

## CULTURAL ATTRIBUTES OF FESTIVALS: A STUDY ON KOLLEMCODE DEVI TEMPLES

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### **Abstract**

Kollemcode is situated on the western coast of kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu. So many Devi temples located in kanyakumari district namely Kollemcode Devi temple, Mandaikadu Bhagavathi Amman temple, Koottalumoodu Devi temple. Kollemcode is the one and only place of its kind considering the fact those two temples for a single deity in the same province that too in a place which is renowned for its natural beauty. In kollemcode devi temple different kinds of festivals such as Meena Bharani Thookkam, Pongala mahotsavam, Kaliyoottu, Paranettu festival are celebrated. This study mainly focuses on how kollemcode Devi temple and its festivals attributed of the cultural values.

**Keywords:** *Cultural attributes, Temples, festivals, inhabitations.*

### **1. Introduction**

The term temple originated from the latin word 'Templum' as a religious institution and place of worship. The primitive people had the practice of worshipping the god due to different reasons of fear, love, amaze and gratitude. It is believed that the establishment of temple could be freed from the sins in thousand births and good fortune can be obtained by the construction of a shrine<sup>661</sup>. Kanniyakumari district has so many Devi temples including Shree Bhadra Kali Devi Temple in Kollemcode. Temple is dedicated to Goddess Bhadrakali, an incarnation of mother durga who is believed to save mankind from all the trails and troubles of kaliyuga. This temple is believed to have omni presene of Goddess and daily worship (pooja) is being conducted. Besides this there is another 'Mudippura' at venkanji province where festivals are celebrated. The famous 'Thooka Mahotsavam' is celebrated in 'Meenabharani' which is the birth date of the Goddess is celebrated at venkanji temple.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Location of kollemcode Temple

Kanyakumari district is the smallest district in Tamil Nadu. The district lies at the southernmost tip of the Indian Peninsula where Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal confluence. Kollemcode is a small village on the borders of Kerala state. It is a coastal village, full of greenery with rich coconut groves and paddy fields. Devi Temple is a landmark situated in the heart of kollemcode. Parassala is on the eastern tip of Kerala state which is 10km from kollemcode. Thookkam festival has been organized at Venkanji. Kollemcode is a beautiful village located at the sea shore in Killiyoor Taluk of south Travancore nearby 1km from kollemcode junction..

### Major Communities:

There are different groups of communities living in kollemcode. The Brahmanas community people found in a small percentage but they held a unique place in the society. A person belongs to Nadar community known as Gramani the Sanskrit word derived from sanror, which denoted the learned person. Most of the peoples are educated. Paraiyars are agricultural workers found in all taluks of district. The word paraiyan is referred in the work of purana muru as the people of drummers.

### Architecture

The temple designated as prasada (platform of god), devagriha (a house of god), Devalaya (residence of god), Kirtana and devayatana (a temple where an idol is installed) serve as center's where religion implies and sentiments of the people find a natural outlet. The primitive people had the practice of worshipping nature due to different reasons of fear, love, awe and gratitude. There is no evidence to prove the existence of temple during vedic period. Temples were probably constructed after the vedic age with the codifications of Agamas and silpa sastras.

The antiquity of kollemcode temple walks up with the "Omkaara" chanted by Arabian sea and the Thathwamasi messages emerging from the heart of the universe through Shree Bhadrakali Devi is believed to have appeared here as dual form of shakti viz. Bhadra and Kali, the devotees get the blessings from the unified form of mother Durga. This Goddess resides in semi-circular "Mudis" (the artificial statue of Goddess which are decorated with snake hood structures carved from jack tree wood. The "Moola kshethram" (parent temple) "Shree Vattavilai Bhadrakali Mudippura" is located not too far from the greenish paddy fields of Kollemcode province uniqueness of the temple.

This is the famous temple in South India known as Sree Bhadrakali Devasom at kollemcode and is an important temple that endows the followers with blessings of the lord Bhadrakali who is believed to be the most efficient lord in endowing blessings to the followers. It is a religious temple for the Hindus and is widely worshiped all over the country. Kollemcode is the one and only place of its kind considering the fact that there are two temples for a single deity in the same province that too in a place which is renowned for its natural beauty. There are two temples

constructed for Sree Bhadrakali. There are two deities who are considered as sister-elder sister Bhadra and the younger Rudhra. Both the sisters Bhadra and Rudhra are worshiped at the same temple. Bharani day is celebrated in a grand manner. Lakhs of people from all over India has been participated in this function. This temple is a golden experience for the wedded couples. It is one of the reputed temples in India and the devotees of the mother Goddess visit the temple especially during the festival occasions.

## FESTIVALS

Pujas and festivals are of an Integral part of temple worship. The system of worship in the Siva temple is governed by the agamas. Devotees believe that if god and goddesses were appeared there would be rain and prosperity therefore elaborate rituals and ceremonies were rapidly evolved and the heavenly beings were pleased with offerings of a sacred bath (abhishekam) oblations, rituals and festivals. Pujas and festivals were regularly conducted to maintain the divinity of the temple for ever and the sanctity of the people. Agamas are originated with Tamil culture from ninth century A.D.

The Hindu festival are designed by great sages of old. There were several festivals recurring at stated times during the course of the year. There were occasions of public rejoicing and merriment and they served to relieve the people of the humdrum monotony of everyday life. Many of the festivals associated with religion. While others were purely social connected with events like the harvest of crops. The festivals in this temple are conducted on the basis of naimittika puja 16 (occasional puja). The festivals conducted in the temples are not compulsory but they add prestige, wealth and attraction of devotees, pious people to the temples. The temple festivals are of nine kinds.<sup>17</sup> The festivals throw light on the basic customs and manners of Hindu religion. On the festival days in this temple the presiding deity (urchavarmoorthy) and other deities are well adorned and well decorated. The decorated deities are brought out in procession in the carstreets or madaveedies as seen as salient feature of the other Hindu festival of temple. In the procession presiding deity and divine consort come out in several vahanas (mounts). The musician go in front of the deity, crackers also fired to attract the devotees and common people for festival gathering.<sup>18</sup> In addition to these festivals some other festivals are celebrated in this temple. They are Panguni Uttiram, Vaikasi Visakam, Thirukarthigai, Kanthasasti, Thiruvathirai and Thaipooasam.

Kolleancode festival is like a feast for eyes with its treasure of green paddy fields, lotus ponds and a variety of trees which will take a visitor to the lap of the nature.

### **Thookka Mahotsavam**

The famous ‘Thookka Mahotsavam’ is also known as Meena Bharani festival has been celebrated in the birth date of the goddess Bhadrakali. Thookkam festival is celebrated in Malayalam month of meenam (March-April) every year. The thookkam ritual is held at Venkanji mudippura situated just one kilometer away from kollemcode mudippura. Thookkam is an offering which is held at the Bhadrakali temple in kerala and Tamil Nadu during the month of meenam. Kollemcode thookkam is celebrated irrespective of cast, creed and race. The festival

is celebrated annual for 10 days and Thookam is on the final day of the festivals. Every year more than 1200 thookkams will be held. Special poojas, colorful processions, special Ezhunnallathu, kavadi and kavadiyattam, vandiyotam and devotional music recitals will be held as part of the festivals. Major tourist attractions of kollemcode thookam festival include musical concerts and dramas, religious and cultural conventions, traditional temple art such as ottamthullal Kadhakali and Harikadha. Lakhs of people from kerala and tamil Nadu participate in the festivals.

### **Preparation for Thookkam festival:**

The temple and the surrounding are decorated with color lights and festoons. The inner area of the temple decorated with flowers, oil lamps, leaves and serial light. The goddesses are taken first to the purakal house for poojas and then reach the temple.

### **Selection of the Thookkakaran**

In the third and fourth day trust selects the thookkakaran. He should be medically fit with the help of doctors and some elders. The trust members give to the thookkakaran a red cloth in which his thookam number printed.

### **The condition for carting the thookkakaran**

He shared pray as sashtanga Namaskaram, shayanapiathakshanam, muttukut Namaskaram in the new temple.

### **Thookkavillu**

Thookkavillu is used to carry the babies, is a twin beam strong wood. The thookkavillu measures almost 45 feet in length and has a width of almost three of fourth feet. Iron clamps are used to strengthen to beam the bottom of both the beams is tied together with rope.

### **Vandiyottam**

The trail running to check the conditions of the cart at the previous as evening the thookkam day is known as vandiyottam. The devotees will pull the chariot around the temple.

### **Villumootil Kuruthi**

Each thookkavillu has a bow on top and each bow two thookkakarars are tied with clothes four children are lifted up in chariot at a time by the thookkarkar. A small hallow silver needle is priced on the bear the waist on the hole on the needle through which blood is stored once the chariot circulates the temple the beam is lowed the children are given to the respective parents. At the end of the thookkam the poojari gives kuruthi called villumootil kuruthi to the devotees. They use only blood of thookkakar.

### **Rituals of thookkakar**

The must be pious and highly adjustable persons. They should stay at the temple without making any problems. They should not for away from the temple under any circumstances. They

have to desist doing any criminal act (32). The tenth day early morning (Ref32 annual report of kollemcode temple) they go to sea for bathing and for makeup. After the makeup he should not eat anything from outside up to his thookkam ends.

### **Rituals of parent and children**

The mother and child offered for thookkam must be neat and clean for seven days before thookkam only offer the ritual ends the hair can be removed from its head. On the day of thookkam the mother must eat only after the child thookkam ritual is performed.

### **Reason for the thookkam ritual**

Thookkam is an offering by the devotees to the Bhadrakali. Wedded couples offer thookkam for their children who are one year old or below. They offer thookkam when children were born without any major health issues by her grace. Every year there would be more than 1200 thookkam

### **Other festivals**

#### **Pongala Mahotsava**

Every year there are offerings of pongal on the patham udayam day of the Malayalam month "Medam" (April). Thousands of devotees assemble from different parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. They observe pongala rituals in and around the temple and Laksharchana is the most important part of the "Pongala Mahotsavam".

#### **Kaliyoottu**

Kaliyoottu is conducted once in twelve years. According to legends Lord Shiva created Bhadrakali to get rid of the atrocities of the giant Darikan. Sree Bharakali beheaded Darikan in the battle. The festival occurs for ten days. On the last day the ground battle takes place. Lakhs of people gather to witness the battle.

#### **Paranettu festival**

The members of the 'Vathy' community celebrated the festival. It is long celebration of twelve days. For the Goddess Bhadrakali a high paranu is decorated in vattom on the kunchkuri fields. There is a small paranu for Dharikan. The cruel monster was the opponent of the goddess. The festival starts with the Ganapathi pooja. An old widower is selected to represent the father of Goddess. The coconut trees are cut with the help of an axe. This ceremony is called as "Kall Nattu Karmmam". Then the paranu is decorated.

The goddesses are taken to pachapanthal decorated with light. On the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the festival the symbolic starts between the Goddess and Dharikan. This is called "Paranil Pournu". Nilathil Poru starts 12<sup>th</sup> day noon amidst. The Goddess after defeating the monster at the fight in the underworld and here also the goddess chases him. This fight in the underworld is called

“Paranil Pouru”. On the last battle at the ground, Dharikan is defeated and pushed down deep in the earth (Pauthalam).

### **Conclusion**

The river is the living museum of ancient culture and history on the native people. Yesterday people are habituated in the river basin for their basic facilities. Soon after the great settlement they built temples on the river side for their religious purpose. Later they functioning the pujas and festivals to exhibit the culture attributes, to fulfill their prayers to god. On the great path Tamil Nadu have several rivers to maintain the cultural attributes which followed by ancient period. However Gadilam River is also one of the rivers which have several important temples. Thus, the temples have picturing the people cultural life of the people ever. Unfortunately, Gadilam River is forgotten by historians and the contemporary people.

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