

Kalamezhuthu Pattu: A Linguistical Analysis Tracing The Cultural Values

Anjali Gopan¹, Ahalya Arundhathi², Gayathri Mv³

¹Post Graduate Student, Department of English,
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India
anjalogopan1397@gmail.com

²Post Graduate Student, Department of English,
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India
ahalyaarundhati@gmail.com

³Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, India
gayathrimv@am.amrita.edu

Article History: Received: 11 January 2021; Revised: 12 February 2021; Accepted: 27 March 2021; Published online: 23 May 2021

Abstract

Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. It is the channel through which culture and its traditions may be conveyed and preserved. The main goal of this paper is to inculcate the reciprocity of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis theory otherwise known as linguistic relativity with the traditional Indian ritual Kalamezhuthu Pattu celebrated in the temples of Kerala as these rituals play a vital role in enriching the cultural heritage of India. This theory claims that the structure of a language affects its speaker's worldview or cognition and thus people's perceptions are relative to their spoken language. This paper focuses on the symbols associated with the ritual and how these symbols contribute to the visual aesthetics of humans and how it helps in the cognition of linguistic and cultural connectivity. The authors also try to assay this ritual as a custom for ecological preservation which is in contrast to the current mechanized world.

Keywords : Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Kalamezhuthu pattu, Ecology, Linguistics, Culture

Introduction

The culture that we preserve and follow is always an inner identity. The culture of a place showcases its value and prosperity to the rest of the world and compels others to explore. Kerala is one among the states in Kerala which is culturally and naturally abundant. Rituals and traditions play a massive role in the preservation and projection of culture we can call them the embodiment of culture. The state of Kerala comprises Plenty of rituals that exhibit the cultural outlook of the state such as Kalamezhuthu pattu Theyyam, Theeyatu, Padayani and so on.

Most of these rituals are associated with the temples. Every ritual holds a significant value that enhances the cultural roots of Kerala. Through this paper, we like to Focus on the ritual Kalamezhuthu pattu. It's a ritual performed in the temple, it's a mode floor drawing that includes several other steps. "Kalamezhuthu is not a painting, but an inspiration; a process that shows collective consciousness. Many different art forms like chitram (painting), shilpam (sculpting), nritham (Dancing), thalam (Rhythm), natyam (Performance) comes together in this functional art form,"

"Pictorial designs is the inheritance of humanity from ancient times. All over the world, it first appeared on floors, and walls of human dwellings. In India, it has existed as part of ritualistic life in Hindu households. Kolam in Tamilnadu, rangoli in Northern India, other forms in different parts of India, are intimately connected with women and their domestic routine. In Kerala, it is in the form of pookkalam, made of flowers during the Onam season. A different kind of drawing on the floor, Kalamezhuthu is associated with sacred groves. This pictorial art, with its inseparable rituals, takes a discerning reader to the roots of the aesthetic sensibilities of cultural Kerala."(Padma Jayaraj ,2010)

Kalamezhuthu pattu is one of the rituals which occupies a vital role in enriching the cultural heritage of Kerala, the southernmost state of India. It's an art form performed on certain occasions, especially in Temples. "Kalamezhuthu pattu "is a Malayalam word in which" Kalam" indicates a picture, which is mostly done by male artists," ezhuth" denotes drawing, and "pattu "means song. This ritual is a collaboration of different art forms, initially, a portrait of the deity will be created on the floor which is followed by singing songs in their praise and ritualistic dance steps

through which drawings are removed. This ritual varies across regions, drawings and executions differ according to the cultural deviations, sometimes it performed in association with some other rituals. And this floor drawing consists of symbols through which cultural transmission takes place.

This ritual is an amalgamation of different art forms and it holds linguistic, psychological and ecological significance. Sapir -Whorf Hypothesis of linguistic relativity in linguistics can be traced through the drawing or Kalam and the pattu or music associated with the ritual. To some extent psychoanalytical theory can also be applied by exploring the psyche of the person who conducted the ritual and the people who witness it. Eco-friendly nature is another peculiarity of the ritual. with no doubt, this is one among the ritual which stands as a replica of Kerala's culture and society. The Well-being and security of the society is the main aim or motive behind this ritual.

Language and culture, two indispensable components of human life, shares a solid linkage. Culture is an amalgamation of beliefs, reflections and attributes of certain societies while Language is the intervening factor that connects these beliefs, thoughts and attributes to communication. Culture influences our traditions and values.

SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESIS

Linguistic determinism and relativity lay the foundation for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which states that language influences an individual's thought process and intellectual cognition. Language is considered as the designer of ideas and it directs an individual's mental scheme. We tend to differentiate various objects with the help of linguistic systems including symbols, colours, signs etc. How we perceive the external world completely depends on the language. Communicative aspects like thought, memory and perception which are related to an individual are regulated by the procurable vocabularies and symbols in language. The theory also throws light upon the relationship between language and culture as culture depicts the thoughts and actions of the society. It paves way for human progress in general which is in turn stimulated by language. Similarly, language affects how we think and act. Language is considered as a social convention is an integral fragment of culture. Thus, according to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, culture is transpired and modelled from the provenance of language.

Symbols the peculiar part of language serves as a medium to transport these values to realm of wide span. Symbols in the form of figures, colours or sounds portray abstract notions and concepts. "Language, and some aspects of culture, are at the tip of the iceberg, the part you see above the water. Yet, the majority of what forms the iceberg, culture, hides below the surface " (Wenying Jiang) , " culture's communicative pressure represents aspects of reality and connects different contexts. It means that the use of symbols that represent events, identities, feelings and beliefs is also the method of bringing these things into the current context".(Professor Michael Silverstein) So, every language and symbols will be embedded with the culture which holds several principles.

Music is also yet another component through which ideas can be conveyed. According to researchers from the University of Groningen." Music is not only able to affect your mood -- listening to particularly happy or sad music can even change the way we perceive the world, "

This paper mainly focuses on how symbols the forms of language transmit cultural values through the ritual in Kerala "Kalamezhuthu pattu " by associating it with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity. Which states that language shapes our perceptions of reality.

To analyze the ritual with the respective theory, we visited kadakkal Bhadrakali Temple and Karunagapally Mahadeva temple to collect first-hand information about the ritual, significance of the kalam or drawing . One common viewpoint we got from both the kalam as so auspicious.

Here we are analyzing different types of Kalam with Sapir Whorf Hypothesis.

Observations.



The above picture is of Ayyappa kalam

Here the central deity is Lord Ayyapa. And this is conducted for the betterment and defence of the people and also prosperity and wealth. When we deeply analyze the Kalam we can see a portrayal of a white horse which symbolizes victory, strength, endurance, freedom nobleness and triumph of good over evils. The abundance of green colour indicates the deity's union with nature and his role as a protector of nature. When we trace the story of Lord Ayyapa we can find that he was born in Jungle and later adopted by a king but in his adulthood, he left apart all the good fortunes and returned to the jungle for leading sainthood. So, he lived a life which is highly in harmony with nature. So, this colour defines his communion with nature, and it projects that deity will win over all the demon forces which deplete nature. Lord Ayyappa denotes the "Samadhi" state but here in this Kalam deity is portrayed in a fierce state. According to linguistic relativity language directly affects our perception of reality here through the symbols inserted in the Kalam these divine ideas are directly perceived into our thoughts and culture So here through the symbols we can see the importance of the relationship between human and nature. And also asserts the importance of culture.



The above picture is of Bhadrakali Kalam in whose central deity is Goddess Bhadrakali incarnation of Goddess Parvati. When we look at the Kalam closely we can find the Goddess in a fierce state which is an indication of war against demon forces. In this postmodern society the so-called demons we familiarized through myths and legends never exists. But here human beings themselves play the role of demonic figures by demolishing nature and society for their egotism. Goddess Parvathi is always in a tranquil state but her incarnation denotes fierceness which shows that both good and evil Co exists together in a person. Here we can see several hands of the deity holding different weapons. It indicates a sense of protection as well as a threat to the negative forces in nature. The green colour of the hands denotes the deity is protecting nature within her hands and assures the existence of mankind and nature. An abundance of red colour can be traced, red colour denotes power, anger and vigour so it enhances the fierce state of deity.

We can see an elephant which is an herbivore, and a lion which is a carnivore, two animals with contradicting features but they are placed equally on both sides of deity, it indicates that all the living beings are the same and are the creation of God, so there must be an equality every creation of God, we can consider this as a perfect example for the universal of the concept of oneness. When we analyse the ritual from another perspective, we can find the figure of elephant and lion are too small compared to the size of deity, as we all know the elephant is the biggest animal in the land and the lion is the most vigorous animal in the land here the symbols transmit the idea of universality and sublimity of deity which is powerful than everything.

By applying the theory and tracing the symbols we can perceive those evils will not have a permanent existence in the world protected by a powerful spirit. These relativistic and universal forces play a vital

role in modelling our thought and perception. The existence of the devil and good in the same person oneness concept and universality of deity is also reflected through the symbols appeared here.



This is the Naga Kalam in which the central deity is Naga or the serpent. When we attempt a close analysis, we can find a serpent with five heads which represents power and according to Hindu mythology, the five-headed serpent is a guardian of truth.

It can also be considered as an animal guide representing something we are experiencing or going through. The dominance of blue colour transmits the qualities of bravery, manliness, determination and ability to deal with a difficult situation. It also represents a stable mind and depth of characters. And yellow is the colour which represents competence and mental development and it stimulates the mind and it's known as the colour of spring.

By associating theory with the Kalam we can conclude that this kalam symbolizes protecting humanity and destroying evil. And the figure snake also represents fertility which is affiliated with procreation and also Nagakalam represents regeneration or rebirth. Serpent worship was part of Indus Valley civilization thus through the portrayal of Nagakalam in the postmodern era represents the importance of ancient culture and tradition. Nagas also reflect the cyclical nature of existence.

From these three different types of Kalams, we can conclude that it picturizes the wholeness of the universe or infinitude. It proves how language and symbols endure life and culture within themselves. All these Kalams are the reflections of the darkest phase as well as the vivid phase of life. In each kalam, the

deity is in a fierce form which promotes the idea that evil forces could not win over supreme power. A sense of preservation and protection is visible in each Kalam. These Kalams with its central figures represents nature which is considered as the observation while the supreme power or the creator is portrayed as the observer.

Symbols are always linked with conventions. Moreover, conveying beliefs, the symbols communicate with our thought process. Symbols, directly and indirectly, attempt to make the sense of their surrounding worlds. These symbols and words help in the comprehension of the surrounding. They also provide a foundation for understanding human experiences and culture by transferring acceptable meanings that are perceived by society.

Ecological elements

The entire depiction of “Kalamezhuthu Pattu” involves a plethora of issues that are closely related to ecology and is created from naturally extracted objects and colours. This art form is a harmonious blend of Aryan, Dravidian and Tribal traditions which gave primary importance to nature worship. Even the drawings associated with the art are closely connected to nature and involve symbols of gods and goddesses and they portray ferocious essence to showcase the triumph of good over evil and ensure the protection of the cosmos. The ritualistic environment is brightened with the colour powders made from natural ingredients. Turmeric powder is used for the yellow, burnt husk of paddy is used for black, powdered leaves and henna for green, the mixture of turmeric powder and lime for red and these base colours are combined to obtain other colours. Rice powder is used to outline the kalam (surface of the ground marked for drawing) and the lamps lighted on four sides of the kalam add to a symphony of colour essence that can be transmitted to life. The drawing is made by the artist with utmost devotion, passion and beauty to create the divine forms of deities and they follow certain traditional norms to make it perfect. Objects of nature like Tulsi leaves, garlands made from red hibiscus, the canopy of palm leaves are used to decorate the environment and to attain the blessings of the deities. These ecological aspects associated with the ritual provide a vibrancy to that atmosphere which can inspire a sense of devotion among the devotees.

The ritual is also known as the “Art of Dust” as it is created from particles. It is deeply linked with the creation and destruction of the universe. The art of dust or “dhoolishilpam” stands for the notion that every object in this cosmos is made from tiny particles. Likewise, the kalam is also created with particles and powders and is destroyed at the end of the ritual with the rhythms of various musical instruments. This explains the whole scenario about the creation and existence of the universe. Therefore, the main idea concerning this ritual is the conservation of nature and understanding the importance of indigenous rituals and practices in human formation in this postmodern era.

CONCLUSION

Language-cultural determinism or relativity affects our mode of thinking, conceptualizing, interacting and expressing and communicating. Language is viewed as a principal determinant and an elemental human prototype that paves the way to the creation and existence of social and cultural life. It plays a vital role in preserving rituals and practices which are adored by individuals and communities. The ritual “Kalamezhuthu Pattu” in the light of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis exhibits the significance of visual language transmitted through the “kalam” (drawings) fabricating the existence of a divine situation or experience with the aid of symbols, songs and colours. The visual treat offered by the ritual helps in shaping our ideas about reality and culture by conferring meaning to the facets of experiences obtained from it. The significance of language in the cultural context of the ritual shows how the experiences of the external world and the meanings related to it are socially and aesthetically produced. The communicative symbols or the visual codes in “Kalamezhuthu Pattu” are considered as the paramount instruments in structuring social etiquettes and cultural practices. These symbols and the ideas associated with them provides the ground for the development of a connotative meaning adhered to the ritual. Studies are made to empower the ritual based on its linguistic and ecological significance and to prevent cultural depletion in this post-modern era, due to lack of knowledge about the aesthetic traditions of the society. Extensively

analysing the ritual showcases the powerful influence of culture on verbal and non-verbal encoding and decoding processes. It specifies how an individual is transformed into an agent of culture with the help of language.

Works cited

1. Nazariya. "Kalamezhuthu from Kerala: the Rangoli with a Difference." Make Heritage Fun!, 9 Jan. 2017, www.makeheritagefun.com/kalamezhuthu-the-rangoli-that-comes-from-kerala/amp/.
2. "Kalamezhuthu, the Traditional Ritual Art of South - Kerala Taxis." Kerala Taxis - Kerala Taxi Service and Tourist Car and Cab Rental Services, www.keralataxis.com/kerala-culture/kalamezhuthu/.
3. "Kalampattu." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 16 May 2021, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalampattu.
4. Articles - Kalamezhuthu: A Ritual Performance - Padma Jayaraj, www.narthaki.com/info/articles/art280.html.
5. Krishnan, Lalithaa. "Kalamezhuthu: When Art Is Integral to Ritual." The Hindu, The Hindu, 29 Nov. 2018, www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/kalamezhuthu-when-art-is-integral-to-ritual/article25622568.ece.
6. "Satyapal Explores History and Aesthetics of Kalamezhuthu No." News Experts, 7 May 2018, www.newsexperts.in/satyapal-explores-history-aesthetics-kalamezhuthu-abhimuhkam-sahapedia/.
7. "Kalamezhuthu Pattu of Kerala." Sahapedia, www.sahapedia.org/kalamezhuthu-pattu-of-kerala.
8. "What Is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis?" Twinword, 24 July 2018, www.twinword.com/blog/the-sapir-whorf-hypothesis-linguistic-relativity/.
9. "Relationship Between Language and Culture." Mars Translation, 18 Oct. 2019, www.marstranslation.com/blog/language-and-culture.
10. www.facebook.com/bilingualkidspot. "The Relationship Between Language and Culture Explained and Defined." Bilingual Kidspot, 12 June 2019, bilingualkidspot.com/2019/06/12/relationship-between-language-and-culture/.
11. "Colour Psychology: How Do Colours Affect Mood & Emotions?" London Image Institute, 28 Jan. 2021, londonimageinstitute.com/how-to-empower-yourself-with-color-psychology/.
12. Kalamezhuthu Pattu - Ritual Art Forms of Kerala, www.keralaculture.org/kalamezhuthupattu/66.
13. images.app.goo.gl/c4z6Y3pNvwhajYZ17.
14. images.app.goo.gl/suroatga67689Pfe7.
15. Twitter, images.app.goo.gl/D1P5iZba5TqRBZgP7.
16. (PDF) *Language and Culture A Philosophical Hypothesis*. www.researchgate.net/publication/334599712_Language_and_Culture_A_Philosophical_Hypothesis.
17. "Ritual Arts of Kerala- Kalam- Kalampattu." *Webindia123.Com*, www.webindia123.com/kerala/arts/ritualart1.htm.
18. "Kalamezhuthu, Powder Drawing, Ritual Art, Temples, Kerala, India." *Kerala Tourism*, www.keralatourism.org/kerala-article/2012/kalamezhuthu/180.
19. <https://Faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/Jschroeder/Publications/Hobson%20et%20al%20Psychology%20of%20Rituals.Pdf>.
20. *Kalamezhuthu Pattu - Ritual Art Forms of Kerala*, www.keralaculture.org/kalamezhuthupattu/66.