CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In our ancient tradition there had been separate authorities for different branches of learning. The Brahmins along could learn and recite the Vedas. Among the Brahmins themselves women were not permitted to learn the Vedas. The ‘Śūdras’ were not even allowed to listen to veda recitals. The purāṇas and epics were created by the sages for the sake of women and the lower castes, which form more than half of the population. They depicts ‘Satyam vada’ and ‘Dharma cara’ through entertaining and enlightening moral stories.
The literature of a region is rooted in the purāṇas and myths of that region. The traditional life styles and culture of the region are represented in the rituals and practices of an old art forms. Even where the knowledge of purāṇas is meager we find its representation in our aboriginal art form. Malayālam literature has its foundation in the old folk songs and folk stories. We can see the images of our old art forms in all of our modern literature. This thesis is also an attempt to find out the influence of our ancient art forms in our modern art forms and literature.

Art forms of country reflect the life of its people. They embody their emotions and experiences and are therefore the best expressions of their mind and culture. The performing arts of Kerala illustrate this truth in a remarkable manner. The cultural ethoses of the people of Kerala find its finest expressions in their performing arts. Kûti, Kôtţu (Drum beating), Āṭtam, Tullal, Kali,
Vilaku etc. are described as the beautiful performing arts of Kerala. Dance, Action, Art, Šilpam, Bhāṣaṇam, Vadyam, Songs, Sāhitya etc. are intermingled in our several folk arts. In temples and in utsava campuses these art forms are exhibited for pleasure, prayer and for performance. The modern classic arts lost their simplicity and kept surrendered only on the four walls of temples. These temple arts are specially privileged with modern techniques and sectarian thoughts and they separated from the local people.

Majority of folk arts which are prevailing now in Kerala are directly and indirectly related to purāṇas. Even ordinary people can find out these influence of purāṇas in folk arts. Relationship between purāṇas and folk arts has great scope for research studies. But it is doubtful whether suitable studies have been conducted on this basis. Government and universities have
started attempts to discover and protect the arts from which are undergoing ruin or destruction. Though their studies are very difficult all attempts have been taken to include the maximum sources.
NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The scarcity of authentic documents is a major hindrance in the study of our Folk Arts and Folk Literature. So much of them have already been lost and what remains is also fast fading away. Therefore any attempt at recording them cannot be further delayed. Prof. Hadens' remarks about the loss and destruction of the instruments of history due to our painful negligence in according human history is very much pertinent to the case of folk art also.

However, there is now a pronounced enthusiasm regarding the studies on the aborigines of our land, their traditional life habits and culture. Among these studies folklore is comparatively new. In order to get an overall picture of the life
of the aborigines, a comprehensive study of their different communities and tribes, their rites and rituals and their traditional folk arts and folklore should go together. Fortunately, a new interest is now being generated about this in our scholars and anthropologists and our common people also have a welcome curiosity regarding these studies.

The folk arts are shining illustrations of the rich cultural heritage of our land. With their innate simplicity and artless communication they have won the hearts of art lovers. These ancient arts have come through the ages from the imagination of the illiterate folk artists and rooted in the aboriginal life styles they stand apart from the sophisticated urban art forms of modern times. The life sources of these primeval arts are the imagination and life experiences of the aborigines and they deal with every
aspect of human life. A study of these arts are therefore a study of the very spirit of a primordial communities.

There are different kinds of classification for the folk arts based upon the objects of the scholars and administrative authorities. According to "Folk Tales from Koria", those are the purāṇās, Legends, Fairy Tales and Primitive lore.

In "Folk Lore and Folk Life" they are classified into Tales of Witchcraft, Religious Stories, Animal Stories, Memory of individual adventures and Comic Stories. The legends themselves are divided into Local and Historical. These are division based religious practices and themes also.

Generally Folk Tales are classified into supernatural tales, adventures stories, legends, purāṇās, Historical and semi historical and semi historical tales and simple stories of imagination. Super natural tales include tales of fairies, witches.
Gods and devils. They usually do not care for the unities of time and age and they are far removed from reality. Another set of tales have heroes and their exploits as their subjects matter. Tales of hunting and heroic encounter etc. also come under this head. Historical figures, their adventures, campaigns and battles form yet another class. We have a number of tales related to our purāṇās and epics. Teyyam a popular folk art form shows strong influences of our purāṇās and agricultural ways of life. The folk arts have developed a strong bond with the purāṇās and epics and they generally have a moralistic approach meant for the guidance of the people.

The Vedas and the epics are beyond the comprehension of the simple village folk. Their themes and ideas have to be retold in folk language and related to the day-to-day life of the people in order to make them acceptable to the rural population. Arts
related to agriculture and songs of the workers in the fields bring out their aspirations, sorrows, cheese, strength and glorification of nature. We have a number of old dance forms related to agriculture and religious rites. Our priestly class reads Vedas and epics as part of religious practices. The common people read them in their simplified rural forms or listen to them as a religious practice. Reciting and listening to the Vedas and epics are considered to be essential for security and protection in ‘Kālīpūja’. The folk tales and arts have unguarded and nourished a co-operative way of life among the village folk which had been the essence of our old community life. This emphasis on a co-operation in community life is their great contribution to the social life of our land and gives a message of co-operative participation in community life for sustainable progress and development.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem for the present study is to find out the influence of purāṇas in the folk arts of Kerala. The study is entitled "PURĀNIC EPISODES IN THE FOLK ARTS OF KERALA-WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TULLAL".

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

PURĀṆA

General information: The Amarakosa describes a purāṇa thus:

Sarga Ścaprisargaśca
Vamśo manvantarāṇica I
Vaṁśānuçaritaṁ caiva
Purāṇam pancelaksiṣaṇam II

According to this definition, purāṇa is one which describes Sarga, Pratisarga, Vaṁśa, Manvantara and Vaṁśānuçarita.
Among these Sarga and Pratisarga are natural creation and renovation (cosmogony). Varṇa means history of sages and patriarchs. By Manvantara is meant the period of different manus. Varṇānucarita means genealogy of kings. In the purāṇās which are current now some of these divisions are wanting. Statements about purāṇās are found even in the Brahmanas. Therefore it is to be surmised that Purāṇas existed even before historic times. Mahābhārata has used the term purāṇa to mean stories about devas and siddhas. The upanisads say that purāṇa are itihasas and as such constitute the fifth veda.

FOLK ARTS

In the early consideration of Folklore there was no distinction between folklore and social anthropology. Both were thought to be factors of the cultural development and humanity.
E.S. Hartland defines Folklore as the illustration of the cultural manifestation of the civilized man. Andrew Lang calls it the science of survival. It is the early display of the developmental movements of human community from its ancient forms. E.B. Tailer in his book “Primitive Culture” says that folklore is the primitive expression of the communities’ desire for survival.

Max Muller views folklore as record of the original myth of man’s relation to nature. He traits the ancient ‘purans’ as examples of the ancient village literature. Muller’s idea got wide acceptance. Andrew Lang in his modern mythology (1897) contradicts Muller’s concept of the relation between purāṇas of nature and folklore.

A real scientific approach to the study of folklore started only in the 19th century. The ‘German scholars Grimm Brothers made a collection of analysis of the ancient tales, even though
they did not exactly use the term 'folklore' in their studies. It was the English archaeologist William John Thomas who first used the term 'folklore'. In a letter to the magazine “Adineeyam” in August 1846 he used the term 'folklore' for folk knowledge. It was from this point the term “folklore” became a popular expression for their studies of ancient arts and literature of our land.

TULLAL

The Tullal emerged in the eighteenth century. Tullal literally means dance. This art form is the cumulative product of all traditional theatrical arts of Kerala, both folk and classical. Kuncan Nambiar was the creator of Tullal, was vigorously earthy. He wanted to make the earth a cleaner place and its
inhabitants more decent people. He believed that a rational sanity with healthy roots in earth could achieve a great reordering of life. No social stratum was the need for correctives in his attitudes and behaviour. He wanted to include in his audience the whole society. He realized that the highly Sanskritic literary diction would fail to get his message across to large sections of the people. So he used the simplest diction, including slang. His verse had a vital rhythm and clung to the memory even without conscious effort. The internal rhymes keep up a lively beat and he can deliver hammer-blows with his thymes with a smashing impact. He rejected Kathakali and turned to the tradition of people, the dance forms of the lowest strata even of the Parihas.

The art of Tullal was evolved as a system out of the various signing and dancing art forms of the people incorporating apt features of the classical styles so that by the harmonious blend of
the folk and classical forms of art it represented the accumulated aesthetic experience of all sections of the people high and low, the themes were drawn from the never failing myths and epics of India.

The Tullal has a full fledged libretto, a tale narrated in verse. The Tullal has only one actor. The Tullal is like the Sanskrit Bhāṇa. He uses the gesture language, but vestigially and transparently so that his mimetic narration gains in speed and benefits by rapid communication. The full painting of the face is retained for the expressive advantage. The costume is picturesque. The actor is supported by a singer who repeat his lines, a drummer and a cymbalist. The narration is accompanied by dancing.

The roles of raconteur and actor are perpetually interchanged in the same man with the aesthetic effect, which
characterizes the continuity of films that have had the benefit of subtle and imaginative direction. The narrative thus emerges with a continuously shifting focus penetrating the interior world of men's fantasies and daydreams, seeing the things with same objectivity, correcting vanity with raillery and deeper fixations with a cathartic, caricaturist distortion.

Nambiar spared nobody and hit everybody hard. But he also laughed loudly when he hits and his victims could not resist the wholesome, infectious quality of that laughter even while reeling under the chastening blows. The rapacity of the pretty rulers, who looted the people, but were gullible enough to be looted in turn by the astrologer, the vendor of the magical tailsmans and the courtesans, the officials who feathered their own nests by betraying both their masters and the people, the rich Nambūtiris who spent their lives in slumber, scandal mongering
and flirtations, and the Nairs who clung with absurd pride to the memories of their martial traditions, when the feudal order that supported it was fast decaying, all got boisterous handling. Insisting in an irreducible minimum of social elegance, he even lampooned people with messy hygienic and eating habits.
OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To make the new generation of art lovers familiar with the old folk arts that are facing extinction at the inslaught of modernism.

2. To find out the influence of purāṇās and epics in the folk arts.

3. To find out the influence of purāṇās in ‘Teyyams’.

4. To examine the ancient people’s awareness of the purāṇās and epics.

5. To find out the level of awareness of modern man about the ancient purāṇās.

6. To examine the folk arts that exclusively deal with local stories, leaving out purāṇās
7. To know the folklores in relation to anthropology and other social sciences.

8. To ascertain the functions of folklores.

9. To study the art form of folklore and folk theatre.

10. To study the classifications of ancient folks.

11. To find out the distinction between folk arts and classical art.

12. To find out the influence of purāṇas in ‘Tullal’ in particular.

13. To study about folk phonology.

14. To learn about the ways in which folklores are being dealt with in modern times.

15. To examine the prospects of folk arts in the modern times.
METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF

Research is popularly known as sodha, gavēṣṭaṇa and samśodhanaṁ etc. in Sanskrit. The literal meaning of these terms are ‘refinement’ ‘quest’ and ‘rectification’ respectively. The whole idea of research thus represents a frame in which there is a systematic structure of investigation which points to the advancement of knowledge in different epistemic process that results in some sort of representation.

Methodology occupies a very important place in any type of research, as the validity and reliability of the findings depend upon the method adopted. In order to attack any problem, suitable method or methods should be adopted in relation to the
objectives of the study. The decision about the method, or methods to be employed, however always depend upon the nature of problem selected and the kind of data necessary for its solution.

The present investigation is intended to study the influence of purāṇas in the folk arts of Kerala. The historical method was used for the present study. Historical research attempts to establish facts so as to arrive at conclusions concerning past events. This is usually accompanied by an interpretation of these events and their relevance to present circumstances and what might happen in the future. The main purpose of historical research is to arrive at an accurate account of the past so as to gain a clearer perspective of the present. The knowledge enables us at least partially to predict and control our future existence. The job of the historian becomes more complicated when he
derives truth from the historical evidence the major difficulty lies in the fact that the data on which historical research is based are invariably relatively inadequate and at times the study is conducted with all of the independability that the data may entail.

According to best "the historian must depend upon the reported observations of others. Often witnesses of doubtful competence and sometimes of doubtful objectivity."
ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The report of the study is dealt within six chapters.

Chapter - I  Describes an overall view of the topic concerned and a brief discussion about the influence of purāṇa on folk arts, need and significance of the study, statement of the problem, definitions of key words objectives, methodology in brief and organisation of the report.

Chapter - II  To give awareness about the purāṇās.

Chapter - III  Devoted to give awareness about purāṇa based folk arts.

Chapter - IV  Describes the purāṇa based Teyyams.

Chapter - V  Special reference to Tullal.

Chapter - VI  Describes the Tullal Kaṭhaḷkal and conclusion.
CHAPTER I

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