

Beyond Folk Heritage: Analysing Theyyam and Padayani as Indigenous Performance Texts in Contemporary Kerala

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Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into education, while the Viksit Bharat initiative recognizes cultural advancement as essential for national development by 2047. This study examines Kerala's traditional ritual performances, Theyyam and Padayani, as complex indigenous knowledge systems rather than mere folkloric expressions. Employing Richard Schechner's three-phase performance methodology—proto-performance, performance, and aftermath—the research reveals how these traditions function as dynamic frameworks of knowledge transmission through embodied cultural practices. The study demonstrates that Theyyam and Padayani encode philosophical, cosmological, and socio-cultural knowledge structures, offering alternative epistemological perspectives beyond conventional academic paradigms. These performances represent living knowledge resources with significant relevance for educational reform, cultural preservation, and decolonial approaches. Recognizing their intellectual depth and systematic knowledge practices can contribute to more inclusive, community-centered, and culturally grounded educational models aligned with contemporary development goals.

1. Introduction

Before dawn breaks at a Theyyam shrine in Kannur, performers begin their quiet labor. They grind rice paste with red earth for pigments, weave coconut fronds into elaborate headdresses, and recite soft invocations to prepare for divine possession. In Central Kerala's temple courtyards, Padayani artists spend months shaping massive masks from areca nut sheaths before staging vivid clashes between gods and demons. Casual observers rarely witness these preparatory stages. Yet they constitute vital arenas where indigenous knowledge takes root and persists in ways that confound our standard academic assumptions.

I argue here that Theyyam and Padayani operate as intricate performance texts whose knowledge systems arise from layered bodily practices rather than rigid written forms. Schechner's observation that "Performance is... being, doing, and showing [1–2] captures something essential about how these traditions work. Instead of treating them as quaint folk displays or static objects of study, I employ Richard Schechner's three-phase model to understand how preparation gives way to enactment, followed by lasting institutional effects. This lens reveals Kerala rituals as sophisticated structures of understanding that foster teaching rooted in direct experience, collective bonds, and transmission through physical presence rather than printed words.

Why does this matter beyond academic circles? India's National Education Policy 2020 calls for embedding Indian Knowledge Systems in classrooms, while the Viksit Bharat agenda positions cultural growth as cornerstone for advancement toward 2047. Too often, though, efforts to incorporate traditional practices echo old colonial habits—extracting surface elements of wisdom while pushing aside communities as authentic stewards. Schechner's insight that "Rituals are collective memories encoded into actions[3–4] points to what's at stake here. Policy tools, digital records, and curricular

adaptations function as active aftermaths that reshape epistemologies instead of safeguarding them intact. The irony becomes clear when we consider how "Theyyam... momentary divinity alongside social discrimination" [4] reveals the contradictions embedded in institutional recognition.

Colonial hierarchies continue to influence how institutions handle such practices today. They often cast indigenous forms as timeless relics suitable for national symbolism while overlooking the fluid intellectual depth actually at work. Scott's analysis of "Everyday resistance... tactics that exploited people use to undermine repressive domination" [3] becomes relevant here. My eighteen months of fieldwork across Theyyam strongholds in North Kerala (Kannur, Kasaragod, Kozhikode) and Padayani centers in the south (Pathanamthitta, Kottayam) involved close observation, conversations with artists, and visual documentation. Reflexivity guided this process throughout—I had to acknowledge how scholarly inquiry itself alters the traditions under scrutiny.

Community voices shaped my interpretations and outputs, ensuring shared authority over how these practices get represented. The fact that "Theyyam functions as a cathartic... medium for historically marginalized lower-caste communities" [5] became clear through sustained engagement rather than detached analysis. Performance studies methodology offers tools for revealing the profound cognitive layers of these rituals without repeating patterns of scholarly overreach.

2. Theoretical Framework: Performance Texts and Indigenous Epistemology

Richard Schechner's three-part performance framework provides solid analytical ground for understanding how Theyyam and Padayani build meaning through embodied practice rather than textual authority. The observation that "Theyyam... conducts subversion of the social hierarchy" through "interim separation and reintegration" [2] gets at something crucial about how these traditions operate. This sequential approach proves especially fitting for Kerala rituals, where knowledge passes through physical habits that carry cultural memory forward while leaving room for transformation in each iteration.

Within Theyyam and Padayani, the preparatory phase encompasses extensive lead-up activities: family training passed down through generations, detailed mask and costume work, plus cleansing rites that transform performers into spirit vessels. These early stages function as sites where cultural understanding embeds itself deeply into bodies through constant repetition. The performance phase itself brings public rituals where village social orders temporarily dissolve, opening space for collective sense-making and social renewal. Aftermath involves community storytelling, official documentation, and policy adaptations that refit traditional knowledge for contemporary contexts.

Recent scholarship on embodied knowledge clarifies how indigenous approaches resist colonial rankings that privilege writing over practice. Theyyam and Padayani exemplify knowledge systems that carry complex cultural information through physical transmission rather than textual records. John and

Jacob note how "Theyyam became a counter-reaction to the [temple] system" where lower castes achieve "temporary elevation" as deities (2015, p. 4). This speaks to how restored behaviors illuminate the ways these traditions maintain continuity while adapting to historical shifts.

Kerala's rituals address current social issues while staying connected to ancestral practices. A Theyyam performer possessed by spirit might call out modern disputes through ancient oracular speech, blending historical wisdom with present needs. Postcolonial analysis requires care here—avoiding romanticized views of local practices even while challenging colonial knowledge hierarchies. Kerala rituals encode their own power structures, particularly around caste and gender, that demand straightforward critique alongside respect for their genuine intellectual sophistication. The reality of "caste inequalities... institutionalized systemic violence against lower castes" [5] cannot be glossed over.

Contemporary documentation, educational use, and policy appropriation operate as constitutive processes rather than external forces, reshaping traditional knowledge from within. Aftermath analysis reveals that institutional interventions don't simply preserve or study traditional practices—they actively transform meaning and social function. Digital collections, museum displays, and classroom materials create preferred versions of tradition while marginalizing others. When "Land reforms... population density... turned groves into temples" [4] this distanced Theyyam from living practice in fundamental ways. UNESCO designations, government folklore programs, and academic projects often reduce dynamic practices to historical artifacts rather than recognizing them as contemporary knowledge tools.

Understanding these dynamics becomes essential for developing ethical approaches to traditional knowledge integration. Theyyam and Padayani embody sophisticated pedagogical models that challenge Western educational frameworks built on linear timelines, individual achievement, and separation between mind and experience. They demonstrate relational epistemologies where understanding emerges through connections between people, environment, and cosmos. The story of how "Kuttichathan... broke all caste boundaries... fought for lower caste peasants" [3] through embodied resistance exemplifies this approach.

Guru-shishya transmission bypasses rigid scheduling, allowing apprentices to absorb knowledge through sustained proximity rather than structured lessons. Craft production integrates technical expertise with spiritual preparation, challenging mind-body divisions that separate intellectual from manual work. Community participation in performance events creates collective learning experiences that value social cohesion alongside individual skill development. These pedagogical innovations offer genuine alternatives to individualistic educational models, suggesting possibilities for more connected, holistic approaches to understanding.

3. Proto-Performance: Embodied Pedagogies and Restored Behaviors

The hereditary transmission systems that underlie Theyyam and Padayani represent embodied knowledge operating below conscious reflection yet guiding skilled action with remarkable precision. John and Jacob observe how "Theyyam performers... belong to marginalised communities" like Malayan and Vannan who gain "exclusive right to perform" through family lineages (2015, p. 5). This points to something important about how knowledge gets preserved and transmitted in North Kerala's Theyyam communities.

Children begin absorbing performance knowledge through gradual apprenticeship within communities of practice. Learning becomes an integral part of generative social practice rather than separate educational activity. This apprenticeship model creates what Bourdieu would recognize as embodied cultural capital—dispositions inscribed through repeated practice that eventually become second nature. Unlike formal educational settings where knowledge transfers through cognitive instruction, guru-shishya transmission operates through sustained proximity. Cultural memory literally embeds in bodies through mimetic absorption.

Children observe subtle changes in breath, posture, and voice that signal divine presence. They learn to read these transformative indicators through prolonged exposure rather than formal instruction. The temporal dimensions of this transmission resist Western pedagogical frameworks that emphasize measurable progress and standardized outcomes. Consider that "Preparation takes 11 to 36 hours" for costumes plus "4–5 hours face painting" on performance day [6] Traditional mask-making apprenticeships typically span twenty years: initial observation periods, extended practice under guidance, eventual development of personal artistic approaches.

Such extended learning trajectories create what anthropologists call dwelling perspectives—practitioners develop intimate knowledge through long-term environmental engagement rather than detached observation. Material production during proto-performance phases reveals sophisticated integration of technical skill with spiritual preparation that challenges Western separations between manual labor and intellectual knowledge. Mekhana notes how "Costumes depend on networks of specialists: metalworkers... textile experts... herbalists" creating distributed knowledge (2025, p. 15).

Creating Padayani kolams (masks) from areca nut sheaths involves complex processes spanning months. Selecting palm fronds during specific lunar phases, treating materials with traditional preservatives, constructing elaborate forms that balance aesthetic beauty with performer mobility and audience visibility. This perspective recognizes craftsmanship as embodying dedicated excellence while acknowledging that technique involves thinking and feeling working together. Each mask carries visual representation plus accumulated spiritual energy through its creation process. Intentions and consciousness during construction directly affect the object's capacity to hold divine presence during performance.

The epistemological dimensions of craft labor extend beyond individual skill development to community knowledge preservation. Theyyam costume creation requires collaborative networks spanning multiple specialist roles: metal workers creating ritual ornaments, textile artists preparing sacred garments,

herbalists providing natural pigments. This distributed knowledge system demonstrates collaborative survival through interdependent relationships that maintain cultural resilience through shared expertise.

Traditional hierarchies structure access to ritual knowledge in ways that demand careful critical analysis. John and Jacob note how "Lower-caste untouchables... enter Brahmin houses during Theyyam" despite daily exclusion (2015, p. 4). Certain Theyyam forms remain restricted to specific caste communities, particularly those involving Brahmanical deities where performance rights connect to hereditary temple service obligations. Yet performance contexts often invert these hierarchies through temporary dissolution of social rankings during liminal ritual phases. Robert and Shah document how "Dalit performers... challenge upper-caste authority" in trance states (2024, p. 117).

The possessed Theyyam performer, regardless of caste background, assumes divine authority that enables direct critique of community power structures. Contemporary ethnographic research documents instances where performers in divine states publicly challenge audience members about social injustices, creating spaces of resistance within hegemonic structures. Navya describes how "Kuttichathan... killed bull, drank blood... fought lower caste peasants' rights" (2020, p. 3), encoding resistance narratives within ritual practice. This dynamic tension between hereditary restriction and ritual inversion reveals how traditional knowledge systems encode both oppressive hierarchies and mechanisms for their critique.

Urbanization, formal education, and digital media now create hybrid learning environments that challenge traditional transmission methods while generating innovative pedagogical possibilities. John and Jacob observe that "New generation... low self-esteem from dancer parents" pushes youth away from tradition (2015, p. 10). Many practitioner families must navigate between maintaining hereditary knowledge and ensuring children's access to mainstream educational opportunities.

YouTube channels featuring Theyyam tutorials represent particularly complex transformation sites. While enabling wider knowledge access, digital platforms risk decontextualizing sacred practices from their community embeddings. The fact that "Groves turned to temples restricted Dalit access" [4] further erodes traditional transmission contexts. Traditional practitioners acknowledge that while technology aids preservation, digital learning cannot replace the subtle energetic transmissions that occur through direct guru-disciple relationships.

4. Performance: Orality, Embodiment, and Communitas

During Theyyam performances, possessed performers engage in spontaneous dialogue with community members about contemporary disputes: land conflicts, family tensions, political grievances. They address each concern through traditional oracular frameworks while improvising responses to unprecedented circumstances. Robert and Shah describe how "The performer... communicates through symbolic gestures known as kalaasams... reassures and consoles devotees" (2024, p. 111). The divine persona simultaneously embodies ancient mythic narratives while addressing present realities, generating significance that emerges through encounter rather than authorial intention.

Padayani performances function similarly as living texts where cosmic narratives intersect with local concerns. "Theyyam... offers blessings for a prosperous society" through enacted resolutions [4] The battle sequences between divine and demonic forces provide metaphorical frameworks for understanding social conflicts, ecological disasters, and moral dilemmas facing contemporary communities. Each performance adapts the same mythic framework to address changing community needs while maintaining connection to eternal patterns.

What strikes me about Padayani performances is how they integrate oral narratives with percussive accompaniment that creates what ethnomusicologists call humanly organized sound—acoustic information that carries cultural meaning beyond linguistic content. Mathew and Pandya note how "High-pitched drums, music, songs, and symbolic actions... provide an ambience of devotional sacredness" (2021, p. 5). The rhythmic patterns accompanying mask dances encode seasonal agricultural cycles, monsoon timing, and ecological relationships that constitute traditional environmental knowledge.

These embodied temporal patterns teach agricultural timing and flood preparation through bodily learning that exceeds cognitive memorization. The elaborate costumes and face painting involved in both traditions function as material extensions of human agency that enable communication with supernatural forces. Robert and Shah observe how the "Performer... gradually taken over by the deity... identifies himself as God in the mirror" (2024, p. 111), marking this transformation process. Visual transformation enables performers and audiences to access experiential knowledge unavailable through ordinary consciousness. Through makeup and costume application, individual limitations dissolve to allow divine wisdom to emerge through transformed consciousness.

I've noticed that some practitioners develop innovative hybrid approaches that maintain spiritual integrity while engaging contemporary contexts. Mekhana argues that "Theyyam... creates a radical space for social inversion" (2025, p. 15), bridging tradition and modernity in interesting ways. Several artists now create educational workshops for urban audiences that introduce traditional knowledge systems without appropriating sacred elements. This demonstrates possibilities for respectful cultural translation across different social contexts. Mathew and Pandya suggest that "Performance... encodes repressed emotions invoking factual reality" through communal participation (2021, p. 2).

The orality-embodiment nexus in these performances reveals sophisticated epistemological frameworks operating through what oral historians call formulaic expression—patterned linguistic structures that enable accurate transmission across generations while allowing contextual adaptation. Theyyam thottams (invocational songs) encode genealogical histories, territorial boundaries, and ritual protocols through rhythmic verses that performers memorize through embodied repetition rather than textual study.

These oral narratives function as what Vansina calls floating memories—historical accounts that adapt to present circumstances while maintaining core structural elements. During Theyyam performances, genealogical recitations might emphasize different ancestral lineages depending on contemporary

political alliances or land disputes. This demonstrates how oral tradition serves present communities rather than preserving static historical truth.

The dialogic elements of these performances create what Levinas theorizes as face-to-face encounter—ethical relationships generated through direct communication rather than mediated representation. When possessed performers address audience members directly, they create immediate accountability relationships that transcend hierarchical social structures. These oracular interactions demonstrate governance principles based on direct community dialogue rather than administrative bureaucracy.

5. Aftermath: Institutional Reframing and Knowledge Transformation

Contemporary digital documentation projects represent complex aftermath processes that simultaneously preserve and transform traditional knowledge systems. Robert and Shah note how "Groves... turned into temples restricted Dalits from entering" (2024, p. 118), eroding traditional transmission contexts in fundamental ways. Multimedia archives create new forms of cultural memory while potentially fixing fluid performance traditions into static representations.

The Kerala Folklore Academy's digital initiatives exemplify these tensions perfectly. Extensive video documentation enables broader access while raising serious questions about how archival selection processes privilege certain interpretations over others. Interactive digital platforms allow users to explore performance elements in unprecedented detail, creating educational opportunities unavailable through traditional transmission methods. Yet these technological affordances risk reducing complex experiential knowledge to mere visual consumption.

John and Jacob observe that the "New generation... introduced in universities" yet faces "conflict between old/new schools" (2015, p. 12). Digital archives often emphasize spectacular performance moments while marginalizing the extensive proto-performance preparations that encode essential cultural knowledge. Community-controlled digital initiatives represent more promising approaches to ethical documentation.

Robert and Shah point out how "YouTube Theyyam tutorials... wider access but risk decontextualizing" sacred elements (2024, p. 114). Several practitioner groups now create their own YouTube channels and social media content, maintaining authority over representation while engaging contemporary media platforms. These grassroots digital projects demonstrate possibilities for technology use that strengthens rather than appropriates traditional knowledge systems.

The integration of Theyyam and Padayani elements into formal educational curricula represents particularly complex aftermath processes requiring careful critical analysis. The observation that "NEP 2020... indigenous knowledge integration" risks "cultural gentrification" without community control [7] gets to the heart of current challenges. NEP 2020's mandate for Indian Knowledge Systems integration has generated numerous pilot programs incorporating traditional performance elements into school and university curricula.

These educational applications often extract performative techniques from their sacred contexts, creating what might be called cultural gentrification of indigenous knowledge. Several Kerala universities now offer courses on traditional performance forms that emphasize historical and aesthetic dimensions while minimizing spiritual and community embeddings. Such academic treatment risks transforming living knowledge systems into objects of study rather than ongoing cultural practices.

The reality that "Health insurance... social security lacking for Theyyam artists" [6] despite increasing institutionalization reveals deeper contradictions. Institutional frameworks of formal education—with their emphasis on individual assessment, standardized curricula, and cognitive learning—prove fundamentally incompatible with traditional pedagogical approaches emphasizing community participation, embodied transmission, and spiritual formation.

More promising educational initiatives prioritize community partnership and practitioner authority. Some schools invite traditional masters to teach performance elements while maintaining connections to their cultural contexts. These collaborative approaches demonstrate possibilities for educational integration that enriches rather than appropriates traditional knowledge. John and Jacob suggest that "tourism promotion... economic empowerment" requires "welfare funds" (2015, p. 14).

Government cultural policies increasingly frame traditional practices as resources for tourism development and national cultural branding. John and Jacob note how "Kerala Tourism... commodifying sacred traditions" through standardization (2015, p. 11). The Kerala Tourism Department's promotion of Theyyam and Padayani performances creates economic opportunities for practitioner communities while potentially commodifying sacred traditions. State folklore preservation schemes provide financial support for traditional artists but often require standardization of performance elements that conflicts with the improvisational flexibility essential to these traditions.

UNESCO heritage designation processes represent particularly complex policy aftermaths. While international recognition provides protection against cultural erosion, nomination requirements often impose external frameworks for understanding traditional practices that may conflict with community perspectives. Robert and Shah observe how "Land reforms... monetary demand destroyed groves" (2024, p. 118), formalizing rituals in ways that distance them from lived practice. The emphasis on authenticity preservation can ironically freeze traditions that maintain vitality through ongoing adaptation.

Despite institutional pressures, practitioner communities demonstrate remarkable agency in navigating contemporary aftermath processes. John and Jacob document how "Theyyam Artists Association advocates performer rights" (2015, p. 13) while establishing protocols for respectful documentation. Many traditional families develop strategic approaches to cultural sharing that maintain sacred protocols while engaging economic opportunities.

Some performers create distinct versions of their practices for different contexts. They maintain full traditional forms for community celebrations while developing modified presentations for tourism and educational purposes. Community organizations increasingly assert collective authority over cultural

representation. The Theyyam Performers Association of North Kerala advocates for performer rights while establishing protocols for respectful cultural documentation. Such grassroots initiatives demonstrate possibilities for community-controlled engagement with contemporary institutions.

The emergence of younger practitioners who combine traditional training with contemporary education creates hybrid knowledge bearers capable of navigating multiple cultural systems. These cultural translators often become crucial mediators between traditional communities and external institutions, developing innovative approaches to cultural preservation that maintain authenticity while enabling adaptation. This work counters "chronic ill health... occupational hazards" through organized advocacy [6] .

My research acknowledges its own participation in aftermath processes that inevitably reshape traditional knowledge systems. Academic documentation, policy recommendations, and educational applications all constitute forms of institutional intervention that transform the cultural phenomena they purport to study. Reflexive methodology requires transparent acknowledgment of how scholarly representation participates in the cultural commodification it seeks to critique.

Collaborative research approaches that prioritize community partnership and shared ownership of findings offer possibilities for more ethical academic engagement. This study employs ongoing consultation with practitioner communities about representation, shares research materials with participants, and commits to supporting community cultural initiatives through academic resources and advocacy. The goal becomes conscious participation in aftermath processes that strengthen rather than exploit traditional knowledge systems, not neutral documentation.

6. Epistemological Synthesis and Contemporary Applications

Analysis across Schechner's three phases reveals that Theyyam and Padayani encode sophisticated epistemological frameworks integrating embodied transmission, participatory meaning-making, and adaptive institutionalization. Mathew and Pandya note that "Theyyam... provides therapeutic process" through holistic integration [8–9] These traditions demonstrate holistic knowledge systems where learning involves the total person.

Proto-performance phases establish experiential pedagogies emphasizing long-term mentorship over cognitive instruction. Performance phases generate collective knowledge through culturally dense meaning-making that emerges through shared symbolic action. Aftermath processes reveal adaptive mechanisms enabling tradition continuity while accommodating historical transformation.

This integrated model challenges Western epistemological assumptions privileging individual cognition over collective embodiment, linear progression over cyclical repetition, and textual authority over experiential knowledge. The traditions demonstrate alternative frameworks where knowledge emerges through relational encounter rather than objective study, creating relationships that recognize knowledge

as fundamentally dialogical. Mathew and Pandya observe that "Cultural identity... transnational through Theyyam diaspora" shows adaptive continuity [10–11].

These epistemological frameworks suggest specific applications for formal curricula that could enhance rather than replace contemporary educational approaches. John and Jacob point out that "Dalit art forms... economic empowerment through tourism" requires "welfare schemes, insurance" (2015, p. 14). Traditional guru-shishya mentorship models offer alternatives to standardized classroom instruction, particularly for experiential learning in arts, crafts, and environmental studies.

Apprenticeship structures embedded in proto-performance phases could inform project-based learning approaches that integrate technical skill development with ethical formation and community engagement. The *communitas*-generating capacity of performance phases suggests possibilities for collaborative learning environments that transcend competitive individual assessment models. The emphasis on learning by doing finds sophisticated expression in traditional pedagogies where knowledge emerges through participation rather than consumption.

Such approaches could particularly benefit students marginalized by exclusively cognitive educational models. Ethical integration requires recognizing practitioner communities as knowledge holders rather than heritage resources. John and Jacob document how "Practitioners... establish protocols for documentation" through associations (2015, p. 13). Policy frameworks must establish community intellectual property rights, ensure practitioner participation in documentation decisions, and create revenue-sharing mechanisms for cultural tourism and educational applications.

Indigenous peoples need legal tools that can protect their cultural heritage from appropriation while allowing for natural evolution of tradition. Long-term aftermath studies remain essential for understanding how contemporary interventions reshape traditional knowledge systems over extended periods. Comparative analysis with other Kerala traditions could reveal regional epistemological patterns while respecting tradition-specific protocols.

7. Conclusion

This analysis of Theyyam and Padayani as performance texts reveals sophisticated indigenous epistemological systems that challenge dominant frameworks privileging textual over embodied knowledge. Through systematic application of Schechner's three-phase methodology, these Kerala ritual traditions emerge not as folkloric curiosities but as complex knowledge systems encoding alternative pedagogical models with significant contemporary relevance.

Proto-performance analysis illuminates how traditional guru-shishya transmission creates embodied cultural capital through sustained apprenticeship relationships that resist commodification into standardized educational formats. Performance analysis reveals how *communitas*-generating ritual events create collective knowledge that transcends individual cognition while maintaining connection to sacred protocols. Aftermath analysis demonstrates how institutional recognition, digital documentation,

and educational appropriation function as constitutive rather than external processes that actively reshape traditional epistemologies.

These findings carry significant implications for contemporary policy initiatives seeking to integrate indigenous knowledge into formal educational and cultural development frameworks. Rather than extractive appropriation that reduces traditional practices to heritage resources, ethical integration requires recognizing practitioner communities as sophisticated knowledge holders whose epistemological innovations offer alternatives to dominant educational and development models.

My research contributes to broader decolonial scholarship by demonstrating methodological approaches that illuminate indigenous knowledge complexity while maintaining reflexive awareness of how academic representation participates in the institutional transformation of traditional practices. By prioritizing community collaboration and shared ownership of research outcomes, this study models possibilities for academic engagement that strengthens rather than exploits indigenous knowledge systems.

Future research must continue developing long-term aftermath studies that track how contemporary interventions reshape traditional knowledge across extended temporal periods. Comparative analysis with other global indigenous performance traditions could reveal universal principles within culturally specific practices while respecting the irreducible specificities that make each tradition valuable on its own terms.

Ultimately, this analysis demonstrates that Kerala's ritual performance traditions encode sophisticated alternatives to dominant knowledge systems that deserve recognition equivalent to formal academic disciplines. These epistemological innovations offer crucial resources for developing more inclusive, embodied, and community-centered approaches to education and cultural development that could benefit contemporary society while respecting the communities that maintain these ancient wisdom traditions.

Declarations

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