

**Swarnathumana: A Case Study of Namboothiri Brahmins of
Ancient Kerala**

**Project submitted to the University of Calicut in partial
fulfilment for the award of the degree
of
Bachelor of Arts in English & History**

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March 2021

Declaration

I, **Purnendu Mahesh** , hereby declare that this project entitled **Swarnathumana:A Case Study of the Namboothiri Brahmins of Ancient Kerala**, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English & History, is a bona fide record of original research carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of **Mr.Sagive Varghese**, Assistant Professor, Department of B.A. English & History (Double Main) Christ college (Autonomous),Irinjalakuda.

Irinjalakuda

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Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled **Swarnathumana: A Case Study of the Namboothiri Brahmins of Ancient Kerala**, is a record of research work carried out by **Ms. Purnendu Mahesh** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English & History submitted to the University of Calicut.

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Acknowledgment

I owe my gratitude to the God Almighty for his endless blessings and intervention in helping me complete my project without any hassles. I am indebted to my supervising teacher, Mr Sagive Varghese, Assistant Professor, Department of English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda for supervising me throughout the project and for the countless hours and effort he has put in to help complete the project. I am grateful to Rev Fr.Dr Jolly Andrews CMI, the Principal of Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, for the congenial atmosphere of research he has always tried to foster in the campus. I owe my thanks to my parents, teachers, friends and all those who have helped me directly and indirectly in the successful completion of this project work.

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Introduction

The early history of Kerala is very complex and there are many problems remaining to be resolved by historians. The history of the Nambudiri community still presents a number of puzzles. According to the legendary *Keralolpatty* (a traditional account of Kerala history, set down in writing in the eighteenth century), Brahmans were brought to the southwest coast of India by the sage-warrior Parasurama, and they settled in thirty-two *grammam* (from Sanskrit *grama*, "Community") in the South Kanara District of Karnataka State and in thirty-two *grammam* in what is now Kerala. Those who settled in Kerala are said to be Nambudiri Brahmans. Each *grammam* had its own temple and its own set of authorities for religious and secular law and its enforcement.

Most of the *grammam* were localized geographically with their *illams* (large manorial homes) located within a 16- to 40-kilometer radius of the temple. However, the territory of one *grammam* might overlap that of another, as they were not communities in the usual sense. There is considerable argument among historians as to when the Nair's became matrilineal, some stating that this started in the tenth century A. D. and others seeing it as being rooted either in an earlier tribal matrilineal system or perhaps in an earlier bilateral system such as is found in Sri Lanka.

The Nambudiri system was between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries. The majority of Modern historians hold that they came to Kerala between the first and fourth centuries A. D., though there are some—such as E. K. Pillai—who believe they came later. Prior to the British, in some parts of Trissur, Taluk (y) of Cochin State, which had the

densest Namboothiri concentration, the area was ruled by the heads of the Vadakunnathan and Perumanam temple boards. Where they did not rule directly, or where their rule was weak, they would align themselves with different matrilineal rulers. When the Zamorin of Calicut was expanding his kingdom, he needed the allegiance of the heads of the two largest temple boards of Cochin to capture power. When the Maharaja of Cochin recaptured part of his kingdom, he had to break the power of the Nambudiri Illam in Trissur.

Far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, surrounded by 16 acres of verdant greenery and resounding with old-world charm is Swarnathu Mana. It is located in Pazhamthottam village and accessed by travelling 16 km from Kochi, via Pallikkara. The ancestral home of the Punnorkootu family, who migrated from Northern and Central parts of Kerala almost 1,000 years back, the Nalukettu, stands proud having successfully faced the onslaught of time. We have all heard of the popular Nalukettu (four-halled with a central courtyard) or the Ettukettu (eight-halled with 2 central courtyards) and the rare Pathinarukettu (16-halled with 4 central courtyards). Swarnathu Mana belongs to the rarest of the rare — Panthrandukettu (12-halled with 4 courtyards).

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the project is to depict the age old Namboothiri culture of Swarnathumana of Ernakulum district .The project focus upon the architecture along with the Adi Shankara legend. The project also aims at bringing out a detailed description about the unique customs of the Mana for the past 500 years.

SOURCES

The study is based on primary and secondary sources of data. The most prominent work selected for this study is book *Variyolachaarthu* by Neelakandan Namboothiripaadu. For further details online websites are also used to gather information regarding the topic. Personal interviews were also conducted to collect first-hand information about the topic selected.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is deductive, transparent and comprehensible. The information which is found to be authentic is included in this project. The project also focuses on the specific details of the selected topic by proving the social, economic and cultural aspects. There is general glance into the lives of the Namboothiri Brahmins of ancient Kerala society in general and about the lives of the Namboothiris in Swarnathumana in specific.

CHAPTERISATION

The project is divided into four chapters. The project topic is launched in the introduction. The first chapter is about the origin of Swarnathumana, the second chapter describes the architecture and legend associated with the Mana. The third chapter portrays the history of the temples associated with the Mana along with others customs and rituals followed by the members of the Mana. The fourth chapter talks about age old Brahmin wedding. The project ends with the conclusion.

Chapter 1

Tracing the Origin of Swarnathumana

From the time they began a social life human race was forced to leave their original habitat and migrate to more suitable areas. Physical factors as well as political social, economic factors have played their role in this migration. In AD 11; there was a great quarrel among the Brahmins of Malappuram known as Panniyoor Chokiram. This forced a group of Namboodiris to migrate from the banks of Bharatapuzha to the banks of Meenachilar and Periyar. A group of Brahmins from Mayannoor Nedumthuruthy settled in Punnorcode in Ernakulum district. Their family name was changed from Nedumthuruthy Pazhiyoor in Mayannoor to Swarnath at Punnorcode. At Mayannoor there were properties of Punnorcode Namboothiris till 1992. There were special rituals offered to Thirumaandhakunnu Bhagavathy at Punnorcode Mana which also shows that Punnorcode Mana had its roots at Mayannoor.

In 12 century AD the Chera dynasty which ruled with Mahodayapuram as capital was deteriorated due to the defeat of Rama Kulashekara Perumal .Panniyoor Chokiram was an after effect of this event. The branch of Namboodiris settled at Punnorcode were rich enough as the historical sources prove that Swarnath Narayanan Namboothiri had owned Aayirappara and Acchch .During those days it was not possible to migrate from one Naatuthalam to another without the permission of the local king or Naaturaajavu. For brahmins had to submit a request for staying in one Naaturaajyam explaining their gotra and ashrama. When such a request is submitted to the king ,the king would grant permission with Deshadhipathyam.

Accepting the patronisation of Vadakkumkoor kings the Pazhiyoor Namboothiris settled at Punnorcode between 12 th and 14 th centuries AD. Presence of

a number of Namoodithiri families and the availability of fertile land and abundance of water were other influencing factors for the family to settle down here at Punnorcode. During the following years the Punnorcode Namboothiris could attain Deshadhipathyam, which means the ownership of desom region like Kaithakkadu , Vemgara , Panangad, Pallimangalam (present day Kothamanhalam), Kadakkavor (present day kolenchery), Kazhukkambalam (present day Kizhakkambalam) Poovamkulam and Kadamakudy. In Kizhakkambalam near Ayyankuzhi Shasta temple there was an English medium school run open Swarnathu Mana. The school was operating till 1960, after that it was closed due to the shortage of students. Now it has the Swarnathu Bus depot. Swarnath Mana Namboodiris enjoyed special social status and privileges at that time. If anyone did anything against the will of the members of this Mana, this punishment was fine or called Praayashitha in the presence of the Naaduvaazhi.

Cordial relation with Marthandavarma

Most of the Namboodiris Brahmins were learned scholars of Sanskrit. Since they were indulged in accusation of wealth and higher position in society they were often culprits of moral and ethical corruption. Around the year 1725, there were no wards to carry on the family line in Swarnathumana. So, Sankaran Namboodiri was adopted from Thali Pazhoor and was designated as the next Karanavar Namboodiri of Punnorcode (1740). Swarnathu Mana had adopted boy children for continuation of lineage from Pallipurathumana and also from Thali.

By the time of 1755 king Marthandavarma of Travancore had expanded his kingdom up to the banks of Periyar. Swarnathu Mana and Punnorcode thus came under

the administration of Travancore rule. There existed a cordial relationship between the Swarnathu Mana Namboodiris and the rulers of Travancore. In the year 1743, Marthandavarma conducted Murajapam in Padmanaabhaswami Temple at Travancore. The Namboodiris of Swarnathumana were assigned the role coordinators and advisors for the event. This resulted in the long term relationship between both. Due to this Swarnathumana was exempted from paying taxes. The major taxes those were prevalent were Muppara, Melvaram, Adiya Purushantharam etc. The members of this Mana were excluded from these dues.

In the year 1545, Punnorcode Mana was caught fire and a large area of it got dilapidated. It was rebuilt in the years 1794-95. The financial assistance for the revival of Mana was contributed by the then Travancore ruler Karthikathirunal. It is this renovated Swarnathumana which has been a marvellous architectural structure with varieties of woodwork. During 1890-1920, Thuppan Subramanian Namboothiri was a renowned personality of this Mana. He helped people financially and during other emergencies. It was he who had financed the construction of Pangodu Kizhakkambalam road. He was also the founder of Swarnathu English Medium School at Kizhakkambalam.

Land Reforms

By 1970, land reforms law came into existence. As a result of the introduction of these laws there was a gradual decrease in the revenue attained by Mana. Some of the members of the Mana made separate establishments away from Punnorcode. The number of servants' and officials were also reduced. Most of the rituals observed were either got extinct or received reduced importance. Some of the customs continued even

after was that one of Thiruvaathirakali along with Thiruvonam. Another ritual was the Purannalpattu in connection with the birthday of Thuppan Namboodiri. These rituals continued up to 1970. The Thiruvaathirakali during Thiruvathira during the month of Dhanu was carried out in Swarnathu Mana till 1988 with its own traditional ethics. Many women and children from the village used to participate in the event.

Festivals

The Mahanavami puja in kaavu was also carried out till 1980s with niramala and puja for three days, Durgashtami, Mahanavami, Vijayadashami. ThirumaandhamkunnilPaatu, Vettakaram pattu, Ashtamirohinivaaram were some of the other rituals observed. All these rituals lost its prominence as years passed by. After the land revenue reforms act, the income of Mana was reduced considerably which affected the rituals and customs. The most affected was the festival of Kaavu. The number of elephants participating in the festival was also decreased to one from seven. Similarly other expenses including Melam or Dummies. The family temple of Punnorcode Mana is the Punnorkootu Kaavu. The Kaavu is situated at the south west of the Mana. The deity is Sri Mookambika (Saraswathy Devi). From records it is seen that the temple is more than 500 years old.

Chapter 2

Architecture and Legend of Swarnathumana

Swarnathu Mana is the best example of Kerala traditional architecture.

Swarnathu Mana is situated in Pazhamthottam Village and can be reached by travelling 16 km from Eranakulam, via Pallikkara. This Mana is a beautiful creation of 600-years-old traditional architecture in 16 acres of land. The atmosphere here is one that creates a homely feeling. Till two years ago, the Namboothiri families used to reside inside the Mana but have now moved to smaller spaces surrounding it. It is said that at some point of time, around 40 members and 16 servants resided in the Mana.

In those times most of the records were written in Thali Olas that have either deteriorated and a large number were destroyed in a fire that broke out long back. What it does substantiate is that the Mana had been attacked by Tipu Sultan's soldiers and faced massive destruction — especially the entrance to the Mana that has since been rebuilt, renovated and reinforced by the family members who fled to escape the attack. It was in 1795 and those records were there in the thali Ola records.

Kerala Illam architecture

Apart from their direct political control, Namboodiris were often able to exercise considerable indirect power Because of their status as the highest spiritual authorities in Kerala. ¹Namboothiri houses (Brahmaalayam, Mana, and Illam) were built invariably according to the canons of Vaasthusaasthram.

¹ Mahadevan T.P, Staal,Fritz . "*The Turning-Point in a Living Tradition somayāgam 2003*". Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies.Vol 10.

Vaastuvidya principle's, the science and art - architecture - of building in harmony with the eternally active, creative, and all pervasive 'Spirit' and 'Nature' and in conformity and proportion with the usually large compound or plot (Illapparambu).

In the early days, they were all built in the form of Chathusshaalas or Nalukettu (quadrangle or the ancient courtyards) - Kizhakkini (eastern part), Thekkini (south), Padinhaatti (west) and Vadakkini (north), as separate structures.² This can be seen even today in Kurumathur Illam. In later years, joining these four through Meladukkala, Kizhakke Ara, Puraththalam and Vadakke Ara, came to vogue. The Vadakkini floor was always considerably raised, whereas local custom determined whether none, any or all of the other three had raised floors or not. The Thekkini and/ or Padinhaatti may either be single storied or two (or more) storyes high. Anyway all Brahmaalayam were invariably in the Naalukettu. The gateway entrance to the plot (Padippura) is built on the western boundary in line with the Thekkini veranda. The Padippura will have standing (or resting) space both inside and outside. This is done to let the passers - by know that the house is a Brahmaalayam, where food will be available. With the same purpose in mind, the kitchen well is provided with a drum shaped wooden pulley system with wooden balls (or dry fruit shells) inside which produce noise while drawing water. The Paththaayappura (grain store-house), bathing tank, well, dining halls (Kettu) and all other functional parts have very definite relative locations, size, shape and other details, determined as per Vaastuvidya.

² Bhattathiripad ,Neelakandan. *Namboothirimaarude Poovacharithram (early history of Namboothiris)*,pp. 35

Nature has arranged an air-cooling facility here with big trees, the width of the trunk of which cannot be contained in the hands of two people, and climbers. Crossing the porch, the inner courtyard is reached. The flooring inside has been done with red oxide. Even after so many years, the floors look fresh, complete and as clear as a mirror.

The Machu [sealing between tiled roof and room space] has lot of intricate carvings. On one side of machu, a palanquin, which was used during olden days, is kept. The beauty of the doors cannot be described in words. There is a temple dedicated to Bhuvaneshvari. It is a temple where, in olden days, Pooram [a temple festival] used to be held with a collection of 9 elephants. There are 2 ways to the temple.

Panthrandukettu

The temple can be entered from inside as well as outside. There are 3 large ponds in the compound. One is meant for bathing the elephant. Except for this one, the other ponds looked unkempt. Architectural styles like dragon face motif, facade, etc. are attractively done on this Mana. Besides building complexes like Nalukettu [4 halled with a central courtyard], Ettukettu [8 halled with 2 central courtyards] and Pathinarukettu [16 halled with 4 central courtyards], in Kerala, we can also rarely see Panthrandukettu [12 halled with 4 courtyards]. Swarnathu Mana is also famous for its panthrandukettu features.

From the 2-storied Mana, there is a beautifully built bridge connecting it to the granary [pathayapura] which is another 2-storied building and stands at a very short distance from the Mana. What is surprising is that it was constructed 200 years back.

There were some framed old-time black-and-white photos and lyrical best wishes [mangalathram] in the long Pathayapura. On the way to the pond, there is a temple dedicated to Siva. Strolling through the plot of land around the Mana is very interesting and one never gets tired. In intricate carvings the singing and chirping of the birds, the coolness of the atmosphere even at midday, all provide a great experience.

Adi Shankara Legend

In olden days, this Mana was known as Nedumthuruthy Illam. There is a legendary story regarding the changing of name to Swarnathu Mana. Once Sankara, when he was a child brahmachari [ascetic], went to seek alms at a Brahmin's house at Punnorcode, Kunnathunadu. During those days, the Illam was in a poor financial situation. There was only an antharjanam [Brahmin woman] in the house. The woman saw the child with a radiant face standing at the door of the Illam seeking alms, she became very sad. The Mana did not have a history of sending back people seeking alms, especially austere people, empty handed. This time, there was nothing to offer, neither rice grain nor money. The woman went inside and searched for something to give the child. At last, she got a small gooseberry. She reluctantly gave it to the child. Sankara understood the situation of the woman. He accepted the gooseberry and composed Kanakadharasthotram as a prayer to Mahalakshmi.³ Mahalakshmi was pleased with the compilation and rained golden gooseberries. Sankara gave those golden gooseberries to the woman. The legend says that the poverty of the Illam was thus put to an end. Later on, it became prosperous and came to be known as Swarnathu Mana.

³ Menon. Keshava .*The Mind of Adi Sankaracharya* pp. 108.

Akshaya Tiritiya

It is said that it was on the day of Akshaya Tiritiya that the child reached the residence of the Brahmin seeking alms. Doing charity on the day of Akshaya Tiritiya definitely brings never-diminishing good luck and success. Whatever be the legend, even if we are not glorifying it, let us try not to humiliate Akshaya Tiritiya. There are references in ancient literatures regarding the importance of doing charity on Akshaya Tiritiya; they also advise us to give our favourite things to others instead of spending money for buying favourite things and keeping it for ourselves. One thing to tell the people who wish to get the blessing of Akshaya Tiritiya; instead of running after gold ornaments, please take a look around yourselves, look at your brothers and sisters having no food to eat and no new dress to wear, do what you can for them. Service to humans is service to god; the Mana has a tradition that puts forward this theory. I gave a big salute to Swarnathu Mana, the pride of Kerala and the architectural creativity of Kerala, and left the place.

Wooden Decorative Works

The design of the Illam is done by scholarly architects of those times. Different kinds of decorative wooden works on the ceiling of the foyer space. Thekkini has double ceiling when it reaches Edottumpuram. One ceiling for bearing the load of thekkini Malika. The second ceiling is one foot down which bears the wooden decorative works. At the centre of the decorative ceiling, sculpture of Sri Bhuvaneshvari Devi and in 24 segments around it 96 floral designs are encrypted. In load bearing beam joints, Bhuvaneshvari sculpture is carved in 16 flowers. On the south west side a relief of

Mahalakshmi is carved. On the north side of the ceiling a total of eighty flowers (small sized) and eight large flowers are carved. Besides this on the support pillars from ceiling to the upper part, twenty large flowers and eighty small sized flowers are also carved. All these contribute to the beauty of the ceiling. This pattern of wooden carving is repeated in Thekkini malika as well as edotumpuram. This is repeated in the ceiling of the drawing room, Kompura in the west side, Padinhaatti, Vadakkini and even the ceiling of the kitchen.

The Mana was renovated by Thuppan Namboothiri and he was very particular about the wooden decorative works. The then Travancore king Dharmaraaja had renovated the temples from Ettumanoor to Maanar. The king had employed a group of talented craftsmen for this purpose. Since the Punnorcode Namboothiri has a close relationship with the Travancore king, the same craftsmen were employed for the wooden decorative works of Swarnathumana. On close observation one can notice the resemblance between the wooden works of these temples and those of the woodworks of Swarnathumana. There are two large dining halls or Ootupura along with the Mana. There is a vadakke Malika exclusively for the ladies (antharjanam) of the family.

On the north side of the vadakkini there are two nadumuttam. The western side of the Nadumuttam (central courtyard) has sit outs on four sides. The eastern courtyard has sit outs on the east and south sides' only. On the western side of the courtyard Pathayapura is situated. The pathayapura had a large room (Nellara) along with other rooms. A new bungalow was built in the western side of the Ootupura in 1911. In addition to the craftsmen in Punnorcode, experts from Pazhoor, Vellapilly and Trissur also participated in the construction of the bungalow. The thekkini of the bungalow on the western side was renovated in 1934.

Chapter 3

Customs and Temples Associated with Swarnathumana

In olden days in all Brahmin Illam and Manas there used to be a sreelakam (a room for the family deity) and a place for worshipping which was known as Thevaravattom. In. In wealthy Mana there was a scholarly Brahmin for executing Thevaram. he is known as Thevari. In Swarnathumana there was a system of daily worship in the family temples, Kaavu, Puthenkaavu, Kuzhiveli and Vishnu temple. Thevari was appointed for observing the daily rituals of all the above mentioned places. In Kaavu daily nivedyam is of rice measuring one Para and six and three fourth of Edangazhangi (Old measurements for measuring rice). For the afternoon puja, pantheeranzhy (payasam), for midday puja koothupaayasam were prepared on a daily basis. The lamps in kaavu as well as sreelakam were lit only with coconut oil. Among these pujas for the family deity in sreelakam, one puja was carried out by the elderly man or Karanavar of the Mana himself.

Celebration of the birthdates

The monthly date of birth of the male members of the family was also observed with special puja and rituals. For the deity Shastha in Kaithakkadu temple on every Saturday there was a special puja organised. For Kizhakkedath Bhagavathy, Mullakaal Thevar and for snake gods nivedyam was carried out once in a month. This has to be done by the members of the Mana themselves. While kizhakkedath Pazhiyoor Illam was extinct as there was no child in the family, the properties of Kizhakkedath Pazhiyoor was dissolved in Swarnathumana. Kizhakkedathu bhagavathy was the family deity of Kizhakkedath Pazhiyoor. There was a ghee lamp (neyvilakku) lit at Pazhoor

Perum thrikkovil for 365 days. For the birthday of the elderly members of Mana there was Ponnumkudam offering at Pazhoor temple. Swarnathumana had an earlier relation with Maayannur. At that time their family deity was Thirumaandhakunnu Bhagavathy. Once in a year Bhagavathypaatu is carried out as an offering to Thirummandhakunil Bhagavathy.

Two types of rituals were carried out any failure from time immemorial. One such is the Bhadrakkali thityattam and the other one is the Vettakaran also known as vellakerumakan pattu. These were observed as offerings to keep the members of the family away from unwanted influence of enemies and for rescuing the members from all the evils. In the month of Dhanu on Avitam star there is a ritual called Pathathanam. It starts at 7.30 in the evening. In the vadakkini, two namboodiris will sit facing west. Vettila and adakka, fruits and coins will be kept in front of them. They will clap their hands. The male members and male children of the family will bow to them. There will be a sadya of feast after that at night. A custom followed for annual birthday of the male members of the family is the Purannalpattu.

The right for conducting the Purannalpattu laid upon Vadayambaadi Kurup and Oorakaatu Kurup, who would draw the kalam but the right to conduct was with Vadayambaadi Kurup. Purannalpattu is conducted in the following way. By 12 o'clock at noon there will be a song. A hexagon style kalam is drawn, jaggery is offered to the deity (nivedyam). In the afternoon by 3 o'clock kalamezhuthu will start. By the evening after kalamezhuthu Vadayambaadi Kurup will do the kalam pooja. After kalam puja Thiruyuzhichil will begin. The male member of the family whose birthday is celebrated will sit on the north side of the kalam facing west. He will be done the

Thiruyuzhichil. After that the songs will be sung. The songs will start by praising Bhadrakkali and ends in praising lord Shiva. For the birthdays of the male members there was another ritual conducted at the kizhakkini. A Vaalkannadi (a metal mirror with handle) is brought in the traditional way with an antharjanam singing with trumping on the plate.

Temples associated with the Mana

In addition to these rituals there was special offerings within the family temple on the birthday of the eldest male in the family. Chathushatham was one of such offerings. A payasam is made with 101 naazhi of rice, 101 kadalipazham (banana), jaggery, 101 palam and 101 coconuts. Another offering on the birthday of the male member was ettary. The quantity of rice will increase according to the age of the person whose birthday is celebrated. This means that one edangazhang rice more than the previous year. These offerings were done to Pazhoor Perum thrikkovil and to Chottanikkara temple. Kuzhiveli Vishnu temple is located 200m west of Punnorcode kaavu .it is a very old temple and deity is four handed Vishnu which is five and a half feet tall .The Sreekovil is a square with outer corridor, the temple is in Sandharaganam' The scars and damages seen on the deity happened during the invasion of Tipu Sultan.

In this temple the daily pooja was carried out twice a day and on the day of Thiruvonam , feast was given to all people. Ullsavam of the temple was on the Ashtamirohini day in the month of Chingam . In Kizhakkambalam- Kolenchery road, in the north west of Pazhamthottam exist Puthenkaavu temple. The Pazhamthottam junction was earlier known as Puthankavalam. The deity is sree Bhadrakkali facing the west direction .the special days were Ashwathi and Bharani of the month Meenam

every year. Since the deity is sree Bhadrakkali, rituals as per convention is done here. This includes Ottathookkam, Garudanthukam, Mudiyettu, Thalapoli and Guruthi. Kaithakkadu Vishnu temple is situated half km east of the Mana. Sreekovil is in the square shape. The deity is facing east direction. The deity is four armed Lord Vishnu. Lord Shiva and Lord Shasta are also present in this temple. On the north side of the Mana in Njarallor Desom is the Kariveli Vishnu Temple. Lord Vishnu is the main deity, facing the west. On the day of RohiniNakshatra, there was a sadya given to their public in each month. The temple situated in Aluva -Thripunitira road east of Kizhakkambalam. 170 years ago there was some Tamil Brahmin family near this temple .They gave their properties to swarnathumana and let the place. Thus the temple along with the surrounding area came in the hands of Swarnathumana.

Special days feast are organised for public on Makarasankranti [Makarasankranti oottu] and Vaaram on Uthram star in the month of Dhanu. Kattathrakkavu Bhagavati temple is located on the east side of Vypinkara in Eranakulam district .Many islands are there and one of the island is Kadamakudy. The special days are first five days from Atham in the month of Kumbham. On these days there is Bhadrakkali Theeyatu. The Theeyatu of first day is sponsored by Swarnathumana. Parapilly Ganapathy temple is situated in Panangad. The festival is for six days from the new moon day in the month of Chingam.

On the day of Chaturty there is valiya vilaku and panjami aratu .Vazhapilly Thrikka Mahadeva temple is situated eight km south east of Kottayam, in Puthupilly desom. Near to Thrikka Mahadeva temple there is Vazhakulam ganapati temple. Pallarimangalam temple near Kothamangalam, Cheruvettur thenmankuzhy temple, Povakkulam Temple near Vazhakulam, and Chemmuka temple in Mankara (Palakkad) were also under the ownership of the Mana.

Chapter 4

Brahmin Wedding or Veli

The Veli took place in 1921. The rituals and procedure throw light to the social life of the people during that time. The marriage was taken place on 1912 January (the period before WW1). Two revolutionary changes were happening during those times in central Kerala. One is the construction of Shornoor –Ernakulum railway track and running of the trains'. Secondly the use of kerosene lamps. Coconut leaves for the construction of Nedumpura and Panthal were reached via Kizhakkambalam kadavu. Along with the construction works of Panthal, started the procurement of firewood. More than 1500 worked only for preparing firewood for the function. The making of earthen as well as wooden utensils for the function also started three months before itself. In those days utensils of steel and plastic was not available. Pots, utensils and accessories were made out of wood, clay or materials like copper. Leaves of coconut tree, palm tree, bamboo were also made use for such purposes. Such food or raw materials for food were collected in large quantities for the function.

Invitation for the wedding

The invitation cards were written and taken to invitees in person. Important personalities like judges etc. were but of lower caste were invited by sending the invitation letter in the hands of the servants. But the Brahmin families were united by gang invitation letters in person by the members of the Mana themselves. The vegetables and provisions of the function except rice was bought by the wholesale vendor from Trichur. Rice were bought from Maayannur. At vegetable-provision market was setup in the Mana by the vendor. Whenever anything was required servants could

go and take from this market like arrangements. Textile items were bought by a wholesale merchant at Tripunithura. For functions like wedding wholesale textile dealers were there, who used the Mana beforehand with clothes for different rituals for the functions.

Rice Transportation

At that time Pazhayari available in Palakkad region was of higher grade than that is available in any other places. So even if the transport of rice from there required a lot of effort for Kudiyaippu or wedding, it was strictly brought from Mayannoor itself. Rice bags were first stored in Mayannoor Madam. Then it was brought to Ottappalam Railway station. It was loaded to Shornoor –Cheruvannur train. From Cheruvannur station it was again transported to the train towards western side. The rice sacks were brought to Edappaly station, from there by means of water transport it was brought to Kizhakkambalam kadavu. Four bullock carts were employed exclusively for the local transportation of the goods to Kizhakkambalam Kadavu and back. They were continuous service for three to four months before the date of the marriage.

Journey for the Veli

On the day of the wedding the groom takes a special feast which is called Ayinniyoonu and go up to Chittethu kadavu in Palang (Manchal). From there the groom and relatives will go to the Kizhakkambalam kadavu in small boats or cheruvanchji. From there in a bigger boat they move to Karuppadanna. After this the journey happens through the land in bullock carts or Palang. This was the usual practice but for the marriage described here, the groom went to Aluva station with his close

relatives and from there to Cheruvannur through train. At Mayannoor a group of relatives and friends joined the groom. For most of the people who accompanied the group the journey in train was their first experience and even unforgettable one.

The Veli took place in the residence of the bride at Vettom. After Veli those who accompanied the groom returned back in the train itself. But the bride and the groom returned in the boat. They first reached in the Kadamakudy, where Swarnathumana had properties and residence. They were treated with grandeur and the people of the nearby islands also participated. Martial art forms like Parichamuttukali was also taken place during the event. The next day this group of people returned to Swarnthumana. They reached the Kizhakkambalam kadavu accompanied by Panchavaadyam and Nadaswaram along with fireworks.

The functions in the house of the groom were mainly Kudivaippu and Sathram. They were carried out like a festival with pomp and show. On the way through, where the bride and groom walk is Malaru is spread like a carpet. A platform is made with mud in the courtyard. Deity is set on the platform at the time of Kudivaypu. The bride will be coming in a palanquin (Palakku, menaavu). The palanquin is placed in the courtyard where the place is marked for it. In the vadakkini the ladies of the Mana will conduct pooja for three days with sixteen lamps. On the day of Kudivaippu th pooja will be conducted in Kizhakkini. When the groom starts to go the bride's residence after the Ayinniyoonu .as a sign of good omen, bullocks were made to come from the opposite side. There were certain families in the village where rice and accessories (ariyum koppum) was to be given along with the marriage invitation. This was the right of that family.

Feast for the wedding

The taste of a society is formed according to the place and time. The taste and food habits of the people of Andhra or Tamilnadu are entirely different from that of Kerala. The north Indian food habits are very much different from the entire south Indian. Even in Kerala there are regional differences in different parts of the state. Time also plays a vital role in the taste and food habits. The favourite dishes of people of two generations back is not the same for the present generation. One fruit that was indispensable in all the Kerala sadya was banana, mostly kadalipazham. Fried chips were also necessary.

Journey to attend Murajapam

It is a function carried out in Sreepadmanaabhaswami Temple in every six years. Like other scholarly Namboothiris, Swarnathu Namboothiri was also a regular invitee. His journey for the function and the related descriptions throw light to the Kerala society before one hundred years. During those days the transportation was only through waterways. The boat journey took about 5 days to reach the Kalpalakkadavu in Trivandrum. Once the date of Murajapam is fixed, the Travancore king will send the harikkaran or messenger to the illams to be invited for the function. Usually a group of Namboothiris used to go to Travancore to attend Murajapam. They initially start their journey from Kizhakkambalam kadavu in two or three large boats. There were places of halt to have food during the journey.

The expenditure for the food and accommodation of the Namboothiris during the journey was on the behalf of the king. The team travelled through water, and some places along their journey were Aroor, Thrichathukulam, Vaikom, and Madathumkara. The journey proceeded through the river Pamba, reached Ambalapuzha, Thrikkunnapuzha and then reached Kollam on the fourth day. The places of halt were Anandavallaswarnam Temple, and then to Maruthukulangara. On the fifth day the team reached Varkkala. The very next day they reached Kalpalakkadavu of Trivandrum.

The main events of Murajapam are Sahasranaamam, Jalajapam and Murajapam. The whole procedure will last for seven or ten days. After participating in the function they will visit the Travancore king which is called Mughamkaanikal. The king welcomes them with gifts. The Namboothiris then visited the Chala market and museum and they came to know about the modern and outer world around them.

Conclusion

Swarnathumana remains with its head up in the village Punnorcode with its traditional grand old building and about 100 acre of land around in. The building is a typical example of Kerala architecture .The residents of the Mana still keeps the year old customs and rituals with its own purity. For a visitor who reaches the village Punnorcode the Mana, its surrounding their family temple kaavu, will provide an experience to travel back to olden days .One feels that he has gone back to 600 years in a point of historical timeline. The history of Swarnathumana is a mirror turned towards the early Brahmin Namboothiri society of Kerala. Eventhough the area near Punnorcode have undergone some kind of modernisation with commercial firms, buildings and newer roads, the village of Punnorcode remains unchanged in the flow of time. One can get the ambience and serenity of Kerala culture which existed 600 years ago. The main reason to feel so it the fact that most of the land area of Punnorcode is still under the ownership of the Mana. The members of the Mana are cautious in preventing the intrusion of the property from the newer era. The people living in the proximity of the Mana nowadays also had some kind of social and economic relations with the Mana.

The three ponds near the Mana remain unused and the common people are restricted from entering these areas. The pathayapura has old family photos and old clocks used in the mana. The peculiar feature of the architecture of the Mana is its construction of Panthrettuketu, which is rarely seen in Kerala home architecture. The normally seen ones include the Nalukettu and Ettukettu or Pathinaarukettu. The entry into the homes of the residents is also not allowed for the visitors. The poomugham is also called the edottumpuram where the members of the Mana organised unofficial meeting after their lunch is the first area inside the Mana that welcomes the visitors.

The entrance into the Bhuvaneswaridevi temple of the Mana has separate ways constructed for both the members of the Mana and outsiders. The outsiders had separate entry gates to this temple even these days also. Nine elephants were arranged for the festival of this temple and one among the three ponds of the Mana was used only for bathing of the elephants. The elephants pathways to the ponds are dilapidated with some ancient remains. The pond used by the elephants long ago is the only pond used these days by the people. The other two ponds got ruined over the passage of time. The kodimaram of this temple was buried properly according to the belief. The age old architecture remains unchanged within the inside areas of the Mana. There are no traces of modern architecture or renovation in the present day Mana building which is about 200 years old. The visitors from city feel the cool breeze and greenery of the Mana compound. There are several medicinal plants and huge trees within the Mana compound which are unknown to many city dwellers.

Thus this project aims to portray the culture and heritage of swarnathumana by describing the social cultural and ritualistic significance it had put forward during the Namboothiri lives of ancient Kerala society. There are several places in Kerala that still preserve the age old tradition. one such example is Punnorkootu Mana or Swarnathumana of Pazhamthottam village. The architectural marvel of this Mana is widely known in Kerala historical study. The students of ancient architectural study can look up to this Mana as specific example to carry their research. The people of this Mana even try to maintain their social purity in this modern 21st century by distancing themselves from the outsiders.

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