



Verbal Vulgarity and Local Belief System in the Pattini-Kannaki Cult: Contextualising the Literary-Linguistic Tradition of Kodungallur Bharani

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Abstract

The study intends to examine the historical reasons of verbal vulgarities and literary tradition associated with Kodungalloor Bharani, Kerala. The Kodungalloor Bharani festival is a yearly temple festival that takes place every March, in Kerala. The devotees who attend this festival are all lower caste Hindus. The festival is famous for the theripaatu songs composed of expletives. These are filled with expletives, innuendos and explicit sexual references and are sung by both men and women who dedicate these 'filthy' songs to the Goddess they adore. In addition, the story of Kannaki has also been associated with Bharani festival. To be precise, the study would make an academic attempt to draw the literary tradition on Kodungalloor Bharani, Kannaki (Southern India)/Pattini (Sri Lanka) cult, linguistic similarities, and of course, the vulgar languages and filthy songs sung by the devotees. This paper intends to examine the historical reasons of verbal vulgarities in Kodugallur Bharani and to assess the continuities and changes in the textual tradition and verbal vulgarities.

Keywords: Bharani, Velichapadu, Kavu, Kannaki, Kovalan

Introduction

Through Shweta Radhakrishnan's work "Sanitising the Profane," this study aims to investigate the historical causes for verbal vulgarities and literary tradition related with Kodungalloor Bharani, Kerala. The Kodungalloor Bharani festival, held every March in Kerala, is a yearly temple celebration. The devotees that attend this event are all Hindus from the lowest castes, and their annual pilgrimage is laced with music and dancing. Theripaatu songs, which are made up entirely of expletives, are a highlight of the festival. These songs are performed by both men and women and are packed with expletives, innuendos, and graphic sexual references. They are dedicated to the Goddess they worship. In addition, the Kannaki/Pattini narrative has been linked to the Bharani celebration. To be more specific, the research will aim to draw a literary tradition on Kodungalloor Bharani, Kannaki cult, linguistic connections, and, of course, the devotees' vulgar languages and filthy songs (Shweta 2013).

There has been a movement to outlaw the festival and censor the theripaatu over the years. A predominantly high caste Hindu populace has led the charge to sanitise the celebration, with quite different conceptions of what is sacred and profane, and what kind of devotion is appropriate. Despite their efforts, this subaltern music has recently made its way into mainstream Malayalam music, with theripaatu tunes appearing in films. As a result, the study will examine the impact of Kodungalloor Bharani on Kerala's socio-cultural domain through intricate interstices of caste, subalternism, and subculture, as well as the passage of the theripaatu from subcultural to popular. Overall, this article aims to investigate the historical causes of verbal vulgarities in Kodungalloor Bharani, and to identify the uniqueness, and to evaluate the continuities and changes in textual tradition and verbal vulgarities.

Kodungalloor Bharani

The Kodungalloor Bharani is a fascinating location where numerous legends and histories collide. Each storey alters the festival's atmosphere. The Bharani is a separate festival than the Kali festival since it is dedicated to Kannagi. The storey alters depending on each participant's social location, and each storey takes its meaning from the context of the narrator. M.J Gentes' paper, "Scandalizing the Goddess at Kodungalloor," was one of the first stories I heard regarding the origins of the Kodungalloor Bharani (1992). According to Gentes, the Bharani celebration arose from a strategic move by the Hindus in the area to take Buddhist property. Kannagi is portrayed as the chief god of the Kodungalloor temple in several of the stories. In his book, Sadasivan claims that the Chera king Chenkuttavan built a structure to honour her memory in the presence of King Gajabahu of Ceylon. It's possible that this is the Kodungalloor Bhagavathi temple (Shweta 2013).

Kannagi is the protagonist of the well-known Tamil film *Cilappatikaram*. Kannagi and her husband Kovalan, according to legend, lived in Madurai. The majority of Kovalan's time was spent with a local courtesan. However, after losing all of his money, Kovalan sought Kannagi's assistance. Kannagi, the upright wife, sold her anklet to him. To sell this anklet, Kovalan travelled to Madurai. The queen's anklet went stolen at the same moment, and Kovalan was accused with robbery and executed. Kannagi went in

search of Kovalan when he did not return. Her search led her to Madurai, where she discovered the fate of her spouse. Kannagi was furious and travelled to the royal palace to prove her husband's innocence by showing the court the other anklet in the pair. Kannagi, the virgin widow, cursed the city by ripping her breast and tossing it at it, and the city was consumed by fire (Shweta 2013).

Kannagi is supposed to have walked to Kodungalloor in Kerala after that. V.T Induchudan mentions a secret chamber within the temple recesses where Kannagi's remains are kept in his book *The Secret Chamber* (1969). While the priests refute this narrative of history, the majority of believers think Kannagi is the goddess. The temple could have started out as a Buddhist shrine, either dedicated to Tara or Kannagi. Sadasivan (2000) makes another intriguing point in his work: Buddhists in Kerala did not build many stupas or other monuments. Several of their meetings were held in the open air, in tiny groves known as kavus. Sri Kurumba Kavu is another name for the Kodungalloor temple. The Bharani's kavu teendal ceremony may have begun as a Brahminical attempt to take over the Buddhist temple. In Malayalam, the word teendal has numerous meanings.

Pollution is one of its most disputed interpretations. Sadasivan (2000) and Gentes (1992) believe that local Hindus threw meat and drink inside Buddhist monasteries, as well as anything else that desecrated the Buddhist shrines' hallowed space. They are also suspected of harassing Buddhist monks and nuns by flinging sexually explicit abuse at them on a regular basis. While some devotees and priests reject this, other researchers feel it was plausible. These acts of damage were gradually controlled and co-opted into the Bharani festival after the land was taken and the Buddhists were pushed out (Shweta 2013).

Kannagi is claimed to have walked from Madurai to Kodungalloor, where she is claimed to have gained samadhi, according to another school of thought. The Raja of the period constructed a temple for her and incorporated her "Shakti" into the deity he erected. Kannagi's shakti was called and relocated to the deity at the main Kodungalloor temple over time since it was felt that having two female shaktis was redundant. Theripaatu are songs chanted for Kannagi to stimulate her and provide an outlet for the young widow who was unable to consummate her marriage with her husband. The ritual isn't just for the devotees' arousal; it's also for manipulating the Goddess's mood (Chanotis, 2010). The Goddess is thought to be hot – either because she is a sexually unfulfilled widow or because she is a warrior just returning from the battlegrounds – much like the earth in the hot dry months of the summer season' (Caldwell, 2003). The songs, as well as the other rites of the Bharani festival, are meant to help the Goddess cool down.

From the interviews of Shweta Radhakrishnan, she stated that the theripaatu was meant for the Goddess. For so long, the poor thing has had to avoid any physical closeness. Consider what would happen if you and I were forced to go so long without experiencing physical closeness. It's only right that we do this for our Goddess every year if we're allowed to want it. A devotee who was interviewed by Shweta Radhakrishnan said that devotees who believe in the Kannagi narrative believe that the theripaatu were written for Nalachan, a friend of Kannagi and Kovalan, rather than a young, sexually unfulfilled widow. Kannagi and Kovalan once stopped at Nalachan's house on their way somewhere. Nalachan propositioned Kannagi in the middle

of the night, while Kovalan was sleeping. Kannagi, aware of her responsibilities as a Goddess incarnation, invited Nalachan to come to Kodungalloor at a specific time, promising to satisfy his desires (Shweta 2013).

Nalachan came to take what he had been promised after Kannagi had burned down Madurai and arrived at Kodungalloor. Kannagi turned Nalachan into a stone and rooted him to one location, according to the author in another interview. To maintain her pledge, she asked her devotees to sing songs to satisfy Nalachan's longing every year. Bhadrakali is thought to be the other receiver of the theripaatu. Devotees sing these hymns to Bhadrakali, who is thought to have returned after defeating the evil Darika. They said that they simply sung the devi stotram and not the theripaatu. They further insisted that theripaatu were not intended for the Goddess. Devotees referred to the deity as *uttami*, which means "excellent." He claimed that the Goddess was greater than all of this. None of the practises that could be classified as *adharma* were specifically for her. Those rituals are for her army of *bhootams*, a retinue of spirits (Shweta 2013).

Everything that is deemed sinful and unclean – animal sacrifice, alcohol usage, and theripaatu singing – are all offerings for her army of ghosts like *Achumedalan*. They are, nonetheless, willing to do *adharma* in order to placate their Goddess and her army. The Brahmins are too preoccupied with their invented concepts of purity and filth to really surrender to the Goddess. The Goddess isn't interested in their tame devotion. She requires a source of heat. She requires insanity. She craves booze, blood, and sexual gratification. Only those of us from the lower castes are willing to be labelled polluting agents in order to placate the Goddess.

In Tantric tradition, theripaatu are also an essential offering. The worship at the Kodungalloor temple is thought to be a mix of *Samayacharam* and *Kavalcharam* traditions. The *Panchamakaram pooja* is one of the most prominent pooja systems in these two faiths. Every worship must include five types of offerings: *malsyam*, *mamsam*, *maithunam*, *mudra*, and *madyam*. Most of these offerings are metaphorically expressed, and the theripaatu is the symbolic representation of the sex offering.

The wife of a Tantric Acharya from Wayanad described why theripaatu were symbolic offerings of *maithunam* or sex in Tantric worship, according to Shweta Radhakrishnan. Tantra has a unique place for sex. The *Mooladhara chakra* in the body opens during orgasm. There is a surge of *Kundalini shakti* right now, which joins with *Shiva energy* in the *sahasra*, or crown. In our body-centric style of existence, this is the closest one can go to spiritual happiness. This energy is used in Tantra to connect with a larger, cosmic *shakti*. Her theory for the theripaatu was that talking about sex and mimicking it can cause the body to set up a comparable energy flow. "Isn't that why we watch pornography?" Why do we talk about sex? Something about using the words and talking about it all the time helps us catch a small part of what we're feeling throughout the intercourse. The same can be said for the theripaatu. It helps the body release the same energy by talking about it and chanting it in a rhythmic fashion as a group. It is more powerful in a group setting (Shweta 2013). It is possible to transfer energy. It's an exaggeration of what a single person can experience. It is for this reason that there is such a frenzy. It's the reason why some people pass out."

Conclusion

The Kodungalloor Bharani festival is a raucous, fast-paced event. It is the festival commemorating Kali's victory over Darika, as well as the harvest season and the Goddess Kannagi. Every year, it is a loud and happy celebration of a culture that struggles with the growth of silence, which is most obvious in the theripaatu space. The Kodungalloor Bharani is a fast changing place, and its interactions with Hindutva politics, upper-caste dislike, and technological innovations have drastically altered how power and resistance are exercised in the Bharani's space. It is possible to understand how the participating castes deal with modernity, Sanskritization, and how they constantly forge new identities for themselves by looking at how they deal with the threat of silence by looking at how they deal with modernity, Sanskritization, and how they constantly forge new identities for themselves.

The homogenising tendencies of various organisations, those who aim to present Hinduism as a single, monolithic entity, have long posed a threat to Hinduism in the common imagination. By doing so, these other voices are reduced to noise, and the voices of individuals whose 'Hinduisms' do not conform to the blueprint of this imaginary Hindu society are methodically muffled. This is especially true in an age when we are performing our identities for a global audience rather than just a local or national one.

Through the ways in which the opposition is made a part of the perceived "noise," we can observe the resistance to these attempts to impose silence in the Bharani celebration. Even the tiniest drop of stillness, on the other hand, might spread like an enormous ink stain. The absorption of the belief that their actions are against dharma, the vellicapadus' self-censorship when singing the theripaatu, the lack of real theripaatu on popular cassettes and CDs, are all slowly muzzling the voice of the Kodungalloor Bharani. The purpose of this paper is to enjoy the polyphony of voices that converge in the Bharani, to expose the silences, and to revel in the noises of the festival.

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