

**PASSION FOR ELEPHANTS AND MODERN POPULAR
CULTURE: EXPLORING THE RITUAL WORLD OF
CENTRAL KERALA**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

BY

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

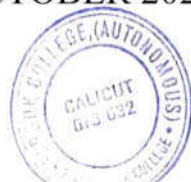
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis "**Passion For Elephants and Modern Popular Culture: Exploring the Ritual World of Central Kerala**", is a bonafide record of research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Manmathan M R, HoD, Associate Professor of History, University of Calicut and it has not previously formed the basis for award of any other Degrees. The contents of the thesis are undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDB	-	Cochin Devaswom Board
CWLW	-	Chief Wildlife Warden
GDB	-	Guruvayur Devaswom Board
ME	-	Malayalam Era
MLA	-	Modern Language Association format
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organisations

Abstract

Microscopic ants to magnificent elephants, non-humans played significant role in the formation and evolution of History. There is difference in the perspectives for elephants between countries having elephant population and those were foreign to elephants. In India Elephants of ancient and medieval days considered as royal status symbol and military strength. In Kerala placing elephants from Natural place to Cultural space has gone through various stages. Role played by elephants since early to present days as part of militia, royal proud, status symbol, religious icon and as cultural magnates were substantial. From displacing elephants from its original natural place to ritual space brought about all kind of restrictions along with increasing care and consideration for the giant. Emergence of Temple centered society mark the beginning of elephants in temple space. Initially elephants were tamed, captured, incorporated to human geography may be as the part of reducing human elephant struggle and later used as assistance for clearing forest, moving timber, etc.

As per information from temple *Granthavari*, temples, rulers and socio economic elites maintained elephants as their wealth. Rulers were maintained and added elephants for their important functions like *Ariyittuvazhcha* during the coronation ceremony. Rulers and elites donated Elephant to temples as offering and as an object of penalty for their offence. This practice of *nadayiruthal* of elephants along with capturing elephant from temple owned forest land increased elephant wealth in temples. Temples of Kerala which remain as nerve centres of society by medieval times has been maintained elephants for constructive purposes in the initial stage and later incorporated them to cultural arena. Rituals of the temples were evolved and added by the temple elites like Brahmins. Deities of temples is considered as protector or ruler of a region and hence attribute all privilege of rulers to deity including procession on elephant top. As per the suggestions of *Thantrasamuchaya* of fifteenth century, elephants were added by affordable temples to the daily rituals like *seeveli*, *chuttuvilakku*, etc. Along with daily rituals annual ritualslike festivals in which deity is coming out of the *sreekovil* to the public space were arrived on elephant top. Elephants as the magnificent animal with huge size could keep the status and purity of the deity in

the public space. As temples were very much keen in keeping the status of the deity high, they initiated annual festivals and holy bath to increase the power of the deity through the collective efforts and support of the people in which elephant became an inseparable element in central Kerala.

Inclusion of Elephants in festival developed as an indigenous institution was included in to the main stream of culture is an intentional process initiated by religious elites with royal patronage. Peruvanam, Arattupuzha festival which is considered as mother of all festivals was initiated and controlled by Brahmin priest. Elite temples, initiated rituals and festivals with elephants, and continued this practice for many years. Compared to other regions, central Kerala is celebrating large number of festivals incorporating maximum number of elephants which can be categorised in to padahadi and dwajadi festivals which give importance to celebrations and popularity than anguradi which give priority for ritualistic elements.

People of Central Kerala, from their childhood days are very much familiar with elephants through various means along with rituals and festivals. Culturally conditioned atmosphere was favourable to elephants and collective mentality of people helped to increase elements of passion towards the magnificent celebrity and create a stardom in cultural space. The role played by intermediaries between elephant owners and temple authorities was an important development of 1980s. Apart from this Elephant Fans Association also helped for increasing the fame of elephants. Advertisements plays an important role in accumulating passion for elephants. Temple elephants in festivals shows that, cultural additions were done by the socio political elites while its maintenance could be done with the support of the masses. When some elements were added in the mainstream of culture and it became a part of popular culture, it will last for long run and alterations are possible with the functioning of multiple internal and external factors. By tracing the causes of passion for elephants, rituals and festivals played a major role. Beyond the religious boundaries it evolved as a collective mentality favourable for inclusion of elephants in religious and secular space, and became part of popular culture with an increasing level in Central Kerala.

സംക്ഷിപ്തം

മനുഷ്യ കേന്ദ്രീകൃത ചിന്താധാരകൾക്കു വീക്ഷണങ്ങൾക്കും അപ്പുറം, മനുഷ്യേതര ജീവ ജാലങ്ങളും ചരിത്ര നിർമ്മിതിയിൽ പങ്കു വഹിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. മനുഷ്യനും പ്രകൃതിയും തമ്മിലുള്ള അഭേദ്യമായ ബന്ധവും മനുഷ്യന് മൃഗങ്ങളോടുള്ള സൗഹൃദപരമായ ഇടപെടലും ആദ്യകാലം മുതലേ കാണാവുന്നതാണ്. ഉടമ-അടിമ എന്ന ചിന്തയിൽ നിന്നും മനുഷ്യനാണു എല്ലാത്തിന്റെയും ഉടമസ്ഥൻ എന്ന മനുഷ്യകേന്ദ്രീകൃത കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ നിന്നും വ്യതിചലിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് പ്രപഞ്ചത്തിലെ സകല സൃഷ്ടികളെയും ആദരവോടെ നോക്കിക്കാണുക എന്ന മനോഭാവത്തിലേക്കു മനുഷ്യൻ ക്രമേണ നീങ്ങി.

മനുഷ്യസമൂഹത്തിന്റെ പുരോഗമനപരമായ വികാസപ്രക്രിയയിൽ മനുഷ്യേതര ജീവികൾ പ്രത്യേകിച്ചു ആനകൾ വഹിച്ച പങ്ക് ഒഴിവാക്കാനാവാത്തതാണ്. ലോകത്തുടനീളം ആനകളോടുള്ള സമീപനത്തിൽ ഒരുപരിധി വരെ സാദൃശ്യമുണ്ടെങ്കിലും ഇന്ത്യാചരിത്രത്തിൽ ആനകൾക്ക് പ്രത്യേക പരിഗണനയും മുൻതൂക്കവും ലഭിച്ചിരുന്നതായി മനസ്സിലാക്കാം. കാട്ടിൽനിന്നു നാട്ടിലെത്തപ്പെട്ട ആനകൾ ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ വിവിധ മേഖലകളിൽ സ്വാധീനം ചെലുത്തിയിരുന്നതായി പല വിധ സ്രോതസ്സുകൾ സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ആദ്യകാലങ്ങളിൽ ആനകൾ രാജകീയ പ്രൗഢിയുടെയും സൈനിക ശക്തിയുടെയും പ്രത്യക്ഷ അടയാളങ്ങൾ ആയിരുന്നു. രാജകീയ ചിഹ്നങ്ങളിൽ ഉള്ള സാന്നിധ്യം മുതൽ സൈനിക ശക്തിയുടെ നേർകാഴ്ചയായും, ഫ്യൂഡൽ പ്രഭുത്വത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യക്ഷ പ്രതിഫലനമായും കേരള ചരിത്ര ഉപാദാനങ്ങളിലും ആനകളെ കാണാം.

ക്ഷേത്ര കേന്ദ്രീകൃത സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ ആവിർഭാവത്തോടു കൂടി ആന എന്നത് ക്ഷേത്ര സമ്പത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി മാറുകയും, ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങളുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ നടത്തിയിരുന്ന കൃഷിവ്യാപനത്തിനും കാടുകൾ വെട്ടിത്തെളിക്കുന്നതിനും മരത്തടികൾ ആവശ്യാനുസരണം ഒരു സ്ഥലത്തുനിന്നു മറ്റൊരു സ്ഥലത്തേക്ക് എത്തിക്കുന്നതിനും ആനകളുടെ സഹായം ആവശ്യമായി തീരുകയും ചെയ്തു. മധ്യകാല ക്ഷേത്രലിഖിതങ്ങളിലും ഗ്രന്ഥവരികളിലും ഭരണാധികാരികളും വരേണ്യവർഗവും ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങളും വരുമാനമാർഗമായി ആനയെ നില നിർത്തിയിരുന്നതായി നമുക്ക് കാണാം. സ്ഥാനാരോഹണ ചടങ്ങുകളിലും, അരിയിട്ട് വാഴ്ചയിലും, ആനപ്പുറത്തുള്ള യാത്രകൾ പരാമർശിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങൾ നേരിട്ട് കാടുകളിൽ നിന്നും പിടിച്ചെടുക്കുന്ന ആനകളെ കൂടാതെ, ഭൂപ്രഭുക്കന്മാരും നാടുവാഴികളും വഴിപാടായും പിഴയായും ആനകളെ ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങളിലേക്കു നടയിരുത്തിയിരുന്നതായി രേഖകളിൽ വായിക്കാം. ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങളിൽ എത്തിച്ചേർന്ന ആനകളും ആദ്യകാലങ്ങളിൽ നിർമ്മാണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെയും പിന്നീട് ക്ഷേത്രചാരങ്ങളുടെയും അത്യന്താപേക്ഷിതമായ ഘടകമായി മാറി. ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങൾ വിശാലമായ ഭൂസ്വത്തിനു ഉടമയായി മാറുകയും, ആരാധനാമൂർത്തി ദേശ സംരക്ഷകനും ഭരണാധി

കാരിയുമായി കണക്കാക്കപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്തു. പതിനാറാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ എഴുതപ്പെട്ട തന്ത്രസമുച്ചയം എന്ന ഗ്രന്ഥത്തിൽ പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നതനുസരിച്ചു ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങൾ രാജകൊട്ടാരമാതൃകയിൽ നിർമ്മിക്കപ്പെടുകയും ശ്രീകോവിലിൽ നിന്നും പുറത്തേക്കിറങ്ങുന്ന ദേവന് കൊട്ടാരത്തിൽ നിന്നും പുറത്തേക്കിറങ്ങുന്ന രാജാവിനെ പോലെയുള്ള എല്ലാ ഉപചാരങ്ങളും നൽകി പോരുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു.

പെരുവനം ആറാട്ടുപുഴപോലുള്ള പ്രധാന ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങൾ ഉത്സവാഘോഷങ്ങളുടെ ഭാഗമായി രാജവാഹനമായ ആനയെ ദേവവാഹനമായി തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുകയും, ദേവന്മാരുടെ ആനപ്പുറത്തുള്ള എഴുന്നള്ളത്തുകൾ നടത്തുകയും ചുറ്റുമുള്ള ക്ഷേത്രങ്ങളെ കൂടി ഉൾക്കൊള്ളിച്ചുകൊണ്ടു തങ്ങളുടെ സാംസ്കാരിക സ്വാധീനം വ്യാപിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. മധ്യകേരളത്തിൽ പൊതുവായി പടഹാദി, ധ്വജാദി വിഭാഗത്തിലുള്ള പൂരം, വേല മുതലായ ആഘോഷങ്ങളുടെ വർദ്ധനവോടെ കൂടുതൽ ആനകളെ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തി കൊണ്ടുള്ള ആചാരങ്ങളാണ് അധികവും കാണുന്നത്. അതിനാൽ തന്നെ ബാല്യകാലം മുതൽ ആന വിശേഷങ്ങളും ആനക്കഥകളും നിത്യ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി മാറിയ മധ്യ കേരള നിവാസികൾക്ക് മറ്റുള്ള പ്രദേശക്കാരെ അപേക്ഷിച്ചു ആനകളോടുള്ള താല്പര്യം വളരെയധികം കൂടുതലായി കാണപ്പെടുന്നു.

ജനപ്രിയ സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗങ്ങളായി മാറുന്നതിലൂടെ സംസ്കാര സവിശേഷതകൾ ദീർഘകാലം നിലനിൽക്കുന്നതായി കാണാം. വരേണ്യവർഗം തുടക്കം കുറിക്കുകയും കുത്തകയായി നിലനിർത്തുകയും ചെയ്ത ആനയെ എഴുന്നള്ളിക്കുന്ന ഉത്സവങ്ങൾ ഉപവർഗങ്ങൾ അനുകരിച്ച് സ്വീകരിച്ചതോടെ, കാലക്രമത്തിൽ സാംസ്കാരിക അതിരുകൾ മറികടന്ന് ജനപ്രിയ സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി പരിണമിച്ചു. ക്ഷേത്രഘോഷങ്ങളുടെ ഭാഗമായി ആനച്ചമയങ്ങളോട് കൂടി നിൽക്കുന്ന ഗജവീരന്മാർക്കു ദേവവാഹനം എന്ന പദവിക്ക് മുകളിലായി ദേവപരിവേഷവും താരപരിവേഷവും നൽകിക്കൊണ്ട് ഉന്നത പദവി പ്രദാനം ചെയ്യുകയും ഒരുക്കും ആളുകളുടെ ജീവിത സ്പന്ദനത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി ആനകളുടെ സാന്നിധ്യം മാറുകയും ചെയ്തു. ആനകളെ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന ഒരു സാംസ്കാരിക മാനസികാവസ്ഥ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിൽ ക്ഷേത്രോത്സവങ്ങളും ആചാരങ്ങളും പ്രധാന പങ്കു വഹിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. മതപരമായ ചടങ്ങുകൾക്കപ്പുറത്തേക്കും മതേതര ഇടങ്ങളിലേക്കും ആനകളുടെ സാന്നിധ്യം അംഗീകരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു കൂട്ടായ മാനസികാവസ്ഥ വളർന്നതിന്റെ ഫലമായി, ആനകൾ മധ്യകേരളത്തിൽ സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ അഭിവാജ്യഘടകമായി മാറി. മനുഷ്യ കേന്ദ്രീകൃത കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾ മറികടന്നു കൊണ്ട് ആന പ്രേമികളുടെ സംഘടനകൾ, ആനപ്പാപ്പാന്മാർ, ഉടമസ്ഥർ, ഗവണ്മെന്റ് അധികൃതർ തുടങ്ങി അനവധി പേരുടെ കൂട്ടായ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ട് മാത്രമേ ആനയെ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന സംസ്കാരത്തെയും സമൂഹത്തെയും നിലനിർത്താൻ സാധിക്കൂ.

INTRODUCTION

Human non-human interaction and interrelation can be traced from the very origin of human beings. The role of non-humans, especially animals, in the evolution of history is visible in archaeological and literary sources. Remarkable changes were marked in history when animals entered in human geography. Man-animal symbiosis and its impact can be visible in socio-cultural, economic, political, intellectual and psychological aspects of human development. Non-humans have not only influenced human activities but have also decided the course of historical and cultural transformations. This interrelationship highlights the necessity of recognizing and appreciating the contributions of non-human actors in the comprehensive study of human history.

The title of the present study is given as “Passion for Elephants and Modern Popular Culture: Exploring the Ritual World of Central Kerala”. By the term Passion, the researcher refers to the strong enthusiasm and powerful emotion that motivate the affinity of the people of central Kerala towards Elephants, which are manifested and reflected in multiple ways. This element of passion drives the people of central Kerala together and it enables them to overcome all kinds of socio economic and legal barriers. The phrase, Modern Popular culture means the way of life followed by the people of central Kerala, which accept and embrace Elephants in all spheres of life by cutting across the borders of caste, creed and age by the late twentieth century. Subsequently, passion for Elephants became a part of popular culture rather than limiting to a particular section of society.

The study explores the background of the inclusion of Elephants and the role played by Elephants in the ritual world of Central Kerala. The term Ritual world refers to the domain within which rituals and ceremonial practices are performed in important religious institutions of Central Kerala which incorporate Elephant. It encompasses the structured, symbolic, and often sacred activities that are carried out according to specific cultural, religious, or social traditions. It also plays a crucial

role in expressing and sustaining cultural and religious identities and values. In the study, Central Kerala can be defined as the present day district of Thrissur, which is the core area of study, along with the districts of Ernakulam, Palakkad and Malappuram which shares borders with Thrissur.

Development of positive mentality and evolution of passion towards the giant can be associated with the popular culture of this region during modern days. It also examines the theoretical framework of cultural conditioning and people's mentality formation. Even though the Elephants were incorporated in ritual world, their role is under represented in the writings on the medieval Kerala. Through a comparative analysis, the study also attempts to explore whether the practice of including Elephant in the ritual space is adopted in regions other than central Kerala. The study explores the human-animal relation and interfaces across the global context in general and Indian tradition in particular.

Elephant, the magnificent and prestigious non-human being, seems to have influenced human life since pre historic days. The etymology of the term 'Elephant' sheds light on the profound impact and cultural significance of the animal even in regions where Elephants are not native. The word 'Elephant' is derived from the Greek word '*elephas*, ' which initially referred to ivory and later came to denote the animal itself. This linguistic evolution reflects the value placed on Elephants and their tusks in ancient trade and cultural exchanges. The fact that languages across the world adopted and adapted the term 'Elephant' underscores the widespread recognition of the animal's importance, even in societies where people may never have encountered Elephants in their natural habitat. This highlights the deep impression that Elephants left on human consciousness and their symbolic role in various cultural and religious contexts.¹

Human-Elephant interrelation has undergone changes owing to the societal changes through ages. From ancient petroglyphs to modern films and cartoon, the

¹ Merlin Peris, 'A Note on the Etymology of Elephant', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, Vol. 38, 1993, p.163.

role of Elephant is renowned and recognized in various aspects from religious to secular, from symbolic to prestigious, from colonial to national, from material to non-material. There is notable variation in placing Elephants in different zones by different people in different times. There is also, variations in perceiving and placing Elephants in countries belong to different regions

In India, Elephants are considered as symbol for power and strength since ancient times. The earliest evidence of the inclusion of Elephants in social life can be traced from numerous steatite seals as well as terracotta Elephant figure of the ancient Harappan civilization. There are various opinions about the status of Elephant during the Indus phase. Some scholars point out the absence of mahout or Elephant goad in the artifacts which reflect the lack of Elephant training and taming in those days, while others argue for its tamed nature which can be inferred from the rope around its body.

In Rigveda, Elephants are mentioned as *mrigahastin* or animal with a hand.² In *Artharvaveda* Elephant are famed for its strength and vitality.³ In Later Vedic and post Vedic traditions, Elephants appear in various religious traditions and mythologies. They were placed in higher status and were sometimes referred as deities, often symbolising strength and wisdom. Elephants, the important wealth of our land, were represented in our myths and legends. Thus, the Elephants which were unfamiliar to Aryan texts in early phase became familiar and their status got elevated in later texts.

The Buddhist tradition states that Buddha came into the womb of his mother in the form of an Elephant having six tusks. *Digha Nikaya* compiled as the part of *Sutta Pitaka* mentions that elephant is considered as one of the seven treasures possessed by kings.⁴ According to Jain tradition, Trisala, mother of the twenty fourth *Thirthankara*, dreamt of fourteen auspicious objects, which included an Elephant. This dream was

² Arthur Antony Macdonell, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* Vol-II, John Murry, London, 1912, p.177.

³ *Ibid.*, p.509.

⁴ Maurice Walshe, *Digha Nikaya* (Trans.), Wisdom Publication, Chennai, 1995, p.110.

interpreted as a sign of her child's future greatness and spiritual prominence which were described in literary texts of those times.

In Hinduism, Lord Ganesha, with Elephant's head has been worshipping for more than two millennium. He is therefore called as *Gajanan* means Elephant faced. Sharmila Rege, in her work *Understanding Popular Culture*, considered Elephant headed God as a non-Brahmanical God, who was worshipped as a rural deity in Maharashtra, by the lower castes.⁵ Several deities and mythological figures have Elephants as their *vahana* or conveyance including Balarama, and Skanda. According to old Hindu belief, the term *Ashtadiggajas* means eight Elephants, namely *Airaavata*, *Pundareeka*, *Vaamana*, *Kumuda*, *Anjana*, *Pushpadan*, *Sarwabhouma* and *Suprateeka* hold the earth in eight directions. Such ancient scriptures elevated the image of Elephants as prestigious and divine.

In ancient India Sources like *Indica* mentions Elephants as the strength of military. Megasthenes gives a figure of 4000 Elephants in the Gangetic region maintained by rulers while private persons were not allowed to keep Elephants.⁶ The Mauryas and the Guptas maintained separate departments for Elephants headed by *Gajadyaksha*, *Pilupathi* respectively which showcases royal favor ascribed to Elephants. Thus, Elephants became an important part of Indian life and society including royalty and other aristocratic segments. Later the process of capturing, taming and training of Elephants was developed into a specialized skill. In ancient India, a number of treatises were written about caring and management of Elephants. *Arthasastra* mentions about the need for maintaining an Elephant Forest which help the ruler for getting a better Elephantry wing in military. *Hastayurveda*, scientific writings on Elephants, reflects the significance given to the animal in the contemporary society.⁷

⁵ Sharmila Rege, 'Understanding Popular Culture: The Satyashodhak and Ganesh Mela in Maharashtra', *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol.49, No.2, September 2000, p.197.

⁶ J.W. Mccrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, Thacker Spink and Company, Calcutta, 1877, p.118.

⁷ Geetha N., *Elephantology and Its Ancient Sanskrit Sources*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Sanskrit, University of Calicut, 2013, p.24.

Informants mention that importance given to Elephants in military was also continued during the medieval period. Al-Biruni, the 11th century traveler, stated that one Elephant is equal to three horses and court historians of later days like Barani of 12th century and Abul Fazal of 16th century said that one Elephant is equal to five hundred horses in a battle.⁸ Medieval rulers used to proceed to the battle field on Elephant top. Number of Elephants a ruler held was the measure of his wealth and power. Elephants played a great role among rulers as they served as part of military wing, gift item, war tribute or as haulers of heavy materials for monumental works. Thus, the use of Elephants became more prominent. Elephants were selected as a mode of travelling by the rulers as riding on Elephant top provided a sense of dignity and honour. Their association ranged from battlefield to backyards, where they stood as living symbols of royalty, pride and also as an icon of intelligence and emotion which illustrated their prestige during the Medieval period.⁹

For the British, the Elephant became indispensable for logging the tropical forests of India and Burma, building hill stations for colonial officers, and for supplying materials to seaports and for constructing railways during the imperial expansion. Elephant veterinary medicines were introduced during colonial period as they realized that the timber Elephant needed special health care. This certainly benefited the captive animals in forest camps. One of the negative aspects of the colonial engagements with the East was the introduction of hunting the Elephant, especially in Ceylon and India.

While focusing the history of *Tamizhakam*, it can be analysed that Elephants played a crucial part in early Tamil literature which shows their affinity towards the animal. *Purananuru* states about the brave Chola ruler who had the guts to lead and control the Elephants.¹⁰ Early Tamil works mention some of the *Chola* and *Chera* rulers who used to tame and ride Elephants in multiple occasions. It is said that the

⁸ S. Jabir Raza, 'Indian Elephants Corps Under the Gaznavids', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol.73, 2012, p.216.

⁹ Imadad Ali Ahmed, 'Elephants In Medieval Assam', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol.76, 2015, p.264.

¹⁰ Vaidehi Herbert, *Purananuru* (Trans.), Digital Maximum LLC, USA, 2015, p.99.

Cheras had sixty Elephants, while the Pandyas had five hundred.¹¹ Later Chera rulers or *Perumals* were also familiar with Elephant as per the inscriptional evidence of *Cheraman Perumal*. It mentions about a white Elephant sent by lord Siva to Sundaramurthi *Nayanar*.¹² Post Chera period marked significant changes in socio economic and political realms.

By the 10th or 11th century A.D., Brahmin settlements expanded rapidly in Kerala. With the emergence of a temple-centered society, semi tribal communities were transformed into temple-centered, semi-autonomous, agrarian and caste-based societies.¹³ More than centers of worship, temples became the hub of socio economic and cultural activities. It is argued that Elephants were incorporated into temple spaces either as penalties from rulers or *naduvazhis* or by capturing them from forests. Even though the purpose of using them in temple premises was not clear, they became one of its major assets. Some documents of nineteenth century, like Irinjalakuda temple transaction, give evidence about the use of Elephants for construction works, movement of timber or heavy load etc.¹⁴

As per the opinion of some scholars, Elephant procession in Kerala is considered as the continuation of Buddhist rituals as this religion was rooted in our land before Brahmanism. Buddhist mythologies which mention the animal with great significance, Buddhist diptych and *Esala Prrahera* the Buddhist festival of Srilanka also support the fact. Elephants were also used as the vehicle for the rulers especially during their coronation ceremonies as well as festivals like *mamangam*. Elephant was assigned as the vehicle of the Deity who was considered as the protector of the region. It can be considered as an attempt by the Brahmanical elites to overshadow the power and prestige of the ruler of the region by placing deity equal to or over to the ruler. As per *Tantrasamuchaya* of 15th century, rituals and festivals will increase the power and prestige of both deity and the temple. During annual

¹¹ K.V. Krishna Ayyar, A Short History of Kerala, Pai & Company, Ernakulam, 1966, p.17.

¹² A.S Ramanatha Iyyer, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. V, Part II, 1925, p.97.

¹³ Kesavan Veluthat, Brahmin Settlements in Kerala, Sandhya Publications, Calicut University, 1978, p.37.

¹⁴ Series File A-49 Accounts Related to Irinjalakuda Temple, Regional Archives, Ernakulam.

festivals, deity should address the devotees on Elephant top in same manner as the ruler address the public.

The inclusion of Elephants in temple festivals of central Kerala can be traced to *Peruvanam* and *Aarattupuzha* festivals which was further established with *Thrissur Pooram*. Elephants were used only in the temple festivals of social elites, till the first half of twentieth century. It became popular among middle and lower-middle strata which reached its apex by 1970s and 1980s. Elephants, esteemed for their majestic presence and cultural significance, are became a cultural symbol of central Kerala. The beauty of adorned Elephants and traditional accessories offers visual treat, celebrating the rich cultural heritage and historical significance associated with such temple festivals.

This passion for Elephants transcends religious borders which is followed by individuals beyond its religious association. Some of the Pre-Diamper Syrian churches of Kerala that existed during 1599, have two Elephant sculptures supporting their main beams, a caparisoned festival Elephant at one end and a plain working Elephant on the other. Such sculptures of Elephants are still seen at churches at *Pazhanji*, *Palayoor*, *Parappur*, *Ollur*, *Ankamaly*, *Pudukkad*, *Kanjoor*, *Malayattoor*, *Mylakombu*, *Palliekkara*, *Karthikappally*, *Kothamangalam*, and many other churches which indicate their prominence across all cultures and communities in Kerala.¹⁵For instance, *Adaputtyperunnal*, *Arthat palli perunnal*, *Kottekkad palli perunnal* etc. have been using Elephants in their festival processions. Among the Muslim community, *Jarram Nercha* of Central Kerala is celebrated by featuring caparisoned Elephants' procession.

Currently most of the Elephants are owned by temples and individuals which were often used in religious ceremonies in the ritual world. Until the last decades of twentieth century, such practices were limited to the Thrissur district of Kerala which later expanded to neighboring districts of Thrissur. The number of captive Elephants declined by the end of monarchy in most of the states except Kerala. In

¹⁵ George Menachery, *Anayum Nasraniyum*, (Mal.), Ebenezer Printers, Thrissur, 2014, p.34.

Kerala the significance of Elephants was retreated from political sphere to cultural end. However, these practices raise questions about its future existence due to the working of contrasting ideologies associated with animal welfare and preservation of traditional heritage.

Increased passion for Elephants can be visible in Central Kerala, especially at Thrissur mainly due to the availability of Elephants in cultural sphere and frequent visibility of Elephants in this region. Elephantine temple festival does not belong to Vedic rituals as it cannot be seen in other parts except Kerala. It may be evolved as a part of tantric custom and institutionalization of indigenous culture. The inclusion of Elephants in to the ritual world was initiated by elite section in society and later amalgamated into popular and mass culture by last decades of twentieth century. The people of central Kerala are conditioned in a positive attitude towards inclusion of Elephants in festivals and gradually developed a supportive mentality towards Elephants.

Usually, central Kerala celebrates their religious festivals by using Elephants in large numbers which is comparatively rare in other parts of Kerala. One among the largest Elephant farm in India, Punnathurkotta of Guruvayoor Temple, is located at central Kerala which has about four dozen domesticated Elephants. During 1970s onwards Elephants became indispensable part in celebrations of Kerala society which extended from religious festivals to wedding ceremonies. Meanwhile, devotional fervor of including Elephants was transformed into unnecessary competitions to showcase status and prestige.

The increasing passion towards Elephants in central Kerala was reflected in religious procession, *anayoot*, *sugachikilsa*, etc. Reflections of Passion for Elephants can also be seen in various aspects of society like art and architecture, Sculptures, films and literature. Elephants were often owned by elite section of the society such as *Namboothiri illams* and *Nair tharavadus*. In order to flaunt their status, the Elephants were named after family members along with their family names like *Poomully Sekharan*, *Varikkasseri Balakrishnan*, *Kizhakkuveetil Damodaran* etc. Elephants are also named along with the temple or region they

belonged to. Names like Guruvayur Nandan, Puthupalli Kesavan, Thrikkadvur Shivaraju etc. denotes the same. Thus, they are considered as the emissaries of temple, *illam*, *tharawad* and even the place to which they belonged. As the state animal, the Elephant is featured on the emblem of Kerala, derived from the royal coat of arms of the kingdom of Travancore and Cochin. Being the Heritage animal of Kerala, Elephants reflect values such as power, reliability, and longevity.

Research Problem

Increasing passion for Elephants can be seen in central Kerala especially in Thrissur comparing to other regions. Inclusion of Elephants in temple ambience was initiated by elite section who amassed social status and wealth in the society and it became popular culture in later period. Insertion of divinity and exclusion of commercial attitude was the feature of early period but divinity for Elephants was diminished in recent decades when it comes to the culture industry. Passion for Elephants is increasing on one side while changing environment and government legislations are coming on the other side. The study addresses passion as an expression and experience within the modernised society. It also looks into various factors, both material and non-material, which contribute towards the awakening of passion for Elephants in the ritual world of central Kerala.

Significance of the Study

Ownership of Elephant is considered as a feudal status symbol by the *Namboothiris* and *Nair* families. Almost all of the local festivals in Kerala include at least one richly caparisoned Elephant. Elephants carry the deity during annual festival processions and ceremonies in the Hindu temples. Central Kerala has the greatest number of festivals using Elephants in large scale. What was started as religious belief became a tradition and now reached in to a level of competition. Nowadays each temple in Central Kerala especially in Thrissur district is trying to bring more and more Elephants in to their festivals as a matter of prestige. This trend is spreading to other areas than Thrissur and other communities than Hindus. In the changing environmental scenario festivals using large number of Elephants led to the harassment of Elephants and threat to human life and property. Govt, judiciary and

other NGO etc. are trying to address the problem. In this context, finding out the role of Elephants and passion for Elephants in our socio-cultural scenario is significant. Even though historical writings of Kerala have given more importance to temple centered society, the role played by Elephants in temple history were invisible and passive. Thus, the role Elephants in Kerala society is worth mentioning, which rarely appearing in historical works.

Objectives

Present study is mainly attempted to understand the evolution of passion for Elephants and establishment of popular culture favorable for Elephants in central Kerala. As study is focused on cultural element and mentality of a group of people geographically limited to Central Kerala, it has to investigate whether similar feature existed in other parts of the world. The research also traces the evolution of Man-Elephant relation, its various dimensions and its impact on human-Elephant life patterns. In order to locate the significance of Elephants in Indian tradition, the study examines Indian literary sources.

Study also analyses the process of accommodating Elephant from its natural geographical space towards cultural space. It also assesses the role played by Elephants during various historical phases, from monarchy to democracy. The process of inclusion of Elephants in ritual and festivals which transitioned from elite to popular culture in later days was also examined. It also traces out multiple Factors which led to the increasing passion for Elephants and formation of popular culture. It also studies the role of government and its various rules and regulations in the protection of Elephants and humans in socio cultural space.

The objectives of this study can summarize in points

1. To analyse human animal relation and the role played by Elephants in history.
2. To explore the importance of Elephants in Indian heritage and culture.
3. To find out changing roles of Elephants in Kerala from natural place to cultural space.
4. To point out the significance of Elephants in temple rituals and festivals.

5. To assess the process of transition of Elephantine festival from elite culture to popular culture.
6. To examine famous rituals and festivals in Central Kerala that incorporate Elephants.
7. To trace out elements of passion for Elephants reflected in everyday life and culture of Central Kerala.
8. To examine various factors that contributed to the formation of collective mentality towards Elephants.

Scope of the Study

The study spans from the second phase of structural temples, and reach up to the contemporary society, particularly focusing on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as it helps to understand the changing role of Elephant in socio cultural realms. The geographical location of the present study is primarily concentrates on modern district of Thrissur as prominent temple festivals like Peruvanam, Arattupuzha and Thrissur *pooram* are celebrated in this region. The study also focuses the increasing passion towards Elephant festivals by considering Thrissur as core area and bordering regions like Ernakulam in south, Palakkad in north east and Malappuram in northern side.

Hypotheses

- In post Chera period, Temple oriented society with *brahmin* domination started initiating their own daily rituals as well as initiation of temple festivals with Elephants. As deity is being considered as the protector and ruler of a particular region, royal prestige and symbols like royal vehicle, umbrella, fans, etc. were given to the deity while coming out of the sanctum. Thus, the vehicle of the ruler or *Raja vahana*, i.e., Elephant, turned to vehicle of the deity or *Deva vahana* in central Kerala.
- The increasing passion for Elephants is visible in Central Kerala compared to other regions is mainly due to the large number of temple festivals and ceremonies which were evolved from the tradition of major Brahmanical settlements and temple centered society like *Peruvanam*. Patronage provided

by royalty and availability of resources helped in the increasing role of Elephants in central Kerala.

- Inclusion of Elephants in temple festivals was initiated by the elite section in society and it was later amalgamated into popular culture.

Methodology

The study adopts interdisciplinary approach to collect and analyse data. Various methods of social science were used for this study for writing different chapters. Descriptive method is used for first and second chapters to examine the role played by Elephants in human history, in a global context and to understand the importance of Elephants in Indian Tradition. Systematic Literature review is also used in the second and Third chapter for understanding the themes and historical background. The study uses the cultural analytical method for fourth and final chapters. To know the details of rituals, field visit to major religious institutions and festival spaces of central Kerala, were conducted. Participatory observation method in order to understand the role of Elephant in rituals and festivals and to sense the passion, also helped the study. Along with analysing legends, myth and oral tradition, the study also utilises information which are gathered from Elephant owners, experts and admirers using interview method, in order to understand the level of passion for Elephants among the natives of central Kerala. Visual analysis method through examining Elephant images in murals and sculptures helped to claim the indigenous origin of present elephantine ornaments in Kerala.

Information has been collected from many sources that includes internet archives, e-book, online journal, both published and unpublished articles etc. Theories like Popular culture, cultural conditioning, formation of mentality etc. were used for the present research. The MLA seventh edition format is adopted for referencing.

Sources

The study collects information from both primary and secondary sources. Temple inscriptions, Archival Records from Kozhikode and Ernakulam Archives, official records of Cochin royal family, Government records, court orders, Report of

Dewaswam boards, were also analysed for the study. Evidences from newspapers since 1930s, Magazines, pamphlets issued by religious institutions etc. were collected to understand increasing number of temple festivals. *Peruvanam*, *Mathilakam-Granthavaris* were examined to navigate day to day temple administration and details of temple rituals. Early Tamil literary works like *Akananooru*, *Purananooru*, Mooshavavamsa Kavya, Manipravalam literature, Greco Roman Literary works, foreign accounts related to Kerala history etc. set background knowledge for the study. Secondary sources related to temple-centered society of Kerala as well as scholarly works related to human animal relation also helped for this study.

Review of Literature

Studies based on human-animal relation, literary works on Elephants in Indian tradition and culture, historical works which deals with temple centred society, works about temple rituals and theoretical studies on cultural conditioning and history of mentalities have been reviewed for this research.

Review of the Studies Related Human-Elephant Relation

Remarkable attempts were made in the field of human animal relation in recent years which were produced by eminent scholars especially in the field of environmental history. *The Elephants in the Temple -Tales of Beast and Man in India* by John Lockwood Kipling published in the year 1891, gives supporting evidence of relation of human with animal life in Indian culture. He criticises about the oriental attitude of ancient Indians towards animals, like animal sacrifice. His work can be regarded as one of the earliest depictions of human animal interaction in early India. The work also discusses the cultural significance associated with Elephants, for instance, reverence to Lord Ganesh, the Elephant headed God, and Elephants as the image of power, might and intelligence. The Elephants were used in fixing boundaries and as public executioners in ancient India. The author also mentions about how the local rajas used to spend 1/4th of income for maintaining Elephants and how they made infrastructural changes in the buildings and palaces with the inclusion of Elephants, like Elephant path, high arched Elephant gate way etc. Elephants which were used in timber industry as well as plantations, Elephant-mahout attachment are

also mentioned in the work. It can be understood that the fascination and inquisitiveness towards Elephants by the westerners led to their export to American and European Circuses and Zoo.

Elephants and Kings: An Environmental History written by Thomas R Trautman provides information regarding the attitude of man towards Elephants during early days. The work mentions about the significance of the Elephants in ancient Indian civilization, inclusion of Elephants in to the military of Aryans, spread of war Elephants from north to south India as well as to other parts of the world. The work provides information on tools like *ankusa* which were used for controlling Elephants and on methods of capturing, taming and training by Aryans of north. It provides references about the Elephant Forest as well as geographical distribution of Elephants, Elephant management system in ancient and medieval period, significance of Elephantry as military wing during medieval days, conversion of war Elephants to timber Elephants, etc.¹⁶

Conflict, Negotiation, and Coexistence Rethinking Human -Elephant Relations in South Asia, work edited by Piers Locke and Jane Buckingham, projected socio-economic life in South Asian continent in which Elephant have played an integral role in material and symbolic terms. The work helped to know the problems and possibilities in human Elephant relations. The work consists of multiple articles by scholars in humanimal studies. The Article titled '*Human and Elephant Relationship Through the Ages: A Brief Macro Scale History*' by Raman Sukumar examines interdependencies between human and Elephants as companions and highlights political, economic, religious, and environmental considerations necessary for understanding the human-Elephant nexus in south Asia. While locating the origin of sacred status of Elephants, the article also analyses practical utility of Elephants for humans.¹⁷

The Article, *Science of Elephants in Kautilya's Arthashastra*, by Patrick Olivelle mentioned significance given to the management and maintenance of both captive and

¹⁶ Thomas R Trautmann, *Elephants and Kings: An Environmental History*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2015.

¹⁷ Piers Locke and Jane Buckingham, (ed.), *Conflict, Negotiation, and Coexistence Rethinking Human -Elephant Relations in south Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi ,2016.

free roaming Elephants during ancient days. The author points out how Elephant Forest was maintained at the borders of the empire to provide best quality Elephants, how they tamed female Elephants and captured infants for entertainment purpose and how they kept officers who were responsible for conducting censuses of Elephants. He also mentions about the superintendent of Elephants who was the senior functionary of the state, construction and maintenance of stables, various Elephant equipment, special veterinarians and trainers, Punishments and fines imposed for neglecting or mistreating Elephants etc.

Symbolism and power: Elephants and gendered authority in the Mughal world by Jane Buckingham gives information about the system of classification by age and size of the Elephants, commercial trade of Elephants, use of Elephants in war, significance of the Elephants for Mughal state during the reign of Akbar, change from horse-based warrior culture to Elephant-based tradition of Indian military, severe punishment for Elephant staff for violating rules etc. Buckingham give details about the personal Elephants of Akbar gifted by his father Humayun. She explains the management of Elephant stables by non-elite group which offered them an opportunity to involve in Mughal administration. Buckingham through her work reveals that Elephants served not only as symbol of Akbar's imperial authority but also as active agents and material resources in the formation of state power.

“Trans-Species Colonial Fieldwork: Elephants as Instruments and Participants in Mid Nineteenth Century India” by Julian Baker explores the role of Elephants in fieldwork in colonial India. It states that colonizers associated Elephants with political power which commanded respect from and authority over local people. *Animals, Persons, Gods: Negotiating Ambivalent Relationship with captive Elephants in Chitwan* by Piers Locke in the same work, argues that the domestication of Elephant is a kind of social appropriation rather than biological intervention. Elephant captivity cannot be maintained merely through force but through socio cultural integration of Elephants to human community.

Arthasastra of Kautilya, mentions about Elephant forest, 20th and 48th *prakarnas* give details of Elephant which mention duty of mahouts, Elephant features and characteristics etc.¹⁸ It also mentions Elephant as sign of wealth and prestige of a country. Varahamihira, the author of *Brihatsamhita* has devoted two separate chapters for showing the characteristic marks of Elephants. *Gajagrahanaprakara* written by Narayanadikshita mentions about regions where Elephants were found as well as exhibition of Elephants conducted every year for evaluating their worth and for entertainment and instruction of the public.¹⁹

Review of Works that give Historical Background

Evolution and growth of temples can be seen in early medieval Kerala which developed into ritualistic and powerful institution by later medieval days. With the increasing role of temples in rituals and ceremonial functions in society, cultural domination of Brahmins became a reality. As temples became sovereign, pure and prestigious institution in social structure, deity was glorified with all royal status.

Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai in his work *Talikalum Taliyatirikalum* mention about the role of temples in the early medieval Kerala society. He examined the expansion of temples by AD 7th, 8th and 9th centuries due to the Bhakti movement. Evolution of Structural temples, and the administrative roles of the *Tali* and *Tali Adhikarikal*, land grants to temples by various groups and the temple affairs were managed by the committee of Brahmins. The temple was overseen by the ruling authorities of the region and they had certain political right over the temple. He stated that the supreme authority of the temple was *Koyiladhikari* who was either the relative of the ruling power or the junior prince.

¹⁸ R P. Kangle, Kautilya's *Arthasastra* Part II, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 2010.

¹⁹ Narayana Dikshita, *Gajagrahanaprakarana*, Sri Venkateswara University Oriental Research Institute, Tirupathi, 1968.

Perumals of Kerala Brahmin oligarchy and ritual monarchy Political and social condition of Kerala under Chera Perumals of Mahotai (800-1124) by MGS Narayanan help to understand political status of Chera rulers.²⁰ *Brahmin Settlements in Kerala Historical studies* (1978) by Kesavan Veluthat gives information about rise and growth of Brahmin settlements. Evolution of structured temples as the center of brahmin settlements increased the power and prestige enjoyed by temples during the medieval Kerala.

The Kerala Temple and Early Medieval Agrarian System written by Rajan Gurukkal is one of the pioneering historical study that focuses on the material milieu of the early medieval temples.²¹ This work has stated the role of temples in consolidating agrarian society and the formation of temple as the centre of early medieval economy and polity in Kerala. It also mentions about emergence of temple and land grants resulted in the formation of hierarchical society in which the landlords were placed at the top, followed by lease holders, artisan-craftsmen group, actual tillers respectively.

Granthavaris offers information regarding the temple rituals and royal support provided by rulers. Keralolpathi *Granthavari* has reference of rituals that is patronized by the Brahmin community. Kozhikodan *granthavari*, Airanikulam *granthavari*, Perumbadappu *Granthavari* published by state archival department of Kerala under S Raymon as editor give information regarding Perumbadappu swaroopam of Central Kerala. The Peruvianam *Granthavari* mention about the capture of Elephants from the highlands, and the *Nambidis* being assigned the responsibility for this task. Elamkunnappuzha *Granthavari* mention about giving Elephant to the temple as penalty for any outrageous acts. Travancore Archaeological Series volume I, II, IV, V, VI edited

²⁰ M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala Brahmin Oligarchy and Ritual Monarchy Political and Social Conditions of Kerala Under the Chera Perumals of Makotai* (AD 800 – AD 1124), Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2013.

²¹ Rajan Gurukkal, *The Kerala Temple and Early Medieval Agrarian System*, Vallathol Vidyapitam, Edappal, 1992.

by Gopinatha Rao and A S Ramanatha Iyyer give important inscription which mention about Elephants in Kerala. These epigraphs mentions about how Elephants were used as tool for calculating revenue. *Kerala Charithrathinte Adisthana Rekhakal* by Dr. Puthusseri Ramachandran gives important *granthavaris* which mention about Elephant and rulers.

History of Kerala written in the form of notes on Visscher's letters from Malabar, Vol. 1 written by K P Padmanabha Menon mentions about the marriage ceremony among the followers of *marumakkathayam* of Malabar in which Elephants were incorporated.²² The member of the family must take permission from the local ruler or chief for Elephant procession in marriage. Method of catching Elephant from forest, various purpose of using Elephants etc. are mentioned by him. Foreign accounts also give information abouts Elephants in Kerala. Varthema mention that king proceed to battle field either on Elephant top or carried by *nairs*. On the 16th day ceremony after death chief mourner go to the nearest waterbody on Elephant top if he gets special privilege from the local chief or raja. Travancore rulers appoint *kanis* to collect forest products including Elephants. *Kochirajya charitram* written by K P Padmanaba Menon gives information about Elephants which acted as an object for redemption of punishment. Elephants were given to temples by the rulers or *naduvazhis* as penalty in the temple centered society.

Review of Works Related to Temple Rituals in Kerala

Temple rituals in Kerala can be traced from the beginning of medieval period which and reached its systematic and organized form in late medieval period.

Tantrasamuccaya of Narayana by N. P. Unni Part 01 published by New Bharatiya Book Corporation Delhi provided base for understanding the evolution of temple rituals of Kerala. The work gives background of using Elephants in

²² K P Padmanabha Menon, History of Kerala: A History of Kerala written in the Form of Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar, Vol. 1, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1989.

temple rituals and in procession of deities who came out of the sanctum or *sreekovil*. It mentions that deity who came out of the *sreekovil* must be in the hand of temple priest or on animal like horse or Elephant or in vahana probably *ratha* or Chariot.

In 1969 Cochin *Devaswom* Board published 'The Secret Chamber' authored by V. T. Induchudan, which gives historical background of temples in Kerala and traditions associated with selected temples. 'The Golden Tower' by the same author provide understanding of Kerala temples and this work approach temple from a technical perspective and hence significant to the study of temples in Kerala. Directorate of Census of India published Temples of Kerala in 1999 authored by S. Jayashanker. This book gives an introduction to temple architecture, allied concepts and rituals associated with temples in Kerala.

Keralathile Ksetrangalum Ksetracarangalum (Malayalam) by P. K. J. Karta elaborates up on the rituals followed in Kerala temples. '*Ksetracarangal*' (Malayalam) by Kanippayur Sankaran Nambudiripad is another work on rituals and the significance behind their performance. Temples of Thrissur and Temples of Ernakulam are volumes based on extensive data collected from vast field work. These books have descriptions of selected temples of the region and appendix which provide complete data of temples regarding its geographical location, deity worshipped, festivals etc. These two volumes serve as ready to refer handbooks on temples of the two districts.

Aithiyamala written by Kottarathil Sankunni published in the year 1934, dedicated an entire session for stories of Elephants of the time with the title *Aithiyamalayile Anakathakal*. It gives a clear picture of Elephantine qualities and rulers' attitude towards their status heroes. Paternal attitude of mahouts towards Elephants were clearly picturised in the work. The work gives reflection of Kerala society and culture of 1900s in which Elephants had significant role. The ritual like procession of deities during festivals, *arattu* and other special occasion is explained in the work. As the work discusses on the background of

the princely state of Travancore the southern Kerala, it helps for the present study as it gives an opportunity for the comparative analysis with the region of central Kerala.²³

Thesis Organization

The study is divided into five chapters along with introduction and conclusion. Introduction to the study consist of objectives, review of literature, methods of study, hypothesis, scope and chapterisation. The First Chapter is titled as ‘Human Animal Interfaces in History’. As an introductory chapter, it analyses origin of human-animal relation in global context in order to understand the traces of affinity towards Elephants in various cultures of the world, from pre-Historic to Historic, from Age of Empires to Modern world. Chapter also examines man, animal relation in different facets such as Economic, Social, Cultural, Political, Psychological etc. It also covers the European’s affinity and attraction for Elephants, Elephants in Greco Roman civilization, in European and central Asian military, Elephants mentioned in Bible and Quran, Entry of non-humans in to human geography and its role in framing, altering and deciding history. Scholarly articles and theories related to human animal relation is also come under this chapter.

Second Chapter, ‘Elephants in Indian Tradition: Images, Mythologies, Military Gallantry’ analyses Elephants in India since pre historic to historic days and It also explain Elephants in different mythologies such as Vedic, Jain and Budhist traditions, Elephants mentioned by Megasthenes and Elephants in *Arthasastra*, Writings on Elephants like Hastayurveda, Manasollasa, Gajasastra etc. were mentioned. The chapter examines Elephants in military wing as well as in socio-cultural and political scenario in India. Using Elephant power in railway construction, timber trade during colonial days etc. were also examined in this chapter. The chapter examines how Elephants were employed in ancient, medieval and colonial period.

²³ Kottarathil Sankunny, *Aithihyamala*, (Mal.), Current Books, Kottayam, 1934.

Third chapter titled, 'Elephants in Kerala: Natural Place to Cultural Space' discuss various role played by Elephants in socio economic and cultural aspects of Kerala in general. Elephants as magnificent feature of hilly tracts and its reflections in cave art and in early Tamil literary works, as a possession under tribal chiefs, local rulers and temples etc. were discussed in this chapter. Elephants as political symbol and status, as item for compensation and penalty, for using in construction purpose including tramway and railways during colonial times etc were mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter four, 'Elephants in Central Kerala: From Ritual Space to Popular Culture, deals with daily rituals, rituals by devotees in *mahakshetras* of central Kerala which were incorporated Elephants. Rituals like *seeveli*, *chuttu vilakku*, *nadayiruthal*, *pallivetta* and major annual rituals like festivals and *arattu*, also discussed various customs and tradition like *kodiyettam*, *gramavili*, *parayeduppu*, *chalukuthal* etc. associated with Elephants are explained in this chapter. The chapter traces the inclusion of Elephants in temple festivals began as a ritual by elite and was gradually imitated by other sections of the society in later decades. Significance of Elephants as *Deva vahana* during rituals and festivals as well as increasing the fame and glory of deities beyond festivals seasons are explained.

The final Chapter is titled as, Passion as Popular Culture: Aspects of Cultural Conditioning and Mentality Formations. The chapter deals with various socio cultural and psychological factors which helped to evolve a positive attitude towards Elephants and evolution of popular culture. It discusses how the elements like religion, rituals, festivals, customs, literature, beliefs, language, films, peer groups etc. mould and conditioned the people of Kerala especially central Kerala towards the formation of a pro attitude and mentality towards Elephant culture. It also assesses the various level of passion towards Elephants and its reflection among the society.

The concluding chapter recapitulates each chapter and important findings of the present study. It forwards the need for regular and special training for mahouts,

proper care and treatment for Elephants in order to maintain cultural continuity. It also gives some suggestions to improve man animal relations by shifting from an anthropocentric to biocentric attitude.

CHAPTER - 1

HUMAN ANIMAL INTERFACES IN HISTORY

Human-animal interfaces can be traced from the very existence of humanity. From hunting to domestication, from agriculture to urbanism, from trade and warfare to sports and games, their relationships differ according to space and time. Such relations can be differentiated as economic, cultural, political and entertainment facets. Remarkable changes were marked in history when animals infringed in human geography. The history of the interconnectedness of man and animal spans for about billions of years, and is shaped by various dynamic elements like biological, geographical, climatic and cultural aspects.

The chapter, Human Animal Interfaces in History, examines the scholarly articles, opinions and findings of previous researchers in this field and also explores history of human-animal interaction from pre-historic days to post-modern scenario. For the better understanding of the topic, the researcher tries to understand the role of animals in the evolvement of human cultural geography and the allocation and reallocation of animals into different economic, political and socio- cultural spheres. The study analyses how countries across Africa and Asia have difference in perceiving Elephants, and also differential attitude among the countries with native Elephant population and those without.

Macro analysis of human Elephant relation in different phases in the global context helps to trace out the feature of passion for Elephants across the world, and also for finding out the incorporation of Elephants in ritual world in any geographical space or culture, similar to Central Kerala. It also studies the role of animals in human geography and evolution of socio-cultural history of particular regions by examining the formation of social institutions and rituals in religion and culture associated with animals. Thereby, the researcher examines the causes of accommodating animals in rituals and the process of how the rituals are operated with animals as it is the focus area of present study. It also analyses how the Elephants influence the shaping of economy by performing as production

companions and as provider of raw materials for food and trade in a particular geographical area. It explores the complex interactions between the man-animal relation in general and man-Elephant relation in particular.

Scholarly writings on Human-Animal relation helps to provide various interpretations and views on human-animal relation. Studies on Human-animal interactions emerged during the last decade of the twentieth century especially as the part of post humanist approach, and its reflection can be seen in various disciplines of knowledge including History, which began to investigate the role of non-humans in the progress of society. Human-animal studies find its expression in the works of different scholars in which they highlighted multi-dimensional role played by non-humans. Lynda Birke in her essay 'Rethinking Human-Animal Relation' discusses about the interconnectedness of life on earth. Humans, nonhumans, and eco-systems are profoundly entwined and interdependent, and coexist in this world. She highlighted the involvement of non-humans in the formation of culture. From the smallest creature to the biggest animal, all living beings have played its role in the historical development.¹ *Mapping Human Animal relation* by Peter Beatson uses the concept of 'mutual determination' to argue that through the very process of being acted upon by humans, animals unwittingly shape human society in their own image.² As per this theory, 'non-humans have their role in shaping the human society and culture'. Throughout history, humans have been inextricably linked with the nonhuman world, relying on animals for labour, food, transportation, and companionship, and on plants for sustenance, medicine, and shelter. In most of the cultures, animals are considered as dynamic participants in the moulding of history.

Theorizing Animals: Re-thinking Humanimal Relations, the work edited by Nik Taylor and Tania Signal, concerns with the way humans think about animals. The author questions, taken for granted assumptions about the human-animal divide

¹ Lynda Birke and Jo Hockenhull, *Crossing Boundaries: Investigating Human-Animal Relationships*, Brill Publication, Netherland, 2012, p.19.

² Nik Taylor and Tania Signal, (eds.), Peter Beatson, *Mapping Human Animal Relations*, *Theorizing Animals: Rethinking Humanimal Relations*, Brill Publication, Boston, 2011, p.43.

and points to the ways in which this divide is maintained through the operation of knowledge. As per the opinion of author, attitudes, epistemologies and methodologies are always malleable, mutable and unfixed, as things are moving knowledge is always changing. Thus, the future conceives non-human animals in entirely different ways.³

Linda Kalof in her book *Looking at Animals in Human History* discusses animal interfaces from prehistorical period and their changing relationships according to social needs up to the period of enlightenment. Animals are related to human history as hunting partners, domestic animals, source of income, means of public procession and rituals, medium for entertainment and as virtual figure in digital world. R. Bennett, defines and differentiates domestic, wild and tamed animals. To him, tamed wild animals are wild animals that have adapted behaviourally through the intervention of man to be traceable and useful to humans. Domesticated animal is an animal taken from a wild species and artificially modified to meet human purposes. Elephants belong to the category of tamed wild animals. In Marxian terms, humans use their reasoning and cultural power to control animals as they try to tame nature.⁴ Tamed Animals are consciously bought to the socio economic and cultural space by the humans for various purposes.

Theoretical frameworks in human-animal interaction is given by symbolic interactionist theory. Herbert Blumer coined the term '*symbolic interactionism*' which examines the symbolic meanings attached to human-animal interactions. It explores how individuals interpret and give meaning to their relationships with animals, including pets, wildlife and animals used in various roles. According to Bruce Bagemihl, for most people, animals are symbolic and their significance lies not in what they are, but in what we think they are. Humans ascribe meanings and

³ Nik Taylor and Tania Signal, (eds.), Lisa Kemmerer, *Theorizing Others, Theorizing Animals: Rethinking Humanimal Relations*, Brill Publication, Boston, 2011, p.37.

⁴ Vijay Laxmi Mall, *Sociology and Human Animal Interaction: A Study of Lucknow*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Sociology, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, 2021, p.34.

values to the existence and behaviours of animals in ways that usually have little to do with their biological and social realities, treating them as emblems of nature's purity.⁵

Human-non human relations encompass various theories and perspectives that discuss the interactions, inter dependencies and complexities of the relationships between humans and animals. Evolution of transdisciplinary branch called Anthrozoology by last decades of the twentieth century has explored various facets of human animal relations. This discuss about how humans and non-humans intertwined with each other. It also studies cross-cultural similarities and differences in human animal relations, role of animals in art, religion, mythology, sports, literature, etc. Human-animal interaction varies according to type and nature while classification or division of animals vary according to space and time. Division into domestic and wild, pet animals or working, performing animals and zoo animals are some major classification. Anthrozoology, as an interdisciplinary field, explores the various ways in which humans and animals interact, influence and contribute to each other's well-being.

Man-animal symbiosis and its impact is visible in social, cultural, economic, political, intellectual and psychological aspects of human development. Evolution of Socio-cultural aspects including social relation, food habits, dress patterns, ornaments, languages, script, literature, art and architecture, religion etc. reflects non-human interference. Anthropomorphism describes the tendency of attributing human characteristics to non-human beings as a deliberate or non-deliberate action in order to make unfamiliar world more familiar. As per the theory of anthropomorphism, deities with animal forms are thought to understand prayer and other symbolic communication. Most contemporary theologians concede that anthropomorphism cannot be eliminated without eliminating religion itself, because objects of religious devotion must have features to which humans can relate. Scottish philosopher David Hume explains human behavior of using known things

⁵ Hillevi Ganetz, 'Familiar Beasts, Nature, Culture and Gender in Wildlife', *Nordicom Review*, Vol. 25, No 1-2, 2004, p.79.

to familiarize mysterious world.⁶ Sigmund Freud explains that people anthropomorphize for an emotional reason, to make a hostile world, more familiar and therefore less threatening. We can see many examples of anthropomorphized figures in the cases of human animal combination in art architecture, literature, religion etc.

Postmodern studies highlight the role of animals as social substitutes that contribute to human well-being. Such interactions and inter relations help to develop new ideas. When such ideas were accepted by society as a whole, it became a knowledge in thought process, became a law in political system, custom and tradition in social order and new production relation in economic system. Such creation of ideas and knowledge continues as the interaction continues in histories. Societal norms, cultural values, and institutions shape our perceptions of animals. It emphasizes that our understanding of animals is not purely based on biological differences but is constructed through human interpretation and cultural contexts.

The relationship between human and non-human transcends physical and material realms towards mental and emotional spheres. Animals also provide a sort of stress relief and happiness. Modern medicine proves human animal relation as a solution for depression and isolation. From being exotic animals towards constant companions in everyday life, they became a major source of entertainment for human beings. A new branch in human geography called as animal geography was developed by cultural anthropologist by the mid 1990s. It discusses human-animal relation with space, place, location, environment and landscape and the role played by animals in human culture. Zoogeography, the study of the geographic distribution of animal species, is considered as the first wave of animal geography. Thus, Zoogeography and animal geography open new areas of understanding animals in Human Geography, where tremendous changes occurred with the entry of animals.

⁶ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book Rix Publication, Germany, 2019, p.64.

Animals in Human Geography

Human Geography can be defined as the branch of geography that studies human societies, culture, activities and interaction with the environment across space and time. Human beings gradually generated a logical and diplomatic adjustments while dealing with non-humans as the part of progress. The selection of animals for various purposes from basic livelihood to highest form of divinity, shows human brilliance in assimilating with the nature. Categorisation of animals into farm, entertainment, performing etc. were based on qualities and nature of animals. The relationship between humans and animals are continuously influenced and determined by cultural, ethical, and environmental considerations. The mutual give and take policy of human-animal relation is visible as humans provide protection and care for the animals, in turn of materials and assistance that they get from animals.

Starting from Pre historic days human beings try to appropriate natural resources in different ways. The relation between man and animals may have started as a means to gratify his starvation during early palaeolithic age. Thus, identification of animals by man as their meal or as companion starts from Paleolithic age. By analyzing materialistic background of man-animal relation, we can see that as a food gatherer man identified animals bigger than his size as competitors for the extraction of natural resources. From mere gatherers of readily available natural resources, human beings transformed into hunters. Paleolithic stone tools and its cultural biography suggest that they were made in order to escape from cruel beings which were a threat for their existence. Hence the animal competitors have their role in the evolution of paleolithic tools and weapons which is considered as the first advancement of man as innovator. Tools and weapons of early stone age were designed according to the size and nature of animals they hunt.

Homo heidelbergensis of Middle Pleistocene epoch, were the first humans to adapt to colder climates and routinely hunt large animals, and they developed wooden and stone tipped spears for hunting. Gordon Childe in his work *Man makes*

himself mentions that human societies have evolved culturally and socially over time, influenced by their environment, technological innovations, and interactions with other cultures. Artifacts of early tools from different parts of the world show variations depending on the nature and size of the animal they hunt. Human beings learnt the technique of survival from observing non humans in the nature. In human history, clothing, tools, weapons, and traditions take the place of fur, claws, tusks, and instincts in the quest for food and shelter.⁷ In this way non humans have directly and indirectly contributed towards the formation of tools and weapons which reflected in human life pattern.

Passing through the prehistoric period, humans and animals forged and developed mutual dependencies in the context of hunting and gathering. Thus, man realised the qualities and efficiency of animals that reached in their geography and this experience helped him to develop new phases in human progress with the help of non-humans. Early humans relied on animals for sustenance, by making use of their knowledge of animal behaviors to hunt. Cave paintings and artifacts from this period provide glimpses into the early societies which had given importance for their animal counterparts. Animals were represented universally in the prehistoric cave arts which shares same pattern and structure.

Role of animals during medieval days continued as working animals and pack animals. The Renaissance brought about a renewed interest in the natural world, and artists and scientists of the time explored the intricate relationships between humans and animals. Matilde Lombardero mentions that Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical studies demonstrated a fascination with the physiological similarities between humans and animals. The Enlightenment further prompted philosophical inquiries into animal cognition, ethics, and rights. Philosopher Rene Descartes, in his cartesian theory, contributed to a dualistic view of humans and animals.⁸ He argued that animals were mere automata, lacking consciousness or

⁷ V. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, Watts & Co Publication, London, 1936, p.31.

⁸ Evan Thomas, 'Animals and Cartesian Consciousness: Paradise vs. the Cartesians', *Journal of Modern Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Issue.11, 2020, p.17.

subjective experience. Religions like Christianity represented animals on religious lines and themes for church architecture.

Animal power in the field of production was replaced by machine power to some extent. Still animals and their parts were continued to be exploited as raw materials for new products. The industrial revolution witnessed changes in the roles of animals as machines that became central to economic production. With this, animals were continued to be used in agriculture and transportation and their status evolved from working partners to commodities. The Industrial Revolution brought about significant changes in human-animal relationships, with the rise of factory farming and increased exploitation of animals for labour.

In the article, *The Representation of Animal Actors: Theorizing Performance and Performativity in the Animal Kingdom*, Gregory S. Szarycz concentrates on the ideas of performance and performativity as a way to consider human-animal relations. Szarycz argues that all social life is dramaturgical and he seeks to extend this analysis to non-human animals by analyzing how humans construct perceptions of the natural world through representations of animal actors.⁹ Since early days folk lore and folk tales describe animals in such a manner that it became an interest to human beings. It can be noted that humans attribute certain characteristics to certain animals such as cruel, crooked, magnificent, funny, kind and peaceful. Animals and birds in popular culture are still relevant. Films and cartoons also portray anthropomorphized animals in order to increase receptivity.

Socio cultural construction of animal identity and social roles were satisfied by certain animals having more similarities with human nature and hence they were gradually incorporated and assimilated to human life and society, while others were eliminated or set aside from human social life. Animals who reach in human geography, are being analysed and assessed through various process and departmentalised into different zones of human life like political geography,

⁹ Nik Taylor, Tania Signal, (eds.), Gregory S Szarycz, *The Representation of Animal Actors: Theorizing Performance and Performativity in the Animal Kingdom*, *Theorizing Animals: Rethinking Humanimal Relation*, Brill Publication, Boston, 2011, p.149.

economic geography, cultural geography, tourism geography, medical geography etc. The departmentalisation of animals into a particular or multiple areas of human life is based on the human attitude and mentality, and is not a permanent or static but dynamic and transformative in accordance with new human experiences and knowledge. Present chapter conducts a macro analysis of assigning Elephants into certain areas of human life and satisfied their material and non-material requirements, which played major role in historical evolution.

Elephants in Human Geography

Hannah Mumby and Gemma Lawrence in the work *Elephants: Birth, Life and Death in the world of the Giants* make a clear idea about similarities between Elephants and humans. The intricate relationship between humans and Elephants reveals a deep emotional connection that transcends species. Both humans and Elephants experience a wide range of emotions, from joy to sorrow, which they communicate in complex and nuanced ways.

Elephants, being larger in size than men, were initially left aloof for being hunted, until the tools and conglomerate of humans were formed. Early Elephantids, the common ancestor of modern Elephants and mammoths, lived around 5 to 10 million years ago. Early Elephantids included species like *Stegodon*, which had distinct molars and tusks. *Stegodon* species were widespread across Asia and Africa. Based on fossil evidence of 400,000 years ago, only *Loxodonta* continued to survive in Africa as the larger savanna Elephant.¹⁰ Asian Elephants are easily distinguished from the African *Loxodonta* species as it has smaller ears and a protruding forehead, unlike the flat forehead of the African genus.¹¹

Mammoths are a group of extinct Elephantids that evolved from earlier Elephantid species. The best-known mammoth species, the woolly mammoth, lived during the Pleistocene epoch. Columbian Mammoth occupied much of the North

¹⁰ Richard A. Lobban and Valerie de Liedekerke, 'Elephants in Ancient Egypt and Nubia', *Anthrozoos*, Vol.13, Issue 4, 2015, p.234.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.236.

American continent and dwarf mammoth in the Mediterranean.¹² The mammoth is one of the great icons of prehistory and they adapted to various environments, with some species, like the woolly mammoth, adapted to cold climates and others to more temperate regions. The African Elephant and the Asian Elephant, the two surviving species of Elephants today, share a common ancestry with mammoths. They represent distinct evolutionary branches within the Elephantidae family.

The consumption of Elephant fat and meat began with the emergence of *Homo erectus* in Africa by almost 2 million years ago.¹³ Available evidence regarding Elephant and mammoth hunting by examining the archaeological, ethnographic and ethno-historical records support this hypothesis. As homo erectus needed high calories of food and fat for their daily activities, they must have hunted huge animals. Northern Africa was the cradle of the proboscideans, where the early evolution of true Elephants was nurtured.¹⁴

Cave art reflection provides ample evidences for man-animal relation in prehistoric times. Elephant depictions in the rock carvings from palaeolithic age of North Africa, show realistic in nature. The Central Sahara is one of the richest regions of rock paintings and engravings in the world and the oldest painted images are likely to have originated in the tenth millennium BCE.¹⁵ Saharan petroglyph shows many scenes of Elephant hunting and angry Elephant pursuing a man, and that relation can be characterized as of both conflict and coexistence.¹⁶ It highlights the dangers and challenges humans faced in interacting with these powerful animals.

¹² Adrian Lister and Paul, Mammoth: Giants in the Ice Age, University of California, 2009, p.131.

¹³ Miki Ben Dor, (et al.), 'Man the Fat Hunter: The demise of Homo Erectus and the Emergence of a New Hominin lineage in the Middle Pleistocene', *Plos one Journal*, Vol 6, Issue 12, 2011, p.6.

¹⁴ Christen Wemmer, and Catherin A. Christen, (eds.), Elephants and Ethics: Toward a Morality of Coexistence, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2008, p.18.

¹⁵ Jitka Soukopova, 'The Earliest Rock Paintings of the Central Sahara: Approaching Interpretation, Time and Mind', *The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture*, Volume 4, Issue 2, 2011, p.193.

¹⁶ Richard A. Lobban and Valerie de Liedekerke, *Op. Cit.*, p.15.

This duality reflects a relationship marked by both respect and fear, where Elephants were revered for their strength and importance but were also a significant threat, leading to a dynamic of dominance and resistance.

Different types of elephant hunting, like hunting by spears, pitfalls, axes, etc. were laborious task and needed a combined effort. This made the human beings come together and form a group, and this helped them to evolve their social lives. At the same time, with the development of spears and stronger tools, there are some instances of hunting the magnificent by a single human. In Africa, rituals and spirit-plays are often associated with hunting in general and Elephant hunting in particular. The spirit-plays, accompanying Elephant hunting, show its great economic and social value and are aimed at ensuring the success of the hunt, eliminating any claims to special status by the hunters, and at monitoring the hunt by the women and at the sharing of the Elephant by the whole group and neighbouring groups.¹⁷ The Kamba community, belonging to the Bantu tribe in eastern region of Kenya, hunted Elephants for meat until the late 18th century before their transition to the long-distance ivory trade.¹⁸ Thus the practice of hunting Elephants continues in Africa for its meat and tusk. African lands like Kenya considered Elephants as a means to satisfy their hunger. Later they moved to the ivory trade with other countries.

In Africa, the Elephant was significant for its by products which had importance in traditional medical practices and rituals. Elephant hooves or part of the foot, were used to treat backache; its skin was used to treat nose bleed and epilepsy in young children, meat to treat pneumonia, fat to treat leprosy convulsions and any other cardiac problems. So Elephants were significant for healthcare and hence were preserved and protected in Africa.¹⁹ But later in certain African clans,

¹⁷ Jerom Lewis, *Where Goods are free but Knowledge Costs: Hunter-Gatherer Ritual Economics in Western Central Africa*, University College, London, 2015, p.27.

¹⁸ E I. Steinhart, 'Elephant Hunting in 19th Century Kenya: Kamba Society and Ecology in Transformation', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol 33, No.2, 2000, p. 346.

¹⁹ Nisbert Taisekwa Taringa, 'The Sacred Duty of Animals in Africa Traditional Religion and Culture', https://www.bayreuth-academy-futureafrica.uni-bayreuth.de/resources/WG-C_Taringa_Animals-in-African-Traditional-Religion.pdf

specific parts of the Elephant considered as totems, such as the heart or trunk and inedible portions were forbidden to eat for the members of the clan. Violating this taboo is believed to result in consequences like the loss of teeth or other forms of harm.²⁰ Evolution of such practice of totems of plants or animals was raised by realising its toxic nature. When society moves from prehistoric to proto historic, later to historic periods like iron age, Elephants were perceived in different ways.

African and Asian Rock painting of prehistoric days shows that Elephant is known to humans and they developed methods for taming Elephants. Thus Elephants were assimilated in human geography from prehistoric days. There is differences in accommodating Elephants into differential geographies based on the nature, character and social need. Like Africa, Elephants were native to Asian countries. Prehistoric cave arts of these places, mainly from India, reflect man-animal relation in prehistoric days. Petroglyphs in recently discovered rock shelters of Gawilgarh Hills illustrates a human figure standing alongside an Elephant.²¹ The Bhimbetka rock shelters, dated to about 8,000 BC., also reflect similar paintings.

The Indian Elephant is smaller than the African Elephant, and Elephants along the coast opposite to Sri Lanka are said to have been taller.²² The natural habitat of Indian Elephants consists of hilly or undulating forests preferably with lots of bamboo or the high Elephant grass, also hot and humid jungles and cool forests at higher altitudes fall within their ecological range.²³ By the passing of stone ages, significant civilizations emerged in the banks of the rivers like Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, and Indus. At this point in history, several human societies independently began developing close ties with Elephants.²⁴ Domestication of animals, occurred

²⁰ Show Chibango, Environmental Preservation in Zimbabwe: A Religio-Cultural nexus, Department of Curriculum and Arts Education, University of Zimbabwe, 2018.p.110.

²¹ Prabash Sahu, 'Petroglyphs in Recently Discovered Rock Shelters of Gawilgarh Hills', *Heritage and Us: Conserve it for the Future*, Issue 4, Dec 2013/Jan, 2014, p.12.

²² S. Digby, War-Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate, Orient Monographs, London, 1971, p.32.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.56.

²⁴ Raman Sukumar, The Story of Asia's Elephants, Marg Publication, Mumbai, 2011, p.21.

independently in different part of the world, brought about changes in human mentalities and behaviour along with human diet pattern. It is considered that horse, cow, sheep and goat were domesticated first in Europe and Asia, pig in China, and poultry, Elephant, and buffalo in India.²⁵ In general, the order of domestication can be considered as dog, goat, sheep, cow, buffalo, pig, Elephant, horse and camel.²⁶

Domestication of animals like pet and farm animals enabled the skill of training and taming of big animals by humans. Deputing animals into different spheres of human geography became evolved and finalized by this time. Unlike other animals, taming or domestication of Elephants might be for protection and security for hunting, as Elephant top provided safety for moving in wild spaces. Being an animal more similar to human emotions, Elephant especially in Asia acted as friendly giant for forest dwellers and their chiefs. The earliest evidence of Elephant domestication is found in the animal depictions on steatite seals from the Indus civilization, which are estimated to be around 4,000 years old.

In Asia, human-Elephant connection evolved into a multifaceted relationship, deeply integrated into the political, social, economic, and religious aspects of life. Elephants, reached in human geography, were allotted into political sphere which provide maximum utility for the dominant ruling strata. For instance, Asian countries which had large number of native Elephant population, recruited mass number of Elephants for military as well as diplomatic zone and in that phase Elephants played decisive role in deciding the course of political history.

Elephants in Political Geography

In political geography, military plays a significant role in shaping power dynamics, territorial control, and international relations. The military is often used by states to secure borders, reshape boundaries and alter the political landscape and

²⁵ James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p.64.

²⁶ Y. L. Nene (ed.), *Glimpses of The Agricultural Heritage of India*, Asian Agri History Foundation, Andhra Pradesh, 1994, p.56.

defend sovereignty. Animals like horses and Elephants played major role in political geography as military strength in the form of cavalry and Elephantry respectively. These animals were also acted as gift items in diplomatic exchanges between rulers.

On both continents of Asia and Africa the rise of the Elephant culture, specifically the large-scale capture and use of this animal, probably was associated with the rise of major republics and kingdoms.²⁷ Elephants hunted from Nile valley were distributed to Egypt and Greco Roman for the raw materials like ivory as a symbol of power and amusement. These animals had certainly disappeared from the Egyptian Nile valley by Early Dynastic times about 2900–2600 BCE.²⁸ The evidence of the presence of Elephants in Egypt were found from the period of Fatimid (10th to 12th century CE) to Mamluk (12th to 15th century CE). They were featured as royal mounts for pharaohs and left their name on some landmarks like Elephantine Island in the River Nile at Aswan. This ancient culture of capturing Elephants, as well as their use in war, died out in most of the African cultures in later years.

While considering Indian context, the culture of capturing and training Elephants in large numbers flourished with the rise of the Aryan republics and kingdoms in northern India and seems to have reached an early peak during Mauryan times.²⁹ Elephants were domesticated for the purpose for military use in India as is evident since the first empire building in India. Magadha emerged as *Mahjanapada* using Elephant wealth from their land. The use of war Elephants has been recorded in the military history of India, from the famous battle between Alexander the Great and King Porus, ruler of Punjab, on the banks of the Jhelum in 326 B.C.

Mauryan period highlights the maintenance of Elephant forest for the supply of strong Elephant for their Elephantry. Thus development of political orders, expansion of kingdom, maintenance of ruling authority is determined by strength

²⁷ Raman Sukumar, *Op. Cit.*, p.31.

²⁸ Richard A. Lobban and Valerie de Liedekerke, *Op. Cit.*, p.241.

²⁹ Raman Sukumar, *The Living Elephants: Evolutionary Ecology, Behavior Conservation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p.134.

and power of standing army which include cavalry and Elephantry based on the availability of these animals. Places having indigenous Elephant wealth enabled the rulers to expand domination by utilising the physical power of Elephants especially in the field of war. Thus, with the emergence of monarchs, Elephants became the symbol of power and dignity. Elephants played a great role in the history of Empire building from the formation to its final dissolution. Seleucus Nicator and his empire gave enough care and prestige for the Elephants as Chandragupta Maurya gifted 500 Indian war Elephants to Seleucus.³⁰ Elephants were adorned army, hence military role of the magnificent reflected as symbols in coins, seals etc. Thus, Elephants played great role in the four fold division of army which include infantry, cavalry, and chariot along with Elephantry.

A Comparative analysis of Asian-African and European Countries by examining the individual political histories of each nation will help to understand the role played by Elephants in the military of these nation. This will also help for tracing the similarities and common pattern of Elephant taming and training which transcend national boundaries. East Asian countries like Thailand also used Elephant strength in their military which enriched their political history. Thai sources mention about the significant role played by Elephants during the time of war and peace. Sukhothai Stone Inscription of 1292 A D states that king Ramkhamhang the great duelled with his enemy while riding on Elephant back. Elephants were basically equivalent to military tanks as they carried armour, soldiers and possessed speeds of around 25 kilometres per hour. King also used to ride the city during the time of peace on the top of decorated white Elephant for ceremonial purpose. Elephants were considered as symbol of power and status. During the time of some rulers Elephant stables in Thai royal palaces shows importance and prestige given to Elephant by them. Icon of Elephant in National flag and in kings personal flag were considered as a symbol of luck. During 17th century, Thai culture had 20,000 Elephants trained for war. Presently they incorporate Elephant in cultural festivals and procession in order to commemorate royal hunt during medieval days.

³⁰ J. Kosmin Paul, *The Land of the Elephant Kings*, Harvard University Press, New York, 2014, p.73.

In central Asia, Elephants were regularly seen in accompanying the Caliphs' processions. The Caliph Al-Hakim Bi Amr Allah rode in a procession with six Elephants who wore special caparisons of red and to inaugurate his mosque in the quarter of Rashida in *al-Fustat*.³¹ Muhammad Ibn Iyas, chronicler of the late Mamluk and early Ottoman period in Egypt, in his work, explained about public concern in Cairo on the death of an Elephant named Marzuq meaning prosperous in 1402 even during the adverse circumstance of Timur's invasion of Syria.

The significance of the Elephant in diplomacy is demonstrated by the message sent in 1283 from the ruler of Ceylon to Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun (1279-90), in which he offered him his friendship and invited him to deal directly without the intermediary of Yemen, praising the goods he could provide, which included Elephants.³² Elephants, although rare in Egyptian iconography, appear in Rekhmire's tomb. The presence of Elephants in Egypt reflect their interaction with sub-Saharan Africa, where Elephants were more commonly found. They were highly prized and viewed as symbols of power and wealth.³³

Although the Mamluks did not use the Elephant in warfare, a rare fourteenth century illustrated manuscript on martial arts includes the image of an Elephant along with a palanquin carried by soldiers. The Indian *mahouts* were responsible for training the Elephants in the Egyptian army. Although the Elephants came to the Arab world from remote places and at high costs, it occupied a prominent place in the medieval courtly and ceremonial culture of Egypt.³⁴ The last acting Mamluk Sultan, Qansuh Al-Ghawri (1501-16), was fond of luxury and regalia of Elephants, which are found on multiple occasions during his reign. It is believed that with the fall of the Mamluk sultanate in 1517, and the annexation of Egypt by the Ottoman Turks, the ceremonial role of the Elephant comes to an end.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.210.

³² *Ibid.*, p.236.

³³ Thomas R Trautman, *Elephants and Kings*, Permanent Black, Ashoka University, Ranikhet, 2015, p.73.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.77.

In the article “Monsters of Military Might: Elephants in Hellenistic History and Art”, Branko F. Van Oppen De Ruiter mentions that Elephants were first deployed in warfare by Indian and Persian armies. Regions with no indigenous Elephant population, became familiar with Elephant culture through trade transactions and contacts. This feature is reflected in the evolution of Arab favour towards Elephants. Elephants were known as war animal to them and war Elephants in South-western Arabia by the sixth century came from Ethiopia. However, Cosmas, an Egyptian monk writing at the time, noted that Ethiopians were not good at taming and training Elephants, even if they did so occasionally. Moreover, it is known that rulers in India supplied Elephants to southwestern Arabia. *Maccabees* mentions that the Hellenistic rulers of Syria gave their Elephants wine, the juice made of grapes and mulberries, before battle following the Indian practice³⁵.

Affinity of Elephants in central Asian military, can be assessed by examining religious scripture Quran and it mentions a chapter in the name of Elephants i.e., *Al Fil or The Elephant*. It mentions about ruler of Yamen, Abraha who built a temple to attract people from *Macca kaabah*, as he wanted to shift the religious and commercial significance from Macca to Yemen. He asked the people not to visit Macca and he marched to *Macca* to destroy the *kaabah* with huge army of soldiers and a strong Elephant named Mahmud. Army began to crush down everything and began to move towards to destroy *kaabah* but legends says that, when *Mahmud* the Elephant, realized that they were heading towards the house of Lord it stopped and sat down on the ground. According to the story, Abraha’s army was divinely defeated before they could destroy the *Kaabah*. This event demonstrates the wisdom and divine bliss of Elephant. Hereafter the event came to be known as year of Elephant which is mentioned in the Quran in *Surah Al-Fil*. Birth of Prophet in the “*year of the Elephant*” is proved to be a good symptom by the believers.³⁶

³⁵ William G. Clarence, ‘Elephants in Islamic History’, *Proceeding of School of Oriental and African Studies, Elephant Conference*, London, 2019, p.261.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.272.

Even though Byzantines or eastern Roman empire never included Elephants in war, their ceremonies were enriched by magnificent giants with much pomp and glory.³⁷ This is evidenced by the Elephant stables in later phase of Byzantine emperor and they were transformed into worshipping places after 1453. Informants also describe that Emperor Heraclius moved in the chariot ridden by four Elephant, after the success in battles. Arabs used different methods through religion and philosophy in order to forbade people from eating Elephant meat.

Emergence of Abbasid caliphate in 750 CE, marked the elevated status for Elephants. By realising the nature and use of Elephants, the common people accepted the animal with great enthusiasm. With the expansion of Persian empire in central Asia, Elephants were given due importance following the Indian tradition and they used Elephants as vehicle of the rulers. Status of Elephants were elevated to precious item for gift which were sent by Hindu rulers. Gifting Elephant became vogue as gift from Caliph Harun al-Rashid to the Christian Emperor Charlemagne in 801.

The work '*Kitab al-Hayawan*' or The book of animals in 9th century written by Amr Ibn Bahr Al-Jahiz deals with animals. The book covers a wide range of topics, including animal behaviour, classification, and even elements of evolution. Author compared both Indian and African Elephants and even corrected the traditional findings of Aristotle regarding the animal. He attempted to provide information on every aspect of the animal, referring to both India and Africa. John M. Kistler's *War Elephants* mentions the role and significance of Elephants in warfare across various civilizations. The book delves into the use of Elephants as military assets, tracing their involvement from ancient times to their gradual decline with the technological advancements that made their presence in battlefield obsolete. Kistler begins by outlining the origins of war Elephants, focusing particularly on Asia and Africa, where they were native and widely used in warfare. In these regions, Elephants were first employed as tools of intimidation, their sheer size and

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

power making them formidable against enemy forces. It also discusses the initial domestication of Elephants, primarily in India, and the training processes that transformed these animals into highly effective war machines.

Some historical narratives mentions diverse military strategies that utilized Elephants, ranging from the ancient Indian subcontinent, to Southeast Asia, China, and Persia. Each region employed these animals differently, depending on terrain, climate, and the types of warfare they engaged. In India, Elephants were a crucial part of military campaigns, symbolizing power and prestige, while in China, their use was more sporadic but significant during certain periods of warfare. One of the most detailed sections of *War Elephants* is the analysis of how these animals were used in actual combat. Kistler explains that war Elephants were often deployed at the front of an army to charge enemy formations, break through lines, and create confusion among enemy troops.

Psychological impact of using Elephants on the battlefield is also discussed by Kistler. For many armies unfamiliar with these animals, the sight of a charging Elephant could induce fear and panic. The thunderous noise they created, combined with their massive size, often led to disarray among enemy forces, giving an army that employed Elephants a significant advantage. He says that while Elephants could be highly effective, they were also unpredictable. Many times, they could be injured or frightened, causing them to turn on their own troops, leading to devastating consequences. The maintenance of Elephants also required significant resources, as they needed large amounts of food, water, and space to live comfortably when not in battle.

The *Cambridge History of Warfare*, edited by Geoffrey Parker, addresses the Western Way of War and how military practices and ideas were transferred between cultures. Regarding ancient warfare in Asia, the work explores the strategic use of Elephants in Chinese military campaigns. War Elephants were utilized in specific contexts as powerful tools of intimidation and brute force on the battlefield. Their deployment in China is contextualized within the broader evolution of military tactics and the unique challenges faced by ancient Chinese armies. Asian armies

developed specialized tactics for working with Elephants. They were trained to respond to commands and were used in combination with archers or javelin throwers riding on their backs. Some rulers, like those in India, also equipped their Elephants with armour to protect them from enemy spears and arrows. Thus Elephants played multifaceted role in shaping the military and cultural landscapes of numerous regions in the east compared to west. Meanwhile western countries tried to develop war strategies that could prevent the strength of the Elephants.

European military history rarely mentions about Elephants as countries west to prime meridian have no native Elephant population. Elephants were known to the Europeans only in terms of tusks or ivory for which they referred as *elephus*.³⁸ There are various opinions related to the evolution of the word Elephant. According to some etymologist, the term Elephant came from the word *elephus* which was popular in many western languages, such as English, French and German. The Greek term for *elephus* is said to have evolved from central Asian language as the latter were involved in ivory trade. Indo-European Etymological Dictionary has mentioned about the evolution of the Greek word '*elephus*'. While examining the chronology, the term *elephus* can be detected in Greek vocabulary during pre-Homeric reign, before ninth century BCE., and the word Elephant only by pre-Herodotus, before fourth century BCE.³⁹ According to certain linguistic scholars, there is a connection between the Sanskrit word '*ibha*' and its influence on Greek and Egyptian terms for "Elephant".

Like many other scholars, Karl Brugmann in his work, *A Comparative Grammar of the Indo-European Languages*, states that the origin of the term "Elephant" or its Greek form "*elephus*" can be considered outside the core Indo-European lexicon. In his work, Brugmann focused primarily on tracing linguistic patterns and common roots across the Indo-European language family. Words like "*elephus*" were often regarded as loanwords or foreign terms, likely

³⁸ Merlin Peris, 'A Note on the Etymology of Elephant', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, Vol. 38, 1993, p.165.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.166.

borrowed from other ancient languages, owing to trade, cultural exchange, or the introduction of exotic animals like Elephants to regions like Greece. Some scholars at the time speculated that "*elephus*" might have originated from Afro-Asiatic or Semitic languages, reflecting contact between Mediterranean civilizations and African or Near Eastern peoples who were familiar with Elephants.

Europeans basically considered Elephants as exotic and used to admire the qualities of the giant as war animal and as a precious gift for diplomatic alliances. From the works of early writers, it can be understood as to how ancient age has perceived and incorporated the giant as not only animals but powerful symbols of strength and power deeply, embedded in the progress of socio cultural economic and political history. Greek historian Herodotus wrote about Elephants as he collected information from Eastern Libya and mentioned it as the magnificent and wild animal.⁴⁰ Aristotle, in his work *De Anima* means On the Soul, proposed a hierarchy of souls, placing humans at the top, followed by animals. This hierarchical view influenced Western thought for centuries, reinforcing the idea of a fundamental distinction between humans and animals. His "*Historia Animalium*" discussed the Elephant in the same context as "*martichora*" or man eater, claiming that animal could live up to three hundred years, and the animal could kneel Infront of the ruler as per the instruction.⁴¹

The geographer Strabo (63 BCE–24 CE), mentioned the term Elephants around fifty times in his work, asserting that Elephants have the life span of three hundred, and rarely live up to five hundred years. In the seventh volume of his work *Geography* he states that common people were not allowed to keep Elephants, except royal class.⁴² Roman writer, Pliny (23–79 CE) quoted that that "Elephants and dragons fought each other to death in India". All these references by the

⁴⁰ Simon Horn Blower and Christopher Pelling, (eds.), *Herodotus Histories*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p.113.

⁴¹ Branko Van Oppen, 'Monsters of Military Might: Elephants in Hellenistic History and Art', *Art*, 2019, p.160.

⁴² Horace Leonard Jones (Trans.), *Strabo's Geography*, Vol VII, William Hennimann Ltd., London, 1998, p.102.

European writers and thinkers showcase their limited ideas and misconceptions regarding Elephants. The Greek ambassador Megasthenes visited India and highlighted several aspects of Indian society and its military strength and also give clear information about the use of Elephant in India. In his work *Indica*, he mentions that the land was abundant with Elephants which were stronger than those from Libya and played a crucial role in warfare, often determining the success in battles. He stated that the king used to maintain a large military force, including soldiers, horses, and war Elephants. The government is described as aristocratic, with 5,000 councillors, each responsible for providing an Elephant to the state.⁴³ Megasthenes also describes the medical treatment of Elephants, including the use of warm water, butter, and pieces of pork to treat wounds, and cow's milk to cure eye infections. Black wine is used as a remedy for other diseases, and if it fails, no other treatment can save the Elephant.

Europe initially experienced the immigration of Elephants as a diplomatic gift and the admiration and curiosity of the commons was visible in each circumstances. Elephants were seen in Italy, for the first time, in the war against King Pyrrhus, in the year of 472 during which Elephants were called as "Lucanian oxen," because they were first seen in Lucania.⁴⁴ Romans exploited Elephants for the mere entertainment of humans by employing them in the bloody ritual of the Amphitheatre.⁴⁵ With the expansion of Christian religion Circus as well as other entertainments like 'gladiator fights' went into oblivion.

Even though Europeans rarely used Elephants in their own armies, they had great admiration and respect for the giant. For instance, Alexander incorporated Elephants in his force after his invasion of Eastern countries from where he attained efficient Elephants. Sources mention about Elephants guarding his war tent. Coins

⁴³ J W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, Trubner & Co, London, 1877, p.76.

⁴⁴ John Bostock, (*Trans.*), *The Natural History of Pliny*, Henry G Bohn Publisher, London, 1855, p.36.

⁴⁵ R Carrington, *Elephants: Their Natural History, Evolution and influence on Mankind*, Basic Books, New York, 1959, p.192.

of Alexander illustrate the great figure in Elephant head dress, which may be of their royal symbol. Later the use of Elephants was reduced to an exchange item between the rulers and the diplomatic roles played by Elephant as tools is reflected in the work *The Emperor and the Elephant* which mention about Harun Al Rashid's gift of an Elephants to Charlamagne.⁴⁶

In Bible, there are a few references about the use of Elephant and ivory. In 17th, 18th and 19th Chapters of Maccabees, Antiochus expanded his domination over Egypt using a strong army consisting of Elephant, chariots and cavalry. When the Indo-Roman trade was declined, the preference was shifted towards African Elephants, despite the fact that Asian Elephants could be trained better.

In sixteenth century an Elephant was seemed to be taken to Rome to present to Pope as a gift. Elephant named "Hanno" is well documented in the semi historical work "The Pope's Elephant" by Silvio Bedini. It also reveals the influence of the Elephant upon the European communities. Asian animals which generate curiosity among the western mind were taken to their land and they were kept in royal zoo. The 'animal drain' especially cheetah, tiger, peacock, Elephant etc. of colonial age is reflected in the work. This work illustrates influential effects made by Indian Elephant on the Papal Court. The depiction and love allotted to the Elephant Hanno by the Pope, is ascribed by a certain author as putting a "certain affinity between animal and mankind" and the "assertion of almost being tempted to put faith in idolatry".⁴⁷ This Elephant was trained to kneel, dance, weep, and trumpet as per instructions.

In Western warfare, there was no long-term adaptation of Elephants. Instead, they developed strategies focused on disabling Elephant force of the enemies. For example, the Romans would use coordinated infantry formations to create gaps that allowed the Elephants to pass through without causing damage. Spears and javelins

⁴⁶ Sam Ottewill Soulsby, *The Emperor and the Elephant: Christians and Muslims in the Age of Charlemagne*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2023, p.126.

⁴⁷ Tripp York, *The End of Captivity: A Primate's Reflections on Zoos, Conservation, and Christian Ethic*, Cascade Books, Oregon, 2015, p.15.

were also used to wound the animals, causing them to panic and turn on their own forces. Elephantry remained as main strength of military by participating in war and as object of diplomatic transaction. Special care and treatment were given to such animals as they were the symbol of royal power and prestige. The countries which have abundant Elephants learned the skill of taming and training and accommodated them in military wing. Such countries have developed their own medicinal branch in order to treat animals. The skill of using Elephants in military was initiated by early Indians and later imitated and followed by other regions of the world. Thus, history proves that the Elephants had a significant role in deciding the political future of bygone era which had its reflections on its cultural sphere as well.

Elephants in Cultural Geography

Cultural geography is the study of relation between human culture and geographical environment. Culture has many components that vary from one group to the other and evolution of culture in each specific geographical space is influenced by its physical environment and landscape. Various cultural components like religion, architecture, language, entertainment etc. reflect the role of non-humans. Animals have consistently played essential roles in every known religious tradition, taking on various forms and serving diverse purposes within spiritual and cultural practices. Across different faiths and belief systems, animals have been revered as sacred beings, embodying divine or supernatural qualities. They have often been used as powerful symbols, representing everything from strength and purity to wisdom and guidance. In many traditions, animals have also been objects of deep concern and care. Furthermore, animals have been seen as fellow creatures, living alongside humans in a shared world, interconnected within a larger cosmic or spiritual framework. In some cases, they are even considered religious teachers, imparting lessons about life, humility, and existence through their behaviour or symbolic presence.

Through religious imagination, ethical considerations, and specific practices, human interactions with animals have significantly shaped their existence. Animals

have been domesticated for companionship, agricultural work, or ritual use, reflecting humanity's deep connection with them. Sacrificial rituals involving animals are central to many traditions, symbolizing offerings to the divine or spiritual realms. At the same time, animals have been dominated and controlled in ways that reflect human domination and power dynamics. The act of eating animals holds varying degrees of significance, with some traditions incorporating animal consumption into sacred rites, while others emphasize refraining from eating them as an ethical or spiritual mandate. Beyond consumption, animals have been blessed in ceremonies, reflecting their sacred status, and reverence for life.

Additionally, animals are often commemorated in religious contexts, whether through art, myth, or ritual, preserving their significance across generations. Contemplation of animals within religious traditions goes beyond mere utility, encouraging humans to reflect on their place in the universe, their role in the natural world, and their relationship with the divine. In this way, animals serve as profound symbols and active participants in the religious lives of humans, shaping spiritual practices and influencing moral and ethical decision-making across cultures.

Margo De Mello in his work "*Animals and Society- An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*", examines social construction of animals in world cultures. Asian countries like India and far East considered animals as a part of their belief system. Chinese legends of ancient days mention about multiple roles played by animals for war assistance of the nomads. In the work *Animals in Religion: Devotion, Symbol and Ritual*, Barbara Allen discusses about the involvement of animals in religion from tribal societies to various religions of the world. To him religion contains ritual, ethics, belief etc.⁴⁸ Religions perceive some animals as God while others as beast. In Oriental countries like India, Evolution of philosophies and ideologies were also influenced by animals. Rise of new religions in India during 6th century BC like Jainism and Buddhism developed with principle of Ahimsa, with the aim of protecting animal wealth.

⁴⁸ Barbara Allen, *Animals in Religion: Devotion, Symbol and Ritual*, Reaktion Books, London, 2016, p.13.

The journal article named “*The Elephant in the Ceremonial and Artistic Culture of Medieval Egypt*” describes important landmarks in the capital city Cairo like Pond of the Elephant known as “*Birkat al-fil*” and “*Jami al-fiyala*”, the Mosque of the Elephants at Fustat, etc. unfold their affinity with the animal. This article mentions that armoured Elephants were also used in ceremonial processions and performed battle games on festive occasions. Items made of Ivory became a luxurious show piece in the royal houses.⁴⁹ The religious veneration for the Elephant appeared by the Pre dynastic times in Egypt. According to Wallis Budge, an Egyptologist, and orientalist, Elephant was sacred to God Seth in Egypt. He stated that fear was the main reason behind worshipping Elephant like other dangerous reptiles such as snakes and crocodiles in ancient Egypt.⁵⁰ However, this cultic veneration of the Elephant did not develop further because of the animal’s extermination.

The work *Animals and Religion*, edited by Dave Aftandilian, *et. al.*, explains the significant role acted by animals in various religions. It also states that in Asia people live in harmony with the animals, plants, and all living beings around them and ceremonies and rituals express gratitude for this sacred creation, and they are performed to ensure that all forms of life compared to western countries.

Development of religion in world civilization and its trans species adaptation bought a status of purity and divinity for animals.⁵¹ As per the social constructionist perspectives, animals have its role in evolving societal norms and values. Human non-human relationships are always influenced by social and cultural context. Animals were featured as deities and given higher status since ancient times. Religion like Hinduism incorporates animals like Elephant, snake, cow and monkeys in religious text emphasizing a deep relation and connection

⁴⁹ The Elephant in the ceremonial and artistic culture of Medieval Egypt, <https://www.geocities.ws/theElephantreader/avery.pdf>, Last Visited on 20/11/2019.

⁵⁰ A. W. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, Vol.1, Dover Publication, New York, 1969, p. 22.

⁵¹ Harvey Whitehouse, *The Ritual Animal: Imitation and Cohesion in the Evolution of Social Complexity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2021, p.82.

between the human and animals. The bond between humans and animals including Elephants became deeply ingrained in cultural practices and religious beliefs especially in Asian countries.

Status Elevation of Elephants by Accommodating in Religion

Asian countries especially far Eastern countries are having large number of indigenous Elephant population. Among the Asian countries itself, countries with more number of Elephant population were assigned high status in mythology, polity, society and economy. In the East its role as a peaceful servant of man, and its prestige as a quasi-religious symbol, were factors encouraging its preservation.⁵² “*Elephas maximus*” i.e Asian Elephants, spread from the Euphrates-Tigris River in the west to the Yangtse-Kiang River in the East.⁵³ Elephants got higher status with affiliation to religion in Eastern countries and the religions consider Elephants as noble and powerful symbol. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism have assigned high status for Elephants. Vedic God Indra is represented on his Elephant *Airavata*. In China, once Elephants were distributed largely and gradually faced a decline in number due to several human-induced factors like extensive hunting. Elephants were hunted for their meat and ivory, which was highly prized for crafting luxury goods and ornaments. Another contributing factor was their use as war Elephants. In ancient times, Elephants were trained for battle, often serving as powerful tools in military campaigns. Their size and strength made them valuable assets in warfare, but the practice of capturing and training Elephants for these purposes often led to injuries or death among the animals. Additionally, the trading of ivory became a significant part of the economy, especially in regions where Elephants were abundant. This trade boosted further hunting and also expanded the demand for ivory across various markets. Elephants were also captured and gifted as tributes to the imperial court, which was a common practice during different dynasties in China. These animals were considered symbols of power and prestige, making them

⁵² R. Carrington, *Op. Cit.*, p.243.

⁵³ Alexandra Van Der, *Animals in Stone: Indian Mammals Sculptured Through Time*, Brill Publication, Leiden, 2008, p.26.

valuable offerings. However, the capture and transportation of Elephants for these purposes often led to a reduction in their natural population.

Dai people of China regard themselves as descendants of Elephants. In Chinese culture they celebrate annual festival in which people push artificial structure of a white Elephant through the streets and they also install statue of white Elephant in religious as well as public places.⁵⁴ A legend from the another ethnic group, *Wa* people, found in their creation epic *Sigangli*, tells of the first humans living in a cave and being guided to an ideal place to settle by an Elephant.⁵⁵ The *Gongxiang* Festival, celebrated annually by the *Wa* ethnic minority in Banlao Town, highlights the community's deep cultural connection with Elephants.⁵⁶ Events such as the Elephant Ceremony and Worshipping the Elephant with a Thousand Prayers showcase the festival's unique appeal, emphasizing animal protection and ecological harmony, in line with the goal of promoting sustainable coexistence between humans and nature. Significantly, Elephant Worship is unique to the *Wa* people and is the only festival among China's 56 ethnic groups dedicated to the protection of Asian Elephants. In 2005, Lincang City, began to celebrate three days in a month as Elephant day. The Elephant is honoured as *Da*, the term used to denote grandpa or elders by *wa* people.

In Japanese culture, the Elephant symbolizes wellbeing, with the earth representing its heart and rivers its blood. The festival unfolds in four stages: inviting, greeting, worshipping, and bidding farewell to the Elephant. The Elephants featured in the festival were crafted from bamboo and paper. On the day of the celebration, *wa* people from various villages gather at Banlao Culture Square, dancing, singing, and joyfully spraying holy water on one another as a blessing for a prosperous and healthy year ahead.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ F.Yan, 'The Ancient Civilization of Tropical Forests on The Elephant Culture of Dai People, *Yun-nan Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.3, Issue 4, 2007, p.91.

⁵⁵ L P. Zhao, 'The Elephant Worshipping Festival of the Wa people along the Nangun River in Cangyu-an' *Journal of Zoological Research*, Vol.2, Issue 2, April 2020, p.84.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.92.

As per the opinion of Y Subbarayalu, South East Asian countries were Indianised with passive adaptation of culture and cultural institutions along with Indian political models, including kingship and administration. R C Majumdar in his work *Ancient India* mention about Indian colonies in Far Eastern regions like *Suvarnadwipa* or Malay peninsula including Java Sumatra, *Champa* or Vietnam, *Kambuja* or Cambodia, *Brahmadesa* or Burma and later Myanmar etc.

Malay peninsula include Peninsular Malaysia, South Thailand and regions of Myanmar and this region has been a trade route connecting the Indian Ocean and the South China, with its culture shaped by Indian, Chinese, and Arab influences over centuries. Elephants hold significant cultural, religious, and historical importance on the Malay Peninsula, which includes modern-day Malaysia and parts of Thailand. In both the Hindu-Buddhist and later Islamic traditions of the region, Elephants were revered for their strength, intelligence, and spiritual symbolism. In the earlier Hindu-Buddhist period, influenced by Indian culture, Elephants were seen as sacred animals connected to royalty and divinity. The white Elephant, in particular, was a symbol of kingship and prosperity, often linked to the rulers' divine right to govern. This belief carried over into Malay sultanates, where owning Elephants was a sign of power and prestige.

Historically, Elephants were also used for practical purposes such as transportation, warfare, and labour. Kings and sultans rode Elephants into battle, using them as symbols of authority and military strength. In the dense forests of the Malay Peninsula, Elephants were indispensable in clearing land and transporting goods. Today, Elephants still hold cultural importance in the region, though they face significant challenges due to habitat destruction and poaching. Conservation efforts are ongoing to protect the endangered Elephant population, which remains a symbol of the region's natural heritage.

Thailand known as the land of white Elephants and Thai culture reveals that people over here possessed a unique attachment for Elephants. The natives loved,

adored and maintained some kind of fear towards elephants at the same time.⁵⁸ History of early Thailand shows the instance of searching white Elephants, the symbol of strength and wisdom. in the forest by Thai folk by the instruction of the rulers. Ruler consciously select the white Elephant as it could serve as the vehicle of the ruler in public places as well as in battles. In ancient times, the kings of Thailand have sent people to the folk to search for Elephants every year, and the white Elephant that is clever and strong is the first choice. The best white Elephants are often used as mounts by the king; for traveling or leading the battle, which symbolize supreme power. Thai version of *Airavatha* known as *Erawan* the white Elephant with three head is considered as vahana for lord Indra. Thai myth also associates Elephant with Buddhist tradition similar to Indian tradition. Elephant tails, nails etc. were used by humans as the part of symbolic belief system for overcoming their fear and diseases. Thai people believe that God created auspicious Elephants and its possession will bring fortune for its owner. Dr.Rattapol Chaiyarat, in his research on *The representation of Elephants in Eastern Culture*, investigates the changing role of the Elephant in Thai Culture from historic to present days.⁵⁹ He states that Asian Elephants were considered as wonderful symbol of power, charisma and status and they plays an important position in representing ruler, religion and nation as whole.

In Myanmar, the land with second largest Asian Elephant population after India, the Elephant is worshipped in association with Buddhism. Elephants occupy a unique role in South East Asian regions. It is evident from the following illustration. “Aniruddha of Bagan took thirty three sets of Tipitaka Buddhist literary works by putting them on the back of thirty three white Elephants, from the place Thaton to Bagan.⁶⁰ The carrying of Tripitaka was simply a pretext; The real political agenda was that Aniruddha invaded Thaton formidable force, where a lot of Elephants took

⁵⁸ Jianghua Han, ‘The Study of Thai Elephant Culture Based on the Elephant Metaphors in Thai Idioms’, *Comparative Literature: East and West*, Vol.3, No.2, 2019, p.149.

⁵⁹ Rattapol Chaiyarat, ‘The Representation of Elephants in Eastern Culture’, *Journal of Business, Innovation and Sustainability*, Vol.II, Issue 4, 2009, p.42.

⁶⁰ Pale Aung, *Elephant in Myanmar Society 1752-1885*, Unpublished Research Thesis, University of Mandalay, Myanmar, 2007, p.112.

part in the campaign. It was also said that Aniruddha usually toured the country by riding on the back of a white Elephant, accompanied by 730 Elephants". White Elephants became a symbol of power and prestige and wars were fought for the acquisition of the same. The expansion of colonisation during late nineteenth and early twentieth century led to the maximum use of wild Elephants for moving timber and teak. During the colonial phase in Myanmar, Elephants were more worked as timber Elephants.⁶¹

Malaysian people also perceived Elephants as symbol of power, strength and prestige. In Malesia, rulers used Elephants in royal processions. Under colonial rule, Elephants were shot dead in order to establish colonial plantation. The northern regions of Sumatra practices the inclusion of Elephants in royal ceremonial activities. In 1265, King Malikus Saleh had 300 fully decorated and armed Elephants as part of his armed forces. Under colonial management, Elephants became part of Dutch gallantry as well as a tool for expansion of cultivation by clearing forest.⁶² The tradition of domesticating Elephants in Sumatra declined in the late nineteenth century, and then, fully disappeared by the end of Dutch colonial rule.

Elephants hold deep cultural, religious, and historical significance in Cambodia. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, Elephants are revered as sacred, with the white Elephant symbolizing purity and divine power. Cambodian temples, such as Angkor Wat, depict Elephants in carvings, emphasizing their importance. Historically, they played a vital role in warfare, transporting soldiers and leaders, and were symbols of strength and royal power. Cambodian kings often rode Elephants into battle or used them in royal ceremonies, further reinforcing the animals' association with authority and divinity. Beyond their symbolic role, Elephants were integral to Cambodia's economy, particularly in agriculture and logging, where they were employed in heavy labour. However, due to the loss of habitat and poaching, the wild Elephant population

⁶¹ Khyne U Mar, The studbook of Timber Elephants of Myanmar with special Reference to Survivorship Analysis. <https://www.fao.org/3/AD031E/ad031e0m.htm#TopOfPage>, Last Visited on 16/10/2024.

⁶² Karl Groning & Martin Saller, Elephants: A Cultural and Natural History, Konemann, Cologne Germany, 1999, p.36.

has dramatically decreased, leading to ongoing conservation efforts. Today, Elephants are also part of Cambodia's tourism industry, though concerns about their welfare have sparked initiatives which aimed at protecting these animals.

Elephants played important roles in warfare, especially during the historical conflicts with Chinese dynasties, where Elephants were used in battle to charge and intimidate enemy forces. Vietnamese military history includes notable leaders, such as the famous Trung Sisters, who reportedly led their army against Chinese invaders on the backs of Elephants. Elephants also played a key role in the daily life of ethnic communities in Vietnam, particularly in the Central Highlands, where they were used for transportation, agriculture, and ceremonial purposes. The *Mnong* people, an ethnic group known for their traditional Elephant taming skills, have a long-standing connection with Elephants, using them for labour and cultural ceremonies. However, the population of wild Elephants in Vietnam has drastically declined due to deforestation, loss of habitat, and poaching. In modern times, Elephants are sometimes involved in the tourism industry, particularly in the Dak Lak province, where the Buon Don village is known for its Elephant festivals and rides. Conservation efforts are underway to protect the remaining wild Elephant population, focusing on habitat preservation and reducing human-Elephant conflict.

When analysing the religious history of Srilanka, the Elephants were used in procession of Buddhist religious festival peraheras in order to adore Buddha. This traditional practice is central to Buddhist festivals and is associated with Elephants preferably tuskers carrying the relics of the Buddha as well as other cultural activities such as performing dancers and drummers. It is believed that use of Elephants in procession commenced from 18th Century CE. Asian Elephants were considered as auspicious animal to bring good fortune and attribute to royalty along with four fold division of armies. *Vinaya pitaka* mentions about Buddha advising his monks to abandon Elephant flesh and considered the same as an offence of the days.

Mahavamsa mentions about inclusion of Elephant in ceremonial procession during the reign of *Devanam piyatissa* of Anuradhapura of 250- 210 BCE. He built

stupa for placing the relic of Lord Buddha and beautify the towns and roads.⁶³ By mounting on the state Elephant with a white parasol, he went to Mahanaga park and received casket of relics of Buddha and placed on top of the Elephant. By reaching the destination of stupa, Elephant disagreed to take down relics until they built stupa as equal to the height of Elephant and later placed the relic there. It is mentioned that the Elephant has guarded the relics until the stupa was built.⁶⁴ Thereafter, Elephants were used in the festival to commemorate the event.

According to the sources, the ruler, Mahadathika Mahanaga of Anuradapura Srilanka of the 1st century, offered Elephant to temple. Such donations by the kings represented a practice of offering materials of high value to the monks in order to redeem themselves. The arrival of tooth relic of Buddha by 309 CE was also well received with Elephant procession. Fahein, who visited Sri Lanka in 5th century CE, describes “about the procession of tooth relic on the top of Elephants ten days prior to the event”. Evidence regarding the use of Elephants in procession associated with relic festivals can be traced from 12th to 16th centuries. The festival of Esala Perahera at new capital Kandy was believed to have originated during the phase of colonial rule.

Elephants were used as themes for cave paintings, as worshiping icons, as symbols in coins and flags, as source of food and as means for entertainments. Animals play symbolic roles in various cultures and traditions which have tremendous and multifaced roles in the evolution and growth of cultural geography. They were often featured in religious ceremonies, rituals, folklore, and art, representing cultural values and beliefs. Understanding the diverse roles of this animal is significant for anthrozoologists, as it helps to shed light on the complex and multidimensional nature of human-animal relationships. Non humans animals, like Elephants, have not only contributed materially to the advancement of human society, but also enriched it with symbolic meanings, spiritual significance, and ethical considerations.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.18.

Elephants under Colonial Phase

Asian countries accommodated Elephants in to their political and cultural spheres during pre-colonial times which were limited due to the pressure of colonial rule and its impacts. Introduction of advanced technological weapons set aside the role of Elephants in military as well as colonial exploitation and European dominance reduced the economic status of rulers who could maintain elephants. Due to the power of westernisation only few places could continue the heritage of keeping the elephants in the socio economic realm. These places had developed their own method of taming and training and treating the Elephants. These methods, used in the management of Elephants in captivity, developed and refined by the south Asian regions, were later borrowed by westerners while exporting Elephants for the purpose of circuses and zoos.⁶⁵

The attitude of Europeans forced for an interspecies empire in colonial phase. Variety of animals which were anonymous to European land were taken to their mother country for the purpose of entertainment and Zoo. With the emergence of modern age, geographical exploration and colonialism, inter species exchange have been taking place between East and West. In the work 'Colonizing Animals', Jonathan Saha examines the complex relationship between Elephants and British colonialism in Burma, highlighting how Elephants were essential to the colonial economy, particularly in the timber industry, where they were exploited as labour for logging. Saha contrasts the colonial state's regulation and commodification of Elephants with indigenous Burmese knowledge and practices, revealing the tension between local practices and Western scientific approaches to animal management. He argues for a decolonization of animal history, encouraging historians to view Elephants not merely as passive subjects but as active agents in their own right, whose exploitation and suffering under colonial rule demanded critical reflection.

⁶⁵ Prajna Chowta, 'Cultural Aberration in the Management of Captive Elephants', *Proceedings of the SOAS Elephant Conferences held at CES*, Bangalore, 2016, p.6.

⁶⁵ James Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon: An Account of the Island Physical Historical and Topographical with Notices of its Natural History Antiquities and Productions*, Vol.1, Longman Green, London, 2011, p.158.

In colonies animals were subjected to imperial exploitation in multiple ways by the colonial masters.⁶⁶ Elephants also served as potent symbols of colonial power, representing the empire's control over nature, while the legacies of this exploitation continued into the postcolonial period, affecting both the environment and the Elephant population. In the article named “Global Capital and Local Animal”, Jonathan Saha mentioned about Elephant trade in early decade of twentieth century and also analysed how local animals in colonies are commodified and turned into a global capital.⁶⁷ Animals from colonial world were exported for the purpose of entertainment such as zoo and circus. Factors such as docility, health, size and gender determined the price and demand of the captured animals. Kheda method of capturing Elephant became prominent by 1900s. The period between 1907 to 1918 showed maximum Elephant purchase along with highest export rate of Teakwood from Myanmar.

For Thomas R Trautmann, “continuing utility of such powerful large mammals in pre-colonial polities was a significant factor in the survival of the species in South East Asian region, in contrast to their diminishing numbers in other regions”.⁶⁸ The history of the Elephants in southeast Asia during the colonial era is connected to the timber industry. Across south and south-east Asia, Elephants were captured from the wild and used for labour, transportation, military power, pageantry, and religious ceremonies for over a millennium. Bringing Elephant and teak into colonial markets across imperial borders at Myanmar and Thai, led to the development of many legal procedures including passport for Elephants. Increasing rice cultivation and deforestation also led to decreasing number of Elephants in colonies. British Government in India, during the 1900s, earned by selling tamed Elephants to Myanmar as drag animal in their teak industry. These animals were nationalised with the independence of Myanmar 1948.⁶⁹ Bringing Elephants into the

⁶⁶ Jonathan Saha, *Colonizing Animals Interspecies Empire in Myanmar*, Cambridge University Printing House, Cambridge, 2022, p.11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.76.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.81.

labour process by harnessing their capacities satisfied the material motives of humans. Animals like camels, Elephants and horses were used in colonial warfare by the Britishers and it is mentioned in the work named *Animal Labor and Colonial Warfare* by James L Hevia. Changes brought by colonial modernity in the fields of medicine, technology, infrastructure etc. also brought changes in the role of animals in socio political cultural and economic areas.⁷⁰

Among animals, Elephants have significant and magnificent role which altered the course of human history. Indeed, this is a highly distinctive relationship between two cognitively elaborate and socially complex species that have influenced each other's lives, environments and imaginations in profound ways.⁷¹ Cognitive capacity is extraordinary in the case of Elephant, which can only be directed and guided by a superior power, to which the animal is amenable. Humans have conceived, encountered and appropriated Elephants as prey, as cohabitants, as dangerous pets, as weapon of war, as emblem of prestige, as symbol of divinity, as objects of entertainment, as commodities for exchange, as castle builders, as means of execution, as providers of trade materials, as central figure in literature and art, as well as intimate companions.⁷² Elephant, being a conscious animal who can pass mirror test, plays important role in shaping history.

E.O. Wilson, in his book *Biophilia* in 1984, states that humans have an innate tendency to connect with nature and living organisms, including animals.⁷³ Anthrozoologists explore how this biophilic instinct influences human attitudes and behaviors towards animals. connection is believed to influence various aspects of human well-being including physical. Animism, one of the earliest human belief systems, suggests that all natural entities, including animals, possess spiritual essence or souls. In animistic societies, humans often perceived animals as sacred beings with intrinsic value. Ancient religions and ideologies have incorporated

⁷⁰ J.C. Daniel, *The Asian Elephant: A Natural History*, Natraj Publishers, Pune, 1998, p.174.

⁷¹ Piers Locke and Jane Buckingham, *Conflict, Negotiation, and Coexistence: Rethinking Human Elephants Relations in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2016, p.160.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.161.

⁷³ Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p.24.

animals especially Elephants into their cosmologies. Mythologies, religions and literary texts of Asian countries which have indigenous Elephant population considered them as deities and sacred beings. Thereby, non-humans entered into human geography and became part and parcel of culture.

Elephants are native to countries in Africa and Asia and they perceive Elephants in different way. Difference in attitude and accommodating Elephants can be seen among these two continents based on socio, cultural, economic and political background. Elephants were accommodated to history based on regional variation. There is orient oxidant variation in human Elephant relations as compared to Asian Elephants, the number of trained African Elephants were less as they were bigger in size and arrogant in nature. Environmentalist like Raman Sukumar has of the opinion that Africans considered dead Elephants as more useful while Asians, especially Indians, considered Elephants as useful and valuable when they were alive.

Present chapter shows that from microscopic ants to magnificent Elephants, animals played a significant role in formation of human history and its evolution. Inter species symbiosis and its causes and consequences vary according to space and time. It can be observed that orient occident varies in accommodating animals especially Elephants in day-to-day activities. In the late 20th century, environmental ethics emerged as a field of study and its thinkers like Aldo Leopold and Arne Naess emphasized the interconnectedness of all living beings and ecosystems, challenging anthropocentric perspectives.

The evolution of new dimensions for the nature of human-animal relations was shaped by cultural, philosophical, and scientific developments over time. The dynamic interplay between humans and animals has been an integral aspect of human history, influencing the course of civilizations, shaping cultures, and defining the boundaries of human experience. From early partnerships in hunting and gathering to the complex relationships seen in contemporary society, the human-animal relations offer a fascinating journey through time. History should widen its scope by incorporating animal history and the environment that we live, which

include the role of animals in the moulding of history. As History is not only the story of human beings, the role of animals in the formation of socio, cultural and economic history should be investigated. As per the comments of Julian baker, Elephants as non-human subaltern whose role in history is yet to be explored.

In India, Elephants have been playing an integral role in the formation of politics, enriching cultural practices, improving economies, compared to other parts of the world. The roles of Elephants is politically pivotal as in warfare, as symbols of power, or as tool in diplomatic alliances, culturally significant with elevated status in religion, myths and legends which will be discussed in detail in the second chapter.

CHAPTER - 2

ELEPHANTS IN INDIAN TRADITION: IMAGES, MYTHOLOGIES, AND MILITARY GALLANTRY

Indian tradition is well reflected from sources that are significant elements of preserving information about our past. This chapter analyses information from both archaeological and literary sources to know about Elephant's glimpses in Indian tradition. From pre historic days, passing through proto historic and Vedic period these sources provide information about Elephants. In this chapter, Elephants in Indian Tradition aims to find the background for incorporating and adopting the giant in Indian socio economic and political context and this knowledge helps to evolve a comparative framework in the present micro level study on central Kerala.

Prehistoric Indian tradition has clearly depicted Elephants through images in rock cut caves. By the term Images, it means images of Elephants depicted in the cave art and paintings at various parts of India. By the term Mythological figures researcher means myths related to the Elephant figures like *Airawatha*, *Ashtadigajas*, Ganapathi etc. in ancient Indian literary traditions along with mythologies related to the origin of Elephants. Military Gallantry means Elephant strength used in military wing which was started in India since the time of *Janapada* polity.

Evidence from references in *Arthasastra* and *Hastayurveda* give information regarding the significance given to Elephantry in ancient Indian polity. When society moves from ancient phase to medieval phase, use of Elephant for military and war purpose became more persistent. Facts and testimonials for the same can be derived from Elephant stables attaching to palaces and biographies of medieval rulers which shows the living evidence for military significance as well as personal attachment of rulers with Elephants. During modern period, Elephants had undergone colonial exploitation by using it as main requirement of constructive works like railway and wood industries and these elements were reflected in colonial records. This chapter investigates various aspects of assimilation of Elephants in

Indian culture and tries to examine context behind the incorporation of Elephants in the ritual world of our land.

Depiction of Elephants in Rock Art

Rock paintings since prehistoric days are man-made markings on natural stones in the forms of petroglyphs and pictographs. It shows reflections of socio-cultural traditions and heritage. Depiction of animals are visible from upper paleolithic period onwards. Paintings mainly depict huge animal figures such as bison, Elephant, tiger and stick like human figures etc. Mesolithic period along with Elephants depicted deer, antelope, leopard, panther, rhinoceros, fish, frog, lizard squirrel and birds. The proto Australoid were perhaps the first people to domesticate and train Elephants.

Bhimbetka rock paintings located at Madhya Pradesh is one of the oldest known sites of human habitation, with evidence of continuous human activity. These paintings, found in over 500 caves, date back to the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and even later periods. Vishnu Shridhat Wakankar, father of Indian Rock art, explored Bhimbetka in the year 1957 CE. Man riding on the top of Elephant is picturised in Bhimbetka cave paintings of Madhya Pradesh.¹ This image reveals that the mastery of man over nature is accomplished with taming the largest living being on land. “Greater realism is shown in the depiction of animal figures than in the case of human figures and it is clear that the animals dominated the mind of the artists.”²

Battle Scenes found at Bhimbetka include Elephant and horse riders, as well as soldiers armed with bows and arrows, lances, shields or swords.³ Hunting scenes and war scenes can be seen in some depictions which suggest that the art belonged to Mesolithic period. Chalcolithic paintings which marked its significance by

¹ RRR Brooks and V S Wakankar, *Stone Age Paintings in India*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976, p.31.

² V N.Misra, *Bhimbetka: Prehistoric Man and his Art in Central India*, Sakal Press, Poona, 1977, p.11.

³ *Ibid.*, p.13.

colours of green and yellow depicted battle scenes with men riding horses and Elephants with bows and arrows. Images of Bhimbetka include Elephant with buffalo, Panther with Elephant rider and other figures. An Elephant figure of historic period is also identified from the site. The caves of *Raigarh* and *Pachmarhi* depict illustrations of animal life, particularly the Elephant, along with other animals. Rock art in central India from the earliest phase of the Mesolithic features a tuskless Elephant without association with people and an Elephant hunt has been clearly depicted from the Neolithic and Chalcolithic period.⁴ Pre historic *Adamgarh* rock shelters, discovered by Manoranjan Ghosh in 1922 CE, situated 2 km south of *Hoshangabad* town near the Narmada River in Madhya Pradesh also provides images of Elephants. The caparisoned horses and Elephants, metal-tipped spears and arrows, battle scenes and royal processions all belong to a later period when urban life was well-established in the area and use of iron had become common.⁵

Most of the Elephants depicted in these sites are represented with riders and majority of these images belong to later days except few of prehistoric. These images show advancement in the relation with man and Elephant in later days. Rubissow Helen in his book *Art of Asia* mentions about the images of animals including Elephant in Mahadeo hill cave at Elephanta, Maharashtra. Depiction of Elephant images on caves of pre historic times shows man's relation with Elephant, knowledge of taming and training and also using of Elephant as an assistant for war and conflict.

Elephants in proto Historic Days

Regarding the proto historic period of our land, Indus cultural sites unearthed Elephant bones, tusk along with seals, amulets, terracotta tablets and figures depicting images of Elephant. Elephant bones found at Harappa and bones and tusks unearthed from Mohenjodaro shows the familiar relation of man and Elephant.⁶

⁴ RRR Brooks and V S Wakankar, *Op. Cit.*, p.36.

⁵ V N Misra, *Op. Cit.*, p.15.

⁶ Sarva Daman Singh, *Ancient Indian warfare with Special Reference to the Vedic Period*, Brill Publication, London, 1965, p.72.

According to RS Sharma, Indus valley people knew about Elephants very well than Mesopotamian civilization.⁷ Present genetic structure and distribution of Elephants in India shows that Elephants in north western region supplied by Uttarakhand and north eastern region or Brahmaputra valley or Himalayas and southern regions provided by western and eastern ghats.⁸

Unfinished seal with Elephant motif in steatite, got from Kot Diji phase, is considered as the earliest seal of that type and the prototype of later Indus seals.⁹ Archaeologist like Marshall and Mackay confirmed affinity of Indus culture with Elephants from the depictions on terracotta seals as well as the figures from Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro and Lothal. Elephants may be the symbol for any class or clan which is represented by the depiction in seal. Seals representing a male deity with horn in a sitting posture of a yogi, is surrounded by animals like Elephant, tiger, rhinoceros, buffalo and deer under his throne and feet respectively.¹⁰ This steatite seal with horned yogi posture was found from Mohenjodaro, approximately of 2500 BC, is considered as a proto type of Siva or Pasupati Siva. J M Keynower in his work *Master of Animals and Animal Masters in the Iconography of the Indus Tradition*, mentions that horns are symbols of human mastery over animals.¹¹ This indicates the fact that humans had established mastery over the animals including Elephants during that time. The work *Corpus of Indus seal and Inscriptions* published by ASI suggested that the seals with Elephant's motif were of indigenous origin and hence Elephants were indigenous to our land. As per the opinion of R S Sharma Elephants were familiar to the Harappans as they are represented in seals and terracotta figures. He also characterized oligarchy forms of

⁷ R S Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, p.34.

⁸ T.N.C.Vidya, (*et. al.*), *Population Genetic Structure and Conservation of Asian Elephants Across India*, The Zoological Society of London, United Kingdom, 2005, p.4.

⁹ <https://www.harappa.com/indus5/46.html> last visited on 16/04/2024 last visited on 13/06/2024

¹⁰ R S Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, p.99.

¹¹ J M Keynower, *Master of Animals and Animal Masters in the Iconography of the Indus Tradition*, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2010, p.39.

the Indus basin, in a state situated on the Baes River in the Punjab, and membership was restricted to those who supplied the state with at least one Elephant.

A terracotta figurine of an Elephant from Harappa dated to 2200-1900 BCE, with red and white painted bands on its forehead much like present day captive Elephants decorated for parade, certainly suggests that the animal was used for ritualistic or ceremonial purpose in this ancient civilization.¹² There are various viewpoints forwarded by historians regarding the presence of Elephants in Indus culture. According to John Marshall there was an absence of a man riding on Elephant and the complete absence of mahout and *ankusa* states about the lack of Elephant training and taming in those days.¹³ At the same time no seals at Indus culture depict wild character of Elephant and it may be due to the existence of a dominating class, either priest, king or ruling aristocracy used the giant for their ceremonial function and may have attained a religious or sacred character.¹⁴ Elephants represented in the Indus seals have a rope on its body. Indus people may have used Elephant to carry timber from Himalayan foothills for the construction of their architectural structures. Sources about use of Elephants in the battlefield by Harappans were unknown.

Terracotta tablet found from Harappa shows a female deity grappling with two tigers and standing above an Elephant, with a spoked wheel sign above her head as well as hollow Elephant figurine from Harappa with undecorated head, two flat ears and a trunk on a round hollow body etc. also depicts the image of Elephant with domestic nature which seems to be friendly. An ivory workshop in the acropolis at Lothal suggests that Elephants may have been domesticated to produce the raw materials.

¹² R Carrington, *Elephants: Their Natural History, Evolution and influence on Mankind*, Basic Books, New York, 1959, p.61.

¹³ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Elephants and Kings*, Permanent Black, Ashoka University, Ranikhet, 2015, p.93.

¹⁴ B. P. Sinha, 'Elephants in Ancient Indian Army', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 18, 1955, Pp. 51–52.

Indus seals, artifacts and other remains depict mainly two different types of Elephant races of that age. From all these informants one can assume that Harappans were aware of the Elephants from the time 2800 and 2600 BCE. These artifacts also reflect man-animal fight scenes and subjugation of animals. Tamable and learning quality of Elephants might have led to the captivity of this animal for riding and other purpose in the initial stage. These assumptions of proto historic days got sanction and approval only after the decipherment of the Indus script.

Elephants in Literary Sources

Historic period in Indian history starts with Vedic period and later many literary works have developed with historicity and facts embedded in it. Early Indian writings like Vedas, epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, major puranas, Jain Buddhist works, *Arthashastra*, kavya traditions, south Indian Tamil anthologies all narrate Elephants in various forms and kinds.

The beginning of historical period with early Vedic age, with Rigveda as the source can trace some references to the animal Elephant. Rigvedic Aryans were less familiar to Elephants as they mentioned it by the term *mriga hastin*. Later hymns in Rigveda gave some references of Elephants as an animal in forest and they know its nature. Book X, Hymn XXIV of Rigveda mentions about the hook carried by mahout of an Elephant, shows the knowledge of taming during the days. Rigveda hymn XXXIII, book 8th sloka mentions Elephant as an object of gift exchange. Fulfillment of Soma sacrifice by offering of man or Elephant to Indra is mentioned in last portion of the sacrifice by Rigveda. The word Elephant is used only ten times in the entire Rigveda. Thus, from the above references one can understand that Elephant which was unfamiliar to Aryan of early days became familiar and absorbed into their life pattern.

During the later Vedic period horses and Elephants were included in the fighting corps by the rulers.¹⁵ Yajurveda *Adyaya* 14 mentions about '*prajapath*

¹⁵ P.C. Chakravarti, *The Art of War in Ancient India*, University of Dacca, Dacca, 1941, p.23.

purushan Hastina’, means take up male Elephant for *Prajapathi*.¹⁶ *Adyaya* 30, mentions as ‘*Armebhyo hastiparii javayasvapathn*’ means create, develop and promote the Elephant keeper for tourists.¹⁷ Yajurveda also mentions the term *hastipa* or Elephant keeper as one of the witnesses at the *purushamedha* or human sacrifice.¹⁸ Samaveda also mentions the term Elephant in very limited numbers. Part 2, Chapter 7 mentions Elephant driver and his efficiency and capacity to control the strength and direction of Elephant.¹⁹ Atharva Veda assigns the qualities like vigour, splendour, energy, strength, grace and majesty for Elephants. Among the animals, the Elephant is steady, sure and comfortable without disturbance. The term *chaturanga bala* came to exist in the war history of India. From the fourth century BC onwards, the Elephants occupied the first rank in the military service as Aryans realized martial utility of the Elephants.²⁰ *Aithareya Brahmana* mentioned about black colored Elephant as well as white tusked Elephant adorned with gold.²¹ Elephants with decoration and gold proves the purpose of Elephants as carrying royal or noble dignitaries. The existence of Elephant keeper or *hastipa* is also mentioned in it.²² *Sankhayana Aranyaka* attached to Rigveda uses the term Elephant in order to compare the strength of hero or ruler.

As bearing of Elephant as military wing may not be affordable for the early small tribal chiefs, hence, they might have used Elephant only as vahana of the chief. These chief from eastern India and central part of India which had enough supply of Elephant Forest may have travelled on Elephant top and later the Aryans who migrated to eastern India may have imitated the tradition from non-Aryans. Vedic society may have adopted Elephant affinity which is already prevailing in

¹⁶ Tulsi Ram, (*Trans.*), *Yajurveda*, Govindram Hasanand, Delhi, 2013, p.768.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.769.

¹⁸ Arthur Antony Macdonell, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects Vol-II*, John Murry, London, 1912, p.178.

¹⁹ Tulsi Ram, (*Trans.*), *Samaveda*, Govindram Hasanand, Delhi, 2013, p.37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²¹ Arthur Antony Macdonell, *Op.Cit.*, p.172.

²² Arthur Antony Macdonell, *Op.Cit.*, p.176.

indigenous culture. As per the opinion of Raman Sukumar Elephant ecologist, Elephantry was added into the military by 6th century BC and later the tradition of capturing, taming and training of Elephants was continued for the purpose of war. Thus, the later Vedic society included war Elephants in order to acquire higher political status and power, in hierarchical structure of the society they reached.²³ As per the opinion of Thomas R Trautmann, war Elephant were invented in the later Vedic days in India and from India it spread to other parts of the world.

Elephants in Epics and Puranas

Ancient Indian literary works reflected thoughtful addition of new environment including animals and birds in the life and culture of Aryans. Indian heritage shows affinity with animals and birds since ancient times, among which Elephant plays important role since early days and its evidence got from Epics. Composers of these epics added myths related to Elephants in order to get justification for the use of Elephants as well as to elevate the status of the giant.

According to Valmiki Ramayana, Balakanda, 40th Sarga, the Earth is supported by the Elephant Virupaksha. When the burden becomes too heavy, he shakes his head, causing earthquakes.²⁴ This belief highlights how Elephants, revered for their strength and endurance, were seen as fitting symbols for the colossal task of sustaining the Earth. The metaphor of an Elephant shaking its head to cause tremors reflects a view of nature as interconnected with divine or supernatural forces. Such explanations also suggest a deep cultural respect for Elephants, attributing to them not only physical power but also cosmic significance.

Ancient Indian epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, along with puranas give divine background for the birth of Elephant and *Airavata* as well as Elephant

²³ Thomas R. Trautman, *Op.Cit.*, p.68.

²⁴ Elephants are also characterised as tusker who hold the burden of earth. The cause of earthquake or bhukampa according to ancient belief is given below: — The earth is being supported and held in its position by an Elephant called Virupaksa. When he feels the burden too heavy, he shakes his head and earth tremors follow.

headed God *Ganesa*. Elephants were placed in high strata with mythological stories like *ashtadigajas*²⁵, *gajendra moksha*, etc. The significance given to Elephants as military gallantry is also well reflected in these literary informants. Epics also states that Elephants were used as royal status and symbol especially on special occasions, ceremonies and festivals in which rulers arrive on Elephant top. Ramayana Balakanda mentions about the arrival of Rama as king on Elephant top from the following statement. “It is therefore proper for you to install Rama the heir-apparent on the throne. We all wish to see heroic Ram riding a huge Elephant under the royal umbrella”.²⁶ Rulers and princess in epics including Duryodhana and Bhima came on Elephant top on various occasions.

Epics and puranas featured Elephants as a necessary element related to military along with royalty. The great epic *Mahabharata* in its legendary tale format had mentioned about *Mahabaratha* war in which Elephants were being used. The statement that *Elephants were rushed against Elephants* shows that Elephantry became a military wing of that time. Elephant ornaments mentioned in epics are considered as safe and elegant for the protection and convenient during warfare. In *Mahabaratha* ornamented Elephants are referred as armed with spikes and in harness, neck chains, bells wreaths, nets, umbrella and blankets.²⁷

²⁵ Astadiggajas and Astadikkarinis -There are eight male and eight female Elephants standing guard over the eight zones. They are as follows, East Airavata Abhramu, South-east, Pundarika Kapila, South Vamana Pirigala South-west Kumuda Anupama, West Anjana Tamrakarm, North-west Puspadanta Subhradant, North Sarvabhauma Angana, North-east Supra tika Aftjanavati. Besides these, there are four diggajas or the Elephants of the universe who bear the earth standing below in the nether world. It is stated that the sons of Sagara who went into the nether land in search of the lost horse of his father saw these Elephants. As they went to the east they saw the huge Elephant Virupaksa, holding the earth on its head. It is said an earthquake occurs when for a change it shakes its head. Going to the left of it they saw the Elephant Mahapadmasama holding the earth on its head on the south. Going again to the left of it they saw Saumanasa holding the earth on its head on the west and going to the left of it on the north they saw Bhadra holding the earth on its head (Valmiki Ramayana, Balakanda, Sarga 40).

²⁶ Makhan Lal Sen, Ramayana: Translated from the Original of Valmiki, Oriental Publishing Company, Calcutta, 1927, p.146.

²⁷ P.C, Chakravarthi, *Op.Cit.*, p.75.

Mahabharatha mentions about ancient military which gives importance to Elephants. Adi parva, second chapter from verses nineteen to twenty six, illustrates about the same. The smallest unit in the army consists of an elephant, single chariot, three horses and five soldiers, while the largest unit consists of twenty one thousand eight hundred and seventy chariot and same number of elephants.²⁸ Elephant image was depicted on Flag of Kaurava rulers Karna and Duryodhana in Mahabharata war. Drona teaches his disciple Arjuna on various methods of fighting in the war which includes fighting from horseback, from the back of an Elephant, from a chariot, and on the ground. *Mahabharatha* mentions the term Elephant for more than 558 times and maintenance of royal Elephants is also stated in the epic. The Elephants narrated in epics highlight the need for socio cultural environment which accept the giant with high status.

Mythological stories related to the origin and importance of Elephants can be seen in puranic tradition. As mythology helps to influence people's beliefs and thoughts and day to day life structure, Epics skillfully incorporates various myths and stories related to Elephants. Birth of Elephant, the concept of Airavatha, Elephant headed God Ganapathi, story of Gajendra moksha, Concept of Ashtadigajas etc. created much impressions and superior status for Elephants as the society was in need for accepting and maintaining Elephant wealth for various purpose including formation of military wing.

Various text gives different opinions for the origin of Elephant. Valmeeki Ramayana Aranyakandam, 14th sarga on the occasion of describing his lineage and tradition to Sri Rama by injured Jatayu says about the birth of Elephants and *Airavatham* the white Elephant. It says that the Elephants were born to *Mathangi*, who is the daughter of *Kasyapa* and *Kroda vasa*. At the same time *Airavatham*, is considered as the son of *Iravathi* who is the daughter of Bhadra, the sister of *Mathangi*.

²⁸ Ramesh Menon, (ed.), The Complete Mahabharata Vol.1 to 12, Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 2012, p.544.

Airavatham is assigned with many significances like Indra's vahana, King of Elephant. *Vishnupuranam* first *amsham* and 22nd chapter, give reasons for Palazhi Samudra Madana. In another occasion, *Ramayana* also mentioned that *Airavatham* came as one among the precious item after churning the milk ocean. As per myths *Airavatham* was hiding in *palazhi* by worshipping lord Vishnu.²⁹ *Airavatham* the white Elephant symbolizes power and prestige. In "*Mahabharata, Adi Parva*, Chapter 18, Verse 42, it is said that a white Elephant with four tusks arose during the churning of the ocean of Milk and Devendra caught and tamed it". It also explains about *Airavatham* as the reason for *palazhimadana*. Hence, varying opinions in major epics in assigning different time period for the story of *Airavatham* as reason for the churning of milk ocean and the product came out from churning of milk ocean can be seen. As per Vishnu purana each "*Manvantara*" have new Indra and hence each Indra possess separate *Airavatha*. Aranyakanda, 14th *Sarga*, of *Ramayana* mentions about the Genealogy of *Airavata* as descendents from Vishnu to Brahma. As per purana tradition Indra made *Airavata* as his conveyance.

Epics also mention the role played by white Elephant in deciding the course of events. It also mentions that Brahma assigned the status of the Lord of Elephants to *Airavatha*. Heinrich Zimmer in his work, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* mentions that "Abhramu, the consort of *Airavata* is instrumental of producing clouds. She knits the clouds to produce monsoon that is necessary for vegetation. Her benevolence disappears drought and famine" thus, Elephant is frequently mentioned in rituals for rain.³⁰ Mythical Elephant like *Airavatham* in white colour tone was evolved and was given high status by the Aryan works, which shows that either white toned Elephants which can be seen in present far east countries like Thailand were present in Indian geographical space or Aryans were familiar with white colored Elephants over far east countries.

²⁹ Ralph T H Griggith, (Trans.), Valmiki, *Ramayana*, Trubner and Co., London, 1874, p.327.

³⁰ Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1946, p.106.

Elephant headed God *Ganesa* is considered as the son of Parvathy and Siva, and the God who remove all obstacles. Evolution of the Elephant God *Ganapathy* can be considered as symbol of adapting indigenous Elephant culture by Aryans. Aryans may have either evolved the deity with Elephant head in the age of puranas or adopted and incorporated as an indigenous deity of east Indian regions with a new name of *Ganapathy* into the Aryan culture. Various statements and opinions were provided by different sources related to the origin and evolution of *Ganapathy*. Uthararamayanam mentions about the birth of lord *Ganapathi* with Elephant head itself. Puranas mention about different stories related to the Elephant head of Ganapathi. Vamana Purana of 450-900 AD and Matsyapurana of 250-500AD mention about the origin of Ganapathi as the son of Siva and Parvathy. Michael SM in his studies mentions Ganesa as a non-Brahminical Dravidian God.³¹ In the work *understanding popular culture*, Sarmila Rege considers Elephant headed God as a non-Brahmanical God, who was worshipped as a rural deity in Maharashtra, by the lower castes.³²

Some argue for the Dravidian traces for Ganesha due to the mouse vahana and later adopted by Aryan culture.³³ Some texts that belong to early days consider the Elephant headed deity as lord of evils as it was non Brahminical, and later it turned into benevolent deity as it was added into the Brahminical religion due to the popularity of culture. There are evidences of worship of the Elephant headed image in the Kabul Valley in 4th Century BC, while there is evidence that the Elephants were even worshipped by the Vedic Aryans. Even though the image of Ganesa was found from Bahama dated 400 CE., it evolved as cult by only by late Gupta phase.³⁴

The need of Elephants in society may have led to the popularity of the cult of Ganapathy the Elephant headed God by 4th and 5th century. The cult of Ganapathy

³¹ S. M. Michael, 'The Origin of the Ganapati Cult', *Asian Folklore Studies* Vol.42, 1983, p. 96.

³² Sharmila Rege, 'Understanding Popular Culture: The Satyashodhak and Ganesh Mela in Maharashtra', *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol.49, No.2, September 2000, p.198.

³³ Robert Brown, *Ganesh: Studies of an Asian God*, State University Press, New York, 2014, p.13.

³⁴ Jitendra Nath Banerjee, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1941, p.359.

became most popular in almost all parts of India. All religions including Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism have followed the practice of worshipping the deity in countries like Srilanka, Indonesia, Afghanistan, along with India. Devdutt Pattanaik, in his work “*Thoughts on Ganesha*”, mentions about the existence of the Female form of Ganesha, which is known as Vinayaki or Ganeshvari, an Elephant headed Hindu goddess”.³⁵

Classic Story of *Gajendramoksha* or the redemption of an Elephant curse is mentioned in *Bagavatha Purana* and in which Elephant is the central character. As per the story the ruler named Indradyumna became an Elephant and left the palace and lived in forest due to the curse of a saint.³⁶ Once the tusker *Indradyumna* entered the pond to drink water in which there was a crocodile who was also under the curse of the saint. Crocodile caught the leg of the elephant, and being a devotee of lord Vishnu, both were given deliverance by the God through his *Chakrayudha*. All together the term Elephant is mentioned almost 164 times in Bagavatha Purana.

Astadiggajas and *Astadikkarinis* are eight male and eight female Elephants standing to guard over the eight zones. They are as follows- East protected by Airavata and Abhramu, South-east by Pundarika and Kapila, South by Vamana and Pingala, South-west Kumuda and Anupama, West guarded by Anjana and Tamrakarm, North-west by Puspadanta Subhradant, North protected by Sarvabhauma and Angana and North-east protected by Supratika with Anjanavati. Besides these, there are four *diggajas* or the Elephants of the universe who bear the earth, standing below in the nether world. It is stated that the sons of *Sagara* who went into the hindmost land in search of the lost horse of his father saw these Elephants. As they went to the east they saw the huge Elephant *Virupaksa*, holding the earth on its head. It is said an earthquake occurs when it shakes its head. Going to the left, they saw the Elephant *Mahapadmasama* holding the earth on its head on the south. Going again to the left, they saw *Saumanasa* holding the earth on its head

³⁵ Devdutt Pattanaik, *Thoughts on Ganesha*, Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai, 2014, p.48.

³⁶ Kamala Subramaniam, *Srimad Bagavatham*, Bharathya Vidyabhavan, Mumbai, 1979, p.262.

on the west and going to the left of it on the north they saw *Bhadra* holding the earth on its head.

Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata also give relevant place for the giant. In Ramayana, Elephant has its own role in the development of the story of Dasaratha as well. King Dasaratha is depicted as a ruler who used to go for Elephant hunting. Once he went to the banks of river Sarayu for hunting, and heard a sound. Thinking that it was the sound of an Elephant from the river side, by mistake he killed the son of a blind ascetics couples, who had come to the river bank for taking water. As per the story Dasaratha, bore the curse of these ascetics as he died in sorrow without seeing his son Rama. The incident mentioned in Ramayana proves that Elephant hunting by the royal class in those days can be understood without doubt.

Mahabaratha, Drona Parva Chapter 26, Verse 23 mentions about a martial art known as *Njalikavedha*, the skill of making the elephant submissive. Pandava ruler Bhimasena is depicted as a person who could master Elephant. This shows the art of complete control over the Elephants by that time. Mahabaratha also mentions the powerful Elephants named Anjana of the asura kings.³⁷ It also mentions the arrival of devils and enemies for war on Elephant top.³⁸ From this one can assume that the Elephants were also used by non-Aryan Dravidians in the battles.

Vaivahika parva of *Mahabaratha* mentions that Elephants along with huge amount of gold as gift or dowery were given to the sons in law, panchapandava, on the occasion of the marriage of Draupadi. Canto 103 of Mahabharatha mentions about the Elephant with gold as *dakshina* to brahmins who performed sacrifices for the king Bagiratha. Canto 14 mentions about the treat for Brahmins arranged by the Dridarashtra and listed wealthy items as gift in which caparisoned Elephants were included.

³⁷ Supratika is a prominent and divine Elephant known as one of the *Diggajas* the eight Elephants that support and guard the eight cardinal directions of the cosmos. Each of these Elephants has a specific direction and family lineage tied to its mythology.

³⁸ Ramesh Menon, (ed.), The Complete Mahabaratha Vol.1 to 12, Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 2012, p.1426.

The feature of giving human names to Elephants is understood from the following incident. Indravarma, the ruler of Malva, owned an Elephant by the name Asvatthama,³⁹ that was assassinated by Bhimasena and spread the rumour about the death of Asvatthama in order to defeat the strongest warrior Dronacharya emotionally as Asvatthama was the name of the son of Drona and he couldn't withstand the news and dropped the weapon.⁴⁰ This incident shows that humans and Elephants were given same name during those days. Agni purana listed a number of objects which can be categorised into good and bad things when appear in dreams. Among that one who dreamt of climbing on the top of Elephant is considered as good dreams. In the story of Upagupta and Vasavadatta, both escaped on Vasavadatta's Elephant. The story reflects the sense that royal class maintained their own favourite Elephants with them. Wendy Doniger in the work *The Hindus: An Alternate History*, observes that animals appear both as objects and as subjects in Hindu religious texts.⁴¹ This is true in the case of Elephants as it appeared both as subject and object.

Yuval Noah Harari in his work *Sapiens* published in the year 2016, mentioned about transition of man from insignificant to significant and became dominant in society because of his power to imagine and quality to co-operate with one another. With the power of imagination they evolved religions and it became the biggest unifier of the mankind. Religion supported by myths and legends spread like wild fire. This viral content passed from generation to generations and led the people to come together and cooperate ultimately resulting in the formation of a community. The needs of physical world is satisfied through the metaphysical speculations with the help of such imagined religions and myths. Elephants which were an essential part in the formation of military strength of these days were elevated to higher position with the support of myth and religion.

³⁹ Indravarma, King of Malava, had an Elephant in the name Asvatthama and it was killed in the battle by Bhimasena and it is mentioned in Sloka 15, Chapter 190, Drona Parva of Mahabharata.

⁴⁰ Ramesh Menon, (ed.), *The Complete Mahabharata Vol.1 to 12*, Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 2012, p.1486.

⁴¹ Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus: An Alternate History*, Viking Press, United states, 2009, p.69.

Elephants in *Janapada* Polity

Moving from the analysis of literature to the history of *Janapadas* one can see that Elephants were used in military for territorial expansion. *Janapadas* were metamorphosed into *Mahajanapadas* with strong and efficient military which included magnificent giants. Rise of Magada as Mahajanapada and later to kingdom marked the victory of monarchy in India. Elephant wealth is considered as the main reason for the rise of Magadha as first dynasty of ancient days. Haryanka and Nanda rulers maintained 3000 to 5000 Elephants in their army. Even though the army of Nanda king consisted of Elephants, chariots were important part of army. Bimbisara is said to have maintained war Elephants and “since his period Elephants became a separate and permanent unit of Indian army”.⁴² As per the opinion of Trautmann, inclusion of Elephants in war and battles might be during later Vedic phase which was followed by other regions of India.⁴³

Buddhist literary works, both canonical and non-canonical, which were orally transmitted by Buddhist monks since 5th and 4th century BC are believed to be compiled in later centuries. *Three Pitakas* of Buddhist literature like *Abidhamma Pitaka*, *Sutta Pitaka*, *Vinaya Pitaka* and the *nikayas* connected to them provide evidences related to Elephant culture. *Brahmajala Sutta* listed Elephant fight as entertainments which block the attainment of morality. *Abidhamma Pitaka* is referred as the philosophical content of Buddhism and it is believed to be given by Buddha to Sariputta who transferred these matters to other disciples. As the answer for animals found among the Devas, devas assumed the shape of an Elephant by giving example of Eravana.⁴⁴ *Digaanikaya* is considered as long discourse of Buddha compiled as the part of *sutta Pitaka*. The work mentions about the seven treasure possessed by kings among which Elephant treasure is included.⁴⁵

⁴² Bimlendra Kumar and Ujjawal Kumar (eds.), Anand Singh, Elephants in the Mauryan Age: Significance and Symbolism, *Dhamma-Anusilana*, DK Printworld, Delhi, 2021, p.359.

⁴³ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Op.Cit.*, Pp. 68-69.

⁴⁴ Nyanatiloka Mahathera, Guide through the Abhidhamma-Pitaka, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1999, p.103.

⁴⁵ Maurice Walshe, The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of Digha Nikaya, Wisdom Publication, Delhi, 1996, p.110.

Samyutta nikaya mentions about war between rulers using Elephants.⁴⁶ As per the work, Elephant training is considered as an acceptable craftmanship during those days. The rulers seems to be travel on Elephant top from the following statements: King Prasenajith ruler of Kosala during 534 BCE is sitting on the neck of an Elephant, King Ajathasatru is described as ridding on his Elephant.⁴⁷ The term Elephant trainer and Elephant rider is used many times in Buddhist works altogether.

Mati posaka Jataka mentions about the birth of Bodhisattva as an Elephant and it explains about the importance given for the selection of a state Elephant by the rulers of the time. It also narrates the evolution of *Hasti mangal* the annual Elephant festivals under the initiative of the ruler. Buddhist tradition mentions about the story of conquering a ferocious Elephant named Nalagiri by lord Buddha. The intoxicated Elephant was released on the streets of Rajagraha, when Buddha was passing through. The Elephant charged through the streets, wreaking destruction in his path. However, when he came before the Buddha, the Enlightened One, gently raised his hand to halt him. Despite his maddened state, Nalagiri recognized the loving kindness emanating from Buddha and immediately knelt down before him in obeisance.

Story of the birth of *Bodhisathwa*, as six tusked Elephant king *Shaddanta* is mentioned in Jataka Stories. He lived on the banks of a lake in Himalaya. He led eighty thousand Elephants and had two wives. His younger Queen *Cullasubhadda* wanted to make revenge against *Shaddanta* in the belief that he shows more affection to the elder queen *Mahasubhadda*. She was reborn as the Queen of Banaras as per her wish. She pretended of being sick and asked the king for six tusks of the white Elephant as medicine. A hunter Sonuttara was given the task for tracking the Elephant and he aimed a poisoned arrow on the Elephant but could not

⁴⁶ M Leon Feer (ed.) *Samyutta Nikaya* of the Sutta Pitaka, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1884, p.258.

⁴⁷ Upinder, Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*, Pearson Education, India, 2016, p.293.

cut the magnificent tusk. When *Bodhisathwa* realized the desire of the queen, he cutoff his tusk by himself and handed it over to him. Sonuttara returned and handed over the tusk to the queen. Seeing that, she recalls the memories of her beloved husband Shaddanta and she also died soon with the grief of killing him.

The *Digha Nikaya* mentions that the king should possess the *Mahapurusha lakshana*. He maintains seven *ratna* or jewel among which Elephant known as *hati ratna* is considered as the most important and auspicious possession of the king. R S Sharma highlighted the use of punch marked coins with pictures including Elephants by the period of Buddhism and Jainism. Seal depicting the relation of Elephants with Buddhist tradition and the emergence of empire with the age of Maurya's, marked growth of Elephantry. Chandra Gupta Maurya also maintained almost 9000 Elephants in his force. Jataka mentions about various ornaments worn by the Elephants during war time like ornaments on four feet, blanket under their belly, a rug on their back and ornaments on the frontal globes as war equipment.

A Buddhist antique called diptych an art piece of Gandhara, also shows the importance given to Elephants in the religion. A diptych refers to a two-part, hinged panel or shrine used in Buddhist religious practices. In the context of Buddhist art, it specifically refers to portable, folding shrines that can be opened like a book to reveal religious images, carvings, or reliefs on the inner panels. These diptychs typically contain Buddhist iconography such as depictions of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, or other sacred symbols, and they were often used for personal devotion or meditation. Their portable nature allowed monks, travellers, or devotees to carry them easily and engage in religious practices wherever they went.

Among these, portable shrines from Gandhara illustrate an Elephant and rider motif showing that the animal used in Buddhist procession. Reflecting Gandhara's unique blend of Greco-Roman and Indian art, the Elephant and rider imagery embodies the Buddhist philosophy of mastering the self and importance given to the giant in the religion and their ceremonies, even though the chronology of these are clouded in mystery. Inner side of diptych represented events from the

life of Buddha. Majority of such diptych were available in fragmented form in different museums of New York, London, Nepal etc., except one which is made of ivory and is recovered from China, and preserved in national museum China. The image depicted in the exterior represents Elephant and rider with relic in his hand. Both panels reflect the same image and the man who seems to be with heavy costumes on Elephant top may be either a priest or noble or member of royal family. Skilfully decorated seat fixed on Elephant top and tied with ropes to body of Elephant.

A bell swings on each side of the Elephant's belly, right above the soldiers is visible in this. The Elephant is depicted as a royal ride as reflected by the use of rich decorative outfit. The Elephant looks calm his trunk and tail are rolled into circles.⁴⁸



Figure 2.1: Exterior of the Ivory Diptych preserved in National Museum of China, Beijing (Picture courtesy: Muhammad Hameed.)

Elephants in Jain Tradition

According to Jain tradition, Trishala, the mother of the twenty-fourth Tirthankara, had a dream featuring fourteen auspicious symbols, one of which was an Elephant. This dream was seen as a portent of her child's impending greatness and spiritual significance. These visions, particularly the one involving the Elephant, are elaborated upon in revered texts such as the *Kalpa Sutra*⁴⁹ and Hemachandra's

⁴⁸ Muhammad Hameed, 'Elephant and Rider Type Buddhist Diptych Type Portable Shrines from Gandhara', *South Asian Studies A Research Journal*, Vol. 32, Issue. 2, July – December 2017, p.297.

⁴⁹ J. Stevenson, *Kalpa Sutra and Nava Tatva*, Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India, 1848, p.25.

Trishashti Shalaka Purusha Charitra. In Jaina tradition Elephant is a vahana of second Jina Ajitnatha.⁵⁰

Monuments and sculpture of ancient days also illustrate the importance given to Elephant in Indian culture. Gajalakshmi is one among the manifestation of Hindu goddess Lakshmi, symbolizing prosperity, abundance, and good fortune. In this form, Lakshmi is often depicted as seated on a lotus, flanked by two Elephants.⁵¹ Two Elephants are usually positioned on either side of Lakshmi, often seen showering water from pots or their trunks. The figures of Gajalakshmi are carved even in the early architecture of the second Century BCE in stupas and coins of the Gandhara period of 1st Century BCE. This suggests that the literary description of the glory of Gajalakshmi was found in the art form and was in vogue before 2nd Century BCE. Though Lakshmi, sitting on a lotus flanked by Elephants, was a common depiction in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples, some mysterious variations, like the Elephants standing on bloom lotus with a long slender stalk or on stone slabs and pouring abhisheka on Lakshmi with a pot, and her standing posture, are intriguing.⁵²

Gajalakshmi, with Elephants, is prominent for awarding economic strength. Elephant Lakshmi is the royal class goddess and the giver of abundant animal wealth, such as cattle, horses, and Elephants of regal splendour. Gajalakshmi panel from Kailash temple, Ellora, Maharashtra, a rock-cut Shiva temple built in the 8th century CE by the Rastrakuta dynasty, has an enormous panel of Gajalakshmi figures. Goddess with two-arms and holding a lotus is seated on a giant lotus that has emerged from a lotus pond. The Elephants are positioned on a slab. The Gajalakshmi panel shows four celestial Elephants, which are symbolic of the earth's

⁵⁰ Shivendra B. Kadgaonkar, 'An Elephant in Ancient Indian Art- A Preliminary Survey', *Asian Elephants in Culture & Nature*, Centre for Asian Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2016, p.144.

⁵¹ Rekha Rao, 'Rigvedic Reference to Gajalakshmi: Her Representation in Temples and Stupas', *Journal of Art, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*, Vol.2, 2022, p.38.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.39.

four cardinal points and could indicate the universal mother of prosperity. Elephants are holding pots in their trunk. Another Gajalakshmi panel above the Ardhanariswara figure in Kailash temple, Ellora, depicts how even Gangadhara Shiva worshipped Gajalakshmi. The Gajalakshmi panel from Mahabalipuram shows her holding the lotus in their hands, seated on a lotus, and resting her feet on a lotus.

Beautiful illustration of Gajalakshmi depicted at Barhut and gate way of Sanchi stupa of probably 1st century CE attained attention of expert scholars of both Buddhist and Hindu iconography. Female represented as the *Gajalakshmi* sculpture with lotus in hand adorned by two Elephants on both side is claimed as Hindu goddess and Buddha's mother Mahamaya by different scholars but both claims were rejected due to the lack of supporting sources.

Gajalakshmi in Jainism

The concept of Gajalakshmi is well depicted in Jain monuments as well. The entrance panel of colossal Gommateshwara Bahubali shrine of Jainism at Shravanabelagola Karnataka, which belongs to the 10th Century Ganga architecture, depicts the image of Gajalakshmi, who is given a bath by Divya Gajendra pouring water from the golden pot Hema Kumbha.

This illustration of Gajalakshi with Elephants on both sides varies in later stages. When the Elephants shower coins instead of water, it can be inferred as shift of focus to material wealth. Here, the Elephants symbolize the source of abundance of wealth. Showering Lakshmi with water or coins represent power, stability, and fertility. In Hindu culture, Elephants are considered as auspicious animals, often linked with rain, fertility, and the nurturing of life. The act of Elephants pouring water reflects the cosmic forces nourishing life and the idea that abundance comes when nature and divinity work in harmony.

Elephants, through their majestic presence, symbolize both the material and spiritual power, making them an enduring motif in art and architecture throughout

history. Udayagiri hills, especially Hathigumpha cave 14 and Ganesha-gumpha cave 10 and Rani-gumpha caves, known for its art treasures sculptures and reliefs, give due reference to Elephant sculptures. Sculpture of the Elephant on both sides of the cave carrying lotus stalk with buds and leaves along with a flower, Ganesha cave and Elephant as thematic decorative feature of Rani-gumpha cave etc. also reflect importance given to Elephants.

In Mauryan phase Elephant image can be seen from many of the pillar and rock inscriptions. Remains collected from the regions like Sankisa, Kalsi, Dhauli, all represent Elephant images. Lomas Rishi cave located at Bihar of Maurya period has a carving of rows of Elephants coming to worship Buddhist stupa on façade. Buddhist stupas located at Bharhut and Sanchi located in Madhya Pradesh as well as Bodhgaya in Bihar portrays highly ornamented Elephant carvings with perfection and accuracy. Murtaziganj Site at Bihar and Amaravathi stupa of Andhra Pradesh also shows their attachment with elephants. All these images represent elephants in different postures as they were taken from the themes of various Jataka Stories. The concept of *Gajalakshmi* was well represented in almost all stupas. Elephant acting as a part of religious procession, natural scenes in forest, carrier of heavy logs, part of army etc could be assumed from all these artistic expressions.

Literary Source of Mauryan Days

Mauryan empire, being the first empire of India must be the period in which Elephants were used far and wide especially for military purpose. As per the sources of Mauryan days like Indica of Megasthenes and Arthashastra of Kautilya, one can see illustrations of Mauryan efforts to enlarge their military strength with Elephantry. Thus, for the expansion of military and especially Elephantry, the need for Elephants came in large number. Megasthenes mentions about Elephant guard of Mauryan days as follows: “The King had maintained a guard of twenty four Elephants and when king went out to administer justice the first Elephant was trained to do him obeisance. As the king passed, the Elephant gave him a sort of

military salute on a hint from the driver and a stroke of his goad.” He describes *khedha* method of catching Elephants by using female Elephants or *Hashti bandaki*. The method that used to capture Elephants has been mentioned by Megasthenes as follows: Groups of female Elephants were placed in one location which is surrounded by a deep trench with one temporary way to proceed which is subsequently withdrawn later. According to him unlike horses, Elephants were usually ridden by several warriors, generally three fighting men for a war Elephant controlling from all sides and the fourth man controlling Elephant with the goad.⁵³ Sculptures at Sanchi literary work like *Manasollasa* and *Agni purana* substantiates the above fact that an Elephant is taken care of by more than three persons. Megasthenes also informs that domestication of Elephant was monopolized by the state, and common people could not domesticate Elephants.⁵⁴

Mauryan expansion towards eastern part of India was mainly with the purpose of acquiring Elephant forest. *Arthashastra* which is believed to be written by Chanakya of Mauryan period mentions about *Gajaranya* or Elephant forest. *Arthashastra* points out that the officer in charge of Elephants should maintain the list of Elephants in the forest, ensure health and food for Elephants, which is considered as basic necessity for an efficient state. Importance of Elephants in warfare, significance of giving proper care for Elephant, punishment for illtreating Elephants, reward for one who does acceptable thing related to the Elephants etc., were mentioned in it.

Arthashastra mentions about different types of forests among which Elephant forest is an important one. As per Kautilya, Elephants found in eastern regions such as Kalinga, Anga, Kuru, were of high quality. A well-qualified officer in Elephant forests just below to minister or *mantrin* was appointed in order to take care the matters of Elephants. Officer in charge of this forest is termed as *Gajadhyaksha* or *Hastadhyaksha*, and he is the person who protects Elephant forest and make all

⁵³ P.C. Chakravarti, *Op. Cit.*, p.74.

⁵⁴ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Op. Cit.*, p.59.

necessary arrangements of Elephants including training by experts. Along with him a number of guards were appointed in order to rear Elephants, chain the elephants, nurse the animal in the case of injuries, protect the boundaries of *gajaranyaka* etc. Elephant doctor and those who are experts in catching the Elephants were also appointed to get the best result from elephant forest.

Superintendents of Elephants shall protect and supervise standing and lying stables of Elephants of all age and categories as well as the works done by the officials including Elephant doctor in forest. There should have a good and proper road to reach Elephant forest. Elephant forest should be formed separately from wild tracts, and maintaining Elephant forest is one among the good qualities of the officer. Whoever kills Elephants shall be punished and even put to death. It is on the power of Elephantry the destruction of enemy's army is depended. Extending Elephant forest at the countries' border will cause much harm to the enemy. *Arthasatra* gives some suggestions for the improvement of the empire which include maintaining and creating new Elephant forest.

As per the work, King as the head of army should be mounted either on horse or an Elephant to proceed to appreciate his army strength. Elephants in army is so important that king could mount on Elephant only after certified by a reliable authority. Elephantry was of great importance as it decided victory of the king and destruction of the enemy. Important functions of the Elephant during the warfare were marching the vanguard, making new roads, camping places, repelling attacks, crossing and descending into water, holding the ground, marching forward and descending, entering rugged and crowded places, setting and putting out fires, scoring and victory with a single army unit, reuniting broken formation, providing protection in calamity, causing fear, terrorizing etc.

Arthasastra mentions about Elephant care. The position and direction of Elephant stable is given much importance, ie., on sites east by south, just like royal kitchen and the store houses. Stable should be double the size of the Elephant and there should be special apartment for she elephant. projected entrance with the door

facing to either east or the north. There should be provision for the removal of urine and dung. The measurement for the place where Elephant can be comfortable in laying is also mentioned in the work. The ration for the Elephant should be determined according to the age, height and weight of the Elephant. The newly captured Elephants should be treated as much care as a young Elephant.

According to Arthasastra, veterinarians were also posted on battle fields to tend the injured animals.⁵⁵ Government provided great care and concern regarding the case of Elephants. Punishment for ill-treatment or for not caring Elephants is discussed by Kautilya. Killing of an Elephant is an offence which brings capital punishment. The officials who made any fault in their works which makes the Elephant to get rude and uncomfortable was considered as an offence and punishment and fines and penalties should be remitted for such mistakes. A man who mounted the horse or Elephant of the king would be punished by cutting off his legs or hands, or pay a fine of 700 *panas*. No private person is allowed to keep Elephants or horse with them as they are considered as the property of the rulers.

Honorarium should be paid to the officials like teachers learned men, all kinds of attendants including the Elephant rider ranging from 500 to 1000 *panams* according to their merit. *Arthasastra* mentions about reward for destroying an Elephant of the enemy king as five thousand *panas*. One who brings a pair of tusk of Elephant which is dead due to natural causes shall receive a reward of four and a half *panas*. Elephant fights were also arranged as the pastime of royal class and the works like *Digha-Nikaya* reflects its disapproval for such fight which is mentioned in the work by the term *samaja*.

It also mentions that, Elephants can be divided according to their work into four categories- Elephants under training or *damyā*, the war Elephant or *samnahya*, the riding Elephant or *aupavahya* and rogue Elephant or *vyala*.⁵⁶ Beyond

⁵⁵ Raman Ranjan, 'Role of Ayurveda in Improvement of Animal Health and Livestock Production-a Review', *Eastern Scientist*, Issue 24-Vol.III, 2023, p.8.

⁵⁶ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Op. Cit.*, p.67.

the military purpose, Elephants were being used for royal procession at the time of religious festivals. As Strabo says, in the procession at their festivals, many Elephants adorned in gold and silver are in the train. Elephant chariots were used by kings during long journeys and the entire body of Elephants were covered by gold at that time. Even though *Arthasastra* is a work that deals with political matters, the inclusion of details regarding the maintenance of Elephants reflect the importance given to Elephants in royal security and protection.⁵⁷

As Eastern part of India provided rich Elephant treasures, the army of Chandraguptha Maurya advanced towards eastern part and conquered the land. *Arthasastra* as well as *Mahabharata* mention about the existence rich Elephants in Eastern India. Mauryans give much importance for the protection of Elephants as they contribute towards the political security and economic prosperity of the country. Thus subjects in training at *Taxila*, the ancient centre of learning, include Elephant lore or *Hatti sutta* along with Vedas and military science. Land grants without right of alienation were made to the officials including Elephant trainer named *Anikastha*. As Elephants played a great role in Mauryan empire, the demand for war Elephants came from other parts of the world, especially from central Asia. Marriage alliances by Selucus Nicator and Chandragupta Maurya also shows the importance of war Elephants. When Selucus came into a confrontation with Antiochus Ist, the latter demanded war Elephants from India.

Buddhist caves carved in Maurya-Sunga period in Maharashtra have depictions of Elephants in various forms like standing, sitting posture. Ajantha paintings reflected beautiful image of *Airavatha*. On left-hand wall of Cave 2 is a panel depicting the miraculous birth of Lord Buddha. Queen Mahamaya had a dream in which a white Elephant came around her couch three times, struck her on the right side and entered her womb. Cave 17 is believed to be created at the time of Vakataka ruler Harisena by the end of fifth century. It depicts Jataka stories and

⁵⁷ Chandrima Das, Analytical study of Matangalila and Hastyayurveda in the light of available Epigraphic data on Elephants in Early India, Unpublished Ph D Thesis, Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta, 2021, p.23.

various forms in the previous lives of Buddha like monkey, deer, buffalo and Elephant.

From Chandraketugarh, the archaeological site located north east of Kolkata, Shri P. Shatne collected a terracotta seal, which depicted the 'figures of royal couple on a caparisoned Elephant led by a mahout', of the Sunga period.⁵⁸ The occurrence of Elephant figurines started in the sixth to third centuries BCE in the Ganga Valley as the evidence comes from Rajghat and other excavated sites. Gradually, their number increased, and these were abundantly found all over the Ganga-Yamuna Valley in the succeeding periods.

It was one of the most popular animals in this period and was profusely decorated. These have been reported from various sites such as Ahichchhatra, Mathura, Rajghat, Bhita, Kausambi, Hastinapur, Sravasti, Ayodhya and Prahladpur.⁵⁹ From 50 CE to the 3 CE, the number of Elephant figurines increased. The provision of a pedestal base for the rider is an interesting feature of these figurines. This feature was absent in the specimens from other sites.⁶⁰ In Vidarbha, from Adam, a pedestal Elephant was found but without a rider.⁶¹ Apart from these, it has also been reported from Rajasthan in sites like Nagari, Rairh and Ahar. Among these sites, there are hollow specimens of an Elephant at Rairh, showing fine examples of the modeller's art.⁶²

Gupta empire usually comes on horse top than Elephants, but still they maintained Elephants in their army under *pilupathi*.⁶³ Kamandaka Nitisara also

⁵⁸ A Ghosh, Indian Archaeology 1957-58, Department of Archaeology, Government of India, New Delhi, 1958, p.77.

⁵⁹ P.Prakash, Terracotta Animal Figurines in the Ganga-Yamuna Valley (600 BC to 600 AD), Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1985, p.35.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁶¹ A. Nath, Excavation at Adam (1988-1992): A City of Asika Janapada, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 2016, p.17.

⁶² U. Sant, Terracotta Art of Rajasthan from Pre-Harappan and Harappan Times to the Gupta Period, Aryan Books, New Delhi, 1997, p.41.

⁶³ P.C. Chakravarti, The Art of War in Ancient India, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 2011, p.73.

mentions about four-fold division of the army. Kalidasa speaks about powerful Elephants of Anga and Kalinga rulers. Chinese pilgrims who visited the court of Pulakesan II in the year 641 AD makes no mention of war chariots. Employment of cavalry or horse man is influenced by that of the Elephants.⁶⁴ During the phase of Vardanas, Harsha Vardana maintained large number of Elephantry. Chinese traveler Yuan Chwang mentioned about 60,000 Elephants in the military of Harsha Vardana. He also says that in the south east of this country i.e., Kamrupa, herds of wild Elephants roam about in numbers; therefore, in this district they use them principally for war.⁶⁵ Harshacharita written by Bana mentions about the import and export items from regions of Assam during seventh and thirteen century that comprised Elephant, Elephant tusk and ivory materials.⁶⁶

Along with these literary works, the literature which is entirely dedicated for Elephants, its taming and training, illness and treatments, its *lakshanas*, its impacts on humans etc. were also developed during the age.⁶⁷ *Gajasastra* or *Hastyayurveda* written by Palakapya muni was first and foremost among them. The age of Palakapya is considered as 11th century by the historians. The work has been developed as the conversation between ruler of Chambapuri Romapda and the sage Palakapya.

As per *Hastyayurveda*, Palakapya, the son of saint Samagayana and their region has been identified by Cunningham with modern town of Bhagalpur of Bihar. The work in Sanskrit consists of almost ten thousand hymns including origin of Elephant, its features, different methods of capturing, taming and training, *musth*, diseases and its remedies, qualities of a good mahout etc. that reflect social need and

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.75.

⁶⁵ E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas (Trans.) Banabhatta's Harsacharita, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1897, p. 284.

⁶⁶ Sujit Sivasundaram, 'Trading Knowledge: The East India Company's Elephants in India and Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 2005, p.16.

⁶⁷ Syam K. Venugopal and V. Sunil Kumar, 'Gajachikitsa: The Treatment of Elephants in Ancient and Modern Medicine', *Sahapedia*, 2019, p.8.

necessities of the time. As the text begins with the background of the problems created by wild Elephants and their capture by the ruler Lomapada. The text is divided in to four sections, like *Maha roga sthanam*, *Kshudraroga stanam*, *Salya stanam*, *Uthara stanam* etc. “*Sainyam bhushanam gajaj*” or ‘Elephant is ornament for army’ is a famous quoting of ancient Indian text *Harthayurveda*, which consider Elephants an important tool for army .One Elephant is considered as equal to six thousand horses and king should keep a number of Elephants with him as they are ornaments for army. As Elephants have played great role in human life and histories, there are many texts and literary works related to the features and deceases of Elephants. The behavior of Elephants during night and certain rituals and remedies to reduce such issues mentioned in *Harthayurveda* is pointed out by K G Sheshadri in his writings.

As Palakapya suggests, Elephants should be provided with soft, comfortable and clean surface for its night time. It further discusses about providing different conditions for different season as per climate requirement. Elephants must be made to sleep in a cool place under moon rays at night during autumn season, stable of Elephants must be smoked with suitable incense to reduce pests at night during rainy season. The age and strength of Elephant will increase with good sleep and sleeplessness at night will cause eye diseases. It also mentions about insanity caused by sleeping at wrong places during night time. Palakapya mentions the symptoms caused by sleepless nights like giving up all food. *Harthayurveda* mentions treatment for such issues with list of herbs mixed up with butter and medicated oil and others.

Along with medicines Palakapya, mentions about some sacrificial ceremonies like *raksoghna*, the sacrifice to appease spirit that disturb Elephants at night. *Guptabhajana* or secret food eating and *Bali offering* to spirit are mentioned in the text as remedies. Sandalwood paste put on Elephants’ head will keep the insect away and other precious items will offer to the spirits all around the dwelling place of the Elephant. *Kalasa kumba* charmed with Vedic hymns for the protection

of Elephant by seeking the blessing of various deities of heaven as well as physical features of this world like mountains and herbs, snakes and demons etc., is charmed and circumambulated around the Elephants.

Palakapya mentions other issues like blood disorder, eye or foot diseases, urinary disorders, pregnancy etc. that may cause sleepless night to Elephants. The *Hastayurveda* mentions worshipping of Elephants by the rulers for welfare of subjects, rainfall, fertility of crops, the fecundity of cattle and man. If they did not pay importance to the worship to the Elephant, the king and the kingdom, the army and the Elephants, would be doomed to perish, because divinity would have been disregarded.⁶⁸

*“Dashalanaam kaṭaḍakaṣhu nirjharajaḍala padmākaḍara sindhuṣhu
svacchaḍanna kaḍaraṇu kābhiraṭavī maḍadhyashu cha krīḍitam|
sāram sāramaḍanaka dhāgra nihitam puḍrēkṣukaāṇḍāikam
ḍanā kamṣhatyatidu-rmanā-ōhvidadhar ḍḍu:dakharuḍapathā: karī.”*

This stanza of *Hastayurveda* mentions about the contrast between the elephant's life and existence in its natural forest and its condition after being taken into captivity as it loses its freedom, social bonds, and natural behavioural expressions, leading to significant emotional distress.

Gajasiksha which is believed to be written by sage Narada gives mythological origin of Elephant. Brahman created Elephant by reciting Samaveda. God made them incapable of flying by cutting their wings as it became unfavourable for the world, and thus Elephants became the largest intelligent and beautiful animals of the land. Second chapter of the work deals with different categories of Elephants with their features and their division into high, middle and low class based on these features. Remaining chapters deals with the method of catching Elephants and their captivity with humans. Good and bad omens related to the Elephants are also discussed. Methods of bringing Elephants and qualities of mahouts are

⁶⁸ Bimlendra Kumar and Ujjawal Kumar (eds.), *Op. Cit.*, p.31.

mentioned in the work. Various training methods according to various age groups are also discussed. Training methods include *paramnhasiksha*, *khelansiksa*, *davanasiksha*, *ekalghadi siksha* and *dvighadisiksha*. *Manasollasa* by Someswara Bhupathi deals with capture and training. Favourable marks, diseases and medicines are mentioned in the work. The scattered distribution of Elephants in the southern parts of the India or south Asia is clearly mentioned in the *Manasollasa*.⁶⁹

Elephants were considered as a symbol of blessing and Elephant image was depicted by many dynasties in their coins. South Indian Sangam age rulers, Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas, issued copper coins depicting Elephants. Sunga Dynasty issued coins with Elephant mark. Kongu Desam issued One Fanam, Half Fanam and Quarter Fanam (1089-1111). Western Ganga Dynasty had Pagoda of 3.860 grams (1050-1183). Samanta Deva of Hindu shahi rulers issued Elephant symbol coin between 800AD-1000 AD. Elephants with raised trunk were stamped on Sathavahana copper coins. Coins of Tippu Sultan also have Elephant image.

Elephants in South Indian Temples

The temples of south India were historically more important as socio economic entity than as religious institution.⁷⁰ Nilakanta Sastri states, “The temple were the most notable recipients of gifts in land and cash, and these played an important role in shaping the economic and social life of the neighbourhood”.⁷¹ In the early period, temples were relatively simple, both in terms of size and function, and their wealth, derived from limited land donations and offerings, was modest. During the imperial Chola period, larger religious establishments like the Tanjavur Brihadeswara temple emerged, providing extensive employment opportunities. During the medieval period, temples became significant employers, as evidenced

⁶⁹ G.K. Shrikondekar, (Trans.), *Manasollasa* By Someshwara III, Vaibhav Press, Bombay, 1939, p.46.

⁷⁰ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pandyan Kingdom*, Swathi Publications, Madras, 1972, p.203.

⁷¹ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Culture and History of Tamils*, Mukhopadhyay Publishers, Calcutta, 1964, p.87.

by 11th-century inscription from Tanjore under Rajaraja I. This record highlights four hundred dancing girls, each were assigned a house and one *veli* of land, yielding 100 kalam of paddy annually. Additionally, the inscription lists around 200 male temple servants, including dance-masters, musicians, drummers, singers, and various other workers like potters, barbers, tailors, and carpenters. Each employee was similarly allotted land with specific revenue yields, reflecting the temple's critical role as an economic institution providing livelihoods for a large number of people.⁷²

The social groups involved in deciding economic matters related to temples were members of the royal family, Chola officials of high rank, palace servants, personal retinues of the royal members like members of Elephant corps, leading landowners from other parts of the kingdom, local merchants, horse traders from the distant Kerala region, merchants from other districts of Tamil Nadu and the merchant guilds.⁷³ Temples, as major land owners, played a significant role in agricultural development during the medieval period. They reclaimed uncultivated land, provided irrigation facilities, and helped to expand agriculture, increasing both productivity and income. The donated lands were either managed by temple administrators or leased to tenants. Since temple lands were often scattered, tenancy was common. Temples also supported cultivators by offering immunity, lending money, reducing the upper share of produce, and sometimes even waiving dues, fostering agricultural growth and benefiting the local economy.⁷⁴

Elephants as a valuable item of gift and main item of exchange between rulers seemed to be familiar since early days. Elephantry acted as the main wing of

⁷² M Kavitha, 'Socio-Economic Functions of Temples during Medieval Tamil Country 11th-16th Century A.D', *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, Vol. 6 Issue 7, July. 2017, Pp.18-23.

⁷³ R. Champak Lakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1996, p.208.

⁷⁴ M Kavitha, *Op.Cit.*, p.22.

military from Janapada polity to Gupta period and ancient Indian evidences shows that from the time of Porus to the time of Prithivraj ie. from 4 BCE to 12th CE. Much reliance is given upon the Elephant than the horses based on the availability of the animal from the land. During ancient Indian days, Elephants were maintained by the royal elites as its maintenance could be affordable only by them. Thus, keeping the giant became a symbol and prestige of royal elite class in the later days.

Medieval Phase

Medieval rulers who reached northern India from the land of horses and Mahmud of Gazni and Muhammed Ghori won their battles with the efficient use of cavalry. During the attack of Mahmud Gazni, he was able to withstand war Elephants of Hindu rulers and could defeat them, and later he enhanced his own army by incorporating defeated Elephants to his army. Al-Biruni the 11th century traveler stated as one Elephant equal to three horses. The court historians of later days like Barani of 12th century and Abul Fazal of 16th century says as one Elephant is equal to five hundred horses in a battle.⁷⁵

With the arrival of sultanate rulers of medieval period Elephants were largely used for military and transportation. Elephants helped to shape victories and design destinies and make histories due to their might and strength. The work *War -Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate* written by Simon Digby says that the power of Delhi Sultanate lay in its strategic location between Indus valley and Ganga, and the ability of the rulers to control the eastward flow of horses and westward flow of Elephants. Military strength of the ruler is assessed by the number of Elephants in Elephantry and they were displayed in main functions and ceremonies to showcase the power and wealth of the ruler. Thus, Elephant capturing and training were highly regarded. Elephants were also useful and more practical in travelling and past-time

⁷⁵ S. Jabir Raza, 'Indian Elephants Corps under the Gaznavids', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol.73, 2012, p.217.

hunting for rulers and elites especially through forest and hilly areas. Rulers travelling in *howdah*, the carriage designed for riding on the back of Elephant for various occasion like ceremonies, festivals, hunting etc. became common in those days. Elephant stables or Elephant enclosures were the larger areas where royal Elephants were housed and cared of.

Baber, founder of Mughal rule in India, used war Elephants in his army and it played a decisive role in securing victory in first battle of Panipat. Mughal rulers have maintained a personal Elephant of their own. As per Baburnama, Babur maintained personal attachment with an Elephant named Lali and they shared deep bond. Humayun's personal Elephant named Lakhhi, is said to have saved Humayun from a fatal injury while he was descending from stairs of his library. Akbarnama and Ain I Akbari mention about a white Elephant named *Umarkot* as pet and companion of the emperor. *Hawwa*, a female Elephant held a special place in Akbar's heart due to her loyalty and companionship. Mughal paintings by Basawan and Chetar Munti entitled Akbar's adventure with the Elephant Hawwa supports the fact.

Ain I Akbari gives details about the Elephants maintained during Mughal phase that consists of the place arranged for them, division of Elephant based on their quality, special food arranged for them as well as attendants for taking care of Elephant etc. Riding on Elephants is also mentioned in the work. Hundreds of Elephants were only reserved for Akbar. All of them enjoyed special care and treatment during the emperor. It also mentions about the process of selecting and classifying royal Elephants. He mentions about the commencement of different regulations to care Elephants during the time of Mughal ruler Akbar. Akbar included animals as his subjects and such inclusion was special in the case of Elephants. *Pheelkhanas* were maintained with minute accounts regarding Elephants. Based on the size and age of Elephants servants were appointed for each Elephants- servants for assisting caparisoning, Elephant riders and his assistant. Accessories for

Elephants were kept in the department of Zinkhana and provided to the Elephant servants during needy time. *Musth* is the Persian word *mast or* intoxicated, adopted during Mughal times.⁷⁶

Gaja-grahana-prakara of Narayana Diksita mentions about role of Elephants in war and useful for works .It also deals with methods of catching Elephants with places where Elephants were found.⁷⁷ Training is given to Elephants and Elephant exhibition are conducted every year for evaluating their worth for entertainment and instruction to the public.⁷⁸ Even though the age of the work is not mentioned, the price of the Elephant is mentioned in Dinars hence the work may have belonged to medieval days. Assam being the region of the best quality of Elephants, Swargadeo Pratap Singha (1603-1641 CE) who belong to Ahom culture founded a city with the name of Gajapur near Jorhat, Assam, and as the name reflect the region maintained strong elephantry.⁷⁹ Elephants also acted as war compensation. Rulers arranged mahouts and other communities for capturing and training Elephants for war was the source of revenue for Ahom state from 13 to 18th century. *Hathijuj* or Elephants fight was one of the most important game among the games and sports in Assam during the Ahom period. Thus the medieval period considered Elephant as the most important animal for warfare and trade.⁸⁰

Focusing towards south India, Hoysalas the predecessors of Vijayanagara have attached with Elephants that reflected in their architecture .Elephants were

⁷⁶ Thomas R. Trautman, *Op.Cit.*, P.63

⁷⁷ Narayana Dikshita, *Gajagrahanaprakarana*, Sri Venkiteswara Oriental Institute, Tirupati, 1968, p.3.

⁷⁸ Geetha N, *Elephantology and its Ancient Sanskrit Sources*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Sanskrit, University of Calicut, 2013, p.26.

⁷⁹ Kamal Hussain Ahmed & Projit Kumar Palit, 'Elephant in the History of Assam During the Medieval Period Up to 1826 CE', *EAS Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, Volume-2, Issue-4, 2020, p.21.

⁸⁰ Imadad Ali Ahmed, 'Elephants in Medieval Assam', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol.76, 2015, Pp. 264-65.

represented in art and architecture with great interest by the artist during those days. Hoysala temples of Belur represent Elephants moving in one direction with their riders. Beautifully Ornamented Elephants are carved at entrance of each mandapa. The attachment with Elephants continued by the Vijayanagara rulers as the dynasty give much importance towards the strengthening of military. The availability of Elephants also enabled their use in ceremonial activities as one could get the evidence from foreign accounts of that period. Devaraya II assumed the title *gajabentekara* as he was an expert in Elephant hunting. Elephant stable at Hampi made of graphite can accommodate more than 400 Elephants. Vittalaswami temple represents the sculpture of two Elephants pulling chariot. Thus medieval period in Indian History reflected the military strength of the giant through literary works along with the aesthetic beauty of the animal depicted in the art and architecture. When India came under the domination of European rule during modern period, non-humans also faced severe transition as colonial subjects like humans.

Colonial Phase

Using Elephants with an economic motive was a feature of colonial days. Clearing forest for expansion of plantation, railway construction, timber trade, had given more works to Elephants during colonial rule. There were also new arenas like utilitarian military strength for colonial expansion and Elephant top imperial hunting as past-time for colonial masters. Elephants acted as an item for export. Europeans continued to use Elephants for hunting other wild animals as Elephant top provided maximum safety. Colonial records show regulations issued for hunting wild animals. European intervention and the British domination have brought considerable changes in the socio-economic role of Elephants in India.

European war techniques brought about tremendous changes in military system. Introduction of canon set aside the importance of Elephantry, and the new system preferred infantry trained with novel machinery. Being an important wing of

military in indigenous army, large number of Elephants were available for Europeans and their role continued as carriers of heavy luggage in warfare- like weapons, canon and firearm products even during the 17th century. The importance of Elephants in wars and battles came to an end because of the discovery of long-range fire arms. Despite this situation, the capture of Elephants went on for their use in the field of entertainment such as joy ride, circus shows, hunting games, Elephant fights etc.⁸¹

Elephants were indispensable in the process of exploitation of indigenous forest goods and hence imperial researchers deepened their scientific understanding and hence they became object and subject of colonialism.⁸² In the areas like Assam, Elephants were used for assistance by the Europeans for setting plantation by clearing forest. By 1838 tea plantations were started in Assam and Elephants and mahouts worked there for removing cutdown heavy logs to distant area. Thus, under colonial rule Elephants became an essential part of Assam's daily life as their service was needed in clearing the forest for tea cultivation and moving timber, as a safe carrier of colonial hunters and recruiting for Circus.

After the expansion of railways, Elephants became vehicles for site seeing. Chiefs and kings, mounted on Elephants, an effective symbol of royal power is continued by imperial officers during functions and ceremonies. Colonial officers used Elephants as a means of transport and site seeing imitating Indian Elites. Elephants as vehicles were considered as Indian hallmarks of wealth and power. In colonial India, the Elephants were embraced by the British as a military asset, as well as for the symbolic value it held as an insignia of royal power, drawing upon a body of cultural practices sustained by the ruling elite.⁸³ In 1903, Lord Curzon, the

⁸¹ Shivendra B. Kadgaonkar, 'An Elephant in Ancient Indian Art- A Preliminary Survey', *Asian Elephants in Culture & Nature*, Centre for Asian Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2016, p.140.

⁸² Jonathan Saha, *Colonizing Elephants: Animal Agency Undead Capital and Imperial science in British Burma*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2022, p.11.

⁸³ Niharika Dinkar, 'Seeing the Elephant: Animal Spectatorship and the Imperial Gaze in Colonial India', *South Asian Studies* Vol.37 Issue. 2, 2021, p. 119.

viceroy, invited 48 kings from across the country for a Delhi Durbar. All of them mounted on lavishly attired Elephants covered with golden ornaments and the procession traversed the roads of *Shahjahanabad* and assembled at Coronation Park. This was the last time when so many decorated Elephants were seen altogether.⁸⁴ Concept of state Elephant continued until the princely states could afford for maintaining them.

The princely state of Rajputana was one of the wealthiest regions in India both during the British Raj and in earlier times. Among its many symbols, royal Elephants were famous and these majestic animals were not only a representation of the state's affluence but also an integral part of its cultural and ceremonial life. The wealth and resources dedicated to their upkeep were unparalleled, showcasing the deep reverence and pride the rulers held for them. However, this illustrious legacy underwent a dramatic shift with the abolition of the Privy Purse in 1971.⁸⁵ The decision to end this financial entitlement dealt a severe blow to the economic standing of the Maharajahs, leaving them unable to maintain the lavish lifestyles and traditions they once upheld. The royal Elephants, once a testament to Rajputana's prosperity, became a financial liability.

Faced with this reality, the Elephants were handed over to their lifelong caretakers the mahouts. These skilled handlers, who had served the royal households with dedication, suddenly found themselves thrust into a new role. Overnight, they were transformed from palace employees, dependent on royal patronage, to independent operators in a commercial world. Owning and caring for the Elephants became both a privilege and a challenge, as the mahouts were compelled to find innovative ways to generate income with their charges. This transition marked a shift in the status of the mahouts and the Elephants. From being pampered symbols

⁸⁴ Shakshi Gupta, 'Metal Embroidery on Elephant Trappings', *Textile and Clothing Research Center, Biannual -e Journal*, Vol.1, Issue.2, 2017, p.16.

⁸⁵ Surendra Varma, (*et. al.*), 'Captive Elephants in Forest Camps of India', *Technical Report*, No.17, CUPA and ANCF, Bangalore, 2010, p.249.

of regal power, the Elephants were now tools for survival. The mahouts, on their part, navigated this change with resilience, often using the Elephants for tourism, logging, or ceremonial activities to make ends meet. Thus, the legacy of the royal Elephants of Rajputana became intertwined with the struggles and aspirations of their new masters.

Post-colonial Days

Significant role of Elephants in cultural geography of India can be identified even during the present days. Jaipur Festival, conducted almost in the month of January every year, parade Elephants and organise competitions for best decorated Elephants and mahouts. Festival held at Guwahati, Assam in the month of December also features Elephant procession. In Mysore palace festival held in November, decorated Elephant procession is an inevitable one.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ The city of Mysore, in Karnataka, has long been associated with the grand celebration of the Dasara festival, a tradition deeply rooted in the cultural and political history of the region. The origins of the Mysore Dasara can be traced back to the Vijayanagara Empire and the Wadiyar dynasty of Mysore adopted and expanded the festival, establishing it as a key event in the royal calendar. The Wadiyars, seeking to legitimize their rule and connect themselves to the grandeur of the Vijayanagara legacy, transformed Dasara into a political and cultural statement of their sovereignty and devotion to Goddess Chamundeshwari, the tutelary deity of the kingdom. By the 17th century, Dasara in Mysore had evolved into a ten-day event that featured elaborate rituals, processions, and public festivities.

A major attraction of the festival was the 'Jamboo Savari,' a royal procession that became an integral part of the Dasara tradition. Elephants, richly caparisoned with intricate ornaments, would lead the grand march through the city, symbolizing the power and prestige of the Wadiyars. The procession, which began at the palace and concluded at Bannimantap, carried the idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari, enshrined in a golden howdah atop the lead Elephant. This practice, which had its origins in medieval royal processions, underscored the close relationship between the rulers and their divine protector. The culmination of the Dasara festival was marked by Vijayadashami, the day of victory, when the 'Jamboo Savari' reached its climax. The procession, which included not only Elephants but also horses, soldiers, and musicians, filled the streets of Mysore with color and sound. The presence of the 14 Elephants in the procession was particularly symbolic, as they were considered royal animals, associated with both religious and political power. The golden howdah, carrying the idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari, served as the centrepiece of the procession, reminding the people of Mysore of the Wadiyars' divine right to rule.

South Bihar cattle market, Sonpur mela, is considered as the largest Elephant market arranged once in a year to attract Elephant lovers all over the world. Sonpur Mela cattle market was arranged by the government annually by collecting tax from Elephants' owners. Majority of Elephants came from Assam Forest with the help of Santhal tribes using the help of tamed animal. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh also import Elephants from Assam. Richest person in the village keeps cow Elephants with them. They make Elephant shed and consider their sight in morning as good omen. Elephants are participated in Marriage function and it was considered as proud and prestigious.

The Sonpur fair traditionally takes place between the first week of November to the first week of December. This event is associated with Harihara temple in Sonpur and this place is believed to be the region where mythical story of *Gajendra Moksha* was happened. It is said that mela bought more than thousand Elephants during last years of 1970s to early years of 1980s. Mela was arranged by Bihar government and every government department related to the legal transactions will camp at the mela for easy dealing related to buying and sailing of Elephants. Elephants had been largely exhibited and traded at the fair since 1974. It is the place where illegal sale of Elephants took place on a mass scale. The necessary documents will be faked and handed over along with the animals.

On October 14, 2015, union environment minister, banned the trade of Elephants during the legendary Sonpur Cattle Mela. As a result, Bihar government decided to ban the entry of Elephants into Bihar and their movement outside its borders. It also banned the sale, purchase and transfer of Elephants. The Centre passed this order to all states on October 14th 2015. In line with this, the state has prohibited all type of transactions of elephants including sale and purchase. Owners will bear full responsibility for ensuring the proper upkeep of their captive elephants, including adequate food, care, and healthy environment. The Bihar government has also shared the Wildlife Board's resolution with Chief

Wildlife Wardens across the country, urging them to take note and adopt similar measures.

India being the land with high quality of Elephant breed on earth, explicit much affinity with Elephants. From pre historic archaeological remains of Harappa, Elephants were known to Indians. From early Aryans who consider Elephants as wild animals to later Aryans who made Elephants as gift item, it elevated its relation with humans. Indigenous tradition of taming and controlling the giant must have adopted by the Aryans with new instruments and tools in later days. Non-Aryan Tribal leaders of eastern India who supplies Elephant wealth, moving on Elephant top attracted the Aryan imaginations which reflected in the literary works and practical sense of adding Elephants as their companions became success in later days. The image and sound of Elephant can create threat and fear among the aliens who saw it for first time. Change from this mental state to positive and accepting state of nature was built through the mythological Elephant figures in ancient literary text. Elephants as Gods, mythological heroes, assets and as vehicle attained sacred status and prestige in social order. This feature is followed by Indian religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Aryans may have used this initially as their agricultural companions in order to clear dense forest. While Ancient Indian works like Arthashastra mentions about the importance of Elephants and its maintenance by the rulers there developed some works which were written exclusively dealing with the science of maintaining and care of Elephants.

By focussing our lens to south Indian state, ecological elements of Kerala which varies with high land, midland and coastal reflect variety of flora and fauna, played a unique part in the land. During colonial and post-colonial times also, continuity in Elephantry and its knowledge was continued by south Indian state of Kerala, especially central Kerala. Kerala gives multiple roles to Elephants which is unique from other states of India and presently possess largest number of

captive Elephants in India. From the age of megaliths to the period of post corona days, Elephants have played multifaceted roles in Kerala history and society. The next chapter will discuss the various roles played by Elephants in Kerala, where Elephant population is significant even in the present time.

CHAPTER - 3

ELEPHANTS IN KERALA: NATURAL PLACE TO CULTURAL SPACE

Kerala, rich with vast highland especially of thick splendid forest, provides a favorable geography for biodiversity. This unique pattern provided by western ghats is incomparable with other states in India, as it provides diversity of species and multiplicity of plants. This peculiar indigenous eco system, with splendid resources like large area of bamboo and water supply, supports Kerala's enchanting Elephant wealth.

Wayanad Elephant reserve, a part of the Wayanad wild life sanctuary possesses the highest number of Elephant wealth followed by Periyar, Anamudi and Nilambur. The term 'Natural Place' given in the chapter title means high ranges, mainly forest land which is considered as the original zone of Elephants where they enjoy maximum freedom. Sources provide evidence for Elephants in prehistoric days through the depiction in rock paintings. Based on the images of rock shelter motifs and early Tamil literature, this chapter analyses Elephants in its natural habitat and its relation with early human inhabitants of highlands. The chapter also examines the various complex roles played by Elephants in the midland region after being captured, tamed and displaced from their original habitat in later period.

'Cultural Space' in the title means man made spheres where Elephants were incorporated and assimilated by assigning particular role for the giant. Throughout the entire period, Elephants were owned and controlled by the dominant class, as only they could afford the maintenance of the giant. Rulers maintained Elephants, in order to establish their symbolic superiority and authority. Expansion of land from virgin area to cultivable land during the early medieval period may have led to closer human-Elephant relation, ultimately leading to their taming and training.

Brahmanical temples being the main land owners of late medieval period may have tackled the Elephant wealth initially. As Elephants were regarded as

temple assets, they were employed in various constructive tasks such as transporting timber after clearing the forest. During that period rulers and other elites who owned Elephants often offered them to temples as a form of penalty. Temple inscriptions of early medieval and temple *Granthavari* of later days also provide ample evidences for the above-mentioned facts. Later on, they were transformed to the ritual space, on the basis of socio-economic context.

Kerala has a deep sense of attachment towards Elephants as it played multidimensional roles in different phases, covering its movement from natural space to cultural place. It passed through various dimensions like being the pride of tribal chiefs, item of trade and transaction, vehicle of the ruler, protector of fort, a valuable gift, the symbol of status and prestige and an inevitable factor in colonial construction. The cultural tradition of keeping and maintaining Elephants continues in the ritual place of Kerala to this day.

Elephants of pre historic days are represented in rock paintings. Rock shelters of Kerala like *Attala* which is situated at the border of *Munnar* and *Marayoor*, depict motifs of men riding on Elephants along with other unidentified animals. Human as well as anthropomorphic figures, plant, sign, weapons etc., can be seen in same shelter. Majority of these paintings belong to iron age in Kerala. The rock surface on either side of the entrance of Edakkal cave which is situated at *Ambukuthimala* at Waynad, is engraved with animal and other symbolic representations, and depicts animals such as dog, Elephants, deer, peacock, bull, bison, along with plants and flowers, a human figure-including saint like seated figure, symbols, ritual dance scenes and ceremonial practices. Most of these paintings appear to be half faded. *Ezhuthala* cave at Idukki shows paintings of this animal with and without riders. This rock cave picturises warriors riding on Elephants with weapons in white pigment. All the Elephant images depicted in the area are domesticated or tamed as they are represented with a rider on top.¹

¹ Benny Kurian, Rock Art in East Anamalai Valley, Rock Art Society of India, New Delhi, 2010, p.83.

During early Tamil age, *Anamalai* which is a part of western Ghats was a famous hunting ground of Elephants for tusk.² They were being hunted and tamed by indigenous people for various reasons and by various means as it is believed to be a place with large number of Elephants. Some people believe that this region is named due to its abundance of Elephant wealth. *Umbark-kadu* literally means ‘Elephant forest’, mentioned in early Tamil work *Patittrupathu*, is believed to be the region of *Anamali* in north west Travancore.³ However others believe that the name may have originated from the overall structure of the hill, which resembles the shape of a giant *Ana*. In the Elephant reserve of *Anamalai* hills, only few depictions of this animal can be found in the paintings. A few dolmens were reported from *Kanakkayam* tribal settlement, Kanthalloor panchayath of Idukki district and white Kaolin paintings were noticed inside a dolmen in naturalistic form and the depictions are of a human and an animal, probably Elephant.⁴

Elephants are depicted in different forms in the rock art including poses with raised ear, extended trunks and tails, uplifted trunk, flared ears showing aggressive nature and in full charging position. The trunk may also raise in greeting to an approaching animal or simply to sniff the air.⁵ These art shows that humans were close to the animal and could observe behavioural changes in it. By analyzing the context of these arts and images reflected in these rock shelters, one could realize the familiarity of Elephants with the early inhabitants. Elephants may have been utilized to hunt small forest animals or to protect and safeguard humans from wild beast. Rock art paintings in the region clearly illustrate the tamed nature of Elephants instead of wild nature.

² Praveen C K., ‘Elephas Maximus in Rock Art of Kerala’, *Proceedings of Conference on Asian Elephants in Culture & Nature*, Sri Lanka, 2016, p.257.

³ K. G. Sesha Aiyar, *Chera Kings of the Sangam Period*, Luzac and Company, London, 1937, p.14.

⁴ Praveen C K., *Op.Cit.*, p.257.

⁵ Kerala State Forest Report, <https://fsi.nic.in/isfr19/vol2/isfr-2019-vol-ii-kerala.pdf>, last visited on 12/10/2024.

Elephants that had enjoyed freedom in the forest may have had good communication and synchronization with the original human inhabitants. From the unlimited freedom of geographical space, Elephants reached to the control and constraints of human space in later days. Later it may have undergone restrictions in a limited way when utilized by the tribal chief. Early Tamil literature shows the affinity of Elephants with the ancient *Tamizhakam*. *Purananuru* states about the brave Chola ruler who have the guts to lead and control the Elephants⁶. *Akam songs* hardly mention about the attachment with Elephants whereas *Puram* songs mention the Elephants as the inhabitants of *Kurunji*, and ivory as item of trade for foreign countries. These works also provide many instances of comparing the hero's strength with Elephantine strength, which makes us to believe that people of that time were quite aware of the qualities of Elephants.

Foreign accounts especially Greco-Roman texts also gives significant information regarding Elephant and ivory of ancient Kerala during the early Tamil period. *Periplus of the Erithrean Sea* by an anonymous author mentions ivory as an important trade item of the days. Ptolemy mentions trade with Rome and Kerala where ivory was an important item. Pliny mentions that trade relation existed between Kerala and Rome. He mentions the trade of early south India and Rome in which importing slaves as well as mahouts and magicians who came to Rome from India.⁷ The Animals like Elephants, hippos, lions, snakes etc. were taken to Rome for entertainment purpose. Ivory was of great demand as an item for ornament making, and is also mentioned by Pliny. Byzantine monk Cosmas visited Kerala during 550 A D. In his work *The Christian Topography* stated that large number of Elephants were found in Kerala jungles and they were caught by making large pits.⁸ He mentions of Kerala rulers having more than five hundred Elephants. Rulers who didn't own indigenous Elephants used to buy it from others. Elephants were given

⁶ Vaidehi Herbert, *Purananuru* (Trans.), Digital Maxim, USA, 2015, p.486.

⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Pliny's Natural History*, Wernerian Club, London, 1849, p.3.

⁸ Velayudan Panikkaseri, *Sancharikal Kanda Keralam*, (Mal.), D C Books, Kottayam, 2001, p.55.

special training and care. Above references leads to the fact that ivory was exported to foreign countries in large scale and rulers were given special care to maintain Elephants.

Early Chera ruler Udiyan Cheraladan is praised for his Elephant corps and cavalry.⁹ K. V. Krishna Iyer in his work *A short history of Kerala* examines the expansion of imperial *Cheramans* and mentions that during the time of Asoka the south India was ruled by *Keralaputras* or *Cheramans* along with Cholas and Pandyas. Cheramans had sixty Elephants while the Pandyas had five hundred.¹⁰ It is also mentioned that Chera rulers controlled their men in war sitting on the top of Elephants. Chera ruler *Elamcheral* maintained the Giants with Prestigious flag for protecting royal fort of that time.¹¹ Last of the known imperial Cheraman ruler *Yanaikkatchey* who is literally the king with the Elephant looks is considered as a warlike ruler. The ideal King, during times of war, should be on the top of his Elephant, to command and control his army.¹²

Chera rulers had special affinity for the giant of their own forest that have reflected as symbols in their coins. Early Chera rulers of 3 BCE to 5CE who were considered as owners of large number of Elephants had used *Iyyam* coin depicting Elephant symbols.¹³ “The Cheras had issued coins made of copper and lead, with the Elephant symbol on the obverse and bow and arrow on the reverse sides. A good number of copper and lead coins of early Chera with their symbol bow and arrow were unearthed from the early archaeological layers from *Pattanam*.”¹⁴ All these shows the attraction for Elephants in Chera kingdom as their magnificent symbolic image.

⁹ R. Nagaswamy, *Tamil Coins: A Study*, Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, Madras, 1981, p.3.

¹⁰ K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *A Short History of Kerala*, Pai & Company, Ernakulam, 1966, p.17.

¹¹ R. Gopinathan, *Keralathanima*, (Mal.), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvanthapuram, 2013, p.412.

¹² K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *Op.Cit.*, p.26.

¹³ R. Nagaswamy, *Op.Cit.*, p.9.

¹⁴ P.J. Cherian (ed.), *Pattanam Excavations Interim Reports of the First Season 2007*, Kerala Council for Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, 2015, p.15.

In the report of Travancore archaeological department for 1920-21, K. V. Subramanya Iyar, the superintendent has the following note on copper coins, unearthed from the State of Travancore. On the obverses of two coins, there is a well-executed figure of a standing Elephant facing the right and represented in its natural purity of outline, unhampered by ornamental paraphernalia and placed a flag staff in front of it. Various symbols like sun, crescent, swastika etc. were depicted in the plain field above the Elephant figure. On the reverse of one coin an *ankusa* or Elephant goad in the form of a spear of short haft and hooked end can be seen.¹⁵ As Elephants were associated with royalty and form an important component of four-fold army, Elephant symbol was adopted by more than one dynasty of kings as their numismatic symbol.¹⁶ Coins of Andhra, Yadava, Kongu, Gangas, Vijayanagara kings of later days also used Elephant symbols.

Ankusa which was found in Kerala resembles north Indian type. In north Indian context, *Ankusha* or iron hook is explained in the work *Elephant and Kings* by Thomas R. Trautmann, a prominent scholar on ancient Indian history and culture. It is used as goad to impel the Elephant forward and to restrain a war Elephant in the grip of musth.¹⁷ This sign of war Elephant in ancient period had extended to regions which Indian technology of war Elephants spread.¹⁸ He highlights the *ankusa* not just as a tool for controlling Elephants, but as a symbolic representation of the ruler's ability to govern and channel authority over powerful forces. For Trautmann, the *ankusa* signifies the control that a king or ruler must exercise over their kingdom, much like how a mahout controls an Elephant. It encapsulates the idea that raw power, symbolized by the Elephant, must be disciplined and guided by the wisdom of the ruler, represented by the *ankusa*. Arthasastra says about stick or *yasti* and one ridden with a goad or *tottra*, instead of the tool *ankusa*, for dealing and managing Elephants in war as well as on riding on it. It speaks of one ridden with a

¹⁵ Puthusseri Ramachandran, *Kerala Charithrathile Adisthana Rekhakal*, (Mal.), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvanthapuram, 2007, p.162.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹⁷ Thomas R Trautmann, *Elephants and Kings*, Permanent Black, Ashoka University, Ranikhet, 2015, p.65.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.66.

stick or *yasti* and one ridden with a goad or *tottra*.¹⁹ Thus it can be assumed that *ankusa* may have evolved in post Mauryan age.

The Later Chera Empire, which flourished between 800 and 1100 CE, was marked by the reign of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram, comprising 14 rulers as recorded by historians like Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai. This period witnessed the culmination of Aryan migration into the region, significantly influencing the social and cultural landscape. One of the most prominent figures from this time was Kulasekara Alwar, ruler and noted poet-saint, whose contributions are memorialized in the Vazhapally Copper Plate inscriptions. The era is often regarded as a golden age, particularly in the realms of literature and religious thoughts. Works such as *Mukundamala*, *Perumal Thirumozhi*, *Subhadradanjaya*, and *Acharyamanjari* reflect the rich intellectual and spiritual environment of the time.

Among these works *Perumal Thirumozhi* mentions about the use of Elephants during second Chera rule. *Perumal Thirumozhi*, composed by Kulasekara Alwar, is a Tamil devotional work that forms part of the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* and mentions about the ruler Kulasekara Alwar who had learnt the art of Elephant riding and horse riding along with all other *sastras* in his childhood days.²⁰ The work also mentions an incident in the Chera court of, Kulasekara Alwar. The king deeply devoted to Lord Vishnu, used to spent his time immersed in religious activities and attending discourses on divine stories. On one such occasion, while listening to a narration of the battle between Rama and Ravana, Kulasekara became so emotionally involved in the narration that he believed the battle was happening at that very moment. Moved by the thought that Lord Rama was struggling in battle, he stopped the discourse and immediately ordered his generals to mobilize his army, including soldiers, Elephants, and horses. The event illustrates the fact that the Elephants were always an integral part of the Chera army. It was mainly based on the strength of the Elephantry that the Cheras could resist attacks by the Cholas. The

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.68.

²⁰ V. Madhava Kannan and K.S Ramakrishnan, Kulasekhara Alwar's Perumal Thirumozhi, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329736254_Perumal_Thirumozhi, last visited on 16/07/2023.

Manimangalam inscription states that Virarajendra, who conquered the Cheras, returned after collecting a large tribute in the form of Elephants.

Travancore Archaeological series, stone and copperplate inscription No.28 give accounts of the life of royal saint Cheraman Perumal, and mentions about a white Elephant sent by Lord Siva to Sundaramurthi Nayanar to reach back his original abode *Kailasa*, while he was staying at Chera capital.²¹ Sundaramurthi may be considering Lord Siva himself as the donor and not any immortal king or his friend. This event is mentioned in literary source, like *Periyapurāṇam*. According to the *Periyapurāṇam*, Sundaramurthi Nayanar lived at Thiruvanchikulam, where he first sang his *Thevaram* hymns in praise of lord Siva. On the star *chothi*, Siva himself sent a white Elephant to bear Sundarar to Kailasa, and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar faithfully followed on horseback. As Sundarar travelled, he composed a *padigam*, whose verses were miraculously returned to the Thiruvanchikulam temple at his request. Tiruvanchikulam temple still honours both saints by depicting their images for its worshippers. As part of the *Makaram Chothi* festival at the Tiruvanchikulam Mahadeva Temple, a distinctive *ezhunnallathu* or ritual procession is held, commemorating the legendary reunion of the Shaiva saints, Sundaramurthi Nayanar and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. In this symbolic re-enactments, Sundaramurthi is represented riding a caparisoned white Elephant, while Cheraman Perumal is depicted mounted on a richly decorated horse. This ceremonial movement through the temple precincts and adjoining streets is not merely a ritual spectacle but a performative remembrance of the saints' spiritual kinship and their joint ascent to Mount Kailasa.

Inscriptional evidences support the fact that Elephants were included in the royal grants as privilege and prestige to merchants and traders which enabled the enhancement of trade and transaction of our land. *Tarisapilly Copper plates* otherwise known as Inscription of Sthanu Ravi issued in 849 CE mentions about the

²¹ A.S. Ramanatha Ayyer, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol.V, Part I, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1924, p.97.

process of land granted to Mar Sapir Iso for constructing *Tarisappalli*, as per the inscription. Boundaries of this land were fixed by the ceremony by a female-Elephant known as *pidi-nadattam* and was granted by Ayyanadigal Tiruvadi and Rama Tiruvadi, governor of the lesser half of Venadu in consultation with Vijayaraghava Devar the *koyil-adigari*, that is, the adviser to the king and the agent of the palace, and others.²²

The second decree of the Tarisapally plates granted 72 special privileges that reflect the symbols of elevated social status, to be used on special occasions. The list of those privileges include sitting on Elephant top, Elephant procession, *alavattam*, using decorative fan, headgear or *nettipattam* for Elephants. These traditional objects, such as the royal umbrella, ceremonial fan, and flywhisk, were important symbols of royal status and authority. The royal umbrella symbolizes protection and sovereignty, often held over the ruler as a sign of divine favour and authority. The ceremonial fan was used in royal courts or during processions represents luxury and comfort, serving to emphasize the monarch's elevated status. The flywhisk or *chamara*, symbolises royal right to be shielded from discomfort. These symbols, frequently seen in royal processions and court ceremonies, publicly affirm the dignity, authority, and divine legitimacy of the rulers. Thus Elephants were placed in political space as military strength as well as prestigious status icon and the rulers shared this royal status symbol with other elites of society and used in secular ceremonies as well.

Thillai Sthanam record which belonged to 860 AD of Stanu Ravi Kulasekhara was a record among the medieval inscriptions that gives information about the use of Elephants in Kerala.²³ In the Huzur plates of the Ay chief *Karunan thadukkan*, dated in AD 864-65, the king purchased village in *Mudalanadu*, and its boundaries were fixed by the officers by using the Elephant and the ceremony is known as *pidinadatham*, thus the Elephant was associated with such ceremonies.

²² Gopinatha Rao, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. 1, Methodist Publishing House, Madras, 1910, p.112.

²³ Puthusseri Ramachandran, *Op.Cit.*, p.11.

This type of demarcating land was more convenient for regions thickly over grown with bush. It clearly points to the fact that people were familiar of using Elephants, and tamed Elephants were available in royal ambiance.

In 1000 CE, Cheraman Perumal of Kerala granted Jewish leader Joseph Rabban a set of copper plates conferring 72 privileges equal to those of Malabar's Nair nobility. Rabban was appointed as head of the *Anjuvannam* trade guild and was granted hereditary rights, including aristocratic honours and key commercial privileges such as tax exemptions and the authority to levy duties. These privileges included the use of aristocratic symbols such as riding on Elephant top or in palanquins, carrying weapons, lighting ceremonial lamps, walking on carpets, use of trumpets and drums. Moreover, he was granted commercial rights like levying duties and tolls and exemption from taxes etc.

The granting of such royal privileges, to elites in society was a deliberate act of extending the monarch's authority and favour. By allowing other nobles or high-ranking officials to use these symbols including use of Elephants, rulers not only elevated the social status of these elites but also reinforced their loyalty to the crown. This practice helped to strengthen the financial benefit of increasing commercial activities and solidify a hierarchy. Consequently, the monarch remained at the apex, with elites visibly sharing the royal aura of dignity and authority, thereby legitimizing their power in the eyes of the public. Thus the Elephant acted as an object of privilege and status symbols, allowing the rulers to create networks of loyalty and dependency while elites gained legitimacy and prestige, reinforcing the kingdoms social and political order.

Elephants as Temple Property

Elephants reached the hegemony of temples from the political and military vicinity. The exact period of the arrival of Elephants in temple ownership is vague, as there is no clear evidence supporting the fact. Development of temple oriented society in Kerala marked the beginning of Elephant ownership by temples. This phase marked great transformation in socio economic distribution and pattern.

During the reign of early Chera kingdom, the majority of agricultural land was owned by non-Brahmins. With the coming of Brahmins from north, the land was granted for them on various occasions by the rulers. Several changes occurred in socio economic and cultural milieu with the thirty-two Brahmin settlements and led to establishment of temples centered society. The Chera kings, provincial governors, landlords, and other elites regularly donated large parcels of land to temples.²⁴ Large lands, both cultivable and virgin, including forest lands, came under temples and thus the temples became the huge land owner and land lord. According to Rajan Gurukkal, “during the medieval period, most of the forested valleys of Eastern hillocks and fertile uplands were brought under cultivation by the temple corporations”.²⁵ M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat noted that temples played a significant role in the expansion of agriculture into tribal regions. They argued that temples facilitated the effective extraction of surplus from peasant community and contributed to the emergence of landlord dominance. This series of developments ultimately resulted in the breakdown of tribal social structures and their gradual transformation into caste-based societies.²⁶ Epigraphic records reveal several distinct methods by which temples came to possess land. These can be grouped into three main categories, first through *dana* or donations made by kings, *naduvazhis* and prominent landowners, second through land grants that conferred upon temples, the right to collect *rakshaboga* or protection fees, and the third by land acquisition through purchase using gold obtained by the temple through various means.²⁷

The details presented in some land grants of eleventh and twelfth centuries indicate that, “During the establishment of a new temple, the ruler invited brahmins

²⁴ Aneesh S., *Perumals of Mahodayapuram: A Historical Re-Appraisal*, Unpublished Ph D Thesis, Department of History, University of Kerala, 2022, p.145.

²⁵ Rajan Gurukkal, *The Kerala Temple and the Early Medieval Agrarian System*, Vallathol Vidyapeedam Sukapuram, Edappal, 1991, p.33.

²⁶ T.R. Venugopalan, *Process and Structures: A History of Medieval Kerala*, Current Books, Thrissur, 2022, p.156.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.157.

to settle around the temple. They were given the responsibility of maintaining the temple and its *devaswom* property. It appears to have been bestowed on them as an incentive for settlement and continued supervision of the temple”.²⁸ Thus from early decades of thirteenth century huge acres of land came under the custodianship of temples and Brahmins.²⁹ “During the middle ages in Kerala the lands were generally divided as *brahmaswam*, *devaswom* and *cherikkal* land among brahmins, temples and rulers respectively”.³⁰ The Elephants captured from clearing of forest land came under the control of temples and became temple property which was managed by Brahmins. The Brahmins became powerful after the *Chera* period and they handled temple affairs and management of temple lands.³¹

In the temple state, Lord was considered as the head and everything was done in his name.³² Temples acted as sovereign body under Brahmin domination and enjoyed the power to rule, punish and even declare war and peace. They are also known as *sanketam* and varies in its size according to the vastness of the land it accommodates. Generally, the administration of *sanketams* have common pattern and is free from corruption. Temple officials in the *sanketam* were given various levels of punishments. If anyone found guilty of taking a life must offer an Elephant as penance to the deity. Temples also continued the method of land assessment using the Elephant known as *pidinadatham*. They may have also used the tusker for clearing forests and moving timber to the needy places.

Brahmin settlements and the related temple *sanketams* were concentrated more in central Kerala. *Peruvanam*, *Thrissivaperur*, *Irinjalakuda*, *Chemmana* in

²⁸ Frits Staal, (ed.), *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, M. G. S., Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *A History of The Nambudiri Community in Kerala*, <https://archive.org/details/agnivol.iib/page/n1/mode/2up>, last visited on 11/08/2019.

²⁹ Mishitha K, *Dominium Populi Dominium Terra: Social Construction of Property Right In Pre-Modern Kerala A.D 1200 - 800 A.D*, UnPublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Sociology, Calicut University, 2019, p.5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.6.

³¹ Elam Kulam Kunjan Pillai, *Janmi Sambradayam Keralathil*, (Mal.), D C Books, Kottayam, 1965, p.73.

³² K.V.Krishna Ayyar, *Op.Cit.*, p.117.

modern district of Thrissur, *Avattipputhur*, *Airanikkulam*, *Muzhikkalam*, *Chengamanad* in Ernakulam, *Panniyur* and *Isanamangalam* in Palakkad etc. belonged to central Kerala. *Peruvanam* being an important and biggest *sanketam*, *Peruvanam* Lord had to maintain and manage huge forest lands. Being the biggest owner of forests in medieval Kerala, the temple *sanketam* owned 36 *katam*, ie. about 180 miles of forest along the Western Ghats from *Akamala* in the north to *Kodassery* in the south, spreading across Thrissur and Palakkad districts. A temple functionary known as *Malayil Karankur* were in charge of the management of forest wealth.³³

In order to reduce human-animal conflict, they began to capture and tame Elephants in early days through various means and later they were accommodated into temple spaces for various constructive purposes. *Peruvanam Granthavari* mentions about the capture of Elephants from high land and the *Nambidis* were given charge of capturing Elephant.³⁴ Elephants caught from the forest also yielded income to *Peruvanam* temple.³⁵ Donation of Elephants to temples by Perumbadappu rulers, who enjoyed *melkoima*, is also mentioned in *Granthavari*. Travancore rulers and Zamorins also enjoyed their rights in this temple in different times. Temple administration was managed by *yogathiripad* till 947 of ME.

Mathilakam Granthavari of 1375 AD also mentions about the Elephants as temple property. It says that Aditya Varma Sarvanganatha made donations for meeting the expenses of *Alpasi* festival.³⁶ These donations included twelve *kalams* of paddy land, 12, 000 *panams* and Elephants. The donation was made before the beginning of the festival and it was an act of expiation. An endowment of twenty gold coins was made for burning a lamp in the sanctum sanctorum in 1386 AD.³⁷

³³ T.R. Venugopalan, *Op. Cit.*, p.169.

³⁴ Personal Interview, T.R. Venugopalan, Retired History Professor, Thrissur, 28/09/2024.

³⁵ T.R. Venugopalan, *Op.Cit.*, p.170.

³⁶ J.Rejikumar (ed.), *Selected Mathilakam Record*, Kerala State Archives Department, Trivandrum, 2010, p.113.

³⁷ Gopikrishnan G., *The Growth of Vaishnavism in Medieval Kerala: A Reconstruction from Archaeological and Literary Records*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Calicut, 2012, p.161.

In festival procession, deity is accompanied by many ornamented Elephants and horses proceed towards Sankumukham beach for the *Arattu* ritual. Following the ritual bath, the procession returns to the temple. Compared to festivals in central Kerala, the use of Elephants in the *Alpisi* festival tends to be more ritualistic and symbolic, reflecting royal customs and the specific spiritual context of the region.

The royal birthdays were celebrated with temple feasts, offerings and special rituals in medieval Kerala. In 1581 AD, *Pururuttati* asterism in *Mithunam* month, Udaya Marthanda Varma of Trippappur Kilperur hosted a feast and made donations to Brahmins and temple staffs. Similar celebrations continued in the following years. In 1594, Vira Iravi Varma made a financial offering, organized a feast, including *chuttuvilakku*, monetary gifts, and donated an Elephant to the temple as gift.³⁸

Mathilakam records also mentions about donation of Elephants as penalty to the temple. Document number 12 mentions about the payment of fine including Elephant for committing certain faults in the estate of Lord Sri Padmanabha, the deity of the region. The incident happened in the *Malayalam* era of 644, corresponding the year 1469 CE.³⁹ Offering of the Elephant as penalty continued in the following decades of 657 and 682 of ME. Document number 21, *churuna* 1722, refers an incident in the year 657 ME, about the offering of an Elephant to Sri Padmanabha for destroying the northern gopuram of the temple by fire. Document no 71, *churuna* 2601, ola 188, mentions about the presentation of an Elephant as penalty by Iravi Rama. *Curuna* 1673, ola 52, mentions the offering of an Elephant and money to the temple of *Sri Padmanaba* by Iravi Varma. When analysing Sri Padmanaba Swami Temple *grantahvari* of 500 to 903 ME, it has mentioned about the penalty given for the ruler for killing *Devaswom* officials within *Devaswom sanketham* by 896 *Medam* 14th. *Naduvazhi* of kizhperur *Thrippapur Sreeramavarmadasa* was given an Elephant as penalty to the temple.

³⁸ J Rejikumar, *Op.Cit.*, p.121.

³⁹ J Rejikumar, *Op.Cit.*, p.34.

Before the commencement of temple festival, rulers had to pay fines to the temple treasury, if they were mistreating temple servants, dependants, or causing damage to temple property. These acts of compensation often involved offerings such as gold, silver vessels, money, Elephants, or tools used by mahouts. The festival flag would be hoisted by temple trustees only after these payments were made.⁴⁰ Medieval temple records contain several instances of such retributions by ruling houses for their misconduct.

In *kollavarsham* 945, a person was killed at *Vadakkunatha* temple *sanketam* and penalty was taken from *Ayinikkor Nambidi*. The judgment was made by the joint committee of *yogakkar*, *Kakkattu karanavar*, *Kochi ruler* and others. *Kakkattu Karanavar*, the head of *ayinikkor swaroopam* accepted the mistakes and agreed to hand over his vast land and six *desams* along with an Elephant to the temple. *Kochi ruler* needed to give an Elephant to the temple as the victim had made a delay in his penalty.⁴¹ Once the *Kochi ruler* had to donate Elephant to *Vadakkunatha* temple as penalty as they fought with *Zamorin*, within the boundary of *Thrissivaperur sanketam*.⁴²

Irinjalakuda Koodalmanikyam temple records indicate that it possessed vast landholdings, Elephants, valuable items and ornaments made of gold and silver. Its wealth primarily came from royal patronage and land contributions by devotees.⁴³ The earliest known description of the *Guruvayur* temple appears in the 15th-century work *Kokasandesha*, which includes four slokas praising the temple and its surroundings. The 34th sloka mentions a large lotus pond, while the next one describes a massive outer wall and an intricately carved gopuram, also noticing the presence of Elephants within the temple grounds. The 36th sloka highlights the

⁴⁰ P Baskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam* (Mal.), Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur, 2012, p.816.

⁴¹ K P Padmanaba Menon, *Kochirajyacharithram*, (Mal.), Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2021, p.171.

⁴² Yogakshema Company (ed.), *Charitram* (Mal.), Mangalodayam Press, Thrissivaperur, 1925, p.51.

⁴³ Gopikrishnan G., *Op.Cit.*, p.171.

flagstaff, the scent of incense and camphor, and the sound of instrumental music during rituals. These descriptions reflect the temple's prosperity and significance during that period.⁴⁴

The Elephants which were considered as temple assets may have been used for transporting timber from highland to midland. The clearing of forests and movements of heavy logs and simultaneous expansion of *kovilakams* and *illams* with wooden materials started during Medieval Kerala onwards, increased the demand for timber. With the increase in the number of Brahmin families, the *Illams* which can be mostly seen in the temple surroundings, moved to interior regions, in the late medieval centuries with royal patronage and land grants. Construction of Namboothiri *illams* reached its architectural and cultural apex between 13th and 16th CE, with the emergence of grand structures like *Ettukettu* and the most elaborate *Pathinarukettu*, both rooted in *Vastu Shastra*. Durable hardwoods such as teak, *plavu*, *anjili*, and rosewood, which were abundantly available in the dense forests of Kerala's highlands were moved to the midland plains where most *illams* were built. Timber was used not just for filling the structure but also for ornamentation of wooden ceilings, finely carved doorways, central pillars, built-in benches or *charupady* etc. This labour- intensive process was significantly eased by the involvement of tamed Elephants trained to haul massive logs. Elephants continued in the timber industry of Kerala even in the late twentieth century.

Introduction of Elephants in construction of temples, *kovilakam* and *illams* and later in temple rituals began during latter half of medieval Kerala. *Tantrasamuchaya* written by Chennas Narayanan *Nampoothiri* in 15th century under Zamorin's directive, codifies the entire ritual practices of Kerala in an effort to make them systematic.⁴⁵ *Tantrasamuchaya* mentions about the use of a royal vehicle as *vahana* of deity while coming out of *sreekovil* during the rituals like *seeveli*. Major

⁴⁴ Gopikrishnan G., *Op.Cit.*, p.172.

⁴⁵ N.P. Unni, *Tantrasamuchaya* of Narayana, New Bharatiya Book Corporation, Delhi, 2014, p.313.

temples or *Mahakshetra* conduct *seeveli* three times a day. Elephants being temple property were incorporated to ritual space. Thus the role of Elephants became important in temple space along with political space during late medieval Kerala.

Changes in political history were marked with the emergence of *Swaroopam* and *Naduvazhis*. Age of *Swaroopam* and *Naduvazhis* became powerful and visible in Kerala with the disintegration of Perumals. *Perumbadappu* of central Kerala, *Nediyirippu* of Kozhikode and *Venad* of south Travancore were major among them. The newly emerged rulers and *Naduvazhis* tried to legitimize their authority and they, along with the support of Brahmin community, introduced many practices in order to get status elevation in society. The rulers of Venad conducted *padiyettam* ceremonies at temples on various occasions. In this ritual, ascending the steps of the *mandapa* was significant for establishing the legitimacy of their rule. It was important during a king's accession to the throne. Before taking office, the king would visit the temple, offer an Elephant to the deity, and proceed to the *Abhisheka mandapa*, where members of the *Ettara yogam* were present.⁴⁶ Royal durbar hall will be decorated with precious things and outside the square, the state Elephants would be standing in an array with decorated ornaments. The state Elephants were richly caparisoned and bells on their necks bear costly houdahs.⁴⁷ A crowd would be assembled in honour of the occasions. Then the king access the throne made of ivory which was well decorated. In the evening he would walk with the procession with decorated Elephant along with music and drums. It was accompanied by *naduvazhis* and landlord of the region. The emblem of the state is also carried on the back of the Elephant. This magnificent procession shows the king's status and pride.

In the *ariyittu vazhcha* coronation ceremony, the Elephant played a crucial symbolic and political role. Both the rulers of *nediyirippu* and *perumbadppu* followed the ceremony of *ariyittu vazhcha*. The coronation ritual of the Zamorin of

⁴⁶ Gopikrishnan G., *Op. Cit.*, p.168.

⁴⁷ K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol.I, Asian Education Service, New Delhi, 1982.p.121.

Calicut held deep symbolic and political significance in legitimising royal authority. Following the funeral rites of a deceased Zamorin, succession was passed on to the senior-most eligible member of the Zamorin Kovilakam, referred to as the *Eralpad*. The coronation ceremony typically took place thirteen days after the demise of the previous ruler, marking both a moment of mourning and political transition.

This ceremonial installation was not merely a ritual event but a vital performance of kingship, carried out under the strict supervision of Brahmin priests. The ceremony was deeply embedded in ritual grandeur and public symbolism. The royal presence in the public was elevated further through the majestic use of Elephants, which functioned both as a symbol of royal authority and a medium for displaying regal splendour. Following the coronation, the newly appointed Zamorin would undertake visits to temple mounting on Elephant decorated with golden ornaments in a procession accompanied by other elites in the society, thereby fulfilling the ritual obligations and further consolidating his sacred and political authority through divine sanction. Within the specific context of the Zamorin's coronation, the Elephant acted as a ritual *vahana*, a sacred vehicle, which physically elevated the *Eralpad* into the position of Zamorin.⁴⁸ In this way, the Elephant was symbolised as political and ceremonial *vahana*.

Sixteenth-century Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa, mentioned about the accession of a new king which is marked by elaborate celebrations as follows. Women adorned in fine clothing took part in welcoming the newly enthroned ruler. The king, as described by Barbosa, was ceremonially mounted on a richly decorated Elephant, accompanied by a procession that featured music and the beating of drums.⁴⁹ The grandeur of the event was further enhanced by the presence of several Elephants, typically seven or eight, each draped in silk coverings, adorned with

⁴⁸ M. R. Raghava Varier, *Sthanarohana Chadangukal, (Mal.)*, Vallathol Vidhyapeedom Sukapuram, Edappal, 2004, p.17.

⁴⁹ Mansel Longworth Dames, *The Book of Duarte Barbosa an Account of the Countries Boarding on the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants*, Royal Academy of Science, Lisbon, 1812, p. 157.

suspended bells, and bearing large iron chains across their backs as part of their ornamental regalia. The king, seated upon his own elaborately adorned Elephant, proceeded in this magnificent procession towards the temple.

In the year 1732, Marthanda Varma dedicated an Elephant to Padmanaba *sanketam* in order to compensate the aggressive action of his mercenaries. *Aithihyamala* mentions about the donation of *Ezharaponnana* or seven and half golden Elephants to the Ettumanoor Mahadeva temple by the Travancore ruler Marthanda Varma. These golden Elephants were exhibited for the devotees during the eighth day of the temple festival. In the latter half of the ninetieth and early decades of twentieth century many *Naduvazhis* or local rajas alienated the practice of maintaining Elephants and abandoned them to the temples in the form of *Nadayiruthal* or dedicating Elephant to the chief deity, may be to adjust and survive with the new political changes, which made them incapable of extending the patronage to the giant. Nilambur Raja donated the most beautiful Elephant Kesavan to Guruvayur temple by around 1920.

Elephants as Elite Property

Along with temples, Elephants were kept by socio economic and political elites in Kerala society, especially *Namboothiris* and *Naduvazhis*. Royal *kovilakams* as well as *Namboothiri illams* became the places for accommodating and taking care of Elephants as they acted as income generating object of the age. Elephants brought fame and reputation for these places along with satisfying their economic needs. Kavalappara *swaroopam* maintained number of Elephants and *swaroopam* became famous by the name of Elephants.

It seems that with the decline of temple-oriented societies in Kerala, Brahmins enjoyed hegemonic power as they owned majority of the lands. As agents of higher civilization, they occupied a dominant position in Kerala's socio-economic and cultural hierarchy and gradually popularized their ceremonies, beliefs, practices, traditions and mythology in Kerala.⁵⁰ As custodians of lands, temples and rituals, Brahmins exercised

⁵⁰ Ginu George, 'Architectural Patterns of Illams of Namboothiri Brahmins in Kerala', *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, Vol.5, Issue 6, 2018, p.228.

immense control over agrarian relations, often extracting labour and revenue from non-Brahmanical community. Simultaneously, they served as the principal carriers of Sanskrit knowledge and Brahmanical traditions. By monopolizing Vedic scholarship, temple rituals and legal interpretations, they not only preserved but also disseminated Brahmanical norms, shaping Kerala's cultural landscape. Their influence extended beyond mere religious hegemony to encompass political structures, as they aligned with ruling elites to consolidate their authority. For centuries, Elephants in Kerala were primarily owned and managed by these Brahmin households, who held significant authority over temple administration and agrarian practices.

Brahmins, being socio religious elites and familiar to temple affairs, were much interested in the matters of Elephants. With the diminishing role of temples and temple centred epochs, Namboothiri *illams* continued the tradition of maintaining Elephants. In central Kerala, Poomulli *Mana*, Varikkassery *Mana*, Avanamparambu, Koodalattupuram *Mana*, Puzhakkale *Mana*, Mallissery *Mana*, Paliyam *mana*, Penjamukku *mana*, Kozhukkulli *Mana*, Cheloor *Mana* etc. maintained their Elephants even in the latter half of twentieth century. As Elephants were mainly maintained by Namboothiri *illams*, they learned medicines for the treatment of their Elephants. Neelakandan *Namboothiripad*, expert in *Hastyaurveda* along with other medicines, learned elephant treatment from Prof. Vazhakunnathu, and he translated *Paalkapya*m into Malayalam. He familiarised Elephant qualities and features of a perfect Elephant. Avanamparambu Maheswaran *Namboothiripad* and Poomully Sekharan were Elephant experts of Kerala.

Literary developments of late medieval period also reflect affinity of Elephant with the land. *Mathangaleela* written by Thirumangalathu Neelakanda Moosathu in Sanskrit language mentions legends related to the origin of Elephants, *gajalakshana*, which brings good and bad fortune for its owners, different methods for capturing and taming of Elephants, variety of Elephant illness and their treatment, qualities for mahouts etc. The work *Mathangaleela* seldom mentions about the inclusion of Elephants in religious rituals. This work mentions Elephants as *raja vahana* or vehicle of rulers and the work gives a clear picture as Elephants

were important in the Kerala society. The date of this work is not mentioned. Ganapathi Sastri, who had studied the work, states that it might be an old text and there is no positive traces of modernity in the work. As the work is very much famous in Kerala, the author is from this region and the work became useful in this region itself. It was translated into Malayalam and English in early half of 20th century. In the translated English text, *Elephant Lore of Hindus*, by Franklin Edgerton, he commented that “the content of the text represents the codification of orally-transmitted traditions of practical knowledge”.⁵¹ Some of the major families which maintain Elephants have specialised their own traditional medicinal practice for the treatment of their visible asset, like Elanjickal family of Kottayam and Avanam parambu mana of Thrissur.

Elephants in Malabar

While Elephants in central Kerala during the late medieval and early modern period seem to play a considerable role in temple space, evidence from Malabar shows less affinity with Elephants in ritual space. Medieval travelers who visited Malabar mention about the Elephants but had not mentioned about temple Elephants. Ibn Batuta who visited Kerala during 1342-43 mentions that the king of Malabar had war Elephants and the ruler used to proceed to the battle field on Elephant top.⁵² Durate Barbosa who visited our land by 1500 AD, mentions in his book about giving Elephant as *kappam* or tax by Cochin ruler to Zamorin.⁵³ Athnacious Nikitin mentions about Elephant as a vehicle and precious animal of the land. Jean Baptiste Tavernier who visited between 1638-1663 A.D. mentions that rich people used Elephant as vehicle for travelling.

Kozhikodan Granthavari gives evidence about the use of Elephants in *Mamankam* as the vehicle or vahana of the ruler. *Mamankam*⁵⁴ is a socio-cultural

⁵¹ Franklin Edgerton, *The Elephant Lore of Hindus*, Yale University Press, London, 1931, p.73.

⁵² Velayudan Panikkasseri, *Keralam Arunnuru Kollam Munpu*, (Mal.), Current Books, Kottayam, 1962, p.28.

⁵³ Velayudan Panikkasseri, *Sancharikal Kanda Keralam*, (Mal.), *Op. Cit.*, p.241.

⁵⁴ The *Mamankam* Festival Traditionally lasted for 28 days. Held every 12 years at *Thirunavaya* on the banks of the *Bharathapuzha* river, it was a grand event marked by rituals, performances, and martial displays.

political event conducted by the Zamorin of Calicut once in twelve years. The event highlighted the political authority of the ruler and aimed to improve the prestige of *Swaroopam*. After the disintegration of *Perumal*, Zamorin conquered most of central Malabar and became a prominent ruler of Kerala and for the legitimization of their rule, they have to perform many rituals and ceremonies like *Mamankam* and *Thaipooyam*.⁵⁵ *Kozhikoden Granthavari* describes *Manmankam* of 1683 as follows: The event lasted for thirty days and the first day of the *Mamankam* or *mamangathaipooyam*, *samoothiri* reached to the procession with complete ornaments including *thirumudipattam* and special costumes. Caparisoned Elephants would be present in the entire ritual and Zamorin will proceed to each, honoring their *Kulaguru* and giving sword and new dress along with headdress made of cloth. Idol of lord *Bagavathy* will be placed at the centre and Zamorin will donate *Dakshina* to all Nair land lords and similar peoples. He will light lamps at *Nilapaduthara* and bow his head before lord of Thirunavaya, and finally after completing the rituals in one day, Zamorin would return to his *Kovilakam*.⁵⁶ On the second day, i.e., on January 4th 1683, Zamorin proceeded to the event with complete pomp and glory including blowing of conch, orchestra, and proceeded in *Pallithanda* and by evening the Zamorin again wore ornaments and sandal and mounted on the top of the Elephant decorated by *vellayum karimbadavum*. A Brahmin also mounted on the Elephant along with Zamorin and proceeded towards *Thirunavaya* temple and the Zamorin dismounted from the Elephant and entered into the temple through western gopuram or entrance, and after praying *Thirunavaya Thevar* he returned and again mounted on Elephant from the same place along with his assistant and returned to *Vakayur kovilakam*. All these shows the role played by the giant in political rituals than the religious rituals in northern Kerala during medieval times. Thus, Malabar seems to be reluctant to the use of Elephants in temple rituals except few which remains as border to modern Thrissur district.

⁵⁵ V. V. Haridas, *Samoothiri Peruma Madyakala Keralathile Rashtreeya Samskarika Charitram* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2012, p.114.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.115.

Elephants in Colonial Malabar

Regional or spatial variation in accommodating Elephants that was visible in Kerala continued during the colonial rule also. While princely states continued the use of Elephants as prestige of power and dignity, colonial Malabar experienced new arenas for the giant. Colonial phase brought changes in all spheres of life, which can be reflected in the case of Elephants also. Elephants as colonial subject began to experience new methods of taming and training which suited colonial works, and new work situation provided by colonial masters. Pedro Alvares Cabral's expedition, following Vasco da Gama's first voyage by 1500, sought to establish a trading relationship with the Zamorin of Calicut, and was marked by conflict. The capturing of three Elephants and preserving their meat with salt for the use of Portuguese in ship of that time is mentioned in the work *Kochirajyacharithram*.⁵⁷

With the arrival of English, Elephants experienced a new pattern of work places which is evident from the sources given by foreign writers of that period. Francis Buchanan⁵⁸ in his work mentions about farmers leaving cultivable land in fear of wild Elephants and also the work states the need to capture these wild Elephants from *Anamala* to *Periyapattanam*. He also suggested East India company to buy such Elephants as it will be beneficial for the company.⁵⁹ Francis Day, the colonial administrator of East India company who visited Kerala wrote about the wild Elephants that are largely found in the jungles of Kerala. He also mentions about the capture of Elephants by making pits and dragging out with the help of two or more other Elephants which were already tamed and trained.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ K.P. Padmanaba Menon, *Kochirajyacharithram*, (Mal.), Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2021, p.191.

⁵⁸ Buchanan, a Scottish geographer's journey to Kerala occurred in 1800, during his assignment to survey the Malabar and Canara regions after the Third Anglo-Mysore War (1799) He observed the religious practices, and cultural traditions in Kerala.

⁵⁹ Velayudan Panikkasseri, *Keralam Arunnuru Kollam Munpu*, (Mal.), *Op.Cit.*, p.38.

⁶⁰ Francis Day, *Land of Perumals or Cochin its past and its present*, Asian Education Service, Madras, 1990, p.452.

Northern Kerala, all together known as Malabar, came under the direct rule of British since the treaty of *Sreerangapattanam*, and began to experience rules and regulations of Madras Presidency. Deforestation in Kerala began in the early 19th century, driven by the British, focus on commercial exploitation, particularly on trees like teak, rosewood and ebony. Infrastructure like the Chalakudy-Parambikulam tramway in 1907 further facilitated timber transport, underscoring the colonial emphasis on resource extraction.⁶¹

Along with Elephants captured from the forests of Malabar during British colonial rule, Elephants were also brought from other regions to meet the demands of war, timber extraction, and ceremonial use. Malabar Gazetteer by C.A Innes, mentions about the large herds and numbers of Elephants caught yearly in pitfalls and spend the rest of their lives in dragging timber and helping to exploit the native forest.⁶² The work also mentions about Elephant atrocities in this area which continued for weeks. The Joint Commission's report, which was prepared to assess the situation in Malabar at the end of the 18th century, states that Nilambur emerged as a key centre for capturing Elephants within Malappuram itself. The historical significance of this region is further underscored by an earlier record from 967 in the expense book of the Zamorin, which describes Nilambur as a place where gold is found and Elephants are caught.

Nilambur's reputation as a hub for Elephants increased significantly over the centuries. By the early 19th century, the region had not only become crucial for capturing Elephants but also for training and working with them.⁶³ These Elephants were indispensable to the colonial enterprise, particularly for the British, who relied on them for various purposes, from labour-intensive activities like logging and transportation to symbolic representations of power and prestige in military and state functions.

⁶¹ K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal* (Mal.), Department of Cultural Publication, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, p.58.

⁶² C.A. Innes, Malabar Gazetteer, Vol.I and II, Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.20.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.21.

Nilambur thus became emblematic of the colonial exploitation of natural resources and labour. Its transformation into a centre for capturing and working with Elephants reflects the British ability to co-opt existing local knowledge and institutions for their imperial agenda. This expansion of British control over natural and animal resources in regions like Nilambur was not simply a matter of economic necessity. It also facilitated a larger project of environmental and social domination. This echoes the earlier report from Bengal and Bombay, written in 1792-93, which describes the systemic incorporation of local resources, including Elephants, into British governance and economic frameworks.⁶⁴

According to Jonathan Saha, colonial rule has extended its hold to all resources of our land including animals, thus forming an interspecies empire in India, Myanmar and other colonies. The Elephants were being used as a tool for colonial expansion, as a commodity to be traded for profit, in military, as a hauler of men, baggage and equipment during late 18th century.⁶⁵ “Elephants’ preservation Act of 1879, which was released on 22nd March 1879, is an Act for the preservation of wild Elephants”. Local extension of this Act includes the places administered by the Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces and the chief Commissioners of Oudh, the central provinces and Coorg. The provincial government may extend it to any other local area by notification in the official Gazette. Regarding the commencement of Act, they planned to implement the act from the first day of April 1879. As per the act, killing and capturing of wild Elephants are prohibited, unless in defense of himself or some other person, or if such Elephant is found damaging houses or cultivation or any public road, railway or canal, or as permitted by a license granted under this act. As per the act every wild Elephant captured, and the tusk of every wild Elephant killed by any person not licensed under this act, shall be the property of the government. The collector or the Deputy commissioners of any district may grant license to kill and capture wild Elephants in such district.

⁶⁴ Mahmood Kooriya, *Mriga Kalapangal*, (Mal.), Mathrubumi Books, Kozhikode, 2023, p.137.

⁶⁵ Piers Locke and Jane Buckingham, *Conflict Negotiation and Co-Existence: The Human Elephant Relationship Through the Ages*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2016, p.39.

The provincial government had the power to declare the list of offences which include cruelty to animals. Any person violating the act shall be punished with a fine which may extend up to five hundred rupees for each Elephant concerned. Any person who breaks any conditions contained in a license granted under this act shall also have the same punishment while any person convicted of a second offence under this section shall be punished with imprisonment extending up to six months or with a fine or with both. The act was amended in 1883 with more favorable provisions for colonial rulers.⁶⁶ Legislative council of India passed an Act for the prevention of cruelty to animals which roused much discussion in England on 21st march 1890.⁶⁷ All these acts have its application in colonial Malabar.

Colonial powers exploited resources through policies and acts in the name of protecting them. The animal resources and wealth of our land along with other flora and fauna became colonial subjects. Elephants being giants were the foremost non-human colonial subjects which were exploited, exported and executed in various means during colonial days. East India Company and its officials realized the importance of Elephants and they initiated to buy Elephants from indigenous markets. Colonial construction of railways and tramways needed much assistance from the tuskers. Elephants were used for pushing large ships into the water. Earlier, this was done by a number of people, and accidents were a common thing at that time. Elephants helped to reduce the number of such accidents. Being much more stronger than a human, it required only two Elephants as a substitute for many men. Colonial Veterinary medicines which give much care for Elephants also highlighted the colonial need for protecting the giant.

Guide to Malabar records Vol-6, mentions about the establishment of four inspectors, two conservators, two head foresters and two assistants for the management of forest department. The expenses including the management

⁶⁶ Unrepealed Central Acts with Chronological Tables, A/2, Vol. II from 1872 to 1883, Regional Archives, Calicut.

⁶⁷ John Lockwood Kipling, *The Elephant in the Temple: Tales of Beast and Man in India*, Speaking Tiger Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2017, p.11.

of Elephants, would amount to Rs 51, 378 a year.⁶⁸ Guide to Malabar record vol 9 and Inward letters of 1827, mention about granting of permission for Elephant Hunting to Mysore Raja beyond the boundary line of his own country on his request for the same. Raja wished to obtain the orders of the government from the collectors of Malabar and Canara to sanction his entering their district under such circumstances. As per the letter dated 22nd May 1827 the government permitted the Raja to pursue his Elephant hunts into the districts of Malabar and Canara.⁶⁹

George P Sanderson, superintendent of the government Elephant catching establishment in Dacca, stated in 1878 that Elephant is essentially a native animal and natives have studied its peculiarities, capturing, taming and training. According to him, the local rulers used the Elephants for its grandeur and glory, and also for decorations and celebrations. They failed to see the real value of the animal. The British, who were much smarter, knew the utilitarian value of Elephants, and used it accordingly. Under the captivity of the East India, Elephants began to die in great numbers. The company began to search for European scientific medicines based on native products for their Elephants. The negligence of the mahouts were blamed for these deaths and they were brought under the supervision of the Europeans for the improvement of the health of the Elephants. The awareness of the illness for these creatures began to spread around from 1840 to 1900.

Colonial Government had given special attention in relation to management of wild and other animals. Government declared rewards for destroying wild animals with following rates: For an Elephant, rupees 70, for tiger rupees 50, for a cheetah rupees 25, bear 7, wolf and hyena 5, and for jackal 8 *annas*. Rewards were not given for killing Elephants unless the destruction of these animals was desirable in any locality. Rewards can be granted by collectors, divisional officers, tahsildar and deputy tahsildar. Collectors are empowered to offer higher

⁶⁸ Guide to Malabar Records Vol.6, XIII Forest Records 17-08-1823, Regional Archives, Calicut.

⁶⁹ Guide to Malabar Record Vol.9, Inward Letters, Elephant Hunting, 22-05-1827, Regional Archives, Calicut.

amount up to rupees 100 as per the situation. Act I of 1873 prohibits the destruction of wild female Elephants, at the same time, permitting male Elephants with the license of the government. Landholders are permitted to shoot wild male Elephants in their own land with the permission of the authority. In Coimbatore special establishment was maintained for the capture of Elephants from 1873 to 1879. It is stated in the report that this operation was not financially successful due to the high death rates among the captured Elephants. North Malabar continued the employment of Elephants in timber industry as well as ship or *uru* making industry. Elephants assisted the moving of Teak wood to port. Elephants working in the timber industry and saw mills make profits, as they work better than men. Some Elephants do the work of ten or more men in a day.

Even during the colonial rule Elephants continued in the temple space in central Kerala with various roles. Rich temples owned Elephants and the *naduvazhies* continued to donate Elephants to the temples for many reasons. While Elephants in colonial Malabar experienced new work spaces, princely states like Kochi and Travancore in the early colonial phase continued its traditional roles of Elephants in royal procession, as war tributes, as an object of penalty or *vazhipad* to temples etc. By October 1742, the Dutch had captured *Kilimanoor* and were poised to attack *Attingal*, though both sides had suffered losses and seemed eager to end hostilities. A peace agreement was signed between the Travancore Raja and the Raja of Quilon. As part of the treaty, the Raja of Quilon ceded significant territory to Travancore, agreed to pay 1, 000 Rupees annually for four years, and offered an Elephant as a tribute.⁷⁰ The inclusion of an Elephant as part of the peace settlement underscores its symbolic and strategic value in 18th-century South Indian polity. Elephants were not merely prized possessions but played crucial roles in warfare, diplomacy, and royal ceremonies and their association with sovereignty and divine power rendered them prestigious status in diplomatic exchanges.

⁷⁰ Francis Day, *Land of Perumals of Cochin Its Past and its Present*, Asian Education Service, Madras, 1990, p.132.

With the indirect rule of colonial powers during the early decades of 19th century, Elephants in central Kerala were also used for timber transportation and other constructive works. Archival documents, in the form of letters related to Irinjalakuda temple transactions, shows that ownership rights of majority of Elephants were enjoyed by *Devaswoms*. Elephants were used for temple construction, movement of timber from highranges and paid *pattam* for their work. Letter in the year of 1813, from Colonel Munro to Thachudaya Kaimal, the local *janmi* of Irinjalakuda temple, mentions about the order given to Mukundapuram in charge for transferring Elephants for Irinjalakuda temple construction. Another letter mentions that captain Blacker must be informed about the Elephants in the temple and its works, as well as returning of Elephants those are not fit for the temple works. Njappayan intimated to Thachudaya Kaimal in ME 993 that among *Devaswom* Elephants, four should be send to work on forest or hilly tracts, and *pattam* for Elephants can be given from *pandaravaka*. It mentions about shortage of *Devaswom* Elephants, due to high demand.⁷¹

Devaswom Elephants and details about their tax or *pattam* are mentioned in the letter to Colonel Breji. Wages for Elephants who worked in forest and other high ranges of government can't be given in advance and the payment can be done only after the completion of the work.⁷² There are numerous letters from Thachudaya Kaimal to Njappayya which deals with Elephant shifting. There existed a number of contracts between the local officials for transfer of Elephants. *Pattam* for the *Devaswom* Elephants were fixed as same for all Elephants in Kochi. These letters concerning temple transactions reveal that along with temple construction as well as timber movement from highranges, Elephants acted as vehicle of the deities during festivals, and rituals like *Hiranyagarbam* and *thulapurushadanam* were completed with the donation of Elephant to temple by rulers.⁷³

⁷¹ Accounts Relating to Irinjalakuda Temple Transaction, A/49, Regional Archives, Ernakulam.

⁷² Accounts Relating to Irinjalakuda Temple Transaction, A/49, Regional Archives, Ernakulam.

⁷³ See Appendix 1 section A.

Letter transaction of Kochi Divan to Thachudayakaimal in the year of 1840 CE. reflects the State interference in capturing Elephants. Prior to these, temples and the private persons can capture Elephants from the land which own by them. Budget Estimate of the Cochin state in 1918-19 shows allocation of rupees 10, 180 for the Purchase of elephants, their capture, training, feeding and treatment. This also gives details of the previous year 1093 as 9, 520.⁷⁴

The community which owns Elephants became highly regarded in the society and using Elephants were considered as a privilege given by rulers to special persons in the society. Some castes like Ezhavas attained the status of Channan, Thandan and Panikkar and among these five categories, Channan belonged to the top position in social order. They enjoyed the power and many privileges in the society like coming on the top of an Elephant to their community functions. Ezhavas also attained the position of Panikkar from *Naduvazhis*. These communities owned their own temples, *Kavu* and *Kalaris*. Enathu Akathayi Panikkar and Ambanattu Panikkar were the military commanders of Kottarakara Thampuran and Chembakassery Raja respectively. Panikkar used to go around the village on the top of an Elephant.⁷⁵

The Cochin State Manual by C. Achutha Menon mentions about 12 Elephants belonging to the *Devaswoms* in 1890s.⁷⁶ By analyzing the Kerala society of nineteenth century P Baskaranunni mentions about the customs prevailed in our land. Ruler is supposed to issue permission for the use of Elephants for any elites. Mounting on Elephants tops in ceremonies like marriages needed special permission. Natives need to pay an amount as directed by the authority for the same. Offering of Elephants to temple as penalty by the ruler is mentioned by the same author. Even the rulers were not exempted from such punishment. Rulers need to obey and fulfill the penalties mentioned in the

⁷⁴ See Appendix 1 Section B.

⁷⁵ P. Baskaranunni, *Op. Cit.*, p.219.

⁷⁶ P. Baskaranunni, *Op. Cit.*, p.216.

judgement without delay. Once *Thekkumkur* Raja accidentally killed a person within the boundaries of the region, and the Kochi ruler who represented *Thekkumkur* and possessed *melkoima* rights, had to pay penance for the error of *Thekkumkur*. Subsequently, Kochi ruler donated an Elephant to *Elamkunnappuzha* temple in ME 743.⁷⁷ *Elakunnappuzha Granthavari* mentions about the settlement of issues and declaration of punishment for revolt or struggle in their jurisdiction. If the person involved in the struggle belonged to other region, their ruler needs to donate Elephant to the temple as penalty.⁷⁸

It was the duty of the rulers or *Naduvazhis* to take care of the *Devaswom* and daily activities of the temples. Rulers need to provide sufficient materials to the temples as per the divine words of astrologers of these temples. Donating an Elephant known as *Anaye iruthal* was an important event during those days which needed special customs and huge expense.¹⁰²⁷ ME., *Anaye iruthal* at Peruvanam temple by Perumbadappu Valiya Thampuram is mentioned as follows: Thamburan, on his way to Kashi, reached Peruvanam and on the 26th of the Malayalam month *Mithunam*, came to *Urakam*, and the very next day after his morning bath and prayers, the Elephant was donated to *Urakam* temple, and proceeded to *Peruvanam* for donating Elephant. On both sides from *Urakam* to *Peruvanam*, the path was decorated with bunches of bananas and coconuts. The procession with musical orchestra walked through the way adorned with *vela* and *karimbadam* and reached the ceremonial space. The Elephant which was decorated with garland and sandalwood was donated to the temple by handing over its *thotti* to *Padinjaredathu* Maha Neelakandan Bhattathiri, the priest over there. *Karutha Mattathil* Kochunni *Moothathu* named the Elephant as Chandrasekaran, whispering in its ear three times. Along with the *Anaye iruthal* other offerings like *dara*, *japam*, *niramala* etc. to the deity was conducted that day onwards. One *edanganzhi* rice *nivedyam* was offered daily without failure.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ P. Baskaranunni, *Op. Cit.*, p.225.

⁷⁸ K.P. Padmanaba Menon, *Op. Cit.*, p.171.

⁷⁹ P. Baskaranunni, *Op. Cit.*, p.869.

A telegram on 1918 February 24th from Travancore Diwan to Cochin Diwan informed the arrival of Thachudaya Kaimal to *Karupadanna* from Paravoor. Kochi magistrate and *Irinjalakuda Kodungallur* sub magistrates etc. reached the spot to receive Kaimal. Next day Kaimal proceeded to *Irinjalakuda* in a palanquin accompanied by three Elephants with *nettipattam* and *kuda*. *Aithihyama*, written by Kottarathil Sakkunni, explains the status of Elephants in temple spaces. The work examines the background of 1900 southern Kerala, especially Travancore regions, and procession of deities on the top of Elephants in major temple festivals like Ettumanur Mahadeva temple, Vaikom Siva temple, Udayanapuram Subramanya temple etc. Selection of Elephants for procession based on its *lakshana* and quality is explained in the work. Vaikom Mahadeva temple maintained two Elephants as the rituals demands. The Elephant, named as synonym to the deity Vaikkathu Thiruneelakandan, is mentioned with heroic image in *Aithyhyamala*. The parent-child affection between the Elephant and mahout is discussed in it. Elephants' familiarity and practice in temple rituals like *seeveli* and *chuttuvilakku* and procession can be inferred from the work. The affinity towards the Elephant Thiruneelakandan was revealed by the Kochi ruler Ayilyam Thirunal and he wished to see the Elephant and sent a letter for this concern. *Aithiyamala* mentions about other Elephants like Kidangoor Kandagoran, Konniyil Kochayyappan, Avanamanakkal Gopalan, Kottarakkara Chandrasekaran, Aranmula Balakrishnan, Panthalam Neelakandan, Thiruvattadikesavan etc., as the famous Elephants of early decade. Author mentions about different native remedies for the treatment of Elephants like *velan pravriti*, *varathirummuka* etc.

Affinity of Elephants in temple space had created structural alterations and ornamental additions in temple architecture in the medieval days. *Gajaprishta* or apsidal shape of *sreekovil* is evident in various historical temples across Kerala. Kadampuzha Devi Temple at Malappuram is a fine example for *Gajaprishta* model, reflecting its antiquity and religious significance. Mannur Temple, Kozhikode,

Mahalingeswara Temple at Adoor in Kasaragod district also have such *Gajaprishta* model *sreekovil*. In Sree Vallabha Temple Thiruvalla, the ancient temple's sanctum has curved architectural elements similar to the *Gajaprishta style*. Apsidal temples follow definitely north to south distribution-pattern, with some concentration in central Kerala.⁸⁰

In apsidal shrines one can find more than one circumambulatory path around the apsidal sanctum. Nedumpura Kulasekharanelloor Shiva temple at Thrissur, believed to have built during Kulasekara period, is having *gajaprishta* model of fifty feet double storied *sreekovil* with highly decorative sculptures.⁸¹ The Subrahmanya temple at Payyanur and the Sadasiva temple at Mangalapadi both in District of Cannanore, have two ambulatory paths but these are without any column. The apsidal shrine is built as exemplified by the Subrahmanya temple at Payyannur.

Minor architectural features like *sopana* also reflect affinity of Elephants in temple architecture. In the construction of the *sopana* or stair-case, the granite has been widely used. It is associated not only with the main entrance or entrances but also with the inner Dravida shrine representing the *garbha-griha*. The one associated with *garbha-griha* has frontal staircase but the main entrance or entrances may have either frontal or lateral flights of steps. Most important component of *sopana* is its *hasti-hasta* or Elephant trunk rail on either side, bearing some carving or the other.⁸² In central and northern Kerala, such *hasti-hastas* contain merely a standing figure of lion, but in south Kerala, beautiful scenes of dance, portrayed in graceful pose.

Another minor architectural form in temple, *pranala* or water-chute for draining out lustral water, specially from the sanctum, in the beginning, was just a

⁸⁰ H.Sarkar, An Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala, ASI, New Delhi, 1978.p.230.

⁸¹ Personal Interview, N. Vijayan, Native of Cheruthuruthi, 12/10/2024.

⁸² H.Sarkar, *Op.Cit.*, p.69.

chhidra or a hole used as the *ambu-marga*. In course of time this simple ritualistic need was transformed into an excellent architectural addition in Kerala. Sometimes even the *mukha-mandapa* is associated with a *pranala* or water-chute.⁸³ The evolution of *pranala* reached its climax in Kerala. According to the *Tantrasamuchchaya*, it must have ornamentations such as the pearl-strings, creepers and armlets encircling the *sundu* or Elephant-trunk evolved as the shape of the trunk of the Elephant.⁸⁴

A gopura, a monumental entrance tower in South Indian temples including Kerala, is usually ornated with various sculptures and motifs. Originating during the Pallava period, gopurams evolved between the 12th and 16th centuries. Gopurams often surround the main shrine, with the tallest usually at the outermost enclosure and overshadow the inner sanctuary. The entrance portions of gopurams are carefully designed to facilitate the smooth entry of Elephants into the temple grounds, reflecting their important role in temple rituals and ceremonies.⁸⁵

Along with temple gopurams, the outer walls of the temples are shaped like the tummy of Elephant which is called as *aanapalla mathil* or *aanamathil*. Almost all traditional temples as well as palaces in Kerala is designed in such shape. It also reflects the resonance of Elephants as well as durability of temple walls in practical and familiar design. Elephant images were added as decorative motifs and sculpture in temple roofs.

Latest structural addition of temples are *aanakottil*, literally meaning "mandapa of the Elephant", an open, pillared pavilion situated in front of the *dhvaja*, directly facing the *balikkalpura* of the temple. During festivals, the Elephants are positioned in the *Anakkottil*, marking its ceremonial significance. The architectural feature known as the *aanakottil* is carefully designed to accommodate Elephants

⁸³ H.Sarkar, *Op. Cit.*, p.89.

⁸⁴ Personal Interview, Sukumaran, Temple Architect, Guruvayur, Thrissur, 17/06/2024.

⁸⁵ Personal Interview, Madavan Kutty, Thiruvambady Devaswom, Thrissur, 03/05/2015.

within the temple space for rituals and ceremonies. This structure, typically a raised pavilion with a slopping roof, is proportioned to provide ample space and a dignified setting for Elephants, which holds significant cultural and religious importance in Kerala temple rituals.

Aanakottil serves as a focal point during festivals, allowing Elephants to be integrated into the temple ambiance, enhancing both the grandeur and sanctity of temple events. Size of *annakotil* varies according to the status of temples. Beyond its role in festival activities, this mandapa also serves as a venue for conducting various important rituals and ceremonies. These include *chorunu*, the ritual of first feeding rice to an infant, *parayeduppu*, where devotees ceremonially offer paddy to the temple, and conduct *thulabharam*, an offering ceremony in which a devotee is weighed on a balance against items such as sugar, plantains, butter, or gold, which are then offered to the temple. *Aanakottil* or Elephant shed is considered as the twentieth century architectural evolution, and even rock cave temples of Thrissur is added such feature. Trikkur temple located at Thrissur has such *aanakottil* at *chuttambalam* with the space of accommodating five Elephants at one time. Elephants were depicted in church architecture and sculpture as decorative feature. Elephant with *nettipattam* on one side and another side Elephant without decoration depicted on roof of *Ollur Church* at Thrissur.⁸⁶

Maintaining Elephants is taxable even during 1950s. Modern Kerala District gazetteer, Thrissur District, mentioned about the municipal act of 1959 which gives information about existence of tax for animals and vehicles. For maintaining Elephants one need to pay rupees 12 per Annum. Mathrubumi daily on 16th June 1938 mentions about the order of Cochin government regarding the suspending of tax related to the Elephants coming for temple festivals.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ George Menachery, *Anayum Nasraniyum*, (Mal.), Ebenezer Printers, Thrissur, 2014, p.7.

⁸⁷ Mathrubhumi Daily, 16/06/1938.

As Kerala geography is being enriched with Elephant wealth, Elephants have an intimate affinity with Kerala history and culture since the age of *Tamizhakam* to the present days. Casting and recasting of Elephants into variety of roles was visible in the history of Kerala. From the age of *Tamizhakam*, people of Kerala experienced Elephants as the giants of the forest, as possession of tribal chief, and emotionally attached companion and supplier of precious items for trade etc. Those days Elephants were neither restricted nor taken away from their natural habitat. As provider of ivory, Elephants acted as visible property which fulfilled material needs of humans since early days. Quality of South Indian Ivory made it as one of the major item of export commodities since Greco Roman trade. Local rulers with the help of indigenous tribal group got access to ivory and attained wealth from its export. Ivory is listed as an export item in Gazetteers which shows its increasing demand till the act of 1972. Elephants in captivity in our state acted as prestigious wealth for rulers and *Naduvazhies*, animal for constructive work in colonial period, as an inevitable element of ritual space as part of rituals and ceremonies. In all times elites owned Elephants as they can only afford to maintain the giants. As a symbol and prestige of rich ruling class, income generating property of temples and landlords, as smart worker in timber industries elephants continued to support human interest.

Emblem of a state or country always represents most elegant things in the place. Kerala state emblem also depicted Elephants in all its updates from princely rule to present days. Emblem of Travancore royal family evolved during Marthanda Varma, depicts majestic Elephant without any ornaments or chain by trunk raised on each side of royal conch that continued till 1948. Formation of *Thirukochi* in 1948 adopted an emblem that included Travancore Coat of Arms along with Indian Union, two Elephants in guarding position with an Indian Dharma Chakra in middle and the *Shanku* on top of it with a banner carrying words "Government of Travancore-Kochi" written in English. The emblem was in use until 1956. With the

formation of the state of Kerala, the first ministry emblem illustrated an Elephant representing Cochin, *Shanku* representing Travancore and Palm tree representing Malabar, and it lasted till 1959. The current emblem of Kerala was adopted in 1960 with slight variations. When the society moved from symbolic administration to participatory democracy, Elephants have gone through economic, political, social, cultural, and aesthetic roles and still maintains its cultural continuity in socio cultural arena.

In Kerala, human- Elephant interactions have significantly influenced the lives of both in various ways. Elephants, the wealthiest part of our biosystem, became an indispensable element of the cultural life. Ownership right of Elephants shifted from nature to tribal chief in early period and then to native rulers during later *Chera* period, passing to temples and landed elites during early medieval phase and to colonial masters during modern phase. Presently the ownership of Elephants mainly rests upon temples and socio-economic elites. The period of the ownership of the Elephants in the temples, became the longest time span which led to the structural additions of temple architecture. Among the multiple spaces, Elephants in temple ambience got high status and divinity compared to others.

Arya-Dravidian syncretism is more prevalent among the regions between the *Perar* and *Periyar* rivers in central Kerala, where early Brahmins were more concentrated, compared to northern and southern Kerala. The continued presence of Dravidian traditions is evident in the rituals and artistic performances of both South and North Kerala. Additionally, the temples, rituals, and worship practices of north Kerala's Brahmin communities reflect a stronger Dravidian influence.⁸⁸ As central Kerala is having a base of a greater number of Brahmin settlements and existence of huge grama and *upagrama*, there are large number of temple festival including large

⁸⁸ Mukundan Kuruppu, *Kerala Samskaracharitram Brahmana Gramangaliloode*, (Mal.), Sahityapravarthaka Cooperative Society, Kottayam, 2018, p.101.

number of Elephants in central Kerala. The evolution of religious rituals and the assignment of ritual status and roles of Elephants in festival are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER – 4

ELEPHANTS IN CENTRAL KERALA: RITUAL SPACE TO POPULAR CULTURE

Rituals are defined as often repetitive patterns of behaviour which are performed at appropriate times which involves symbols and express a shared meaning.¹ Various disciplines like Anthropology, Sociology, Religious studies, Political science, Philosophy and Literature have taken different theoretical approach towards rituals and proposed different definitions.² Rituals varies according to context, space and time and it also changes depending on the community that performed the same. Rituals are mainly mentioned along with any religious practices, where it is defined as the sequences of activities which involves gestures, words, and objects, and which are performed according to a set sequence.³

Emile Durkheim, a pioneer in the study of rituals, had indicated a direct relationship between the rituals and members of the society. To him rituals are creating social solidarity among the members, and it is mentioned in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious life*. There exists different types of rituals in a society like religious rituals, family rituals, institutional rituals etc. In the Durkheimian approach, there is a concrete difference between the sacred and the profane and he had connected the sacred to the religious rituals. Rituals create a social solidarity which is crucial in holding the society together and also consolidate the concept of rituals to social structure. Those which hinder the sacredness becomes profane. Durkheim emphasized that through rituals, people correctly represent themselves to the pattern of relations in the society. Stanley. J. Tambiah in his work,

¹ Steve Bruce, Steven Yearley (eds.), Dictionary of Sociology, Sage Publication, London, 2006, p.263.

² Sobiya Raphael, Historicizing Ritual Traditions A Case Study of Ayyappan Thiyyattu, Neythal Pathippakam, Thalassery, 2023, p.9.

³ Vandana M V, Changing Rituals and Practices of Traditional Festival A study of Onam in the Contemporary Kerala Society, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Kerala, 2017, p. 67.

A Performative Approach to Ritual, explains rituals as a kind of sociological interaction among the people of that particular locality.⁴ Thus rituals plays a very important role in bringing solidarity among a community.

Religion is the main social institution where rituals get practiced. Religious rituals and belief system of a society are interconnected. In other terms, rituals helped for the evolution of beliefs and beliefs in turn coined some rituals. Rituals varies based on the context of space and time. Caste, class and gender also play its role in the formation of rituals. Most probably rituals maintain rigidity and purity, and are passed down to generations. Meanwhile, some rituals will disseminate to nearby regions and transcend the barriers of social segregation.

Rituals in general must be evolved by a few dominant members of each and every society, social strata or community, based on the need and necessity of the situation and later followed and imitated by other people. Some rituals became wide and popular as it got the acceptance from other social strata or community. Such rituals became that part of culture which will be altered only in long run. i.e., when some rituals are accepted by the people belonging to diverse social strata, and is entrusted and influenced in their belief system, that may last for centuries, and replacing this ritual with a new one will be a slow and gradual process.

Kerala is a land which carries lots of rituals and people over here are more ritualistic. Beliefs brought many rituals and practices among the people of Kerala. Religious rituals are believed to be evolved for the common benefit, and its performance provides more optimistic attitude among Keralites. Abundance of rituals show the enduring role of religion in our tradition and society. There exist variety of rituals in religious space connected to the deities since *sangam* days onwards.

This chapter explores only those rituals in Kerala especially in temple space in which Elephants perform an important role. In central Kerala, Elephants are

⁴ Stanley. J. Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual*, Oxford University, London, 1979, p.14.

mostly used in religious rituals, to be more specific, rituals associated with Hindu temples. The term temple means a place of worship which is common at least to a particular group of people. Contributing to the main title of Ritual world of central Kerala, this chapter examines and make assessments through various stages of evolution of rituals and festivals that incorporate Elephants. Central Kerala is renowned for prioritizing elephantine rituals within their temple practices. Realising that the temple space of central Kerala is having more rituals incorporating Elephants, the chapter discuss this particular geographical area in detail by taking major temples in general. Examining the rituals of the *Mahakshetrams* and other *temples* located in the districts of Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Malappuram, *Guruvayur* temple is identified as the one which includes Elephants in daily rituals and ceremonies. Thus the study focus on the daily rituals of *Guruvayur* temple which incorporate Elephants.

Field visits to these temples were conducted and information was collected from interviews with temple priests and details regarding rituals through participant observation method. This approach ensured the acquisition of the relevant and most recent information. Oral data was collected from eyewitnesses, regarding the practices from previous years and decades. This first-hand information was collected from temple priests regarding temple rituals. Secondary sources were also utilized to verify the data. These sources helped for the examination of the intricate role that Elephants play in the ritual world of central Kerala. After explaining various types of daily rituals associated with temples, this chapter explains annual rituals called festivals like *Arattupuzha* and Thrissur *pooram* in particular, as these festivals are using various events incorporating Elephants. It also added church festivals, as well as annual feast at Mosque called *nercha* celebrating at central Kerala, which includes Elephants processions.

The later Chera phase marked evolution of social stratification and hierarchies as these rulers patronized early migrants of Brahmin priests for rituals and sacrifices even during the pre-temple era. At that time there was no particular

group assigned for performing ritual functions or no particular common place for rituals. Among the brahmins, a traditional group performed rituals at household as per the requirement. Expansion of agrarian society facilitated evolution and development of a permanent structural institution for worship.⁵ This agricultural expansion and growth may have led to the development of temples under the Brahmin domination and later these temples developed as the core center for all socio-cultural rituals and practices. Temple rituals reflected much variations, as they were formed on different time and in different context. Rituals of early medieval times were developed in temples near to Brahmin settlements. *Saiva* and *Vaishanava* deities followed daily routines of brahmins and it became evolved as temple custom and culture.

Evolution of Temple Rituals

The temple rituals in Kerala reflect placing of deity and Brahmins as highest ritual icons.⁶ According to M.R. Raghava Varier, temple rituals including lamps, garlands, and food offerings were consistent, regardless of the deity, as shown by epigraphic evidences. Rituals associated with worshipping spaces and deities in Kerala reflect region, class and time uniqueness, as they were evolved by the particular members. Brahminical temple rituals of Kerala society were evolved by Brahmin elites with the royal patronage. Simultaneously non Brahminic temples and *kavus* maintained their own rituals and ceremonies which are specific to their culture.

In Kerala, a blend of Vedic rituals and the *Agamaic* style of temple practices emerged. Kerala Brahmins embraced the new temple worship, along with that they continued practicing Vedic sacrifices and domestic rituals along with it. According to Prof. Venkitesubramanya Iyar, “the ritual of ceremonial worship in the Kerala

⁵ Arya Nair V.S., *Temples of Early Medieval Kerala A Study Based on Archaeological and Literary Evidences*, Unpublished Ph D Thesis, Department of History, University of Calicut 2020, p.110.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.111

temples is a combination of both *Vaidika* with Vedic mantras and *Tantrika* with non-Vedic mantras and its rules”.⁷ These ritual practices were transmitted orally for many generations and later systematised into written format, most probably by latter half of the medieval period.

Temples in Kerala evolved during that period where the ruler is considered as the paramount power and protector of the subjects. During the temple centered society, deity or the Lord is considered as the protector of the region as well as people. Consequently, temple worship evolved by projecting the deity as a sovereign ruler, with rituals, ceremonies, and festivals structured in accordance with royal courtly traditions. A significant ritual mantra by temple priest, *samasta rajopacharan samarpayami*, meaning offering of all royal honours to deity, underscores this point.⁸

This royal symbolism is deeply embedded in temple architecture, which were designed like royal palaces. Temple is fortified by outer walls like fortress of the palace, entered through monumental gateways like *rajagopurams*, with expansive courtyards. The inner cloister *nalampalam* represents the inner quarters of the royal residence, while the sanctum sanctorum *sreekovil* serves as the throne room and abode of the deity like king. Surrounding the *nalampalam*, the guardian deities depicted through *bali*-stones symbolize royal guards stationed at cardinal points, with the principal *bali*-stone at the forefront representing the commander of the divine army. Further, the temple premises include representations of ministers, warriors, priests, etc., forming a complete symbolic royal attendance in the court. Every devotee, entering the temple, ritually re-enacts the role of a subject bowing before their sovereign, thereby reaffirming the convergence of sacredness and kingship within the ritual and spatial practices of temple culture.⁹

⁷ Krishnan Poduval, *Guruvayur :Gods own Temple*, Samrat Publication, Thrissur, 2014, p.71.

⁸ Praveen Namboothiri, *Keraleeya Kshetra Parichayam*, (Mal.) Saraswatham Publications, Ottappalam, 2019, p.16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

Temple rituals for the deity is evolved by considering the deity as a ruler or sovereign. As Temple possess vast area of land, daily rituals were met with the income or yield generated from this land, and it was considered as the responsibility of the concerned ruler to conduct the rituals without any hindrance. If he fails, the same ruler or chief had to remit fine to the deity, i.e. both to the temples and to the Brahmins. Through such rituals, Brahmins and the ruling chiefs were believed to elevate their position in social strata along with the temple deity. Thus, Temples in Kerala both Saiva and *Vaishanava* sects became the institutions which recognise the ruling authorities. This socio religious aspect was developed during the early medieval society.¹⁰

Temples in Kerala mostly follow rituals based on *Thantra Samuchaya* written by Chennas Narayanan Namboothiri, which is believed to be written in 1427. As per the oral testimonies there were almost ten Chennas families and presently only four among them exists. Among them, Chennas family, having their base at *Vanneri*, is credited with the authorship of *Tantra samuchayam*. The task of writing the work was assigned to the priest *Chennas Narayan Nampputhiripad* as a punishment by Zamorin for criticising the ruler. Finally he could complete the work in time by including all the affairs from the construction of a temple to the installation of deity. The work, divided into twelve chapters called *padala* and the ninth padala, discusses about the details of rituals and the significance of festivals conducted in a temple.

It is more concerned with fundamental theories than directions for conducting specific rituals. As per the opinion of the author, those who practice rituals can add or emit some features which seems to adjust with the context of place and time. It is believed that rituals and *poojas* will increase the divinity of the deity. Thus, as per belief, *Mahakshetram* which conducts more *poojas* and rituals has more power compared to other temples. Based on the daily rituals conducted in the temple, they are categorized into three. *Mahakshetram* with daily five-time *pooja*

¹⁰ Arya Nair V.S., *Op.Cit.*, p.49.

and three-time *seeveli*, *Sadarana kshetram* with three times pooja, and *Kavu*, where only *nivedya* or offering to deity is given priority than *pooja*.

Rituals of Kerala temples can be categorized into daily rituals, monthly rituals and annual rituals.¹¹ Temples associated with each Brahmin settlements or *grama* try to create rituals which increase the fame and status of their own deity. They added several rituals patronised by rulers and tried for a cultural domination over other temples or settlements. Thus rich temples with more landed property could afford their rituals in the most splendid manner.

Among the daily rituals observed in temples, the morning *Seeveli* holds paramount importance, and the presence of an elephant is integral to this ritual. *Seeveli*, also referred to as *Sreebali*, is a significant daily ritual practice dedicated to the deities. *Seeveli* is the ritual in which, the attendant deities or *parivara devatas* or sub deities associated with the principal deity of the temple are offered worship and food in a smaller, yet significant manner. It symbolizes the belief that the deity, while partaking the offering or *nivedyam*, ensures that all the divine attendants also partake along with him. To affirm this, the deity ceremonially comes outside the sanctum to witness the offering of *nivedyam* to the sub deities. During this ritual the deity assumes the role of a noble householder or *grihapati*, who personally ensures that his servants and dependents are fed with care and affection. Since the deity cannot perform this act directly, the chief priest or *melshanti* carries out the ritual of *Seeveli* on his behalf. Accompanying the chief priest, assistant priest *keezhshanti* carries the *thidambu* or the representative idol of the deity.

The procession is accompanied by traditional oil lamps or *kuthuvilakku* and percussion ensembles, reflecting the principle that just as a king's public appearance is marked by music and lights, the deity's movements must be ceremoniously honoured. During *Seeveli*, *nivedyam* is specifically offered to the principal attendant deities, a practice known as *Bali* which represents a complete and devoted offering. The

¹¹ Chennas Narayanan Naboothiri, *Tantrasamuchayam* (Trans.) Shripuram Publication, Irinjalakkuda, 2020, p.92.

offerings are made to various divine guardians both inside and outside the sanctum sanctorum such as the protectors inside the sanctum, the *vahana* or vehicle of the deity stationed in the mandapa, deities like Ganapati, Dakshinamurti, Indra and the *Dikpalakas* or guardians of the directions, and the *Saptamatrikas* or Seven Mother Goddesses etc. Outside the sanctum, offerings are made to deities stationed at *balikkal* or sacrificial stones including the temple's chief guardian deity and the supreme commander of all divine forces. Thus, *Seeveli* is a significant ritual that embodies a comprehensive ceremonial act.

Kaazhcha Seeveli is the ceremonial procession that follows the offering of *Bali* to the host of divine attendants. It is intended to bring mental and sensory joy to the deity, and the devotees alike. *Kaazhcha Seeveli* is a visual treat and celebration that pleases both the eyes and the ears. During this procession, the deity circumambulate the temple premises accompanied by a grand display of traditional percussion music and lamps. The procession concludes after the circumambulation leaving the devotees spiritually fulfilled.

Placing Elephants in Temple Ritual as *Deva vahana*

Elephants were considered as royal symbol and *Raja vahana* since early times. Elephants seemed to be the temple property since the time of temple oriented societies of medieval Kerala. Availability of Elephants in the temple premises than any other royal animal like horses also acted as supportive factor for selecting Elephant for *Deva vahana* in the rituals. Elephant is most socially evolved, and its capacity for learning helped to develop human association with it and use that in the ritual world. Elephants plays an important role in religious rituals including daily rituals and annual festivals as *deva vahana*. Daily rituals or *seeveli* can be termed as the deity visiting the sub deities, like the ruler visit his family members, sub ordinates or chieftains in the palace, while in annual ritual called festival the deity visiting its devotees in festival ground for blessing as rulers visit the subjects occasionally in the public place to address the people.

As mentioned earlier, *Mahakshetras* in central Kerala conduct the ritual *seeveli* with Elephant procession for three times and five *poojas* each day. Notably, the Guruvayur Temple in Thrissur district managed by the Guruvayur *Devaswom* employs Elephants for the ritual *seeveli* three times in a day i.e., morning, afternoon and in the evening *seeveli*. Similarly, under the jurisdiction of the Cochin *Devaswom* Board, Thrippunithura Sree Poornathrayesa Temple, and Thriprayar Sreerama Temple practice *nitya seeveli*, or daily *seeveli with Elephants*. However, these temples utilize Elephants only for the morning and evening *seeveli* ceremonies. The decision to exclude Elephants from the *seeveli* at noon time or *ucha seeveli* is based on practical considerations as the temple premises, designated as the *seeveli* path, are expansive and exposed to intense sunlight during mid-day. Deep-rooted significance of the rituals *seeveli* and Elephant can be seen within the traditions of *Guruvayur* temple.

Case Study of Guruvayur Temple

The *Guruvayur* temple, classified as Mahakshetram, conducts *pooja* five times daily. The daily rituals commence with *Nirmalya Darshanam*, the first sight of the deity, which occurs during the Brahmanuhurtham, at 3.00 AM. Following this auspicious event, the rituals continue with *Abhishekams* and *Vakacharthu* culminating in the offering of *Malar Nivedyam*. The elephant's role in the daily rituals begins after these initial ceremonies. The elephant, which carries the Lord's *thidambu* or festival idol for the first *seeveli* of the day, is also entitled to partake a portion of the *nivedyam*. Daily *seeveli* involves a procession of caparisoned Elephants, most probably one or three, and the procession of deity carried on the top of the elephant. The *seeveli* is conducted three 3 times a day, i.e., *Prabatha seeveli* at 7:00 AM, *Ucha seeveli* between 4:30 and 6.15 PM, and *athazha seeveli* at 8:30 PM.

At the time of morning *seeveli* only temple elites are supposed to attend the ritual. For the ritual, *melsanthi* lights the *kuthuvilakku* from the lamp inside the *sreelakam* and keeps it on the *sopanam*.¹² *Melsanthi* or chief priest goes to the

¹² Pepitha Seth, Heaven on Earth: The Universe of Kerala's Guruvayur Temple, Niyogi Books, New Delhi, 2009, p.73.

garbhagriha and prays to the lord for the permission to conduct *seeveli*, and *keezhsanthi* comes out of the *sreekovil* with *thidambu* and start the procession towards eighteen celestial deities and *sapthamatrikas* giving *thooval*. *Keezhsanthi*, belonging to one of the thirteen *illams*, holds *thidambu* made of gold on the Elephant during the procession of *seeveli*. For the ritual of *seeveli*, normally there will be a procession of the deity for three times carrying the Lord's *Thidambu* on the top of the elephant and it kneels down for dismounting the *thidambu* in front of the *kodimaram*. Thus after finishing the *seeveli* from a ritual point of view, a portion of malar *nivedyam* will be given to the *seeveli* Elephant. This custom was said to have started at the time of Guruvayur Kesavan in 1923.¹³ As per the popular believes, Guruvayur Kesavan became an intelligent tusker by attending *seeveli* and served the Lord and temple for over fifty years.

Uchcha seeveli at Guruvayur temple is performed in the evening between 4.30 and 6.15 PM. For this ritual, after the *Chuttuvilakku*, three caparisoned Elephants are employed.¹⁴ *Athazha seeveli* is conducted between 9 to 9.15 P M. along with temple rituals. The night *seeveli* is particularly majestic, featuring three or more Elephants. Temple illuminations as well as the evening ambience enhance the sensory experience. On special days, *seeveli* becomes more elaborate with five Elephants adding splendor to the spectacle.¹⁵

In addition to the regular temple rituals, Elephants play a significant role in the rituals associated with devotees' offerings. One notable ritual at the Guruvayur temple is the evening *Sreebhootha Bali* and *Vilakku*, which are special offerings made by the devotees. These rituals are conducted during the evening of *Udayasthamaya pooja*. During the *Sreebhootha Bali at night time*, the *Othikkan* or

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.78.

¹⁴ PRG. Mathur, Sacred Complex of the Guruvayur Temple, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, 2009, p.72.

¹⁵ Tresa Abraham, On the deification of Guruvayur Kesavan: The Making of an Animal Religious Subject through Cultural Productions, Proceedings of the SOAS Elephant Conferences, Bangalore, 2016, p.71.

the priest offers *Thooval* or sacred fan to the *Devaganangal*, sub deities, and *Balikkalus* sacrificial stones, as part of the *Athazha Seeveli*. The involvement of Elephants in these ceremonies adds a unique and revered aspect to the rituals, highlighting their integral role in the spiritual and cultural practices of the temple.¹⁶ The Priest comes out with *Thidambu* and mounts on a small caparisoned Elephant and it takes three circumambulations with the accompaniment of *chenda*, *madalam*, *kurum kuzhal*, and *ilathalam*.

Other rituals like *chuttuvilakku* and *sreebhoothabali* are also conducted in almost the same manner with slight change in the musical instrument. While instruments like *maram* or *pani* is using for *chuttuvilakku*, for *sreebhoothabali* the *chenda* and *chengala* are used. Normal temple ritual of *seeveli* have three rounds of circumambulation when it is an offering by the devotee. *Sreebhoothabali* needs four rounds, while *chuttuvilakku* have five rounds. After three rounds of *seeveli* is completed at *kizhakke nada* or eastern gopura of the temple, the *Thidambu* is dismounted from the small Elephant and is tied to the *kolam*, mounted on the tallest elephant, and is circumambulated around the temple with the accompaniment of two other Elephants. In the fourth *pradikshanam nadaswaram*, *edakkas*, *sanku*, *sruthi*, *chengala* etc. are employed. When the fourth circumambulation is completed, the accompanying two Elephants are separated and the tallest Elephant with *kolam* will proceed for the fifth *pradakshinam*. Thus, for the final and fifth round only the tallest Elephant with *kolam* is taken round accompanied by the *melam* in which *idamtala chenda*, *valamthala chenda*, *kurum kuzhal*, *kombu* etc. are used. During this time *vilakkumadam* is illuminated with 8000 lamps. Thus, the ritual called *vilikku* is completed by the fifth circumambulation. *Chuttuvilakku* is performed on every *udayasthamana* day or special *vilakku* is conducted as per the offering of the devotee.¹⁷ After completing *vilakku* there is a customary payment known as *nadakkalpanam*. A nominal amount is kept at the entrance of the temple after

¹⁶ PRG. Mathur, *Op.Cit.*, p.74.

¹⁷ PRG. Mathur, *Op.Cit.*, p.81.

dismounting *kolam* from the elephant. This amount is offered to the temple in order to express recognitions of the devotee on whose account *udayasthamana* pooja is conducted.

Seeveli with Elephant is also conducted by other temples in Thrissur like *Tiruvambadi Sreekrishna* temple which has *seeveli* 2 times as day with Elephant as *vahana*. *Sree Poornathrayesa Temple, Thrippunithara*, practices *nityaseeveli* with Elephant *vahana*. Meanwhile other temples in central Kerala include Elephants in festival time *seeveli*, *Arattu* and *pallivetta* etc. In addition to the daily rituals, special days like *Thiruvonam*, *Ashtami Rohini*, *Saraswathy pooja*, *Mandala pooja*, *Sivarathri*, *Thalappoli*, *Vela* etc. are celebrated with *chuttuvilakku* and *seeveli* with Elephant procession. Koodalmanikyam temple has *seeveli* on Elephant for two times on the ten days of the festival. For festival days, deity is taken outside for eight days for morning *seeveli*. Elephant carries *thidambu* during *pallivetta* and *arattu* which takes place on the next day of festival.

Offering Elephant or *nadayiruthal*

Along with daily rituals at *Guruvayur* temple, there are some rituals connected with the offerings of the devotees which include Elephants. Elephants were offered to temples by devotees as their offerings. Elephant “*Nadayiruthal* is a ritual where Elephants are offered to the Gods and Goddesses of temples by devotees” as offering for attaining intended or desired goal. Most of the Elephants of *Guruvayur* temple are through *nadayiruthal* and they are kept at Punnathur Kotta and are used for the daily rituals and festivals of the *Guruvayur* and other temples.¹⁸

There are different ways of offering an Elephant to the Lord. *Nadayiruthal* and *Nadathallal*. *Nadathallal* is the act of offering the Elephant without any rituals. *Nadayiruthal* with rituals which can be performed in two ways. Elephant *nadayiruthal* with *kalabham* is the most expensive and elaborate offering. Six balls

¹⁸ Rajan Chungath, *Ana Manushyante Atmakatha*, (Mal.), Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2015, p.120.

of *kalabham* are required for this purpose. Usual *namaskaram*, a feast with the *nivedya* of 10 *para* of rice and *poojas* must be there on the same day.¹⁹ *Nadayiruthal* over white cloth and woolen blanket is another form of Elephant *nadayiruthal*. For this function Elephant is brought to the temple before the lord after the morning *seeveli*.²⁰ The place for Elephant *nadayiruthal*, measuring six X six feet, is cleaned with cow-dung for purification. There will be *nirapara* and two and a half *nazhis* of *vellari* will be placed nearby. To the south of it, plantain leaf, jaggery and pieces of coconut kernel and bananas are also kept as an offering to *Ganapathy*. On the four corners of the sanctified area *nilavilakku* with five wicks are also arranged.

The Elephant is brought to the temple and then to the purified place with temple musical instruments. The priest in his ceremonial dress comes out of the temple and asks the *marar* to blow the conch. *Melsanthi* then gives the owner permission to donate Elephant to the temple. As the sign of greeting, white cloth as well as blanket will be placed for Elephant to sit. Temple Priest will take the goad and the stick and touch the tusk of the Elephant and return both to the mahout. Priest will give the Elephant *Theertha* and *prasada* and put sandal on its head also name the Elephantin secret. All expense for this function should be met by the donor. *Guruvayur* Padmanaban and *Guruvayur* Kesavan are the two famous and magnificent Elephants that reached *Guruvayur* through the ritual called *nadayiruthal*.

Nadayiruthal became a common process in 1980s and 1990 s. A token that bears both the committee's name overseeing the temple and the elephant's name is fastened around the elephant's neck and hence officially regarded as belonging to the temple and consecrated for the deity's service. From then on, it is authorized to bear the Thidampu or the deity's idol during all sacred and festive occasions. Increasing trend of donation of Elephants to *Guruvayur* temple since 1970 onwards can be inferred from the following graph given in the report on the welfare and

¹⁹ PRG.Mathur, *Op.Cit.*, p.92.

²⁰ Gopala Krishnan K, *Guruvayur Booloka Vaikundam* (Mal.), Guruvayur Devaswom Publication, Mathrubumi Press, Calicut, 1977, p.65.

veterinary status of captive Elephants at Punnathur Kotta at *Guruvayur*, conducted by Animal welfare board of India ²¹.

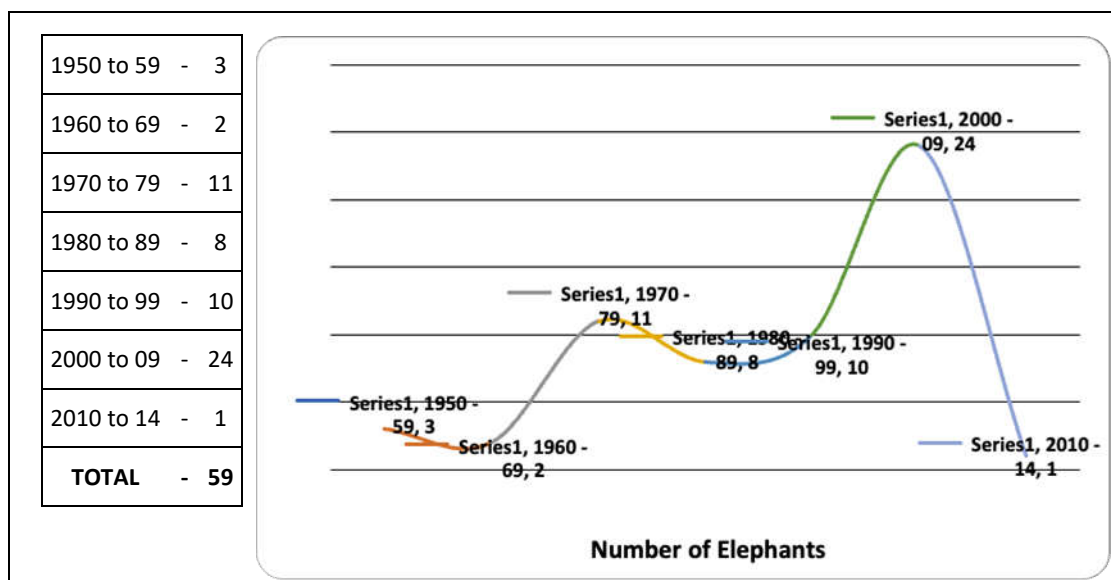


Figure 4.1: Donation of Elephants to GDB

Nadayiruthal can be done on any day and the doner need to inform the temple authorities two weeks before the ritual in order to complete the initial works. In early days there will be a nominal amount remitted by the owner to the *devaswom* for the rituals. Later four lakh Rupees for Elephant *nadayiruthal* and five lakhs for symbolic *nadayiruthal* was fixed. Before *nadayiruthal* a Veterinary doctor should examine the Elephant and must give a fitness certificate in order to accept Elephant in temple.²² The ritual *Nadayiruthal* could afford only by the elite families inside and outside Kerala as a reward for the fulfillment of their wishes.

With the changes in the socio-economic pattern and land reforms, many of the temples and brahmin land lords got set back, and the process of *nadathallal* started. *Nadathallal* of animals including Elephants, was due to their incapability of maintaining these animals. Namboothiri land lords who became landless by late 1990 s were forced to abandon their Elephants as *nadathallal* to temples and

²¹ Report on the Welfare and Veterinary Status of Captive Elephants at Punnathur Kotta, Guruvayur Devaswom Board in Thrissur, Animal Welfare Board of India, 2014, p.70.

²² Rajan Chungath, *Op.Cit.*, p.125.

the devotee who came with Elephant need to enter the name in the *Jeevadhanam* register and receive receipt for that. In accordance with the Captive Elephants Rules, the use of elephants for *nadayiruthal* has been prohibited since 2012. This regulatory restriction is clearly reflected in the trend illustrated in Figure 4.1, which shows a steady decline in the donation of elephants to the Guruvayur *Devaswom*. The graph indicates that the enforcement of these rules has had a direct impact on traditional practices, resulting in a noticeable reduction in elephant donations over the period under review. Devotees who wish the same can pay Ten lakh Rupees as offering for *Devaswom* as symbolic *nadayiruthal* ritual. For that, an Elephant was brought to the temple from *Punnathur kotta* for the fulfillment of this rituals.²³

Prathyaksha Ganapathy homam

Prathyaksha Ganapathy homam or *pooja* is a ritual conducted as per the offering of the devotees mainly in the month of *karkkidakam*. This ritual is also known as *ashta dravya mahaganapathy homam*. For *mahaganapathi homam*, *agni* or fire is considered as the mouth of Ganapathy and *ashta dravya* is offered into fire altar. For *parthyaksha ashtadravya mahaganapathy homam*, Lord Ganapathy is worshipped in three different ways. Offering first to fire, second to *padmam*, third to the Elephant as visible form of Ganapathy. *Ashtadravya* which include *nalekeram*, *ellu*, *sarkkara*, *malar*, *avil*, *karimbu*, *kadali pazham*, along with *appam* and *ada* or rice cake, was offered to the fire, and to the *swasthika* symbol with *ashtadalam* flowers on the right side of the fire, and to the Elephants mouth of Lord Ganapathy. At *Guruvayur* temple *prathyaksha mahaganapathy homam* is an important offering by the devotees. Elephant will be brought to the Ganapathy temple which is located in the front of *Guruvayur* temple and conduct *pooja* as Elephants are considered as representation of Ganapathy. After *Ganapathy homam* the devotees can offer *nivedyam* to the Elephants directly. *Guruvayur* temple also provide options for daily offering of *Gajapooja* or

²³ <https://www.manoramaonline.com/style/arts-and-culture/2022/07/02/specialties-elephant-sukha-chikilsa-guruvayur-and-history-of-punnathoor-kotta.html> last visited on 21/10/2023.

worship of Elephants and ‘*Aanayoottu*’ or feeding of Elephants, consisting of rice, jaggery, plantains, coconut, as an offering to Lord Ganesha.

The ritual called *prathyaksha mahaganapathy homam* began in 1980s at Vadakkunatha temple. Different from other rituals, here Elephant is treated as God Ganapathi. *Gajapooja* and *Anayootu* or the feast for Elephants, is an important ritual conducted for the welfare of the Elephants. Evolution of a ritual for the Elephants began with the *anayootu* at *Vadakkunathan* temple. Here *Gajapooja* is conducted once in four years for getting the favor of Lord Ganapathy. In these rituals, Elephants are worshipped as the visible form of Ganapathy. Conducted after *Maha Ganapathy homam* in the month of *Karkkidakam*, four Elephants are taken inside the temple at one time and Elephants are decorated with flower garland and *kalabam*. *Nettipattam* and other usual decorations are not used during this time. Elephants will be on the yellow *karimbadam* at a special shed inside the temple premise. After *gajapooja* Elephants are taken to the *anayootu*. Rituals of other districts is comparatively very much limited as they are conducting *seeveli* with Elephant only during festival days. Elephants play a significant role in the temple rituals of central Kerala in an increasing progression since medieval to contemporary days.

Deity Comes Out of the Temple for Festivals

Along with daily rituals and offerings from the devote, temples celebrate annual rituals in a grant way. In rituals, deity comes out of the *sreekovil* to see his or her subordinates while in festivals deity comes out of the temple to visit people or devotees. As festivals are shaped by the culture and social life of the people of a particular region, it contributes much for building a harmonious society and hence can be used to link the society with the past and the present, and enrich the participants with a feeling of togetherness and belongingness. Festivals, which associate feast, fun, sound and colour, are close to the hearts of people of all ages and can create an experience and impressions in the mind and mentality of people, and these impressions made it integral to the life and culture. Most of the festivals,

both religious or secular, were associated with the phase of their relaxation mainly after the harvest or they mark the end of a season associated with nature like solar, lunar eclipse etc. Festivals are dynamic in nature as it carries features from past and adopting present elements and move to future with more expectations of improvisation.

Among religious and secular festivals, religious festivals have ritualistic and celebrative elements which evolved as the part of our culture and enrich our heritage. Rituals were more connecting to society with adoration while festivals connect society with participation. People visit temples to get blessings of deity during daily rituals while deity comes to public space to bless people during annual ritual called festivals. People gather around to receive their God in public and share their happiness together. Mass participation in religious festivals is the popular expression of their support and co-operation. It will increase collective responsibility and cooperation of the people. Beyond the element of devotion and faith, festivals reflect enjoyment, community gathering and their inter connectedness. It involves rituals or ceremonies aimed at invoking blessings for prosperity and abundance.

Religious festivals mark great social significance and provide occasions for people to come together and provide an opportunity to wear their best dress and share happiness. People from nearby villages and *desams* come to festival ground in order to enjoy and assimilate themselves and this festival *vibe* will spread to nearby areas in a smooth way. Even though festivals and rituals are universal in nature, it reflect features of space and time. Therefore, the study of festivals and celebrations in a society can provide an important aspect in understanding the society as well as its related mechanisms.

Access to rituals may be restricted to certain members of the community, while festive events are public and open to all members of the society. Temples varies its festival rituals based on the nature of deity. Temples celebrate special events like annual birthdays, *Onam*, *Vishu*, *Sivarathri* and royal festivals, often

featuring grand feasts and entertainment primarily for Brahmins.²⁴ Among these, *Vaishana* temples celebrate their annual rituals or festivals like *Onam*, *Vishu*, *Ekadasi Dwadasi*, while Siva temples mainly celebrate *Sivarathri* and *Thiruvathira*.

Copper plates give evidence for the land grants to temples for the purpose of conducting festivals. “In some instances the ruling chieftains transfers whole villages and forest areas to the temple authorities for the conduct of annual festivals or for some routine expenditure”.²⁵ These festivals include grant feast to brahmins, temple arts for entertainments, *seeveli*, *chuttuvilakku*, *pallivetta*, *arattu* etc. Festivals got structured by late medieval period based on the work of *Tantrasamuchayam* and got additions in the following centuries to reach the present day form. During the festive season *yathrahoma* is performed and in that ritual, deity is taken in procession mounted on the chariot or Elephant or a temporary vehicle accompanied by percussion instruments, performing the holy bath called *thirthasnana* or *avabhrtasnana*. The preparation of ritual for festival culminates in the *sribhutabali* which is preceded by the downing of the flag and the ritual bath called *kalasabhiseka*.²⁶ These rituals of every year are believed to empower and rejuvenate the deity. All the traditional scriptures are instructed to perform rituals and festivals affordable to each temple authorities.²⁷ Temple priests are also given the right to decide and execute the rituals pertaining to each temple. *Tantrasamuchaya* permits slight variations in rituals and festivals according to the need and circumstances of each temple.

The very first *sloka* of the ninth *padala* is stated like the following.

²⁴ Frits Staal (ed.), *Agni Vol. II*, The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar, M. R. Raghava Varier, The Namboothiri Ritual Tradition with Special Reference to Kollengode Archive, Motilal Banarsidass Publishing House, Delhi, 2010, p.6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7.

²⁶ Ajithan P I., *The Ritualistic Tradition of Tantra in Kerala A Study on its Characteristics Features and Transmission*, Un Published Ph.D. Thesis, Dept. of Sanskrit, Sree Sankaracharya University, Kalady, 2013, p.121.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.124.

अथप्रतिष्ठा स्थापनाद्यनन्तरं
समाचरेत् तत् सर्वं सुपूर्वोत्सवम्
ततो नु संवत्सरम् उक्तावसर-
व्यवस्थया चाखिलसंपदाप्तये ।

*Atha pratiṣṭha sthapanadyanantaram
samacareta tat sarva suparvasutsavam
tato nu samvatsaram uktavasara-
vyavasthaya cakhilasampadaptaye.*

“After the establishment of the idol or the consecration ceremony, one should perform all the auspicious festivals and celebrations. Thereafter, every year, on the prescribed dates, these should be observed for the attainment of all prosperity. The cited verse highlights the ritualistic and temporal continuity crucial to the practice of sacred installations and beginning of ongoing ritual obligations. Immediately after installation, all auspicious festivals must be performed to maintain the sanctity of the site. Annual celebrations, conducted according to prescribed dates, are necessary for ensuring continuous divine favour. Prosperity and well-being are linked directly to the faithful repetition of these rituals.”

Second *sloka* mentions about the time span of annual festival as seven to twelve days from the month of *vrishchika* to *medam* corresponding the months from November to May in English calendar. As per this *sloka* the festival should be planned according to the particular date decided for each deity based on the installation date. Thus temple festivals called *Utsava* will be conducted on the same day in every year, while festival with the name *pooram* or *vela* will change according to the star of the deity of the temple.

Third *sloka* mentions the ritual of *kodiyettam* which is considered as an announcement of festival as follows: After the beating of drums and other auspicious sounds within or the temple premises, the officiant enters the sanctum or

garbhagriha at the conclusion of the *Nandimukha* rite.²⁸ Having performed the purificatory rite or *Punyaha vacana* the priest or *mantrin* should make a formal resolution or *sankalpa* for the festival. This preparatory rituals of a Hindu festival, emphasizing the transition from preliminary rites to the formal commencement of celebrations and formalizes the devotee's or community's commitment to the festival, align human intentions with divine will.

अन्तर्विकीर्ष्य बलिमेकपरिक्रमेण बाह्यं च

तद्धजचितिः प्रविलाप्य देवे

क्षेत्रेशगुप्तसदनोऽन्यगणैः प्रयातु ।

देवम् निजे समधिरोप्य रथादियाने ।

Antarvikirshya balimekaparikramena bahyam cha

Taddhvajachitihpravilapyadeve

kshetresha gupta sadano anya ganaih prayatu

devam nije samadhiropya rathaadiyane

113th *sloka* of the same chapter gives description of a ritual procession or *utsava*, especially focusing on offering *bali* or ritual offerings and leading the deity out in a procession vehicle like a *ratha* or chariot as *vahana*. These lines describe the temple festivals where the deity is ritually prepared for public procession. The act of offering *bali* both within the temple and nearby external sacred structural feature like the *dhvaja-stambha* or flagstaff reflects the encompassing sanctification of both internal and external spaces before the deity. The mention of attendant groups or *ganas* safeguarding the deity highlights the collective and hierarchical nature of ritual participation, emphasizing the deity's royal and sacred status. Installing the deity carefully onto a *ratha* or chariot symbolizes not only the deity's readiness for public veneration but also enacts the theological idea of the God

²⁸ The *Nandimukha* Ritual, is a ceremony seeking the blessings of ancestral spirits and divine forces, serves as a necessary prelude, ensuring an unobstructed and prosperous beginning.

moving into the world to bestow blessings. This ritual movement connects sacred space to social order.

Selection of Elephant as *vahana*

Mahakshetrams of central Kerala selected Elephants as the *vahana* of the deity during festival procession as Elephants were already in use as elegant *vahana* by the elites. This preference is also due to the majestic appearance of the elephant, whose considerable height significantly enhances the visibility of the deity during such events. This practice is further supported by the availability of domesticated Elephants within temple premises as *devaswom* properties, making it a convenient and practical choice. Over time, the inclusion of Elephants in these religious and cultural festivities garnered widespread acceptance and appreciation, ultimately evolving into a tradition.²⁹ Later phase is marked by the procession of deity, from *sreekovil* for *pradakshinam* on *vahana* that can be either human or animal like Elephant or horse, palanquin or chariot. *Vahana* should be given proper *pooja* before the procession of Deity.³⁰ Many temples follow the ritual of conducting *vahana pooja* to Elephant before mounting the deity. *Mahakshetrams* at central Kerala, like temples of *Guruvayur*, *Koodalmanikyam*, etc. conduct *Utsava* with Elephant as *Deva vahana*.

पञ्चवाद्यवरवादनाविधाचुञ्चवोऽस्य पुरतः प्रयान्त्वह ।

छत्रचामरविधारिणोऽभितः पृष्ठतो जयजयादिवादिनः ।

The *sloka* 116 illustrates the ritual procession, emphasizing the aesthetic and symbolic elements significant to temple festivals. The *panchavadya*, composed of five traditional instruments, leads the procession, creating an atmosphere of sacred festivity. Surrounding the deity, the presence of attendants with royal emblems like

²⁹ Personal Interview Madavan kutty, Thiruvambadi Devaswom secretary, 20/10/2012.

³⁰ Chennas Narayanan Naboothiri, *Tantrasamuchayam* , Shripuram Publication, Irinjalakkuda, 2020, p.12.

umbrellas and fly-whisks underlines the portrayal of the deity as a sovereign being, deserving of honour and ceremonial reverence. It reflects rituals and festivals that highlight the divine in public with dignified royal manner.

Sloka-122 of the same chapter states that after respectfully sending off the deity with holy water and placing the deity back onto the original vehicle or *vahana*, one should proceed to the main shrine. On the same day itself, the deity should be reinstalled in the original image, followed by a ritual bath *abhiseka*. The careful ritual closure of a festival procession, emphasises the importance of returning the deity to its original sanctum. Placing the deity on its original vehicle and moving it back to the main temple reaffirms the deity's permanent presence in its foundational space. The ritual *abhiseka* or ceremonial bathing known as *arattu* ensures the sacred continuity and renewal of the deity's energy. And the deity proceeds for the same on the top of elephant.

Saint Vilwamangalam, poet and devotee of Lord Krishna, has mentioned about the majestic pageant parading of fifteen Elephants at Sreepoornathrayesa temple. *Ashtamiprabandha*, written by Melpathoor Narayana Bhattathiri of 1559-1645, mentions crescent-shaped designs on the *nettipattam* or headgear of an elephant, which is considered as a potential evidence of Elephants being present in temple spaces in the late 16th and early 17th century.³¹

Kerala District Gazateer Ernakulam, states that “the district is noted for a large number of amusements and festivities. The *Utsavams* or festivals conducted in temples stand out as the most spectacular of such festivities. The *Utsavam* is a big event in the social and religious life of the people and all kinds of pastimes and entertainments are held in the temples during the season”. One could see that large number of daily rituals and annual rituals called festivals are celebrated with the procession of deities to the public space on Elephant top. Padmanaba Menon, in his work, mentions that for temple festivals or *utsavams*, the image of the God is placed

³¹ A. K. Sharma, (Trans.) Melapthur Narayanabathathiri, *Ashtamiprabanda*, Sanskrit Classics Publication, Kochi, 2005, p.117.

on a triumphal *vahana* beautifully decorated, and dragged round the pagoda. It is peculiar to the Canarese temples in Malabar and also to the Tamil Brahman temples of Palghat. In Kerala, this is not observed in the temples where such a *vahana* is not kept. The images of the deities are always carried on the backs of huge Elephants with gold or silver facings.³²

Coming out of the deities from the usual place of *sreekovil* in order to see the people of the locality symbolizes the political sovereign who came out of the palace to meet the subject in order to understand their condition. This meeting helps to evolve and develop a fine and healthy reciprocal understanding between the deity and the follower similar to the ruler and the ruled. Royal entry of the deity to the public space needed a royal *vahana*.

Categories of Festivals

There are three types of temple festivals based on the rituals. They are *Anguradi*, *Dwajadi*, *Padahadi*. *Anguradi* festival starts with *suddikriya* i.e., purification of temple as well as idol followed by the main ritual called *mulayidal*, sprouting of seeds. *Kodiyetam-utsavabali-pallivetta-palliyurakkam-palliyunarthal-arattu* etc. are the main rituals of this festival. *Guruvayur temple festival* as well as *Koodalmanikyam temple festival* are examples for this type. Second type is *Dwajadi* and it starts with *kodiyetam*. *Padahadi* gives more importance to celebration. Large number of Elephant procession can be seen in *dwajadi* and *padahadi* while in *anguradi* smaller number of Elephants were used as the part of rituals.

Utsavam, Pooram, Vela

Annual temple festivals in Kerala can generally be divided into *Utsavam*, *Pooram* and *Vela* in which one can see major difference in its rituals and Elephant procession. There are some distinctions related to the rituals of these terms. Religious festivals known as *Utsavam* are the annual rituals associated most probably with a

³² K P Padmanaba Menon, *Kochirajyacharithram*, (Mal.), Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2021, p.16.

single religious institution or temple. These *Utsavams* last for several days and may have included a range of cultural activities like temple arts, music, structured rituals and procession. During the *Utsavam* temple deity is decorated and taken out for procession in the temple ambience or in nearby open space.

Meanwhile *pooram* festival is generally conducted in the star of *pooram* and many temples participate in the event. Temple Festivals in general follow some common pattern and procedures along with unique and particular practices. Before the days of the festival, deity of the temple visits people in the form of *parayeduppu* or *grama pradakshina*. Deities of rich temples will proceed on Elephant mount. *Pooram* is a combination of rituals as well as celebrations. *Vela* is considered as the festival of non-Brahminical temples with more importance to performance and display, and the deity will proceed to the house of each devotee. In central Kerala, most of the *kavu* perform their festival as *vela*.

Major temples associated with brahmin settlements generally followed the pattern of conducting temple rituals in more sacred manner as they want to keep their purity and sacredness. Paul Younger in his work states that “ Religious festivals with much pomp and glory had its roots within the non-Brahmanical communities that were traditionally not allowed to follow within the Brahmanical temples which are more ritualistic. In many ways such festivals represent an alternative religious form to that offered within the Brahmanical temples”.³³ Brahmanical temples of some regions in late medieval times may have gradually developed festival traditions like temple festivals and procession of deity in festival, equal to the procession of ruler to the public function with all honours including procession on Elephant, orchestra, silk parasole, *venchamaram*, *alavattom* etc. This tradition may have developed in order to establish the cultural domination above the political power or to overshadow the other religious sects of contemporary days.

³³ Paul Younger, *Playing Host to Deity: Festival Religion in South Indian Tradition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2022, p.8.

Temples outside central Kerala rarely celebrate their festival as *pooram*. Most probably they celebrate *arrattu* and *Utsavam*. Thiruvalla temple inscription mentions about fund allocation for festivals like Onam-*Arattu-Ashtami*, *Rohini-Dvadasi* etc. *Thiruvalla* copper plates related to *Thiruvalla* temple at Kottayam give information about minute details of temple transactions and festivals but lack the information regarding Elephants. Festivals like *pooram* and *vela* are incorporated into Brahminical order as the part of transition from Vedic to agamic system or when Brahminism find its path to liberalism. Thus, Festivals with large number of Elephants are concentrated in central Kerala, especially in Thrissur and Palakkad as these areas celebrate the temple festival as *pooram* than *utsavams*. Temple festivals of central Kerala give more significance and priority to Elephants by assigning particular roles for it.

Elephants in Festivals of Central Kerala

Peruvanam temple is claimed to be the beginner of annual ritual of *pooram* and this cultural practice may have initiated and followed by other temples which could afford the same. Ruling class and other elites stood at the place called *nilapaduthara* which shows their special position in the *pooram*. As per the oral testimonies the festival last for 28 days with the participation of 108 deities.³⁴ As per *Peruvanam Granthavari* 1742 mentions about ceasing of *Peruvanam pooram* according to Kodaseery Kaimal. Canter Visscher Dutch priest who settled at Kochi also mentions about festivals of central Kerala. He states that of festive occasion, “The idol, of the temple finely ornamented and placed in a palanquin or set up on an elephant and covered with a canopy, is paraded about accompanied with music. The low castes who may not enter the temple, are permitted to attend at a distance on some of these occasions, and to deposit their donations of fanams before the temple: for though not admitted, they are compelled to contribute to its support”.³⁵

³⁴ N.V. Krishna Varrier, *Kalolsavam* (Mal.), Current Books, Thrissur, 1967, p.47.

³⁵ Jacob Canter Visscher, *Letters From Malabar*, Adelphy Press, Madras, 1862, p.149.

The original thirty-two settlements in Kerala expanded cultural dominance with subsidiary settlements, known as *upagramas*, as evidenced by numerous Chera inscriptions. Over time, additional settlements emerged, creating a network centred around temples. These settlements, rooted in upper caste Brahmanical ideas and institutions, established the necessary framework for the Brahmanical social order in Kerala.³⁶ Later a number of subordinate deities were added in the temple. Celebration in relation to the temple festivals also increased and with the increased number of temple dependants, as well as with their more donations to the temple. Beyond the temple governing body called as *Uralar*, additional groups were formed in order to organise and conduct festivals.

As per the opinion of MR Raghava Varier in the article, The Namboothiri Ritual Tradition with Special Reference to *Kollengode* Archive, “Namboothiri of *Peruvanam* village would worship the *Sasta* of *Tiruvullakkavu* temple. This appears to account a link between the conduct of the Vedic rituals and the institutionalized aboriginal systems of worship in the respective localities. Not only did the *Agamaic* deities of the temple-centred Brahmin society supersede the Vedic Gods, but even aboriginal local Gods like *Sasta* or Ayyappan were granted higher status than the celestial beings propitiated in the Vedic rituals”.³⁷

The subsidiary temples affiliated to new Brahmin settlements to constitute a fresh settlement like *upagrama* and show its allegiance to main temple.³⁸ The temple itself grew by consecrating more and more subordinate deities. This meant the appointment of more people as temple functionaries. A typical case of such a development is illustrated in the *Tiruvalla* Copper plates. In this way the temple and the Brahmin settlement around it gradually became a system in itself commanding allegiance of large sections of population. This command gave a certain immunity

³⁶ Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahmin Settlements in Kerala*, Sandhya Publications, Calicut University, 1978, p.68.

³⁷ Frits Staal (ed.), *Agni Vol. II : The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, M. R. Raghava Varier, The Namboothiri Ritual Tradition with Special Reference to Kollengode Archive, *Op.Cit.*, p.291.

³⁸ Kesavan Veluthat, *Op. Cit.*, p.77.

and jurisdiction to the complex.³⁹ Temples followed various methods to expand the cultural domination among which conducting festivals places an important role. Annual festivals in the name *pooram* were celebrated by rich Brahminical temples of Thrissur with the socio economic support of nearby *desams*.

Festivals create a link between deity and devotee. Such Festivals join together people of different categories. Procession of deities to the public is a customary and communal practice that holds deep spiritual, cultural, and social significance for believers. It serves as a dynamic expression of faith, devotion, and community interrelation, enriching the religious and cultural mindset of the communities where it takes place. The procession serves as a symbolic representation of the presence of the divine in the community. By bringing the deity out of the temple or shrine and into the public realm, believers feel a closer connection to the divine presence, and it fosters a sense of accessibility and inclusivity. It's a way for them to express their reverence, love, and devotion to the deity and seek blessings for themselves and their community.

Each religious institutions use different methods and strategies in festivals, to attract people towards its ambience. Temple festivals with large number of Elephant procession is a strategy for increasing temple popularity and participation of people. Festival season of Kerala from October to May is also known as elephantine season, especially for central Kerala.

Peruvanam temple festival is claimed to be the oldest and prestigious of all temple festivals. As per oral legends this festive event was once participated by hundred and eight deities from *Angadipuram* in northern Kerala to *Kalady* in south and later the festival got ceased due to some unknown reasons. Early days temples of *Thrissur*, *Kuttanellur*, *Avittathur*- all participated in the event. *Peruvanam gramam*, believed to be one among thirty-two Brahmin settlements established by Parasurama, enjoyed highest privilege during temple centered society as it extended

³⁹ Kesavan Veluthat, *Op.Cit.*, p.90.

its borders with north *Akamala Sasta*, east *Kuthiran Sastha*, west *Edamuttam Sastha*, south *Uzhavur Sastha*.

After the dissolution of *Peruvanam Utsavam* of early times *Peruvanam, pooram* was restarted in later days. Each ritual and event of the early *Peruvanam utsavam* were later celebrated as different *festival events* by nearby temples. Presently *Peruvanam pooram* is celebrated on the *Valiya vilakku* day of *utsavam*. The *Aarattupuzha* *pooram* starts on the *aarattu* day of the old *Peruvanam Utsavam* and the *pidikka parambu vela* is celebrated in the *Pallivetta* event of the old one. Deities of nearby temples come to *Peruvanam* as procession on Elephants known as *Peruvanam pooram*. *Peruvanam pooram* is celebrated with the procession of twenty-four temples- with *Pisharikkal Bagavathy* with three Elephants, *Arattupuzha Sastha* with seven Elephants, *Chathakudam Sastha* with seven Elephants and *Urakathamma* with one elephant. Eleven deities nearby who don't have their own *pooram* will come with single Elephant and pay homage to *Irattayappan of Peruvanam*. *Cherppu Bagavathy* will arrive with three Elephants and *Ayikkunnnu Bagavathy* with one elephant. They together celebrate *Peruvanam pooram* festival.

Arattupuzha

Arattupuzha *Pooram* festival is believed to be one of the oldest temple festival using Elephants from the process of *kodiyettam* to *kodikuthu*. *Kodiyettu* is on the *Makayiram* star in the *Meenam* month, and after placing *kodimaram*, temple *uralar* will place *dharba* on *kodimaram*. Rituals start with *Thevarpurappad* procession of Lord Sree Rama to the nearby temples on Elephant top. *Makam, pooram tharakkal pooram* are the starting events of *Arattupuzha pooram* with Elephant procession. *Pidikka Parambu anayottam* is also conducted on the next day of the main *pooram*. It is organized in a very formal and minimal form.

Deva sangamam i.e., meeting of deities on Elephant top is a very special one, unique to this festival. *Kooti Ezhunnallippu* is the practice of the procession of all deities participating in *pooram*. In this event *Trippayar Thevar* enters on Elephant

top with eleven Elephants accompanied by the procession of *Urakathamma* and *Edakkunni Bagavathy*, together with other participants. On the final day of the festival, after *Arattu* at *Mandaracadavu*, *Upacharmcholli piriya* is an important ritual, where Elephants carrying each deity who had participated in *pooram* pays due respect to the host, *Arattupuzha sasta*, by raising their trunks with a trumpet. *Arattupuzha sasta* follows the participants of festivals mounting on Elephant till *Ezhukandam* and *Tripayar Thevar* until *onpathu kadam*.

Gramavili, also known as *gramabali*, is a custom of voyage by the lord to the devotees in order to maintain strong bond between Lord and devotees. *Arattupuzha Sasta* mounting on Elephant top reaches to villagers and ensure their protection and safety through his blessings. On that day, Elephant will be with *thidambu*, and the procession starts from *Arattupuzha*, visits the temples at *Kottamkulangara*, *Mypilly*, *Urakam*, *Kidakulangara*, *Aynikkad*, *Muthullial*, *Cherpu*, *Thayamkulangara*, *Mekkavu*, *Peruvanam*, *Thiruvullakkavu*, *Vallachira*, *Chathakkudam*, *Pidikkaparambu*, *Pisharikkal*, *Thottippal* and *Mulangu* before reaching the *Arattupuzha* temple at 5:00 am on next day. The fest concludes by *kodikuthu* or lowering of flag. This ritual keeps the deity and devotee more intimate and the Elephant as the vehicle of lord reaches each region.

Thrissur Pooram

Elephant plays a leading role in the Thrissur *Pooram* festival than any other festival. Thrissur *pooram* rituals and customs which last for 36 hours give much priority to Elephants. Thrissur *Pooram* was first recorded in 1797 May 27th during the reign of Sakthan Thampuran. Initially the participants were *Paramekkavu* and *Thiruvambadi* temples, and later other small temples also joined. Participant deities of Thrissur *pooram* from eight fractions come to the *Vadakkunathan* temple with Elephant procession. *Pooram kodiya* occurs seven days before main *pooram*. *Poorakodiya* first occurs at *Laloor* temple followed by *Ayyanthole Karthiyan* temple, *Paramekkavu* and *Thiruvambadi* temple etc. Remaining eight temples will conduct the *kodiya* ritual at evening.

After *kodiyettam* the main deity of each temple will perform *Ezhunnallathu* on Elephant for *arattu* and reach *kokkurunni parambu* at *Vadakkunathan* temple premise. *Arattu* is followed by *parayeduppu* from their own localities on Elephant top. *Parayeduppu* is initiated in order to develop a direct relation with the deity and the devotee. In Thrissur *pooram*, through the ritual of *parayeduppu*, the deity visits on Elephant top each house and institution in the *thattakam*, and ensure participation of every community irrespective of caste or religion.

Pooravilambaram with Elephant

The ritual of *pooravilambaram* is entrusted with *Naithalakkau Bagavathy*. On the previous day of Thrissur *pooram*, an Elephant will mount the *thidambu* of *Naithilakkavu Bagavathy* and reach *sreemoolasthanam*, will open south *gopuram* of *Vadakkunathan* temple and will proceed towards southern side initiating *thekkottirakkam*. This event symbolizes the beginning of *pooram* and make the temple ambience ready for receiving *ezhunnallathu* of other deities. All the deities participating in the *pooram* will follow this ritual of *thekkottirakkam*.

On *pooram* day each participant deities reach *Vadakkunathan* with Elephant procession initiated by *Kanimangalam Sastha* starting with three Elephants and becoming nine Elephants when it reaches *Vadakkunathan* temple. These nine Elephants enter inside *Vadakkunathan* temple on *pooram* day and move towards *ilanjithara*. After *pandimelam* the Elephants move to *pandinjare gopuram* to meet *Karamukku Bagavathy* who has come for the fest, and after the climax of the *melam*, the Elephant procession moves to *Kulasseri* and the Lord dismounts there for the renewal of certain *pooja* and by evening 6.30 pm proceed towards Thrissur *Manikandal* and then to *Naikkanal*. After *panchavadyam* and *melam*, *Pooram* concludes from *nilapadu thara* and return back to *Kanimangalam*. Elephant Procession and *parayeduppu* continues for next day and *pooram kodiyirangal* or *kodikuthu* will take place on the same day.

Panamukkumpally Sastha comes with the procession of three Elephants, *Chembukkavu Bagavathy* and *Karamukku Bagavathy* temple start with one Elephant and increase to three and nine Elephants while entering into *Vadakkunathan* temple and after saluting Lord Siva proceeds for *Thekkottirakkam*. *Lalur Bagavathy* starts with five Elephants and increase to nine when it reaches *Vadakkunathan*, *Choorakattukavu Bagavathy* temple starts with one Elephant and joins remaining Elephants at *naduvilal* and becomes the procession of fourteen Elephants. *Bagavathi thidambu* is moved on to the tallest Elephant among the procession. Elephant with *thidambu* enters inside *Vadakkunathan* and after circumambulating the lord proceeds for *Thekkottirakkam* and reaches *Paramekkavu Bagavathy* temple and dismounts the *thidambu* for *pooja*. *Ayyanthol Bagavathy* temple proceeds for the *pooram* with thirteen Elephants and on her return back to *thattakam*, there will be *Chalidal* ritual i.e. Elephant taking out soil from earth with tusk and place it near *kodimaram*. *Neithilakkavu Bagavathy* starts with one Elephant and increases to eleven Elephants when reaching *Vadakkunathan*. These are the temples at different directions of *Vadakkunathan* temple. All Elephants representing deities will bow before Lord *Vadakkunathan* and lean towards *Thekkottirakkam*.

Madathil varavu by *Thiruvambadi deity* with Sreekrishna *thidambu* reaches *naduvil madam* by the procession of three Elephants on the *pooram* day, and is a unique practice. As per tradition, *naduvil madam*, being rich with three golden *nettipattam*, was asked for these to use for *Thiruvambadi* Elephants. *Muppil swamiyar*, then *madathipa*, told the people concerned to bring the Elephants to *naduvil madam* to receive the golden *nettipattam*. Later, even after the age of golden *nettipattam*, *Madathil varavu* continues as an important custom related to Thrissur *pooram ezhunnallathu*.

Three Elephants of *Thiruvambadi* temple will proceed to *naduvilal* and then to *naikkanal* and will become fifteen Elephants. Elephant with *thidambu* will go to *Vadakkunathan* and after circumambulation proceed through southern gopuram towards the statue of the ruler. *Paramekkavu Bagavathy* also reaches *Vadakkunathan*

with a procession of fifteen Elephants. After *Ilanjithara melam* Elephant with the idol of *Paramekkavu Bagavathy* moves around *Vadakkunathan* and proceeds for *thekkottirakkam*. *Thekkottirakkam* also has some popular memories to connect. According to some opinion it is to recall memories of going for *Arattupuzha pooram*. Some others opine this event as visiting *Pazhavor Bagavathy* worshipped at *Erattachira Kovilakam*.

Kudamattam, the changing of umbrellas, an important popular event in Thrissur *pooram*, was also conducted on Elephant top. Elephants of both *Paramekkavu* and *Thiruvambadi* temple will stand facing each other and conduct this event. This is considered to be a healthy competition for both team as each of them tries to bring innovations in umbrella making. Elephants also play an important role, as the event is more visible to the masses as it is on the top of Elephants. Thrissur *pooram* is the most important one which includes Elephants in its maximum. Along with procession of deity on Elephant top, there are many practices in which Elephant plays an inevitable role. Elephants with beautiful paraphernalia attract the people towards the temple space.

Upacharam Chollipiriyal

Role of Elephants is significant for the final ceremony of Thrissur *pooram*. It concludes with the important ritual *upacharamchollipiriyal*, where the main participant deities of *Paramekkavu* and *Thiruvambadi* temple bid farewell on the hosting temple ground of *Vadakkunathan*. Elephants carrying the *kolam* of both deities will raise its trunk and bid farewell. Thousands of people will participate in that event. Along with the main festivals, almost all Siva temples celebrate *Sivarathri* and Bagavathy temples celebrate *Kartika vilakku* with minimum one Elephant's *ezhunnallathu*. *Sivarathri* festival of *Vadakkunathan* which is celebrated in the month of *Kumbam*, is an occasion where the Elephants' procession will reach to the *Vadakkunathan* temple. All participant deities in Thrissur *pooram* will come on Elephants.

Guruvayur Kodiyetutsavam lasts for ten days. On the first day of *utsavam*, morning *seeveli* is conducted without the Elephant in order to commemorate the olden days when the temple did not own Elephants. The ritual of *Anayottam*, conducted prior to the temple festival, also reflects the importance given to the Elephants. According to the legends *Guruvayur* temple, a part of the *Nediyirippu Swaroopam* had to depend for Elephants to conduct festivals for *Trikkanaamatilakam* temple, which was under the jurisdiction of the ruler of Kochi. Due to the misconceptions between the two authorities Elephants were not send to *Guruvayur* festival as promised. As per the oral testimonies of the devotees, Elephants from *Trikkanaamatilakam* reach to *Guruvayur* temple by themselves after breaking the chains and restrictions and could conduct festival with Elephants. Elephants from *Trikkanaamathilakam* reach *Guruvayur* for the Lord's service.⁴⁰ *Anayottam* became a ritual in later days to memorise this particular event.⁴¹ *Guruvayur utsavam* starts with *anayottam* from *Manjula* near the temple to *kodimaram* inside the temple. The honour of carrying the *Thidambu* on its back during the festival goes to the Elephant that wins the race. Festivities go on for ten consecutive days.

Ekadasi celebration at *Guruvayur* and *Triprayar Sreerama* temple are also celebrated with *ezhunnallath* and *seeveli* of deity on top of the Elephant. *Guruvayur Ekadasi* Festival is considered to be very auspicious to the Hindus. On *Ekadasi* day there will be *seeveli* for three times. There will be almost thirty Elephants for procession and all these Elephants coming for the procession will be a *vazhipad* from the devotees. By 6.00 PM, *kazhcha seeveli* is conducted with Elephant, and the Lord is taken back inside the *sreelakam*. Between 1.00 AM and 4.00 AM, there will be *vilakku* procession and *panchavadyam*.

Triprayar pooram purappad is an important festival which celebrates seven days prior to the *Arattupuzha pooram*. On the first day of the festival, Lord comes

⁴⁰ P. Unnithan, *Guruvayur Kshetram Oru Parswadarshanam (Mal.)*, Guruvayur Devaswom Board, Guruvayur, 1982, p.13.

⁴¹ Personal Interview, Madhavan Kutty, Thiruvambady Devaswom, Thrissur, 20/10/2012.

on Elephant top and moves to *arattu* at *Sethukulam* which is one kilo meter away from *Triprayar* temple. There will be five Elephants for this *arattu* and after initiating *parayeduppu* and *padikkal pooram*, they return to *Triprayar* temple. On the second day, three Elephants join for procession and after *nadakkal pooram* and *arattu* at *puthankulam* proceed to *kattur pooram* in the evening. On the third day procession and *arattu* will be at *kannambilly chira* and evening there will be *kurukkan kulam arattu*.

***Chalukuthal* with Elephant**

On the fourth day, the Lord proceeds to *Valappad chira* which is four kilometres away and after *arattu* moves to *Painoor* paddy field and there is a unique custom known as *chalukuthal* or *Thalakkatu chalu*. People receive the mud taken by Elephant as it is considered as significant for getting high yield. Evening there will be *pooram* at *illams* and *arattu* at *Raman chira*. Fifth day *arattu* procession will be in the morning towards *Puthankulam* and evening procession towards *Triprayar*. Elephant procession proceeds towards *punnapilly*, *njanapilly* and after *parayeduppu* from *kunnathu manakkal* and *arattu* at *kuttamkulam*.

Sixth day Elephant procession is towards *padinjare mana* which is *thantri illam* of the temple. The procession proceeds with *parayeduppu* and visits to nearby temples and returns on seventh day after *arattu* at *puthenkulam* and reaches *Tripayar* temple and after necessary *poojas*, by evening proceeds towards *Arattupuzha pooram*. Large number of people will follow the *Thevar* procession towards *Arattupuzha*. Elephant procession will take a break in between *Chirakkal* and *Irinjalakkuda* and will reach the place called *kaitha valappu* through *Thevar* road. The procession is received with *panchavadyam* and *kootaezhunnallathu*. *Thevar pooram* lasts the whole night with Elephants representing *Urakam Bagavathy* on right side and *Cherppu Bagavathy* with *Chathakudam Sastha* on left side with *kootaezhunnallippu* with almost sixty Elephants.⁴²

⁴² Yogakshema Company, *Charitram (Mal.)* Mangalodayam Press, Thrissivaperur, 1925, p.108. <https://archive.org/details/pli.kerala.rare.32534/page/n109/mode/2up>, Last visited on 26/03/2024.

Festivals in Twentieth Century

Twentieth century can be considered as a period of great changes in the socio economic and political spheres. Colonial impact, socio religious reform movements, English education, decline of native rulers, deterioration of Brahminical hegemony, growth of communist ideologies as well as growth of national psyche all contributed towards such great changes during this age.

Temple festivals as well as the procession of Elephants also underwent severe ups and downs in twentieth century. When society passes from symbolic administration to participatory democracy, there will be a lot of changes in conducting festivals. Temples and its rituals including festivals were managed by temple *uralers* or brahmin families under the patronization of rulers from temple centered society to twentieth century. *Illam* and *mana* have much participation and specific roles in the festivals. Idols were given pooja in this Namboothiri houses during festival time. Festivals which were mainly handled by elites and *janmis* became a great question, as these groups were not in a status to afford the same. From *uralers* the administration and management of temples were shifted to a small organizing committee known as *pooram* committee. In the initial years of 1900, even Thrissur *pooram* was conducted by such groups. Later by the second decade of the nineteenth century, first *devaswom* committee for *pooram* was formed.

During the period of 1940s and 1950s, certain rituals and festivities associated with the *Pooram* in different parts of the temple had to be temporarily suspended. The era was marked by economic hardship and rationalist ideologies, which further threatened the continuation of the festival. With the changes due to land reform were implemented in the 1970s, the temple *uralar*, who were traditionally responsible for organizing the *pooram* festival, faced severe financial constraints. Thus 1950s to 1970s shows a transition phase from the conduct of festivals from Brahminical *uralars* to a group of festival enthusiasts in each locality, who managed to revive and elevate the *Pooram* into the grand celebration it is today.

Along with the festivals in *mahakshetrams*, there are some temples performing their festivals as *pooram* festival which can be generally categorised as *padahadi*, with large number of Elephants. For eg. *Parkkadi Bagavathy* temple near *Kunnamkulam*. The annual festival in the temple is known as *Thalappoli utsavam* and it is one of the largest festivals with a display of more than fifty Elephants. Besides these magnificent festivals, almost all temples perform other rituals like *prathisha dinam and arattu*, at least with the procession of one elephant.

As per the information, the proceedings of Cochin *Devaswom* board, Elephant Programme, published in 2019, mentions about various temples and its activities related to the temple rituals and ceremonies including *Prathishta Dinam*, *Niramala*, *Arattu*, *Navarathri*, *Ekadasi*, *Vilakku*, *Kodiyettam*, *Ulsavam*, *Vela*, *Kadavallur Annyonyam*, *Parayeduppu*, *Pallivetta*, *Sivarathri*, *Karthika*, *Thalappoli*, and *Thiruvathira*.⁴³ Number of Elephants used for these festivals vary from one to seven in numbers.

Koodalmanikyam temple festivals, *Uthralikkavu pooram*, *Kodungallur thalappoli*, *Chembuthara Makarachowa*, *Peruvanam pooram* and *Anjoor Parkkadi pooram* etc. are some temple festivals held around Thrissur where Elephants are an important part. *Kodungallur thalappoli* includes four days celebration with large number of Elephants. Morning *seeveli* and evening *ezhunnallath* with seven or nine Elephants is the common ritual of the festival. Besides Thrissur, other festivals famous for Elephant parades in central Kerala are *Nenmara Vallangi vela*, *Chinakkathoor Pooram*, *Thattamangalam Angadi vela*, *Manappullikkavu vela*, *Poornathrayeesa Festival in Tripunithura*, *Ernakulam Shiva Temple Festival* etc. Other than central Kerala, in *Moothakunnam Narayanamangalam* temple, *Vaikathashtami*, *Thirunakkara Temple Festival* of Kottayam, *Ithithanam Ulsavam*, *Ettumanoor Temple Festival*, *Ayiramkanni Bhagavathy Temple Festival*, *Paripally Kodimootil Bhagavathy Temple Festival* etc. Elephants are used in large number.

⁴³ Elephant Programme, Cochin Devaswom Board Booklet, 1194 ME, p.17.

Pidiyana Pooram Festival

Only few temples in Thrissur conduct festivals with she Elephant instead of tusk. *Harikanyaka* temple at *Ariyannoor* conduct temple festival with female elephant. *Edapally Cheranellur Karthyayini Bhagavathi* temple celebrates festival with *pidiyana* or cow Elephants. As per the belief of these temples, deity is in virgin and premarital form, and hence preferred she-Elephants to be used in the event. Five to Seven Elephants participate for the event.

Devavahana Beyond Elephants

Elephants are considered and accepted as *devavahana* in majority of the rituals and festivals in Kerala especially Central Kerala. Other than Elephants there are some other vahana which are accepted as prestigious for the procession of the deities in public. They are *ratha* or chariot, palanquin, or horse- all these are considered as royal vehicles during medieval days. *Kalpathy Ratholsavam* in Palakkad, initiated with Elephants, is an eleven-day celebration and on the final three days, chariots of the four temples carry their respective deities to the main temple. *Thiruvanchikulam* temple at *Kodungallur* uses palanquin for the everyday ritual procession of deities Siva and Parvathy to *palliyara* for *dampathi* pooja.

Central Kerala also provides alternatives for elephantine festivals in few temples with artificial horses or *poikuthira*. *Machad Mamangam*, *Magad*, *Manimalar kavu*, *Velur*, *Thattamangalam* at Palakkad etc. gives importance to horse motif. Presently almost all the temples are incorporating the Elephant for *pooram* to the next day of *vela*. *Anthi Mahakalan kavu* in *Chelakkara*, *Thrissur* district celebrate the *kala vela* with an artificial *kala* or bullock.

For the rituals and festivals of Cochin Thirumala *devaswom*, the temple of *Gowda Saraswath Brahmins* at *Ernakulam*, Elephants are used for the procession of Lord during festival days. *Aarat* festivals in the month of *vrichikam* and *medam* are famous. After the hoisting of the Garuda design flag, there will be two times

procession every day on mornings and evenings. Image of *Venkateswara* is taken on caparisoned Elephant for procession. In another procession, the image of *Venkateswara* is carried in various vahana decked with costly ancient diamond - studded jewels and garlands. The vahana that carry the image of *Venkateswara* each day are made of wooden motif of *garuda*, *hanuman*, *hamsa*, *airavatha*, *ashwa*, *sesha* besides *pushpaka vimana*.⁴⁴

On the eighth day afternoon, the deity is taken to the lake mandapam for the final bath called as *avabritha snanam*. Before the performance of *avabritha snanam* a procession of the community people carrying deity on shoulders accompanied by two caparisoned Elephants will take place. After *avabritha snanam* the processional deity of Lord *Venkateswara* is seated on the throne at the *mandapam* in the middle of the temple tank, and after *arattu*, the processional deity is taken on golden palanquin with caparisoned Elephants carrying *thidambu* embossed with an image of *Venkateswara*, and from the lake *mantapam* enters inside the temple through eastern *gopuram*.⁴⁵ Among *kizhedams* temples of Thirumala *devaswom*, *Mahishasuramardini* temple at Kochi uses Elephants on the festival day, with a representative image of goddess taken on caparisoned Elephant with the beating of drums to the houses of the devotees.

Increase in the Number of Festivals with Elephant Procession

As socio religious practices can be categorized into two, like elite culture and popular culture, there will be a general tendency to follow and imitate the customs and practices of higher caste. With the melting of caste and achieving economic independence, the non-Brahminical sessions of society also followed an institutionalized pattern of rituals and festivals like upper caste along with their cultural traits.

⁴⁴ N.Purushothama Mallayya, History of Cochin Thirumala Devaswaom and the Keezhedams, Cochin Thirumala Devaswaom Publication, Cochi, 2007, p.11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.15.

Thrissur *pooram* was not mentioned in any newspaper or journals in late nineteenth century. Cochin State Manual by C Achutha Menon published in 1911, mentioned *Arattupuzha* festival incorporating elephant procession with spectators between fifteen to twenty thousand but didn't mention about Thrissur *pooram*. The number of Elephants used for each temple festival and the number of festivals using Elephants for festival was limited until latter half of the twentieth century. This is evident from scrutinizing the news reports in Mathrubumi Daily. The years from 1923 to 1960s show limited number of news related to Elephants and Elephant festivals while its increase can be seen from 1970s and later decades.

With the decline of *illams* such ceremonies came to an end in the '50s and '60s. Then the locals of the area took charge, and they started collecting the fund to conduct festivals. They formed temple committees, and the number of Elephants were increased. In 1926, there was a written constitution for *Paramekkavu* allowing only communities above *Nairs* as the main participants. In 1943 *Cherppu Aswathy Vela*, also known as *Nair vela* began with almost 3 to 5 Elephants. Temple management was shifted from the brahmin *uralers* to elites of other communities and then to local people. 1960 onwards shows the increasing number of news related with Elephants in festival. 1970s marked a great socio-economic change in the history of Kerala. In order to make the availability of Elephants for rituals and festivals, temples decided to buy Elephants for themselves. *Guruvayur devaswom* owns most Elephants, followed by Cochin *devaswom*. Administrative Report of The Cochin *Devaswom* Board published in the year 1976-77, mentions about the number of Elephants maintained as twelve and these elephants were rented out to private parties based on their availability. They were also given to other institutions at concessional rates and used for carrying timber at scheduled rates. An elephant consultant was appointed with an honorarium of Rs. 100 per month for treating the elephants.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Administrative Report of The Cochin Devaswom Board, Cochin Devaswom Board Press, Thrichur, 1976-77, Regional Archives, Ernakulam.

Temples like *Paramekkavu*, *Thiruvambady* and many others bought their own Elephants and started using them for *velas* and other important days. Major temples began the trend of buying Elephants since 1970s.

Revival of regional identities especially cultural unique elements were considered as the desire of the youth of this decade. Almost all temples in Kerala engage at least one Elephant for temple rituals and festivals. First and foremost, huge size of Elephants enabled visibility for the deity. Secondly being a herbivorous animal, Elephants can be considered as pure as per temple concepts, and even its dung or urine are not considered as impure in temple ambience and doesn't need any purification process. Number of festivals and using of Elephants were comparatively high in central Kerala, which is supported by all communities beyond religious barrier. Some Church and Mosque at Thrissur accommodated Elephants in to their cultural space.

Elephants in Church and Mosque Festivals

Susan Bailey in her work emphasises mainly on the shared beliefs and practices among the St.Thomas Christians, the Muslims and the Hindus in Kerala. Such shared beliefs and practices can be seen in the case of Elephants among Christians and Muslims of central Kerala. Along with temples, Churches and Mosques of central Kerala perform festivals with Elephant procession. During Medieval Kerala itself, Syrian Christians of south Kerala used the practice of leasing out temple elephants to the Syrian worshippers on rent basis on the occasion of festival processions.⁴⁷ While in central Kerala, *Adupputty* Church festival at *Kunnamkulam*, Thrissur district is the foremost among them parading almost fifty caparisoned Elephants for their festival. Church at *Kottekad* as well as *Parappokkara* in the district of Thrissur also practice church festival with Elephant mounting the *kolam* of their deity. Elephants are being used for *Chandanakudam Nercha* of Thrissur, Palakkad and Malappuram district. *Nercha* at *Kaliyar* road, *Pavarty*

⁴⁷ Lisha C John, Christianity in Medieval Kerala: A Study of Family Histories, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Hyderabad, 2015, p.115.

Maruthayur Mosque, Patambi nercha, BP Angadi nercha, Vattekkad, Chettuva, Chavakkad and Manthala nercha etc. were celebrated with three to five Elephants.

Elephant procession as the part of the *Chandanakudam nercha* festival is visible in Thrissur, Malappuram and Palakkad regions while other regions kept aloof from the same. In the *nercha* festival, the devotees follow the Elephant procession known as *Thaboorth*. Reaching the mosque the *Thaboorth* will be placed near the person in honour. Then *Kodiyetta Kazhcha* from nearby mosque and other places will reach there. The *kodis* or flag from these places will be tied to the tree in front of the mosque. And thereby ends the *Kodikayattam*. In the afternoon, nearby places will have Elephant procession and *Kootti Ezhunellipu*. Festival concludes with the entry of *nattukazhcha* at the mosque premises.

Cultural practices generally move across regions and communities through the process of direct or indirect contact. Those who witnessed festivals which incorporated Elephants, will carry its prestige and proud to their own locality and communities. Thus cultural uniqueness of one region will transcend geographical and religious boundaries with slight variations in the process of dissemination. The use of Elephants in festivals emerged in Thrissur spread to other parts of central Kerala with maximum and other parts of Kerala in its minimum. This particular element emerged in elite Brahminical temples, later diffused to all other temples in its maximum, and festival space of other communities in minimum.

Rituals play an important role in the socio-cultural space of humans. Customs associated with belief system which succeeded in making a cosmos in human mind will remain for a long span in ritual history. Temples and evolution of rituals and festivals were established in society during the time when our political system was undergoing symbolic administration under monarchy. Rituals and festivals were designed in such a way that royal symbols were manifested through the deity, creating an equilibrium between the ruler and the deity. Through royal patronage, temples gained prosperity and in turn rulers secured legitimacy and reinforced their Kshatriya status.

Elephants, the most magnificent symbol which added into the ritual tradition of Kerala history, remains for centuries with an increasing role. Rituals have a passive participation limited to a small circle of people compared to festivals which have maximum participation of people. Festivals of central Kerala, especially with large number of Elephant procession, evolved as a space for common platform and it acted as an agent for social interaction by latter half of twentieth century. Festivals even though celebrated in temple ambience, acquired the nature of secular public celebration of a region that can act as a platform for bringing people together by breaking all the barriers of social stigma.

Rituals and festivals played a great role in making a popular culture in favor of Elephant. In turn, Elephants help to preserve festal ambience in the memory of people and also played an important role in popularizing temples and other religious institutions of central Kerala through its festivals. Elephants remained as cultural magnates to attract people towards these rituals and festivals. In turn these rituals and festivals helped the Elephants to come on the limelight of the cultural arena. Along with these rituals and festivals there are some other factors which contribute towards increasing the passion for Elephants among the people of central Kerala. That dynamics will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER - 5

PASSION AS POPULAR CULTURE: ASPECTS OF CULTURAL CONDITIONING AND MENTALITY FORMATIONS

Passion can be defined as strong emotion or feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something. Post-modernist paradigm incorporated study of emotions as a newly emerging field in History. Thinkers like Lucian Febvre, Peter Stearns, Willam Reddy and Joanna Bourke have made significant contributions in the history of emotions. According to Barbara H Rosenwein, some emotions are instinct or individual construction while others are socio cultural construction.¹ Present study concentrates on the evolution of passion as an emotion among the people of Central Kerala especially the people of Thrissur towards the Elephants which have played significant role in socio cultural and economic aspects of their life. The study regards passion for Elephants in Central Kerala which has developed as both individual as well as social construction in modern Thrissur district as the core area and spread to nearby district which shares the border with Thrissur.

Popular culture can be simply defined as the culture which is widely followed and accepted by many people of a given region. The phenomenon of passion evolved in the region under mentioned became popular culture encompassing a wide range of cultural expressions, beliefs, attitudes, trends, practices and phenomena that are prevalent within main stream of society at a given time among general public. Elephants were nailed in the visual thalamus and visual cortex of the people of Central Kerala in present days.

As per the opinion of some scholars including Lev Vygotsky, socio cultural elements influence how individuals think, feel and behave in a particular society. Cultural conditioning helps for the formation of mentalities in a particular society. It is a process through which one absorbs and interprets the influences, norms, and

¹ Barbara H Rosenwein, *Angers's Past: The Social Users of An Emotion in the Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1998, p.34.

forces from the environment and translate them into what is believed to be acceptable behaviours. People of Central Kerala were born, grown, lived and evolved in an environment which is attached to Elephants. A unique cultural feature that favour Elephants was formed through last decades in this geographical region and it became part of socio cultural environment. The exposure to this culture resulted in a set of attitudes and beliefs that one internalize and develop. These beliefs became central in creating our behaviour, interest, ambitions in favour of Elephants, and influence the pattern of accepting, assigning and assimilating Elephants in to our socio cultural sphere.

As per Annals school of thought, Mentality emerges as mental stage of people of a given community or region over a period of time, consciously or unconsciously by different elements of the society. Present study highlights the feeling of enthusiasm and excitement of the people towards the Elephants in the region of Central Kerala especially for the natives of Thrissur. It also examines the various elements which generate passion towards Elephants and formation of popular culture through establishment of supportive mentality and analyses the elements contributed towards conditioning the people of central Kerala for forging Elephants as inevitable in the cultural geography. People are culturally conditioned to a positive attitude towards Elephants and that led to the evolution of mentality. Following factors conditioned the formation of positive mentality towards the giant starting from the distant past to the present time.

Role of Mythical Elephants

Myths and legends played an important role in evolving affinity towards Elephants as they illustrated Elephants with divinity as well as with supernatural powers. Ancient Indian Epics like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha* and *Puranas* created an elevated status for Elephants. From the deity of *Ganapathy*, legends of *Airavatha* and *Gajendramoksha*, to the concepts of *ashtadigajas*, and *Gajalakshmi*, epics played their role in the evolution of a positive attitude towards Elephant.

Lord Ganapathy with Elephant face-initiated respect and honour towards Elephants. It is said that when Lord *Siva* replaced the head of *Ganapathy* with that of an Elephant, he became extremely wise, powerful and intelligent. Image of Lord *Ganapathy* infiltrated to interior regions of all parts of India even though the cult is not personally supported by any *bhakti* movement. In almost all temples in Kerala, there is an Elephant faced *Ganapathy prathishta* considered as Lord *Vigneswaran*, who remove all hindrance and obstacles in the way to achieve our goal.² *Sree Kakkad Maha Ganapathy temple*, *Naduvilal Ganapthi temple*, *Thiruvambady Mahaganapathy temple*, *Edappilly Mahaganapathy Temple* etc. are main Ganapathy temples in Central Kerala. Other temples also have *Ganapathy* as sub deity and have *Ganapathy prathishata*.

The ritual of *prathyaksha Ganapathy homam* has been conducting in temples of Thrissur and Palakkad with Elephant as *prathyaksha Ganapathy* since 1980s. An Elephant without a mahout on top is considered as equal to *Ganapathy* and need to give due respect to the giant.³ Devotees consider Elephants as representation of *Ganapathy* and develop a kind of adoration towards Elephants which helped for conditioning the mass for a supportive mentality towards Elephants. The perception of divine images of *Ganapathy* holds a significant place in the hearts and minds of individuals across various cultures and regions, and the images of Elephant headed God whether in the form of statues, paintings, symbols, or other artistic representations evoke a wide range of emotions and beliefs, reflecting deep-seated connection with the divinity as well as Elephant. Along with the image of *Ganapathy*, the Elephant face has also become a part of collective memory of the people of central Kerala.

Devotion to *Ganapathy* will switch to admiration in the case of the mythical figure *Airavatha*. Legendary figure of *Airavatha*, the white Elephant, is widely popular as the king of Elephant. As white Elephant is unfamiliar, the figure of

² Personal Interview, Praveen Namboothiri, Temple Priest, Palakkad, 22/03/2023.

³ Personal Interview, Chandramathi, Native of Thrissur, 4/06/2022.

Airavatha is always attached with the element of curiosity and wonder. As per Puranic Encyclopedia, *Airavatha* came from the churning of the river *palazhi* and became the vehicle of Devendra. White Elephant depicted in many paintings and pictures with grand feathered wings adorned with elaborate ornaments impressed the minds and thoughts of people. Most probably children of twentieth century from the text book of preliminary class to children's magazines will be definitely fascinated by the image of this majestic white Elephant. White Elephant is believed to be the icon of prosperity and richness as per several traditional literature and legends.

Along with *Airavatha*, *Gajendramoksha*, picture of a tusker holding up lotus in trunk caught by crocodile on leg, became a popular painting even before the story of that tusker Gajendra was known. From the mural paintings of Sreekrishnapuram palace to the annual calendar pictures, the image is stuck in our mind and memory. Curiosity for that image fulfills from the story of *Gajendramoksha*, and as per the story, the tusker *Indradyumna* entered the pond to drink water. When a crocodile caught hold on the leg of the Elephant, tusker prayed Lord Vishnu for help then riding on an eagle Mahavishnu appeared before them. With using his *Cakrayudha* the wheel-weapon lord Vishnu gave deliverance to both. Along with *Gajendramoksha* the concept of *Ashtadigajas* in the form of eight male and female Elephants who safeguard earth from different directions also admired the mind of people at least in a limited manner. *Agnipurana* listed a number of things which can be categorised into good and bad dreams. Among that climbing on the top of Elephant is considered as good. *Gajalakshmi*, Goddess of prosperity who appears on the background of ocean also reverberates in the mind of people. These images serve as powerful symbols of faith, offering comfort, inspiration, and moral guidance. All these mythical characters with Elephant as main feature evolved in the remote past and continues to exist in present days in different forms like sculpture, paintings, icons, depiction in literature, movies, cartoons etc. All these mythological Elephants have played a significant role in creating a sense of admiration towards the Elephant.

Role of Elephants in Rituals and Festivals

Beyond the stories conditioned from childhood days, practices associated with religious institutions play an important role in framing an atmosphere that inculcate passion for Elephants. Customs, rituals and tradition incorporating Elephants which developed in religious institutions were accepted and followed by the people and it became the part and parcel of belief systems. Based on the rituals mentioned in *Thantra samuchaya* of sixteenth century, deities of Central Kerala chose Elephants as *devavahana*. Deities come out of the *sreekovil* on Elephant top and gradually became inevitable in the temple ritual like *seeveli* and festival *ezhunnallathu*, which assigned divine status for the Elephants. As they continued the centuries old tradition of Elephant procession in festivals, people of Central Kerala cannot imagine an alternative vahana for the procession of their deities. Offering of the devotees like *nadayiruthal* and *chuttuvilakku* elevated the role of Elephants in temples.

Festivals which paraded large number of Elephants, boosted for pinning Elephants in the canvas of people's retention as they are capable of providing episodic memory and made the Elephant an icon of temple festivals and more fascinating one for the people. Festival passion can be seen as *Aana kambam*, *Mela Kambam*, *Chamaya kambam* or otherwise as the amalgamation of above all. Festivals increased the passion for Elephants and in turn Elephants attracted people to festivals.

In the early decades of twentieth century, only limited temples used Elephants for their temple festivals. This fact is supported by the advertisement appeared on 21st April 1910 in the *Mangalodayam* magazine, which was administered by the esteemed *Yoga Khemsa Sabha*. The advertisement announced the auction of Elephants owned by Panjal Mathur *Manakkal Sankaran Nambuthirippad*, shortly after the vibrant festivities of Thrissur Pooram. At that time, the auction was scheduled to take place at the famous *mana* of Thrissur Chengallur *Namboothiri*. It also mentioned that auction

is for eight male Elephants and two cow Elephants. Shankaran *Namboothiripad*, renowned for his profound passion for Elephants, emerged as a prominent figure in the Kerala Elephant trade during this period. His involvement underscored his leadership in navigating the intricate dynamics of Elephant commerce, highlighting his significant influence in shaping the Elephant trade in Kerala. The advertisement further detailed that interested parties seeking information about the Elephants could reach out to Shornur *Cherthuurutthi Mannazhi Manakkal Thuppan Namboothiripad*. In those days the journey to acquire Elephants through auction was a cherished endeavour for many, particularly for high caste socio economic elite families. The Elephants procured through these auctions held great value, often fetching handsome prices upon their arrival in *Mana*.⁴ During those times, large number of Elephants was a rare spectacle, often reserved for grand events such as *Peruvanam Pooram* or Thrissur *Pooram*.

Traditional and popular temple festivals and ceremonies incorporating Elephants in large numbers is concentrated in Central Kerala, with Thrissur as core area, because festivals like *Peruvanam*, *Arattupuzha* and Thrissur *pooram* are held in this region. From this core, vibe of Elephants in festivals was spread to the nearby areas, ie. Earnakulam in south and Malappuram and Palakkad in the north and north east respectively. Presently Thrissur is having a greater number of temple festivals with large number of Elephants. As the part of *Pooram* care for Elephants, many arrangements are done by temple authorities, Elephants fans associations, and natives of each locality. Arrangements for food, water and Elephant bath, space for Elephant relaxation etc. were done by them. If the procession of deity is at day time, procession path is frequently watered in regular interval in order to cool down the heat.

Rituals and ceremonies incorporating Elephants have contributed an element of divinity for the giant. *Aithihymalayile anakathakal* mentions about such features during early decades of twentieth century. This trend got widened as per the need

⁴ Mathrubhumi Daily, Thrissur, 12 /07/2024.

and demand for inclusion of Elephants in almost all temples of Central Kerala. Elephants were included in more and more ceremonies of Central Kerala during the later decades of twentieth century. During festival seasons, Elephants assigned as *Deva vahana* would reach all houses in the *thattakam* as part of *parayeduppu* or *gramapradakshinam* through which Elephant and people came closer.

In some customs, Elephants acquire divinity along with the deity, and in some situations, Elephants are represented as deity and act for deity. As per the ritual of *chalukuthal*, deity who comes on Elephant top is blessing the agricultural field and irrigation system which supported the livelihood.⁵ Such social rituals help to create a deep intimacy between Elephants and common people. The custom like *chalukuthal* or taking the sand out from field is done by Elephant with its tusk is considered as an act which connect Elephant with daily life of the people. The practices such as Elephant *Chalukuthal* conducted in between *Ekadasi* festival of *Triprayar* as well as procession of Ayyanthol *Bagavathy* during Thrissur *pooram* in central Kerala, make Elephants more attached to human life.

Temples added more and more rituals incorporating Elephants in temple festivals. Important customs in Thrissur *pooram* like *kodiyettam*, *Parayeduppu*, *koota ezhunnallippu*, *poora vilambaram*, *Madathil varavu*, *Thekkotirakkam*, *Kudamattam*, *Upacharam cholli piriya*, *kodiyirakkam*, and customs like *Gramabali*, *thalappoli*, *Anayottam*, *Anayootu* of Guruvayur festival- all created an ambiance for elevating demand to the great giant. Large number of temple festivals in central Kerala opened the path for frequent connection with Elephants and people.

Traditional temple festivals incorporated temples of nearby sub urban elites and initiated Elephant procession since the beginning of *pooram* festival. Meanwhile Elephant in festivals were unapproachable for the lower social strata. With socio economic legal changes and newly emerged middle class, the proliferation of temple festivals using Elephants became a reality in Thrissur by 1970s onwards. By 1990s

⁵ Personal Interview, Vinod Kandankavil, Writer, Thrissur, 23/03/2022.

almost all temples of Central Kerala imitated the practice of Elephant procession in temples.

Along with Elephant procession in temple festivals, few of Christian Churches and Muslim festivals like *nercha* incorporate Elephants. *Adappooty perunnal* at Kunnamkulam Church celebrates their festival with large number of Elephants ranging above fifty.⁶ Even small children closely interact with Elephants during that festival times. Elephants who reach the church premise get grand welcome from natives. Finally, all Elephants from each area will reach church ambience with the *Kolam* of their saint. Twenty-five Elephants participated for *Pazhanji* St. Mary's orthodox cathedral festival at *Kunnamkulam*.⁷

Memories are framed by things we absorb from sensory organs like what we have seen, heard, smelled, touched and tasted. Elephants have the capacity to invoke the iconic memory, that is memory formed from our eye visions, and echoic memory, the memory from sound. While going through a particular thing or image repeatedly, it will help linking the gap between our Neurons and helps for a synaptic transmission. Beyond the works in timber industries, as the part of festivals, people of Central Kerala come across Elephants daily and frequently. This visual impact created by the Elephant occupied prior place among the reasons for increasing passion towards Elephants.

Fascination for Elephant as Elite property

As elite property, Elephants were owned by rulers or *naduvazhis*, temples, Brahmins as well as other socio-economic elites like landed Jenmis. Thus, Elephants acted as a property which belonged to *Rajaswam*, *Devaswom* and *Brahmaswams*. The whole authority over the temple lands and the agricultural lands were in the form of corporate property as *brahmaswam* and *devaswom* made the *Brahmins* as a power factor in medieval Kerala.⁸

⁶ Personal Interview ,Rosakutty, Native of Thrissur, 22/05/2024.

⁷ Malayala Manorama, Thrissur, 3/10/2022.

⁸ Mishitha K., *Dominium Populy Dominium Terra: Social Construction of Property Right In Pre-Modern Kerala (A.D 1200 - 1800 A.D)*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of Sociology, Calicut University, Calicut, 2019, p.5.

Famous Elephants since early half of twentieth century like *Guruvayur* Padmanaban and Kesavan belonged to *Guruvayur* temple while *Chengallur* Ranganathan, *Akavur* Govindan, *Koodalattupuram* Ramachandran belonged to Brahmin families. It illustrates that Elephants were considered to be the exclusive property of socio religious elite until the early decade of the twentieth century and created a sense of prestige in society. *Namboothiri illams*, *manas* or *Nair* families who were passionate towards Elephants were used to maintain Elephants until the last quarter of the twentieth century. Namboothiri hegemony and dominance in society can be seen through their Elephant ownership. In Thrissur Main Namboothiri *Illams* and Mana like *Chengallur*, *Keerangattu mana*, *Avanamparambu*, *Desamangalam*, *Koodalattupuram* along with *Poomulli* and *Varikkaseeri* at *Palakkad*, *Swaroopam* like *Kavalappara* maintain Elephant with great pride and fame. Names of these families got famous by the names of their Elephants- for instance *Kavalappara Swaroopam* became renowned *through the Elephant Kavalapara* Komban.

Chengallur mana located at *Anthikad* in Thrissur district, possessed large acres of land and they owned the famous Elephant *Chengallur* Ranganathan who was recorded as the tallest Elephant who lived in Kerala, measuring approximately of 11 feet 3 inches in height. Initially, it was owned by the *Srirangam* Temple in Tamil Nadu, where it was assigned the duty of transporting water for temple use. However, due to his exceptional height, he was unable to pass through the temple's entrance or gopuram which led to his auction. He was subsequently purchased by Parameshwaran Namboothiri of *Chengallur* Mana in Kerala. Ranganathan became a prominent figure in religious and cultural events, regularly participating in various temple festivals, including Thrissur *Pooram*. Following his death in 1917 a British official insisted that Elephant's skeleton should be preserved and displayed at the Thrissur Museum after performing the necessary rituals where it is accessible to the public even today.

Koodalattupuram Ramachandran was a famous Elephant who was owned by Narayanan Namboothirippad, of Koodalattupuram mana near *Cheruthuruthi* during

1920s. Ramachandran participated in almost all famous festivals and his mahout, Gopalan Nair, shared a deep and enduring attachment, characterized by remarkable loyalty and affection. Ramachandran's contributions to festivals such as *Peruvanam*, *Arattupuzha*, and Thrissur *Pooram* were particularly noteworthy. These events, steeped in tradition and cultural significance, were greatly enhanced by his majestic presence. In all these festivals, Ramachandran was more than just a participant, who was adored by the crowd. His grace in these vibrant celebrations elevated the festivals' splendour till his death in the year 1954.

Experts for treating Elephants also belonged to *Namboothiri* families like Avanamparambu Maheswaran *Namboothiripad*, who learned and practiced *Hastyayurveda* from his ancestors like Avanapparambu Narayanan *Namboothiripad*, and treated Elephants for more than seventy decade. He was the ultimate word in this field. Maheswaran *Namboothiripad* reminisces about his childhood in a household which domesticated Elephants, his grandfather's expertise in taming Elephants, his love for these giant pets and his long career in healing Elephants. He dwells upon the incompetence of new mahouts in treating Elephants in contrast to traditional mahouts.

These *illams* or manas were cautious about the well-being of magnificent creatures, beyond profit motive. Poomulli Neelakandan *Namboothiripad* was a renowned Elephant expert who had treated a number of Elephants and Madambu Kunjikuttan, an expert in *Hastyayurvedam*, belonged to Central Kerala.

Hence Elephants being the property of socio economic and political elites, it amassed prestige in society. Those who afforded to maintain the Elephants and those who have passion for the Elephants, tried to own it as a matter of prestige. After socio economic changes like land reforms and gulf migration by latter half of 20th century, newly emerged rich families were able to afford and maintain Elephants as a symbol of their prestige which fulfilled their childhood dreams. Using Elephants, they wished to increase their fame and social status along with economic status. Now a days Elephants are owned by temple *Devaswom* as well as socio economic elites.

Significance of Elephant Caparisons

Anakambam or attraction towards Elephants is followed by *chamayakambam* or attraction for Elephant ornaments. Cultural Aesthetics of Elephant festivals were well reflected in Elephant ornaments like *nettipattam* or *Thalekettu*, *Thidambu* or *kolam*, *Alavattam*, *Venchamaram*, *Varnakuda*, Elephant chain with bells, neck bell, bells for the forelegs, bigger bells on either side of the body. Among these, *alavattam*, *venchamaram*, *muthukuda* etc. are used for deity in *thidambu*, as these are royal symbols. Other ornaments except these were developed purely for decorating Elephants. Ornaments for Elephants change according to the context.

Ancient Indian texts mention about ornamenting Elephants with metals for safety and protection during warfare. Ancient Literature mentions that Lord *Brahma* created head dress for first time for *Airavatha*. As vital point of Elephants is its forehead, protection shield made of metal was used for them during war and they might have evolved to different forms in later days. When the Elephants changed its space from war field to imperial palace, ornaments became more beautiful and attractive in order to reflect royal dignity. As Elephants were used in ceremonial and festival space since early days the most attractive ornaments were used by the giants.

The Elephant ornaments used in present temple festivals of Kerala might have been its origin as an indigenous ornamenting style as we cannot find similar types in other parts of India. North Indian architecture represents Elephant images and sculptures in which Elephants were represented without headdress or with headdress which is entirely different from Kerala style *nettipattam*. *Nettipattam* have common features and designs. They are built with base of jute and red canvas. Initially *nettipattam* was made with brass and plated with gold which made it so costly. Each part of it represents Divinities like Brahma and Vishnu, *Chadrakala* representing Siva either seven, nine or eleven in numbers Edakinnagal representing sub *gana*. Making of *nettipattam* starts from placing moola Ganapathy then proceed for central bowl then *Lakshmi* and *Saraswathy* then fill five balls representing *pancha boothas* or five elements that constitute the universe, and then places

Chandrakala in descending size. After that *ashtalakshmi* was placed and then *nava graha* concept is also added to *nettipattam* in order to fulfil bio geometry requirements as it *harmonies* energy exchange with environment. *Podippu* in seven colours like red, green, blue, yellow and orange were used for decoration, *kannakalanchi* of *nettipattam* will be at the eye portion of the Elephant. *Kalanchi* is the hanging part at the tip of *nettipattam*. *Podippu* and *thongal* give a fine and celebration tone for *nettipattam*. *Kacha* in white colour will be at the backside of the *nettipattam* and it is used for covering upper portion of the Elephant.

Elephant paraphernalia especially *nettipattam*, is believed to be developed in to the present form by Keerangattu mana Sankaran Namboothiri of *Peruvanam* village.⁹ These *nettipattam* were believed to be used during the procession of *Cherppu Bagavathi* in *Peruvanam pooram*. Elephant ornaments were made out of pure gold, being the major wealth of the time, and only *Kovilakams* and *Namboothiri illams* along with few temples were afforded to own this. During the early years of twentieth century, native rulers with colonial aid and technological advancement, were ready to pledge the golden *thalekettu* of Urakam temple, especially for the construction of Cochin -Shornur railway line.¹⁰ It reflects the value of *nettipattam* made of gold, as its worth moves beyond mere ornamental or aesthetic appreciation to serve a practical financial purpose. This act can also signify a ruler's commitment to public welfare and demonstrating willingness for regional development. Varikkassery *mana* who owned *nettipattam* used to provide it for Elephants of Thiruvambadi temple during Thrissur *pooram*.

Palappo thalekkattu was considered to be the most traditional *nettipattam* and being the lengthiest one it can be used for the taller Elephants. In the year 1960 *Guruvayur* Padmanaban with *palappo thalekkattu* participated in Thrissur *Pooram* for Thiruvambadi side. *Cherppu* temple also claims their unique *nettipattam* called *palakka choral poli* for their Elephant who carries their Lord. There were traditional

⁹ Personal Interview, Vinod Kandankavil, Writer, Thrissur, 14/04/2023.

¹⁰ Panchayat Development Report, Cherppu, 2000, p.15.

Nettipattam makers associated with traditional temple festivals. They used to make *nettipattams* for *Peruvanam*, *Arattupuzha* and Thrissur *poorams*. When the number of Elephant festivals increased during 1970s specialization in each minute works became the trend. Gold plating, stitching, and *podippu* fixing etc. were done by different experts from different centers.

Kuthokkarans family adorning Elephants during *kudamattom* ceremony of Thrissur *pooram* have nailed their names in the process of *nettipattam* gold plating.¹¹ This Christian family based at Cherppu in Thrissur district is attached to the work for generations reflect the fact that religion was not a barrier for making the festival prouder. *Kuthokkarans* family got into the work as Keerangattu Sankaran *Namboothiri* assigned gold plating of *nettipattom* for them. Present members of this family continue the work, which is closely linked with festivals of the region for almost four generations.

In Thrissur few families keep their tradition of making *nettipattam*. Thus, the Kuthokkarans family continues the tradition of *chamayam* making till the date. These families were located at Cental Kerala especially in Thrissur area and the festival organisers used to hire their work and talent for the festivals beyond central Kerala. Though all sorts of craft underwent or witnessed sweeping changes down the generations, the craft of making *nettipattam* is one vocation which has withstood the test of time. There are mainly three types of *nettipattam* known as *choral poli*, *nagapadam* and *vandodu* based on the special design used for decorating main portions of the *nettipattam*. *Choorapoli nettipattam* weighs around twenty-kilogram and it got its name as it incorporates *Choorapoli* design to decorate around each *kumila* and other part of the *nettipattam*.¹² This type is the lengthiest as it is used for the Elephant at the center or the *kolam* Elephant. Presently this cost up to Rs. 1, 60, 000. There have not been many innovations in the traditional design of *nettipattam*. It has not witnessed any significant changes and continue to remain the same.

¹¹ The New Indian Express, Ernakulam, 10/05/2019.

¹² Personal Interview, Muraleedaran, *Nettipattam* Maker, Aranattukara, 19/04/2023.

In the Second type of *nettippattam* known as *nagapadam*, the shape of snake head is used to decorate. This type is used for the Elephants at both left and right side of the centre Elephant. Third type of *nettippattam*, known as *vandodu*, shaped like bee face, is used for accompanying Elephants during *ezhunnallathu*. *Nettipattam* is attached with popular culture in such a way that they are being using as decorative item at household and other secular institutions. *Kazhuthu mani* which is the neck bell, *palla mani* or belly bell, *kal mani* or anklet for Elephant at centre will be in golden colours while others will be in silver colour. *Kaccha kayar* for Elephant at the center will be different from others and most probably green for centre and pink for *kootana* or accompanying Elephants.

Royal emblems and symbols which indicate royal status were attached to divinity as far as accessories of Elephant top is concerned. Beautiful and colourful umbrellas will be used during *ezhunnallathu* time on Elephant top. Since early days umbrellas were considered as royal accessories and were used as status symbol more than its function by the chief and elites, as it can afford only by high class. It became part of ceremonies and events in later days. Thus, Elephant procession carrying deity during the festival enjoys regal paraphernalia. Festival Umbrellas reflect high sense of artistic talent and skill. They were made of beautiful cloth most probably of silk or velvet. Golden or silver colour decorations were attached to each umbrella. Innovations are added to umbrella used for the *kudamattam* event while traditional type is preferred in temple rituals and *ezhunnallathu*. Elephants with divine *kolam* have special umbrella which is different from other Elephants. *Kudamattam* of Thrissur *pooram* has given a chance for innovative styles in umbrella. Thiruvambadi Sivasunder, one of the Popular Elephants, is also represented on these umbrellas as a tribute to his memory.¹³

Venchamaram or yak tail whisks also have an important place among *anachamayam*. Aalavattam or peacock feather fans were also used by rulers since

¹³ The Elephant, Thiruvambadi Sivasunder also represented in *kudamattam* as the tribute to the popular Elephant of the region. The event was widely showcased in the media, drawing attention to its vibrant cultural significance.

ancient days. Chathanath family near kuttimukku, located 4 kms from Thrissur, were traditional family in this field.¹⁴ *Anachamaya pradarsanam* which is held on festival eve also attracts people. *Chamaya pradarsanam* or exhibition was initiated by Thrissur *pooram* organisers in which they make special feature every year. Later these *chamayam* are given to other temples for rent. Nowadays Elephant *chamayam* is exhibited by almost all temples during their festive eve showing the cultural upsurge is spreading to peripherals from core region.

Elephant caparisons reflect and showcase expert skill and talents of the craftsmanship of the age. They place higher role in conditioning people and attracting mass towards enjoying Elephant beauty and involving themselves towards festivals. *Nettipattam* became more attractive and popular as people began to manufacture and use it as decorative piece in the elite houses. Elephant *chamayam* is given as *vazhipad* or offering by devotees during festivals. Thus, Elephant ornaments as well as paraphernalia acted as an agent for the formation of pro mentality towards Elephant.

Popular Belief Associated with *Gajalakshana*

There are several beliefs associated with Elephants which boost passion for Elephants. There is a common belief that Elephant with *gajalakshana* can bring prosperity to its owner as per *gajasatra*. Elephants were categorized based on the physical features which are as follows. Elephant tusk in the colour of Pearl, well defined symmetrical limbs, good body size capable of bearing heavy burdens, back bones like bows, and buttocks resemble those of the pig, is known as *Bhadra*.¹⁵ The Elephant whose breast, arm-pits and folds of skin are loose, whose belly is hanging, whose skin and neck are thick, whose abdomen resembles that of the crow, and whose eyes are like those of the lion, is known as *Manda*.¹⁶

¹⁴ Muraleedaran and his family is expert in making such *Aalavattam* and they play major role in making in Thrissur *pooram Aalavattam*. Muraleedaran, Eravimangalam Radakrishnan, Kanimangalathu Chandran, etc. were the main experts in *Aalavattam* making.

¹⁵ F. Edgerton, The Elephant-lore of the Hindus: The Elephant-sport *Matangalila* of Nilakantha, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1985, p.62.

¹⁶ N Chidabaram Iyer, Brihat Samhita of Varahamihira (Trans.), Part II, South Indian Press, Madurai, 1884, p.65.

The Elephant with very short lips, tail and genital organ, legs, neck, tusks, trunk and the ears and whose eyes are large, is known as *Mriga*. The Elephant which possesses the three sets of features above referred to, is known as *Sankirna*.¹⁷ The Elephant whose lips and mouth are red, whose eyes resemble those of the sparrow, whose tusks are shining, rising and with sharp end, whose face is large and long, whose back bones are like bows, long and invisible, whose frontal globes are covered with hair and resemble the turtle, whose ears, mouth corners, navel, forehead and genital organs are large, whose body resembles the turtle, whose nails are 18 or 20, whose trunk has three lines and is round, whose tail is beautiful, will bring huge wealth. The Elephant with long tail, red trunk, roar like that of the clouds, and large neck, long and round, will bring wealth to a king or its owner. Even image or statue of an Elephant signs with trunk up will bring good luck to the Elephant owner. Elephants with *gajalakshna* have high demand and those who buy Elephant with *gajalakshana* is believed to be become rich and prosperous.

Elephant with *gajalakshana* is always attracted and admired by people and played great role in conditioning the people for a pro attitude towards them. During the early decades of twentieth century Elephants namely Vaikathu Thiruneelakandan and Avanamanakkal Gopalan, Thiruvattattadi Kesavan gained much popularity due to their *gajalakshana*.¹⁸ Elephants with such features became legendary figures and became popular in later days.

Legendary Elephant Figures

During the later half of twentieth century, legendary Elephant figures like *Guruvayur Padmanaban*, *Guruvayur Kesavan*, *Thiruvambadi Chandrasekaran*, etc. have played significant role in conditioning people. These Elephants of 1960 and 70s with complete *gajalakshana* or Elephant features as well as elegant character increased their fame and glory. Through the miraculous deeds and actions, they

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.70.

¹⁸ Kottarathil Sankunni, *Aithiyamayile Anakathakal*, (Mal.), D C Books, Kottayam, 2013, p.16.

attracted mind and memory of the people and were ascribed a divine status among the believers. *Guruvayur* Kesavan, the Elephant at *Guruvayur* temple from 1923 to 1976 with his majestic appearance, behavior, attitude and attachment to human beings, became an iconic figure in the Elephantine world and left a powerful and lasting impression on human mind and memories.

Kesavan is considered as an incarnation of *Guruvayurappan*, the Lord of *Guruvayur* temple, by the believers. Present study considers the details of *Guruvayur* Kesavan as case study in order to understand the reasons for devotion towards an Elephant. *Guruvayur* Kesavan reached at *Guruvayur* temple as an offering from Nilambur raja, after his life and property were saved during Malabar Rebellion. According to oral history, the Elephant Kesavan was born in 1913, in Nilambur Forest of Malabar and came to Nilambur *Kovilakam* and later in 1922 the Elephant reached *Guruvayur* temple at the age of ten. Some literary works mention that Kesavan was donated to *Guruvayur* temple by Manavedan *Thampuran* of Nilambur *kovilakam* in January 14th 1922 by performing the ritual of *Nadayiruthal*.¹⁹ Kesavan was assigned with the duty of *seeveli* at *Guruvayur* temple two times daily and later he became an expert in this ritual.

Kesavan attracted the mind and favour of people with his behavior and attitude. With his majestic head and intelligent performances, he fascinated the people of ritual world. Kesavan was highlighted in festivals with deities on his top. He fulfilled people's imaginations and focused admiration with his Elephantine beauty and elegance. He is believed to be included in the *Devavrinda* category with *sarvalakshana*, with twenty nails, and believed to provide prosperity and pride to the owner.²⁰ Some writers who wrote about Kesavan considered him as the greatest devotee of Lord Krishna as he would bend his front legs only before those who held

¹⁹ N B Neena Kumari, Development of Vaishnavism in Kerala with Special Reference to *Guruvayur* Temple, Un Published Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Calicut, 2015, p.99.

²⁰ Unnikrishnan Puthur, *Gajarajan Guruvayur Kesavan* (Mal.), Current Books, Thrissur, 1989, p.56.

the Lord's *thidambu* to enable them to climb on him. Others who held the umbrella, *alavattam* etc. had to climb by his back legs.

It is believed that glory and prosperity of *Guruvayur* temple increased after the arrival of Kesavan. Kesavan was demanded in all festivals from different parts of Kerala as he is considered as the most appropriate *Deva vahana* or vehicle for deities. He also participated in church festivals and *Chandanakudam Nerchas*. In the work *Gajarajan Guruvayur Kesavan*, Unnikrishnan Puthur, shares childhood memories with Kesavan. He and his friends were rushing out after school, when they encountered Kesavan on the road. On seeing the children, Kesavan moved to the side and allowed all of them to pass safely and then proceeded to the temple.²¹

In 1973, he was honoured with the title of *Gajarajan* or King of Elephants.²² According to KR Vaidyanathan, Kesavan won the title of *Gajaraja* or king of Elephants after winning *aanayottam* or Elephant race, the first ritual conducted after the rise of the festival flag at Guruvayur.²³ Lots of Elephants from different *devaswoms* participate in the race. During 1940s Kochi ruler announced *gajarajapattam*, a competition for selecting the best Elephant, and invited almost all Elephants for the same. Competition was held on the day of *Aratupuzha* festival under the guidance of Cochin ruler. Prize for the winner is announced as golden garland of 101 *pavan* and all of the major Elephants of the period participated in it. All the Elephants had to keep the head high during the entire festival day procession and among all the Elephants over there Kesavan kept his majestic head upward and won the title of *gajarajapattam* and he was presented the *Veerachangala*, the garland of brave and achieved the status of *Gajaraja* given by Cochin ruler.²⁴ From 1922 to 1976 Kesavan participated in the temple rituals mainly of *Guruvayur* temple.

²¹ Tresa Abraham, 'On the Deification of Guruvayur Kesavan: The Making of An Animal Religious Subject Through Cultural Productions', *Proceedings of the SOAS Elephant Conferences held at CES Bangalore*, 2016, p.110.

²² *Ibid.*, p.116.

²³ K.R. Vaidyanathan, *Sri Krishna Lord of Guruvayur*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1974, p.85.

²⁴ Personal Interview, Rajalakshmi Manazhi, Librarian, Guruvayur Devaswom, 18/05/2024.

Following his death, a 12-feet high statue was erected in his honour. Every year his death anniversary is commemorated by the temple authorities with an Elephant procession with maximum number of Elephants of Punnathur Kotta.²⁵ Devotees who come to worship Guruvayurappan are often shown as praying and paying homage to him. Tresa Abraham in her article titled *On the deification of Guruvayur Kesavan: The making of an animal religious subject through cultural productions* states, how literary narrative and movie helped for the Deification process of Guruvayur Kesavan and the public acceptance followed it.²⁶ Guruvayur Devaswom has preserved and displayed the tusk of Kesavan at the entrance as his remembrance.²⁷

Thiruvambadi *valiya* Chandrasekaran, a contemporary of Kesavan, was also elevated to the category of divine Elephant. From Konni camp, the Elephant was adopted by Travancore ruler who named him. He is said to be the morning site for Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma at Kavadiyar palace. Later he was handed over by the ruler and was trained for rituals and procession as well as working at timber industries. In 1973 he reached at Thrissur and in 1982 he became Thiruvambadi Chandrasekaran. He participated in more than 27 years of temple rituals in *Aratupuzha*, Thrissur and Uthrali *kavu pooram* and became an expert in the same.

Coming to the last decade of twentieth century *Thechikottukavu* Ramachandran is popular among all Elephants. This Elephant became so popular that the Temple and the place called *Peramangalam* became famous in his name. It is believed that *Thechikkotukavu* temple became prosperous after the coming of this Elephant.²⁸ All festivals try to get Raman as their main Elephant and passion towards this Elephant became so high that it could shape public opinion and even

²⁵ Tresa Abraham, *Op.Cit.*, p.119.

²⁶ Tresa Abraham, *Op.Cit.*, p.120.

²⁷ <https://englisharchives.mathrubhumi.com/news/offbeat/Elephant-ivory-forest-department-1.5906048>, Last Visited on 21/05/2025.

²⁸ Sreekumar Arookutty, *Anakkundoru Kathaparayan* (Mal.), Authentic Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2008, p.82.

influence laws and regulation, reinforcing its role as festival hero.²⁹ Popular passion towards an Elephant has made festival ritual called *pooravilambaram* so popular that Ramachandran could complete that ritual with popular demand oversteering the government rules. *Thechikkottukavu* Ramachandran got many fans with his entry into this ritual and the fans of this Elephant also increased the popularity of this ritual. While Guruvayur Kesavan got popularity with divinity, *Thechikottukavu* Ramachandran became popular by stardom and fan following.

Reflections of Passion

Various factors helped for conditioning the mindset and formation of mentalities towards the Elephant which favored generating the emotion of passion towards the giant. People express passion for Elephants in many ways such as arranging *sugachikilsa* in the month of *karkidakam*, Remembrance Day like Kesavan *anusmaranam*, incorporation of Elephants in secular events like inaugural ceremonies, marriage functions, summer vacation camp, school re-opening Day etc.

Sugachikilsa is provided to Elephants during the month of *karkkidakam*. Elephants in human captivity must be treated with great care and provide with *sugachikilsa* as per *Hastayurveda* and *Mathangaleela*. Elephants should be provided with desirable food and water so that it could be pleased. Bathing in enough water, exercise, suitable medicine, food accompanied by jaggery, giving of pastry, and in the afternoon, food accompanied by a quarter of sesame oil and medicine, and then sleep- these are inevitable in the daily routine of Elephants. Elephants are provided with facilities for bathing and exercise along with medicines and proper food. One-month is reserved for *sugachikilsa* to ensure proper grooming and health of Elephants.³⁰ It includes both Ayurvedic and allopathy medicinal practices. Prior to giving *sugachikilsa* each Elephant was

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.83.

³⁰ Personal Interview, Hareesh R Namboothri, School Teacher, 3/03/2024.

medically examined including blood test, liver function test, and the Elephants would be provided medicines for de-worming. The food regimen is fixed on the basis of factors such as weight, height, age, gender, and daily workload of each Elephant. Advisory body of veterinary doctors and experts chart health care medicines in order to prevent disease and make them healthy. This will rejuvenate their strength and regain lost minerals, vitamins, proteins etc. *Sugachikilsa* includes three and half hours *thechukuli*, food consisting Chyavana *prasam*, Rice, horse gram, green gram, ragi etc.³¹ Liver stimulants, vitamins and mineral supplements, and appetite stimulants would also be given. The Elephants in *musth* are excluded from the therapy. Both Cochin and Guruvayur *devaswoms* arrange special food and medicinal chart with slight variation. Guruvayur *devaswom* Elephants at Punnathur *kotta* as well as Cochin *devaswom* Elephants at *aana parambu* near Vadakkunathan temple is camped for *sugachikilsa*. It is said that Guruvayur *Devaswom* allocates fourteen to fifteen lakh rupees for Elephants' *sugachikilsa*. It demonstrates that the human's passion towards Elephants surpasses its utility which ensures proper rejuvenation.

The passion towards Elephants can also be seen even after its demise. For instance, Kesavan *Anusmaranam* which is conducted on *dasami* day, highlights the passion for Elephant who elevated to the status of incarnation of Lord Krishna. Kesavan passed away on the *Ekadasi* Day in 1976, thus, Kesavan *anusmaranam* is observed in association with *Ekadasi* Festival³². Elephants from Punnathoorkotta will take part in the procession starting from *Thiruvengkatachalapathi* temple at *Guruvayur* and that ends by offering tributes at Kesavan statue.³³ Elephants from Punnathur *kotta* line up before the statue of the legendary Elephant for a few minutes before paying homage. Later, the Elephants pay their homage by raising their trunks as a mark of respect while leading Elephant from the procession pays

³¹ Rajalakshmi Manazhi, *Poornavatharam*, (Mal.), Logos Books, Palakkad, 2021, p.200.

³² Deccan Chronicle, Maharashtra, 10/12/2016.

³³ Rajalakshmi Manazhi, *Op. Cit.*, p.245.

floral garland as a tribute to the statue of Kesavan.³⁴ Hundreds of devotees arrive at the temple premises to witness the solemn ritual performed by the Elephants.

The rituals like *gajapooja*, or offering made to the Elephant and *Anayootu* or Feeding of Elephant, are considered as the ways to please Lord *Ganesa*. The tradition of *anayootu* or Elephant feeding was begun in Thrissur Vadakkunatha temple as per the *ashtamangalya prasnam*, in order to save Elephants who were facing health issues after their long distance travelling to Delhi Asian games in 1982. The unique and risky journey was planned and executed from Thrissur to Delhi for the opening ceremony of Asiad with the joint efforts of ministers, administrative officials and Indian Railway. Elephant owners were not in agreement for the same in their initial meeting and later agreed to send the Elephants. Indian Railways did not have any special wagons for Elephants like they had for livestock and horses and they arranged special coaches for calves.

Indian railway arranged a 28 wagon train with very slow speed of 18 km per hour in the journey. Twenty-six adult pachyderms were carried in 13 open 8-wheeler bogie wagons. Exit was given for mahouts to attend to their pets as well as for facilitating their entraining and detraining at the time of loading and unloading. The front legs of the individual animals were loosely chained to keep them stable during the journey which ended on November 8th at Tughlakabad station.

The Elephants, from temples across Kerala, the forest department and from private owners, were taken standing and facing one another in 13 open wagons. This included the smallest 750 kg calf Pushpa of three years. Even though they were provided with enough water and food the long and hectic journey made the Elephants weak and ill. By passing through rain and heat they reached the destination. Chief veterinarian and coordinator K. Chandrasekhara Pannikar, Mahout Narayanankutty and Chellappan shared their experience in many articles. Only four Elephants managed to sleep on the journey and eight were so terrified by the travel that they had to be given sedatives to soothe their nerves.

³⁴ The New Indian Express, 24/11/2012.

Long hours of standing led to swelling of their legs and indigestion. Eight Elephant calves were put in two closed bogie covered wagons. The Special water tanks and four bogie covered wagons with 100 tonnes of luscious palm leaves as fodder. In addition there were also a number of passenger coaches as part of the train for carrying a large escorting retinue of a total of 264 persons. It included 112 mahouts, 6 veterinary doctors, 19 from the Kerala Police and a large number of helpers, attendants and cooks apart from officials. A dining car was also present in the train.

The 9th Asian Games which was held from November 19 to December 4 1982, in Delhi, incorporated Elephants in their inaugural ceremony.³⁵ All dressed up for the Asian Games and performed well. Opening ceremony of Asiad had almost thirty one Elephants from Thrissur. The Elephant Kuttinarayanan of Guruvayur Devaswom, later came to be known as '*Asiad Appu*' as he was the mascot of the Asian Games. After participating successfully in the parade at the opening ceremony of the Asian Games, the Elephants returned. But the long journey made many of them sick and weak. To help them regain health, *Anayootu* was started at the Sree Vadakkunnathan temple, where special nutritious food was fed to the Elephant.

This tradition of *anayootu* continues annually in the month of *Karkkidakam* even today. Items like jaggery, banana, corn, sugarcane etc. were arranged by the temple authorities. People who wish to feed Elephants can join the function. Elephant and Elephant fans from different part of Kerala will attend the function. Elephants will reach the temple premises by the previous day of *anayootu*. Stomach issues of the Elephants were believed to cure after this *anayootu*. Almost fifty Elephants used to participate in *anayootu* including both male and female. Currently beyond Vadakkunatha temple, many temples have started to conduct

³⁵ IX Asian Games at Delhi, Opening Ceremony Part 2, Prasar Bharathi Archives, 1982. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBkRmsB1CJE>

anayootu as annual ritual and as per the offering of the devotees. It was later developed in to ritual to please God *Ganapathy* that followed many temples in Thrissur.

Guruvayur temple recently started *Anayoottu* or the feeding of Elephant at Punmathur kotta.³⁶ Anayootu organized by Koodalmanikyam temple is conducted in the first of *Chingam* at *kottilakkal Ganapathy* temple with twenty-five Elephants. *Ganapathy homam* is followed by *gajapooja* and *anayootu*. Devotees are also given the chance for *anayootu*. Temples in Thrissur such as Sankarankulangara, Vadakurrambakavu, Thechikootukavu etc. also started *anayoot* in recent years. It involves a number of unadorned Elephants in the middle of the people for being worshipped and fed. This event allows people to feed Elephants directly which increases rapport between Elephants and people.

In medieval Kerala, during the period of *naduvazhis* onwards, Elephant titles and honours like *Gajarajapattam*, *Veerasringala* etc. were used to grant to the best Elephants by native rulers. Rulers of Perumpadamppu *swaroopam* has given special encouragement and support for the Elephants and their merit. *Veerasringala* which was assigned to Guruvayur Padmanaban, *Gajaraja pattam* or title of *gajaraja* which was assigned to Guruvayur Kesavan were main among them. Now a days Elephants were given such titles and honours based on popularity and admiration. The practice of awarding such titles were taken up by the fans association and temple *devaswoms* in recent days. *Guruvayur Devaswom* assigned the title of *Gajaratnam* to Guruvayur Padmanaban in the year 2004 in association with the golden jubilee Celebration of the service of Elephant to the temple.³⁷ The tittle like *Ekachatrathipathi*, Rama *Rajavu* etc. were given to the Elephant called Thechikottukavu Ramachandran. Elephants' fans associations for these legends also play a leading role in making them as heroes. Even Elephant's mahouts also have fans club in their names. Certain

³⁶ Ritualistic Feast for the Elephants at Punmathur Kotta was initiated by then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Ms Jayalalitha on her 57th birthday on 24th February 2006.

³⁷ Rajalakshmi Manazhi, *Op.Cit.*, p.202.

titles like *Gaja kesari*, *Kalaba kesari*, *Gajothaman* etc. were assigned based on the features and attributes of Elephants.

Spaces Reserved for Elephants in Thrissur

Elephant sanctuaries in Thrissur reflect the passion for Elephants in this area. These places were known by names like *Aanakottil*, *Aanakotta*, *Aanathavalam*, *Aanaparambu* etc. Major temples in Thrissur including Guruvayur, Paramekkavu and Thiruvambady maintain Elephants and have their own *aanaparambu*.

Punnathur *kotta* is the largest Elephant farm in world for captive Elephants and is maintained by *Guruvayur devaswom* since 1975. *Guruvayur* temple purchased Punnathur kotta on 5th January 1975 and materialized a suitable place with maximum facilities for *devaswom* Elephants on 26th June 1975.³⁸ The Elephants were taken to Punnathur *kotta* by conducting an Elephant march consisting of about 25 Elephants led by Gajarajan Kesavan.³⁹ Stephen Alter in his work *Elephas Maximas, A Portrait of Indian Elephant*, mentions that though the main shrine at Guruvayur is only accessible to Hindus, the *Aanakotta* is open to all and it has become a centre of tourist attraction.⁴⁰

Elephant farm of Cochin *Devaswom* board is situated at north eastern part of *Thekkinkadu* ground. Paramekkavu temple have *aanaprambu* at the place called Padukkad. Thruambadi *anaparambu* located near to *Kaustubam* convention hall at Thrissur itself. Other temples in Thrissur like Koodalmanikyam temple, Thechikottukavu, *Bagavathi* temple at Olari, Vada Kurumba *kavu Bagavathi* temple etc. own Elephants of their own and maintain Elephant shelters most probably near to their temple compound. Such places were emerged with the decline of *illams* and *mana* which used to accommodate Elephants in early days. Such Elephant farms provide an opportunity for people to mingle and interactive with Elephant.

³⁸ Personal Interview, Jisha P.J., Teacher, Kunnamkulam, 11/11/2023.

³⁹ Report from Punnathur Kotta, KITCO Project, 1987.

⁴⁰ Stephen Alter, *Elephas Maximus: A Portrait of the Indian Elephant*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2004, p.126.

Passion Reflected in Everyday Life

Human's emotional attachment with Elephant and vice-versa is also an important feature for increasing passion towards them. There are various incidents and native stories related to the emotional bond between Elephants and mahouts, Elephants and children etc. Day to day life culture also conditioned mindset of people and expressed in different forms. Everyday life and popular Culture conditions, behavior and attitude of humans helped to form passion for Elephants. The very first term *aana* ie. Elephant, create a sense of allure and curiosity among every human being. There are some popular beliefs among the people associated with huge figure. Elephant hair from tail ie. *aanaval* which is used to make ornaments like ring, bracelet and bangle, is believed to reduce fear and nightmare among children's and helps to increase their confidence. Wearing such ornaments are often regarded prestigious and proud.

A notable instance occurred during Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Veembur Mana at *Urakam* in Thrissur in 1921. To honour him a procession of an Elephant was organized. This procession carried a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi on top of the Elephant, symbolically representing his presence and reverence. The journey from *Thalore* to Veembur Mana thus became a memorable event, showcasing the continued cultural and political significance of Elephants in processional contexts, even during the nationalist phase.⁴¹

Small children were asked to pass under the Elephants in order to eliminate their fears. Endeavors initiated by Elephants are believed to be strong and successful. The Elephants are used to put foundation stones for houses or building in many parts of Central Kerala. It is also believed that if Elephants pluck jackfruit from its tree there will be better yield in coming years. Incorporating Elephants to socio cultural rituals marriage, inauguration of new ventures was visible during 1990s. In Thrissur Elephants were used for receiving students during their *pravesana ulsavam* conducted during first week of their school. Students summer

⁴¹ Panchayat Development Report, Nenmanikkara, Pudukkad, 1996.

camps conducted by Thrissur *Balabavan* each year arrange a session on Elephant with Elephant expert and a small Elephant reach the camp in order to provide direct experience of an Elephant to the students.

Thus, people Central Kerala reflect their passion for Elephant by incorporating the giant from their personal to public as well as from religious to secular events.

Reflection in Popular Culture

Attitude towards Elephants is deeply reflected in the language, literature, and other forms of popular culture. Literary phrase and words like *aanachantham* or overall elegance, *aanakambam*, *aanakopam*, *aanakaryam* etc were common in Malayalam language. Along with these, popular stories of Elephants which is learned from their kith and kins, like Elephant and Tailor, *Aanayum kurudanmarum* helps to create an image formation regarding Elephant character and features since childhood days. Elephant related proverb and puzzles like *Aana choru kolachoru*, *Aana nadannalum cherinjalum pantheerayiram*, *Aana vayil ambazhanga*, *Aana koduthalum aasa kodukkaruthu* etc. were also common. Malayalam literary works like *Aithiyamalayile aanakathakal* by Kottarathil Sankunni is a true reflection of this feature. *Sahyante makan* of Vailoppilly Sreedaramenon, *Ente Uppoppakoranandarnnu* by Vaikom Muhammed Basheer also reflect constant presence of Elephants in socio cultural aspects. A poem by the notable poet N.K. Desham, *Aanakomban*, has become very popular among the people in Kerala, and this poem is frequently used for recitations and also for dance forms like Thiruvathirakkali. It is also added in the school syllabus for primary students.

Films can be considered as an agent and product of popular culture as it reflect socio economic life and relations of a particular time and space. Even though films are born out of human imaginations and mentalities and in turn, it helps to shape human mentalities and emotions further. Apart from fictional and imaginative element, historical glimpses can be traced from films as it represent certain period of society. Movies related to Elephants began to release in Malayalam film industry during 1970s, the decade which reflected increasing passion for Elephants. Movies

like *Sindooracheppu* and *Guruvayur Kesavan*, became superhit movies and got record collection. *Sindooracheppu*, released in 1971, was the first movie projected Elephant mahout relation and *Namboothri illams* as Elephant owners. As a story of an Elephant trainer and mahout Sankaran Nair, the movie represent Elephantine features, affinity of Elephant towards mahouts and owner, use of Elephants in festivals etc.

In 1977, the very next year of the demise of *Guruvayur Kesavan*, the movie named *Guruvayoor Kesavan* directed by Bharathan was released. The story revolves around the Elephant *Gajarajan Guruvayur Kesavan* that belonged to the Guruvayur temple in Kerala, who served the temple deity in major rituals. Human Elephant relation is well portrayed in the movie through the depiction of mahout Achutan Nair with Kesavan. It showcases Kesavan as working in the timber industry, Church festival and in Nercha ceremonies. Thereby film shows the popularity of Kesavan among people belonging to all communities and his achievement of the title *gajarajapattam*. The final moments of the Elephant is picturised in a melodramatic manor similar to the last stage of a human being. It also picturises passion for Elephants and impact of Elephant in the entire society.

The Movie named *Aana* released in the year 1983 directed by Chandrasekharan represent human-Elephant conflict. It picturises the destruction caused by wild Elephant on lives of people and the appointment of hunter for shooting it. It represents human animal tension and its impact on the normal day to day life of the people. *Kolakomban*, another Malayalam movie released in 1983, directed by J. Sasikumar, depicts the ritual Elephant *nadayiruthal* which was a major practice of the time. Elephant in the main title *kolakomaban* was given a guest role in the movie as punishing the villain and the saving good ones as an executioner of poetic justice.

Aanakkorumma, movie released in 1985 directed by M Mani reflects Elephant as a conscious animal. The movie begins with Elephant procession for a festival and as the title highlights, it reflects attachment of an Elephant named Manikandan towards a five year old girl. Elephant protects her from thief and memories of Elephant remain in the child even after its death. *Adiverukal* released in the year 1986

directed by P Anil mentions about Balakrishnan and his attachment with his Elephant. This illustrates the emotion of the society of that age and obsessive level of attachment towards Elephants among the youngsters of those times.

Gajakesariyogam released in 1990 directed by P G Viswambharan discusses the ambition of a mahout to own an Elephant for himself despite all the financial and social obstacle and troubles. In the movie *Prayikkara Pappan* directed by T S Suresh babu released in 1995, Achuthan, a mahout, decides to take revenge against the villain who murdered his parents. These movies satisfied the audiences' curiosity regarding the life and struggles of the mahouts. *Gajaraja Manthram* released in 1997 under the direction of Thaha also depict Elephants in Kerala society. A film called *Anachandam* released in 2006, directed by Jayaraj shows affinity of people with Elephants. This movie showcase the real life situations of the days as hero in the movie became attached to Elephants as an Elephant saves his life in childhood. It also reflects the pure admiration for elephant without concentrating the material benefit from the animal. The movie *Pattabhishekam* shows the deep trust and emotional understanding between man and the elephant. Here the elephant is given the same name as of its owner which shows the bond between man and the animal. Majority of these movies were set background at Central Kerala as passion towards Elephants can be seen in this zone.

Beyond films Elephants were celebrated in social media platforms which further enhanced their popularity. For instance short Album video song named *Gajam* was released in 2018 featuring Chirakal Kalidasan, following his the success in the epic film Baahubali. This trend continued with making reels and videos of each Elephant and sharing through popular online media created a digital popularity for each Elephants. Evolution of such mentality has its influence on other sectors of socio-economic life. Large number of people in central Kerala earn their livelihood depending upon the Elephant especially in ritual space. Elephants were assisted by at least four people, one main mahout with title *chattakaran* and other assistants. *Matangaleela* mentions about types of Elephants as well as about mahouts. Emotional

bond between the Elephant and mahout can be inferred from the Elephant stories of *Aithihyamala*. Increasing passion is reflected in the following aspects. Many families are maintaining Elephants like a family member. Just like meeting an astrologer for writing horoscope for the family member, writing horoscope for Elephants is a common phenomenon as the owners are conscious about the future of the giant. Devotees conduct special offering called *pushpanjaly* for the wellbeing of their favourite Elephants.

Gajamela or the Elephant Celebration was an event promoted by tourism department which was initiated during 1980s. Event reached its apex by the Thrissur *Gajamela*- in 1996 with the participation of hundred and one Elephants. Eventually this fest faded away in the late 1990s.⁴² Elephant contests or *Gajamela* is initiated recently in places like Ithikkanam *Gajamela* in Chengannassery, which was started since 2000. It is conducted on the ninth day of their festival. Elephants with title *Gajaratnam* and tallest Elephant were selected from *Gajamela*. Tallest Elephant will lead Bagavathy *thidambu* on the festival. *Vadakkan Paravur Chakkumarassery Ganesa Mangalam thalapokkamalsarm* was conducted in order to transfer the diety's kolam to the tallest elephant (*thidambu nirnayam*) between two *desam* of the temple. Cherayi thalappokkam contest, Adoor *Gajamela* at Pathanamthitta etc. will assess tallest Elephant. *Gajamela* is also arranged in association with Church festivals.

Funeral given to Elephants is another form of reflection of passion towards Elephants. The practice of conducting Elephant funerals in Kerala reflects the profound respect and reverence that these majestic animals command within the cultural and religious fabric of the region. When an Elephant passes away, particularly one of notable repute, the ceremonies and rituals performed in its honour are marked by solemnity and grandeur, befitting their esteemed status.

One of the most illustrative examples of such a ceremonious farewell is the funeral of Thiruvambadi Sivasundar, a revered Elephant whose death in 2018 was

⁴² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336846295_Vijayakrishnan_and_Sinha_2019_Captive_Elephants_Gajah, Last Visited on, 19/12/2024.

met with great sorrow by the community. The rituals performed for Sivasundar included the offering of *Pushpachakram*, an intricate flower offering ceremony, and the *Vilapayatra*, procession of mourning. These rituals underscore the deep emotional bond and the sense of loss experienced by the people. Following the initial ceremonies, additional rites such as *Chithabasmam Nimanjanam* and *Balitharpanam* are conducted. *Chithabasmam Nimanjanam* involves the immersion of the sacred ashes, symbolizing the final purification and release of the soul. This rite is often performed at Thirunavaya, a site of great religious significance, which adds to the sanctity of the ritual. *Balitharpanam*, another vital ritual, involves offerings made to appease the departed soul and ensure its peaceful journey to the afterlife.

For Elephants, post-mortem process itself is conducted meticulously, ensuring that every aspect of the Elephant's death is understood and respected. In the broader context of Elephant funerals, the Valayar Forest and Malayattur forest has become a significant site for the cremation of Elephants following their post-mortem examinations. This location, chosen for its appropriateness and sanctity, serves as the final resting place for many of Kerala's beloved Elephants.

The ceremonial practices surrounding the death of an Elephant in Kerala are not merely procedural but are imbued with cultural and spiritual significance. They reflect the community's deep connection with these animals, acknowledging their role and presence as more than just creatures of utility but as revered beings integral to the cultural and religious identity of the region. The tradition of Elephant funerals in Kerala, exemplified by the detailed and respectful ceremonies for Elephants like Thiruvambadi Sivasundar, Mangalam Kunnu Ayyappan highlights the community's deep reverence for these animals.

Kuttankulangara Ramdas was the Elephant who first earned the prestigious *Gajaraja* title at the *Gajamela* held in Thodupuzha in 2000. It secured the same title again in 2002 and was later honored with the *Gajaraja Chakravarthi* title by the Punkunnam Ayyappa Seva Sangam in 2009. The *Devaswom* had brought the Elephant to the temple 24 years earlier from the Parambikulam Reserve Forest, and

since then, it became a commanding presence in festival processions throughout the state. After death of the Elephant, *adiyathira sadya* ⁴³ the feast is prepared as an offering to the departed soul rituals was conducted and in the 16th day grant feast were arranged by temple *devaswom* including *aanayootu*.

Thrissur has a number of registered and unregistered Elephants fans association since 1990s. Similar to the fan's association of film stars, these associations follow a particular Elephant and responsible for the promotion and welfare of the particular Elephant. These are NGO which regulate several programmes related to awareness and ensures that no rights of the Elephant are violated. While honouring Elephant experts and mahouts, they also engage in social welfare activities such as providing financial assistance to the needy people. These groups arrange Elephants for various events and manage its transportation by keeping a vigilant eye on exploitation.

These groups are keen on promoting their favourite Elephant by placing large banners and arranging cheering crowds, fire crackers, garlands and flowers during the entry of Elephant in to their *thattakam*. These activities provide stimulating and exhilarating experiences which uphold passion towards Elephants.

Types and Various Levels of Passion

Each person expresses Passion towards Elephants in different forms. For instance, some people showcase their passion through physical interactions with the animal while others may exhibit it through mere observation. Various forms of passion are often shaped by personal desires, cultural traditions, and modern technological influences. The desire to sit on Elephant top, to touch the giant, or at least Elephant's chains or ornaments can be categorised as passion for physical interaction. Meanwhile, to cherish Elephant's beauty reflected in festival ambiance, to watch Elephant taking bath in river or other water bodies provide observatory pleasure for those who are passionate. Sometimes, passion towards Elephants is

⁴³ The *Adiyanthira Sadya*, where the feast is laid out as an offering to the deceased and deities, symbolizing the completion of mourning and the soul's merger with the ancestral spirits. This practice underscores the Hindu belief in the cyclical nature of life and death, and the importance of food as an offering to both the living and the departed.

reflected in various artistic expressions like films, literature and paintings. It can be observed that the present generation expresses their passion towards Elephant by capturing and sharing its photos across social media platforms.

The passion towards Elephants can be categorised in to various levels. Among them, first group of people can be termed as *aana pranthanmar*, who blindly loves this animal and give priority for Elephants more than anything. Even though some among this group have a personal favorite Elephant, generally they love all Elephants irrespective of their features or *lakshanas*⁴⁴. They chart their day-to-day affairs around their love for Elephant. In most cases such blind love towards Elephants have evolved during childhood days and teenage years when they cherished their personal attachment with an Elephant. Their love for Elephants transcends festival spaces toward everyday life of the giant. During off season also they follow Elephants and look after its affairs. Often, they express their desire to work as a mahout assistant as they could not afford to buy the giant. Such category of people was more prevalent during 1980s and 90s and gradually disappeared in later days.

Second category of Elephant admirers is called as *aana kambakkar* who idolize the Elephants in festival grounds. Most probably they follow the Elephant route map from one festival to another. They consider Elephants as the main highlight of festivals and they are keen on observing *gajalakshana* or perfect Elephant features during such festivals. Third category can be termed as *aana premikal* or *Elephant lovers* who learn about the details and traits of Elephants from works like *gajasastras*. They like to learn and observe the qualities of Elephants and they are enthusiastic about providing complete protection and care for the Elephants. They often engage in studying Elephants in a scientific way and stood for its welfare and conservation.⁴⁵

The newly emerged middle class, who once admired the beauty and charm of Elephants in the temple festivals, followed the elite way of celebrating festivals which incorporated Elephant procession. Elephant owners enjoyed a kind of

⁴⁴ Personal Interview, Marshall C Radhakrishnan, Expert in Elephant Studies, 07/01/2024.

⁴⁵ Personal Interview, Murali Puranattukara, Office staff, Guruvayur Devaswom, 20/02/2023.

privilege and status in the society and many business men in Thrissur kept Elephants as the ambassadors of their business and as part of passion and social prestige. Activities and institutions which are responsible for promoting information and transmitting knowledge regarding Elephants are based in Thrissur. Elephant information Centre which provides training for mahouts as well as preserves and displays details regarding Elephants is established at Thrissur in 1991. Elephant treatment centre known as *Gaja chikilsa kendram* is also functioning at Thrissur.

Kerala Government and concerning authorities have introduced regulatory rules in order to control the detrimental effects of increasing passion for Elephants which leads to unnecessary competitions and rivalry. From the implementation of Wild Life Act of 1972, Measures have been taken to maintain correct record regarding the ownership of Elephant which could restrict illegal ownership as well as transactions of Elephants. Laws govern the ownership, care, and use of captive Elephants, which may include Elephants in zoos, circuses, and private ownership.

The increased demand for Elephants along with the adverse governmental laws regarding capturing Elephants forced indigenous temples to import Elephants from other states like Assam, Bihar, Karnataka etc. during 1970s. Elephant experts went to Sonpur cattle fair in Bihar, from where Elephants were bought to Kerala. Many autobiographies of Elephant experts in Kerala reveal their painstaking journey to *Sonpur mela* during 1970s for getting a perfect Elephant with *gajalakshana*.⁴⁶ Their willingness to overcome challenges and struggles in the voyage to secure Elephants from north east regions of India reflected the demand and passion towards the Elephant. 1972 Act got amended in the following years like 1986 and 1991. As per the Act of 1998 regulations were implemented regarding the transportation and logistics of Elephant.⁴⁷ Proper housing of Elephant with necessary shade without direct exposure to sunlight is mentioned in the Act of 2012.⁴⁸ These rules ensured the

⁴⁶ Personal Interview, R Balakrishnan, Devaswom Secretary, Paramakkavu Temple, Thrissur, 17/04/2023.

⁴⁷ G O No W. L (1)18018/F2/ 2008 Dated 23.01.2009.

⁴⁸ G O (P) No.119/2012 /F &WLD. Thiruvananthapuram, Dated 18/12/ 2012.

regularization of the work load of Elephants along with sufficient supply of food and medicine. It demanded the owners to maintain details like vaccination records, Disease and treatment record, movement register, feeding and work register etc.

In the year 2007 microchip was installed in every captive Elephants with a unique id number, in order to retrieve the details of Elephants including name, gender, age, custodian name and custodian address. In Kerala Special rules have issued for incorporating of Elephants in festivals. The veterinarian should issue health certificate by verifying and recording the accuracy of all the registers along with ownership, microchip and health care certificate.⁴⁹ During COVID Pandemic, tremendous changes were brought in the field of festivals and functions especially in public space. While festivals were cancelled from 2019 to 2021 revival can be seen from 2022 with minimum use of Elephants for ritual purposes.⁵⁰ By 2023 festivals regained their old pomp and glory which shows the influence of festival in public space and the role of Elephants.

Through this study, direct relation of Elephant with cultural and social institutions of society can be inferred. Cultural geography as a vibrant branch of Human geography analyses different ways in which culture develop and impact on everyday life and places. Temple rituals and festivals played an important role in framing Elephant culture in Thrissur which were imitated by other religious communities and nearby regions of Thrissur. Culture has complex and diverse elements which are evolved as a result of socio-economic power stratifications. Elephantine temple festival is evolved as a cultural practice due to the working of various power relations and their existence in society. In early days the Elephants were owned by socio political elites, but the admiration and acceptance of Elephants spread across all social classes.

In central Kerala, especially in Thrissur, the element of passion was ignited by religious institutions and festivals. It was further enriched by traditions, peer groups,

⁴⁹ Letter N.WL-837/2007 Dtd.28.04.07 of the CCF(WL) No.WL, 837/2007.

⁵⁰ Advisory for Safe Conduct of Festivals in the Context of COVID 19 No-3/31/F2H & FWD, 4/01/2021.

print culture and media. More than a sympathetic engagement with Elephant, they build an intense emotional feeling which seeped into their blood. Passion for Elephants is a part of culture which is collective than individualistic in nature which negates religious and communal barriers. These cultural elements conditioned human minds and mentalities in such a way that it enabled to assimilate and adapt Elephants into the human cultural map which shaped our beliefs, practices and attitudes.

Passion for Elephants is identified as a cultural trait of Kerala with central Kerala as the core and Thrissur as its nucleus. Elephant festivals grabbed national as well as international attention since past decades. It became a popular and prestigious institution with public support. Elephants entered in to the cultural sphere of Central Kerala as cultural magnates and as agents of social harmony which cut across the religious borders and dominated in the secular space as well. Common interest towards the giant helped to form cooperative and co-coordinative mentality and behaviour which finally led to the passion for the giant as a social reality.

Conditioned mindset and mentalities evolved for Elephants may alter in long run due to both internal and external factors such as lack of trained mahouts as well as Elephant treatment experts, abuse of Elephants, unhealthy competition among ritual spaces, deficiency in the number of Elephants, climate change, changes in regulatory rules, changing attitude of each generation towards Elephants. The space where Elephants are revered should be handled with great care by eliminating exploitative measures and brutal acts which may create public opinion against the institution. Both temple space as well as secular space should take maximum care and concern through regulations and awareness for the existence of such a socially shared passion for the giant.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Passion and Culture is deep and dynamic as they are mutually reinforcing powers. When individuals passionately engage in cultural practices, it will help to endure and sustain that culture over time. Cultural institutions of each region define acceptable expressions of passions, and that helps for the endangered aspects alive. Elements of passion when accepted by majority of the people lead to powerful outcomes and new cultural experiments. It provides the energy to structure the cultural events with the support of popular culture. Thus passion, which is considered to be the heartbeat of popular culture, becomes a force to build the identity of a region. Rituals provide a powerful way to generate and sustain the element of passion of one age, and in turn passion influences and intensifies the rituals.

Passion, curiosity and enthusiasm for Elephants is a universal phenomenon, and is evolved since time immemorial. Development of passion as an emotion and element of popular culture based on collective mentality is an unexplored area of historical inquiry. Comparative analysis of Eastern and Western countries shows variations in accommodating Elephants to various spheres of human life based on need and circumstances. Eastern countries, which have native Elephant population continues to play significant role in multiple domains.

People of Asian countries, especially Indians, have developed considerable relation with Elephants from early times. Remnants from pre-historic petroglyph to proto-historic artifacts of Harappa elucidate human-Elephant relation in early Indian subcontinent in a vague manner without clear indication of the purpose of using Elephants. From early Aryans who considered Elephants as wild animals, to later Aryans who made Elephants as gift item, the status of Elephants got elevated. Aryans might have learned the skill of taming Elephants from indigenous people of north eastern part of India, who were already acquainted with the Elephant wealth from the forest.

When society moved from *Jana* to *Janapada* and later to *Mahajanapadas*, the need for Elephants as military strength became established. Emergence of Magadha as first empire also reflected the skillful use of Elephants in their military. Vedas illustrate the fact that the importance given to horses were shifted to Elephants as the latter was available abundantly in India. It also depicts Aryan God Indra switching from horse to Elephant as his vehicle. By realizing the need and necessity of accepting and incorporating Elephants into the life and culture of Aryans, the divinity and status were assigned to the giant with the mythological and literary support. Origin of Elephant is mentioned in puranas as a precious creation of Brahma. The concept of white Elephant *Airavatha*, Elephant headed God *Ganapathy*, *Ashtadigajas*, *Gajendramoksha* etc. elevate the position of Elephants in the mind of people. Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata mention about war Elephants. Elephants as the military wing, called as Elephantry, became established as mentioned in Epics. *Arthasastra* being the important source of Mauryan age, mentions about the need for maintaining *Gajaranyaka* or Elephant Forest by the ruler in order to ensure the supply of Elephants during the time of war.

Strabo the Greek traveler of ancient days, has mentioned about the royal procession on Elephant top during the time of religious festivals which paraded Elephants with precious ornaments during Mauryan days. Thus, monarchs started to use Elephants as their vehicle since the formation of empire in early India. When the elephants were elevated to the position of royal vehicle, highly customized Elephant ornaments in gold and silver might have evolved to adorn them, instead of mere protective armors of metals which were used in warfare. Elephants as *Raja vahana* was also important in order to safeguard royal power as well as to keep the status and dignity of the ruler. Focusing to south Indian kingdoms, even though not up to the level of north Indian states, Elephants acted as a part of militia, royalty and status symbol. Since the age of *Tamizhakam*, Elephants marked their role in Socio Political and Economic aspects which were evident from the early Tamil literature.

The tradition of maintaining Elephants in warfare and using in ceremonies continued throughout ancient Indian traditions.

During medieval period foreign rulers also continued the indigenous tradition of using Elephantry with increasing importance given to imperial Elephants which reflected in the court chronicles as well as Elephant stables attached to royal court. Elephant stables of Mughals and *Vijayanagara* also give ample evidence of this fact. Colonial powers prioritized the utilitarian aspects of human-Elephant relation by using Elephant power in railway construction, timber trade and rarely for official procession, following the pattern of indigenous tradition.

Elephants were adapted, assimilated and integrated into the history of Kerala in a unique manner. Later Chera rulers and their inscriptions showed their affinity with Elephants. Medieval inscriptions of Kerala show the importance of Elephant as an object of penalty to temples. Most probably Elephants were bought to midland from highland widely during early medieval period and that continued till recent decades. This period witnessed the emergence of temple centered society, as well as wide expansion of agriculture.

The age of *naduvazhis* and *swaroopams* led to increasing demand for wood for construction of temples, *kovilakams* and *illams* as well as for making furniture, as wood plays an eminent role in indigenous Kerala buildings styles. Clearing of forest and expansion of agriculture along with moving of timber, forced the situational necessity of taming Elephants. Rulers as well as *devaswoms* assigned certain specialized groups for the capturing of Elephants. It became an income generating asset for the owners. As one of the main wealth and property of forest, Elephants were tamed and trained by its experts to satisfy the labour force of temples. Thus the Elephants became temple property by early medieval days and became an income generating element and later played an essential role in that space. Being the owners of large area of landed property including forest land, temples along with *desavazhies* and *naduvazhies* became the owners of forest

property which comprised of Elephants. Thus, Elephants became a tangible property of rulers, temples and other chieftains.

The use of Elephants in temple rituals claim its support from *Tantrasamuchaya* of fifteenth century CE., which provided information about Brahmanical temple construction along with its rituals and festivals. The mature phase of structural temples in Kerala was evolved during the early medieval days, and in the temple centred society, assigning royalty to the divine power is deeply visible in every cultural and religious acts. As per *Tantrasamuchaya*, temples symbolized royal courts, with the deity revered as the supreme sovereign and worship rituals reflecting royal ceremonies. Architectural elements as well as rituals of temple mirrored the structure of a palace as well as royal reverence and recognition. The presence of guardian deities, sub deities and ritual honours offered to the deity further reinforced the concept of sacred kingship and ministers. Thus, temple spaces not only functioned as centres of worship but also as powerful representations of divine sovereignty embedded within the socio-political power structure.

As per the traditions, rituals and festivals increase the power and divinity of the temple. In the ritual called *seeveli* deity comes out of the sanctum or *sreelakam* to see the welfare of the sub deities and in the annual ritual called *utsavam* deity comes out of the temple to the public space to bless the devotees and also for taking ritual bath called *arattu*. Rulers and deities were equalised, as deity is considered as the ruler or protector of an area or *desa* and were given all expressions of royal prestige and symbols including *ana*, *ambari* etc. Thus the *Raja vahana* of political tradition during the time of public procession became *Deva vahana* during the time of festivals in the ritual world. Royal and regal assents were given to the deity of a region or *desam* who is symbolically considered as the ruler or protector of the area. Festivals and holy bath are believed to increase the power of the deity through the collective efforts and support of the people. For rituals and festivals, Elephants are selected as the *vahana* of the deity in temples especially of central Kerala, as sitting

on Elephant could assign the royal dignity to the deity even though *Tantrasamuchaya* only mentions the term '*rathathiyane*' which means use of *ratha* or other royal vehicles. Among the royal vehicles of that time Elephant, chariot, palanquin etc. were used in common.

The Brahmanical temples of medieval Kerala which enjoyed higher status in the social hierarchy and ritual space, initiated the custom of including Elephants in temple rituals along with the support of rulers as both these classes controlled the economic base of that time. Temples remain the nerve centres of society and has been maintaining Elephants for constructive purposes in the initial stage and later incorporated them to cultural arena. As per the opinion of Karl Marx, the class that controls the economic base also controls the production of cultural and political ideas. Here also, as per the evidence from temple *granthavaris* and oral traditions, *Peruvanam* temple, which is the core of *Peruvanam* Brahmanical settlement of Central Kerala, may have initiated the ritual of incorporating Elephants into temple rituals as they were very much keen in keeping the status of the deity high.

The role played by Elephants in the ritual world of central Kerala is significantly high compared to other regions. Traditional temples who initiated rituals and festivals with Elephants, continued this practice. *Peruvanam* festival is considered as the mother of all festivals with much pomp and glory. Evolution of *melam* and Elephantine ornaments or present day *anachamayam* evolved from this same place also support the fact. Reign of Sakthan Thampuran, which marked the beginning of Thrissur *pooram*, also increased the trend of temple festivals with the title of *Pooram*. Central Kerala with base of these *pooram* festivals provided the background for all other *pooram* festivals of later period. *Pooram* festivals incorporate the procession of deities from the nearby temples to the main temple and hence number of Elephants used in the *pooram* festival will be greater than the annual temple festival known as *Utsavam* which is held in a single temple. Thus Central Kerala has large number of *pooram* with large number of Elephants than any other region.

Geographical availability of the Elephants from the forest area of Central Kerala which were under the control of Peruvanam temple, helped for the accessibility of the giant in temple space and later in festivals. Ecological condition of a place decides the cultural evolution and transition, likewise, the customs of rituals and festivals of central Kerala is developed and shaped by the availability of Elephants that is provided by indigenous ecology. The rulers of central Kerala had also given their patronage and support for temple rituals and festivals which helped the institution to attain mature state. Thus the evolution of cultural elements and cultural institutions incorporating Elephants is more visible in central Kerala as the combined working of socio, economic, political and environmental factors of the region supported the same.

Sitting on the top of an Elephant is considered as a royal prestige and status, and sharing such privilege to the nearby social elites is equal to sharing power, and in return confirming suzerainty for the ruler. In the same way cultural authority of a deity is established by incorporating nearby temples in the festival ritual and Elephant procession of sub deities to the main temples. Granting of cultural privileges to nearby elite temples in the society was a deliberate act of extending the authority and favour of Brahmanical temples in a region . By incorporating such temples, *mahakshetrams* try to continue and retain their cultural hegemony. This practice helped to strengthen the financial benefit from increasing commercial activities and strengthen social hierarchy where the main deity of major temples remained at the apex, with sub elite deities of the nearby temples visibly sharing the divine aura of prestige and authority, and thereby legitimizing their power in socio cultural milieu. Royal procession of deities on the top of Elephant during the ceremonies is acted as an imitation of sharing such privileges and prestige in a stratified manner, thus creating and widening a cultural hegemony in the society. Traditional temples of central Kerala might have adopted the same power sharing mechanism in cultural eco system where Elephant became a tool of power sharing.

Distinction between elite and non-elite culture is an usual phenomenon in every society, and dominant group in each class plays a significant role in the evolution of customs and rituals. Those in positions of handling power often contribute to the shaping of dominant rituals and customs. Elite cultural institutions that emerged in social structure maintain its purity and rigidity for some time, and became diffused to other sections. Melting and liquidation of caste rigidities and shattering of class strata during post-colonial phase helped for such diffusion. Elephantine festival as an indigenous institution was included into the main stream of culture by religious intelligentsia with the support of socio-political elites. As the feature is added by the socio political elites in Brahmanical temples, it continued for a long span of time with its purity and rigidity. In the next phase Brahmanical temples expanded its cultural arena by incorporating temples of sub elites of social hierarchy. Communities up to Nair category were only allowed to participate in the festivals during the early decades of 1900s . With the loss of royal patronage and *Brahmanical* hegemony, the functioning of daily rituals and conducting festivals became uncertain. This forced the temple authorities to take contribution and offering from the locals for the same. Administration of temple activities were gradually opened to non-brahmins of society.

By studying about the Elephants in festivals, it is evident that even though the cultural additions were done by the socio political elites, its maintenance in long run could be done only with the support of the masses. Cultural additions done by dominant sections in society became a prestigious phenomenon which create an imitating tendency for other section of the society, especially for the non-elites. When some elements were added in the mainstream of culture and becomes a mass culture, it cannot be altered in short run. Elephants could be afforded only by the elites and they incorporated Elephants into the temple rituals and festivals which were limited to social elites. Even though this general trend has changed by the middle of twentieth century, the loss of Brahmin monopoly over cultural domains led to the transition from elite to popular

culture. Festivals in Brahmanical temples became undoubtedly popular by 1960s by crossing the social stigmas. Later the non-Brahmanical temples which wanted to imitate the rituals of the traditional Brahmanical temples, slowly added the practice of using Elephants in festivals by 1990s onwards. Earlier, Temples which could not afford Elephants, celebrated the annual rituals like *vela* without Elephants, but later they became capable for the same by 1980s. Thus Elephants are used in festivals and became an unavoidable part of popular or mass culture and continued till the date.

Intra relationship inculcated by Elephants and temple rituals has a significant role in the evolving and increasing passion for Elephants. Festivals in general could attract people through influencing their five senses and they play great role as cultural magnates to attract people towards religious spaces. Elephants help to maintain festal ambiance in the minds of people through the Elephantine fragrance even after the festival, and played a major role in making temples and festivals popular and vice versa. Their reciprocal contribution helps to nourish the cultural eco system of the region. Festivals as a spectacle added more visually enriched Elephant into its space which fulfilled the aim of visual as well as mental impact. Thus Elephants acted as ambassadors of temples as well as deity in festive and off-festival seasons.

In post-colonial days Government of India had issued orders related to the protection of wild life especially in later half of the twentieth century. The 1960 Act restricting cruelty towards animals, holds the first position among these. In 1972 wild life protection Act was introduced, and it mentioned Elephants as endangered. By the amendment of this Act by the year 1977 Elephants were considered as the animals which needed most care and Elephants were listed in Schedule I of the wildlife protection Act. This Act is applicable both for wild and captive Elephants. Elephants can't be treated as domestic like other live stocks and they remain wild even after taming and training. Kerala the region which employed maximum Elephants compared to other places, follows the rules.

Elephant procession being a collaborative effort, includes wide range of people from different categories. A large number of people and their families are formally and informally working in relation with Elephant and its ritualistic tradition. During early days, Elephants were captured and initial training were given by the tribals from the forest of each locality. Beyond Elephant owners, Elephant mahouts, ornament makers, those who groom Elephants including cutting Elephant tusk, those who arrange food for Elephants to the festival ground and intermediaries who arrange Elephants to festivals all depend on this giant for their livelihood.

Elephants possess many human characteristics and they can be trained to perform various activities. Elephants achieve a kind of enthusiasm and desire from people of all age. People from their childhood days adore Elephants through various means along with rituals and festivals. Culturally conditioned atmosphere favourable to Elephants and collective mentality of people helped to increase elements of passion towards the magnificent celebrity and create a stardom in cultural space. Thus element of passion is followed and transmitted by prestigious and collective imitation.

Passion for Elephants got generated in central Kerala in long run due to the interplay of various factors. Beyond the role played by Elephants in rituals and festivals, Elephants in mythologies reached to us in the form of pictures, symbols, sculptures, stories, films, cartoons, playing its role in creating an adoration for Elephants. Fascination for Elephants as elite property created a sense of admiration as a symbol of status and wealth. Beauty and elegance of Elephant caparisons also attracted the mass towards the Elephant and wanted to make the same as the symbol of our cultural identity.

Popular beliefs associated with Elephants also generated to increase passion towards the Elephant. Legendary Elephant figures like Guruvayur Kesavan of 1960s and 70s Thechikottukavu Ramachandran of the recent decades are connected

emotionally with the people and amassed mass support. The element of passion generated among large number of people makes the emotion a part of popular culture. This popular culture is reflected in many ways such as organising, participating and donating for *gajapooja*, *sugachikilsa*, *anayootu*, etc. Titles and honours given to the Elephants reflect popular interest which spanned beyond the religious space.

Elephants in religious space are considered as a dominant stratum where they enjoy privilege, respect and care compared to other spaces. During the time of rituals and festivals, Elephants enjoy the status of *Deva vahana*, thus achieving the divine status in socio cultural realm. Rituals and festivals intensified the element of passion towards Elephants as it explored the elephantine beauty to its maximum. Still Elephants in this space are not free from exploitation and cruelties. The relevant regulations ensure the well-being of both human and non-human, and their sustainable co-existence with humans. Instead of Anthropocentric attitude which gives importance for human beings without due consideration for well-being of our environment, there is a need to develop a bio centric attitude for a better relationship with man and surroundings. The development and enforcement of laws related to animals reflect our societal values, ethical considerations, and evolving attitudes towards our responsibilities to non-human species.

The collective attitudes towards Elephants as a cultural icon had widespread effects in our society. Elephants being a bio-icon provide various stimuli to human life related to prosperity, material gain, fame and happiness. Positive mentality towards such icons became a trade mark of socio-cultural institutions. Elephant represents far more than a cultural symbol for the entire Keralites especially for the natives of Central Kerala. Passion for Elephants have created a sense for identity formation among the people of central Kerala especially of Thrissur. The embedded, and hidden power of popular culture is reflected through passion for Elephants. This intangible element of cultural geography had its reflection in the way of life, belief

pattern, system of practice, and along with it established new relations with man and material world.

Transition and transformations can be seen with increase in the number of temple festivals which incorporate Elephants. The role of mahouts or care takers are very important in maintaining the system. The proper and trained mahouts who possess a real passion for the giant is a need and necessity. Lack of hereditary experience and dedication from the part of mahouts and care takers result in the unpredictable behavioral problem from Elephants and will lead to mass injuries. Elephant mahouts primarily belonged to Nair communities in the early days which witnessed a change by 1970s as people from other communities were accommodated in to this profession. Regular and systematic training should be given to the mahouts and elephant attendance. Increasing demand and passion led to competition between temples by decreasing the element of divinity. The role played by intermediaries between Elephant owners and temple authorities was an important development of 1990s and Elephants' fans association of these time helped to increase the fame of each Elephants. Social media and Advertisements plays an important role in accumulating passion for Elephants. Mentalities and attitudes will differ region to region and it alter social behavior since it is dynamic and dialectical in nature. Multi linear theory of culture says that cultural evolution occurs differently and in a different manner. Now a days more people are passionate as well as concerned and conscious about Elephant welfare along with appreciating the role of Elephants in festivals and other rituals in temple spaces.

Passion for Elephants had its variation in recent decades. The element of commercialization instead of divinity is prioritised in order to outshine nearby regions. This led to the worsening of the situation and government interference in this field became inevitable. Presently legal restrictions are existing for the import of Elephants to Kerala as well as capturing of Elephants from forest. The government interference and regulations should be in a proper way with wider

sense and farsightedness. Otherwise, the work burden of the existing Elephants will increase which will have a reverse impact on the lives of both human and Elephants.

Different perspectives exist among different factions towards the continuation of Elephants in the ritual world. Environmentalist and Elephant welfare squad stand against the Elephant procession highlighting the torture and exploitation of the animal. To them Elephant in captivity undergoes many problems both physical and psychological, and ensuring adequate veterinary care, enforcing strict wildlife Act etc. are essential for overcoming such problems. To them element of passion is a created emotion that could satisfy material aims of a certain category of people.

Those who want to continue Elephants in ritual world, are arguing for the maintenance of rituals and customs which are evolved as the part of an indigenous culture and the working of international lobbies to cease our heritage. They considered that being sacred animal, Elephant possess divine charisma and are treated with high prestige as *Deva vahana* in such rituals. For them beyond economic profit there generated an emotional, cultural and spiritual bond between man and elephants in central Kerala that cannot be measured in material terms which can be reflected in acts of care and companionship. And being magnificent and huge in size visibility of the image of deity in the mass is satisfied by the Giant.

As an indigenous institutionalization of culture, natives of Thrissur have a defensive attitude for using Elephants for festivals in this area. They uphold Elephant festival as cultural identity and part of tradition, which can unite the people of this region. As per the opinion of Thomas Hobbes, Indigenous culture will create a self-pride and unique nature from other culture. Thus, the pro attitude towards elephant created a sense of distinctiveness for the people of this region. The changing religious and materialistic perception incorporated Elephants with varied

attributes and occupational as well as ritual situations, which posted Elephants in various spheres of socio-cultural life as mentalities, are always embedded with socio cultural and religious aspects of life.

Organizations and NGOs, like All Kerala Elephant Owners Federation, All Kerala Elephant Fans Association, Elephant Welfare Forum, All Kerala Festival Coordination Committee etc. play their own role regarding Elephant in temple space. Kerala Government Animal Welfare Board also stands for protecting the interest of the captive Elephants in Kerala.

Features of Elephants like Fibonacci curve in trunk, ivory coloured and growing tusk, self-cooling ears, waving tail, more over emotional attachment of Elephants with fellow beings - all help to stay Elephants in long run in our socio cultural space. A change in attitude from anthropocentric to biocentric is necessary for maintaining a good and healthy, human non-human relation. It is a complex and majestic being that embodies the intersection of natural splendour and human imagination. Thus Elephant, a non-human social being, is attached in multiple ways to human, the social animal since pre historic days and continues the relation till the date. Its pervasive presence in literature, music, and visual arts, coupled with its extraordinary sociability and intelligence, ensures that Elephants will continue to inspire and fascinate future generations.

The Elephants in different realms like environmental ,socio economic , cultural and political spheres, constitute an indomitable role in History. The ritual world of Central Kerala played its significant role in generating emotion of passion and affirming an element of popular culture. The emotional engagement, admiration and passion of people who resided in Central Kerala, created a new chapter of timeless bond, reinforcing the profound respect for these magnificent creatures and its cultural illumination in History. By exploring, understanding and appreciating their role in our cultural world strengthen their place as one of the most revered animals in human history. The government and legal systems should

take initiative to understand the indigenous cultural peculiarities and practices that can continue in a more bio-centred manner. As the comment of project Elephant, *Gajah* or the Elephant and *Praja* or the people have to go together without harming each other.

GLOSSARY

<i>Aana pandal</i>	: Shelter for Elephant on festivals occasion.
<i>Aana</i>	: Malayalam term for Elephant.
<i>Aana Kambakar</i>	: People who were passionate with elephants.
<i>Aanakambam</i>	: Passion for elephants.
<i>Aanapallamathil</i>	: Outer wall in the shape of elephant stomach feature in architecture.
<i>Aanapranthanmar</i>	: People who were mad with elephant affairs.
<i>Aanapremikal</i>	: People who love with engaging with elephant affairs.
<i>Aanasamrakshana Samithi</i>	: A committee for the protection of elephants.
<i>Aanayeeruthal</i>	: Donating an elephant to temple.
<i>Aanayoottu</i>	: Occasional Feeding of elephant.
<i>Aanayotam</i>	: Elephant race as the part of ritual.
<i>Aarat</i>	: Annual holy bath given to the idol.
<i>Abhisheka mandapa</i>	: The stage where important functions were take place.
<i>Adyaya</i>	: Chapter
<i>Airavatha</i>	: White Elephant illustrated in mythologies.
<i>Alavattam</i>	: Gold platted caparisons.
<i>Ankusa</i>	: A tool of controlling Elephant.
<i>Ariyittuvazhcha</i>	: coronation ceremony.
<i>Ashtadigajas</i>	: Eight mythical elephants, each guarding earth from different direction.
<i>Ashtadikkarinis</i>	: Eight mythical female Elephants standing to guard earth from the eight zones.
<i>Ashtalakshmi</i>	: Eight manifestation of Hindu Goddess Lakshmi.
<i>Avarnas</i>	: Lower caste people.
<i>Ayyappa</i>	: A Hindu God.
<i>Bada Hathigumpha</i>	: Big elephant cave.
<i>Bagavathy</i>	: Goddess.
<i>Bhajan</i>	: Recitation of Sacred Legends.
<i>Cakrayudha</i>	: The wheel-weapon used by lord Vishnu.
<i>Cavady</i>	: A Person who assist mahout.

<i>Chalukuthal</i>	: (here) ritual by which Elephant take the mud out from field with tusk.
<i>Chamayakambam</i>	: (here) Strong interest towards elephant ornaments.
<i>Charupady</i>	: Built in benches made at balcony or sit out.
<i>Chaturangabala</i>	: Fourfold division of army.
<i>Chendamelam</i>	: Beating of drums before procession.
<i>Chothi Nakshatra</i>	: Name given to a star as per Malayalam month.
<i>Chuttuvilakku</i>	: Lamp lightening at the outer wall of Kerala temple conducting as offering or ritual.
<i>Chyavanaprasam</i>	: An ayurveda medicine for improving health.
<i>Dakshina</i>	: Donation.
<i>Dara</i>	: Temple ritual of dropping water on idol probably conducted as offering.
<i>Darsan</i>	: Vision.
<i>Devaprashnam</i>	: An astrological practice to find out the will of God.
<i>Devaswom</i>	: The Authority which administers the temple.
<i>Diptych</i>	: Two-part hinged panel or shrine used in Buddhist religious practices.
<i>Dwadasi</i>	: A special day of Temple.
<i>Ekadasi</i>	: The eleventh day of the moon.
<i>Elephus</i>	: Greek word for ivory.
<i>Eralpad</i>	: senior-most eligible member of the Zamorin Kovilakam.
<i>Erawan</i>	: Thai version of Airavatha or white Elephant.
<i>Esala Perahera</i>	: The festival celebrated at new capital Kandy incorporating Elephant.
<i>Ettarayogam</i>	: Council of eight and half members who decide affairs of Padmanaba swamy Temple of Travancore.
<i>Ettukettu</i>	: Traditional style of building with two central courtyard.
<i>Ezharaponnana</i>	: Statue of seven and half golden Elephants displayed in Ettumanoor Mahadeva temple during festivals.
<i>Ezhunnallathu</i>	: (here) procession of deity from temple during festival.
<i>Gaja</i>	: Elephant.
<i>Gajalakshna</i>	: Features of Elephant which bring good or bad luck to the owners.

<i>Gajamela</i>	: Gathering of elephants.
<i>Gajaprishtasreekovil</i>	: Apsidalshape sreekovil.
<i>Gajarajan</i>	: King of elephants.
<i>Gajaranyaka</i>	: Elephant Forest mentioned in the work of Arthasastra.
<i>Gajaratnam</i>	: Jewel among elephants.
<i>Ganapathi prathishta</i>	: Installation of an idol of Lord Ganesha in a temple.
<i>Ganapathi</i>	: Elephant headed God of Hindus.
<i>Gramabali /Gramavili</i>	: Custom of visiting to the house the devotees of the region by deity.
<i>Gramapradakshinam</i>	: Ritual in which idol of the deity is carried in procession from temple to village.
<i>Granthavari</i>	: Chronicle related to medieval ruling households.
<i>Guptabhojana</i>	: Secret food eating.
<i>Hasthi</i>	: Elephant.
<i>Hasthihastha</i>	: architectural feature of temple in the shape of Elephant trunk seen on both side of sopana.
<i>Hasthipa</i>	: Elephant Keeper
<i>Hathijuj</i>	: Elephant fight organised for entertainment purpose.
<i>HiranyaGarbha</i>	: Ceremony conducted by the ruling power during the medieval Swarupampolity in order to increase their status it associated with large scale donation to brahmins and temples.
<i>Homo heidelbergensis</i>	: The first humans belonged to Middle Pleistocene epoch to adapt to colder climates and routinely hunt large animals.
<i>Howdah</i>	: The carriage designed for riding on the back of Elephant mainly for rulers or elites.
<i>Ibha</i>	: Sanskrit word for Elephant.
<i>Illam</i>	: House of Namboodiri.
<i>Janmi</i>	: Holder of Janmam.
<i>Japam</i>	: Chanting of mantra.
<i>KalabhamKazhikkal</i>	: Pasting of Sandal especially on idols.
<i>Kalari</i>	: (here) Place where martial arts were taught.
<i>Kappam</i>	: Type of traditional Tax existed in Kerala.
<i>Karanawar</i>	: The eldest member of family.

<i>Karikaras</i>	: State Peons during premodern Kerala.
<i>Karimpatam</i>	: Woollen Blanket.
<i>Karkkidakam</i>	: A month in Malayalam calendar.
<i>Khatam</i>	: Land measuring unit in Kerala.
<i>Khedda</i>	: Trap pen.
<i>Koima</i>	: Internal Administrator of Temple.
<i>Kollavarsham</i>	: Malayalam calendar used in Kerala.
<i>Kotta</i>	: Fort.
<i>Kovilakam</i>	: Palace of ruler or Naduvazhi.
<i>Kudamattam</i>	: Changing of umbrellas during festivals.
<i>Kulaguru</i>	: Senior Teacher attached to each family.
<i>Lord Vigneswara</i>	: Another name given to lord Ganapathi as remover of obstacles.
<i>Madam</i>	: Musth.
<i>Madathil Varavu</i>	: The event within the Thrissur Pooram festival where the deities of the Thiruvambadi temple, are paraded to the Brahmaswommadom.
<i>Mahakshetras</i>	: The temple with at least three times pooja in a day.
<i>MalayilKarankur</i>	: A Group of early inhabitances who were give the charge of forest wealth.
<i>Matanga</i>	: Elephant.
<i>Medam</i>	: A month of Malayalam Calendar.
<i>Melkoima</i>	: term used in medieval Kerala, the right of a ruler to rule a temple.
<i>Melsanthy</i>	: Head priest of a temple.
<i>Mithunam month</i>	: A month in Malayalam Calendar.
<i>Moga</i>	: Musth.
<i>Nadathallal /Namaskaram</i>	: Offering without any proper function.
<i>Nadayiruthal</i>	: Offering elephant to the Lord through proper function.
<i>Naduvazhis</i>	: Local rulers with political power.
<i>Nambidi</i>	: Namboodiri.
<i>Navagraha</i>	: Nine celestial bodies that influence human destiny
<i>Nerchas</i>	: Festival in honour of a Saint.
<i>Nettipattam</i>	: God plated caparison for elephant .

<i>Nilavilakku</i>	: Lamp.
<i>Niramala</i>	: decorating <i>sreekovil</i> with garland usually conduct as offerings
<i>Nirapara</i>	: Offer of a measure of rice for the deity.
<i>Ottayan</i>	: Single elephant of Rogue nature .
<i>Padiyettam</i>	: Ceremony of ascending the steps of the <i>mandapa</i> conducted by rulers of Venad
<i>Palazhy</i>	: Ocean of milk mentioned in Hindu mythologies.
<i>Panas</i>	: Ancient Indian Coin
<i>Panchaboothas</i>	: five elements that constitute the universe.
<i>Panchavadyam</i>	: Five instruments used in procession.
<i>Parayeduppu</i>	: Collecting paddy offering from the devotees
<i>Pattam</i>	: Rent.
<i>Perunnal</i>	: holy days in memory of Christian saints.
<i>Pidi</i>	: she elephant.
<i>Pidinadatham</i>	: walk of a cow elephant for measuring land.
<i>Pooja</i>	: Ritual practice.
<i>Pooram</i>	: Festival related to temples with participation of two or more neighbouring temples, with richly caparisoned elephants.
<i>Pooravilambaram</i>	: Ritual in Thrissur pooram by which beginning of pooram is announced.
<i>Pranala</i>	: water-chute for draining out lustral water.
<i>Prasadam</i>	: Divine food, Literally divine grace.
<i>PrathishataDinam</i>	: The annual ceremony of consecration of an idol.
<i>Pururuttati</i>	: A star in Hindu astrology.
<i>Rajavahana</i>	: Vehicle of the ruler.
<i>Rakshaboga</i>	: Protection Fee or tax.
<i>Sahasrakalasam</i>	: A ritual in temple during purification of the Idol.
<i>Sanctuary</i>	: An area where animals live in their habitats with no interference.
<i>Sastha</i>	: Incarnation of lord Ayyappa.
<i>Seeveli</i>	: Procession of the deity around sanctorum.
<i>Sopana</i>	: steps leading to sreekovil of the temple.

<i>Thalekettu</i>	: God plated caparison for elephant.
<i>Thalore</i>	: A place in Thrissur district.
<i>Thappana</i>	: Tamed elephants who help for trapping wild elephants.
<i>Thattakam</i>	: A region around a temple with a cultural boundary.
<i>Thekkottirakkam</i>	: The name of a famous procession featuring decorated elephants that takes place from the south gopura of Vadakkunnathan Temple during the Thrissur Pooram.
<i>Thidambu</i>	: Image or idol used for procession.
<i>Thooval</i>	: sprinkling of cooked rice mainly related with temple ritual during <i>seeveli</i> .
<i>Thottra</i>	: An Elephant controlling tool or goad mentioned in Arthasastra.
<i>Thulabaram</i>	: an offering ceremony in which offering made to the temple equal to the weight of devotee.
<i>Thulapurushadanam</i>	: an offering ceremony and ritual conducted by the ruler in which offering of precious item like gold or others made to the temple equal to their weight .
<i>Umbark-kadu</i>	: The term used for Elephant forest in early Tamil works.
<i>UpacharamChollipiriyal</i>	: farewell ceremony between the participant deities of a festival.
<i>Urakam</i>	: A place in Thrissur district.
<i>Utsavabali</i>	: Religious symbolic sacrifice in the temple in connection with the festival.
<i>Utsavam</i>	: Festival which give priority to rituals.
<i>Vahana</i>	: Vehicle.
<i>Vazhipad</i>	: voluntary donation mainly to temples.
<i>Venchamaram</i>	: White tufts mainly made of yak tail or hair
<i>Yasti</i>	: An Elephant controlling stick mentioned in Arthasastra.
<i>Yogakkar</i>	: here means a group of people with decision making power.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Archival Documents Related to Elephants

Section A

Irinjalakuda Temple Transactions Collected from Earnakulam Archives (988-1026-1038)

നമ്പർ	റിജിസ്ട്രേഷൻ			മുൻ ആൾ	ഇന്നാൾ	സംഗ്രഹം
	കോളം	മുൻ	ഇന്നാൾ			
1	നമ്പർ	വർഷം	മുൻ	മുൻ	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
2	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	സി	ഇന്നാൾ
3	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
4	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
5	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
6	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
7	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
8	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
9	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ
10	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	ഇന്നാൾ	ഇന്നാൾ

Letter (988 ME1813 CE) from Colonel Munro to Thachudayakaimal local jenmmi of Irinjalakuda temple, mention about the order given to the person in charge of Mukundapuram for transferring Elephants and other necessary help for Irinjalakuda temple construction

നമ്പർ	നമ്പർ	കോളം	മുൻ	നമ്പർ	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
1	നമ്പർ	കോളം	മുൻ	നമ്പർ	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
2	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
3	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
4	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
5	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
6	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
7	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
8	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
9	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം
10	സി	കോളം	മുൻ	സി	തീരുമാനം	തീരുമാനം

Elephants maintained for construction work in Temple

ന. ന. ൦	൧ ൦ ൧ ൯	വി. സം.	൨. ൪	തിരുവാറ്റാ ദിവാൻ	തച്ചുകയറുകൾ	പണവകുപ്പിന്റെ ആഭിമുഖ്യത്താൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ള അല്ലെങ്കിൽ കയറുകൾ വെട്ടുന്ന സാധാരണ കയറുകൾ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്നവയാണ്. ഇവ ആഭിമുഖ്യത്തിൽ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്നവയാണ്. ഇവ ആഭിമുഖ്യത്തിൽ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്നവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧	൧	ടി	൨൨	തിരുവാറ്റാ ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൨	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൩	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൪	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൫	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൬	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൭	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൮	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൯	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൦	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൧	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൨	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൩	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൪	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൫	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൬	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൭	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൮	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൧൯	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.
ന. ന. ൨൦	൧	ടി	൧൧	കൊച്ചി ദിവാൻ	ടി	കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയുടെ പട്ടികയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കയറുകൾ എടുത്തിട്ടുള്ളവയാണ്.

1015 ME. (1840 CE.) Kochi Divan to Thachudayakaimal reflect the State interference in capturing Elephants.

Section B

B-39 Budget Estimate of the Cochin State for the year 1094 (1918-19 CE), Ernakulam:

DISBURSEMENTS									
7. CUSTOMS (including 'Marine').									
Numbers	1093	1094	Description	Budget estimate 1094		Revised estimate 1093		Budget estimate 1093	
				Rs.	Pcs.	Rs.	Pcs.	Rs.	Pcs.
Salaries	1	1	Deputy Superintendent (125)	1,500					
	1	1	Assistant Superintendent (65)	750					
			ESTABLISHMENT.		2,280		3,380		2,280
	7	7	Accountants (20), Chowkies (15), Messengers 4 (7), Servant-Signaller (15-20)		936		1,054		936
			TEMPORARY ESTABLISHMENT.						
			Light-keepers 2 (10) for 45 months, Syring (7), both for 35 months, boats 2 (6), and allowances for 6 months		400		400		400
			Travelling allowance		100		100		100
			Purchase and repair of furniture		600		600		600
			Cleaning charges						
			Office expenses						
			Miscellaneous						
			Total	4,376	24	4,434	34	4,376	24
			Add or deduct for rounding						
			Total 'Customs' (including 'Marine')	4,400		4,400		4,400	
8. FORESTS.									
A. CONSERVANCY AND WORKS.									
			(1) Timber and other produce removed from the forests by Sirkar agency	1,18,150		1,40,800		91,620	1,60,068
			(2) Do. by consumers and purchasers	2,820		8,090		8,300	8,558
			(3) Confiscated produce, drift and waste	100		50		100	100
			(4) Stores and elephants	200		670		780	801
			(5) Purchase of elephants, their capture, feeding, and treatment	10,180		9,520		11,890	9,749
			(6) Construction, buildings and other works	12,287		9,680		8,468	6,726
			(7) Conservation, improvement, and extension of forests						
			(8) Demarcation, survey, and of forest settlements						
			(9) Compensation for lands and rights	2,000		2,000		2,000	2,000
			(10) Survey and planning	10,000		9,030		9,000	9,000
			(11) Other works	5,700		5,700		5,700	5,700
			(12) Miscellaneous						
			Carried over	1,65,407		1,77,090		1,24,000	2,21,726
			(13) Increase mainly due to payment of increased collection charges.						
			(14) Decrease due to the provision for Devaswam elephants being omitted.						
			(15) Increase due to the provision made for more original works.						

Budget estimate of 1094 ME. Shows allocation of rupees 10,180 for the Purchase elephant, their capture, training, feeding and treatment. This also gives details of the previous year 1093 as 9,520.

Appendix II

Mathrubhumi News (from 1923 to 1980) on Elephants and Festivals Collected from Mathrubhumi Office Kozhikode (Documents Courtesy: Mathrubhumi Archives Kozhikode)

03.05.1923

കേരളം.

ഇക്കൊല്ലം തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ പൂരം ഉത്സവം വളരെ ആഘോഷമായി കൊണ്ടാടിയതായും, കരിമരുന്ന് പ്രവൃത്തിനിമിത്തം രണ്ടുപേർ മരിച്ചതായും, ചിലർ വരക്കാരായും അറിയുന്നു.

News mentioned about Thrissur pooram in 03.05.1923

16.06.1923

കേരളം.

കുറർ നിലകളാൽ നമ്പൂതിരിപ്പാടവർക്കുള്ള പ്രോസിക്യൂട്ട് ചെയ്യുവാൻ കൊച്ചിൻ ഗവണ്മെണ്ടുസമ്മതിച്ചതുകുറിയുന്നു.

മലബാർ ഡിസ്ട്രിക്ട് ബോർഡിന്റെ കീഴിലുള്ള 250 കളാപ്പാക്കുകൾ കറക്കുവാനായി തിട്ടപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

ഇന്ത്യക്കാർ ഭക്ഷണം കഴിക്കേണ്ടതലേക്കായി കോഴിക്കോട്ട് തീവണ്ടിആറ്റിപ്പിയിൽ 75,000 ക ചിലവിട്ട് ഒരുമുറി പണിചെയ്യുവാൻ എസ്. ഐ. ആർ. കമ്പനി റിശായിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടത്രെ.

പാലക്കാട് മുണ്ടരംഗത്തിൽ ഇച്ചിടെ തെക്കുട്ടിജിതുവാൻ കണ്ണാണുസ്സൂത്രയുടെ വട്ടങ്ങൾ തെയ്യക്കാക്കുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നതിനിടയിൽ പരുവോൽ കൂടി വെട്ടുന്നു മരിച്ചു പോയതായി അറിയുന്നു.

തെയ്യവാതിലാൽ പാറത്തിൽ കൊന്നാശ്ശരത്നകുമാരനെ തൊക്കെ മലയാളം സംസ്ഥാനം എസ്റ്റി ഇംഗ്ലീഷ് കൊല്ലുവാൻ വിധിച്ചതിന്റെ തകരാറായിട്ട് എസ്റ്റിലിൽ ആട്ടിരിപ്പി സ്ഥലത്തു നടത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

ഉത്സവകാലങ്ങളിൽ കൊച്ചിയിലെ കേരളത്തോളമെന്ന് എന്ന് നോക്കുന്നതുകൾക്കുപയോഗിച്ചാൻ കൊണ്ടുപോകുന്ന ആനകൾക്ക് വരണമിരുന്നെങ്കിൽ പുകയെകൊടുക്കേണ്ട ആവശ്യമില്ലെന്നുകൊച്ചിഗവണ്മെന്റ് കല്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു.

Elephants taken for temple processions in Kochi during the festival season were exempted from paying chungam (tax)

10.01.1933

കൊല്ലങ്കോട്ട ആറാട്ട് ഉത്സവം

ആനയാടകയാൽ 2 പേർ മരി
ച്ചു, പലക്കും പരക്കു പറ്റി

പാലക്കാട്, ജനുവരി 6

കൊല്ലങ്കോട്ട എല്ലാ കൊല്ലവും പതിവുള്ള അയ്യപ്പൻകാവ് ആറാട്ട് ഉത്സവം കഴിഞ്ഞ ബുധനാഴ്ചയായിരുന്നു. ഏഴു ആനകൾ പതിവുപോലെ എഴുന്നള്ളത്തിനുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. അന്ധകായിരം ആളുകളും ഉത്സവം കാണുന്നതിനു എത്തിച്ചേർന്നു. കൊല്ലങ്കോട്ട രാജാവിന്റെ അയ്യപ്പൻ എന്ന പേരായ ഒരു വലിയ കൊമ്പനായുടെ മുൻകാലകുട്ടിയെ കരക്കു പണ്ടെ അഴിക്കുമ്പോൾ അതിന്റെ അടുത്ത കൂടെ മുമ്പിലാക്കു കടന്നു പോയിരുന്ന ചിക്കൻ നായ്ക്കരുടെ ആനയെ അതു മല്ലോരു കള്ള കൊടുത്തു. ഇതുകൊണ്ടു ചിക്കൻ നായ്ക്കന്റെ ആന മറിഞ്ഞുവീണു. അതിന്റെ അടിയിൽ പെട്ട കരാൾ ചത്തതാണെന്നു ചതുപ്പോയിരിക്കുന്നു.

അയ്യപ്പനാഥരിൽനിന്നു വിണ്ടും ഉപദ്രവം ഉണ്ടാകുന്നതിനെ ഭയന്നു ചിക്കൻ നായ്ക്കന്റെ ആന എഴുന്നീറ്റു നിൽക്കുന്ന ജനക്കൂട്ടത്തിന്റെ പടയോട്ടകളെ അസംഖ്യം പരമെ തട്ടി മരിച്ചിട്ടും ചവിട്ടിയുകൊണ്ടു കാടുവാൻ തുടങ്ങി. വലിയ കപനമേരി. അസംഖ്യം പേർ അടുത്തുള്ള കുളത്തിൽ ചെന്നു ചാടി. ഇതെഴുന്നതാവ മെരണ്ടു പേർ മരിച്ചുപോയിരിക്കുന്നു. അഞ്ചാലുപേർക്കു കുറിഞ്ഞായ പരക്കുകളും പറ്റിയിട്ടുണ്ടു. പരക്കു പറ്റിയവരുടെയെല്ലാം അസ്സത്രിയിലേക്കു കൊണ്ടുപോയിരിക്കുന്നു. നന്നു ചുരുട്ടി അയ്യപ്പനാഥയെ പിടിച്ചിടത്തന്നെ നിൽക്കു ആറാട്ടു കഴിച്ചുകൂട്ടി. പാലാഴി ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ടർ സ്ഥലത്തു പോയി അന്ധപാലാഴി തടത്തിട്ടുണ്ടു.

ആനയുടെ
സെതലർകളും

മാങ്കാവിൽ പടിഞ്ഞാറെ കോവിലകംവക തുളിശാലെ ഭഗവതി ക്ഷേത്രത്തിൽ പതിവിന്നനുസരിച്ച് ഇക്കുറിയ ആഴ്ചയിൽ നടത്തിയ ഉത്സവത്തിൽ എഴുന്നള്ളിക്കുവാൻ വേണ്ടി കൊണവന കോവിലകംവക കുട്ടികളുൾക്കു നെയ് പള്ളിവേട്ട ദിവസം പകൽ എഴുന്നള്ളത്ത് കഴിഞ്ഞു മടങ്ങിക്കൊണ്ടുവരുമ്പോൾ ആനക്കാരൻ കറെ വഴിയെ ആവുകയും ആന കറെ വേഗത്തിൽ മുന്നോട്ടു പോവുകയും ചെയ്തു അവസരത്തിൽ അഞ്ചു വയസ്സുപ്രായമുള്ള ഒരു കുട്ടി ആനയുടെ കാലകുട്ടുടെ ഇടയിൽ പെട്ടുകയറുമായി. തൽക്ഷണം ആന അവിടെനിന്നു തുവിക്കെക്കൊണ്ടു കുട്ടിയെ എടുത്തു ലേറവും അപകടംകൂടാതെ റോഡ് വക്കത്ത് കൊണ്ടുപോയി. കുറച്ചപ്പോഴായി നിന്നിരുന്ന കുട്ടിയുടെ അമ്മ ഈ കാഴ്ചകണ്ട് നിലവിട്ടി കൂട്ടുകയും ആന ആ സ്ത്രീയുടെ അടുത്തെത്തിയപ്പോൾ കറെ നേരം ആ അമ്മയുടെ മേലുള്ള നോക്കി അവിടെനില്ക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. അമ്മയും കുട്ടിയും കുറച്ചുനേരത്തേക്ക് ബോധരഹിതരായി എങ്കും അതിനു ശേഷം യാതൊരപകടവും കൂടാതെ വീട്ടിലെക്ക് മടങ്ങി പോയി എന്നും അറിയുന്നു.

ഉത്സവങ്ങൾ
നിലനിൽക്കട്ടെ

[illegible]

23.04.1950

**തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ പുരം
കൊടിക്കേറി**

പുരവരാരംഭം

തൃശ്ശൂർ, ഏപ്രിൽ 21
ചരിത്രപ്രസിദ്ധമായ തൃശ്ശൂർപുരം
ഇന്ന് കൊടിയേറ്റിരിക്കുന്നു. പതി
വിൽനൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ പുരത്തി
ന്റെ തലേന്നുവരെ ശ്രീശങ്കരയ
നിയ്യം, പുരം വരവും ചടക്കണമേൻ
ക്കേതുത്തിന്റെ മുൻവശത്ത് ശ്രീമൂല
സ്ഥാനത്തുവെച്ചു വിവിധപരിപാടിക
ളോടുകൂടി ആഘോഷിക്കുന്നതാണ്.
അവയിൽ മേടം 9-ാം-നാ-ശനിയാഴ്ച ക
ടത്തനാട് ശ്രീ. ശങ്കരവർമ്മാജിവി
ന്റെ അദ്ധ്യക്ഷതയിൽ കൂടുന്നതും
അതിൽ ശ്രീ. കെ. വാസുദേവൻമൂപ്പതി
ന്റെ മതപ്രസംഗവും 11-ാം-നാ-തിങ്ക
ളാഴ്ച ചേർത്തു വേണിയമ്മയുടെ ഹരി
കഥയും 12-ാം-നാ-കലാമണ്ഡലം യോഗ
ത്തിന്റെ കഥകളിയും പ്രത്യേകം പ്ര
സ്താവ്യമാണ്. —സ.പ. ലേ

30.04.1950

**തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ
പുരാരംഭം**

**പതിവിലധികം ആഡംബര
പൂർവ്വം കൊണ്ടാടി**

തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ, ഏപ്രിൽ 28
ഇക്കൊല്ലത്തെ തൃശ്ശിവപേരൂർ പുരാ
രംഭം പതിവിലധികം ആഡംബര
പൂർവ്വം ഉന്നമിച്ചോടുകൂടി അവസാനി
ച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. എല്ലാ പുരങ്ങളും, പ്രത്യേ
കിച്ചും തിരുവമ്പാടിപാറമേക്കാവു പു
രങ്ങൾ, ഒന്നാത്തരം ആനകൾ, കോപ്പ
കൾ, മേളങ്ങൾ എന്നിവയോടുകൂടി ആ
ഘോഷിക്കപ്പെട്ടു. ജനങ്ങൾക്കിടയിൽ
ആഹ്ലാദവും, ഭിത്തിയും അതുതന്നെ ദൈ
വമായതു വളർത്തിക്കൊണ്ടു ഗംഭീരങ്ങ
ളായ ഓലപ്പടക്കങ്ങളോടുകൂടി ആരംഭി
ച്ചു “പെടിക്കെട്ടിൽ” ഇരുപതുപേരും
പല നൂതനങ്ങളായ കൈകളും പ്രയോ
ഗിച്ചിരുന്നു. രാത്രി രണ്ടുപന്ത്രണ്ടു മണിക്കാ
രംവെച്ചു പെടിക്കെട്ടു കാലത്തു 6 മണി
ക്കാണ് അവസാനിച്ചത്.

എത്രതന്നെ സാമ്പത്തികശേഷമു
ണ്ടാവാലും ഈ ദേശീയമഹോത്സവ
ത്തിൽ സംബന്ധിച്ചു വമ്പിച്ച
ജനം വെച്ചു, ഈ ഉത്സവ
ത്തിന്റെ വർദ്ധിച്ചുവരുന്ന പ്രാധാ
ന്യത്തെ തികച്ചും വ്യക്തമാക്കി. കം
മേളയുടെ ആവശ്യത്തിനനുസരി
ച്ചായി 55 കോപ്പകൾ തിരിക്കേണ്ടിവ
ന്നതുകൊണ്ട് പുരത്തിന് പ്രത്യേകവ
ണ്ടികൾ ഓടിക്കുവേണ്ട സാധിക്കുകയി
ല്ലെന്ന് ആദ്യം വിചാരിച്ചിരുന്നെങ്കി
ലും, കിട്ടാൻ സാധിക്കുന്നതുകൊച്ചു
കൾ സമ്പാദിച്ചു 20 പ്രത്യേകവണ്ടി
കൾ തേയിൽപേക്കർ ഇന്നലെ തൃശ്ശിവ
പേരൂർ ഓടിച്ചു തൃശ്ശൂർ റെയിൽ
വേ സ്റ്റേഷനിൽ പ്രത്യേകം വേറിന്റേ
ഷെഡ്ഡുകളും ബുക്കിങ്ങ് കൊണ്ടുവരുകയും
എപ്പോഴൊക്കെയും ഡിസ്ട്രിക്ട് ഓപ്പറേ
റ്ററിന്റേ സൂപ്പ്രണ്ടു മി. ബൈവാട്ടർ
ഇവിടെത്തന്നെ ക്യാമ്പുവെക്കു വണ്ടി
കൾ ഓടിക്കുന്നതിനേയും യാത്രക്കാർക്കു
വേണ്ട സൗകര്യങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്നതി
നേയും മേൽനോട്ടം വഹിച്ചു. പുതു
ക്കപ്പെട്ട ഒരു യാത്രക്കാരൻ വാതിൽ
ശരിക്കടകാത്തതിനേ മറ്റൊരു വീണ
പരിഷ്കാരവും ആസ്സത്രിയിൽ കൊ
ണ്ടുവെച്ചു ചികിത്സക്കും ചൊല്ല
ണ്ടുവന്നതൊഴിച്ചു മറ്റു പറയത്തക്ക
കെടുതികളൊന്നും ഉണ്ടായിട്ടില്ല.

തൃശ്ശൂർ പട്ടണത്തിൽ കടിക്കാൻ
കുളിക്കാൻമുള്ള വെള്ളത്തിന്നു ഏറ്റവും
ധികം ഞാൻ ബാധിച്ച കാലമാണിത്.
ഉത്സവത്തിന് വന്നവേണ ലക്ഷക്കണ
ക്കിൽ ഉള്ളവർക്ക് വെള്ളത്തിന്നു വലിയ
വിഷമം തോരിട്ടതന്നു എവിടെ നി
ന്നോ കൊണ്ടുവന്നു സാക്കറയിൽ കല
ക്കുവാനുവന്നിരുന്ന വെള്ളം ഗ്ലാസ്സു
ഗ്ലാസായി ജനങ്ങൾ വാങ്ങിക്കൊടുക്കുന്ന
തു കണ്ടിരുന്നത് ആരും സ്തബ്ധനാ
നാവാൻ.

—സ.പ. ലേ

Elephant Atrocities reported in early decades

29.04.1941

ഒരു ആനയുടെ പരാക്രമം

പാപ്പാണെ കൊന്നു

എറണാകുളം, ഏപ്രിൽ 27
പാവൂർ സക്കാർക്കേതൃത്വത്തിലെ ഉത്സവ ഘോഷത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുത്തുകൊണ്ടിരുന്ന ഒരു പിണങ്ങി വലിയ ബഹളം ഉണ്ടാക്കിയതായി വിവരം കിട്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഉഗ്രമായ പ്രതികാരബുദ്ധിയോടുകൂടി എന്ന് തോന്നാമെന്നു, ആന അതിന്റെ പാപ്പാണെ തട്ടിത്താഴത്തിട്ടു ചവിട്ടുകയും കത്തുകയും എടുത്തു മുകളിലോട്ടു എറിഞ്ഞവരുന്നവർ കൊമ്പുകാണിച്ചു അതിൽ തറച്ചു വീഴ്ചവാൻ സൈങ്കര്യമുണ്ടാക്കുകയും എന്നിട്ടും കോപം സഹിക്കാതെ കയ്യും കാലും ചാർന്നു ചീന്തി എറിയുകയും ചെയ്തു എന്നാണ് കാണികൾ പറയുന്നത്. ഇതിനെത്തുടർന്ന് ആണെങ്കിലും ആന മറ്റാരെയും ഉപദ്രവിക്കുകയുണ്ടായില്ലത്രെ. കേരളത്തിൽക്കെട്ടിനകത്തായിരുന്നതിനാൽ ഇത്തരം പെട്ടെന്നു പിരിഞ്ഞ ഗോപുരപിരങ്ങി വെന്തിക്കുകയാണ് ചെയ്തത്. ആനയെ ഓടിവെച്ചുകൊല്ലുവാൻ അധികൃതന്മാർ അനുമതിനൽകിയതായും അതു കൂടാതെ കഴിക്കണമെന്നും ആനയെ ബന്ധിച്ചു യാതൊരാളെയും കൂടാതെ കൊണ്ടുപോന്നു കൊള്ളാമെന്നു പട്ടാളത്തലവന്മാർ ആവലാതിബോധിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളതായും അറിയുന്നു. (സ്വ. ലേ)

11.02.1953

ആനകൾ ഓടി പലർക്കും പരിക്കേറ്റു

ബാലുശ്ശേരി, ഫിബ്രുവരി 8
ഇന്നലെ രാത്രി ഇവിടേക്കുവന്ന കരളേക്കേതൃത്വത്തിലെ ഉത്സവ എഴുന്നള്ളത്തിനു കൊണ്ടുവന്ന 3 ആനകൾ മീനലമിട്ടുകൾ പൊട്ടിക്കുമ്പോൾ പേടിയോടുകൂടി തിരികെപോയി രണ്ടാം കിണറ്റിൽ വീഴുകയും ഏതാനും പേർക്ക് ചീപ്പിറ പരിക്കുകളേറ്റുകയും ചെയ്തതായും ഓടിയപ്പോൾ നാശനഷ്ടം പറ്റിയതും ചെല്ലിക്കുന്നു. കരളേക്കേതൃത്വം കൂടിക്കൂടി ഒരു യുവാവിന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ പല്ലുകൾ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുകയും അയാളെ കോഴിക്കോട് ഹോസ്പിറ്റലിൽ കൊണ്ടുപോയതും ചെല്ലിക്കുന്നു. മൂന്നു ആനകളും ഒരുമിച്ച് പായുകയാണുണ്ടായത്. വളരെ താമസിയാതെ ആനകളെ പിടിച്ചുകെട്ടാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞു. —സ്വ. ലേ.

18.04.1970

തൃശ്ശൂർ പൂരം: കൂടിക്കാഴ്ചയും കുടമാറ്റവും

സ്വന്തം ലേഖകൻ

തൃശ്ശൂർ, ഏപ്രിൽ 17
തൃശ്ശൂർ പൂരത്തിന്റെ വിശിഷ്ടമായ ഒരു ഭാഗമാണ് കൂടിക്കാഴ്ചയും കുടമാറ്റവും. ഇവ വൈകുന്നേരം സാധാരണ പേരുകളിലുള്ളവയായിട്ടാണ് ആദ്യം വീക്ഷിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത്. തിരക്കു കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷങ്ങളെ അപേക്ഷിച്ച് കാവായിരുന്നു എന്നാണ് പറയുന്നത്. കൂടിക്കാഴ്ചയ്ക്കും കുടമാറ്റത്തിനും വേണ്ടി പൂരത്തിലേക്ക് ആവാലവൃദ്ധം ഉറപ്പായും ലോകത്തിലേക്ക് അപൂർവ്വ കാഴ്ച ഉണ്ടാകാൻ കോട്ടയം പൂരത്തിൽ 30 ആനകളും ഈ അഭിമുഖീകരണത്തിനായി കാണാൻ നോക്കുന്ന കൂട്ടി എത്തിയിരുന്നു. പൂരത്തിന്റെ മറ്റു രണ്ടു പ്രധാന ചടങ്ങുകൾ കൂടാതെ എലഞ്ഞിത്തല ചേറ്റവും, മാത്തിലെ വെണ്മ ഉച്ചക്കു ഒരു മണിക്കു പാറമേക്കാവ് ക്ഷേത്രത്തിൽ

നാലുപേരുള്ള 15 ആനകളോടുകൂടി നിർമ്മിത സമ്പ്രദായപൂർവ്വമായിട്ടുള്ള ചേറ്റം പൊടിപൊടിപ്പിച്ചായിരുന്നു. പരിയാരത്തു കണ്ടെത്തിയ ചെറിയ നേത്രം പരിചിതമായിരുന്നു. തിരുവമ്പാടിയിലെ വെളിന്റെ ആനത്തലിൽ തിരുവമ്പാടിയിലെ ശ്രീ അനന്തനാഥ പീഠം ബഹുമാനം കൈമാറ്റം ചെയ്ത വിദഗ്ദ്ധന്മാരായ കൊല്ലാമണ്ണ നാരായണൻ നായർ, കടവല്ലൂർ അരുവീന്ദ്രൻ എന്നിവർക്കും തിരുവമ്പാടി ദേവസ്വം പ്രസിഡണ്ട് ഡോ. കെ. എൻ. പിഷാരടി ഓരോ സ്വർണ്ണ ചാർമം സമ്മാനിച്ചു. പാറമേക്കാവിന്റെ പൂരം പൂർത്തിയാക്കിയതിനുശേഷം കണ്ടെത്തിയ ചെറിയ (ചെണ്ട) അനന്തനാഥ പാറമേക്കാവ് (തിരുവ) എന്നിവർക്കും ഓരോ സ്വർണ്ണ ചാർമം കൊണ്ട് ദേവസ്വം പ്രസിഡണ്ട് ശ്രീ വി. കെ. അച്യുതമേനോൻ സമ്മാനിക്കുകയുണ്ടായി.

19.04.1970

തൃശ്ശൂർ പൂരം

50,000ക. യുടെ ഉഗ്രമായ വെടി കെട്ട്

സ്വന്തം ലേഖകൻ

തൃശ്ശൂർ, ഏപ്രിൽ 18
ശ്രീ വടക്കുന്നാഥ ക്ഷേത്രത്തിന്റെ ശ്രീമൂല സ്ഥാനത്തു നടന്ന പാറമേക്കാവ്-തിരുവമ്പാടി ഭാഗക്കാരുടെ പൊടിപൊടിച്ച മേളത്തോടെ ഇന്നു തൃശ്ശൂർ പൂരം സമാപിച്ചു.

പുലർച്ചെ രണ്ടരമണിയിൽ 'കി' കൊട്ടൽ വെടി കെട്ട് കിടിലം കൊള്ളിക്കുന്നതായിരുന്നു. ഈ ഭാഗക്കാരുടെയും 'ഫിനിഷിങ്ങ്' പൊട്ടിക്കൊടുത്ത വീഡം ഉഗ്രമായിരുന്നു. തുടർച്ചയായ ഗുണ്ടകൾ അന്തരീക്ഷത്തിലുയർന്നു. കണ്ണടയ്ക്കുന്ന മിന്നലോടുകൂടി മഴക്കാലത്തോടു പൊട്ടിക്കൊടുത്ത 'ഇതവസാനിച്ചാൽ കി' എന്ന കോണുവാക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. കെട്ടിടങ്ങൾ കിടന്നു കയറിക്കൊടുത്തു. തുടർച്ചയായി പതിനൊന്ന് ചുരുക്കുകളിലെ കയറുകൾ അടർന്നുവീണു.

ഇരുപക്ഷത്തുമായി ഉദ്ദേശം അമ്പതിനായിരം ക. വെടികെട്ടിനു മാത്രം ചിലവു വന്നു എന്നു പറഞ്ഞാൽ അതിന്റെ ഗൗരവം ഉൾക്കൊള്ളാം. രണ്ടു ലക്ഷത്തോളം പടക്കുണ്ടാണ് പൊട്ടിച്ചിരുന്നതെന്ന്.

ഡയനാമിക്സെ ഇടി മുഴക്കം മിന്നലൊളിയും അനേകം നാഴിക ദൂരം വരെ

പ്രതിധ്വനിക്കുകയും വെളിച്ചം വിതയ്ക്കുകയും ചെയ്തതായി പറയുന്നു. ഇതിനിടയിൽ ചിലർക്കു പരിക്കേൽക്കുകയുണ്ടായി. കണ്ണിനും കൈക്കും കാലിനും പരിക്കുകൾ പറ്റിയവയുണ്ടെന്ന് അപ്പോൾത്തന്നെ ആസ്സത്രിയിൽ പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ദേവസ്വം കെട്ടിടത്തിന്റെ താഴെ വെടി കെട്ടുകാണാൻ നിന്നിരുന്ന ഒരു യുവതിയുടെ തലക്ക് കെട്ടിടത്തിനേൽന്നിന്നു. ഓടിച്ചു കിട്ടി വീണു. ചിലർ പരിക്കു പറ്റി.

തെക്കോട്ടുള്ള ഇറക്കുമതിയുള്ള പാറമേക്കാവ് ഭാഗത്തുനിന്നും പൊട്ടിച്ച ഒരു ഗുണ്ടയിൽനിന്നും രണ്ടു വെള്ള പ്രാവുകൾ അന്തരീക്ഷത്തിലേക്കു ഉയർന്നു തൃശ്ശൂരിൽ ഇടപ്രദമായ ഒരു കാഴ്ചയായിരുന്നു.

കുച്ചവടക്കാരുടെ പൂരംകൊയ്ത്തു വമ്പിച്ചതായിരുന്നു എന്നാണ് പറയപ്പെടുന്നത്. എല്ലാവരും പറയുന്ന വിലയായിരുന്നു. രണ്ടര ഉറപ്പിക സാധാരണ ചാർജുള്ള ഒരു മുറിക്കു ഇന്നലെ വാടക 25 കയായിരുന്നു. വെടി കെട്ട് കാണാൻ ഒരു കരസേന ഇട്ടുകൊടുത്തതിന്നു 10 ക. വരെ വാങ്ങിയവരുണ്ട്.

26.04.1980

വർണ്ണചിത്രാർന്ന തൃശ്ശൂർ പൂരം ജനകീയ ചങ്ങമ്പുൾ ദർശിച്ചു

തൃശ്ശൂർ, ഏപ്രിൽ 25
തൃശ്ശൂർ പൂരത്തിന്റെ സവിശേഷതകളിൽ ജനലക്ഷങ്ങൾക്കു പുറം ആവേശം പകരുന്ന കടപ്പാടും ഉച്ചതിരിഞ്ഞു നടന്ന മാത്തിലെ വരവീന്റെ പഞ്ചവാദ്യവും ഇലഞ്ഞിത്തരമേളവും പറ്റിപ്പോയിയായ എല്ലാ നിരപ്പുകീട്ടോടും കൂടി ആരാധകരെ കൊരയ്ക്കി കൊള്ളിച്ചുകൊണ്ടുവെളിച്ചമായി നടന്നു.

ഇലഞ്ഞിത്തരമേളവും നടുവിൽ മാത്തിലെ പഞ്ചവാദ്യവും ആകാശവാണിയിലെ ചെമ്പു പൂരത്തിന്റെ വാദ്യമേളം പൊതുവായ സന്മാനമാക്കുക മാത്രമായി കൊള്ളുകയുണ്ടായി.

ഇതിനിടയിൽ ഇരുപതിലധികമുണ്ടായ അപകടങ്ങളിലായി അടിച്ചുകളിയിൽ നിന്നും ഉതിർന്ന വെളിച്ചംഗിയുള്ള 'പാലച്ചുട്ടകൾ' പൂക്കൾക്കൊക്കെ ഇമ്പം പകർന്നു ശ്രദ്ധയായിരുന്നു.

പകലത്തെ വെടികെട്ടിൽ തിരുവമ്പാടി വിഭാഗം-പ്രത്യേകപ്രദേശം പിടിച്ചു പറയുകയുണ്ടായി. അത്ഭുതകരമായ കടമാറത്തിലെ ഫിനിഷിംഗിൽ പാറമേക്കാവ് ജനങ്ങളുടെ കയ്യിൽ വാങ്ങി. ഇവർ ഒരു സെന്റർ ലക്ഷക്കൾ ഗജവ

ന്മാരുടെ പുറത്തുകയറി വടക്കുകയ്യിൽ പൊട്ടിപ്പോയിയായ കൈയടി ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു. അഞ്ചാലണിക്കും ആലണിക്കും ഇടയിൽ നടന്ന കടപ്പാടും വികസിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള മുമ്പ് തന്നെ നഗ്നരായി പൊട്ടിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള കെട്ടിടങ്ങളുടെ മുമ്പാകെ പുകയിൽ പതനം വരുത്തും ആലണിക്കുമണിഞ്ഞ കട്ടികളും സ്ത്രീകളും ഇരുപറ്റിച്ചിരുന്നു.

മുഴുപൊള്ളുന്ന ചുട് ശിരസ്സുമായി കുച്ചവടക്കാർക്കും ഇന്നത്തക്കയ്ക്ക് 'കോമ്പം' അവരുടെ പ്രതിഷ്ഠയ്ക്കുപോലും കവച്ചുവെച്ചതായിരുന്നു. ഒരു സെവകൾ അമ്പതു പൈസയും നാലാറു പൈസയും സർവ്വതോം എന്ന പേരിൽ വെറും നാലുപൈസയ്ക്കായി 60 പൈസയും ഇടാക്കിയെന്നും. പൊലകളും ചാലകളും കടക്കണസാധാരണക്കൾ വില വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുകയുണ്ടായി.

സന്ധ്യ മയങ്ങുന്നതോടെ പൂരത്തിന്റെ 'ചുട്' നഗ്നരായി പല ഭാഗത്തും ചാലകളെടുത്തു വന്നുവെന്ന് പൊലീസ് ഇപ്പോൾ നിയന്ത്രിച്ചു. പൂരത്തിലെ 'പൊലീസ്' സാധാരണ പ്രദേശങ്ങളിലായിരുന്നു. പല നിരത്തിലും പ്രവർത്തിച്ചുള്ള അധികാരിയെ ബോധ്യപ്പെടുത്താൻ പൊലീസ് സേനാഗോളം നഗ്നരായി പല ഭാഗത്തും ചാലകളെടുത്തു വന്നുവെന്ന് പൊലീസ് ഇപ്പോൾ നിയന്ത്രിച്ചു.

തിരുവമ്പാടി-പാറമേക്കാവ് വിഭാഗങ്ങൾക്കു വേണ്ടി തിരുവമ്പാടി ചന്ദ്രശേഖരനേയും കിഴക്കിവിട്ടിൽ വാചാഗ്രനേയും യഥാക്രമം കോലങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചു പൊതുവെ അറിവു സമ്പന്നരായ ഉണ്ടാകാത്ത തൊഴിലാളികൾക്കും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നു.

27.04.1980

പുരം: ഗംഭീരമായ പര്യവസാനം

സ്വന്തം ലേഖകൻ

തൃശ്ശൂർ, ഏപ്രിൽ 26—ഏതാണ്ടൊരു 'തെക്കോട്ടുള്ള ജീവനത്തിന്റെ' തിരക്ക് അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടുകൊണ്ട് വികാര നിർഭരമായ പാറമേക്കരവ് തിരുവമ്പാടി പോക്കോരുടെ 'കൂടിപ്പിരിയൽ' ഇന്ന് ഉച്ചയോടെ ശ്രീകൃഷ്ണസ്ഥാനത്ത് നടന്നു.

പുരത്തിന്റെ ആകർഷണീയ കഴി ആവേശവും ആഹ്ലാദവും ഇന്നലെ രാത്രി മഴയിൽ മുങ്ങിപ്പൊയെങ്കിലും ഇന്നു വീണ്ടും സജീവമായി. അങ്ങിനെ പുരം അതിന്റെ എല്ലാ മഹത്വവും കഴിഞ്ഞു കൂടി തൃശ്ശൂർ പട്ടണത്തിൽ അറക്കുക. നൽകിക്കൊണ്ടു സമാഹരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു.

പുര പ്രേമികളെ പറ്റാറും അധികം ആകർഷിക്കുന്ന വെളിക്കെട്ട് മഴയുടെ ശബ്ദം മൂലം നിശ്ചിത സമയം കഴിഞ്ഞു ഏതാണ്ട് രണ്ടു മണിക്കൂർ വൈകിപ്പോയി. മഴയുള്ളികൾ ഉയർത്തിയ ജീവണി വകവെക്കേണ്ട പതിനായിരത്തോളം ശബ്ദം വെളിപ്പിച്ചു നിലയ്ക്കു മണികൾ പ്രദീപ്തമാക്കിയപ്പോൾ മഴയുടെ ശബ്ദം കേൾക്കാൻ പക്ഷം ഭരം കാത്തിരുന്നു വെളിക്കെട്ടിൽ തീപ്പെറ്റാലിപ്പാർത്തുനന്നു മുതൽ അതു ഒരു അഗ്നിശോഭനമായി രൂപം നൽകി പരിസരമെങ്കെ കയ്യെറി സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നതുവരെ തിങ്ങി നിറഞ്ഞുനിന്നു. കെട്ടിടങ്ങളുടെ ഇരുന്ന ഔദ്യോഗികതയെ വെളിക്കെട്ട് കറുത്തൊരു 'തിരക്ക്' അധികമെന്നും കണ്ടിട്ടു. മഴ പെയ്തതു മുതലായതൊക്കെ വെളിക്കെട്ട് കമ്പക്കാരെ വേണ്ടി കെട്ടിടങ്ങളുടെ ഉടമകൾ മേക്കിയ കരസരകളിൽ പകർത്തിയ ധികവും 'ശ്രീ നൃ'കാവുകയാണ് ഉണ്ടായത്.

ശക്തമായ പോലീസ് ബന്ധവസ്ഥി കീഴിൽ ആദ്യം തിരുവമ്പാടി പോലും അസ്വസ്ഥത സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു തുടർന്നുള്ള ഏതാനും സമയത്തെ കാത്തിരിപ്പിനു ശേഷം പാറമേക്കരവ് വിഭാഗവും വെളിക്കെട്ട് കണ്ടിട്ടു.

'കൂടിപ്പിരിയിൽ' കഴിഞ്ഞു ഇരുവിഭാഗങ്ങളും അന്തരീക്ഷത്തിൽകുതിന്നുകൂട്ടിയ ഒരു നിമിഷത്തിനുള്ളിൽ മേയ് വർണ്ണമിടുകൾ ഉയർത്തി വീട്ടു പ്രദേശം സജീവ ആകാശത്തിൽ വെളിച്ചം പകർന്ന ശേഷമായിരുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ടു തന്നെയാവാം—അവയുടെ വർണ്ണപ്പെട്ട ലിഖിത ആസ്വാദിക്കാൻ ആരും എങ്ങും തിങ്ങിക്കൂടിനിന്നു അനുഭവനോരവത്തോളം ഉയർത്തി ആഹ്ലാദിക്കാൻ തീർക്കും കൂട്ടിയത്തായി കണ്ടിട്ടു. ഏറ്റവും മുന്നിലുള്ള ബസ്സിൽ വീടത്തോളമുള്ളതൊക്കെ 'കിടം' തിരക്കിനും 'ഇര കിട്ടാൻ' 'കേൾ'കളുടെ പ്രകടനങ്ങൾ കേൾക്കുകയും കൈതന്നിയിൽ ഇരിക്കുകയും നടന്നു.

വെളിക്കെട്ടിന്റെ ഇരുവിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെ എളിപ്പിരിയും അന്തരീക്ഷത്തിലെ മിന്നലും വെളിക്കെട്ടിന്റെയും ഇരുവിഭാഗങ്ങളുടെയും 'കൂടിപ്പിരി'യും അതും വെളിക്കെട്ടിന്റെയും പരിവർത്തനത്തിന്റെ ഹിതപ്രദമായിരുന്നു.

അതേതന്നെ പഴമക്കാർ പറഞ്ഞു. എന്താലും രാത്രി തകർത്തുപെയ്ത മഴയുടെ ശേഷവും നിഷ്പ്രയാസം അതിന്റെ എല്ലാഗുണവത്തോടുകൂടിയും കാഴ്ച വെച്ചു ഇരുഭാഗങ്ങളുടെയും വെളിക്കെട്ട് സഹോദരരെ അനുഭവിക്കിച്ചുവെച്ചു. മുട്ടിക്കെട്ടിയആകാശത്തു വെളിക്കെട്ടുയർത്തിയ പുകപടലം വർണ്ണമംഗിക്ക് മഞ്ഞൽ എളിപ്പിച്ചുകിട്ടും ഈ പുക പടലമാണല്ലോ ജനങ്ങൾതിങ്ങിക്കൂടുന്നതും, എന്തും അഗാധതയോടെ നാശംവരുത്തിയത്.

ശ്രീകൃഷ്ണസ്ഥാനത്ത് നിന്നു രാവിലെ നടന്ന കൂടിപ്പിരി 12 മണിക്ക് ഗംഭീരമായിക്കൊട്ടോടുകൂടിയാണ് സമാപിച്ചത്. മഴകാരണം, രാത്രിയിലെ പുരത്തും അധികവും പടങ്ങിയിരുന്നില്ലെങ്കിലും അപകടങ്ങളും, അത്യാഹിതങ്ങളും അന്നിഷ്ടസംഭവങ്ങളും ഇക്കേറിപരാവധി ഒഴിവാക്കാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞതായി പോലീസ് കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ പറഞ്ഞു. പോക്കോരിയും ആരോണ മോഹണവും എല്ലാം അപൂർവ്വമായി രാത്രിമേ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുള്ളു.

Appendix III

List of Captive Elephants Kerala with Highest Number in Central Kerala

Sl. No.	District	Number of Captive Elephants
1.	Thiruvananthapuram	42
2.	Kollam	64
3.	Pathanamthitta	25
4.	Alappuzha	19
5.	Kottayam	72
6.	Idukki	10
7.	Ernakulam	25
8.	Thrissur	114
9.	Palakkad	29
10.	Malappuram	14
11.	Kozhikode	14
12.	Wayanad	8
13.	Kannur	11
14.	Kasaragod	0

Source: District-wise details of Captive Elephants of Kerala on 2010 as per Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department

Appendix IV

**Famous Festival in Central Kerala which Incorporate
More than Fifteen Elephants**

Thrissur

Sl. No.	Name of Festivals	Number of Elephants
1.	Chavakkadupanchavadypooram	Above 15
2.	Chembuthra makara chowa	Above 50
3.	Parkkadipooram	Above 30
4.	NeluvayaEkadesi	Above15
5.	Pathirakkottukavu vela	Above 12
6.	Thiroomvadakurumbakavupooram	Above15
7.	Amakkavupooram	Above 30
8.	Panthallurpooram	Above 30
9.	Angadikkavu vela	Above 60
10.	Kattakambalpooram	Above 30
11.	Chiravarambathukkavupooram	Above 75
12.	Kozhukkullypooram	Above 30
13.	Karamukkuvisu vela	Above 15
14.	Kunnamkulam Cheerankulangerapooram	Above 60
15.	Annamkulangerapooram	Above 15
16.	Uthralikkavupooram	Above 30
17.	Kuttiyankavupooram	Above 10
18.	Arattupuzhapooram	Above 50
19.	Peruvanampooram	Above 20
20.	Parappukavupooram	Above 50
21.	Kadavallurpooram	Above 30
22.	Kaiparambupooram	Above 15
23.	Palakkalpooram	Above 20
24.	Peringottukarasomeshwarapooram	Above 15
25.	Thrissur pooram	Above 30
26.	Sakarakandampooram	Above 15
27.	Cheerankuzhi temple near Amala	Above 15

Sl. No.	Name of Festivals	Number of Elephants
28.	Ayyankulangara Kunnamkulam	Above 15
29.	Kavilakkad	Above 15
30.	Kakkadadkunnamkulam	Above 15
31.	Ayiramkanni Engandiyur	Above 35
32.	Kokkulangara Engandiyur	Above 15
33.	Viswanatha temple chavakkad	Above 15
34.	Adupputtypalliperunnal	Above 30
35.	Pazhanjipalliperunnal	Above 15

Palakkad

Sl. No.	Name of Festivals	Number of Elephants
1	Chinakkathurpooram	Above 15
2	Kavisserypooram	Above 15
3	Nenmaravellangi vela	Above 15
4	Thiruvilwamala Thalappoli	Above 15
5	Thoothapooram	Above 15
6	Mayanoor Thalappoli	Above 15
7	Tattamangalam vela	Above 15
8	Manappullikkavu vela	Above 20
9	Chalisserypooram	Above 60

Ernamkulam

Sl. No.	Name of Festivals	Number of Elephants
1	Thrippunithura Utsavam	Above 15
2	Maradupooram	Above 15
3	Cherai Pooram	Above 15

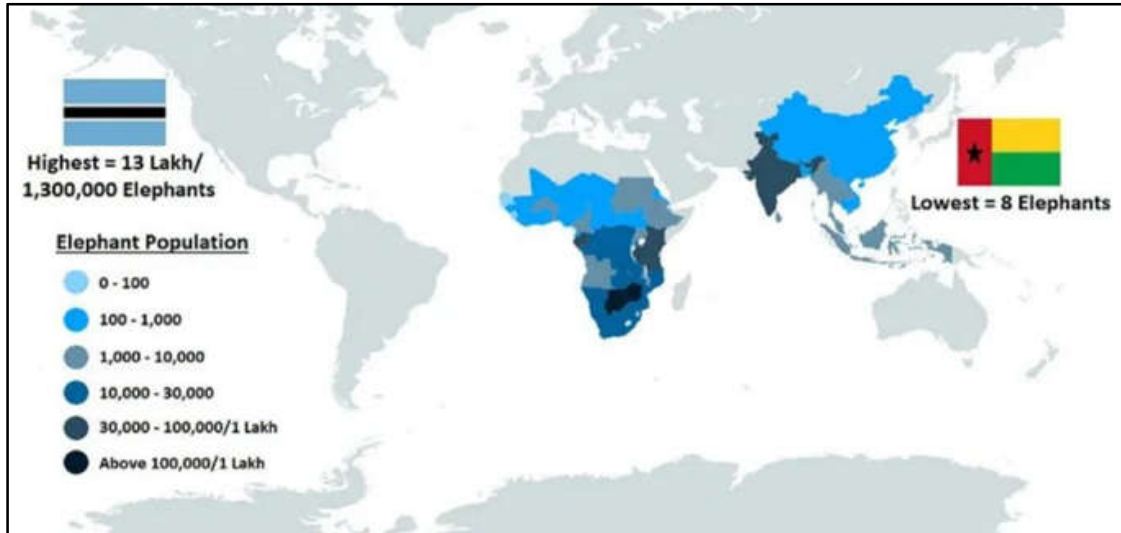
Malappuram

Sl. No.	Name of Festivals	Number of Elephants
1	Thirumandhamkunnupooram	Above 15

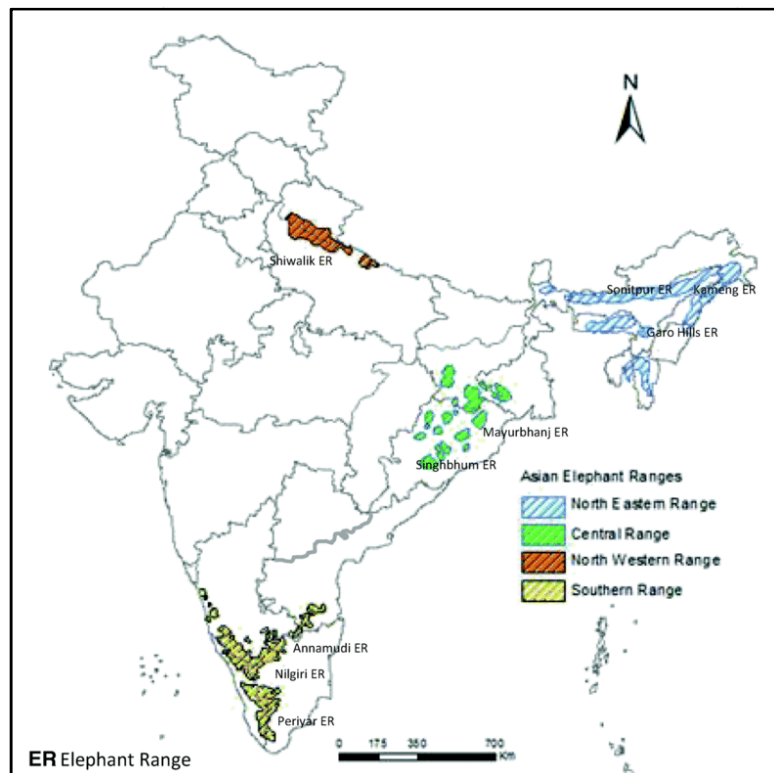
Source: Data collected based on personal interviews and contemporary newspapers updated in 2024.

Appendix V

Photos Related to the Study

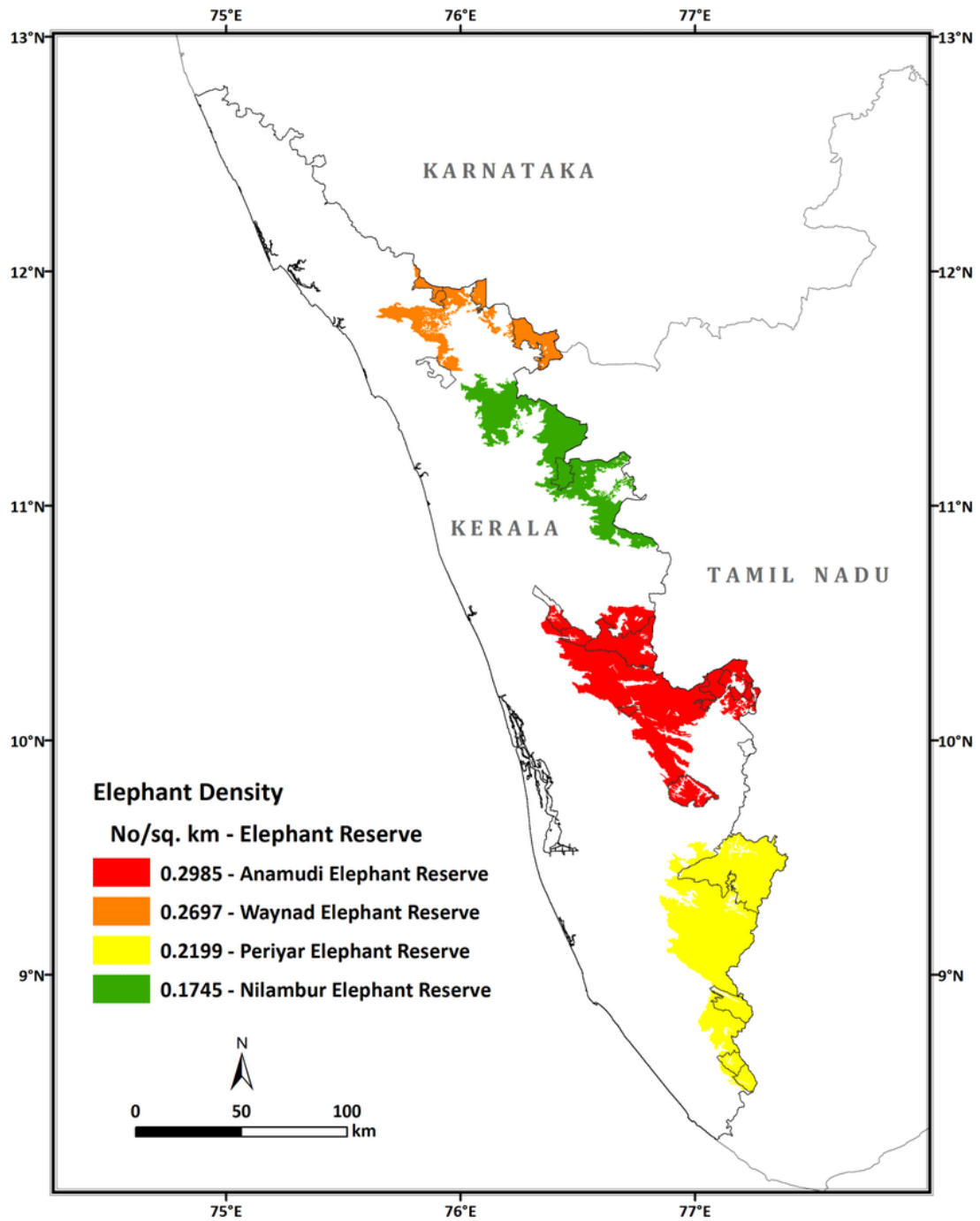


World Map displaying the distribution of both African and Asian elephants in (2018)
 (Photo retrieved from : https://www.researchgate.net/figure/World-map-displaying-the-current-and-historical-range-of-both-African-Loxodonta-africana_fig3_331990689)



Elephant range areas in India

(Photo retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Elephant-ranging-areas-in-India-adapted-from-map-provided-by-Baskaran-et-al-2011_fig1_338835478)



Kerala Map representing Elephant Density

(Photo retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Sighting-locations-of-Nilgiri-langur-in-Kerala-Forests_fig3_306292661)



Man sitting on Elephant top Bundelkhand Rock Paintings, India

(Photo retrieved from: www.bundelkhand.in)

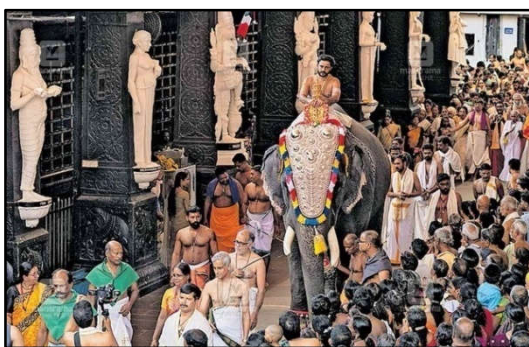


Elephant images in Ajanta Cave paintings on the wall of the Verandah, painted the story of Nalagiri, the maddened Elephant

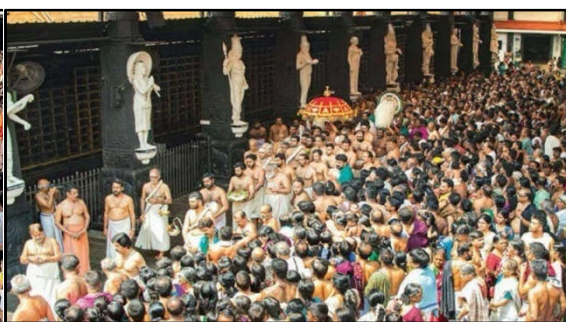
(Photo Credit Benoy K Behl)



Keerangattu Mana at Peruvanam from where the design of nettippattam Emerged.

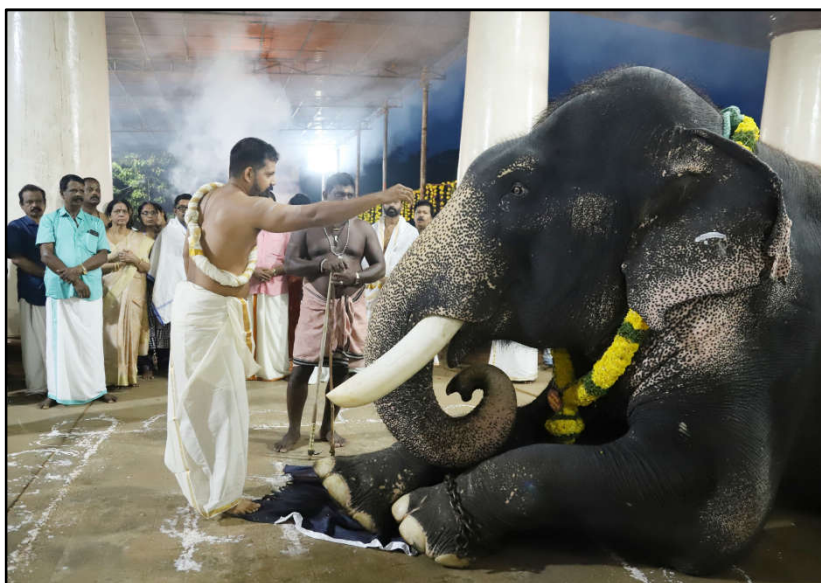


Guruvayur Seeveli with Elephant



Guruvayur Seeveli with without Elephant

(Photo retrieved from Manoramaonline.com)



Gaja pooja at Triprayar Temple, Thrissur

(Photo Credit: Arun Kuruvath)



Anayottam ceremony of Guruvayur Temple

(Photo courtesy Mathrubhumi.com)



Triprayar Thevar Chalukuthalritual related to Triprayar Festival



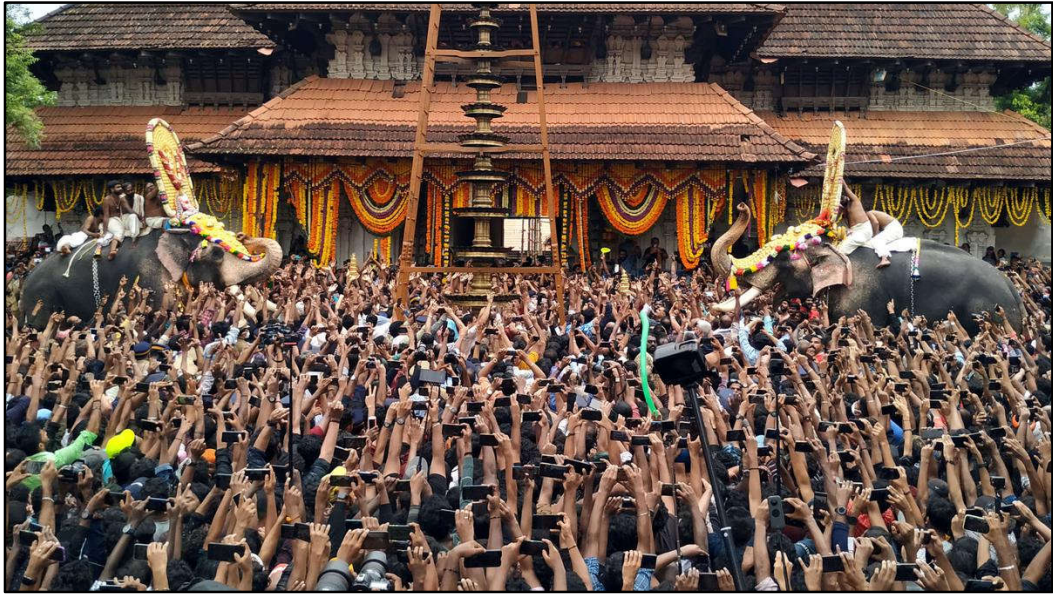
Kudamattam during Thrissur Pooram, the event that popularized the festival.

(Photo retrieved from <https://www.tusktravel.com/blog/thrissur-pooram-festival-kerala-guide/>)



Special umbrella raised by the Thiruvambady contingent in 2018 Thrissur Pooram as a tribute to the mighty tusker Shivasundar.

(Photo Credit: Fahad Muneer, Manorama Newspaper)



Upacharam Cholli Piriya, the farewell ceremony of the Thrissur Pooram, in front of the Vadakkunnathan Temple,

(Photo Credit: K.K. NAJEEB,Hindu Newspaper, Thrissur)



Adapputy St. George Orthodox Church Festival

(Photo retrieved from: Kunnamkulam<https://www.adupputtychurch.in/perunal>)



Chavakkad Manthala Chandanakudam Nercha



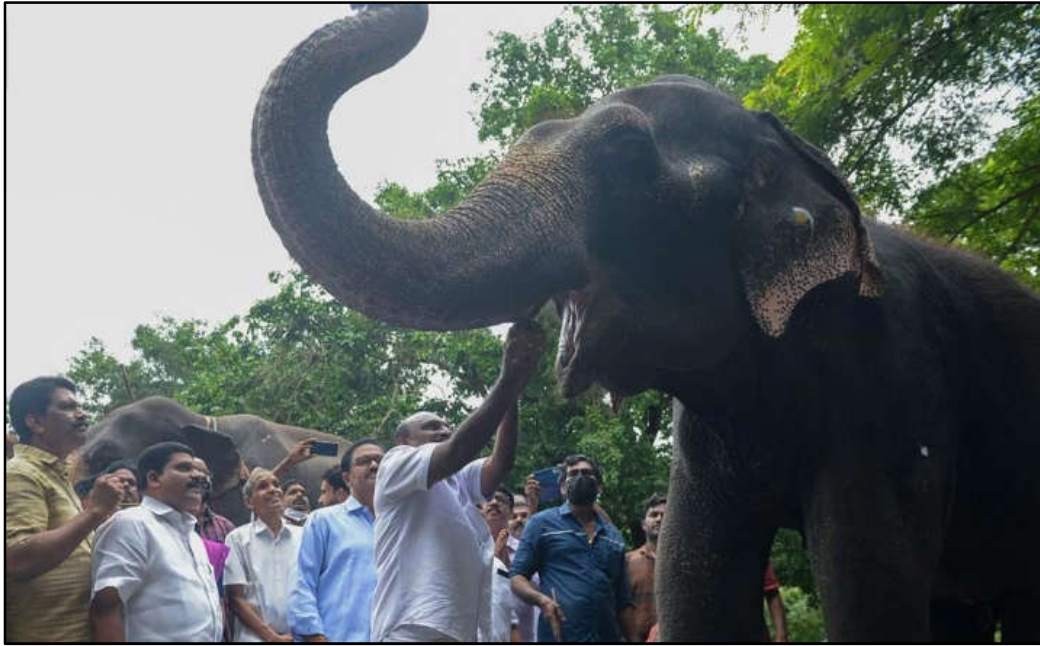
Kesavan Anusmaranam-Homage paid to Guruvayur Kesavan

(Photo retrieved from New Indian Express, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2012/Nov/24/homage-paid-to-guruvayur-kesavan-427742.html>)



Anayootu at vadakkunathan Temple

(Photo retrieved from Hindu.com <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/elephants-feast-on-a-sumptuous-spread-at-aanayootu/article67089946.ece>)



Inaugurating sugachikilsa for Elephants during the month of Karkidakam by giving medicinal food to the Elephant Nandini at Punnathurkotta.

(Photo courtesy Manorama online.com)



Anakottil attached to temple in Poomullimana, Palakkad.

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