



Kalamezhuthum Pattum -A Sacred Artistry

Deepa M S¹, Lalini M²

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of History, Sree Narayana College, Kollam, Kerala.

² Assistant Professor, Department of History, Sree Narayana College, Chathannur, Kerala.

* Corresponding Author:

Deepa M S

deepaayiliam@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Kalamezhuthum Pattum is a traditional ritual art form from Kerala that combines drawing, music, and dance. It reflects the cultural and religious traditions of the region, blending Aryan and Dravidian elements. The main part of the ritual involves drawing colorful images on the ground, known as *kalams*, using natural powders. These drawings are accompanied by songs and performances that honor deities like Bhadrakali, Ayyappan, and Nagam. There are two types of *kalams*: geometric (*Amoorthakalam*) and figure-based (*Roopakalam*), each created with great care and skill. The rituals serve many purposes, including prayers for children, healing, and protecting the community. Different communities perform these rituals in their own ways, using various musical styles and instruments. The performances also express different emotions such as peace, love, fear, and courage. Passed down through generations, *Kalamezhuthum Pattum* continues to play an important role in Kerala's religious and social life, helping to keep its folk traditions alive.

INTRODUCTION

Kalamezhuthum Patum, a traditional ritual art form of Kerala embodies the rich cultural heritage and spiritual significance of Kerala.. This is an integrated art form which is a combination of Music, Dance and Theatre. This art form fulfills different needs in social, cultural and religious fields. When the Aryans migrated to Kolathunadu in the 10th Century A.D their Gods were also incorporated in the rituals of indigenous folk dance. Kalamezhuthupattu emerged from the ritualistic performing art of Kerala where Bhagavathy cut is very famous. It reflects the cultural heritage and social life of the land. Both vedic and non-vedic concepts of deities are also seen in Kalamezhuthu.. A combination of

Aryan and Dravidian elements of religion and culture is revealed in this art form. The Antiquity of this tradition traces as part of worship with the color powders on ground with drawn figures or designs. In the Kalam ferocious expression is shown by the decorations by designs, drapery and ornaments. (Sathyapal: 2011)

The drawing are of different patterns like square rectangle or a circle, as the design requires and these drawing are known in different names in other countries like Rangoli (Rungavali) in Maharashtra, sathiya in Gujarat, Mandana in Rajasthan, Alpana in West Bengal, Aripa in Bihar and Orissa, chowk in Uttar Pradesh, Kolam in Tamil Nadu and Abiyal or Kalamezhuthu in Kerala. The drawings may include stylized flowers, fruits, trees, leaves, animals and birds which have ritualistic significance and are associated with deities. Beautifully designed geometric patterns are created with mysticism and symbolic meaning. Kalams are derived from the concept of floral designs and geometrical drawings (Sathyapal:2011).

Kalamezhuthupattu is performed as the ritualistic worship of Kerala and Gods like Kali, Ayyappan, Vettakkorumakan, Nagam, Vairajathan, Tripurandhan etc are worshiped. The style and structure differ in consonance with the theme and place (Radhakrishnan chembra, 2011). Kalams are categorized into two types, Amoortha Kalam and Roopakalam. Amoorthakalam are geometric in design while Roopakalam has the representational figure. They differ from each other. The colors used for both are same. In Padmakalams dots, straight line, circle and squares and geometrical designs are being used but in Roopakam figures are drawn. Three dimensional figures height, length and breadth to make the figure become visible (Radhakrishnan Chembra:2011). Padmakalam is related to Tantric rituals. The deities which are not regularly worshiped in idol form will be reenergized and restore sannidhyam of the deity in the kalam and the pooja is done. One chaturakalam is drawn and it is divided into four columns and in that they leave one column after the other and apply white and yellow powder and this is used for Padmakalam. The Brahmins and also the Non-Brahmins follow their rituals. Aniyal is considered as the part of ritual of Padma Kalam. Animal is drawn by Padmakalam. Aniyal is known as the ancient art form of painting and it is used in Paana, Onam, Vishu etc. (M.V. Vishnu Namboodiri: 2016) In Padmakalams the drawing is architecturally constructed by measuring with scales or threads but in other Kalams artists adopt a mental calculation. The internal variations are corrected by using measurement with thread. As the basis of drawing classic kalams have Dhyana slokas and for other kalams they have wild and rural features that render soul-power to the central figure in the diagram. For Bhagavathy Kalam in central Kerala they use green color with Sathwika Bhava to give significance. In North Kerala they add ferocity by decreasing the green color in the ritual performance by the Theyyampadikal (Chummar choondal:1978). During the Vedic period this art form was practiced. The Dravidian word for drawing of Kalam is Aniyal. Human figures are not drawn in Kalamezhuthu. The purpose of ritual events is to eradicate evil spirits and bless the people with prosperity. These rituals are observed by women to get off spring. Kalamezhuthu is performed in Kavus and temples. This art form is done by both upper class and lower class people. This beautiful art form is considered as a combination of Sristi (creation), Sthithi (position/stability) and Samharam (dissolution) (sathyapal:2011) Dr. Vishnu Namboodiri says that there are different traditions in Kalamezhuthu. These streaks in the tradition of kalams show caste hierarchy in the social structure (M.VVishnu Namboothiri: 1996).

Kalamezhuthu was a traditional art form and an important art form during ancient times in which Kannaki is seen as a legend. They draw kalams for 41 days connecting from the 1st of Vrischikam. They draw a figure of Kannaki with sword and anklet in the right hand which resembles the heroine in Silappadhikaram. Kalamezhuthu is derived from the formal conception of kolam. The concept of floral painting must have evolved from the Aryanisation of the Dravidians. There are 140 kalams used by the artist for Kalamezhuthu. Kalamezhuthum pattum comprises of three stages, kalamezhuthu; drawing pictures, kalampattu; singing song of the representational deity with the instruments and kalamthullal; enactment of the myth in styled performance (M.v Vishnu Namboothiri:1996). It is also considered as Ezhuthu, Pattu and Thullal.

The word kalam in Malayalam, is the root of many words with multiple contextual meanings (sathyapal:2011) The term Kalam in this context stands for a design and Ezhuthu means a form of

writing. This is a pictorial representation of a deity. This art form is seen across the entire state of Kerala and it helps us to understand the beliefs, rituals and traditional arts of a folk community. It is an integrated form of art developed by the folk or the sub folk. The knowledge of this art form is passed from generation to generation and are applied in performance. The ritual varies from Kalam to Kalam and it is performed in groves and shrines. The objectives of Kalamezhuthu also changes and it has different aspects like worshipping for the fulfillment of desires, for treatment, invocation and also invoking blessings to the people of that village (Chummar choondal: 1978). The sense of color in kalamezhuthu is very attractive. The last rite in the kalamezhuthu is the kalammayikkal or wiping out of the kalam. It will be wiped out using the flower of arecanut. The kalam will be erased from its feet. The face of the deity must not be trampled. Kalamezhuthu is a form of writing on a specially made space to invoke the deity for blessings. They draw a figure of Kannaki with sword and anklet in the right hand (interview with kallattakurup Manikantan, Kalamezhuthu artist).

The following Communities perform Kalamezhuthupattu in traditional paarambariya fever such as Kurup (Kallatta Kurup, Varanattu Kurup, Theyyampadi Kurup), Theyyattunni, Theyyadi Nambiar, Marar, Velan, Mannan, Pulluvan, Kuravan (K. K: Marar 1999). Karukalakki, Eridahamohini, Pillatheeni are some of the Kalams which are drawn and some of these are also used for Kolam Thullal. In Pulaya Community houses after the cremation of the body of a person on the 21st day Bhadrakalikalam or human Kalam is drawn to invoke the deity of prosperity and to get rid of evils from that person. They use Yellow, White and Black for drawing the Kalam. The Kalams are used in Trikona, Circle and Lotus petals shape etc and mantrika, tantrika Kalams are used for rituals. In the text Agni puranam we can find the discussion of colors and Paramarsa (supreme thought) (Babu Mundekkad: 2002.). The Kalamezhuthu used by the Brahmins is known as Sathvika Tantrika karma and by the lower strata of people is Thamasa (Tantrika Karma) but the colors used are the same. Sudarsanam, Srichakram, Chakrabja Padmam etc are used in Chitra Padmam and they used correct Beeja Mantra sound for it and it is used instead of Sthuthipattu. The Kalam's used is Sathvika Karmam have that much clarity than the Tantrika Kalam. The creativity shown by the person who draws in Naga Kalam and Bhadrakali Kalam will differ in Tantrika Kalam. This ritual is a combination of Drawing, Dance, Music and Theatre (K. K Marar: 1999).

Some of the rasas are also found in the Kalamezhuthu Pattu drawings mainly Santham and Raudhram. There are nine types of Rasa's ie Shringara (love), Haasya (mirth), Karuna (compassion), Raudhra (fierceness), Veera (valor), Bhayaanaka (frightful), Bheebhatsa (disgust), Adhbhutha (wonder) and Shaantha (peace). Shringara Rasa is shown as an experience of love and is used in Sthayi bhava. In Natyasastra it is said that favorable seasons, blossoming of flowers, seeing loved ones, poetry, music etc. is shown in Sringara Rasa in dance. Haasya means laughter which comes in an abnormal mode of dressing or behavior. Karuna rasa is portrayed by showing separation from the loved ones, loss of wealth or death. Raudra rasa is shown in fighting, killing and war scene. Harsh and fierce words are shown in action. Veera Rasa is shown by portraying courage, glory, valor and also contradiction of others opinion. Bhayanaka Rasa is a fear produced while hearing odd sounds in forest, deserted areas etc. Bibhatsa Rasa is evoked by seeing something undesirable or sentiment portrayed by seeing or hearing of unpleasant things. Albhutha Rasa is portrayed by showing exclamations of praise or appreciation, trembling, sweating etc. Shaantha Rasa is shown by rescue and hunger for knowledge of reality. This rasa is also accurate for the scenes of deep meditation in a forest (sathyapal: 2011)

. For the preparation of Kalam multiple materials and methods performed by a master artist with assistants are also involved. In olden days and still in some places they create a unique space with cow dung paste on the ground and they draw Kalam in it. After leveling the half wet ground there are areas where the color powders have to be applied. To protect the drawing from wind they prefer half wetland or cow dung ground for drawing. The Kalam is drawn after the black color is put in the ground and black work as an opaque body for other colors to function. The structural construction of the Kalam starts with white powder. For constructing a Padma Kalam the drawing is architecturally made by measuring with scales or threads and in other Kalams the artist adopts a mental calculation. The dots are indicated by incorporating supplementary extensions for images. In Figurative Kalams the central axis is supplemented with circles in a random action. The artist constructs the skeleton of the figure in

three stages by exploring the use of accelerated movements of hand(Cummar Choondal :1978). Nowadays they started using blue, rose, gray, maroon etc. and glitters to bring attraction to the audience. Pictures are divided into three, Rasa Chitram, Pushpa Chitram and Dhoolichitram depending on the use of the materials like flowers, leaves etc. Pictures drawn on walls and canvas is Rasa Chitram, with flowers and leaves is Pushpa Chitram and with color powders and rice powders is Dhoolichitram. The powders used are Rice (white), Turmeric (yellow), Charcoal from paddy husk (black), blend of turmeric powder and lime (red) and powdered leaves (green) although several leaves are found suitable.

There are varieties of singing style like Uchapattu, Amanchaya, Nirampadal, kesadipadam Varna, Sthuthi, Kathapaduka etc, used in Kalamezhuthum pattum. There are five varieties of songs representing the deity like bhadrakali pattu, Ayyappanpattu, Vettakkorumakanpattu, Nagathan Pattu, Kailayam etc. The song kailayam is used for the deity except the above four. The myth behind bhagavathy kalampattu is the story of kali who killed Darika. Before going to Thiruzhichil, the song ends with some special song called padikkal. The background music like Nanthuni and Kuzhithalam are used. The singer uses an instrument called Nanthuni (stringed Instrument), cymbals (Kuzhi Thailam) as accompaniments. Vannan uses a stringed instrument called Nantani and Kurup sings kalampattu, by using percussion instrument with cymbals and Gong. The song starts with the invocation to Ganapathy, then saraswathy, siva and sri krishna are prayed. Athipattu is the song sung at night with Amanachaya and continues with Niram Padal, keshadipadam varna and story telling. At the end of Thiruzhichil, Padikkal a special song is sung. Ragas are changed according to the situations. There are classical rhythms too in this song. Talam used are Triputa, chembada thalam, muthalam, Adantha and Panchari. In Kerala in Devi temple and houses commonly people worship the devil in her “sattvic” appearance as “Lalitha”. This is called as Bhagavathy Pattu and it is the most intricate and Driminent worship. The beginning of the ritual starts with the drawing of Kalam of Bhagavathy on the floor with natural powder in five colors. The ritual is done in purity by taking Vrutha. It is believed that bhagavathi pattu originated before the time of ideal worship. In northern Kerala in almost all temples Bhagavathy Pattu is being conducted(Sathyapal :2011).

Kalamezhuthum paattum has a rich historical significance, and its preservation is crucial for maintaining cultural heritage. Kalamezhuthum paattum was performed in temples and during festivals, ensuring its continued practice and preservation. The historical preservation of Kalamezhuthum pattum is a testament to the dedication and efforts of artists, communities, and cultural institutions working together to safeguard this valuable cultural heritage.

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