CHAPTER 4
KURUVANTHATTA KALAKAM
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Kuruvanthatta kalakam is the only Kalakam which falls in Kannur District of Kerala state. Other three Kalakams fall under Kasargod revenue district. This place is located about 5 kms away from Payyanur, one of the ancient Bhramin villages of Kerala. Another feature of this area is that Kingdom of Mushika dynasty, earliest kerala Kingdom, comes under this area. This is the place where Naval Academy, under the Defense Ministry is housed.

Area of jurisdiction: Ramanthali and Ettikulam villages except Kunnaru fall within the jurisdiction of this Kalakam. Total number of Tiya families coming under this Kalakam are about 415, out of which 15 are located to the north and 250 are located to the south of the headquarter of Ramantali.

4.1 Myth

It is believed that the deity on her voyage to Malanad (Mountain land) after crossing Edathurazhy reached southern side of Ramanthali. It was on the wooden ship the deity had travelled towards Kerala from the north. After reaching Ramanthali she had visited the principal deity of the area Lord Shankaranarayanan at Shankaranarayana temple and disclosed her ambition. On the way back from the temple a Pala Tiyan happen to see her. She was pleased by his devotion and had visited his dwelling place through his umbrella to his house. The house belonged to his wife. It was famous Kooliyadam
house. *Pala Tiyan* experienced several eseveral miracles and realized the presence of the deity. And he built a small shrine and daily lamp was dedicated to the deity. And later the deity had travelled towards a place called Kuruvanthatta, which was 1 km. north from the *Kooliyadam* house. After realizing the presence of deity at Kuruvanthatta the devotees had constructed a shrine and dedicated to the deity.

There are four Ooralans belonging to four different houses. All the Ooralans belong to *Parakka Illam* of *Tiya* community and all the four families are equal in rights but they have an order of rights. The first among them is *Kooliyadam Tharavad* and the second among them is *Thidilpongi* and third one is *Ozhikandathil* and the last one is *Karikunhiyude* veedu. The eldest female member of *Kooliyadam Tharavad* has a sister belonging to Thidilpongi veedu. One day she could not attend the Pooja conducted by her sister at *Kooliyadam* as she came late. The elder sister was angry towards her sister. She had come back from her sister’s house without attending the *pooja*. The deity was pleased towards the younger sister and she accompanied her towards *Thidilpongi* house. This is how the deity has reached *Thidilpongi*. It is also believed that the Devi had left the home due to the smell of fish in the house. It is also believed hat about 41 years ago. *Pattulsavam* and *Pooramulsavam* were conducted at *Kooliyadam*.

Among the four Kalakams the first seat of *Poomala* Bhagavathi is believed to be *Kuruvanthatta Kalakam* as the deity had reached *Kuruvanthatta* from the northern part of India, and she travelled from *Kuruvanthatta* to other
Kalakams. Another point to be noted here is that in all the other three Kalakams there are more deities like Srikurumba, Nilamangalath Bhagavathi and Padakathi Bhagavathi apart from Poomala bhagavathi, but in Kuruvanthatta there is only one deity that is Poomala Bhagavathi.

The performance of pooja is also different from other shrines. Here the sanctum sanctorium is opened every day and Panchopachara pooja is performed in the evening. During Sankramam (last day of Malayalam month) days special poojas are performed. Pattulsavam (song festival) and Pooram (flower worshiping festival) are the important festivals conducted in Kuruvanthatta kalakam. They conduct nine day Pattulsavam and nine day Pooram festival. There are only eight Sankramas performed in this Kalakam. They are Medam, Edavam, Thulavam, Vrischikam, Dhanu, Makaram, Kumbham, and Meenam.

4.2 Important festivals of the Kalakam other than sankramanam

Chovvavilakku

This is lighting the lamps in the outer walls of the Kalakam during the twilights on Tuesdays.

Pattulsavam

Singing the devotional songs and the narrative mythology of the goddess Poomala Bhagavathy during the months of December and January.

Pooram
This is a nine-day festival in the month of *Meenam* which falls February-March. Poorakkali is the main performance during the *Pooram* festival.

**Nira**

*Nira* festival is conducted in the month of *Karkatakam* (August) in which new paddy is brought to the shrine and worshipped along with other herbs.

**Puthari**

This is the festival conducted in the month of *Chingam*. New paddy is brought and beaten rice is made out of the paddy and it is served to all devotees. The family members of the *Oorkakam* (Kalakam jurisdiction) are allowed to take new rice only after the celebration of *Puthari* festival of the *Kalakam*.

**Onam**

Onam is also celebrated with the special *poojas* during the month of *Chingam* (August-September).

**Vishu**

*Vishu* is the celebration of New Year in the month of April. Special *poojas* are performed.

**Adiyanthiram**

This is the ritual conducted as and when the devotees are offered to do so. The expense for one *adiyanthiram* is estimated as 23 measures of paddy,
half litre coconut oil, 7 tender coconuts, one coconut, 5 arecanuts and 50 betel leaves. But now Rs.400/- is charged for an adiyanthiram.

4.3 Poojas of the Kalakam

In Kuruvanthattu Kalakam daily poojas are conducted. This is called Panchoacharapooja using water, flower, camper, lamp and coconut oil.

Thrimaduram is prepared and offered. Sugar candy, honey and ghee are used for preparing for thrimaduram.

4.4 Administration

The administration of Kalakam is controlled by four Ooralams and 26 Karnavars. The Kalakam is divided into two parts such as Thekkar and Vadakkar. The total members of the Tiya community who fall under this Kalakam is known as Randoorkakakkar ie. people belonging to two places. So the total administration is controlled by Ooralans, Karnavars and the committee elected by the people belonging to Randoorkakakkar.

The first Ooralan belongs to Kooliyadath family and he is the head of the administration of the Kalakam.

The second Ooralan belongs to Thidilpongi family and one member of the family is the Anthithiriyan( one who lights lamps) of the Kalakam.

The third Ooralan belongs to Ozhikandathil family and a member of this family acts as the Parikarmi ie. Sub-priest of the Kalakam.
The fourth *Ooralan* belongs to *Karikunhiyudevededu* and he resides very close to the *Kalakam headquarter*.

All the offices are life term and after the death the family suggests a new name towards the office.

*Anthithiriyan* of this Kalakam can trim his hair but cannot wear shirts.

The expenses of the *Sankramam* is met by *Valiyakkar* (married male member) and *Poorakkali* is also performed by the *Valyakkar* of the Kalakam.

There are two *Sangam* committees for the administration of the *Kalakam*. One belong to north and one belong to south.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Sangam committee</th>
<th>South Sangam committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Secretary</td>
<td>Joint Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 member executive committee</td>
<td>17 member executive committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4.5 Revenue:

The total revenue of this Kalakam is derived as follows:

1. The revenue from the land belonging to the Kalakam

2. The subscription of the members,

3. Offerings by the devotees.

The total Valyakar are divided into eight groups and each group has to conduct one Sankrama each. The subscription for Pooram festival is Rs.60/- and for Teyyam Rs.65/-. (Rs.50/- for entertainment programmes and 15/- for the ritual performance).

4.6 Subshrines under Kuruvanthatta Kalakam.

1. Kuruvanthattamundya

2. Ettikkulam Kshethram

There are 26 Karnavars in this Kalakam. Out of the 26 Karanvars eight are important. They are:

1. Muttil Family

2. Pulukkool

3. Parithi

4. Pongi

5. Kannada

6. Chamundi

7. Malliyod puthiyora

8. Karappath
The Velichappadu (Oracle) of Poomala is performed by a man selected by the public. And it is vacant since 1999. There are umbrella bearers who are also considered as the Kalakam officials. Six persons carry bell metal umbrellas and there are other officials who carry palm leave umbrella, thathika, tazha etc.

**Adichuthali (Sweeper)**

The sweeper is a girl before attaining menstruation period and belongs to the family of Anthithiriyan.

**Samudayi (Executives)**

There are four Samudayis out of which two belong to north and two belong to south. The term of office is two years and the retiring Samudayi nominates his successor.

**Koottayi**

There are four Kootayis (subscription collectors) in the Kalakam out of which two belong to north and the other two belong to south.
Table: Traditional offices of Kuruvanthatta Kalakam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Acharam</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>House name</th>
<th>Illam</th>
<th>Since how long</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Anthithiriy 1</td>
<td>Bhaskaran</td>
<td>Thidilpongi</td>
<td>Parakka</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Anthithiriy 2</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Kooliyadan</td>
<td>Parakka</td>
<td>Vacant for 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Anthithiriy 3</td>
<td>Ozhikandam Chandran</td>
<td>Ozhikandam</td>
<td>Parakka</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Parikarmi</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Ozhikandam</td>
<td>Parakka</td>
<td>Vacant for 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Oracle of Poomala</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>As offered</td>
<td>Thalakkodan</td>
<td>Vacant due to death (4 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Vellottukuda 1</td>
<td>Karappath Kunhiraman</td>
<td>Karappath</td>
<td>Pala Tiyyan</td>
<td>25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Vellottukuda 2</td>
<td>Kalashakkaran Kunhambu</td>
<td>As offered</td>
<td>Parakka</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Vellottukuda 3</td>
<td>Armadayil Appookuttan</td>
<td>Thalakkodan</td>
<td>Parakka</td>
<td>35 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Kaivilakku</td>
<td>Kuleri Pandinherevettil Kunhiraman</td>
<td>From the public</td>
<td>Open to all Illams</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Adichuthali</td>
<td>Narayani</td>
<td>Thidilpongi</td>
<td>Parakka</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Samudayi (4 Nos)</td>
<td>2 year term</td>
<td>From the public</td>
<td>Open to all</td>
<td>Every two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Koottayi (4 nos)</td>
<td>1 year term</td>
<td>Two from south Two from north</td>
<td>Open to all</td>
<td>Every year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Persons from other communities in the region also have certain rights in the affairs of the Kalakam, such offices are given below:
Kanisan (astrologer)

He is also having rights to sing songs during the Pattulsavam.

Kavutiyan (Barber)

He is having rights to decorate the Pandal (traditional sahamiana) using leaves of coconut tree.

Chaliyan (Weaver)

They have right over the Kalakam festivals to bring threads for decorating the Pandal during the Pattulsavam.

Kollan (Blacksmith)

Kollan has a right to sharpen the iron weapons for the festival.

Thattan (Goldsmith)

They have a right to polish the ornaments for decorating the idol.

Malayan (Teyyam performer)

Malayans are Teyyam performers who perform Vishnumurthi, Madayil Chamundi and Rakthachamundi and Ottekolam during Teyyam under the Mundyas of Kalakam.

Koyma (Feudal head)

Koyma of the Kalakam is Kodiath veedu who belong to Poduval(a high caste) community who are supposed to be the higher caste of the area. It is believed that Thaliyil Thirumumbu (Brahmin community) was the Koyma
during the previous years and after their decline office was transferred to Poduval community. Poduvals are experts in astrologied predictions.

When we look into the social life and the rituals practiced by the members of Kuruvanthatta kalakam, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- Kuruvanthatta kalakam is the most ancient and it is considered to be the first abode of Poomala bhagavathi. Poomala bhagavathi had reached Kerala from a distant place through voyage in the river which was the only available transport system at that time. We have to agree on the fact that even at the earlier time of Bhagavathis visit, Tiya community was prevalent in this area.

- If we study the Kalakam administration system, we can arrive at a conclusion that the ritual system has not changed much and the day-to-day administration has reached to the stage of democratic system. Power vests with the people instead of some families. But temple officiants are more or less following the old tradition. It is also a fact that the present generation is not showing much interest in holding the traditional posts, at the same time they have no hesitation to hold the posts elected by the public.

- Bhramanical symbols are seen in kalakam. The daily poojas, vegetarianism during the festivals, non existence of Teyyams in the kalakam premises suggests that Sanskritisation among Tiya community was going on for a long time. Kuruvanthatta is the nearest kalakam to the ancient and northern most Kerala Bhramin village at Payyanur.
• History can be traced from the narrative songs and myths of *Poomala Bhagavathy*. The places mentioned in the *Marakkala pattu* sung by *Kanisan* are proved to be historical places.

• Relationship between different communities are also seen in the rituals and festivals of *kalakam*. It gives us an idea of communal co-existence.
JURISDICTION OF KURUVANTHATTA KALAKAM
Ramanthali Panchayath
Taluk : Taliparamba

1. Thazheekkanam
2. Kuruvanthatta Temple
3. Kannagat Temple
4. Sangaranarayana Temple
5. Kooliyadath Arra

MAP No. 3