

# **Kundat Srimoola Bhadrakali Temple**

**Kukloor Village, Virajpet**

# CHAPTER I – THE TEMPLE

Kundat Srimoola Bhadrakali Temple is in Kukloor village of Virajpet Taluk in Kodagu.



*Image 1: Inside view of the temple amidst backdrop of coffee plantation and hills*

**Location:** The temple is about 2 Kms from the town of Virajpet and a kilometer from Kodava Samaj, Virajpet. The exact location co-ordinates are - 12° 12'47.1"N 75°48'16.0"E.

**Directions:** The closest landmark to the temple is Kodava Samaj, Virajpet. One would follow the road that leads towards Chembellore from Kodava Samaj and the road to the temple will be on the right, about 200 meters from the Kodava Samaj. There is an arch with the name of the temple etched on it that serves as a landmark at the entrance of this road.

About eight Kodava okkas (families) and 10 Kembati kudis (henceforth referred to as Harijana) come under the temple's preview. Of the eighty, five okkas: Monnanda, Maletira, Thathanda, Kuttanda and Karnanda are considered native inhabitants of the village with 'aime-koime'. They are responsible for:

- a) Offering 'therige' during the namme (village festival)
- b) Managing specific roles and responsibilities in the administration and management of the temple
- c) Overseeing the conduct of namme and other celebrations in the village



*Image 2. Entrance to the tank (kere) where devotees are expected to wash their feet*

## CHAPTER 2 – HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Hundreds of years ago, during the Paledhara System (administration system that prevailed before the Haleri dynasty) it is believed that Monnanda, Kuttanda and Thathanda okkas were living on the hills. Legend has it that Goddess Parvathi took the form of Bhadrakali and came to the earth to kill evil demons who were harassing human beings. She then stood on top of Brahmagiri hills and looked around. Upon seeing the village of Kukloor she was attracted by its nature, the trees, water tank (kere) the hills etc. Then, Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi appeared in the guise of a Brahmin couple at the Monnanda household as guests. In reverence to the 'Brahmin couple' the Monnanda family patriarch gave them gold, silver and a milking cow. The couple left the house and after moving a short distance they disappeared which shocked the Monnanda family. That same night, the oldest man in the family (referred as Monnanda Ajja) had a rare dream in which "Goddess Parvathi" appeared and asked him to build a temple in her name with the co-operation of the villagers.

The next morning, a man from Thathanda family grazing cattle went into a trance (as he was believed to be-possessed by the Goddess) and proclaimed that "she was Goddess Kali" who had appeared in Monnanda Ajja's dream the previous night. He insisted that the dream was to be taken seriously and asked the Monnanda Ajja to fulfil the wishes of Goddess Kali on that very spot. This place where the Thathanda man was possessed by the Goddess for the first time is called "Nengotte Kallu" and plays a significant role in the deity's festival (namme). The possessed man then ran to a place called Nandyanda Kala (threshing yard for grains) accompanied by the villagers. There he poked the earth with his stick and concluded that place was not suitable to build the temple and ran towards a place now called 'Kudhre Kall'. He found that place unsuitable for the temple too. He eventually ran to the spot where the temple is situated now and announced to the villagers that it was indeed the right place to build the temple. He also claimed that the goddess wanted to be worshipped as Bhadrakali by the villagers. Hence the people of the village refer to the deity as Bhadrakali or Maathai with utmost devotion and reverence. Monnanda Ajja then sent word to the villagers to assemble in this place and as per directions given by the Thathanda man, they built the temple of Kundat Srimoola Bhadrakali, purely with villagers' contribution.

During the Lingayat regime (Haleri dynasty) the then king paid a visit to the temple and offered a silver cradle for having been blessed with a baby. He also presented an iron kadathale (sword) to the Harijana deity "Aiyappa" as mark of his success in Kodagu. These offerings are still preserved in the temple with an inscription of LIN (King Lingaraja) written in Kannada.

## CHAPTER 3 – ROLE OF OORUKAARA

### The Priest:

As commonly practiced in most temples in Kodagu, the pooje (offering prayer) and other rituals in the temple are conducted by 'Havyak' brahmins. This is per the wishes of Maathai communicated through the Thirvalakaara. The brahmins migrated from the neighboring district of Dakshina Kannada. During that time brahmins were forbidden from practicing agriculture as it involved cutting plants/ trees and were looking for an occupation or source of livelihood. This tradition continues to-date and Havyak brahmins perform the pooje in Kundat Srimoola Bhadrakali Temple. It is believed that Mathai communicated to the villagers that she wanted to be worshipped in an austere manner. She preferred the idol to be a holy stone and not something made of expensive metals. She wanted flowers and fruits found in the jungles around to be used for worship. These directions are followed in various rituals to date.

The priests perform various types of pooje through the course of the year. Few of them are noted below:

- **Nithya Pooje:** as the name suggests this pooje is performed daily at the temple early in the morning. While the priest (henceforth referred to as Patta) performs the pooje and offers 'naivedya' (freshly cooked rice with milk and jaggery), it is normal to see the local villagers attend the pooje and start their day with a worship of Maathai.
- **Scheduled Pooje:** Villagers and other devotees can have pooje performed in the temple as per their requirements. These poojes can be planned and scheduled through the Patta.
- **Chowtt Pooje:** "Pudiya akki oota" otherwise known as "chowtt pooje" is normally done in the month of February or March after the harvest and processing of paddy (main food crop in Kodagu). The first grains are offered as "naivedya" to the Goddess after a grand pooje and then eaten by the villagers in the form of sweet dish payasa as prasada.
- **Chandika Homa:** This is performed every year at the time of Navaratri festival as the Goddess is believed to be most powerful during this time. In order to please the Goddess and obtain her blessings, this Homa is performed on a grand scale where devotees from Kukloor and other surrounding villages/ towns participate.
- **Chouthi:** a temple for Lord Ganesha was built recently as part of the many improvement initiatives undertaken in the temple by the passionate villagers. Ganesha Chaturthi (Chouthi) is also celebrated in a grand scale on the auspicious occasion.

### Deva Thakka:

Per Maathai's wishes that she wanted to be served by the Monnanda okka (conveyed through the Thathanda ajja who was possessed), this family is the deva thakka. The oldest male member

typically plays this role and in case he is unavailable or sick, any other male member of the okka can play this role on his behalf.

- The Deva Thakka is accountable for all the decisions made in the management of the affairs of the temple. This includes key decisions on namme, pooje, improvement initiatives in the temple etc.
- The Deva Thakka chairs all the important meetings in the management council that consists of the villagers and has a President, Secretary and Treasurer.
- He administers the vows and does the invoking during various rituals in the namme.

Monnanda M Kariappa (Mothi) is the current Deva Thakka of the temple. Kariappa has lived all his life in Kukloor and besides being well versed with all the traditions and rituals is a well-respected man in the village. His father served as Deva Thakka for many years and Kariappa has leveraged the knowledge he acquired from his father. Kariappa's credentials, knowledge and gentle nature has helped him build a good relationship with the rest of the villagers and under his leadership several initiatives have been successfully implemented in the temple making it very popular among the nearby town/ villages.

### **Thirvalakaara:**

Thirvala means getting possessed by gods. It has been a belief for centuries that humans do get possessed by gods and attain certain divine powers during that time. The men who get possessed by gods must observe certain penance and practices. They are respected by the villagers and they help in the smooth conduct of the namme.

As mentioned previously, up until the 1905s or so, Thathanda Kariappa ajja used to be possessed by Mathaai and guided the villagers during the namme. However, after his demise, this tradition did not continue. Currently there are three Thirvalas and three men from the Harijana community carry out this tradition. It may be noted that this has continued genetically or within the same Kudi. The three Thirvalas; Aiyappa, Mammoodha and Kethamma are continuing this tradition and Aiyappa takes the lead among them and continues to guide the smooth conduct of the namme. Aiyappa wears a red colored panche tied slightly above his knees and is bare chested. He always holds a Kadthale. Mammoodha and Khethamma wear white Kuppiya Chaele and hold Thoore Kol (cane sticks). Aiyappa and Khethamma Thirvalas can speak in Malayalam while Mammoodha only communicates using gestures. There are instances when Khethamma Thirvalakaara gets possessed by another deity called Kuliya and during that time he communicates in Kodava thakk. Similarly, Mammoodha Thirvalakaara sometimes gets possessed by Ajaappa/Karona of the Harijana community and communicates in Kodava thakk. However, the Thirvalakaara speaks very few words and most of the answers are indirect and must be interpreted. They have helpers called Moopkaara who often help mediate the communication between the villagers and Thirvalakaara. Moopkaara serve as assistants to the Thirvalakaara and they are also dressed in white Kuppiya Chaele.

**Okkas and Therige:** Five okkas that have origins in Kukloor are considered primary in the temple with specific roles, responsibilities (referred to as Therige) and privileges.

1) **Monnanda:**



*Image 3: View of Monnanda balliamane*

Monnanda Okka are the deva thakkas per Maathai's wishes and have an important role to play in the affairs of the temple and the namme (festival). Some of the key roles and responsibilities are highlighted below:

- The oldest male member of this okka is the Deva Thakka in the temple.
- On the Pattani Day of namme (*please refer to the section on namme for details*) Pattani Putt is served to the Harijana men and children in the balliamane of Monnanda family. Pattani Putt consists of - Kuvale Putt (made with ripe jackfruit wrapped in Kuvale leaves) and Chekke Curry (curry made of raw jackfruit). It may be recalled that Maathai had insisted on using flowers and fruits found in the jungle around and this Pattani putt is in accordance with this.
- Ballia Namme (main festival) starts from the Monnanda balliamane and all the villagers assemble there (refer the section on namme for details).
- In the namme, the kudhare (horse) and choole (prostitute) dance and race in the paddy fields belonging to the Monnanda okka. This is per the wishes of Mathaai.
- All three days of the namme, a Monnanda man dressed in Kuppiya Chaele stands at the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and oversees the pooje. He also ensures all the devotes get an opportunity to offer their prayers and parike to

Mathaai and get the Prasada. He is also the custodian of the Bhandara that is offered by the devotees.

- In addition to the namme responsibilities, Puthari festival (inaugural harvest of paddy) is celebrated in the paddy fields of the Monnanda family. All the villagers assemble in the paddy field and the deva thakka harvests the paddy shoots with the ceremonial valaga and firing of a gunshot. The villagers (Kodavas and Harijanas) proceed to the temple amidst bursting of firecrackers and to offer the harvest to the deity. The villagers then harvest in their respective balliamanes.



*Image 4. Paaryama – Paddy field where the inaugural paddy is harvested on Puthari Day*

## 2) **Maletira:**

Maletira okka is the ooru thakka (village head) of Kukloor village. Their role includes the following:

- The President of the temple committee is usually from this family.
- This okka is the custodian of various artifacts of the temple including the kadthale (symbolic sword used for various rituals), jewels used to decorate the statue of Mathaai and bandaara (the offerings devotees give to the temple as a token of their devotion).

- On the days of the namme, the villagers go to the Maletira balliamane at the end of the day's namme to store the Kadthale. They are treated to a meal of Paputt and Koli curry (chicken curry) on the last day of the namme.
- Pattani Maatho (end of Pattani) is also done in Maletira balliamane where the Harijanas are treated to a meal of rice and baale curry (raw plantain curry). These are all detailed in the section on namme.



*Image 5: View of the Maletira balliamane*

### 3) Thathanda:

- An aija from Thathanda okka was possessed by Mathaai and was revered by the villagers as a form of Mathaai and this tradition continued into the mid-1900s. But after the demise of Thathanda Kariappa aija, this tradition stopped and nobody has been possessed by Mathaai yet.

#### 4) **Karnanda:**

Karnanda okka played the role of support to the Thathanda ajja who got possessed by Mathaai.

- In the past a man from this okka was responsible for holding the bhasma (holy ash) and giving raw rice (used by the Thirvalakaara for various purposes including blessing the people). However, with nobody after Thathanda Kariappa ajja being possessed by Mathaai, this has become redundant.
- Karnanda okka is responsible for cleaning the temple during the namme; especially after the offerings are made to Mathaai on the day of ballianamme (*details in the section on namme*).

#### 5) **Kuttanda:**

- A man from this okka is entrusted the responsibility of performing the Peeli Aat (a form of dance performed in the temple during the namme).
- This okka works with the Monnanda okka during the namme (*refer to the section on namme for the details*).

While the above 5 are the main okkas with Koime in the temple, there are other okkas that are residents of the village and offer Therige to the temple.

- **Balluda:**

- People of this okka are residents of Kukloor village and offer Therige in the temple.
- Balluda okka also take turns along with the five main okkas to help with the Theray Ketto on the ballianamme (main festival) which will be detailed in the section on Namme.

- **Manduda:**

- This okka also resides in Kukloor village and are entitled to offer the Therige in the temple. They do not have Koime like the other okkas, but they actively participate in the namme and other activities in the temple.

- **Nandyanda:**

- This okka is now extinct. It is believed that an old woman from this family was last seen in the village around 75-80 years back and her daughters were married to other okkas. There are no other known members from this family after her death.
- Nandyanda okka has to offer a kudhre (horse), ettu porata (coconut loaded on bullock) and choole (prostitute). These are detailed in the section on namme. Their responsibilities have now been taken over by members of the Maletira okka.
- The kala (threshing yard) belonging to the okka called Nandyanda Kala is a sacred place and is of great significance in various rituals of the namme.

- **Harijana community:**

As most villages in Kodagu, different castes lived in harmony and have co-existed for centuries. The Harijana community in Kukloor play a significant role in the affairs of the temple none more important than the namme. The kudis of this community were associated with the Kodava okkas and they worked for the Kodava families helping them in their paddy fields, coffee estates, help them manage their cattle etc. Initially they were given paddy and hay for their work but now they are paid money. However, with the change in economic situation and opening of other lucrative job opportunities, most of the members of this community are working in the nearby town of Virajpet and some running their own business. However, it is heartening that they are as closely involved in the temple and namme as ever. Some of their roles and responsibilities are:

- Playing the Vaalaga (traditional music), an important part of every Kodava ritual is played by this community.
- It is the members of this community who are possessed by gods (thirvalakaara) and guide the conduct of the namme. One of the members is possessed by Lord Aiyappa who with the help of two other gods Mammoodha and Khethamma ensure that the namme is conducted as per the traditions and guide the villagers.
- The Pattani (start of the namme) commences with the Harijana community offering a fowl at their ambala (where the holy shrine is located) early in the morning and having a meal of rice and chicken curry. Their Pattani lasts for 2 days with the Pattani Maatho meal of rice and jackfruit curry in the balliamane of the Maletira family.
- Every Harijana family is required to bring a chicken on one of the days of the namme to be hurled from one side of the temple (place where the Harijana deities are worshipped) to the main temple. This will be further described in the section on namme.



*Image 6. View of the temple from the tank*



*Image 7. Entrance to the temple with a view of the Harijana deities*

## **CHAPTER 4 – NAMME PREPARTION**

Kundat Bhadrakali Namme is the most important event in the temple and the most auspicious occasion for the entire village. Although it has tremendous religious and traditional significance, it is also a social occasion that the entire village community looks forward to. Like most village festivals, it runs over several days and brings the entire village together promoting unity and brotherhood among all the villagers irrespective of caste or creed. This is a time when villagers residing outside and women of Kukloor married outside the village visit the village and take part in the festivities. It is common to see native Kukloor people residing outside the village (some outside Kodagu or outside the state or even country) plan their vacation to take part in the namme. Friendships are made and old acquaintances renewed during this time by taking part in the rituals together or socializing over dinner/ informal get-together. The tradition has continued for generations and the mood in the village is of joy, friendship and celebrations.

### **Timing and Duration:**

Namme in Kundat Bhadrakali temple is typically celebrated around the third week of May and lasts several days. The main festival lasts three days and is typically the third Saturday through Monday of May. However, there have been exceptions when it happens from the third Monday through Wednesday. The preparations of the namme begin several days prior to the main days is as explained below:

### **Beginning of the rituals:**

#### **Namme Kuripo and Deva Kettu:**

The start of the namme is called Namme Kuripo which means 'start of the festivities. It is on the first day of the month of Kaadiyaar (around mid-May) according to the Kodava calendar. The namme starts with the villagers gathering at the kere (tank) near the temple and the priest performing pooje to the goddess. Deva Thakka administers the vows of the festival to the villagers. The thiruvakara (men belonging to the Harijana community who get possessed by gods) directs how the festival has to be conducted. Many years ago, one Thathanda Kariappa aija used to get possessed by Maathai herself but since his demise the tradition has discontinued. Now there are three men who get possessed by the deities Aiyappa, Mammoodha and Khethamma. Aiyappa takes lead in ensuring the namme is conducted as per the established traditions and the right level of discipline is maintained. The roles and responsibilities of each okka and Harijana kudi is already established and any alterations may be done only under special circumstances.

There is also a ritual called tappadaka at which all the villagers take a vow to observe certain kettu (kettu means restriction) including dietary restrictions which are broken during the main

festival days. Some of the restrictions include refraining from harming animals, cutting trees/plants, leading a life of austere and refraining from non-vegetarian food and alcohol. The villagers are expected not to leave the village for overnight stay. No weddings or other auspicious events are held during this period and funerals are conducted in a low-key manner without the customary valaga or firing of the gunshots. Corpses are usually buried instead of being cremated during this period. Violators of these restrictions are required to pay a small price called Thappu Pana (monetary penalty for the mistake). The amount varies depending on the social and economic position of the offender.

### **Peeli Aat:**

After namme kuripo, the villagers spend days leading up to the main festival performing various rituals and preparing for the namme. The roads leading up to the temple are spruced up (de-weeded and pebbles removed) and the temple premises is given a makeover in preparation for the namme.

Peeli Aat, a traditional dance is performed by a male member of the Kuttanda okka (the okka is split into two and one of the parts of this okka holds this responsibility). Peeli Aat is performed 101 times around a stone called Peeli Kall outside the main temple in front of the main gate. The dancer holds a bunch of peacock feathers and is dressed in a white kuppiya. The meda (Harijan man who plays a drum) and four Kodava men play the dhol (drum) and sing the Bhadrakali song. This dance is performed is usually performed for 1, 3, 5 or 7 days (odd number only), with the last day being the day before the Pattani.



*Image 8. Peeli Kall around which the Peeli Aat is performed*

## **Pattani:**

The day before the Kudare (first day of the main namme) is called Pattani. The day starts with members of the Harijana community meeting in their ambala (holy shrine located near their colony) and each kudi offering a fowl to the gods. This ceremony happens at dawn after which they have a meal of rice and curry made with the fowls that are offered to the deity. Post the early morning meal, they are not supposed to eat anything during the day. The Kodavas are also not supposed to eat anything during the day but it is not uncommon to find people refraining from rice or rice-based items but eat other grains and vegetables. The villagers get together to clean the area surrounding the temple and the path to the temple is decorated with Thorana (symbolic of most hindu festivities). Villagers perform a pooje called Naga Pooje at the Nagasthana which is near the tank belonging to the Maletira okka. This tank is about half a kilometer from the temple near the Maletira balliamane.

**Pattani Putt:** Kuvale Putt (snack made with the extract of ripe jackfruit and mixed with coarsely ground rice and steamed in a leaf called Kuvale leaf) is a symbolic snack made during the namme. It may be recalled that Maathai had instructed the villagers to worship her and celebrate the festivities with fruits and flowers found in the hills and jungle nearby. Each family in Kukloor prepares Kuvale Putt during the namme. In the afternoon, male members and children of the Harijana community who have been fasting since their early morning meal, proceed to the balliamane of the Monnanda okka. There they are served Kuvale Putt with Chekke curry (curry made of raw jackfruit).

## **Kombu Urupo and preparing dinner:**

Kombu (horn) is a very important instrument for Kodavas. Besides being an integral part of the valaga, it has been used as a means of communication for ages. On the day of Pattani, the men of the village (oorkaara and that includes Kodavas and Harijanas) gather at Adhithana or Nengotte Kall (significant place where the Thathanda ajja was first possessed by Maathai) at around 8 PM. Valaga kaara (Harijana troop playing the valaga) blow the Kombu which is considered the signal for all the Kodava women in the village to start making dinner which is essentially making rice that they were forbidden from eating all day. This does not apply to the Harijana women as their Pattani lasts two days (explained in the subsequent section). While the women start making dinner upon hearing the Kombu the men and male children assemble at Nengotte Kall. This is where the details of schedule and activities of the namme are finalized. It may be noted that while the rituals and customs of the namme are already in place, the exact time, subtle responsibilities etc. vary and are finalized on the day of the Pattani at Nengote Kall. The priest starts the rituals with pooje to Maathai and four Kodava men sing the Bhardrakali song beating the drums (dhol). The Thirvalakaaras get possessed and give specific instructions to the villagers on how the Namme must be conducted. Since Thathanda ajja getting possessed by Maathai has stopped, the man who gets possessed by Lord Aiyappa is considered the lead among the Thirvalas. Thirvalakaaras communicate with the villagers if they see any concerns or issues in the village or the way the rituals have been carried out so far. The villagers revere the Thirvala

and adhere to their instructions. Some of the details of the way the namme must be carried out is decided here. While most of the customs and rituals are the same and will be carried out the same way every year, there may be subtle modifications and the Thirvalakaaras communicate those subtleties. The men/boys who will carry the Kudhare or dress up like Choole are decided here and the Thirvalakaaras bless them with grains of rice. They are expected to refrain from eating non-vegetarian food and rice on the respective days of the namme. The whole convoy then proceeds to Nandyanda kala amidst Bhadrakali song sung by Kodava men and the Valaga. The Thirvalas lead these rituals and the villagers follow their directions. Maathai is invoked in Nandyanda Kala and the details of the plan for the Bodu Kali (dressing up in different costumes and dancing seeking gifts and money) is decided. The villagers then disperse to their homes with a set plan to assemble back at Nandyanda Kala for the Bodu Kali later that night.



*Image 9. Nandyanda Kala – a significant place in the namme*



*Image 10. Adhithana where Thathanda ajja got possessed for the first time*

### **Bodu Kali:**

The Pattani fast is broken and the villagers have dinner. Rice is a mandatory dish for dinner that night. The mood in the village is very festive by then and it is common for friends and cousins to get together for a drink and dinner. After dinner, the male members irrespective of age dress up in various costumes. The most common themes are as dressing up as vadda and thimmi (laborers who work in the paddy fields or help dig the earth), muslim traders from Kerala, sanyasi (sage), women, etc. They assemble at Nandyanda Kala at a pre-decided time (mostly around 10 PM). Four men play the drum singing songs (batte paat, thaali paat etc.) and it is the Thirvalakaras who lead the way. The men and boys dressed in costumes are in a joyous mood and dance to the songs of the men playing the dhol and the Valaga. The procession makes its way to the temple and dance outside the temple. Nobody enters the temple at that time but the kalikaara (men dressed in costumes) dance for the goddess near the platform where the Harijana deities are kept. Thirvalakaaras lead the dance and the Kalikaaras dance per their wishes. Symbolically this depicts Kalikaara performing for Maathai in the temple after which they perform for the rest of the villagers.

The possession of the Thirvalakaaras cease and the entire troop proceed to each of the balliamanes of all the okkas starting with the Ooru thakka (Maletira) balliamane. The men playing the dhol sing the Batte Paat as they approach the balliamane. Batte Paat means song of the path; the singers sing about the path to the balliamane, they describe the ooni (narrow passage that leads to the yard of the balliamane), the work done to decorate it, the yard and how well it has been prepared for the namme, the steps to the balliamane and finally the glory of the balliamane. They sing about the verandah, the hall, the lamp in the main hall and wish well for the okka. The members of the okka including women and children are excited and happy to welcome the kalikaara and look forward to the funny costumes and their acts. The kalikaara then dance while the men playing the dhol sing the Thaali Paat describing the kalikaara and their costumes in a funny way. Some kalikaara put up silly acts or enact hilarious scenes from movies to entertain the members of the okka. The kalikaara and the rest of the troop are given money for their performance signifying the concept of bodu (seeking alms) and are also treated with coffee and snacks (Kuvale Putt being a staple snack). It is common to have alcoholic beverages served which helps keep the spirits of the troop high. The men who play the dhol (called dholkaara) sit in the main hall and sing about the men of the host okka glorifying the okka and its men starting from the moolapurusha or karonna to the current generation. All the members of the okka gathered there, including the visiting daughters of the okka married to other families offer their token of appreciation by contributing money that is collected for the dholkaara. After enjoying the hospitality and entertaining the members of the Maletira okka the troop proceeds to the next okka; Karnanda.

Karnanda okka has two parts (called bhaaga). Every year the Bodu Kali visits the balliamane and the house belonging to one of the bhaagas. Members of the bhaaga that are not visited that particular year assemble at the balliamane of the other bhaaga and take part in the namme. The process of performing, entertaining, collecting money and other goodies is repeated here and the troop then proceeds to the Thathanda balliamane. Kombu is an integral part of the entourage and its noise serves as an alarm for the women and children to wake up and get ready to receive the troop as it often well past midnight when they arrive. Following the Thathanda balliamane, the troop proceeds to Monnanda balliamane followed by the two balliamanes of the Kuttanda okka. Kuttanda okka has two bhaagas and hence two balliamanes. By the time the Kalikaara finish performing at the last Kuttanda balliamane it is almost dawn. After visiting all the balliamanes the troop proceeds to Pattamaada (residence of the brahmin priest) and collects money from the priests after performing for them. The bodu kali culminates at the Nandyanda Kala (where it started) and everyone makes a small contribution from their collection as bhandaara (money collected for the temple which is used for the maintenance and betterment of the temple). The exhausted Kalikaara proceed to their homes to get some well-deserved rest.

## CHAPTER 5 – NAMME DAY I (KUDHRE NAMME)

### **Kudhre Namme:**

The day after Pattani is the first day of the main namme and pooje starts that morning. The team of priests who perform the pooje is augmented by an extended team from other temples to manage the workload. Chande is a set of drums played during the pooje and a team of drummers from Kerala are summoned during the namme to play the drums. The sound of chande and bells rung during the pooje fill the entire village with an atmosphere of devotion. Visitors from the village and nearby towns/ villages flock the temple to offer prayers and have pooje performed in the name of their family members. The deity is decorated with special sarees, jewels and flowers for the pooje called alankaara (decoration). Deva Thakka or a male member of the Monnanda okka is always present in the temple during the day to oversee the pooje.

The Nandyanda, Maletira and Monnanda okkas are required to make offerings of a Kudhre (hollow horse without legs made with braided split bamboo). The horse back has an opening large enough to allow a man's head and shoulders to pass through. The frame of the horse is decorated with simple plain cloth that is usually shade of red. The long neck is draped with a chaele (the waist band that is worn by Kodava men as their traditional costume). Being consistent with using natural resources and articles, the eyes, ear, tongue and tail of the horse is made with bark of areca nut tree and it is colored using natural ingredients like turmeric and lime (mixing turmeric and lime makes red color). As mentioned previously, the Nandyanda okka is extinct and their responsibilities are fulfilled by members of the Maletira okka.

Though the pooje in the temple is performed all day long, the namme on this day starts only around mid-afternoon. The decorated Kudhre offered by the Maletira okka must be carried by a male member of the Thathanda okka or someone designated by that okka. The members of the Maletira and Thathanda okka assemble in the former's balliamane and so do the Thirvalakaara and Kombukaara (the two men belonging to the Harijana community who play the Kombu) along with the meda who plays a drum called Parey. The Thirvalakaara get possessed and instruct the time when the Kudhre can be lifted and the man who can carry it. This person should have followed certain restrictions like refraining from eating meat and had a bath prior to the namme. He wears a pair of shorts and a long-sleeved white shirt and Mande Thuni (traditional Kodava turban that is hand wrapped not ready-made). Once the Kudhre is mounted on him and is tied around his neck, he wears a white kuppiya (traditional Kodava coat that is knee length) the bottom of which is spread on the body of the Kudhre. He then dances inside the main hall of the balliamane as four men (villagers) play the small drums called Dhudi and sing a song. The Kudhre then dances in the yard of the balliamane and the Thirvalakaara take turns to dance along. The dhudi and song continues along with the Kombu making it a festive and traditional event. The Thirvalakaara bless the members of the okka especially those who are old or weak and unable to make it to the temple for namme.



*Image 11. Kudhre Kall that the Kudhre and Choole climb up and spin three times*

The troop led by the Thirvalakaara invokes Mathaai and then proceed towards the Monnanda balliamane. A young maiden will carry the Thaliyathakki Bolcha (brass plate with gains of rice and a small oil lamp that is lit). This is an important part of the ritual and the young girl leads the procession as they proceed towards the temple and when entering the temple. Constant blowing of the Kombu is in indicator to the Monnanda and Kuttanda okkas to gather at the former's balliamane. As the troop reaches close to the Monnanda balliamane the Maletira Kudhre stays back at the paddy field belonging to the Monnanda okka while the rest of the villagers and Thirvalakaara proceed to the Monnanda balliamane. The same ritual is repeated in the Monnanda balliamane with a man from or designated by the Kuttanda okka is given the responsibility to carry the Monnanda Kudhre. The troop leaves the Monnanda balliamane after invoking Mathaai while the Maletira Kudhre waiting in the paddy field joins them and together they proceed to Nandyanda Kala. The Kudhre offered by Nandyanda okka (decorated and carried by a part of the Maletira okka) waits for the Thirvalakaara and the villagers. The dance and previously described rituals are conducted at Nandyanda kala. The three Kudhres led by the Thirvalakaara walk towards Pattamaada (residence of the brahmin priest) and to a holy stone called Nengotte Kall. There the Kudhre climbs the holy stone, spins three times and worships Maathai. The villagers then invoke the deity and proceed towards the paddy fields belonging to the Monnanda okka. There the three Kudhres run a race accompanied by the Thirvalakaara from one field to another (a distance of about hundred meters). It is believed that Mathaai had instructed that she wanted the Kudhre to run and dance in the paddy fields of the Monnanda family. It may be recalled that during Puthari, paddy to be offered in the temple is also harvested in this field. The rest of the villagers along with the valaga are waiting at this

paddy field. The Kudhres dance as the four men playing the Dhudi sing and the valaga joins playing the song. The Thirvalakaara dance along and it is not uncommon to see them dance for longer periods of time. The procession then proceeds towards the temple after invoking Mathaai.



*Image 12. Paddy fields where the Kudhre and Choole run the race*

The Thirvalakaara lead the way and run back and forth between the temple and the procession. The valaga is playing and the villagers beat the Dhudi making it a festive atmosphere. Upon reaching the temple the Kudhres and the rest of the troop are blessed by the priest with the sprinkling of the holy water. The Kudhres then repeat the dance in front of the platform where the Harijana deities are kept. Once the Thirvalakaara gives the permission, the villagers along with the Kudhre enter the temple. The troop go around the temple three times after which the Kudhre dances again twice, once in front of the shrine for the botekaara aiyappa (hunter) and then in front of the main temple. The Kodava men and boys perform the Bolkaat (a traditional form of dance) holding small swords called Kadthale around a stone platform by the side of the main temple. Four men play the Dhudi and sing the Baalo Paat (a traditional song sung for the rhythmic beat of the Dhudis). The song is about glorifying Sun, Moon and Earth and singing praises of gods and goddesses. The Kudhres walk around the stone three times before the frame may be lifted and the men who carried them can rest.

Once the Bolkaat is performed, Prasada (a dish made of parched rice mixed with jaggery and grated coconut) is distributed to everyone. A kind of coffee called Panaka (coffee mixed with black pepper) is also served to the villagers. The Brahmin priests prepare these and the Kodava villagers take responsibility to distribute amongst everyone.

The Harijana community perform a ritual in front of the platform where their deities are kept. They use dry bamboo stem and dry hay to light up a fire and sing a song around it playing the Dhol. This ritual is to commemorate the slaying of a wicked demon by Mathaai on this day. Then the Harijana men start dancing to the tune of valaga and throw about twenty-five chicks which perch on the roof of the temple compound. The Kodava villagers and guests who are on the other side of the roof try to catch the chicks and are allowed to take them home. The Harijana kudis work for the Kodava okkas and receive paddy, hay and money for their services and the birds they offer is considered a gift from their side to the Kodavas. The Kodavas on the other hand consider it a symbol of good luck to be able to catch one of these birds. They take it home and care for it. This ritual highlights the inter-caste solidarity that has been prevalent for centuries. The women, children and guests disperse from the temple while the oorukaara (villagers) stay back to ensure the temple premises are cleaned in addition to taking care of few other activities.

### **Bhandara:**

Devotees express their gratitude and devotion to Mathaai in many ways and Bhandara is one of them. While Mathaai is supposed to have insisted on keeping money and material wealth away from her worship and hence no donation is sought, the devotees have been generously offering money for many years. Kundat Bhadrakali temple collects more amount in Bhandara compared to most temples around the area even though the village of Kukloor is much smaller compared to some of the other villages around. Besides Bhandara, the devotees offer other items to the deity like jewels (mostly made of gold), saree, Kadthale etc. It is a common practice for devotees to pledge to offer a miniature silver replica of a human body part if he/she or their family member is suffering from an ailment pertaining to that body part. This is often offered at the namme as a token of gratitude if the person is cured of that ailment. A lot of offerings come in such forms or the form of a replica of a child if the devotee is planning to have a child. The Bhandara money is used for the upkeep and maintenance of the temple and also to carry out development activities in the temple and around it.

At the end of the day's namme, the villagers open the box where the Bhandara is collected and count it to ensure the account is maintained correctly. Once this is done, the oorukaara proceed to the balliamane of the Maletira okka carrying the dhudi and the kadthale used for the Bolkaat. This is where they are stored as Maletira okka is the custodian of these artifacts. The oorukaara then return to their homes.

While the Kodavas observe Pattani for one day, the Harijana community have two days of Pattani and are hence refraining from food (now interpreted as cooked rice) on this day too. In the evening they proceed to the balliamane of the Maletira okka where they are served a meal of rice and curry made of plantain. This is called Pattani Maatho (ending the Pattani) and is the end of the day's festival.

## **CHAPTER 6 – NAMME DAY 2 (BALLIA NAMME)**

### **Ballia Namme or the Main Festival:**

Day 2 is the ballia namme or the main festival and typically falls on a Sunday which helps the people from nearby villages and towns to participate in the festivities. The day has three main events (explained below) culminating in the Theray (Naalandehere) at night when the main pooje and offering is made.

#### **1. Harijana Bodu Kali:**

While the members of the Harijana community accompany the Kodava men and boys on their bodu kali, they do not dress-up or get money that night. On the morning of the ballia namme the men and boys of the Harijana community dress up in various costumes and assemble in their ambala (holy shrine). It is common to find them dressed up in costumes like a bear, famous personality, a woman or paint their bodies like tigers. Some even smear themselves with slush (called bund kali) or cover themselves with bundles of hay. They are accompanied by the valaga and four men playing the dhol singing various songs like Bhadrakali song, batte paat, thaali paat and manepaat. The carnival proceeds to the temple where they dance in front of the platform where their deities are kept. This is symbolic of performing for the deities. They then follow the same path as their kodava counterparts (explained earlier) and go from one balliamane to another starting with the Maletira balliamane culminating in the Kuttanda balliamane. They receive money from the kodavas highlighting the concept of bodu (seeking alms).

#### **2. Ettu Porata (Ettu means bull and Porata is to carry):**

As was described in the paragraph on Kudhre namme, the namme in the afternoon starts at Maletira balliamane and the Thirvalakaara along with four men playing the dhudi accompany the ettu (bull) that the Maletira family is supposed to arrange. A jute bag with coconuts is loaded on the bull. Each family in the okka is required to contribute a certain number of coconuts as therige (absolute meaning of the word is tax but, in this context, it is an offering). The procession arrives at the Monnanda paddy field where the bull stays back while Thirvalakaara along with the men playing the dhudi proceeds to the Monnanda balliamane. On their way the Thirvalakaara visits the Kuttanda balliamane and bless them. The Monnanda okka also arranges a bull and the bag of coconut is loaded on its back. The procession then proceeds to the paddy field and joins the rest of the villagers and the bulls. Thathanda family is also required to arrange a bull laden with coconuts and joins the procession in the paddy field. Valaga and people dancing to its beat makes the environment festive and joyous. Then upon invoking Mathaai, the procession led by the Thirvalakaara proceeds to the temple amidst valaga and song and playing

of the dhudi. Upon reaching the entrance of the temple the priest blesses the troop by sprinkling holy water. The procession is led by maidens carrying the thaliyathakki bolcha followed by the men playing the dhudi and followed by the bulls and the rest of the villagers. They all go around the temple three times and offer prayers to Mathai. The priest blesses the bull and offers garlands to them. It is considered auspicious and good fortune to have your bull take part in the ettu porata. The bags of coconuts are unloaded from the bulls and they are set free to go back home. As on Kudhre namme, the villagers then perform the Bolkaat holding Kadathale for the Baalo Paat sung by four men. The devotees are treated to Prasada and Panaka after which they return to their homes.

### **3. Theray:**

This is considered the 'main' event of the namme and involves a community called Panika who perform the rituals as detailed later in this section. Each of the five okkas plus Balluda okka is responsible for arranging the Theray and take the responsibility on a rotational basis. Balluda okka is not in the list of five okkas but this is one part of their Therige to the village and the temple. Panikas do not live in Kukloor but arrive on this day to perform the festivities. They arrive at the Monnanda balliamane late afternoon and start the preparations. With a brass mask of Mathaai as the center, the Panika builds a circular Theray which is a framework of bamboo covered with thin sheets of the pith of a plant called Pambale.

The villagers assemble at the Monnanda balliamane at about 8 PM after dinner and as per Mathaai's wishes, the festivities start from here. The celebrations begin with invoking Mathaai and Panika singing a song in Malayalam about the glory of Mathaai. The villagers along with Panika carrying the Theray proceed to Nandyanda kala. As is the case with most events, the procession is led by the Thalithakki bolcha the only difference being in this case it is carried by a man and not by a maiden. Women are forbidden from going to Nandyanda kala and they participate at the Theray in the temple. At the Nandyanda kala, the Panika places the Theray leaned to a tree called Devakalli tree and worships it. A fire is lit in the center of the kala followed by Valaga troop playing the valaga while men and boys dance to the beat. The Panika offers a fowl and the villagers clean it and it is roasted in the bonfire that is lit. A piece of the cooked meat and some alcohol is offered to the Theray and the rest is consumed by the villagers as Prasada. The goat to be sacrificed as an offering to Mathaai is also brought here.

The Panika who is supposed to carry the Theray gets ready for his performance. He wears tiny bells called gaggara around his ankles and smears paint on his face. He wears a turban on his head and a bamboo frame covered with a bright colored cloth around his waist. The performance begins after the Thirvalakara who are already possessed by the gods arrive at Nandyanda Kala. They inspect the Theray and ensure that all arrangements are in order. The Thirvalakara of Aiyappa takes the lead and indicates the appropriate time for the Theray to be placed on the Panika's head. Meanwhile the Thirvalakara who is possessed by Mammoodha writhes on the ground and rolls around the yard. It is believed that he goes blind temporarily while doing that. The Thirvalakara of Aiyappa has the power to bring back Mammoodha's

eyesight and have him back up on his feet. The Panika carrying the Theray performs a dance to the song and beat of the drum of his counterpart. The Thirvalakaaras take turns to make the Panika dance in front of them. The oorukaara witness these events with devotion.

The procession led is by the Thirvalakaara followed by the maiden carrying Thaliyathakki bolcha accompanied by the Panika with the Theray on his head and the rest of the oorukaara. Together they proceed to the temple. Along the way they stop at the holy location of Nengotte Kall to offer prayers and invoke Mathai. The villagers dance to the beat of the Valaga and four men play the Dhol singing the Bhadrakali song making it a very boisterous environment. As they approach the temple, the Thirvalakaara run to the temple and back to the procession. Meanwhile, the women and children who are not allowed to go to Nandyanda kala have assembled at the temple to receive the procession and seek blessings.

Once the procession reaches the yard of the temple where the Harijana deities are kept, the priest comes out of the temple and sprinkles holy water on the Panika and the rest of the oorukaara. The Thirvalakaara who is possessed by Aiyappa takes two swords kept on the platform, places one on his head and hits it with the other. This is done amidst the valaga playing the appropriate beat and villagers dancing. After he hits the sword a few times, his head starts bleeding and blood drips over his face, but he is alive. This ritual is called Narahuti (human sacrifice). Then the Panika carrying the Theray dances while his counterpart sings a Malayalam song in glory of Mathaai. The Thirvalakaara take turn and dance in front of the Panika. While dancing, the Panika holds a small sword in his hand and oorukaara keep a few lit wicks on the sword. The Panika dances till the wicks drop from the sword. It is common for the Thirvalakaara to make the Panika dance and he can stop only when they give their consent. The Mammoodha Thirvalakaara dances to the beat of the valaga with the sacrificial goat. He gives an impression that he likes to play around with the animal and has fun (indicated by his smiles) with the animal. The procession including the Panika can proceed to the inside of the temple only after the Thirvalakaara give their permission. A sack of coconuts that are collected from each of the okka during the ettu porata is kept on the verandah of the temple and before the procession enters the temple, the villagers hurl it against the steps breaking them into small pieces. Each and every coconut has to be broken, and it results in a huge pile of coconut pieces. This is called 'eed kaai'. The Harijana children collect these pieces as Prasada to take home.

The Panika carrying the Theray and the oorukaara go around the temple three times and the Panika repeats his dance twice; once in front of Mathaai's statue and then in front of the shrine dedicated to botekaara Aiyappa. In the meanwhile, the Thirvalakaara continue to be possessed and the villagers meet them to ask questions as they are believed to be the voice of god. Questions could be about personal issues they are facing, health, children, business etc. It is believed that the Thirvalakaara can guide them with potential solutions.

Once these rituals are completed, the women, children and guests leave the temple and proceed home. The brahmin priests also lock the temple and proceed to their residence. It is well past midnight by then and time to sacrifice the animals dedicated to Mathaai. The Panika who is responsible to conduct the sacrifice makes a small incision on one of his fingers before decapitating the animals. It is expected that he offers a few drops of his blood before the

animals are offered. The ooru aad is offered first. The goat is taken around the temple three times with the chanting of 'aalalla amme aad' meaning it is not a man but a goat. Myth is that several thousand years ago, a human being was sacrificed to the deity but now a goat (aad) is offered instead and hence the chanting. After the animal is offered, the villagers turn their backs on the scene of the offering and remain silent for a few minutes. This is to allow the dhoothas (body guards) of the deity to consume the essence of the sacrificed animals in peace. Then the ooru koli (village fowls) are offered in the yard outside the temple close to where Harijana deities are kept. Again, the villagers turn their backs on the scene of the offering. Before departing to their homes, the villagers tie the headless carcass of the goat to a tree (deva kalli mara or oleander tree) outside the temple compound near the kere (tank). The carcass remains hung on the tree for more than 48 hours before it is taken down and cooked for the villagers. It is to be noted that no birds like vulture or kite touch the carcass nor does the flesh go bad despite the heat of the summer.

Several years ago, tens of goats and even sheep were offered on this day. However, Mathaai insisted (communicated through Thirvalakaara) that the number of animals sacrificed should be reduced. Since then only one goat is offered. Devotees who are interested in offering goats to the deity can contribute in the form of money. Devotees do offer fowls as offering that are capacitated by the Panika and the birds are taken home by the devotees. The okka that is responsible for the arrangement of the Theray have to offer a fowl too.



*Image 13. Tree by the Kere (tank) where the carcass of the goat is hung*

## CHAPTER 7 – NAMME DAY 3 (CHOOLE NAMME)

On the third day of the namme, men belonging to the Karnanda okka are responsible to clean the temple and remove all the blood stains. The brahmin priest than purifies the temple spraying consecrated water and uttering the appropriate mantras. This is completed before the pooje starts in the temple and the devotees start arriving.

### **Choole Namme:**

Choole means prostitute and a young boy around 10-15 years old is dressed up like a woman with saree, jewels and make-up as Choole. Like the Kudhre, Choole is also a symbolic offering made to Mathaai and sometimes 'vovtive'. For instance, when a boy is ill, his parents make a vow that they will dress him up as Choole at the coming namme.

Most of the rituals are similar to that of Kudhre. The okkas of Monnanda, Maletira and Nandyanda are supposed to make the offering of Choole and are assisted by Kuttanda, Thathanda and Maletira okkas respectively. The Namme starts around mid-afternoon in the balliamane of the Maletira okka where the choole offered by Maletira okka but dressed up by a boy belonging to or designated by the Thathanda okka is ready. The Thirvalakaara lead the namme by having the Choole dance to a song sung by four men playing the dhudi and singing a song. The Choole dances first inside the main hall of the balliamane and then in the yard. The procession led by the maiden holding Thaliyathakki bolcha and Thirvalakaara accompanied by the men playing the dhudi, Kombukaara, drummer and Choole proceed to the paddy fields of the Monnanda okka. The Choole waits in the paddy fields while the rest of the procession proceed to the Monnanda balliamane where the Choole offered by the latter but dressed up by a boy from or designated by the Kuttanda okka is ready. The dance performed at Maletira balliamane is repeated at Monnanda balliamane. The group then departs the Monnanda balliamane along with the Maletira Choole (waiting in the paddy fields) and proceed to the Nandyanda kala where their Choole is waiting. The dance ritual is performed there and the troop moves towards Kudhre Kall where they invoke Mathaai. All three chooles accompanied by the Thirvalakaara run a race in the paddy fields of the Monnanda okka. Upon reaching the main paddy field of the Monnanda okka called Paaryama, the chooles dance to the beat of the dhudi and valaga. The three Thirvalakaara dance along taking turns and the procession cannot move ahead until they dance to their content and give the nod to proceed. All the villagers join to invoke Mathaai and proceed towards the temple. Upon arriving at the entrance of the temple the priests sprinkle the holy water to receive and purify the chooles and the rest of the oorukaara. The chooles dance again in front of the platform of the Harijana deities and the Thirvalakaara take turns to dance in front of the chooles facing them. The procession enters the temple once the Thirvalakaara gives permission and upon entering the temple led by the Thaliyathakki bolcha, the procession walks around the temple three times. The chooles repeat the dance twice inside the temple once in front of the shrine of botekaara Aiyappa and then in front of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. The priest then blesses the little boys dressed as chooles by giving them holy water and a garland.

Just as in the previous two days of the namme, the men and boys perform the Bolkaat while four men sing the Baalo Paat to the beat of dhudis. The choole also join the dancers and walk around the shrine three times. After this the Choole can retire and change their costume.

Tenge pore or coconut snatching happens in the temple on this day. This is a competitive sport yet conducted in the spirit of friendship between various age-groups for boys and young men. One of the villagers, preferably a strong well-built man, holds a coconut aloft in his right hand which is the signal for other boys and men to gather around him. He then lowers his hand and stretches it horizontally and the men or boys gathered around him will have to snatch it from him. It is generally conducted in groups of 5 – 8 people and who snatches it will have to break it by hitting it against holy stones inside the temple. There are two such stones called Patth Kutth Paathaal and Kuttankarigali within the temple close to the sanctum sanctorum. It is considered a show of strength for young men and boys to win this and then share the coconut with their friends.

Meanwhile, outside the main temple in the yard of the Harijana deities, a unique and interesting event takes place. The Thirvalakaara who gets possessed by Mammoodha sits on a stone and goes blind temporarily. Few men stand in a circle holding a cane each and hide a coconut. Mammoodha has to find the coconut to regain his eyesight. The valaga plays and the men/ boys dance while Aiyappa tries to grab the coconut. Mammoodha rolls on the ground in search of the coconut and Aiyappa teases the later about the coconut. This is a spectacle though part of a ritual and the villagers flock to watch it closely. Aiyappa finally hands over the coconut and Mammoodha regains his eyesight and dances with happiness. The Thirvalakaara continue to dance and devotes hand them ripe banana clusters. They dance holding these clusters resulting in the ripe fruits scattering all over which are grabbed by the villagers dancing around them. It is considered a good omen to receive the fruit as prasada.

Just like the previous days, the villagers are served panaka and prasada after which they all return to their homes. The orrukaara men generally stay back to ensure the bhandara collected is counted and accounts maintained. The priests do the needful to store the jewels used to decorate the idol safely and all the valuables put away. The oorukaara men then proceed to the Maletira balliamane carrying the Kadathale and dhudi where they are treated to a meal of Paaputt (rice cake made with broken rice and coconut) and chicken curry. This is a symbol of the ooruk thakka (village headman) treating and thanking the rest of the villagers for their efforts in the smooth conduct of the namme.

## CHAPTER 8 – NAMME DAY 4 (WRAP-UP)

### **Shudda Kalasa and Kala Maduko:**

Shudda means to purify. The day after the namme is spent to clean and purify the temple and formally end the namme celebrations. On this day the men of the village meet at the temple around mid-morning to clean the temple after which the priest purifies the temple premises. The priest performs pooje to Mathaai just like it is normally done. The villagers are served lunch at the temple. After lunch, the temple management committee then conducts a meeting to review the conduct of the namme, financial accounts, bhandara income, namme expenses etc. The vendors like chande drummers, florists, priests and others are paid, and their accounts settled.

After the meeting the oorukaara assemble in the yard where the Harijana deities are worshipped. The Thirvalakaara get possessed and talk to the oorukaara highlighting any mistakes that may have occurred during the namme celebrations. They then bless the oorukaara after which they all proceed to the Peeli Kall. The Peeli dancer belonging to the Kuttanda okka who is ready post a ritual bath near the well of the temple, performs the Peeli aat for the final time. The villagers then invoke Mathaai and disperse towards their homes.

In the evening the oorukaara men and boys assemble at the temple premises again. The goat that was offered on the night of Theray is cooked by the villagers outside the temple premises near the gate. A small portion of the meat is roasted and offered as Meedhi. Curry is made with the rest of the meat. Oorkaara enjoy alcoholic beverages during the cooking process and relax with some fun and humor after days of hard work during the Namme. The Peeli dancer is served the goat meat first as a token of appreciation. The oorukaara then sit in a circle and enjoy the goat meat demonstrating friendship and brotherhood. Beetle leaves with areacanut is served to everyone. At the end, Mathaai is invoked three times and the oorukaara turn to face the main gate of the temple and throw the grains of rice they would have received from the Thirvalakaara during the namme. The rice grains are thrown backwards over the heads. This brings down the curtains on the namme and villagers head home with a sense of accomplishment, contentment and being blessed by Mathaai.

## **Glossary of Kodava words**

**Okka** – Kodava patriarchal family set up. The Kodava community consists of several hundred families that converge into the same patriarchal ancestry. Each okka has a common family name and members belonging to an okka are considered brothers and sister (not intra-okka marriage is permitted).

**Kembati** – one of the original inhabitants of Kodagu. They follow a lot of customs and traditions of the Kodavas and speak the language too. Traditionally they worked for their Kodava masters but it is common to find them pursuing other traders.

**Kudi** – Clan or a group of families sharing the same ancestry. May be considered equivalent to a Kodava okka.

**Aime-Koime** – Kodava words to indicate a family's belonging to their land with certain privileges and responsibilities towards the land and its social/religious setup.

**Therige** – therige means tax. However, in this context it has to be interpreted as the offering each family is expected to make to the temple. It could be in the form of money or agricultural products like rice, coconuts etc.

**Paledhara System** – political system in Kodagu prior to the advent of the Haleri dynasty. There were local chieftains who controlled certain territories.

**Haleri dynasty** – Dynasty that ruled Kodagu from the 15<sup>th</sup> century till the British took control in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They belonged to the Lingayat community.

**Ajja** – Elderly person is referred to as Ajja in Kodava Thakk (language). Addressing with this word symbolizes respect.

**Kala** – Kala means threshing yard. Since paddy was the main source of income and food crop, kala is considered sacred.

**Kadathale** – It is a form of sword. However, this term is used mainly for the swords used as offering to deities and not for any other sword. Hence there is a sense of holiness associated with this term.

**Pooje** – Kodava word for Pooja or worshipping the god/goddess.

**Havyak Brahmins** – one of the many sects of Brahmins.

**Thirvala** – the tradition of human beings being possessed by gods/goddess is called Thirvala. It is a common practice in multiple parts of India. The men who get possessed are called Thirvalakaara. They communicate with humans verbally or through gestures and people revere them and listen to their instructions with respect and devotion.

**Thakka** – Thakka means leader or Headman. There are different types of Thakkas like Deva Thakka who is the leader with respect to the affairs of the temple, ooru thakka who is the village headman for the administration of the village.

**Pudiya akki oota** – Literal meaning is new rice meal. As rice is the staple food and main source of income, the inaugural meal with the freshly harvested rice is traditionally celebrated grandly.

**Prasada** – offering that is given to the devotees after worship. It is typically a snack made of parched rice, coconut and jaggery.

**Puthari** – one of the three main festivals in Kodagu. Puthari means new rice and this is the festival where the new crop of paddy is ceremoniously harvested. It is celebrated towards the end of November or early December.

**Balliamane** – Each okka has a 'family home' that belongs to each and every member of that okka. It is considered sacred for the okka and the ancestors are worshipped there. It is sometimes called ainmane too.

**Nandyanda Kala** – Technically it means the threshing yard of the Nandyanda okka (now extinct). It is just an open yard or a piece of land with a huge mango tree by the side. As described in the chapters on Namme, it is a significant place where lot of the celebrations are held or commence.

**Aiyappa, Mammoodha, Khethamma** – Local deities that are worshipped and Thirvalakaara get possessed by these gods. Three different Harijana men get possessed by these deities and they help carry out the namme as per the established traditions.

**Kudhre** – Kudhre means horse. As described in the chapter on Kudhre namme, the chosen okkas are required to offer a decorated hollow frame of horse carried by a young man.

**Choole** – Choole means prostitute. It is a symbolic offering where a young boy is dressed up in women's clothing with saree, makeup and jewels and dances in the namme. Like the Kudhre there are okkas designated to offer Choole at the namme.

**Moopkaara** – Men who serve as assistants to the Thirvalakaara. They are pre-designated and they are supposed to practice certain austerities during the namme like being dressed in white kuppiya chaele and abstaining from alcohol and meat during the days of the namme.

**Parike** – Practice common among devotees to commit to offering cash, kind or service to god in return to a wish like recovery of a loved one from an illness or fulfilment of a plan.

**Bhandaara** - offering made to the temple. It is mostly in the form of cash or kind like jewels, silver articles, saree to the deity etc.

**Valaga** – Traditional band in Kodagu that includes different types of drums and reed instruments.

**Namme Kuripo** – Namme means festival and Kuripyo is the traditional word for the ceremonious start of an auspicious event.

**Kaadiyaar** - Second month of the Kodava calendar.

**Tappadaka** – Tappu means mistake or forbidden. The ritual of Tappadaka is to take a pledge to not commit certain mistakes like chopping a tree or culling an animal for food which are otherwise part of normal life.

**Adhithana** – a sacred place historically as the Thathanda ajja first got possessed by Mathaai at this location.

**Oorukaara** – Residents of the village are referred to as oorukaara.

**Thorana** – Decoration typically at the entrance of the road or the gate. Plantain stumps are used on either side with a string of mango leaves tied from one stump to the other.

**Kuvale Putt** – Snack made of the extract of ripe jackfruit and broken rice. The paste is baked in leaves called Kuvale Leaf and hence the name.

**Kombu** – an important wind instrument of the Valaga. It is a long curved metal instrument like a horn and is historically significant as it was used to communicate messages and also in battles and celebrations. Kombu has significance in the Namme as described in the relevant sections like Pattani.

**Moolapurusha or Karona** – First person or the root of a okka. Kodavas worship their ancestors and Karona is revered as gods. Each okka has a Moolapurusha or Karona who is revered and worshipped and the Balliamane is considered a temple for the Kaorna.

**Chande** – a drum used in traditional music and played during pooje in many temples. Its origin is in Kerala but is common in many temples across South India.

**Gaggara** – it is a rhythmic instrument which is like a jingling anklet.

**Botekaara** – Hunter. Lord Aiyappa is often worshipped as Botekaara Aiyappa the hunter god.

**Oor aad** – oor means village and aad is goat. In the modern era, only one goat is offered in the namme and it belongs to the village and not to any individual or okka and hence called oor aad or village goat.

**Paaryama** – Paddy field belonging to the Monnanda okka where the paddy is first harvested on the day of Puthari festival and offered to Mathaai. It is on this field the three Kudhres and Chooles dance together for the first time on the days of namme as described in the chapters on namme.

**Meedhi** – it is common in Kodagu to offer food for gods and ancestors and the food offered is called Meedhi.

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### **About the Author:**

Nithan Thimmaiah Monnanda grew up in his native Kukloor in the late 1970s and 1980s. his forefathers were among the original okkas of Kukloor and hence Nithan has been involved in the temple and namme activities from his childhood. He moved out of Kukloor in the late 1980s for the sake of education and then for professional reasons. He currently lives with his family; wife Sweta Monnanda, daughter Anwita Monnanda and son Praneel Monnanda in Philadelphia in the USA. He continues to be as passionate about Kukloor, the temple and namme as he has ever been and attends the namme almost every year and takes part in the celebrations.

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