



## A Variety Of Ethnicities On Craft Conception Habituated In Premises Of Kerala.

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**Abstract:** *There are a number of conformist skill based forms extensively prevalent in instantaneous circumstances clearly visible for ordinary human beings. As a matter of fact, these innovative forms are part of an average power of human survival and performances of these social mechanisms are unavoidable for its existence. Many mechanisms are invented for reducing difficulties of employment and with use of them strains evacuated to negligible. Apart from useful aspects common man like them to contain a shape enhances aesthetic sensibilities of its beholder. On anticipation of this specific utility these mechanisms well planned before creation. There are several of activities come into ones purview when seriously look at it for its significance. In this study several venues of craft production are elaborately explained and pointed its social relevance on materialistic and Aesthetic utility. The craft productions found in Kerala has two phases, the first one is with excess of labour content in it and other is with more aesthetic or philosophic content. Necessity of further studies in this area is exposed and confirmed.*

**Key words:** Craft, Folk Arts, Nalukettu, Capitals, Chathurvarnya, Kodi Vilakku, Thadukku, Kuthira, Theyyam, Bhadrakalikalamezhuthu, Vadakkupurathu Pattu, Temple Proclamation.

**Introduction:** There are several conventional craft forms widespread in our instant situation which observable for ordinary human being. As a matter of reality, these creative forms are part of an average fortitude and performances of these social mechanisms are unavoidable for any survival. Man invented mechanisms for reducing his hazardousness of employment and composed their physical strains negligible. Apart from serviceable aspects the man likes them to contain a shape appealing to his aesthetic sensibilities. So he began to create with planned observations, anticipations and predictions. Anticipation is a humanitarian behaviour, he self accessed its explicitly beneficial efficiency and he cheerfully acknowledged the unintentional temperament of it. There are several of activities come into ones purview when seriously look at it for its significance.

**Certain Objects and Objectivities:** Implementation of wheel by its nature of revolving dynamics is one of the above noted kinds of finding. Colloquially called “Kappi” (means pulley) for the wheel made out of wooden logs placed over deep wells in villages all over Kerala is an example. It residue as a most major mechanism found by human being, remained usable for several centuries and famed for its straight forwardness and novel nature. These wheels are made in both materials, wood and Iron. The wheels made in wood are always made by craft persons belonged to carpenter families generally called “Asari” (*Note-1*) which is a job associated caste name in Kerala. When this mechanism is fully made with solid Iron, the creator would be an Iron worker, who is called “Kollan” (*Note-2*) (Blacksmith) in Kerala villages.

Another most significant example for a craft tradition that has been carried out for several centuries and made its impact stationary in our social background is the use of Bullock Carts. The huge, more than 6 feet dimensioned circular wheels are made up of wood and placed in both sides of the wooden platform created to place heavy materials measuring tons. An elongated wooden part is placed from the centre portion of the bullock cart in front. This portion is attached with two powerful bulls permitting them to pull the cart filled with heavy materials or the number of people sat on them including the Driver who controls the Bulls. Majorly wood is the material on use for preparation of Bullock Carts and Carpenters belonged to “Asari” caste families are the creators of the same. The workers related with “Asari” caste families have remarkable contributions on preparation of Furniture for various purposes including Chairs, Cots, Tables, other such objects and wardrobes. Apart from major masonry craft persons, it required specially trained workers belonged to ‘Asari’ caste for preparation of a house for construction of which wood is utilized as the major material. Whatever may be the material for construction, it was the duty of carpenter to make necessary calculations, create the concept and design for the building in Kerala, and he took the entire role of an architect during construction. With knowledge acquired traditionally on architecture they built beautiful houses using natural wood and named them Nalukettu, Ettukettu or Pathinarukettu according to the sizes of the houses they made. When the walls of the houses were made on wooden pedestals the rooms were called “Ara” (*Note-3*). Nalukettu (Four Blocks) is a house built with buildings in four sides, Ettukettu (Eight Blocks) is with adjunct of such two structures for single house and Patinarukettu (sixteen blocks) is construction of sixteen blocks enables four top open central portions in the single residential building. The number of people could be accommodated in each style of building is increased as per the number of Kettu (Block) is increased. Beautiful carvings on wood are elaborately chiselled to decorate various portions

of the Padmanabhapuram(*Note-4*) Palace is an example, for such kinds of residential buildings built in various parts of Kerala.

Single blocks are made for single family houses and Four Block houses with single opening at the central portion (Nalukettu) are built for the use of big Group family houses. Ettukettu of Eight structures are built for rich family houses for accommodating large number of people in it and Pathinarukettu are built for even more bigger number of people, accommodated rich group families and also the Palaces. Palace of Attingal (*Note-5*) is such a building traditionally made centuries ago but currently some parts of this structure is partially rebuilt or demolished forever.

There are beautiful carvings made on wood are deliberately used in various parts of the buildings in Kerala. These kinds of deliberations are visible all over the building particularly in which the wood is the major material. Decoratively carved portions are situated even in the roof structures made up of wood, specially designed carvings along the sides of wooden doors, Pillars and supporting beams etc. The pillars are decorated with Corinthian Capitals most of the time if it is in the open areas in the centre portions of the Nalukettu.

The central joining portions of the two shutters of doors are covered by a thick wooden log which is generally decorative all the time. It has no other function than become supportive to the shutters. The central portions of the door are fitted with huge Iron lock which is usually has curiously curved portions which generate curiosity of the viewers. The people belongs to “Kollan” religious group were responsible for making of all iron tools starting from small knives known as penknives to Axe called Kodali(*Note-6*) , the heaviest tool to cut wood. They were skilled enough people to meet all iron work demands including sharpening tools, making small mechanisms in locks, designing beautiful locks and Making tools for carpenters, stone workers and all other tools, arms and armouries to maintain ordinary life in a village. It is here important to state that the sub castes Asari Musari Karuvan Thattan are subdivisions of Viswakarma the splendid division of Sudra and the fourth division of Chaturvarnya (*Note-7*) society.

People of “Mushari” religious division were responsible for all works related with casting and making of utensils. Copper, Brass and Bronze were three different mixtures of metals used for such purposes in Kerala. Uruli, Valkindi, Thalika, Poothalam, Traditional Lamps known as Nilavilakku (*Note-8*) are some of such utility objects made with devotional purposes and revered utilities. The workers of the village in this particular category were always adopted the lost wax method for the creation of casted utensils in Kerala. Kodivilakku (*Note-8*) is a small lamp used during devotional practices, use of which is largely appreciated in temple surroundings. The

devotional bell is another object used during devotional practices. The traditional bronze bells are made in various sizes and with various combinations of metals for the creation of desired tune from it. Similarly the lamps, Utensils such as Lotta, Uruli, Kindi are made in various sizes to support the day to day utility. Traditional Lamps are made in various sizes up to more than six feet heights which are utilized during Kathakali performances in Kerala and were known as Aattavilakku (*Note-9*).

The workers belongs to Kubhakar (*Note-10*) sub-cast were responsible for making terracotta utensils in villages. They collect clay from loose soiled cultivation fields and smashed over it after mixing with fibrous materials to generate pasty quality and boldness. They make the utensils using this pasty clay and broaden them by putting in sunlight. They beat over the form and tight the clay broadens and let it fully dry in shadows. Later burn it on fire and make the shapes permanent. It was on practice and the products were on sale by the producers themselves travelling by foot taking them in heavy baskets over head.

There are several kinds of Baskets for carrying objects are made using prepared Bamboo flexible strips. The largest of them are meant to carry heavy articles, are made considerably big and are called 'Kutta' (*Note-11*). They are popularly used in entire Kerala. The ordinary people place heavy objects in "Kutta" and carry those over head for transportation. Thick Bamboo splits are the material used by the workers who make it. Similarly small baskets are made to carry small objects and keep them in homes, which are called "Vatti" (*Note-11*). Most of the time Bamboo split is the material for production of the "Vattis". Bamboo split is made thin and cleaned to make flattened square holders by hand weave to create "Muram" (*Note-11*). It is largely used in all over Kerala state to handle rice and paddy. "Parambu" (*Note-11*) is a larger mat weaved using bamboo thin material which is largely on use in Kerala to place paddy and rice on sun light. The Parambu are rolled longer and kept hang in village houses for next uses over several years.

But it can be noticed that there are 'Vattis' made with prepared soft materials made from other vegetations too. Same material is used for the preparation of Mats to lie on which are sized normally 6 feet x 3 feet. Sometimes prepared leaf of "Palm Tree" (Panamaram) is used to prepare small bags. Same material is used to make small mats for sitting on the floor which are known as "Thadukku" (*Note-11*).

There are Umbrellas made using prepared leaves of "Palm Tree" which are made round and conical in shape, could be fitted on head so the user didn't have to carry it. There are even smaller umbrellas made with a bamboo handle. The raw rice measuring Vessels and small measuring Vessels are made both in Metal and wood. They are widely available all through Kerala. Wooden seats to sit are of a special mobile design widely used in Kerala.

Another remarkable utility based production is Maruvis (*Note-11*) made out of wood. Also the Aattukallu, Arakallu, (*Note-11*) grounding mechanism through turning etc made up of granite are wonderful human inventions where the brain took its role soundly.

The mechanisms used for removing water shed from the cultivation fields in farm bound wet areas of Kerala are also to be considered here. I have already discussed a number of venues where craft production conceived on the basis of utility. Apart from materialistic utility the man has demands for objects useful to his psychological leisure. Belief in religion is reason to substitute leisure, an unavoidable element in human lives. To accommodate leisure, human mind search for departed feeling from his busy schedules of workouts in day to day life. They curiously found religious reasons to produce objectivities which have no other meanings than production of aesthetics and leisure. The society found logical conclusions for involvement in mind simulative activities like creation of aesthetic objectivities in collection of massive efforts.

All along Kerala it is visible beautiful pedestals made during festivals of temples and otherwise, and carry them with massive efforts by large number of people gathered on religious reasons, considering the temple of deity the destination. Many thousands of people are gathered for such functions on particular day and time as they make it as a purpose of duty. These images have more to do than just appealing aesthetic sensibilities, but the rest is psychological and indescribable. The pedestals made during the Bharani festival of Chettikulangara (*Note-12*) Temple are an objectivity of this kind. Several Pedestals are made by different groups of people and brought them to the Temple premises with almost participation of human gathering. Such kinds of forms are made all over Kerala in relation with Temple festivals and the entire process is done with large human attention and participation in each venue. Similarly, Animal figures are made in huge sizes, decorated and carried to festival venues with logics build on religious themes. These animal figures are known as “Kuthira” (*Note-13*) in the villages. Chinakkathur Pooram and Machathu Mamangam are some notable occasions of this kind. The various images of “Theyyam” are a good example of elaborate craft attempts made by human being for other than mere utility purposes but devotional and aesthetics.

Shadow puppeteering (*Note-14*) is an entirely unique production with ambience of aesthetics and leisure. There are more than 150 venues in Kerala where Shadow Puppeteering is held during festivals as a yearly practice particularly in northern parts of Kerala. Puppets are made with prepared animal leather and coloured with natural colours. The shadows are projected to a cotton screen with moving effect and religious story is narrated dramatically and musically with accompaniment of musical instruments. Basically the men behind it are nomads,

roots found all over the globe. There are a number of families settled currently in Kerala for past several centuries' finds reasonable reasons for their century long stay here. In India, they generally adapted the story of Ramayana as a major theme for theatrical presentation which is largely appreciated.

Widely spread all over Kerala is the drawing with vegetable powder colors and worship particular god or goddess for blessings on anticipation of advancement in life. Most popular one among such craft production is Bhadrakalikamezhuthu and singing of praises of Goddess. The biggest diagrams in this style are done once in 12 years at Vaikkam Mahadeva Temple along with other worship modes, which are known as Vadakkupurathu Pattu. This is 12 days long celebrations during which variant iconographic images of Goddess are drawn each day in which shows Lourdes Bhadrakali is arriving on Vetala - her chariot- handing Head of Darikasura (Darika the demon) after killing him on fierce war. Praising songs to Bhadrakali is sung in the evenings after drawing the images and the picture is removed at the end by the devotees. Removed mixed color powder is distributed as Prasad to devotees. There are many thousands of venues in Kerala here similar kinds of devotional practices are performed to attract well wishes of Devi for goodness of Man.

There are more than two hundred venues marked in Kerala where Mural paintings are elaborately drawn. The surface of the devotional venues is prepared for painting and pictures are drawn with naturally produced colors. Most of the time Hindu religious themes are stylistically drawn on the walls of temples. (*Note-15*) Pictures are drawn several centuries ago, but when Christianity was established in Kerala, the churches also began to be decorated with these kinds of narrative pictures. It is important to note that the oldest examples for these painting activities might have done by higher caste Hindu artists belongs to sub castes of Nair like Warriar, Kurup, Marar etc, because entrance of lower and other caste people were largely controlled before Temple Proclamation in 1936. Most of the meticulously done venues were created before that.

The People survive at northern coastal areas of Kerala are experts in making huge ships which are practically found beneficial and economically supportive. Local technologies are utilized and they build big ships using wood as a major material and market them to requirement. There are several families and groups in Kerala dedicatedly working in this area of craft production.

There are several thousands of humans engaged in making cloth by hand weaving. Balaramapuram (*Note-17*) of southern Kerala is an example for such venues in Kerala. Hand weavers are spread all over Kerala and mostly they are belongs to lower caste Hindu Families. It required more than one person efforts to continue cloth production by hand weaving and it a joined process. Many of the time all the family members are involved with

various stages of cloth production including arranging the fibre, Weaving, Colouring and marketing. Even though they are bound to enquire other resources also for a stable survival as the wages in this area of production are such low. Also currently the hand weavers have to compete with cloth mills, their massive low cost production and marketing skills.

**Conclusion:** In this study, I have briefly introduced and explained several venues of craft production which has social relevance on materialistic and Aesthetic utility. The craft productions found in Kerala has two phases, the first one is with excess of labour content in it and other is with more aesthetic or philosophic content. The later discussed craft forms like Leather puppet manipulating, Mural painting, and the Festival images (forms made and carried by human gatherings during Festivals) have a greater affinity towards production of visual aesthetics. But as a matter of fact productions in these titles are just making repetitions of the images previously done with neglecting the spirit of making aesthetic saturated and secondary. Some of them acquire and reflects the meaning that certain level of practice could make anybody a creator of this genre. But it is true only when considering materialistic but untrue for creation of artists of improvisation and experimentation. They could only produce craft but not aesthetics. After several centuries of continuous work they are unable to mark any kind of improvised status in their products. The forces of widely accepted art forms are their capacity for renovation and originality on mere communication. But many times images are not created for communication of aesthetics and realities of life but to transfer religious content and physical being in it as a mere and only purpose, as it a craft form which has to meet its mere purposes only. The innocent repetitive qualities with focus on results are never vanishing but powerfully reminding its weaknesses to turn original. Thus it found adequate to attach them into category of crafts than original unique art form.

Being a curious resident of this area, I have described all what naturally exposed to me and took attention as craft production in surroundings. After evaluation through analysis on them focusing various grounds, I felt the significance and the requisite of further studies in this area and chances for the same are uncovered and entrenched.

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### List of Images.

1. *Iron Kappi (Pully). Kindi, Kodivilakku.*
2. *Traditional lamp- Nila Vilakku – Various sizes.*
3. *Warpu, a bronze casted utensil for cooking food for feasts.*
4. *Bullock Cart, a terracotta representation from Indus valley.*
5. *Portion of Padmanabhapuram palace example for Kerala Architecture.*
6. *Vatti, Kutta, Muram for handling household items.*
7. *Aattukallu, Arakallu, Ural for household use.*
8. *Temporarily built image for Chettikulangara Bharani festival.*

9. Animal figures for Chinakkathur Pooram- at static stage.
10. Animal figures on mobility with human force during Machathu Mamangam.
11. Theyyam Image symbolizing Devi with majestic craft work on headgear.
12. Theyyam on performance on a street.
13. Another image with appealing craft work on it.
14. Uru- the ship at delicate fabrication level and craft.
15. Uru- Nearing completion= floating.
16. Image of Pavakkoothu, lord Shiva.
17. Principal images of Ramayana on stage during Pavakkoothu Performance.
18. Ramachandra Pulavar, the leading Pavakkoothu artist in Kerala.
19. Bhadrakalikalam on worship during Vadakkupurathu Pattu of vaikkom Mahadeva temple.
20. Achutha Marar, an exponent of Bhadrakalikalam on completion of Devi image.
21. Gopalakrishna Kurup and his disciples at work during Vadakkupurathu Pattu celebrations.
22. Daru Shilpa f Yakshi image, from poovappuzha Temple.
23. Mural painting at Padmanabhapuram Palace, Sree Krishna and Gopikas.
24. Mural image of Dakshina Murthi at Panayannarkavu Temple.
25. Mural painting- Awaking Kumbhakarna. Mattancheri Palace.
26. Sree Rama Pattabhishekam, Padmanabhapuram Palace.
27. Women working on a pit loom for making cloth.
28. Man working on a stand loom for making cloth.

**Image: Courtesy: images 1-10, 14, 15, 22-26 common files widely available used, Images 11, 12, 13, 27, and 28 Artist Babunamboodiri K photography 2014 and 2003, Images 16-18 Support from Ramachandra Pulavar, 20. Suresh Punalur Photography, 19, 21 image supported by Vaikkom Gopalakrishna Kurup.**

## Images.

Image-1.



Image-2



Image-3



Image-4



Image-5



Image-6



Image-7



Image- 8



Image-9



Image-10



Image-11



Image-12



Image-13.



Image-14.



Image-15



Image-16



Image-17



Image-18



Image-19.



Image-20.



Image-21



Image-22



Image-23.



Image-24.



Image-25



Image-26



Image-27

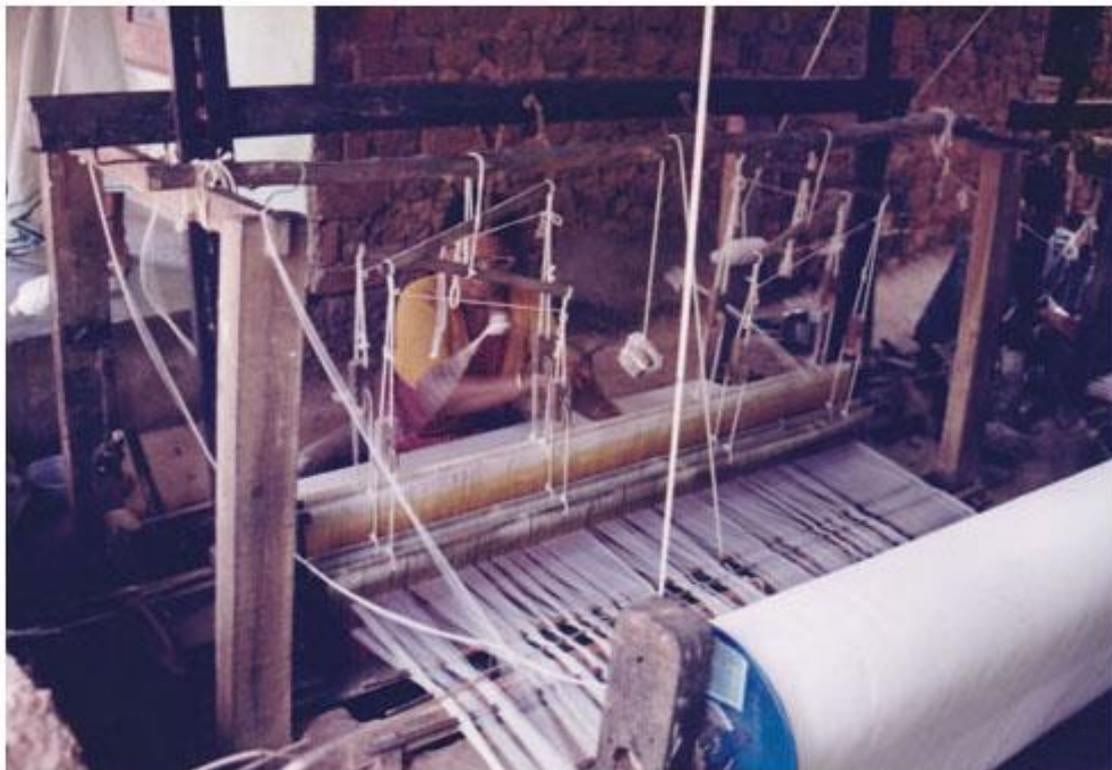


Image-28



### Notes

1. *Asari. A Malayalam word means the Carpenter and denote a sub caste of Shudras in four caste system.*
2. *Kollan. Malayalam word means the Blacksmith.*
3. *Ara. Malayalam word for safe room.*
4. *Padmanabhapuram was once the Capital of Travancore and currently situated in Tamil Nadu, State.*
5. *Attingal is thirty five Kilometers far in the north away from Capital City of Kerala State, Trivandrum.*
6. *Kodali is the Malayalam word for Axe.*
7. *Referred here the ancient four caste system with Brahmin, Kshathriya, Vyshya, and Shudra castes in it.*
8. *Uruli, Valkindi, Thalika, and Poothalam are words of Malayalam origin describing various utensils of day to day life and Nilavilakku is the traditional Bronze ceremonial Lamp.*
9. *Attavilakku is made up of bronze in shape of a traditional lamp with enough heights to fall light into the face of actors while Kathakali Performances are on.*
10. *Kumbhakar, Kusava, are Malayalam words denotes clay figure makers for terracotta. Kusava is the sub caste of Shudras the fourth category of four caste system.*
11. *Kutta, Vatti, Muram, Parambu, Thadukku are Malayalam words for objectivities utilized in day to day life.*
12. *Chettikulangara is a place in Central Kerala.*
13. *Kuthira: a composed Horse image.*
14. *Puppeteering, Manipulate puppets as in a theatrical performance.*
15. *The artists depends up on Dhyana slokas for the iconographic image to be drawn in painting.*
16. *Warrier, Kurup, Marar are belongs to higher castes acknowledged as per the job they are placed in, in temples.*
17. *Balaramapuram is in Trivandrum District where thousands of Weavers settled their lives and work in family groups.*

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