

Sree Valayanad Devi Temple, Kommeri:
An Exploration of Its Identity as a Medieval Temple in the
Contemporary Context

Project submitted to the University of Calicut
in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree

of

Bachelor of Arts in English and History

By

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Declaration

I, **Amal Raj Thettummal**, hereby declare that this project entitled, **Sree Valayanad Devi Temple, Kommeri : An Exploration of Its Identity as a Medieval Temple in the Contemporary Context** submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History**, is a bonafide record of original research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled, **Sree Valayanad Devi Temple, Kommeri: An Exploration of its Identity as a Medieval Temple in the Contemporary Context** a record of research work carried out by **Mr. Amal Raj Thettummal** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Bachelor of Arts in English and History** submitted to the University of Calicut.

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Amal Raj Thettummal

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Introduction

A Hindu temple is a spiritual destination for many Hindus, as well as landmarks around which ancient arts, community celebrations and economy have flourished. Hindu temples come in many styles, are situated in diverse locations, deploy different construction methods and are adapted to different deities and regional beliefs, yet almost all of them share certain core ideas, symbolism and themes. Hindu temples served as nuclei of important social, economic, artistic and intellectual functions in ancient and medieval India. South Indian temples managed regional development function, such as irrigation projects, land reclamation, post-disaster relief and recovery. These activities were paid for by the donations they collected from devotees. These donations came from a wide spectrum of the Indian society, ranging from kings, queens, and officials in the kingdom to merchants, priests and ordinary folk.

Temples also managed lands endowed to it by its devotees upon their death. They would provide employment to the poorest. Some temples had large treasury, with gold and silver coins, and these temples served as banks. Hindu temples over time became wealthy from grants and donations from royal patrons as well as private individuals. Major temples became employers and patrons of economic activity. They sponsored land reclamation and infrastructure improvements including building facilities such as water tanks, irrigation canals and new roads. Temples also acted as refuge during times of political unrest and danger. Literally, temple is the storehouse of life of the community. Temples depict much of the cultural history and social life of the society of the particular period, therefore studying the rituals and history of a temple is contributory to gain a better understanding of the lives in the past.

Valayanad Devi Temple is one among such temples that would help one to trace the sociopolitical and cultural lives of the subjects of Zamorin of Kozhikode. During classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, Kozhikode was dubbed the ‘City of Spices’ for its role as the major trading point of Eastern spices. It was the capital of an independent kingdom ruled by the Samoothiris (Zamorins) in the Middle Ages and later the capital of the erstwhile Malabar district under British rule. Kozhikode, being a prominent trade and commerce centre of Malabar Coast right from the 13th century, has a prominent place in the international trade map of the country. Sree Valayanad Devi Temple is situated in Valayanad near Kozhikode in North Kerala, India.

The temple is dedicated to Sree Valayanad Bagavathy, the family deity of Zamorin royal family. The prowess, wealth and cultural eminence of Kerala were primarily dependent of Valluvanad and Kozhikode. This astonishing condition was attributed to the merciful blessing of the Goddess whom the families of Valluvakkonathiri of Valluvanad and the Zamorin of Kozhikode worshipped with intense devotion. The legend about the origin of the temple is related to the power struggle between the rulers of Valluvanad and Kozhikode. The Valayanad Devi Temple in Kozhikode one of the rare temples of Shaktism where puja is performed in accordance with practice of *Rurujit* worship. The presiding deity of this temple is the goddess from Kashmir, known as Chandika. The priests of this temple who perform worship according to Shakta injunctions in this temple are Moosads who follow Kashimiri way of worshipping. Annual festival of this temple will commence every year on the day of Karthika of Makaram and continues for seven days. There will be *Kalamezhuthupattu* from 1st of Vrischikam (later half of November and first half of December) for forty one days during the Mandala season.

Review of Literature

There is only few authentic works about the Valayanad Devi Temple in the form of thesis papers, documents, and newspaper reports. The Directorate of Census Operations of Kerala had published a work titled, '*Temples of Kozhikode District*'. It forms an integral part of the '*Temples of Kerala*' study already completed by the organization. Mr. S. Jayashanker, who retired after a very distinguished innings as Deputy Director of Census Operations, Kerala, has authored the present volume. As a part of imparting the legacy of the temple, the Valayanad Devaswom also had published a book in Malayalam language titled, '*Sree Valayanad Devi Kshetram: Charithravum Aithihyangalum*' (History and Legends of Valayanad Devi Temple).

Objective of the Study

This project aims to understand the historical background of the Valayanad Devi Temple and to acknowledge the connection between Zamorin and the temple. The project seeks to examine the structure, architecture, idols and iconography of the Valayanad Devi Temple. The project attempts to decode the sociopolitical and cultural aspects of medieval Kerala along with the customs and practices followed during the period. The project also explores the mode of worship, festivals, rites and rituals of the Valayanad Devi Temple.

Scope

The study about the Valayanad Devi Temple include acknowledging the importance of this temple to the Zamorin of Kozhikode, a brief account of the legends and events that led to the construction of the temple by Zamorin. This study traces the customs and practices related to the temple during the Medieval Age. It also emphasises on the

present day rites and rituals of the temple along with the festival celebrated in the temple. The study also mentions about the political rivalry that existed during the time between the ruling classes, typically that of Valluvakonathiri and Zamorin. It also focuses on the Valayanad Devi Temple – its architecture and idols. In short, the scope of the study is to give an outline about the socio political and cultural lives led during the Medieval Age in Kerala in relation with the Valayanad Devi Temple.

Sources

The main sources of information for the study were '*Temples of Kozhikode District*' by S. Jayashanker and '*Sree Valayanad Devikshethram: Charithravum Aithihyangalum*' by Sukumaran Punnassery and Vazhayil Chandran. The other important sources include pamphlets, brochures, newspaper reports and interviews from the natives.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study is the historical analysis of data including documents, records and materials obtained from the temple. This study is mainly based on the primary sources or first-hand information further improvised by the secondary sources.

Chapterisation

The project is divided into three chapters apart from the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter presents the details about the history and legends of Valayanad Devi Temple. The second chapter provides a picture of the architecture and idols of the temple. The third chapter gives details about the custom, festivals, rites and rituals of the temple.

Chapter 1

History and Legends of Valayanad Devi Temple: Unravelling the Political Complexities of Medieval Kerala

Location of the Temple

Sri Valayanad Devi Temple is a serene temple located in the picturesque surroundings of the historic city of Kozhikode. It is situated 3 kilometers southeast of Kozhikkode from Palayam junction at Kommeri. Until a few years ago, there were no easy access to this ancient temple. The devotees used to come to see the Goddess by walking through the alleys full of laterite stones and red soil. However, today the situation has changed. The temple is located about 4 kilometers east of the Kozhikode railway station and due to the construction of roads, the temple can be reached by any vehicle in a matter of seconds. The Valayanad Devi Temple could be reached by traveling 3 kilometers east of the renowned Tali Shiva Temple. The Valayanad Devi Temple is located around 1 kilometer north of the road to Govindapuram from Zamorin junction on Kozhikode bypass. The Valayanad Devi Temple is about half a kilometer away from the mini bypass on the Kozhikode National Highways. There are roads to the east, south and west of the temple walls. To summarise, there are well-connected roads around the temple area. It is safe to say that various roads converge near the temple.

If looked west from the eastern gateway, one could see the temple perched on a small hill. One could reach the entrance gateway on the east side by climbing 28 wide, comfortable and beautiful steps. If entered through the eastern gateway inside the spacious

compound surrounded by temple walls, one could directly see to the east, outside the sanctum sanctorum of the Goddess is the installed Shivalinga deity. If entered through the northern gateway, one will first get a glimpse of Valayanad Devi. Inside the walls of the temple, there is a circumambulatory pathway (*pradakshina paatha*) around the temple that is paved with granite.

Zamorin and Valayanad Devi Temple

Dataable to fourteenth century, the temple has historical association with the kingdom of *Samoothiris* (Zamorins- according to European writers). The Nediyiruppu Swarupam¹, the original territory of Zamorins, had their territory land-locked without any access to the sea. This prevented them from having maritime trade in ancient days with the foreigners. Therefore, they decided to annex the domain of Polanadu whose ruler was Polarthiri. They succeeded in their attempt and could establish a kingdom 'between the hills and the waves'. The glory, economic prosperity and cultural excellence of Malabar depended mainly on Valluvanad and Kozhikode. This unique situation led to a power struggle between the Valluvakonathiri (eldest designate and supreme leader of the Valluvanad kingdom) and the Zamorin (the hereditary monarch of the kingdom of Kozhikode). Zamorins next attempt to have suzerainty over the kingdom of Valluvakonathiri did not succeed, despite the military might and economic superiority of the Zamorin.

¹ The region under the control of a chieftain was known as Swarupam. The joint family of the chieftain was also known as Swarupam.

The Zamorin conducted an inquiry to find the root cause of his failure. Zamorin realized that Valluvakonathiri was able to defeat him, despite Zamorin's military prowess and war tactics, only through the worship of Thirumandhamkunnu Bhagavathy, the *bharadevatha* (family deity) of Valluvakonathiri. Zamorin ultimately realised that the blessings of the powerful Goddess Sree Thirumandhamkunnu Bhagavathy were always with Valluvakonathiri. As a result, Zamorin performed rigorous penance. Pleased by the devotion of Zamorin, the Thirumandhamkunnu Bhagavathy manifested before Zamorin. At the request of Zamorin, the Goddess agreed to accompany him on one condition that he should not look back while She was following him. Bhagavathy also mentioned that if Zamorin looked at Her with suspicion, She will go back. The king readily agreed to this condition and proceeded to Kozhikode.

Nevertheless, after some time Zamorin could not hear the tinkle of *chilanka* (anklet) of the Goddess and he looked back to make sure if Bhagavathy was still following him or not. As he violated the aforementioned conditions, the Goddess took out her *vala* (bangle), threw it into the air, and uttered; "My power shall be felt wherever this bangle falls" and soon after that, Bhagavathy disappeared. It is believed that for one week, the bangle swirled round in the air and finally fell on the site where the temple now stands. A temple was immediately constructed there and the Zamorins made Her their *bharadevatha* (family deity). The place over which the *thiruvala* (holy bangle) revolved in circles (*vattam*) for a week (*azhcha*) came to be known as Azhchavattam and the place (*nadu*) where the *thiruvala* (holy bangle) fell, came to be known as Thiruvalayanadu. The temple got the name as Thiruvalayanadu Bhagavathy Temple. Since then, Sri Valayanad Bhagavathy has been the deity of worship of the Zamorin. It is believed that after this incident, Zamorin

could easily fulfil his desire and establish his sway over the kingdom of Valluvakonathiri by the blessings of Sri Valayanad Bhagavathy.

Sri Valayanad Devaswom² is one of the royal devaswoms of the Zamorin. These include Sri Thiruvalayanad Bhagavathy Temple, Sri Thevar Temple, Sri Thalikunnu Shiva Temple, Korangottu Parthasarathy Temple and Odumbra Bhagavathy Temple. Inside the famous Tali temple compound at Kozhikode, apart from the Tali Mahadeva Temple, there is a temple dedicated to Lord Krishna and also a temple dedicated to Lord Narasimha. Inside the temple cloister of Sri Krishna Temple in Tali, the *pallivaal* (royal sword) of Sri Thiruvalayanad Devi is worshipped.

It is mentioned that Thiruvalayanad Bhagavathi is the *upasana devatha* (Goddess of worship) of the Zamorin. The Zamorin used to offer animal sacrifices to Sri Valayanad Bhagavathy every time before he went for a *Mamankam*. It is believed that, due to this custom, the Zamorins never had to know the taste of defeat again. Whenever a child is born in the family of the Zamorin, there is a practice of placing the child in front of the deity after daubing the *sannidhanam* (the spot of the sanctum sanctorum) with cow dung. The belief is that the child belongs to the Goddess and that the family has only the privilege to rear the child.

² Socio-religious trusts in Kerala that comprise members nominated by both government and community to ensure the smooth operation of Hindu temples in accordance with traditional rituals and customs.

Mamankam

Mamankam is one of the biggest fairs in ancient Kerala held beside the Nava Mukunda Temple at Thirunavaya on the bank of the Bharathappuzha River. It happened once every 12 years under the aegis of the local chieftains and later the Zamorins of Kozhikode who established suzerainty over the region. As per K. V. Krishna Iyer, the last Mamankam fair was held in 1755 CE. The Mamankam came to an end with the conquest of Kozhikode by the Sultan of Mysore, Haidar Ali (1766 CE) and the subsequent Treaty of Seringapatam (1792) with the English East India Company. Mamankam was the coronation ceremony of the Perumals on the *Makam* asterik between the *amavasyas* (no moons) of the *Makara* and *Kumbha* months. Legend has it that, on the festival day of Thirunavaya Thevar (Lord Vishnu), Parashurama took the decision to let the Perumal rule over the region. It is believed that Mamankam was a ceremony where the Brahmins, civic dignitaries and trade representatives gathered once in every twelve years to pledge their allegiance to the ruler. The elected ruler was thus recognized as the emperor of Kerala. It is believed that the Mamankam began in the year 829 AD. After the collapse of the Kulasekhara dynasty, the ruler of Perumpadappu royal dynasty who was escorted by thousands of Nair warriors of Valluvakonathiri, became the *Rakshapurushan* (Great Protector) of Mamankam and held the title of Kerala emperor in the 11th century. It is believed that friendship existed between Valluvakonathiri and Perumbadappu. The territory of Thirumalassery Namboothiri, the ruler of Panniyoor faction, was jointly attacked by Valluvakonathiri and Perumbadappu by accusing him to be a wrongdoer. Thirumalassery took refuge in Zamorin who was rising as powerful ruler. Zamorin waged war against them and took the title of *Rakshapurushan* by capturing the Thirunavaya

Navamukunda Temple along with the *nilapaduthara*³ of Mamankam. This is believed to have been in A.D. 1350. Valluvakonathiri and Perumbadappu did not accept this. Perumbadappu had to shift to Thiruvanchikulam in Kodungallur because of Zamorin expansion.

During the subsequent Mamankam fairs, all other chiefs of Kerala - including the ruler of Travancore - were obliged to send flags as a symbol of submission to Kozhikode. These flags were used to be hoisted at the festival. However, Valluvakonathiri who did not recognize the Zamorin as the legitimate Great Protector but considered him only a usurper, used to send *chavers* (suicidal warriors) instead. If these men could kill the Zamorin, who was personally present at the fair, protected by thousands of his own warriors, the right of Great Protector would have devolved on the chief of Valluvanadu. These *chavers* were Nair warriors who preferred death to defeat, and who sacrificed their lives to avenge the death of Valluvanadu clan members in the battles leading to the fall of Thirunavaya. The death of the Valluvanadu clan members also started a period of intense hatred and battles between the two clans. *Kutippaka* (blood feud) was prevalent in the medieval Kerala society. If a Nair warrior was killed (in his attempt to kill the Zamorin), it was the duty of the relatives or even the subsequent generations of the deceased, to avenge the death. So, most of these *chavers* had lost their relatives or elders in previous battles with the Zamorin and as a result, they were fueled by blood feud.

The *chavers* will have a 41-days meditation at the Thirumandhamkunnu temple in Angadipuram, which was the capital of Valluvanad dynasty, in Malappuram district of

³ During the Mamankam festival, the *Rakshapurushan* used to stand on this raised platform.

Kerala. The *chavers* used to offer oblation to the manes (*pindam vekkal*) at Thirunelli in Wayanad district of Kerala. According to the Padma Purana, Parashurama paid homage to Jamadagni, his deceased father, at Papanashini near Thirunelli Temple. It is believed that offering oblation to the manes at this location gives salvation. The *Chavettu paattu* (songs about *chavers*) describes of the *chaver* soldiers eating the rice that had been used to pay homage to the deceased. The *chavers* went to Thirunavaya after they shaved their eyebrows and hair, covered their whole body with ashes and ate the last morsel off food served by Puthumana Amma.⁴ The *chavers* went for Mamankam after receiving the blessings of the Bhagavathy from the *chaver thara* (platform of the martyrs) of Thirumandhamkunnu Temple. The Zamorin's soldiers would butcher the *chavers*. Legend has it that the *chavers* from the family of Chandrathil Panikkar came dangerously close to Zamorin who escaped with his life by the breadth of a hair. It is customary to tie up captured *chavers* and bring them to Vakayur where they would be slain. The Vakayur *Kovilakam*⁵, which was a temporary palace, built during the Mamankam festival, was located one kilometer away from the western gateway of the Thirunavaya Temple. The Zamorin arrives there on the *Poornatham* asterik of *Makara* month and the next day of *Pooyam* asterik, the Mamankam begins. The Kodungallur *Kovilakam* was in charge of the food supplies at Mamankam.

⁴ The eldest woman of the Puthumana family who was given the position of ‘sister’ by the king of Valluvanad.

⁵ The principal manor, estate or palace of princely lineages of Kerala.

The Trial by Ordeal in Valayanad Devi Temple

The trial by ordeal to ascertain truth, in the Valayanad Devi Temple, was very famous. It was called *sathyam cheyyal* or *sathyapareeksha* in vernacular language. The trial by ordeal was an ancient test of guilt or innocence by subjection of the accused to severe pain, survival of which was taken as divine proof of innocence. The famous historian, Dr. M.R Raghava Varier described about some of the ordeal methods in the kingdom of the Zamorin. Varier mentioned about the topic in an article entitled '*Srivalayanad Viralmukku*'. He evaluated the traditional judicial process in Kerala on the basis of the palm-leaf manuscripts written in the later half of the 17th century. The project inspects few paragraphs of his work.

The methods of *Agnipareeksha* (fiery ordeal) vary locally. In the Suchindram temple of Tamil Nadu, it is customary for the accused person to dip his hand in a bowl of boiling ghee. The accused is supposed to take and place the figure of a bull that was immersed in the boiling ghee, on to the *mandapa* (pavilion) of the temple. But in the records that are available, it mentioned that only the fingers need to be dipped in the boiling ghee. The ordeal was called as *viralmukku* (dipping of fingers). The revenue and expenditure figures in relation with the *viralmukku* ordeal in temples of Valayanad, Lokanarkavu and Koodali are available as records. The records mentions about the members, officials and functionaries of the local assembly called *nagaram*. From the list in the records, one can understand the social structure of the people who congregate at the temple. The light decorations, *kshetra vadyam* (ritual music of South Indian temples) and the gifts for the officials, all add to the festive atmosphere of the ceremony. The *viralmukku* ordeal was conducted in the presence of a large crowd that comprised of the officials of the *kovilakam*,

the accountants of the temple, a number of temple employees such as the *vadyakkar* (drummers), *kuzhal vilikkars* (oboists), garland makers, Veluthedans⁶ and Vaniyas⁷ of the *urs* (settled villages) and representatives of Valayanad city. The organizers of the ordeal provided necessary items for its conduct. They brought clean clothes for the accused, flowers, *darbha* (cogon grass), yarn for lighting the lamps as well as to wrap the hand of the accused after it has been dipped in oil, half an ounce of coconut oil, rice and other materials required for the *puja* (offerings). The royal representatives would be present to hand over a palm leaf with the affidavit inscribed in it. After immersing himself in the temple pond, the accused (*Shankithan*) returns to the temple by wearing the cloth given to him by a Veluthedan. Then the *navipathram* (palm leaf with the affidavit) was inserted around the waist of the accused and he was taken to the place where the boiling oil had been prepared. The accused then dips the fingers of his right hand in the bowl of boiling oil and soon after that, the accused circumambulates the temple with his hand raised in the air. When the circumambulation was done, the hand of the accused that was dipped in the boiling oil was wrapped in a cloth and bound with a thread. It was believed that the hand of the accused, when unwrapped after 3 days, would be unburnt, had he been innocent. The hand of the accused would be burnt if he was guilty. If this was the case, then the accused would also have to pay a fine for contaminating the sanctity of the temple. Some of the records mention that the British abolished the trial by ordeal held in certain temples.

⁶ Veluthedans are servant class of Nairs (kshetriyas of Kerala). Though they belong to the lower sub cast of Nairs, Veluthedans are being treated as an Other Backward Community (OBC). They mainly hail from the family of washer men.

⁷ Vaniya are the backward community found mostly in northern part of Kerala. They are oil mongers.

Chapter 2

Delving Into the Architecture, Iconography and Idolatry of Valayanad Devi Temple

Structure of Valayanad Devi Temple

The Valayanad Devi Temple owns an extent of 2.5 acres of which 72.04 cents constitute the temple complex. The structures thereon are *sreekovil* (sanctum sanctorum), subshrines, *chuttambalam* (temple cloister), *valiya-balikkall* (principal oblation stone), *dhwaja-sthamba* (flagstaff), *gopuras* (tower gateways), compound wall, a well and a pond. The main *sreekovil* of Goddess Bhagavathy, perceived in the fierce form of Goddess Bhadrakali (Chamunda), faces north. The structure of the *sreekovil* is rectangular single floor of *saandhaara*⁸ type. It has granite *adhishthanam* (base with vertical moulded tiers), laterite walls and copper sheet covered roof. Each moulded tier is arranged from bottom to top in specified order and shape with flower motifs. The *sopaanam* (steps leading to the sanctum sanctorum) has four direct steps with *vyaali*⁹ face and protruded tongues as banisters. On the sides of the banisters, motifs of *ghanadwaaras*¹⁰ are exquisitely carved. The *pranala* is a discharge outlet attached to the wall of the sanctum. It discharges the lustral water or other liquids poured over the idols. The *pranala* of the Valayanad Devi Temple is of simplified type. The walls have 16 beautifully carved pillars besides three

⁸ If a *sreekovil* has ambulatory passage in between the wall of the *garbhagriha* (the inner chamber or the sanctum-sanctorum where the deity is installed) and its outer-wall (*baahya-bhiththi*) it is known as *saandhaara* type.

⁹ Mythical figure of a fierce animal like lion, tiger or a rogue elephant.

¹⁰ A facsimile of a door of the *sreekovil* which cannot be opened and smaller in dimensions than a functional door.

ghanadwaaras and a functional door. The *namaskara-mandapam*¹¹ with four pillars does not exactly face the centre of the *sreekovil* but is slightly towards the east. At the centre there is a bronze *deepa-sthambham* (pillar having different levels of circular rows of lamps), installed in 1940. To the east of the *namaskara-mandapam* there is the sub-shrine for Kshetrapala facing south. The sub-shrines of Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva are at northwest - Lord Shiva facing east and Lord Ganesh facing south. The well is at northeast of the *akaththebalivattam* (the innermost enclosure, which includes *Sreekovil*, *Antharamandala*¹² and *Namaskaara-mandapa*).

The *chuttambalam* has entrances from all sides. The temple kitchen is at southeast. The western *vaathilmataatam* (the front portion of *chuttambalam*) is used for staging Chakyar Koothu, while the eastern one is earmarked as *paattu-mandapam* (pillared hall for song). The *valiya-balikkall* Is outside the *chuttambalam* facing the main entrance at north. To its north is the teak *dhwaja-sthamba* (flagstaff) covered with copper plates. The temple has excellent laterite compound wall having the shape of an elephant's back in the top portion and with a height of 2.4 metres. Though earlier there were *gopurams* on all sides, at present the southern *gopuram* is ruined and it has only a door as entrance. The main *gopuram* at north is two-floored with tiled roof while those at east and west are single-floored with tiled roof. There are 25 steps from the ground level to reach the entrance of the *gopuram* at the east.

¹¹ A detached pillared hall in front of the *sreekovil* and generally used for prostration by priests.

¹² The space outside the *Sreekovil* occupied by protective deities in the form of small stone platforms called *Bali-Kall*

Facilities at the Valayanad Devi Temple

As a part of the temple complex, a convenient *vazhipadu* (offering) counter is set up next to the eastern gateway, outside the walls of the temple. In front of it is a small hall that is convenient enough for the devotees to stand in queue as well as to relax. The northern and western gateway to the temple are situated on level ground. However, one can enter the temple through the eastern gateway by climbing the magnificent steps near the *aalthara* (platform around a banyan tree). Once entered through the eastern gateway, there is a room with a photo of Shasta on the southwest side of *Chuttambalam*. Devotees have the facility to worship Shasta in the room. The circumambulatory path later leads to the aforementioned idol of Lord Ganesh and the consecrated Shivalinga. The idol of Nandikeswara, which is placed facing Lord Shiva, is remarkable. If one moves to the east and then to the north after worshipping the Shivalinga, one can see the shrine of Kshetrapala. To pacify the enraged Kali after the murder of Darika, Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva placed a boy in the scorching heat. The boy later became a *kshetrabalakan* (temple boy) and eventually became the Kshetrapala (temple guardian).

Surrounding the Kshetrapala's shrine, one can bend down and enter into the hall and pray to Tevara Bhagavathy (Saraswati) on the northeastern corner of the hall. The walls of the hall are decorated with the paintings of Bhagavathy that were donated by the devotees. From there after passing by the shrine of Kshetrapala through eastern gateway, one could reach the circumambulatory path of the *Chuttambalam* (the building constructed around the sanctum sanctorum of Kerala temples). One can reach the circumambulatory path through the northern gateway and western gateway as well. After circumambulation, one can exit the temple walls through any one of the three aforementioned entry gates.

The *Chuttambalam* is spacious and the devotees have the facility to make offerings and to buy *prasadam* (holy food or blessed gift). One of the most important offerings in the temple is the *muttarukkal*, that is done at the place in front of the shrine of Valayanad Devi and straight ahead of the shrine of Kshetrapala.

Principal Deity

This Devi temple at Valayanad has its own distinct identity and is different in several respects from other Devi temples in this country. The Valayanad Devi Temple in Kozhikode is one of the rare *Saktheya* (Shaktism) temples where *puja*¹³ is performed in accordance with practice of *Rurujit* worship. Sri Valayanad Bhagavathy is the principal deity of the Valayanad Devi Temple. The presiding deity of this temple is the goddess from Kashmir, known as Chandika, also called Mahartham and Kalasarppini. The priests of this temple who perform worship according to *Saktheya* injunctions in this temple are Moosads who follow Kashimiri way of worshipping.

The principal deity of the Valayanad temple, Sri Valayanad Bhagavathy, is consecrated in the form of sitting on a *rathna peedam* (pedestal made of gems) with the right leg bent up to the lap and the left one freely hanging down. The idol of Bhagavathy is about six feet tall. The idol is adorned with a crescent moon, a sparkling crown, ornaments that hide the divine bosoms and bangles that embellish the wrists. The idol has four hands and holds a sword, an axe, a noose and a round vessel in them. The idol of Thiruvalayanad Bhagavathy is made of daru (wood).

¹³ Puja (pooja) in Hinduism is the ceremonial worship, ranging from brief daily rites in the home to elaborate temple rituals.

Upadevatas (Subordinate Deities)

There are wood carvings on the east and west of *vimana* which have been coloured. *Vimana* is the structure over the garbhagriha or inner sanctum in the Hindu temples of South India and Odisha. A *vimana* is usually shaped as a pyramid, consisting of several stories. *Naaga-maalas* (serpentine necklaces) and flower motifs are depicted as wooden carvings. In addition to this, close to the rear wall of the sanctum sanctorum granite figurines of Saptamatrikas, Lord Veerabhadra and Lord Ganesh are installed. Of these the Saptamatrikas are in sitting pose, while Lord Ganesh and Lord Veerabhadra are of standing poses. It may be noted that the usual type of Matrikas (mother-goddesses) are also installed in the *akathe balivattom* that is on the southern side of the sanctum sanctorum in the form of *balipeedam* (oblation stone, generally representing a deity). The shivalinga idol of Lord Siva has a height of about 21 cm. The idol of Lord Ganesh, facing west, is in sitting pose with a height of 97 cm. The idol of Kshethrapala is in standing pose with a height of 97 cm and faces south.

When one circumambulate in the southern direction after the *darśana* (auspicious sight) of Sri Bhagavathy, nine small idols of Saptamatrika, Ganapati and Veerabhadra can be sighted. Inside the sanctum sanctorum the granite idols of the following deities can be seen: 1. Devi, 2. Chamundi, 3. Brahmani, 4. Maheshwari, 5. Kaumari, 6. Vaishnavi, 7. Varahi, 8. Indrani, 9. Mahalakshmi, 10. Ganapati, 11. Bhairav, 12. Bhairavi, 13. Veerabhadran, 14. Yogini and 15. Yogeshwari.

Sri Chakra

The *Sri chakra* worshipped in the temple is carved on a pure gold-leaf. It is installed within the sanctum sanctorum representing Goddess Bhagavathy. It was engraved by Kolkunnath Shivangar who was a saivite saint. *Sri chakra* is believed to be formulated by the ancient sages. It is believed to be the best form to embody, meditate on and worship the spiritual energy of the Devi that is formless and universal. The Sri Chakra constitutes of nine interlocking triangles that vary in size and shape and intersect to form 43 smaller triangles, organized in 5 concentric levels. Together they represent the totality of the cosmos and express *advaita* or non-duality. In the middle, the power point (*bindu*) represents the cosmic center. The triangles are circumscribed by two concentric circles composed of 8 and 16 petals, representing the lotus of creation and reproductive vital force. The entire configuration is framed by the broken lines of an earth square, representing a temple with four doors open onto the regions of the universe. It was Shankaracharya who placed a dot (*bindu*) at the centre of the *Sri Chakra*. The structure of the *Sri Chakra* is such that the five triangles with the apex down (*Shakti Chakras*) and the four triangles with the apex facing upwards (*Shiva Chakras*) are merged together. *Shakti Chakras* are symbolic representation of skin, blood, flesh, fat and bone and *Shiva Chakras* are bone marrow, semen, soul and life. It is believed that the greatest contribution of the *kaula* practise to the world is *Sri Chakra*. When the two-dimensional *Sri Chakra* is represented in three dimensions, it is called a *Mahameru*. Mount Meru derives its name from this shape. Mount Meru is the sacred five-peaked mountain of Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist cosmology and is considered to be the center of all the physical, metaphysical and spiritual universes. A mathematical equation that can explain the unique ratio of the nine mysterious triangles of

the *Sri Chakra* remains as an enigma and is yet to be discovered. The *Sri Chakra* is an iconic representation of the deepest intuitions of the Vedas. It represents both the recursive structure of reality and also expresses the fact that Nature and Consciousness are interpenetrating.¹⁴

Shivalinga

A *lingam* (sign, symbol or mark), sometimes referred to as *linga* or *Shivalinga*, is an abstract or aniconic representation of the Hindu deity Shiva in Shaivism. It is typically the primary *murti* or devotional image in Hindu temples dedicated to Shiva, also found in smaller shrines, or as self-manifested natural objects. The subtle spirit resides in the gross body as well as in the sexual body it is believed that Godliness resides. The *Trimurti Sangamam* (confluence of Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva) is also envisioned in the *Shivalinga*. It is believed that the visible *linga* in the *Shivalingas* in the temples represents Shiva, the invisible octagonal pedestal represents Vishnu and the square part in between represents Brahma. Therefore, it is believed that the trinity spirit is also present in Shiva temples. *Soundaryalahari*¹⁵ states that if Shiva joins Shakti Devi, he will be able to create this universe and if not, this deity will not be capable even to move.

Saptamatrikas

According to *Devi Mahatmya*, when the demons Chanda and Munda were killed in the battle between Devas and Asuras, the demon Raktabija attacked the Devas with the Akshauhini army. Chamundi - a fearsome form of Chandika, the Hindu Divine Mother

¹⁴ S. Kak. *The Prajna Sutras: Aphorisms of Intuition*. 2007

¹⁵ *Soundaryalahari* or *The Waves of Beauty*, famous Sanskrit literary work by Adishankara.

Parvati and is one of the seven *Matrikas* (divine mother) transformed to Kali. Out of Kali's mouth came Brahmani - sitting on a swan, holding a rosary in one hand and a *kamandulu* (an oblong water pot) in the other hand. Maheshwari emerged from the third eye of Kali. She mounted Nandi (the bull) and wore a large serpentine bracelet, hoops and held a trident. Kaumari was born from the waist of Kali. She rode a peacock and held a spear. From the hands of Kali, beautiful Vaishnavi was born. She held conch, discus, mace and a sword. Garuda (the eagle-man) was her mount. From the nates, Varahi was born who rode the Sheshanaga (the five-headed serpent), carried a rod of punishment and ploughed the ground with her tusks. Then from the heart came the fiery clawed Narasimhi and the Vajra (thunderbolt) armed Indrani. The Chamundi came from the feet of Kali. It is said that the Saptamatrika were replaced by the Ashtamatrikas (eight divine mothers) in the early days. According to these commentators, Yogeshwari later disappeared. Some people are of the opinion that Bhadrakali in Bhadrakali temples like Kodungallur might be considered as the eighth Matrika that went missing. In Buddhism, there are seven virgins. It is doubtful whether the concept of the Saptamatrikas was adopted due to the influence of the seven virgins in the Buddhist concept to unify the rituals during the renaissance period.

Various forms of Sri Bhagavathy

Bhagavathy is worshiped in various forms in India as Bhadrakali, Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati. In Bengal and Kerala, Shakti worship is the most important in the country. Kali is believed to be born from the third eye of Shambhu to kill Darikasura. The ten forms of Mahakali are Kali, Thara, Bhuvaneswari, Bhairavi, Mastha, Dhumavathi, Bagala, Mathangi, Kamala and Chamundi. Keralites worship Kali who killed the Darikasura.

During the battle between Devas and Asuras, the Asuras who died were resurrected due to the magical power of the Mritasanjivani boon, possessed by their guru, Shukra. So the demons became arrogant. They threatened the heavens. The gods prayed to Lord Vishnu for salvation. After hearing the prayers, Lord Vishnu killed the demons. Sudarshan Chakra (the disc weapon of Lord Vishnu) reduced their bodies to ashes in an instant, so Shukracharya could not resurrect them. When all the males among Asuras were destroyed and only the females were left, Shukracharya advised the Asura women to pray to Lord Brahma and grieve. Lord Brahma gave the boon that all the widowed Asura women would have male children. Thus, the sons born to Daruvati and Danavati, the widows of the slain Asura king, were Darika and Danava respectively. Darika was more heroic than Danava and Sukracharya taught both of them all the arts. By penance, Darika received the boon from Lord Brahma that only a woman who does not possess female genitalia could kill him and that every drop of blood dripping from his wounds would give birth to more Darikas.

With the attainment of the boon, Darika shook the whole world and became the emperor of the world. The trinity created seven women to put an end to the arrogance of the Asuras. Though the army of Devas fought the Asuras, the Devas could not defeat them. Lord Shiva became furious at the situation. Lord Shiva was burning with rage and Bhadrakali came out from his third eye. It was the same Kali who had disappeared after interrupting the rituals of Daksha. Lord Shiva placed a sword in the hand of Bhadrakali and gave her a great command- “Only you, born without the female genitalia could kill Darika and save the world. Every drop of blood that falls from the body of Darika gives rise to a clone of Darika. Hence, go to his palace, slay him and bring his head in front of

me. May the whole world worship you as Bhadrakali". With Vetala (a vampire spirit) as her vehicle, Bhadrakali started her journey. Darika entered the battlefield with Danava along with other Asuras. Vetala licked every drop of blood that oozed from the wounded Darika before it could hit the ground, preventing the creation of a clone of Darika. Bhadrakali did not allow Darika to flee from the battlefield. She beheaded Darika using her billhook machete and the Vetala licked and drank every drop of blood before it could fall on the ground.

Goddess Kali reached Kailasa with the intestines of Darika around her neck and placed his head at the feet of Lord Shiva. Then Lord Shiva blessed Bhadrakali and said that, "You will always be worshiped as a goddess who removes all the dangers of the world and gives refuge to the devotees who seek refuge. Those who write and worship your *kalam* (artistic drawing on the floor) and those who remember and sing your heroic tales will have all the blessings. All the ghosts, evil spirits and demons will flee once they hear your name and you can save the world forever."

Transformation of Kali from Atyugramurti to Shantaswaroopini

A *murti* is a humanized image or statue of a Hindu deity. The images or sculptures may be present inside or outside a home or temple, as part of processional festivities, or as a cultural landmark. The Sanskrit translation of *murti* is 'embodiment' and study of a *murti* is meant to inspire those that look upon its likeness. A *murti* is typically created in one of two forms. A *raudra* or *ugra murti* is designed to incite fear. A *shanta* or *saumya murti* is depicted as compassionate symbols of peace and kindness. They are constructed with careful symbolism relating to the deity that they embody. Symbols present in the fearful

raudra murti may include weapons or bones as adornment. However, *shanta murti* is representative of love and may contain icons of knowledge, music, wealth or flowers. By constructing a *murti* as the visual embodiment of a profound being, it is believed qualities of that deity are emanated and transmitted to those who meditate upon it.

The transformation of Kali from *Atyugramurti* to *Shantaswaroopini* is seen in the temple history of Sri Pisharikavu Temple in Kollam. It is said that the daily ritualistic practices done by the Nambudiris transformed *Ugramurti* to *Atyugramurti*. Bhadrakali's supreme power and fierce appearance terrified the devotees. The devotees did not even dare to enter the temple. When Nambudiris became the priests, Bhadrakali became *ugra murti* due to the changes in the method of worship. The Vaishya chiefs ended the Nambudiri priesthood to convert the appearance of Goddess Kali from terrifying to a serene form in order for the devotees to worship. Moosads changed the nature of the Goddess as soon as the *puja* began, and the devotees were able to see the Goddess in her serene form. The Moosads were Shaktas – the followers of Shaktism. The *Shantikars* (priests) of Pisharikavu temple are the Moosads of the Thiruvalayanad Bhagavathi Temple premises in Kozhikode. The Shakta Moosads who are Brahmins can be found in various parts of the northern districts of Kerala.

Chapter 3

An Introspection into the Socio-Cultural and Religious Importance of the Valayanad Devi Temple

Festivals of Valayanad Devi Temple

The festival at the Sri Valayanad Temple is held for a week every year from the Karthika asterik in the month of *Makaram* (later half of January and early half of February). The festival is held jointly by the Devaswom and the committee for festival celebrations. The festival, which is attended by thousands of devotees and locals, is a grand event that evokes the spirit of the Goddess. At the beginning of the temple festival, on the evening of the appointed day, the *udaval* (personal sword) of Devi called Naandakam is brought from the Tali Shiva Temple to the Valayanad Devi Temple by *ezhunallathu* (procession). The Tali Shiva Temple, situated in the heart of the Kozhikode city, is one of the oldest temples in Kozhikode. The temple was built in the 14th Century by Zamorin of Calicut.

On the day of Karthika, *kodiyettam*, the hoisting of the auspicious festival flag of the temple, is held at 8 pm by the *tantri*¹⁶ of the Valayanad Devi Temple. After the ceremony, for seven consecutive days, there will be a number of rites and rituals every day from 4.30 am onwards. There will be *kelikai*, *ushapooja*, *prabhataapooja*, the procession of *thidambu* (a replica of the idol) carried by an elephant which is accompanied by the sound of musical instruments, *kazhchasheeveli*, *pantheeradi pooja*, *sree bhoothabali*, *navakam*, *panchagavyam aadal*, and *uchhapooja*. In the evening, there will be *kazhchasheeveli*,

¹⁶Tantri is the Vedic head who set rules in temples. It is a position held hereditarily. It is the tantrist who consecrates the deity in the temple and is the authority on the rites and rituals of the temple.

deeparadhana and athazha pooja. By 9 pm, *chuttuvilakku, kalamezhuthupattu* and *vilakkinezhunnallippu* will be held.

Annadanam (food donation) will be held every afternoon in association with the festival. The *annadanam* is conducted by the sponsors and the festival committee. Prior to *annadanam*, a ceremony is conducted in which the granary is to be filled. This process lasts from morning to evening. In this devotional ceremony, the offerings (*nercha*) made for *Abhishtasiddhi* (attainment of the desired objective/thing) are received from the devotees. On the evening of the day, before the end of the festival, the *pallivetta* begins. *Pallivetta*, which literally means the Royal Hunt, is an important ritual in many temple festivals in Kerala, performed on the second last day of the annual temple festival. This is symbolic of the deity exterminating the demons of evil. After 4 p.m. that day, the heirs of the temple bring umbrellas, swords, etc. by procession and place them at the northern gateway of the temple. After 8 pm, *pallivetta* begins with the procession accompanied by the caparisoned elephants and then return with the *pandi melam* (classical percussion concert) followed by *pallikuruppu* and *shayanam* at 12 pm. There will be a spectacular fireworks display after *pallivetta*.

The next day, between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m., there will be morning rites and rituals of the temple such as *palli unarthal* (waking up the deity), followed by *abhishekam* (bathing of the deity) using ghee, honey and turmeric powder, reading Puranas, showing the replica of cow etc. are conducted. After 5 p.m., with a *yatrabali* (sacrifice before the journey), the procession arrives at the Tharakkal Temple for *arattu* which is the immersion of the deity in a holy river or pond on the last day of a temple festival. After *thayambaka* and *kelikai*, seven circumambulation is made on caparisoned elephant's back with the accompaniment

of orchestra. After the ceremonies of *vilakkezhunnallippu*, the dance and the command of Kurup¹⁷, at midnight, the procession reaches the Mankavu Trishala pond where the *arattu* ceremony is done. Baladurga is the deity worshipped in Trishala Bhagavathi Temple. It is very rare to find temples dedicated to child form of Goddess Durga. The deity faces east. Devi is symbolically worshipped as a small girl playing with a ball in one hand. It is believed that Trishala Bhavathi is the younger sister of Sree Valayanad Devi, the family deity of the Zamorin's Swarupam. Upon returning to the Valayanad Devi Temple after the *arattu*, the festival concludes with *kodiyirakkam*, the lowering of the auspicious festival flag.

A notable feature is that during festival days, the regular *tantri* of the temple conducts *madhyama-puja* (offering of toddy and meat) for Sree Bhagavathi at his house known as the Vattoli *illam*.¹⁸ All sattvic rites (*uththama-puja*) are held at this temple by the *tantri* who belongs to Chennas *illam*. From the beginning to the end of the festival, there will be cultural activities, day and night under the auspices of the sponsors.

Guruthi

The ceremony is also known as *Kuruthi*, *Guruthi* and *Gurusi*. *Kuruthi* means blood. Currently a mixture of turmeric and lime that gives a blood red colour, is used for Guruthi. In the past, *Guruthi* was conducted using the blood itself. To fulfil this purpose, chickens and goats were sacrificed in some Bhagavathi temples. The Puranas states that Adi

¹⁷ Kuruppanmar is a small community, considered to be part of ezhava community, found in central and northern part of kerala associated with Bhadrakali temples. They usually draw *kalam* or *kolam* in Bhadrakali temples.

¹⁸ Homes of Nambudiris (also Mana, Maththam)

Parashakti (primordial energy denoting the Supreme Goddess or Divine Mother in Hinduism) took the form of Kali to slay the Asura, Raktabija. He had a boon that whenever a drop of his blood fell on the ground, a duplicate Raktabija would be born at that spot (*rakta* = blood, *bija* = seed; "he for whom each drop of blood is a seed"). According to Devi Mahatmya, the Goddess annihilated Raktabija by making him to lie down on her outstretched tongue. Kali drank his blood without letting a drop fall on the ground, thereby preventing the formation of more Raktabijas. Thus Kali became bloodthirsty. The *Guruthi* is held at the Bhadrakali Temple on Tuesdays and Fridays. This offering is done by the devotees for the purpose of success in life and to avoid dangers.

Guruthi is held at the Srivalayanad Devi Temple on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays after *Athazhapooja*. Many devotees pay their dues in advance to conduct a *Guruthi*. After *Guruthi*, those devotees who have made *Guruthi* get *prasadam*, *theertham*, *Unniyappam* and green gram in a piece of plantain leaf. These will be delivered during the night by 9 p.m. Men can queue up to worship Bhagavathi followed by praying to Kshetrapala and then receiving the *prasadam*. Women can buy *prasadam* outside the *Nalambalam*. The closure of the temple is delayed on the days conducting the Guruthi due to the increased rush in the temple.

Kalamezhuthu Paattu

The *kalamezhuthu paattu* conducted from 1st of *Vrischikam* for 41 days of Mandala period is a peculiarity of the Valayanad Devi Temple. *Kalam*, a unique drawing of Kerala is a ritual art form since the ancient times. It refers to the pictorial representation of deities on the floor (*kalam*) using coloured powders (*kolappodi*) during ceremonies. When

combined with the singing of specific songs (*kalampaattu*) and dance movements related to the *puja* (*kalapradakshinam*), it becomes a ritualistic performance known as *kalamezhuthum paattum* or *kalamezhuthupaattu*.

Kalams occupy an important place in Kerala's rituals and figures of favourite Goddesses are drawn on the floor using powders. Songs are rendered to appease the figures/deities. Coloured powders are used for preparing the *kalam*. Primarily, five natural colours are used – white, black, yellow, green and red. For making the colours various natural products are used. White colours are extracted from rice flour, charcoal powder for black, turmeric powder for yellow, powdered green leaves for green and a mixture of turmeric powder and lime for red. *Kalam* are drawn by people belonging to different communities in different places.

Kalamezhuthu paattu performed mostly in Bhadrakali temples are known as Bhadrakali *kalam* and *Paattu*. These are also sung in Vettakkorumakan temples. The number of hands of Bhadrakali determines the size of the kalam. Some *kalam* have sixteen to sixty-four hands. Once the *kalam* drawing has been completed, paddy, coconuts and fibres are placed in the *kalam*. And then starts the rendering of songs. After rendering the songs, the performer circumambulates the *kalam*. Against the background music of instruments, the singer dances vigourously and will erase the *kalam*. The popular song rendered in Bhadrakali *paattu* is that of Bhadrakali killing the demon Darika. These are also known as *thottam paattu*.

Thottam

Thottam is celebrated as a festival at the Azhchavattam Tharakkal Bhagavathy Temple which is a *keezhedam* (subordinate temple) of the Valayanad Devaswom. The songs sung in praise of the Goddess in the Bhagavathy temples are called *Thottam*. These songs are sung as a part of special customs. The word ‘thottam’ means feeling. *Thottam* can be interpreted as the songs sung to make the goddess appear, which is derived from the verb '*thonnal*' which means to appear. That is why it is believed that the word ‘*stotram*’ (hymn) became *thottam*. The goddess is portrayed as the saviour of the world and the destroyer in the *thottam*. They are based on the concept of Bhadrakali protecting the world by subduing evil.

Muttarukkal

One of the main offerings at Valayanad Devi Temple is Muttarukkal. ‘Muttu’ means ‘obstacle’ and ‘Arukku’ means ‘to cut’. Therefore, Muttarukkal literally means to ‘cut away any obstacles’. The obstacles may be of many forms, it could be illness, an obstacle to good health, lack of business growth, obstacles due to bad influences etc. There are very many predefined obstacles for which this offering could be done by the devotee. It is believed that the *muttarakkal vazhipadu* (offering) when done in the presence of the Goddess will help one to face any obstacles and achieve success in life. Devotees believe this offering promotes healing, health care, education, employment and well-being.

A coconut, after removing its husk is given to the priest with the devotee’s name and birth star in Malayalam and the priest in turn breaks this coconut in front of the deity. If the coconut breaks evenly, it is believed that the *muttu* or obstacle is cut. In case the

coconut breaks unevenly, the devotee is asked to bring another and the process is repeated until the coconut breaks evenly denoting that the obstacle is cut. Coconuts for the offering could either be brought by the devotee or could be purchased from the Devaswom counter. After the coconut is shattered, the priest gives a coconut piece to the devotee as *prasadam*.

Source of Income and Renovation of the Temple

The primary source of income of the Valayanad Devi Temple is the money given by the devotees for *vazhipadu* (offering to God or Goddesses). Offerings are pouring into the temple not only from Kerala but also from different parts of the country. Offerings are being made in the name of big business enterprises as well as political, social and cultural leaders. It is important to note that the main offerings of the temple such as *valiya-guruthi*, mandalapattu and navaratri festival can be performed in a beautiful manner only with the altruistic help of the devotees and well-wishers of the temple. There are 45 items of *vazhipadu* (offering) in this temple and *valiya-guruthi* is the most important offering.

All the stone steps of the temple pond that have been in a state of disrepair were demolished and rebuilt. The pool is situated inside the temple walls and gateways were left open only to the devotees so that the sanctity of the temple pool could be maintained. The entire Thevarambalam Shiva Temple in *kizhakkenada* (eastern gateway), which was more than a century old, has been demolished and a splendid temple has been reconstructed at the site. This has increased the number of devotees who visit the temple. In the last few years, the circumambulatory pathway inside the Valayanad Devi Temple was paved with granite and the reconstruction of the dilapidated steps of the northern gateway have been completed. The surplus funds of the annual festival committees are being used for such

purposes. Recently, the eastern part of the temple was restored as well as preserved and about thirty steps were renovated. At the same time, the receipt counter for offerings near the eastern tower was refurbished and a hall was built for the devotees so that they could wait in queues and furthermore relax.

The long-cherished dream of the devotees to build a comfortable wedding hall adjacent to the temple has come true. The wedding hall of the temple is being rented out for weddings and similar events, making it very convenient not only for the locals but also for those living far away. There is no doubt that the *Sreedevi Kalyanamandapam* (temple wedding hall) will be an asset to the Valayanad Dewaswom.

The restoration works of the sanctum sanctorum has reached its final stage. The courtyard of the temple has been paved with *thalakallu* (flagstone) and steps made of *karinkallu* (granite) were constructed on the eastern gateway. Five latrines were built on the south side. The road to the south was reconstructed. Interlocking tiles were laid on the northeastern side. A biogas plant was built for the wedding hall of the temple. The construction of *vilakkumaadam* (multi-tiered brass lamps that are usually fixed on the *Chuttambalam*) at the Parthasarathy temple (*keezhedam or subordinate temple*) was completed. The refurbishment of the *aanapadi* (giant steps) of the northern gateway was completed. Apart from this, for the convenience of the devotees, construction of *Oottupura* (dining hall) Dormitory has started. In the near future, it is planned to repair the dilapidated *namaskara mandapam* (prayer hall) and *chuttambalam* along with the reconstruction of *vilakkumaadam*. It is intended to construct canopied walkways (*nadapanthal*) on the eastern and northern sides.

Mythology and Puja Traditions

Sri Valayanad Devi Temple is also known as the Thiruvalayanad Bhagavathy Temple. In the encyclopedia of the temple, it is written as Thiruvilayanattukavu. It also mentions about another temple, at Koduvayur in Palakkad district, that is also called Thiruvilayanattukavu. The elderly people still call the Valayanad Devi Temple as Thiruvilayanattukavu.

The description of Sri Valayanad Devi Temple in the temple-encyclopedia is given below. The main deity is Bhadrakali along with Saptamatrika. *Sri Chakra* is installed. Sri Valayanad Devi is the principal *bhara devatha* (family deity) of the Zamorin. Other *bhara devathas* (family deities) of the Zamorin are Bilathikulangara Vettekkorumakan¹⁹ and Tali Mahadeva (Lord Shiva). Sri Valayanad Devi being the principal family deity, the *sathyam cheyyal* (asserting truth by an oath in front of the deity) in the kingdom of Zamorin was at the Valayanad Devi Temple. According to the legends, Sree Porkali Bhagavathy is believed to be brought and installed here. There is an alternate opinion that the Tharakkal Bhagavathy of Azhachavattam is the *moolasthanam* (the initial place where the presence of the deity has first been revealed). Wishing for the prosperity of the country, the temple had been built with the consecration of Bhadrakali in accordance with the tradition of Shaktism. The worship is done by Pitarar brahmins and is called *madhyama puja*. In the sacred groves of the Pidarars the Nambudiris performed worship for one time and is called *uththama puja*.

¹⁹ Vettakkorumakan is believed to be the son of Lord Shiva by his consort Parvathi, born when he assumed the form of a Kirata (hunter) to deliver a divine weapon known as Pashupathasthra to Arjuna.

The temple *puja* is offered by the Nambudiris during the (eight-day) annual festival commencing from Karthika asterik on the month of *Makaram*. During this time, Goddess Bhadrakali is taken to the *illam* of the Moosad of Vattoli. Meanwhile, the Nambudiri *puja* and the festival is conducted by bringing and consecrating the Bhagavathy of Tali Mahadeva Temple. Naandakam, which is the personal sword of Bhagavathy kept at the Tali Mahadeva Temple, is brought in procession to the Valayanad Devi Temple. The Zamorin enters the temple through the northern gateway to pray to the Bhagavathy.

Puja by Pitarars

In temples of *Rurujit-vidhana* where *madhyama-pooja* (offering of toddy and meat) is performed, Moosads or Pitarars are the priests (*shanthikkaran*). Meat and alcohol is a core feature of worship in this temple, and the priests are by necessity non-vegetarians. They are regarded a little lower than Brahmins in caste status. The common Brahmin communities found in the district are Nambudiris (Malayali Brahmins), Embranthiris and Thulu Pottis. There are five Moosad families residing around the Sri Valayanad Kavu. They have the traditional right to do observances in the temple. The five *illams* are Vattoli-*illam*, Vadakke-*illam*, Kozhiparambillam, Naduvilakandi, and Kozhikodanparambu. The chief priests are from Vattoli-*illam* and Vadakke-*illam*, as an inherited right.

Legend has it that Kolathiri²⁰ brought Pitarars from Kashmir to perform Shakti rituals. It is also argued that they are Bengali Brahmins. There used to be Brahmanical *puja* once in a day in the *kavus* (sacred groves) of Pitarars. During the annual festival of the

²⁰ Kolathiri was the title by which the senior-most male along the matrilineal line of the Mushika or Kolathunadu Royal Family based at North Malabar region was styled.

Valayanad Devi Temple, there will be no *madhyama puja*. Instead, Brahmins were brought to the temple to perform the *uthama puja* (sattvic rites).

Rurujit-Vidhana

Rurujit, Dakshajit, Darikajit and Mahishajit are the four different forms of installations that could be found in a Bhadrakali temple. These names are derived from different forms of the Goddess Kali winning (*jit*) over different powerful demons. Bhadrakali, as the destroyer of demon Ruru is known as Rurujit. Similarly, the victory over Daksha, Darika and Mahisha earns Her the other 3 names. These *Saktheya prathishtta* (Devi worship installations) are considered to be formulated in *Rurujit-Vidhana* which is a Kashmiri Tantra based style of worship.

The temples which are devoted to Rurujit follows a pattern of installation of the deities which is mentioned in ‘*Shesha-Samucchaya*’ written by Chennas Sankaran Namboothirippaad. It stipulates that idols of Shiva, Rurujit (Chamunda), Mathrikas and Kshethrapala should be installed in the *akathe-balivattam* or *chuttambalam*. Salient features of *Rurujit-vidhana* (worship in accordance with mandatory injunction) are that it is a combination and embodiment of the famous concepts of Kashmiri Shaivism and also the *sankalpam* (splendid conception) of Goddess Tripura Sundari According to the Sriksula tradition in Shaktism, Tripura Sundari is the foremost of the Mahavidyas²¹ and the highest aspect of Goddess Adi Parashakti (primeval power).

²¹ A group of ten aspects of Devi that are Kali, Tara, Tripura Sundari, Bhuvaneshvari, Tripura Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi and Kamala.

Sri Valayanad Temple is different from other temples in Kerala for many reasons. The Valayanad Devi Temple is one among the few *Shakteya* temples worshiped in the *Rurujit-vidhana* based on ‘Kularnava Tantra’ which is a major text in the Kaula tradition of Shaktism and Tantric Shaivism. It is believed that the *Rurujit-vidhana* originated from the Kodungallur Temple in Thrissur district. In *Rurujit-vidhana*, Lord Shiva is consecrated independently facing east. Goddess Chamundi, the Rurujit, is consecrated in front of Lord Shiva on the southern side and could face north, east or west. On the south side of the two of these installations, the Saptamatrikas facing north and Kshetrapala facing south are installed. Valayanad Devi Temple satisfies the above dictum. The Shakti temple is dedicated to Chandika, a unique Kashmiri Goddess also known by as Mahagarvam and Kalasankarpini. It is also a rare temple where the Moosads who follow Kashmiri tradition of worship, perform rites and rituals pertaining to Shaktism.

Kaula

Kaula is a religious tradition in Shaktism and Tantric Shaivism characterised by distinctive rituals and symbolism connected with the worship of Shiva and Shakti. It flourished in ancient India primarily in the first millennium CE. Kaula preserves some of the distinctive features of the Kapalika tradition, from which it is derived. It is subdivided into four subcategories of texts based on the goddesses Kulesvari, Kubjika, Kali, and Tripura Sundari respectively. Kaula practices are based on tantra, closely related to the Siddha tradition and Shaktism. Kaula sects are noted for their extreme exponents who recommend the flouting of taboos and social mores as a means of liberation. Such practices were often later toned down to appeal to ordinary householders, as in Kashmiri Shaivism.

Alcohol, chicken and betel nuts are offered to the deity according to the Kaula conduct. Azhakath Shastra Sharman Namboodiripad wrote: “The Kaula conduct that has been a part of clan rituals was codified and modified. *Sri Chakra* worship and worship in accordance with Shaktism are only two cultural branches of the same doctrine”. The Moosads, who perform Shakti rituals there, use alcohol and meat for *puja*. The *pujas* performed in Mataikavu, Kodungallur and many other *kavu* (sacred grove) circles are just different forms of *puja* in accordance with Shaktism. In many places, special groups are assigned to perform the *puja* like Pitarars, Adikas, etc. In the *thottam* songs and matrilineal customs of their rituals the vigour and vivaciousness of Shakti worship could be seen. Bhuvaneshwari *puja* performed by Zamorin’s Nair warriors of Malabar was in fact the *Sri Chakra puja*.

Shaktism

Shaktism is one of several major Hindu denominations, wherein the metaphysical reality is considered metaphorically a woman and Shakti is regarded as the supreme godhead. It includes many goddesses, all considered aspects of the same supreme goddess. Shaktism has different sub-traditions, ranging from those focused on gracious Parvati to that of fierce Kali. The Sruti and Smriti texts of Hinduism are an important historical framework of the Shaktism tradition. In addition, it reveres the texts Devi Mahatmya, the Devi-Bhagavata Purana, Kalika Purana and Shakta Upanishads such as the Devi Upanishad. The Devi Mahatmya in particular, is considered in Shaktism to be as important as the Bhagavad Gita.

Shaktism is known for its various sub-traditions of Tantra²² as well as a galaxy of goddesses with respective systems. It consists of the Vidyapitha and Kulamarga. The pantheon of goddesses in Shaktism grew after the decline of Buddhism in India, wherein Hindu and Buddhist goddesses were combined to form the Mahavidya, a list of ten goddesses. Shaktism also emphasizes that intense love of deity is more important than simple obedience, thus showing the influence of Vaishnava idea where passionate relationship between Radha and Krishna is also the ideal relationship. These older ideas still influence modern Shaktism. Similarly, Shaktism's ideas have also influenced Vaishnavism and Shaivism traditions. In Shaktism, the Goddess is considered as the Shakti/Energy of Vishnu and Shiva respectively, and revered prominently in numerous Hindu temples and festivals.

Shaktism tradition practices animal sacrifice to revere goddesses such as Kali in many parts of India but particularly in the eastern states of India and Nepal. This is either an actual animal, or a vegetable or sweet dish substitute considered equivalent to the animal. In many cases, Shaktism devotees consider animal sacrifice distasteful, and practice alternate means of expressing devotion while respecting the views of others in their tradition. Animal sacrifices are performed at Shakti temples, particularly to mark the legend of Goddess Durga slaying the buffalo demon. This involves slaying of a goat or a male water buffalo. Animal sacrifice is also an essential component as part of the Kaula tantra school of Shaktism. The meat of the sacrificed animal is then cooked and eaten by the Shakta devotees.

²² Tantra refers to both the philosophy and set of spiritual practices that emerged in India around the 6th Century, focused on the direction and manipulation of universal energy as a means of liberation.

Conclusion

The Valayanad Devi Temple is entangled with the history of medieval Kerala. Zamorin, the ruler of Kozhikode, believed that the blessings of Valayanad Bhagavathy, the presiding deity of the temple, was the reason behind his victory over Valluvakonathiri, the ruler of Valluvanad. The Valayanad Bhagavathy is the family deity of the Zamorins. Zamorin's belief in the powers of Valayanad Bhagavathy was unwavering as he conducted animal sacrifice at the temple before he set his journey to Thirunavaya to preside over the *Mamankam* fair as the 'Great Protector'. This study is an exploration of the identity of Valayanad Devi Temple as a medieval temple in the contemporary context. Many books, reports and articles were referred for the purpose of the study.

Apart from the religious and historical significance, the Valayanad Devi Temple has been a part of both social and cultural aspects of the society of Kozhikode. A closer inspection of the customs, festivals, rites and rituals of the Valayanad Devi Temple would shed light on the social stratification during the medieval age of Kerala. The distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society could be grasped better by examining the records of the temple that detail the ordeal and festivals held there. The chapters of the study would help one to have a better understanding about the architecture and iconography of the temple along with the idolatry practiced in the temple.

This project attempted to delineate the peculiar aspects of Valayanad Devi Temple. Moosads, the priests of the Valayanad Devi Temple, follow the Kashmiri way of worship of Bhagavathy making it distinct from other temples that follow the principles of Shaktism. Another noteworthy specialty of Valayanad Devi Temple is that the puja is performed in

accordance with practice of *Rurujit-vidhana*. Usage of meat and alcohol as offerings to the deity is an anomaly when compared to most of the temples in the world. The project also expatiates about the fire ordeal that had been held in the temple.

The Valayanad Devi Temple is under the administration of Valayanad Devaswom Board with the present day Zamorin as the hereditary trustee of the board. At present, there are two *tantris*. The staff includes *santhikkars*, *kazhakam*, *vadyam*, watchman, storekeeper, mike operator etc. besides Manager. There had been a time when Valayanad Devi Temple struggled to meet the daily expenses of the temple but the situations has bettered now. The temple's primary source of income is from the *vazhipadu* offered by the devotees. The temple revenue has been used to renovate the dilapidated structures of the temple. The authorities of the Valayanad Devi Temple have already planned to introduce more developments and renovations of the temple. In conclusion, it could be said that the Valayanad Devi Temple is managed satisfactorily.

Appendix



Figure 1: Sree Valayanad Devi Temple, Kommeri



Figure 2: Sree Valayanad Bhagavathy

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