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An Enquiry into the Multi-dimensional Representation of Folk Goddesses in Kerala

Dr.Susmitha Ramakrishnan

The symbolic representation of Mother Goddess portrayed in the murals and kalams, and in the myths and folk performances, are undoubtedly the religious symbols which the believer carries in his mind. They are born out of man's experience, and have the capacity to reveal of many concepts that demand rational analysis. Analytical psychology speaks of the primordial images or archetype of the Great Mother, it refers not just to the image existing in space and time but to the inward image at work in the human psyche. The effect of this archetype may be followed through the whole of history, for we can demonstrate its working in the rites, myths and symbols of early men and also in the dreams, fantasies and creative works, as well as the sound of the sick man of our own day.¹

The evolution of the society and its production relations considerably influence the cult of Mother Goddess. Just as many of the local heroes had been elevated as Saivite deities, the local heroines had been elevated to the position of Bhagavathi or Sakthi. The primitive folk belief system had been exposed to the process of Sanskritisation. The folk aspects had been interrelated to classical legends and myths of Hinduism. This historical process could be explained only in the light of social formation and the development of production process in the agrarian society. The narration of classical mythology in the ritual songs of the folk Gods, provides a rare example for the interaction between 'smaller' and 'larger' cultures in a region. An elaborate process had taken place in superimposing classical ideas on the folk performances and allied cults. There were two systems of this process: one is the association of Puranic legends