
***Bhakti* Beyond the Temple: Locating *Kaḷameḷuttu* in Pre-Modern Kerala**

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Received: 10 August 2020; Revised: 18 October 2020; Accepted: 05 December 2020

Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology 8.1 (2020): 514-543

Abstract: The extant historiographical traditions between the late 16th and 21st centuries in Kerala have viewed the *kaḷameḷuttu* as ‘devil worship’ sorcery and exorcism, dravidian and as manifestations of individual pursuit of art. The *bhakti* beyond the temple is discussed here as a new concept to identify with that wave of *bhakti* which was based on the extant worship of major non-brahmanic deities by the major non-brahmanic social groups in Kerala. The temple centred *bhakti* is primarily a religio-philosophical or ideological phenomenon with a new wave of Aryan-based concept centred on the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples in south India. The following discussion works out the way this tradition was constituted and could safely be characterised as extra-temple *bhakti* outside the premises of the brahmanical temples. The centrality of the widespread worship of the female deities, the prominence attached to female participation in the sacred rites, the centrality of the ferocious and maithuna form of deities, widespread invocation of *bhakti* hymns and the mantras around the non-brahmanic sacred sites of *kāvus* or *koṭṭas*, which are taken up for discussion here. For the purpose of this paper, sources are explored, from the medieval *granthavaris* (palm leaf manuscripts of *kāvus* and land lords), manuscripts of *mantravāda* rites of the “lower castes”, British colonial records and contemporary religious occasions.

Keywords: Aryan, Dravidian, *Kaḷameḷuttu*, *Bhakti*, *Bhūtam*, *Pulluvar*, *Kaniyanmār*

Introduction

The present study locates *kaḷameḷuttu* as a very significant religious symbolism and cult of *bhakti* outside the Brahmanic temples in pre-modern Kerala. The extant anthropological and folkloristic studies seem to imagine and locate the *kaḷameḷuttu* as ethnic composition, ‘indigenous’, ‘native’, ‘Dravidian’, sorcery and exorcism, which are deeply rooted in the colonial ideas. The concept of *bhakti* beyond the temple is proposed here as a new category to understand that wave of *bhakti* which was based on the major non-brahmanic deities and was practiced among the major non-brahmanic social groups in Kerala. The non-brahmanic *Naṭuvālī Svarūpams* and *Sthāni Nāyars* and major non-brahmanic society primarily worshipped and patronized these deities in the major non-brahmanic sacred centres such as *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* in the medieval Kerala. Specific priestly groups with specific ritual tradition were associated with this extra-

temple *bhakti*. The *bhakti* or intense devotion to the deities in *kaḷameḷuttu*, in the sacred centres located outside the brahmanical temples or in the sacred sites like *kāvu* or *koṭṭam* constituted the main theme or contents of this extra-temple *bhakti*. Its characteristic features include the centrality of the widespread worship of the female deities, the prominence attached to female participation in the sacred rites, the centrality of the ferocious form of deities, widespread invocation of *bhakti* hymns and the *mantras* around the non-brahmanic sacred sites of *kāvus* or *koṭṭas*. For the purpose of this paper, sources are explored, from the medieval *granthavaris* (palm leaf manuscripts of *kāvus* and land lords), manuscripts of *mantravāda* rites of the “lower castes”, British colonial records and contemporary cultic occasions.

Received and Reigning Notions on *Kaḷameḷuttu*

By the end of the 19th century, the colonial studies locate *kaḷameḷuttu* as an ideas generated by the Dravidian conceptualization. The colonial and anthropological surveys developed and propagated the religious world of *kaḷameḷuttu* as ethnic compositions, ‘indigenous’, ‘native’, ‘Dravidian’ devil worship, sorcery and exorcism etc. Hermann Gundert, in 1872 (Gundert 1999: 224), William Logan in 1887 (Logan 1995: 176), L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer (Iyer Vol. I-III, 1981) and of Edgar Thurston and Rangachari (1993: 439) (Figures 1 and 2) defined ‘*kaḷameḷuttu*’ as sorcery and exorcism. These colonial surveys described the *kaḷameḷuttu* as lower form of worship or as ethnic compositions, devil worship, animism, and exorcism; and signified its priests as different caste/lineage groups, and exorcists with their ethnic identities (Iyer 1981: 230-233). Later on, the folklore studies emerged from the colonial embedded ideas, continued the same colonial attributions on *kaḷameḷuttu* such as ethnic compositions, ‘indigenous’, ‘native’, ‘Dravidian’ devil worship, sorcery and exorcism (Vanamali 1981: xii). Furthermore, folklore studies treated *kaḷameḷuttu* as manifestations of individual pursuit of art and its priests as individual artists (Choondal 1978: 9-14). They find *kaḷameḷuttu* as a contemporary issue and art form without understanding its historical antecedents and roots (Shibi 2016: 25). Thus, the contemporary folklore studies in Kerala contributed the present form of ‘*kaḷameḷuttu*’ as an individual art.

This paper identifies *kaḷameḷuttu* as an extant tradition of *bhakti* beyond the brahmanical temples in Kerala. The term *kaḷameḷuttu*, in the religious traditions of Kerala, also means ritually “making *maṇḍala* (ritual diagram) with chanting of hymns” for worshipping the deities and sacred healing (Mundekkadu 2000: 40-41). The widespread worship of the non-brahmanic deities forms the central characteristic feature of this extra-temple *bhakti* in Kerala. These deities are praised by the *madhyama* and the *adhama* style of worships by the major non-brahmanic society in Kerala (Logan 1995: 176). The non-brahmanic sites such as *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* (sacred groves) are the sacred place (Panikkar 1909: 146-148) of this *bhakti* of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala.

The temple centred *bhakti* is primarily a religio-philosophical or ideological phenomenon with a new wave of Aryan-based concept centred on the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temples in south India. The saints like Nāyanārs and Alvārs propagated and practiced

Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava cults with royal support in medieval period (Subrayalu 2012: 20, 209). The *bhakti* beyond the temple is discussed here as a new concept to identify with that wave of *bhakti* which was based on the extant worship of major non-brahmanic deities by the major non-brahmanic social groups in Kerala. The following discussion works out the way this tradition was constituted and could safely be characterised as extra-temple *bhakti* outside the premises of the brahmanical temples. The non-brahmanic nature of deities, sacred sites, the worship method and the priesthood of the extra-temple *bhakti* of *kaḷameḷuttu*, which are taken up for discussion here.



Figure 1: Pulluvar with pot drum (Thurston and Rangachari 1909)

The Deity: Lure, Lore and Life

Kerala historical studies have not yet addressed the study of the iconography of *kaḷameḷuttu* because of the received notions of the lack of source materials. The colonial historiographical traditions between the late 16th and 20th centuries in Kerala have viewed the non-brahmanic deities in the *kaḷameḷuttu* as ‘devils’ ‘demons’, ‘monsters’ and dravidian. The colonial studies argues these non-brahmanic deities are non-puranic and non-sanskritic, which played a major role in the modern lives of ‘Dravidian cults’ (Gundert 1999: 224, Logan 1995: 176, Thurston and Rangachari 1993: 439) (Figures 1 and 2). Later on the entire academic spectrum on folklore studies built on the ‘devils’ ‘demons’, ‘monsters’ and dravidian as popular deities, from the 1950s onwards, became the corner-stone to the views generated by the ‘Dravidian’ conceptualization embedded with colonial-orientalist ideas (Vanamali 1981: xii). They viewed the deities in the *kaḷameḷuttu* only as a design and craft (Choondal 1981: 9-14). They find it as a contemporary art form without seeing its historical and religious

value. The present form of '*kaḷameḷuttu*' as an individual art or as a manifestation of modern art form is a contribution of the contemporary folklore studies in Kerala. All of these historiographical traditions not viewed imageries in the *kaḷameḷuttu* as deities or religious symbolisms (Shibi 2016: 25).



Figure 2: *Nāḡakkalām* as 'Pulluvan casting out Devils' (Thurston and Rangachari 1909)

The present study brings out, for the first time, that this 'art form' or 'devils' in the *kaḷameḷuttu* as a most prolific religious symbolism beyond the Brahmanical structural temples and these religious symbolisms typically belong to the worshipping deities of the non-brahmanic groups in Kerala. The widespread worship of the non-brahmanic deities such as *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Nāḡam* and so forth, forms the central theme of this extra-temple *bhakti* of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala. *Vairajātan*, *Kalarātri*, *Bhairavan*, *Yakṣas*, *Gandharvas*, *Bhūṭam*, *Matangi* and so on are the minor deities in the *kaḷameḷuttu* of Kerala (Shibi 2016: 251-257).

Maṇḍala, (Sanskrit: "circle")—which is generally known as *kaḷam* in Kerala—a symbolic diagram and anthropomorphic figure of the deities of *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Nāḡam* and so forth, are used in the performance of sacred rites and as an instrument of meditation for the cultic tradition of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala. For making the religious symbolism or *kaḷam* of the deities, priests use five colored powders on the ground with specific iconographic prescriptions (Mundekkadu 2000: 57).

The present session proposes to examine the nature of deities such as different forms (aniconic and iconic) and analyses the *maithuna* and ferocious characteristic features in the deities of *kaḷameḷuttu*. It further locates the anthropomorphic forms of deities in the *kaḷameḷuttu* which represent more *maithuna* and ferocious features rather than pacific imageries.

Maithuna Forms: *Maithuna* is a Sanskrit term referring to sexual union or male-female couples and their union in the physical or sexual sense in a ritual context (Williams 2005: 834). This *maithuna* characteristic of Indian high-reliefs, statues and religious symbolism can be found in temples and other religious symbols of early India (English 2002: 4). *Kāṣameḷuttu* exhibits different forms of *maithuna* characteristics in non-iconic and iconic figures, which reflects the *pañca-makāra* traditions in *kāṣameḷuttu*. This characteristic of *maithuna* is found clearly expressed in the iconography of *Bhagavati*, *Nāgam*, and *Aṣṭadala* of *kāṣameḷuttu* in Kerala.



Figure 3: Ferocious form of Bhadrakālī, Central Kerala (© Shibi 2013)

Bhagavati: The widespread worship of *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakālī*) is the most extant tradition of non-brahmanic *bhakti* beyond the medieval temples in Kerala. The *maithuna* characteristics are also found in the iconic figures of *kāṣameḷuttu*, which are very ferocious in appearance (Figure 3). The *maithuna* manifestation of *Bhagavati* is the most prominent *kāṣam* in Kerala. In medieval period, she is known as *Mahākālī*. The worship of *Mahākālī kāṣam* is recorded in *Vanṇēri granthavari* (Narayanan 1987: 51). She has numerous manifestations and many of them became very popular in Kerala. *Bhagavatiyum Nṛttagōṣalanum* and *Vairajātanum Bhagavatiyum, Kāṣarātri* etc. are the important *maithuna* manifestations of *Bhagavati* in *kāṣameḷuttu*. The worship of *Bhagavatiyum Nṛttagōṣalanum* in the *kāṣameḷuttu* is recorded in *Vanṇēri granthavari* (Narayanan 1987: 51). All these manifestations of *Bhagavati* are found in *maithuna* appearance. The navel part of the body of *Bhagavati* basically appears in *maithuna*

aspect. She is manifested in a half-sitting posture and is depicted as in sexual intercourse with a *lingam* (penis). The characteristic of the *maithuna* concept in the cultic tradition also influenced the concept of divine couple in the *kalāmeluttu*. *Vairajātanum Bhagavatiyum* constitute a particularly ferocious form of *kalām* that is being worshipped in north Kerala¹.



Figure 4: *Maithuna* form of *Nāgakkalām*, North Kerala (©Vijesh Ariyallur 2013)

The extant tradition of the ferocious form with certain kinds of *maithuna* features of *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakālī*) also worships in the ritual realm of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala. The worship of *Bhadrakālīkkalām* in the *maṇḍalakāla* (month of *Vṛścikam*) was reported by Iyer (Iyer II, 1981: 134). The *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakālī*) is worshipped by almost all non-brahmanic communities in Kerala. *Teyyampaṭṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampaṭṭikkuruppus*, *Kallārakkuruppus*², *Tiyyaṭṭunṇis*, *Manṇāṇmar* (Choondal 1979, Choondal, 1975: 12)³ etc. have specific tradition of worshipping the *Bhagavati*. The cultic and ritualistic components of *kaḷameḷuttu* are also found enmeshed in the tradition of *tīyyaṭṭu*⁴, *mutiyēṛru* (Menon 2002: 418-419)⁵ and so on. The worship of various manifestations of *Bhagavati* is the central characteristic features of the *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala.

Nāgam: *Nāgam* is another significant and widespread form of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala. All the figures in the *Nāgam* consist of two terrible snakes in sexual union. The sexual imagery of *maithuna* concept forms the basis of the cult of *Nāgam* in Kerala (Figures 4 and 5). A *koleḷuttu* document related with Śabharimala, dated to 1668 CE, recorded the religious practices of *pulluvanpāṭṭu* in the *kilakkēnāṭa* of the temple (Santhosh 2019: 56). Women had a major role in the cultic world of *Nāgam* in medieval Kerala. *Vanṇēri granthavari* documented the depiction of *Nāga* deity and women who were sitting and dancing (*tullal*) in the *kaḷam* (Panikkar 1909: 146-148)⁶. They had to sit and dance in the *Pāmpinkalām/Catirakkalām* during the rituality and were bestowed rewards in the form of oil and cloths by the *janmis* (Narayanan 1987: 51-52). *Teyyampaṭṭinampiārs*, *Kallārakkuruppanmār*, *Pulluvar* and *Kaṇṇiyanmār* (Lalithambika 2011: 183) are the priests of this religious practices in contemporary Kerala.

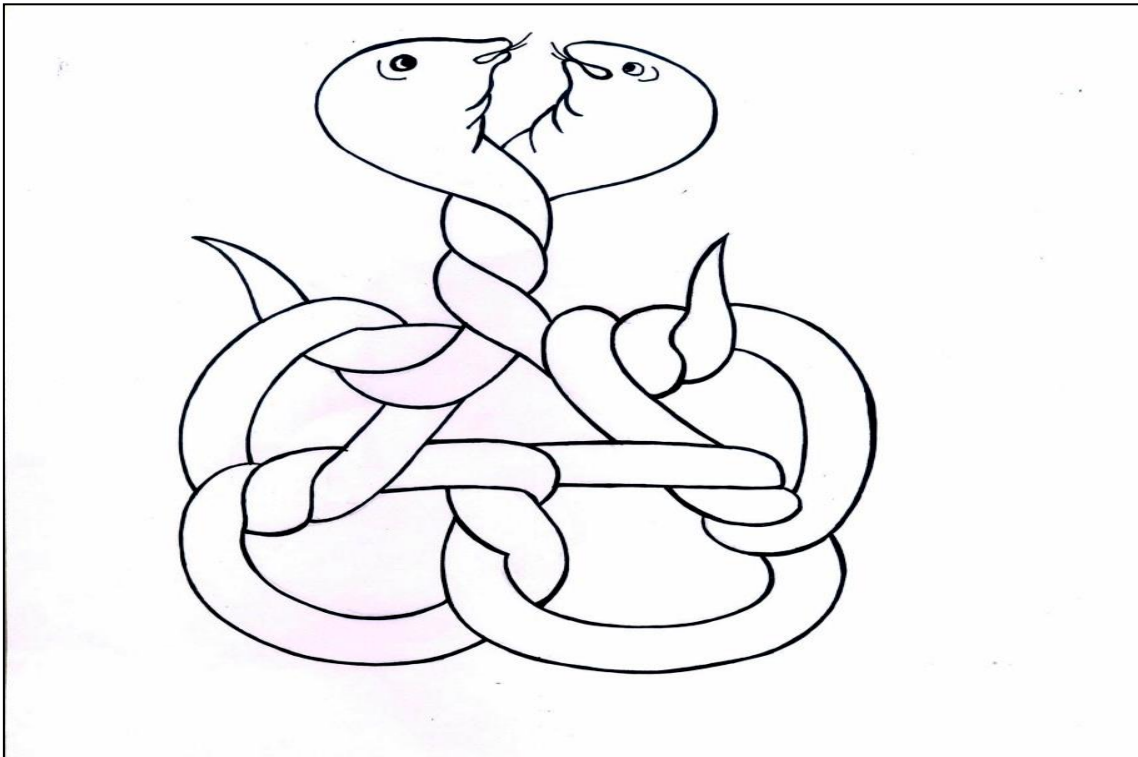


Figure 5: *Maithuna* form of *Nāgam* (Adapted: Kurup 1960)



Figure 6: Ferocious form of Ayyappan, Niramkaitakkotta, Vallikunnu (© Shibi 2013)

Aṣṭadala: Aṣṭadala is one of the most important forms of Tantric *Patmams*. In Aṣṭadala, there is the picture of a white lotus with eight petals. It represents the deity *Bhagavati*. *Vanñēri granthavari* documente the depiction of the ritual of Aṣṭadala to *Bhagavati* by *Tantri* in front of the courtyard of the *illam* (Document No: 53 recorded in between 1606 A.D. and 1716 AD). Aṣṭadala was performed with the divine representation of the guardian deity (Narayanan 1987: 28). The Brahmins drew Aṣṭadala figures during tantric *pūjas*. Similarly, *Kallaṛrakkuruppanmār*, *Teyyampatikkuruppanmār*, *Kaniyanmār*, *Manñānmār*, *Tīyyar* and other non-Brahmanic groups in Kerala used the religious symbolism of Aṣṭadala as part of various cultic traditions. It is seen that the Aṣṭadala

represents the deity *Bhagavati* and the end part (navel part) of this diagram is illustrated in a *maithuna* form. The diagram is manifested in the frame of *kaḷam* with a figure of *lingam*, which is depicting as in sexual intercourse with the inner part of the *patmam* around *pīṭhakkāl*. The same kind of depiction can be seen in the figure of *Bhagavati* which was discussed above.

Ferocious Forms: Ferocious form of deities is a prominent characteristic of religious symbolism in the Indian sub-continent. Ferocious deity represents the forceful battle, which destroys enemies and helps devotees overcome all kinds of obstacles (Bhattacharya 1958: 246). As stated earlier, almost all of the deities in the *kaḷameluttu* appear in fierce forms. *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Bhūṭam* and others are the chief ferocious forms of *kaḷameluttu* that are discussed here. It can be seen that the non-brahmanic *Naṭuvāḷi Svarūpams* and *Sthāni Nāyars* in late medieval Kerala worshipped *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, and *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as war-deities through *kaḷameluttu* (Shibi 2016: 264-283). It appears that these *Naṭuvāḷi Svarūpams* patronized the priests such as *Teyyampāṭikkuruppanmār*, *Teyyampāṭinampiār*, *Kallārṛakkuruppanmār*, *Tiyyaṭinampiārmār* and *Tiyyaṭtunṇikal* to worship *kaḷameluttu* and to praise their political overlordship in the locale.

Ayyappan: The *Ayyappan* cult is the most widespread of the extra-temple cultic practices in Kerala. *Ayyappan* is manifested in a ferocious form in the *kaḷameluttu* (Figure 6). The ritualistic components of *kaḷameluttu* of the deity *Ayyappan* are also found enmeshed in the tradition of *tīyyaṭṭu* and so on (Choondal 1975: 11, Aiyer 1990: 212-213)⁷. The priests usually make the *maṇḍala* of *Ayyappan* as a hunting deity or a war deity. Sometimes, he is depicted with a horse. He carries in his right hand an arrow and a bow (Dages 1997: 869)⁸. The *Naṭuvāḷi Svarūpams* such as the *Kōlattiris*, the *Kōṭṭayam Raja*⁹, and the *Zamorins* (Namboothiri 1987: 167) and some of the landlords such as *Pāṭāykkara*, *Eḷankuḷam*, *Vaṭakkeṭattu*, *Nāgeri* (Mundekkadu 2000: 75) worshipped *Ayyappankāḷam* as a war deity in Malabar. *Kōḷikkoṭan granthavari* records the *Zamorins'* patronage of *Ayyappankāḷam* (*tīyyaṭṭu tullal*) in north Kerala (Namboothiri 1987: 231).

Veṭṭakkorumakan: *Veṭṭakkorumakan* is yet another prominent fierce form of war deity in *kaḷameluttu*¹⁰. Hermann Gundert defined *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as a hunting deity, chiefly in *Kurumpanaṭu* (Gundert 1999: 988), and as the deity propitiated by the *Zamorins* at *Calicut* for granting them victory over the Portuguese (Gundert 1868: 93). The *Veṭṭakkorumakan* is one of the guardian deities of the *Zamorins* of *Calicut* (Gundert 1868: 93). *Bāluśśērīkkoṭṭa*, *Bilāṭtīkkūḷam*, *Nampumalakkōṭṭa* and *Trikkangoṭṭuru* of the *Zamorins* are important sacred centers of *Veṭṭakkorumakankāḷam* in north Kerala. The *Zamorins'* patronage of *Veṭṭakkorumakankāḷam* is mentioned in the *Kōḷikkoṭan granthavari* (Namboothiri 1987: 222).

Puṭam: *Vanīṇēri granthavari* recorded the worship of *kaḷam* of 18 days only once and this consisted of a *kaḷam* of *Puṭam* which is an archaic form of *Bhutakkāḷam* in present Kerala.

It may be noted here that the *granthavari* speaks about a hierarchy of the deities represented in the *kaḷam* i.e., as superior and as subordinate. *Pāmpu* appears to be superior to *Puṭam*, as referred to in the texts (Narayanan 1987: 51). This hierarchy is still followed in the *kaḷams* of *Kallāṭṭṛakkuruppanmār* and *Pulluvar* in Kerala.

Caṭtan, *Kṣētrapālan*, *Gulikan*, *Gandharvan*, *Bhairavan*, *Māṭangi*, *Yakṣan*, *Yakṣi*, *Triśulini* and so forth are the minor forms of deities in *kaḷameluttu* of Kerala. In examining the deeper nature in visual manifestations, it could be seen that *kaḷameluttu* is entirely different from the religious culture and ritual practices of the brahmanical structural temples in medieval period. The presence of major deities such as *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Nāgam* and others in *kaḷameluttu* is absent in the major structural temples of the Brahmans in medieval Kerala. These structural temples of medieval period are dedicated to Śiva or Viṣṇu (Narayanan 1996: 190), except those of Kumaṇanallūr and Panniyankara, which are dedicated to *Bhagavati* (Narayanan 1996: 190). Obviously, the temple iconographic programme is nearly absent in Kerala when compared to that of the other parts of south India. At the same time, the extant tradition of the various forms of iconography in medieval Kerala existed in *kaḷameluttu*. It necessarily existed out of the structural temples and was of the ferocious and *maithuna* nature.

The Sacred Space: Places of the Secret and the Heal

The nature and material culture of non-brahmanic sacred place of *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* in pre-modern Kerala constitute an almost unexplored field of historical research. The entire colonial, anthropological and folkloristic studies developed and propagated the non-brahmanic sacred place of *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* as the centre for devil worship, sorcery, exorcism and animism. The present study locates *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* as the most prolific sacred centres for the cult of non-brahmanic *bhakti* in pre-modern Kerala. The non-brahmanic deities in the *kaḷameluttu* are usually worshipped outside the structural temple which is known as *kāvus* or *koṭṭas*. The deity *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Nāga*, *veṭṭakkorumakan* and so on in the *kaḷameluttu* is usually worshipped in the *Bhagavati-kāvus*, *Ayyappan-koṭṭas*, *Nāga-kāvus*, *veṭṭakkorumakan-koṭṭas* as respectively.

The sacred sites of the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* is usually situated in the isolated places and the *kaḷam* usually worshipped as a secret practices. The *maithuna* forms of *Bhagavati*, *Nāga*, *Yakṣi* and so on worships at secret and isolated places in the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas*. The cultic practices of *kaḷampaṭṭu* and *mantravādakkalām* of lower *jāṭis* indicate that traditional healing practices were basically systems of healing through mystic practices. These mystic practices constitute an attempt at winning the favour of deities by prayers and sacrifices.

In the early medieval period the sacred site of *koṭṭas* is known as *koṣṭham* or *koṭṭam*. The *Cilapatikāram* and *Maṇimekhalai* describe *koṭṭam* as located at an isolated place, situated at the end of the city and as the sacred centre of the magical and esoteric practices in medieval Tamilakam. *Caṭtanār* in *Cilapatikāram* represents the *koṭṭam* as of

philosophical import (Hikosaka 1989: 114). He explained a *cutukaṭṭukoṭṭam* and a *cakkravāḷakkoṭṭam*. *Cutukaṭṭukoṭṭam* is located at an isolated place, situated at the end of the city. There are practices of the ferocious dance of the ghost in the *koṭṭam* (Hikosaka 1989: 114). These are the indicators of esoteric practices. The Goddess *Campāvati* appears in *cakkravāḷakkoṭṭam* (Hikosaka 1989: 114). The text describes all *devas*, *devaganas* and *asuras* staying in that *koṭṭam* (Hikosaka 1989: 114). The *Cilapatikāram* and *Maṇimekhalai* also describe *vajrakoṣṭam* as the sacred centre of the magical and esoteric practices in medieval Tamilakam (Nair 1989: 119). Thus *maṇḍala* practices in the *koṭṭam* are found in the early medieval society of Tamilakam.

The secret worship of *Yakṣiṇis* in the isolated sacred places can be seen in early medieval Tamilakam as well as in the *Kaḷameḷuttu* of Kerala. *Cilappatikāram* describes the presence of *Yakṣiṇi* in an isolated place. She approached Kovalan with great *trṣṇa*. She is described as a non-human being and as a female deity (Nair 1992: 192). All the legends related to *Yakṣiṇis* in south India share the manifestation of *trṣṇa* and we can find a lot of references about the sacred sexual union of *Yakṣiṇis* at isolated places in literary works of Tamilakam. In *Yakṣikkalam*, which is practiced only for men as secret worship, the presence of *Yakṣiṇi* was visualized as having entered in a male body (Sankunni 2012: 140-144, 355). Here the worship of deities in the *kāṇus* or *koṭṭas* in the isolated and secret places indicates the *maithuna* worship in the *Kaḷameḷuttu*.

The secret worship in the isolated places also mentions the blood offerings and animal sacrifices in the *Kaḷameḷuttu*. The healer offered sacrificial flesh of animals and toddy to the deities in the *mantravāḍakkalam* (Logan 1995: 176). *Koṭṭikoṭṭan Granthavari* recorded the goat sacrifice (*aṭuvettum paṭṭum*) in the *Kaḷameḷuttu* of Vaḷayanaṭukāvu (Haridas 2008: 57). *Cilappatikāram* describes the *indiraviḷa* conducted on the day of 'cittirai cittirai tinkal' (full-moon day of month *cittirai*) and the offering of *ninaiccōru* (rice mixed with blood) and *ponkal* (toddy) into the *balipīṭha* in front of the guardian deity *Bhūtam* (Nair 1989: 110). We have enough evidence for the blood offerings and animal sacrifices of the secret worship in the isolated sacred sites in south India.

The Way to Praise and Worship

We have seen *kaḷameḷuttu* is understood as *maṇḍalas* of the deities such as *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Nāgam* etc. worshipped in the non-brahmanic sacred centres of *kāṇus* or *koṭṭas* of pre-modern Kerala. Now, we are going to examine the nature of worship in the religious culture of *kaḷameḷuttu*.

Kaḷameḷuttu, which literally means writing or making a *kalam* (*maṇḍalam* in Sanskrit meaning ritual diagram) with chanting of hymns, is a non-brahmanic religious or cultic practice in pre-modern Kerala, integrating body, speech, and mind. Priests engage in visualizations, recitations of *mantras*, sacred hand gestures, and foot movements, and wear themselves with the crown and ornaments of a deity. In this religious practice, non-brahmanic priests offer devotional hymns, *dhaṛaṇīs* (mantras) and sacred dance as ritual ceremonies, meditation, and gestures. To the priest-followers of the Tantra,

chanting hymns and ritually dancing are prerequisites to enlightenment. The priest—male as well as female—therefore performs *tullal* (ritual dance) as a path of enlightenment in the *kalameluttu*. It is held that while the priest enters the *kaḷam* (*maṇḍala*), he/she is transformed mentally and physically as deity. Thenceforth, they are regarded as deity itself, and begin to speak the will of the deity. This extra-temple religious tradition in Kerala is identified and recognized, for the first time, in the late medieval records such as the *Koḷikkoṭaṇ granthavari* (1674 CE), the *Vanñēri granthavari* (recorded in the years of 1606 1657 and 1687), the *Kuṭālī granthavari* (16th CE), the *Kēraḷpatti granthavari*, and a Śabharimala epigraph (1668 CE), and is traced back to its medieval religio-cultic roots.

We have enough evidence for the religious context of the *kalameluttu* such as sacred dances in south India. *Cilappatikāram* describes the sacred dances like *kuravai kuṭtu* and *tunankai kuṭtu* are performed in front of the deity. There is also mention about the dancer who becomes the deity and removes *paci* (poverty), *piṇi* (diseases) and *pakai* (wrath) from the *pattinam* of Pukar (Nair 1992: 110-111). We have some more evidence on *maṇḍala* worship from the accounts of *Cilappatikāram*. Madhavi is said to dance (*kuṭtu*) in the *maṇḍala* of *Bhūṭas* with accompanying music of *pañca-tāḷa* and *stutis* of *dēvatas* (Nair 1992: 80-85). The text describes the *maṇḍala* ground is selected according to the experts of *maṇḍala* constructors (Nair 1992: 80). The ground could have seven *kōl* for width, eight *kōl* for length and one *kōl* for height (Nair 1992: 81). Then the figures of *Bhūṭas* will be make on the floor to be followed by chanting *dēvata stutis* set to musical tunes of *pañca-tāḷa* and sacred dances of *kuṭtu*. This *maṇḍala* is adorned with garlands and beads (Nair 1992: 85).

The religious culture of *kalameluttu* was based on *madhyama* and *adhama* practices (Logan 1995: 176), which represented *pañca-makāra* (i.e. *madya*, *māmsa*, *matsya*, *mudra*, and *maithuna*) (Sharma 2012: 441), concepts of Tantric practices. It is recorded in the *Koḷikkoṭaṇ granthavari*¹¹, *Kuṭālī granthavari* (Kurup 1989: 41) and Śabharimala record (Santhosh 2019: 59)¹² in medieval Kerala. We have already discussed that *Cilappatikāram* describes the offering of *niṇaiccōru* (rice mixed with blood) and *ponkal* (toddy) into the *balipīṭha* in front of the guardian deity *Bhūṭam* during the *indiraviḷa* (Nair 1989: 110).

Kalameluttu is worshipped in the month of *Meḷam* (Narayanan 1987: 51), that is, from mid-April to mid-May. The *kalameluttu* of *Bhagavati* and *Ayyappan* is conducted during the *maṇḍala* period, which consists of 41 days starting from the month *Vṛścika* (Narayanan 1987: 51) (mid-November to mid-December). It is very significant that this *maṇḍala* worship is conducted in *kāvus* or *kōṭṭas* and not in brahmanical temples. These extra-temple ritual occasions are also attested to in the *Koḷikkoṭaṇ granthavari*, *Kuṭālī granthavari* and *Vanñēri granthavari*.

The above examination of the religious culture of *kalameluttu* brings out the contrast in the *bhakti* of *kalameluttu* with that of the culture and ritual milieu of the structural temples in Kerala. Scholars have already suggested that the organization and culture of

the structural temples were revived from the oligarchy of Brahmins such as *kaṇam*, *cāttirarasankam*, *sankētam* and so forth. The temple routines like *śānti* (daily worship), *tiruvamṛtu* (sacred food), *nandāvilakku* (permanent lamp), *nīraṭṭupalli*, (sacred bath) (Narayanan 1996: 190-195) and so forth are not seen in the context of the cultic nature of *kaḷameḷuttu*. The *kaḷameḷuttu* primarily focuses on the concept of *pañca-makāra*, which is different from the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava temple routines in Kerala. The cultic and religious symbolism of *kaḷameḷuttu* is typically found outside these structural temples and practiced by making the *maṇḍala* of various deities on the purified floor using *pañca-varṇa* powders with the accompaniment of *bhakti* hymns and sacred dances.

The Realm of Sanskrit Mantras and Bhakti in the Hymns of Kaḷameḷuttu

We have seen in the previous session the religious tradition of *kaḷameḷuttu*. Chanting of *mantras* or ritual songs is an essential element in the religious world of *kaḷameḷuttu* which we will discuss in this session. It is historically significant that the *mantras* or *bhakti* hymns of *kaḷameḷuttu* are usually performed outside the temple complex. When the making of *maṇḍalam* or *kaḷam* is completed, *mantras* or hymns for the deity will be sung. *Teyyampāṭikkuruppanmār*, *Teyyampāṭinampiār*, *Kallārṛakkuruppanmār*, *Tiyyaṭinampiārmaṛ* and *Tiyyaṭṭunṇikal*, *Maṇṇāṇmaṛ*, *Vaṇṇāṇmaṛ*, *Tīyyar*, *Kaṇiyar*, *Pulluvar* etc. chanting various kinds of *mantras* of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala. Sometimes, most of the *mantras* and hymns are found in written form, preserved in manuscript tradition in pre-modern Kerala. These *mantras* and hymns had their origins from the astrological, healing and Tantric traditions. The *mantras* are chanted in the ritual performance of the symbolic diagrams, these are brief forms of praises or syllables of the deity. At the same time, making of anthropomorphic *maṇḍalas* of *kaḷameḷuttu* is accompanied by the rich tradition of *bhakti* hymns. The above mentioned non-brahmanic groups have specific traditions in practicing the extant hymns of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala. The iconic representations of the *kaḷameḷuttu* necessitates detailed description in the *bhakti* hymns of the features of the iconography of the deity such as weapons, ornaments, garments, poses, facial and body expressions etc. Obviously, the *mantra* system constitutes the centre ingredient of symbolic deities, and the hymns constitute the vocal manifestations of iconic figures of the deity.

While the entire spectrum of the academic discourse on *kaḷameḷuttu*, from the 1950s onwards, became an appendix to the ideas generated by a pure Dravidian, 'indigenous', and 'south Indian' conceptualization in contrast to the 'Aryan', 'Brahmin' and 'north Indian' (Shibi 2016), the historical dimensions of most of these *mantras* which are in Sanskrit, and the hymns of *kaḷameḷuttu*, with huge mix of Sanskrit terms, has never been realised. The *mantras* of *Kurupus*, *Maṇṇāṇmaṛ*, *Vaṇṇāṇmaṛ*, *Tīyyar*, *Kaṇiyar*, *Pulluvar* etc. behind the symbolic diagrams typically belong to Sanskrit¹³. The *mantras* of *uccaṭana*, *vidveṣaṇa*, *ākarsaṇa*, *māraṇa* and *vaśikaraṇa* are also found in the context of *mantravaḍakkalām* of *Kaṇiyar*, *Maṇṇāṇmar*, *Tīyyar* and so on¹⁴. There are so many manuscripts of the healing and astrological practices of *Kaṇiyar* groups in north

Kerala describing the chanting *mantras* of *yantra* traditions (Lalithambika 2011:115, 119, 130, 132, 135, 138)¹⁵. All of the texts of hymns belong to Malayalam and Sanskrit terms very frequently occur (Chanduppanikkar 1936: 28-29, Chanduppanikkar 1936: 7-8.)¹⁶. A few Tamil words are also seen. All the forms of *kaḷameḷuttu* are always in Sanskrit.

This discussion of the nature of *mantras* in the *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala can lead to some observations on the non-brahmanic religion outside the temple complex as well. The evidence on the *mantravāda* manuscripts shows that there are strong traditions of Sanskrit *mantras* in the context of *mantravādakkaḷam* of non-brahmanic groups in Kerala.

Now, we are going to examine the nature of *bhakti* hymns in the religious world of *kaḷameḷuttu*. The huge volume of historical scholarship on *bhakti* in medieval south India is based entirely on the concept of devotion to a single deity other either Śiva or Viṣṇu. The whole imageries and visualization of devotion are reconstructed fully on a few hymns composed by Śaiva Nāyanārs and Vaiṣṇava Alvārs, centred at a few temples of medieval Kerala. It was based on these *bhakti* hymns that the nature of religious praxis and social ethos in medieval Kerala was reconstructed by historians. The discourse on these practically missed out the big world of the living tradition of *bhakti* of the late medieval Malayalam *bhakti* songs centred outside the wall of temple. The following discussion works out the way this tradition which could safely be characterised as extra-temple *bhakti* outside the premises of the brahmanical temples, was constituted.

The structure of the *bhakti* hymns of *kaḷameḷuttu* (*kaḷameḷuttupaṭṭu*) which starts with the praises of deities such as *vandanam*, *stuti* and so forth. The structure of *niram*, *ammanāchaya*, *keśādipādam* and *pāḍāḍikeṣam* described the iconography of *dēvata* in the ritual songs and how these structural forms purposefully attributed the *bhakti* to the deity is taken up here.

The varied ritual songs of *kaḷameḷuttu* such as *Bhadrakaḷippaṭṭu*, *Dārikavadha-tōṛṛam*, *Ayyappan-paṭṭu*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan-paṭṭu*, *Kṣētrapālan-paṭṭu*, *Maṇimanka-tōṛṛam*, *Vairajātan-paṭṭu*, *Nāgappaṭṭu*, *Cāṭtan-paṭṭu* etc. show the *bhakti* outside the temple world of brahmanical society, and the entire non-brahmanic social milieu of late medieval Kerala take part in it. The terms like *antikkappaṭṭu uccappaṭṭu* (Kurup 1989: 127)¹⁷, *Veṭṭakkorumakan-paṭṭu* (Nampoothiri 1987: 222, 225, 236), *brahmanippaṭṭu*¹⁸, and *aṭuvettum paṭṭum*¹⁹ etc. are indicative of the *bhakti* in the rituals associated with the *kaḷameḷuttu* in late medieval Kerala. These *bhakti* hymns do not denote the Śaiva-Vaisna cults of brahmanical temples. But sometimes, these *bhakti* hymns share the ideologies of Śaiva concepts and elements. In these *bhakti* hymns, deities such as *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*), *Ayyappa*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Kṣētrapālan*, *Vairajātan*, *Nāgam*, *Cāṭtan* and so on, who possess extra-human powers, are placed at the centre, in the tradition of the cult of *bhakti*. These *bhakti* songs describe the deities who were worshipped and adorned by the devotees to satisfy their needs. Devotes glorify the deities as super-men and who possessed bliss and power.

Bhagavati (*Kālī*) is considered as an object of devotion in the cult of *kaḷameluttu* in Kerala in the popular imagination. *Teyyampāṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampāṭikkuruppus*, *Kallāṛṛakkuruppus*, *Tiyyaṭṭunṇikal*, and the lower castes such as *Manṇāṇmar*, *Tiyyar*, *Pulayar* etc. worshiped her as mother goddess in medieval period. Thus she is chosen for worship and adoration in order to satisfy the needs of the devout. The hymns of *Dārikavadham* and *Bhadrakālippaṭṭu* refer to *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*), who is mentioned as hereon and also as a divine incarnation in the *Dēvimāhatmyam* of *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇam*.

The *Naṭuvaḷis* and land owning families praise and glorify *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*). They evinced their *bhakti*. They glorified *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*) as an extraordinary woman. Her greatness of mighty power of war had given rise to the cult of *bhakti* for her. They praised her heroic activity of killing *Dārika*. She is well known in the four Vedas, she rules over the four *pīthas* in the earth and so on. They worship her with performance of *paṭṭu*, *vilakku*, *āṭṭu* and so forth. Devotional songs of *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*) as the universal mother, protected the devotees. They also glorify her greatness in the power of war and her body is described as being adorned by *Bhūṭam*, her hands hold a *pallivāl* (sword) and head of *Dārika*; she sits on a *veṭāḷa* (who is a ghost inhabiting in charnel ground) and mingles with tigers and other wild animals. They further explain her extra-human powers as she swims in the blood, and plays with elephants. They praise her black coloured body and beauty. They praise her image from head to leg and her weapons. *Kālī* is considered as daughter of *Śiva* and there is a process—of convergence with the mainstream *Śiva bhakti* of medieval Kerala.

Bhakti as a concept is also drawn largely upon the *Ayyappan-paṭṭu* of *Ayyappankalām* and *tīyaṭṭu* in Kerala. It also speaks the specific association of the sacred places and worship of *Ayyappa* in Kerala. It is also systematically developed by *Naṭuvaḷis*, *Nāyars* and subsequently by the *Teyyampāṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampāṭikkuruppus* and *Kallāṛṛakkuruppus*. The *Ayyappan-paṭṭu* also seems to represent a transition from the worship of mountain deity to a crystallized Purāṇic *Śiva*. *Ayyappa* is converged with *Bhutanathan* as a form of *Śiva* during late medieval Kerala. It remains as a major component of Purāṇic pantheon. The hymns describe the worship of *Ayyappa* with the offerings of rice, lamp, flowers of coconut tree, betel leaf, arecanut, *grantha*, *kaṇṇaṭi*, *pītha*, *koṭikkūra* (flag), perfumes, feast, song, dance and so on. They also praise the heroic activity of *Ayyappa* as a mountain deity, who moves upon elephant and horse. They glorify his weapon of daggers, sword and *vajra*. They glorify his weapon of daggers, bow and arrow. *Ayyappa* is considered as the father of all creatures and protector of the mountains.

Bhakti as a concept is also recognized in another late medieval *bhakti* hymns of *kaḷameluttu* as *Nāgappaṭṭu*, which speaks about the worship of *Nāgas* in Kerala. It praises the *Nāgarāja* and *Nāgarājni* for progeny (Panikkar 1909: 146-148). They worship *Nāgas* in the *pīthas* and consider them as the highest on earth and heaven. The *Nāga bhakti* can be seen in the land owning families of *Nāyars*, *Tiyyar*, and *Manṇāṇmar*, which are sung by the *Nāyars* (Panikkar 1909: 146-148) and *Pulluvar* (Menon 1995: 479) in Kerala.

Bhakti to *Veṭṭakkorumakan* is another prominent extra-temple *bhakti* movement in the late medieval Kerala. The *bhakti* hymns of *Veṭṭakkorumakan* are in wide circulation in the locale of the Kōlattiris and the Zamorins in Malabar. They worship and adoration of *Veṭṭakkorumakan* for protection from war. The *Naṭuvāḷi* and *Svarūpams* worship *Veṭṭakkorumakan* in the *kaṇṇus* in Malabar. They worship the *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as a war hero and glorify his might as mountain deity.

The *bhakti* can also be seen in the hymns of other minor deities such as *Vairajātan*, *Daivattār*, *Kṣētrapālan* and so forth. These *bhakti* songs describe the worship and adoration of the deities by the devotees to satisfy their needs. The devotees glorify the bliss and power of the deities.



Figure 7: *Teyyampāṭikkurupu* Drawing the *Aṣṭadalāpatmam*, Valliyurkavu, Wayanadu (© Shibi 2008)

The *bhakti* outside the structural temples strongly exists in the hymns dedicated to *Caṭtan*, which are systematically developed by the *Maṇṇāṇmar* and subsequently by *Tīyyar* in south Malabar. It was a very powerful engagement of *bhakti* in the extra-purāṇic and extra-temple religious premises of Malabar. The *Caṭtan-pāṭṭu* is very much akin to the *bhakti* hymns of *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*), such as *Bhadrolpattikilippāṭṭu*, *Dārikavadham-pāṭṭu* and so forth. The *bhakti* to *Caṭtan* is identical with the *bhakti* to *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*) in the *Dārikavadham*. *Caṭtan* is described as a great hero and war deity. He kills *Brṅgāsura*,

which lies parallel to the killing of Dārīka by *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*). He leads a mighty war to kill the *asuras*, which is also identical with *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*)’s war procession against *asuras*. The lower castes actively take part in the *bhakti* of *Caṭtan* by praising the deity with the *Caṭtan-pāṭṭu* in Malabar.

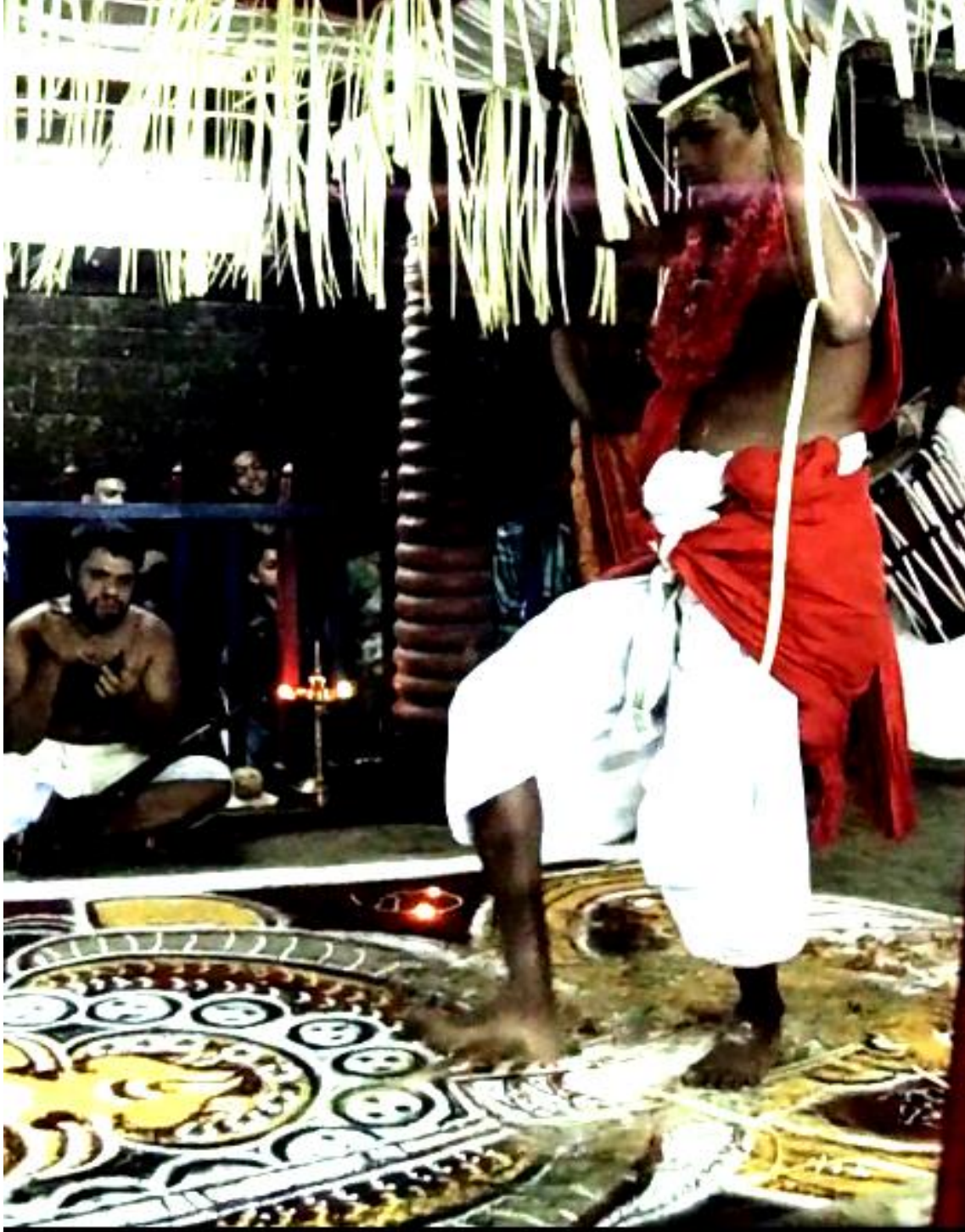


Figure 8: *Teyyampāṭinampiār*s singing and dancing in the *Kaḷam*, Putiyakavu, Kannur
(© Shibi 2013)

The Ideal of the Priest and the Devotee

The entire colonial historiographical traditions in Kerala have viewed the non-brahmanic priests in the *kaḷameḷuttu* as ‘devil dancers’ exorcists, ethnic performers and dravidians. Later on the folklore studies viewed the priest of the *kaḷameḷuttu* only as an ethnic performers. We have already discussed folklore find *kaḷameḷuttu* as a contemporary art form and considered the priests as independent individual artists. The present study brings out, for the first time, that this ‘independent artists’, ‘ethnic performers’ or ‘exorcists’ in the *kaḷameḷuttu* as a major social group of non-brahmanic priests beyond the Brahmanical structural temples in Kerala. *Teyyampāṭikkurupus*, *Kallārakkuruppus*, *Teyyampāṭinampiārs*, *Tīyyaṭinampiārs*, *Tīyyaṭṭunṇis*, *Manṇāṇmār*, *Vanṇāṇmār*, *Tīyyar*, *Kaṇiyar*, *Pulluvar*, *Parayar* and others have specific traditions as priest of the religious world of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala. We have already discussed the priest making a *kaḷam* (*maṇḍalam* in Sanskrit meaning ritual diagram) with chanting of hymns, *dhāraṇīs* (*mantras*) and sacred dance as sacred rites, meditation, and gestures. For making the religious symbolism or *kaḷam* of the deities, priests use five colored powders on the ground with specific iconographic prescriptions. The priest—male as well as female—therefore performs *tullal* (sacred dance) as a path of enlightenment in the *Kaḷameḷuttu*. It is held that while the priest enters the *kaḷam* (*maṇḍala*), he/she is transformed mentally and physically as deity. They are regarded as deity itself (Figures 7-9).



Figure 9: *Teyyampāṭinampiār* singing Ritual Song in the *Kaḷam*, Putiyakavu, Kannur
(© Shibi 2013)

Women have prominent role in the priesthood of *kaḷameluttu* in contrast to the context of the brahmanical temple culture in Kerala. *Nāga-maṇḍala* is the most significant religious practices of women in Kerala (Figures 10- 12). Priestesses are made to sit in the *Nāga-maṇḍala*, which is made in the *maithuna* form and these women are to preserve sanctity. As the priest sings, the young priestesses appear to be influenced by the *Nāga* deity. They are generally called *Nāgayakṣis*, *yakṣiyammamar*, *Nāgakanyaka*, *Nāgarājñī*, *Yakṣikanyaka*, *Kanyaka* and so forth. Their bodies gradually develop into a ceaseless ecstatic shaking, and they begin to speak the will of deity and they are regarded as deity themselves. Women had a major role in the sacred rites of *Nāgam* in medieval Kerala. We have already seen the worship of *Nāga* deity and women who were sitting and dancing (*tullal*) in the *kaḷam* of the documents of *Varṇēri granthavari* (Panikkar 1909: 146-148)²⁰. They had to sit and dance in the *Pāmpinkāḷam/Catirakkāḷam* during the rituality and were bestowed rewards in the form of oil and cloths by the *janmis* (Narayanan 1987: 51-52).



Figure 10: The priestess making the *Nāga* deity, North Kerala (© Shibi 2013)

Keralolpatti mentioned to the priests of *kaḷameluttu* such as *Teyyampati*, *Tiyyaṭinampi* and so on who are included within the Brahmanic religion based on four *varṇas*. They are known as *antāraḷas* or *ampalavaśis*, whose are upgraded from *śūdras* but degraded from Brahmanas (Gundert 1868: 56-58). It is well-known that they were acting as priests in the *kaṇḍus* or *koḷṭas*—non-brahmanical sacred sites—in medieval Kerala. At the same time, they act as *ampalavaśis* or *antāraḷas* in the brahmanical temples of Kerala. The Brahmins (sometimes low-grade Brahmins such as *Mūṣats*, *Emperumān*, *Piṣāras*, *Nampīṣans*, *Iḷayats* and so forth) are the priests in the brahmanical temples and not considered as *ampalavaśis* or *antāraḷas* as priests, whose compelled there as temple employees (Gundert 1868: 56-58, Narayanan, 1996: 150)²¹.



Figure 11: *Nāgakanyas* Sitting in the *Kaḷam* (*Mathrubhumi* Weekly, Book 30, Sep. 7, 1952)

Keralolpatti mentions the non-brahmanic priests of *Manṇāṇmar*, *Kaṇiyar*, *Tīyyar*, *Pulluvar* and so forth as lower *jāṭis* in the *brāhmanādivarṇas* (i.e., the four *varṇas* in the brahmanical social composition). Further, it says about the non-brahmanic religious practices such as *kaḷam-maniyal*, *mantravādam* of these lower castes (Gundert 1868: 64). It is very significant that the non-brahmanic priests of *Manṇāṇmar*, *Kaṇiyar*, *Tīyyar*, *Pulluvar* and so forth re-configured lower *jāṭis* by the brahmanical religion in medieval Kerala.



Figure 12: *Nāgākanyas* Dancing in *Kalam*, Malappuram Kerala (©Vijesh Ariyallur 2013)

Now, we are going to examine the nature of devotees in the religious world of *kalameḷuttu*. It is significant that the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* were owned and the *kalameḷuttu* was patronised by the non-brahmanic (Veluthat 2012: 181)²² *Naṭuvālī* (Varier 2002: 121-123)²³ *Svarūpams* (Ganesh 2000: 222-227)²⁴, *Sthāni Nāyars* and warriors in pre-modern Kerala (Frenz 2003: 80 -81)²⁵. Our attempt below is an examination of the nature of the worship and patronage of the non-brahmanic power structure of the *kalameḷuttu*, outside the brahmanical temples. These non-brahmanic royal lineages worshipped the deities such as *Śāsta* (*Ayyappan*), *Bhadrakālī* and *Nāgam* in the *kāvus* and *koṭṭas*, which has been described in *Keralolpatti*, to protect wealth and power of the *Svarūpam* (Varier 1984: 4). It was from the ferocious and warrior nature of *Ayyappan*, *Bhadrakālī*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan* and so on of the *kāvu* that the *Naṭuvālī Svarūpams*, *Sthāni Nāyars* and warriors in Kerala were held to derive their power and especially their success in battle. Their power, of course, confirmed the power of their deity (Varier 1984: 33). These non-brahmanic *Naṭuvālī Svarūpams*, *Sthāni Nāyars* and warriors possessed martial training centres of *kalari* and served as a temple where the guardian deity was a form of *Bhadrakālī* (*Bhagavati*) or else *Ayyappan*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan* and so on (Zarrilli 2002: 26)²⁶. When they go to war they salute and worship the *kalari-dēvata* in this *kalari* (Gurukkal 2000: 20). It appears that these *Naṭuvālī Svarūpams* patronized the priests such as *Teyyampāṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampāṭikkuruppus*, *Kallārṛakkuruppus*, *Tiyyāṭṭunṇis*, *Tiyyāṭinampiārs* to worship *kalameḷuttu* to praise their political overlordship in the locale. Non-brahmanic priests such as *Teyyampāṭinampiār*, *Teyyampāṭikkuruppu* (Zacharia 1996: 338-417, Gundert 1999: 273, 480, Thurston and Rangachari 1993: 181) and *Kallārṛakkuruppu* (Hundert 1999: 480, 273, Thurston and Rangachari 1993: 92, Iyer

1981: 288, Mundekkadu 2000: 35, Shibi 2016) are patronized by the above two ruling lineages and they worship the deity in the *kaḷameḷuttu* for blessings.

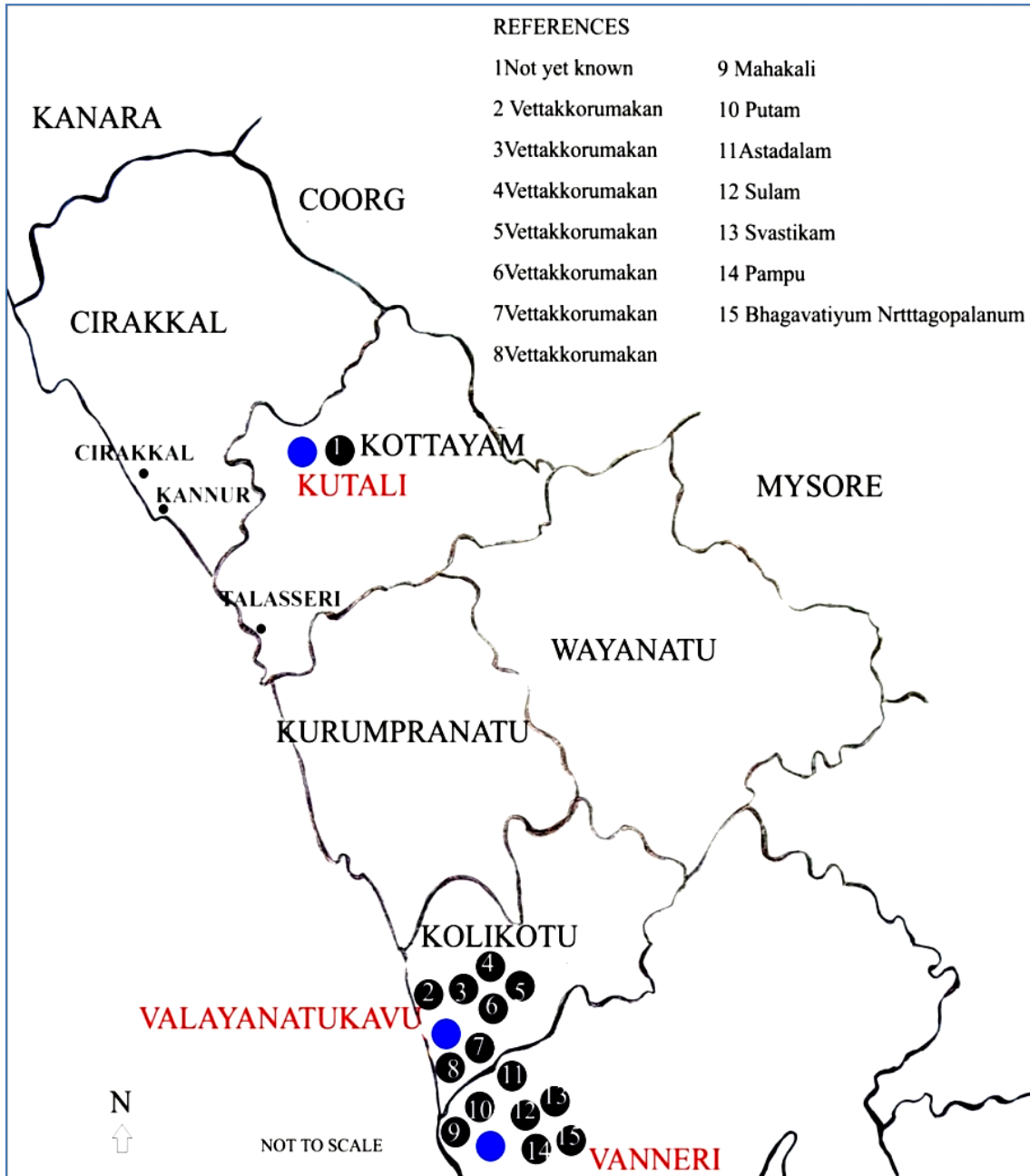


Figure 13: Sacred Sites of *Kaḷameḷuttu* in Late Medieval Malabar based on *Granthavaris*

The Zamorins worships *Veṭṭakkorumakan* as an important war deity, who is one of the guardian deities of them. The *Koḷikkoḷaṇ* *Granthavaris* have so many references to the patronage of *kaḷameḷuttu* of *Veṭṭakkorumakan* (Figure 13). As per the legend, *Veṭṭakkorumakan* protected the Zamorins from the attack of the Portuguese (Gundert 1999: 480). So many references to the *Veṭṭakkorumakan-paḷṭu* in the *granthavaris* belong to the period of the war between the Zamorins and the Portuguese. The *Nāyar* military

chieftain Kuṭālī family patronized the *kaḷameḷuttu* in 16th century onwards. They are one among the localities in the Kalliaṭṭusvarūpam, a territorial division of Puravaḷinaṭu (Kurup 1989: ix). They have a *kaḷari* and worships *Bhadrakālī* as guardian deity.

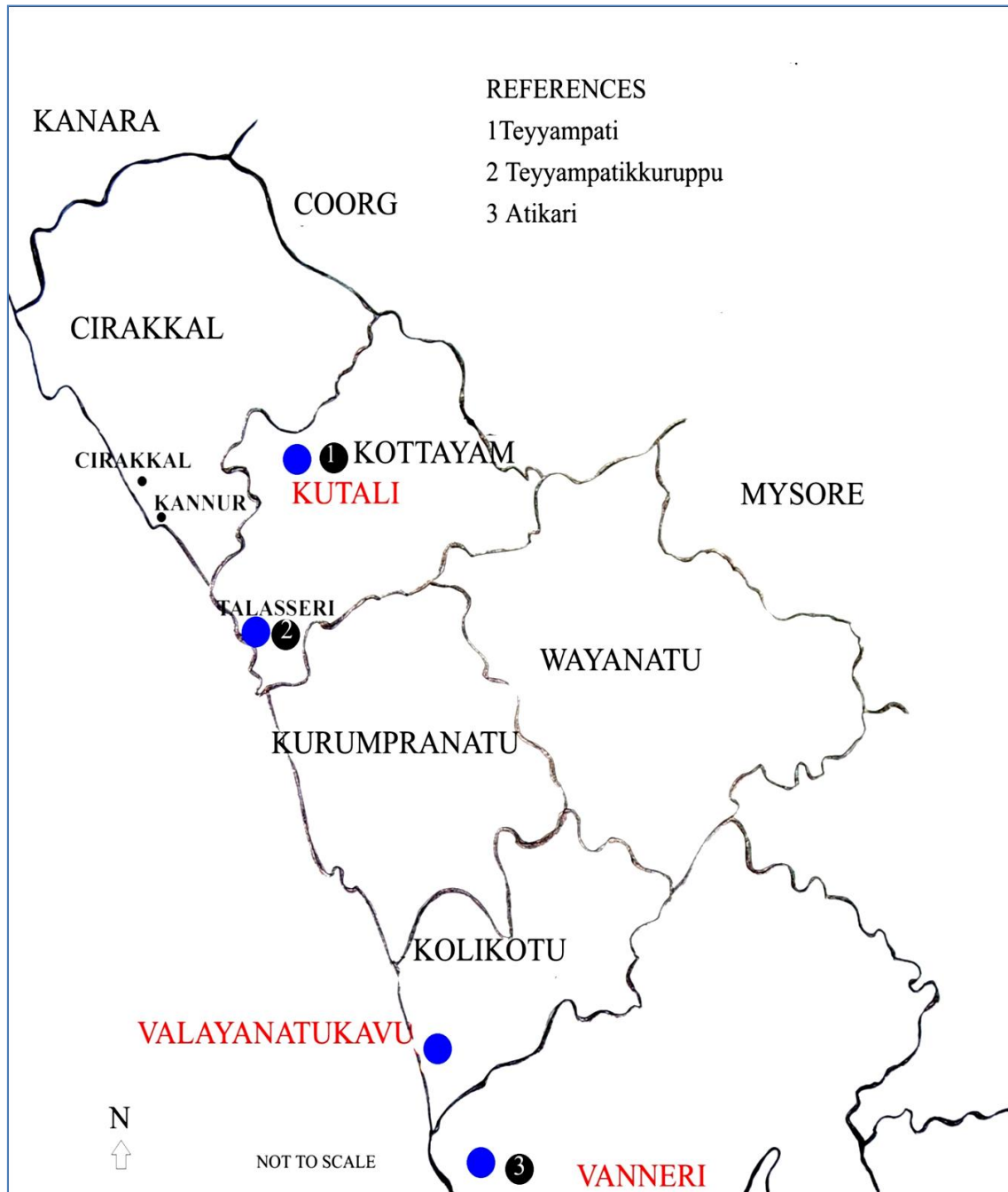


Figure 14: Location of Priests of *Kaḷameḷuttu* in Late Medieval Malabar

Kuṭālī *granthavaris* documented the patronage of *Teyyampātis* to worship *kaḷameḷuttu* in the Kuṭālīkkāvu. They granted payments of rice given to *Teyyampāṭi* and carried the expenditure of rice for *antikkappāṭṭu*, *uccappāṭṭu*, *kaḷattilari* etc. which are the important forms of rites in *kaḷameḷuttu* (Kurup 1989: 127-128). We have seen the worship of

Nāgakkalam by *deśams* or *amsams* is described in the medieval document of Varññēri *Granthavaris* (Narayanan 1987: 51-52). The *deśams* such as Mēchēri, Annakare, Kumāramangalam, Tirur, Mullappalli, Tekkummuri and so forth worshipped *Pāmpinkalam* in late medieval Malabar. They worshipped the *kalameluttu* of *Pāmpu*, *Mahākālī*, *Puṭam*, *Bhagavatiyum nr̥ttagōṇalanum* etc. which mentioned that the *Nāyars* ladies sat on the *pāmpinkalam* and the payments of money, rice, oil, cloth were given to them. The documents also recorded the grant of money and rice to the *tantri*, *atikāris* and so on (Narayanan 1987: 51-52). The document suggested that the *kalameluttu* was practiced under the leadership of *atikāris* ²⁷. The above mentioned *deśams* are under the rule of Varññēri *Nampūtiri* family in the locale of Vettam Rajas (Narayanan 1987: xiii).

Bhakti found enmeshed in the hymns of *kalameluttu*, is very deferent from the temple centred *bhakti* of the brahmanical world in many respects. It is a religious and cultic world outside the ritual milieu of the temple and the Brahmins. The *Nāyars* including *Nāṭuvali Svarūpams*, *antarālas* and the lowers castes also actively took part in this process of extra-temple *bhakti* in the late medieval Kerala. The preists such as *Teyyampaṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampaṭikkuruppus* and *Kallārṛakkuruppus* claim to be the devotees of true *bhaktas*. With the patronage of the *bhakti*, the *Nāṭuvalis* and land owning families of *Nāyars* too attain the position of true *bhaktas*. The practice of temple service as hereditary profession recurs in the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* hymns (Champakalakshmi 2012: 56-57). The same practice can be getting crystallized in the *bhakti* hymns of *Kalameluttu* in Kerala. The priests such as *Teyyampaṭinampiārs*, *Teyyampaṭikkuruppus*, *Kallārṛakkuruppus*, *Tiyyaṭṭunṇis*, *Tiyyaṭinampiārs* and so on serve as hereditary professionals and their concept of service is dedicated to the deity and also to the non-brahmanic temples or *kāvus* in Kerala²⁸. The idea of the temple as the focus of this devotional cults emerges in the *bhakti* hymns of medieval south India (Champakalakshmi 2012: 55). At the same time, the sacred sites of *kāvus*—which are especially outside the structural temples—are the centres of the *bhakti* hymns of *kalameluttu* in Kerala.

The foregoing examination of the religious traditions of *kalameluttu*, as taken up above, has very interesting implications which are in contrast to the temple culture, architecture, sculpture, routines and organization of medieval Kerala. The iconographic and sculptural traditions of the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava cult of the structural temples in Kerala are quite different from the ferocious and *maithuna* forms of the *maṇḍalas* of *Bhagavati*, *Ayyappan*, *Nāgam* and so forth, in the *kalameluttu*. The secret worship of *maithuna* deities in the *kāvus* or *koṭṭas* in the isolated places is also contrast to the brahmanical temple culture in Kerala. In this religious practice, non-brahmanic priests offer devotional hymns, *dhāraṇīs* (*mantras*) and sacred dance as ritual ceremonies, meditation, and gestures. It is also seen that the non-brahmanic cultic practices such as *pañca-makāras* in the *kalameluttu* are distinct from the Brahmanic routines in the structural temples. The varied hymns in the *kalameluttu* show the *bhakti* outside the temple world of brahmanical society, and the entire non-brahmanic social milieu of late medieval Kerala took part in it (Figure 14). These *bhakti* hymns do not

denote the Śaiva-Vaisna cults of brahmanical temples. In these *bhakti* hymns, deities such as *Bhagavati* (*Kālī*), *Ayyappa*, *Veṭṭakkorumakan*, *Nāgam*, *Caṭtan* and so on, who possess extra-human powers, are placed at the centre, in the tradition of the cult of *bhakti*. Similarly, the social involvement and priesthood of the nature of *kaḷameḷuttu* also stand in contrast to the Brahmanic organization and priesthood of temple culture in Kerala. Women have prominent role in the priesthood of *kaḷameḷuttu* in contrast to the the brahmanical temple culture in medieval Kerala. Obviously, the entire world of *kaḷameḷuttu* revolves outside the brahmanic traditions of the structural temples in Kerala. *Bhakti* found enmeshed in the *kaḷameḷuttupāṭṭu*, is very deferent from the temple centred *bhakti* of the brahmanical world in many respects. The *Nāyars* including *Nāṭuvaḷi Svarūpams*, *antarālas* and the lowers castes also actively took part in this process of extra-temple *bhakti* in the late medieval Kerala. The idea of the temple as the focus of this devotional cults emerges in the *bhakti* hymns of medieval south India. At the same time, the sacred sites of *kaṅṅus*—which are especially outside the structural temples—are the centres of the *bhakti* of *kaḷameḷuttu* in Kerala.

Notes

- ¹ *Vairajātan* carries in his hands the *vattapparica* and a sword. He is in white colour. His consort *Bhagavati* is drawn beside him, and she is in yellow colour. She carries with her left hands the *paṭra* and human head; and with her right hands she holds the sword and *śūlam*. Data collected from Satisan, *Teyyampaṭinampiār*, (priest of *kaḷameḷuttu* in north Kerala), Mattannur, Kannur on 13/07/2012.
- ² The figure of *Bhagavati* (*Bhadrakālī*) in the form of four and eight arms, are traditionally drawn by *Teyyampaṭikkuruppus* and *Kallāṭṭakkuruppus*. Her eyes are distended and have *dramstra* (tusks) from her mouth. In her form with eight arms, her eight hands carry the sword, *śūlam*, *vattaka*, *khatvankam*, *maṇi*, head of *Dārika*, *paraśu* and *kapāla*. She is green in colour, and wears red garments called *vīraḷippaṭṭu*. Her four arms carry sword, *śūlam*, *kapāla* and the head of *Dārika*. She sits on a *pīṭha* and her body is decorated with ornaments. The figure of *Bhadrakālī* is also decorated with *lata* and *prabhāmaṇḍalam*. Data collected from the field work, Palakurumbakkavu, Kozhikode on 08/04/2014.
- ³ *Bhadrakālīkkalam* of *Manṇāns* is influenced by the concept of *Bhagavati* and *Kali*. The eyes of *Bhadrakālī* in this *kaḷameḷuttu* are depicted in a widened manner. She has two arms with the right hand, she holds the *paḷḷival* (sword) and with the left hand the *cilampu* (anklet). She wears a garment on her body and two *tala* (anklets). She is adorned with ornaments on her neck, and a *tilaka* on her forehead. She has long hair. See Chummar Choondal, Mannan, figure 3. The figure of the *Bhagavati* in the *Bhagavatikkalam* of *Manṇāns* is very similar to the figure of female *kōmaram* of Kotungallur *Bhagavati*. The *Manṇāns* draw the pictures of *Bhadrakālī* in different forms such as *Viṣṇumāya* (*Caṭtan*), *Oṭṭamulacci* etc. in the sacred sites and the collective ritual occasions of the *Ṭavas*. *Manṇāns* sing *tōṭṭam-paṭṭu* of *Bhagavati* after drawing the figure, during the 41 days commencing from the first of *Vṛścikam* according to the Malayalam calendar (November to December) which is known as *maṇḍalakāla*.

- ⁴ *Tīyyaṭṭu and kaḷameḷuttu are similar in many respects. In the Bhadrakālī-tīyyaṭṭu, dancer's (Tīyyaṭṭunṇis) face is painted black with simulated pustules of smallpox. He wears a crown on which is a figure of Kālī in front, with long flowing hair.*
- ⁵ *There is yet another ritualistic performing art known as mutiyēṛru, which needs basic requirements of the figure of kaḷam for its performance.*
- ⁶ *A particular plot of ground in the house-yard is cleansed with cow dung and certain geometrical figures are drawn with five coloured powders. The priest recites mantras, and some ritual songs in praise of deities Nāgas. A number of Nāyar women are made to sit in the figure. As the priests sing, the young women appear shaking their heads in a circle appear to be influenced by the Nāga deity. They then go into an unconscious state and wipe off the figure of snake in the sitting posture and they begin to speak the will of deity as deity themselves.*
- ⁷ *In Ayyappan-tīyyaṭṭu, the kaḷam is devoted to the deity Ayyappa or Śāsta. At the same time, tīyyaṭṭu is dissimilar in many respects that, after the kaḷam is finished Tīyyaṭṭinampians seated adjacent to the kaḷam, well-versed in fire dance, commence singing religious ballads to the accompaniment of Para, a kind of drum, for rhythm.*
- ⁸ *In his left hand, there is a curika. He has a long beard. His body is coloured with yellow. On some occasions, Kallārṛakkuruppus depict a female figure holding a pot of kaḷḷu (madhu) in the Ayyappankaḷam. It is significant for us here to understand that the same iconography is described in Mayamatam, a medieval chronicle of deities in south India.*
- ⁹ *Data collected from the field work, Mattannur, Kannur on 13/07/2012.*
- ¹⁰ *It is a standing figure and his body is green in colour and he wears vīraḷippaṭṭu. He has two arms and with the right hand he holds an arrow and bow. In the left hand, there is a curika. He has a beard. He is seen adorned with all ornaments such as kuṇḍalas, hara and a broad belt round the waist. Data collected from the field work, Korattimala, Nilamboor on 12/03/2013.*
- ¹¹ *In 1752, Sāmuṭiri Kōvilakam Granthavari describes the performance of aḷuvetṭum paṭṭum in Valāyanaṭṭukaṇṇu.*
- ¹² *In 1793, a copper plate from Sabharimala describes sheep offerings in the temple.*
- ¹³ *The manuscripts of Tīyyar and Maṇṇānmaṛ describe the mantra for Unmattakuṭṭiccaṭtan as 'ōm hrīm lam lam unmatta kuṭṭiccaṭtaya ānantha rūpāyasa santoṣaṇi vaśika śrī paramēśvaranaṇṇe cūvanama śrīm'. This is a mantra that is helpful in healing mental disorders. The mantra for suppressing one's speech is 'ōm mantramuttimaṛe auṣadha śakti mahaśakti svaḥa', 'ōm śakti śakti eva vaśśassu muttīyāmaṇṇambhavaya vaśam kuru kuru svaḥa'. The mantra to practice truth is: ōm namo bhagavato ōm namo bhagavato narakamalataye vasisra ṛṣidevimalasike svaḥa ōm hrīye svaḥa. The mantra for suppressing*

enemy: 'ōm atikallukanta anam karam ayi vingikkantu villum pilayum mutṭi varanta kiṭakka svāmiyaṇu guruvinaṇa svāha'. The mantra for killing enemy: 'yuṁ dīrkhaṇa bhuṭāya yuṁ'. The mantra for sthambhana: 'yuṁ galagaṇḍa kurunkuṭṭiccaṭta mama ripu sthambhāya svāha'. See Manuscripts dealing with mantravāda collected from south Malabar.

¹⁴ The mantra 'yuṁ galagaṇḍaruṇa kurunkuṭṭiccaṭta ripuccaṭanaṇa svāha' is used for uccaṭana. The mantra 'yuṁ galagaṇḍaruṇa kurunkuṭṭiccaṭta ripudveṣaṇaṇa svāha' is used for vidveṣaṇa. The mantra 'yuṁ galagaṇḍaruṇa kurunkuṭṭiccaṭta ripuakarsaṇa svāha' is used for akarsaṇa. The mantra 'yuṁ galagaṇḍaruṇa kurunkuṭṭiccaṭta ripu māṇaṇa māṇaṇa svāha' is used for māṇaṇa. The mantra 'yuṁ galagaṇḍaruṇa hasampraṇa kurunkuṭṭiccaṭta sarva strī puruṣa akarsaṇaṇa svāha' is used for vaśikaraṇa. The mantra for jvara is 'ōm namo bhagavate ōm kaḷi koṭunkaḷi bhairavakaḷi hrīm nandikeṣvarakaḷiye svāha'. See Manuscripts dealing with mantravāda collected from south Malabar.

¹⁵ The mantra of Uccittamaṭangi is 'ōm uccittamaṭangi maṭangi mahārūpi mahakaḷi ōm uccitta toṇnippoka svāha'. The mantra for vaśikaraṇa is 'ōm namo bhagavato kalluruki ulluruki taḷuti poṭṭi turannuvannu ennuṭe kiṭappil vaśamaṇa svāha'. The mantra for protection from preṭa is 'ōm śrī durdaṣaṇaṇa nama: vinaṣaṇaṇa ōm mahāprakāṇaṇa sarvabhūta bhayankaraṇa sarva duṣṭa preṭa piṣāca vinaṣaṇaṇa svāha'. The mantra for vyādhi is 'ōm śulini śulini ōm brahma śulinim śulinim śulinim ōm kapāla śulinim ōm karimurikkintanḍu vetṭikkanṇārepole sarva vyādhiharam varika svāha'. The mantra for preṭa is 'ōm mrṭyu mrṭyu kalagūḷika svāha'. The mantra for suppressing one's mental disorder is 'ōm hrīm śavikam hrīm ōm hrīm kṣaṣavaya svāha'.

¹⁶ The kalampaṭṭu of Kaniyar like Balivadhama, Kamsavadham, Kalyāṇasaugandhikam, Santhānagōpalam and so on belongs to Sanskrit Purāṇic stories.

¹⁷ Kuṭāḷi Granthavari recorded kalameluttu as a part of the expenses of the festive occasions. The last portion (section E) of the Granthavari is not dated, which records the cost of the cultic tradition of āraṭṭu (festival), ritual songs and so on. Document No: 25 lists the expense of the payments of rice given for uccappaṭṭu, antippaṭṭu, kaḷattilari etc. and also records the amount of rice given to Teyyampaṭi, Tantri, Mārār, Vanṇāṇ and so on. Document No: 26 also lists the expenditure of rice given to Teyyampaṭi. In the case of the nature of priesthood of the cultic practices of kalameluttu, those social groups have a vital role.

¹⁸ In the documents of 1675 Grantham 7, palm-leaf 6-54 of Koḷikkoṭan Granthavari explains the expenditure for the performance of brāhmaṇippaṭṭu, which is a particular kind of ritual dance in Kerala. As a part of the performance of Brāhmaṇippaṭṭu kaḷam should be drawn.) But we have no further evidence for the performance of kaḷam in the practice of tiyyaṭṭutullal or brāhmaṇippaṭṭu as well as the present condition.

¹⁹ In 1752, Koḷikkoṭan Granthavari documented the expenses of the performance of aṭuvettum paṭṭum in Valayanaṭukaṇu.

- ²⁰ A particular plot of ground in the house-yard is cleansed with cow dung and certain geometrical figures are drawn with five coloured powders. The priest recites mantras, and some ritual songs in praise of deities Nāgas. A number of Nāyar women are made to sit in the figure. As the priests sing, the young women appear shaking their heads in a circle appear to be influenced by the Nāga deity. They then go into an unconscious state and wipe off the figure of snake in the sitting posture and they begin to speak the will of deity as deity themselves.
- ²¹ The epigraphical sources of Kerala refer to a large number of temple servants, who were employed in the temple service, like the Potuval, Vāriyar, Nampiār, Cāntiatīkal, Cakyār, Nangayār, or Kottīkal and so on. The Keralolpatti calls them as antāraḷa castes and says that they are either Brahmins who were degraded or Śūdras who were upgraded on account of their service as we have already discussed. They are a class of dancers, musicians, drummers, painters and so on. It is significant that they are associated with the Jain and Buddhist temples as well as Brahmanic temples. The Keralolpatti says those who were employed under Brahmanic temples and transformed them as antāraḷas into brahmanical jāti lineages. The process of evolution and consolidation of the jāti system that we come across in Kerala during this period was directed by the Brahmins.
- ²² Usually there are no Brahmans in the power structure of nāṭus. The Svarūpam represents its power in the basic local units.
- ²³ The nāṭus are the original seats of the Svarūpams in medieval Kerala. 'nāṭu utaiyavar' or 'nāṭu vaḷumavar' are usually the governors of the nāṭus. The nāṭus were the agrarian settlements in territorial units which grouped together for various socio-economic needs.
- ²⁴ The Svarūpam is a political authority of a large number of small territorial units based on a powerful matrilineal joint family which exercise their political and judicial authority in late medieval Kerala.
- ²⁵ The political disintegration of the Cera empire after 12th c AD led to the emergence of a Brahmanic oriented temple world, and the emergence of Nāṭuvaḷi Svarūpams in medieval period, causing drastic changes in the religious world of Kerala. Nāṭuvaḷi Svarūpams appropriated ferocious deities and fertility deities for their ritual justification. The network of temples was of utmost importance to the rule of an Indian Raja, because temples and their respective festivals are instrumental in the religious legitimation of the ruler.
- ²⁶ The kaḷari was a centre for training and healing tradition of the Nāyar land lords or military chiefs. In all kalaris, the most important deity is Bhadrakālī who was the guardian deity. Other deities sometimes include Ayyappan, Veṭṭakkorumakan, Kālabhairavan and Kālabhairavi, Nāgabhagavati, ancestors and heroes.
- ²⁷ Atikāris had played an important role in the performance of Kaḷam at Vanneri illam. We have practically very little data about the role of Atikāris as the performers of Kaḷam in

present Malabar except in the case of Vanñēri. Atikāri Rāmankuḷangara Kurupu of Niramkaitakkotta near Vallikunnu is the only available reference to their association with the present day performance of kaḷameḷuttu. See MGS. Vanneri... Interview with Karunakara Kuruppu (late), Atikari Rāmankuḷangara Kuruppu, Niramkaitakkotta, Vallikkunnu, Malappuram: 26/03/2011.

- ²⁸ Putiyakāvu, Lokanārkāvu, Valliyūrkaḷu, Valāyanaṭukaḷu, Kaḷikaḷu and Tirumānthāmkunnu, Utinūrkuḷom and Matiyūrkuḷom, Kuḷāḷikkāvu, Aryankāvu and so forth are the non-Brahmanic temples or kavus, which are the centres of the bhakti hymns of Teyyampaṭinampiars, Teyyampaṭikkuruppus, and Kallāṭṭakkuruppus in Malabar.

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