

Cultural Significance Of Religious Festivals In Kanyakumari District

S. H. Suma

Research Scholar of Schott Christian College (Autonomous)

Nagercoil,

Reg. No. 21113161082007

Guide Dr. D. Dathi, Assistant Professor,

Dept. of History, Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil.

Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

Abstract

Religious festivals are celebrations that are held by particular communities that follow a particular religion or set of beliefs. This attempt is to know more about the Cultural significance of religious festivals in Kanyakumari District. It helps to unite people from different cultures and religions in a friendly atmosphere, removing any misunderstanding between them. It is also a great chance to celebrate peace and love and spread it throughout the world. A festival is an extraordinary event celebrated by a community and centering on some characteristic aspect or aspects of that community and its religion or cultures. A festival constitutes typical cases of globalization, as well as the high culture-low culture interrelationship. Next to religion and folklore, a significant origin is agricultural. Food is such a vital resource that many festivals are associated with harvest time. Religious commemoration and thanksgiving for good harvests are blended in events that take place in autumn. Dravidian culture is significant in Tamil Nadu.

Key words: religion, festivals, folk dance, entertainment, and holiday.

Introduction

In every life of the Tamils entertainments formed an integral part. Tamil literary works of greater antiquity make mention about some of the common festivals and entertainments. In most of them the spirit of chivalry is found in Dravidian culture. Kanyakumari District was an important dominion of the early Chera country, which had a remote and glorious past. The Ithihasas and the Epics speak about it with fair and festivals and

cultural significance. People lived in those days without any sort of discrimination of a caste system. All the kings celebrated religious and cultural festivals from 8th century.

Festivals often serve to fulfill specific communal purposes, especially regarding commemoration or thanking to the gods, goddesses or saints: they are called paternal https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronal_festival festival. They may also provide entertainment, which was particularly important to local communities before the advent of mass-produced entertainment. Festivals that focus on cultural or ethnic topics also seek to inform community members of their traditions; the involvement of elders sharing stories and experience provides a means for unity among families. Attendants of festivals are often motivated by a desire for escapism, socialization and camaraderie; the practice has been seen as a means of creating geographical connection, belonging and adaptability. A festival is typically only open to communities that believe in a particular God or phenomenon, even though there are no limits on members of other religions participating. For instance, non-Hindus also enjoy Holi, which is largely a Hindu religious celebration in a secular nation like India.

Kanyakumari District festivals are celebrated all year long and are as varied and colourful as the country's landscapes and populace. Our views and feelings are expressed via festivals and fairs, which are an essential component of Dravidian culture. Each community has its own holidays and celebrations, but this does not bar members of other religions from celebrating them as well. Dravidian culture focuses a secular nation, and numerous festivals related to different faiths and communities have their own official holidays.

Kanyakumari celebrates a number of religious and cultural festivals and the atmosphere is imbued with enthusiasm and fun. While festivals such as Navratri are celebrated with a great deal of fanfare, the Cape Comorin Festival which is celebrated in October, adds a touch of grandeur to the festivities. Celebrated over three days, there are several cultural programmes which introduce visitors to the various aspects of Kanyakumari. There are some of the major festivals in Kanyakumari. They are Sucindram Car festival, Pogal festival, Vavubali festival, Mandaikadu Annual festival, Peer Mohammed Dargah festival, Onam festival, Easter festival and Christmas festival, etc.

A Historical Overview

Festival celebrations have been a part of the Dravidian heritage since the early era. The Dravidian texts and literature have a wealth of information on festivals, which were occasions to honour gods, plants, rivers, and mountains. Dravidian festivals and European festivals concentrate more on community services. Kanyakumari's holidays include fasting, prayer, and celebrations of social and cultural importance. They include arduous physical exercises as well as musical, dance, and theatrical performances.

The other activities included Folk Dances, Karakattam, Kavadi, Therukkuttu, Chilampattam, Mayil Attam, Kummi Attam, Karadi Attam, Puli Attam, Oyil Attam, and Villupattu. Sucindram Car festival is the most significant holiday. It was held to mark the occasion. Numerous festivals were observed by Muslims, many of which were connected to the Shia faith. The Prophet's birthday and Imam Husain's martyrdom were the two major holidays. An important Dravidian event that was observed by the Tamiliandu was the Pongal Festival of harvesting.

During this occasion, people set up cultural activities and prayed to a nature god to expand their agriculture. Another traditional Indian event is the Onam. It honours the victory of good over evil. It lasts for a whole week. Conflicts between colours occur during the celebration. People splash each other with coloured water and paint. Festival celebrations have been a part of the Dravidian cultural heritage since the Lemueria era. The Dravidian texts and literature have a wealth of information on festivals, which were occasions to honour gods, plants, rivers, and mountains. Fasting, social significance, and prayer are all components of Kanyakumar's festivals.

Holidays are observed for a number of religious and communal celebrations in the secular nation of India. Since some holidays are on the "limited list," the employer has the option of designating them as a holiday or not. Even foreign travellers who visit India make festivals a part of their vacation since they are important to understanding Indian culture as well as Dravidian culture.

Festivals are separated into two groups. They are Religious celebrations and Secular celebrations. On the same

day, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and other religious groups celebrate their own holidays, either alone or collectively if their holidays are the same. These are holidays that are observed by various communities that follow a certain philosophy or faith. The majority of religious groups have significant festivals in their communities.

People who practise a particular religion and adhere to its rituals participate in religious festivals. These are holidays that are observed by various communities that follow a certain philosophy or faith. A festival is open to people of all faiths, although it is typically only open to the communities that follow a particular God or phenomenon. Festivals are a significant part of the cultures of the majority of religious groups.

Religious festival's characteristics

Religious rites of one kind or another are performed in conjunction with almost all of them. There are two parts to any traditional event. One is worship, which is conducted in accordance with particular religious customs. Hindus, for instance, worship their gods and goddesses individually or as a family on certain occasions like Holi, Diwali, or Ram Navami. Muslims visit mosques to perform namaz during Id because their faith places a high value on communal prayer. Similarly to this, Christians attend church services on Christmas Day. The majority of the festivals are open to people from all communities. The celebrations that go along with a festival are attended by members of all the communities. Therefore, despite having a strong religious focus, the holidays serve to highlight the similarities, foster the solidarity, and promote a sense of community.

The majority of Hindu-specific holidays are seasonal in nature. They mark the harvesting seasons and proclaim the start of each. The two harvesting seasons, kharif (August through October) and rabi are when all of the seasonal celebrations are observed (March- April). Additionally, spring is a time when there are seasonal celebrations.

Observations at Kanyakumari, Muttam, Citharal, Munchirai and Attoor clearly indicate that Dravidian culture has a social importance since 30, 000 B.C. Religious holidays

have a significant significance in society. They have value for integration. They are important for socialisation as well. The interaction of society, nature, and man: The “planned alternating of sacred and profane periods, of celebration and work” happens in the yearly social cycle of life. The festivals show that most religious celebrations occur during transitional intervals between the three well-defined seasons of rain, winter, and summer. The Person’s Emotional Social Security is revealed in the programmes. Festivals that aim for emotional security often take on a magical undertone. Religious holidays have social implications for both group unity and identification as well as for conflict and division within and across groups.

Challenges of Religious Festivals

A good number of religious festival centres have been discovered in various parts of Kanyakumari District since 1974. As every coin has a head and tail religious festivals also possess some challenges. While the Indian Constitution declares the state being absolutely neutral to all religions, the society has steeped in religion and religious festivals. The mingling of religion in terms of religious festivals and Politics that is mobilisation of votes on grounds of primordial identities like religion, caste and ethnicity, have put Indian secularism in danger.

Some religious festivals have been the source of communal tensions and violence, particularly in instances where there is a perceived threat to religious traditions or cultural practices. The politicisation of any one religious group leads to the competitive politicisation of other groups, thereby resulting in inter-religious conflict. One of the manifestations of communalism is communal riots. In the recent past also, communalism has proved to be a great threat to the secular fabric of Indian polity. Non-secular ideas which are formed as a result of religious festivals may result in mob lynching on mere issues.

Extra efforts must be given to look after the law and order during the time of religious festivals. Limited access: Some religious festivals are only accessible to certain sections of society, particularly women, who may face restrictions on their participation in public celebrations.

Conclusion

Prehistoric studies since 1974 in various parts of Tamil Nadu have yielded Dravidian culture and its significance from the Mesolithic period. Historians and literarians saw the Dravidian country divided into various factions by caste distinctions. They made an earnest attempt through their wrings. Indian festivals are now widely observed over the world with more enthusiasm. There are many delightful things to do, such as the essentials of praying to gods and participating in religious festivals and customs. Even foreign travellers who visit India make festivals a part of their vacation since they are important to understanding Indian culture and Dravidian culture. In Tamil Nadu, fairs and festivals are a magnificent, fantastic, and cheerful collection of events that represent the rituals of birth, death, and rebirth. South India celebrates its national holidays to honour its gods, goddesses, heroes, heroines, gurus, prophets, and saints, and to remember their heroic deeds. Tamil Nadu holidays are now widely observed over the world with more enthusiasm. There are many delightful things to do, such as the essentials of praying to gods and participating in religious festivals and customs.

References

1. Immanuel, M., Kanyakumari Aspects and Architects, Nagercoil, 2007.
2. Lal Mohan, R. S., Heritage of Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil, 2019.
3. Kailasapathy, K., Early Historic Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 2009.
4. Yesudhasan, V. and Isaac Jayadhas, R., History of Tamil Society and Culture since 1336, Marthandam, 2002.
5. Rajendran, P., Unraveling the Past, New Delhi, 1018.
6. Selvamony, V. M., ed., Aspects of South Indian History, A Re-Awakening, Nagercoil, 2014.
7. Kumari Maha Sabha Souvenir 2018, Nagercoil.
8. Daniel, R. R. And others, The State of Development and Environment in Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil, 2001.
9. Manu S. Pillai, Ivory Throne, London, 2013.
10. Chronicle, Magazine, Vol. XXXV No. 1, August 2023.