

MINOR PROJECT
KUTHIYOTTAM:A TRADITIONAL VISUAL PERFORMING ARTS

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SYNOPSIS:

Kuthiyottam is a ritualistic folk dance. It is an offering to the part of festival in the temple with the idol of goddess, in southern part of Kerala. Kuthiyottam is more prevalent in chettikkulangara of Allapuzha district. It is observed during the Malayalam month of 'kumbam' which has similarity with the human sacrifice. It is also observed in Harippad, Kayamkulam, Ochira, Mavelikkara Chengannur and Karunagapali.

Kuthiyottam is derived from two Malayalam verbs 'kuthuka' and 'oduka'. Kuthuka means a thin wire made of silver or gold is stabbed through the human body of child who do this art. 'Ottam' signifies the journey. Through this process, the child is forced to run back to the temple from the place of stabbing. If there only one child it is named as otattakuthiyottam'. If there are two children it is named as erattakuthiyottam'. Kuthiyottam experiences the unwritten past of the history and culture

Goddess 'Bhabrakali' is more prominent in kuthiyottam. It is an offering by the society to avoid the epidemics like small pox. There is a belief that the children are sacrificed for 'Bhagavati'. In kuthiyottam, blood is dedicated before 'Devi'.

The children who participate in kuthiyottam will practice martial arts under the guru. The person who offers this art in temple should shelter the children and they are concerned to follow certain norms. 'Devi pooja' and Bhajans are conducted in twilights. The musical effects of the instruments such as Chenda, Kurunkuzhal and Ilathalam are accompanied in the steps of kuthiyottam.

Firstly, in the offered house, a thatched shed is made and sword is placed on a stool, which is considered as the seat of Goddess. The basement is purified by spreading cow dung. It is decorated with the leaves of banyan, mango and coconut (tender) and seeds of arecanut. Till the day of kuthiyottam is performed these decorations are renewed. The singers are seated at the left side. We can classify this performance into two forms. First stage lasts up to five days of practice. The 6th day is for resting. On that day, cutting of hair and bathing is done. After that a feast is also arranged. On seventh day, observance is held. Instead of wire, a cane is stabbed through the body and the children are accompanied by the musical procession to the temple. It includes 'panchvadyam', 'nadaswaram' and 'muthukudas'. After reaching the temple, they circumambulate the temple three times and then the cane is removed. The songs and dance are held for only one day in districts of Kollam and Trivandrum.

Kuthiyottam is offered by the blessed devotees for the joy of Devi. They believe that, if it is not done, their family will be suffered from Small pox. 'Chooralkuthu' is an important ritual in this. In Alappuzha, the children are bought for this. The children are considered as inauspiciousness. After sacrifices these children are taken as waste things. They use their own children for this in the district of Kollam and Trivandrum as a dedication to Devi. Programs will be last for seven days and on sixth day feast is conducted in a special manner.

Kuthiyottam is related with the presentation modes of other art forms in Kerala. In Kuthiyottam and "padayani", the possession will start from one temple and ends in another. There will be hymns during the journey for both of them. There is similarity in the face make up of both "Theyyam" and Kuthiyottam. There is similarity between the dance forms of Kuthiyottam with "Kuravakali" and "Parichamuttukali".

On the 'Kettukazhcha' day porridge will be offered for the persons who are engaged in this . The artists should be invited by the house holder . At the time of porridge they will enter the 'Tharawad' by singing hymns. Relatives and neighbors will be included in this . There will be porridge with 'Muthirapuzhukku' papad, banana ,salties etc for this. This festival will create unity and affection among the people

Kuthiyottam bound all the people together as one thread . A village entirely becomes a platform for this festival. This art form for the cultural progress and prosperity of the place.