



# Cultural Impact And Dynamics In Kaikottikkali

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## ABSTRACT:

The performing arts like Kaikottikkali was essential in preserving the cultural and ritualistic traditions of Kerala's Namboothiri households. The Illam, a traditional Namboothiri household, served as a key venue for ritual performances, linking the dance to religious and social practices. The influence of Brahmin households extended to the Kathakali art form, impacting Kaikottikkali techniques and compositions. Despite their cultural contributions, Brahmin women were subjected to strict societal restrictions and limited personal freedom, although their role in creating and performing Kaikottikkali songs remain a notable aspect of their contribution to the art.

**AIM:** To bring out the cultural and artistic contribution of the Namboodiri community in kaikottikkali.

## KEYWORDS:

Gurukulam, attakalari, Namboodiri illam, kathakali, tazhekkattumana, mundum-veshti, marakkuda, cheriya Parvathy swayamvaram, veliya Parvathy swayamvaram, gaurivratam, muthassi, brahmin, thiruvathira, kaikottikkali, aupasana, thirumunbu.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Kaikottikkali, a traditional dance form practiced predominantly in Kerala, India, carries profound historical and cultural significance. To fully appreciate its origins and development, it is essential to understand the role of the Namboothiri caste and Illam within this context. The Namboothiri community, a prominent Brahmin caste in Kerala, has been instrumental in shaping various aspects of Kerala's cultural landscape, including its dance forms. The Namboothiri's, known for their scholarly and ritualistic contributions, have historically held

a prestigious position in the region. Their influence extended to the arts, where they played a crucial role in the development and preservation of classical dance forms, including Kaikottikkali. Illam, a traditional Namboothiri household or family institution, is central to the cultural and ritualistic practices of the community. It serves as a custodian of sacred traditions and rituals, and its members are often deeply involved in the performance of various dance forms and religious ceremonies. The relationship between the Illam and the dance forms is related, as these households often serve as the venues for ritualistic performances, including Kaikottikkali. Historically, Kaikottikkali was performed during festivals and temple events, reflecting its deep connection with the religious and social practices of the Namboothiri's. The dance not only served as a form of worship but also as a means of reinforcing community bonds and cultural identity. The role of the Namboothiri caste and Illam in the dance's development highlights their broader influence on Kerala's cultural heritage.

## II. TAZHEKKATTUMANA – ART TRADITION

Among the 64 Brahmin villages established by Jamadagni's son Parashurama, payyannur village is the northern most village of Kerala villages. The 16 Brahmin family, with the title of “*thirumunbu*” were settled as its rulers. These 16 Namboothiri households, represent the golden inscriptions of Uttara Kerala's art and literary tradition due to their historical significance and positive contributions to the arts and culture of that era, shining brightly as a prominent symbol.

For over a century, the Manas of Payyannur village served as a prominent Gurukulam, nurturing numerous Kathakali Acharyas. During this period, the institution was renowned for its contribution to the Kathakali art form, which is a celebrated tradition in Malayalam culture. Historical accounts suggest that the temple associated with the Brahmin houses was actively engaged in scholarly activities related to Kathakali. Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, a distinguished Kathakali teacher and practitioner, provides valuable testimony regarding this legacy. He recounts that his mentor, Guru Chandupanikar Ashan, made his debut performance in the courtyard of Thazhekkattumana. This venue was notable for its association with significant figures in Kathakali. Among the historical narratives related to the Attakalari—traditional training spaces for Kathakali—life stories of Guru Chandupanikar Ashan hold a place of prominence. These accounts reflect the enduring impact of the Brahmin household's influence on the evolution and dissemination of Kathakali as an esteemed art form.

The Golden Age of Brahmin households' art history is widely regarded as occurring during the reign of Valiya Vasudevan Thirumunbu, also known as Shakthan Vasu Devan Thirumunbu, at Thazhekkattumana. It was under Thirumunbu's patronage that the Kathakali group was established at Brahmin household, reflecting his profound appreciation for musical arts. In contemporary times, the legacy of this artistic tradition is perpetuated through the efforts of ancestors who travelled to Eranadu (Malappuram district) to study Kathakali and the Acharyas who were invited to share their expertise. These influential figures have imparted their knowledge and techniques to subsequent generations, ensuring that the artistic heritage continues to thrive. It is evident that Kaikottikkali has been influenced by Kathakali in various aspects, including its techniques and musical compositions. This influence is reflected in the incorporation of Kathakali elements into the Kaikottikkali performance, showcasing the impact of Kathakali's traditional practices on the development and refinement of Kaikottikkali.

### 2.1 contributions to kaikottikkali songs:

Thazhekkattumana located in Payyannur district of Kerala was a significant centre for the preservation of culture and tradition. It was a repository of traditional Kaikottikkali songs, which have been used since ancient times and are regarded as a valuable collection of musical heritage.

The works, such as:

- '*Cheriyā Parvathi Swayamvaram*' by Cheriyā Nangaiyā amma thirumunbu
- '*Sri Gopika Gaurivratam*' by Sridevi amma thirumunbu
- '*Veliyā Parvathy Swayamvaram*' by Unnimaya amma thirumunbu
- '*Rukmini Swayamvaram Cheruthu*' by Unnimaya amma thirumunbu
- '*Thinkalaazhcha mahathmyam*' by T E Narayanan thirumunbu
- '*Valli swayamvaram*' by Kannarathu Lakshmi

These were highly esteemed but remained largely within the brahmin community. Thiruvathira songs written by men were also confined to the mind without being known, since it was performed exclusively by women inside their houses for private occasions, it remained largely unnoticed by the outside world.

### III. WOMEN IN BRAHMIN HOUSE

Despite the significant cultural and intellectual contributions of Brahmin families, women within these households often faced limitations in terms of freedom and preferential treatment. Brahmin families, esteemed for their scholarly and ritualistic roles, have upheld a high regard for tradition and cultural practices. This reverence for tradition, however, did not necessarily extend to the empowerment of women.

#### 3.1 Nangeliamma Thirumunbu – Tazhekkattumana

Nangeliamma Thirumunbu was born in 1925 to Keezhaattupuram Narayanan Namboothiri and Unnimayamma Thirumunbu of thazhekkattumana. She was married at the age of 19. Throughout her life, Nangeliamma maintained the practice of Thiruvathira, continuing its observance even after the death of her husband. Since she did not fully adhere to all fasting rituals, she had persistently engaged in singing Thiruvathira songs. She had dedicated a significant portion of her time to singing and learning, serving as a beacon of our rural cultural values.

In the past, women had very limited freedom. Although the elderly person of the family exhibited a notable affection for children, this fondness often dissipated as girls grew older. The lives of girls during that era were characterized by a constrained existence; they were required to remain secluded, avoiding interaction with men, and wore cotton off-white clothes ie; '*mundum-veshti*' in a manner and were compelled to cover their faces with a particular type of umbrella known to be '*marakkuda*'. Nangeliamma's experience mirrored this reality. As she reached maturity, her life too became confined to a corner, reflecting the restrictive norms of that time.

Inside the household, Brahmin women lacked the freedom to express or make decisions about their own thoughts. Their daily routine was confined to waking up in the morning, performing household duties, and taking care of the children, reflecting a life of strict limitations. This situation was consistent across other villages as well.

The education system of that period was such that girls were taught but not allowed to go outside. Instead, teachers were called to house to instruct the children. Nangeliamma received her education from Govindanmash of the Cheralan family, Krishnanmash of the Kakot family, and Sreekumarettan (before Sreekumaran). However, once she grew older, her education came to an end. Despite her desire to continue learning, she was unable to do so. Nangeliamma's marriage was not of her own choosing; she was compelled to marry the man selected by the elders in her family. At the age of nineteen, she was married to Raman Namboodiri, who was twenty-eight, based on her uncle's decision. The wedding was a four-day celebration,

and it was only on the fourth day, after the Aupasana ritual was performed, that she saw her husband's face for the first time. The brahmin Houses are renowned for kaikottikkali which were regarded as a form of art during that period.

From a young age, only maternal ancestors and girls were involved in the Thiruvathira day celebration. Grandmothers, who composed songs and set them to music, instructed the rhythmic steps and played the accompaniment. In their leisure time, they would sing, clap their hands, and motivate others to learn the art form.

#### IV. CONCLUSION:

Kaikottikkali, a traditional performing art from Kerala, is deeply connected to the Namboothiri Brahmin community and their households, known as *Illams*. The Namboothiri's, known for their scholarly and ritualistic roles, significantly influenced Kerala's cultural practices, including Kaikottikkali, which was performed during festivals and special occasions to strengthen community bonds and cultural identity.

The *Illam*, central to Namboothiri cultural and ritualistic life, served as a venue for these performances. The artistic legacy of the Namboothiri's, in several villages, is noteworthy for its contributions to Kathakali as its influence is evident in Kaikottikkali techniques and music.

Women in Brahmin families, despite their crucial role in cultural practices like Kaikottikkali, faced significant restrictions. Their lives were constrained by strict traditional norms, limiting their freedom and opportunities. The female members of the Brahmin community were highly valued within the community but largely unnoticed outside it.

It is the culture of a people that is evident in the form of literature, music, and dance. With the flow of time, changes can happen in any art, but changes should not destroy their uniqueness. All these make thiruvathirakali different artform from other dance forms. It can be described as the life pulses of ancient Kerala or the rhetorical pictures of social life. The evolving world and the influence of modernisation cause challenges to preserving such artforms. As custodians of our cultural heritage, it is the responsibility of the future generations to maintain the integrity of this traditional artform.

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