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Chapter Four

Visuality and Space: The Politics of Seeing and Being

Bharani is a haven of aesthetes as it is primarily a festival of color, drama, and extravagance. Accentuating this fact, we see hundreds of photographers and media persons; professionals, and amateurs, finding their way through the bustling crowd to transfer and record these exotic visions. People share the images and videos of *bharanikkar* ("pilgrims in Bharani") singing ribald songs captured on their mobile phones and hence after each Bharani festival we get loads of images and videos uploaded by the spectators. Thus, Bharani always stays 'live' in popular media through visuals and videos shared in blogs, social platforms as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, and *WhatsApp*. Each of these genres does different kinds of performance with their audience as the framework shifts in each case.

Visuality

Martin Jay hails vision as "the master sense of the modern era" (15) as human experience is becoming increasingly visualized. Visual technology may mean any method adopted to enhance natural vision. With the emergence of visual culture, 'picture theory' was developed by W. J. T Mitchell that adopts a pictorial, rather than textual, view of the world (10). In Mitchell's view, picture theory stems from "the realization that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that 'visual experience' or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable in the model of textuality" (Mirzoeff, *How* 16).

This notion places vision on an equal pedestal of speech against the western notion of the superiority of spoken word and proclaims vision as a diverse discourse that must be studied using new tools of reference.

To begin with, military and police power has proven time and again to be necessary but not sufficient to create and maintain an empire. Rather, empires must employ a multitude of strategies to expand and survive, one of the most important of which is state-sanctioned public spectacles, ceremonies, and rituals (Coben 2). The primary feature of the spectacle is gatherings centered on the theatrical performance of a certain scale in clear spatial and temporal frames, in which participants witness and sense the presence of others and share a certain experience (MacAloon 246). According to MacAloon, the defining features of spectacle include the primacy of visual sensory; its certain size and grandeur; the institutionalization of distinct roles of actors and audience; its dynamic form, demanding movement and action; and participation by choice as opposed to duty as in the case of ritual (30). Thus, spectacles have deeper functions to play than circulating frivolities, and rather than being accidental outgrowths they are meticulously devised by the society to meet its ends.

Further, the hierarchy of the senses within the western culture over the past few centuries has placed the visual at the top (Rorty 198). Thus, vision emerged powerful, "reduced the relative power of the oral/aural sense and enhanced the written word, as well as pictures and maps" (Hibbitts 255) and led to the popular belief that to be real, a thing must be visible (McLuhan 238). Simmel considers 'eye-contact' as the most direct and 'purest' interaction as it "produces extraordinary moments of intimacy." The look is returned, and this results from the expressive meaning of the face. What we see in the

person is the lasting part of them, "the history of their life and … the timeless dowry of nature." By contrast, the ear and the nose do not reciprocate – they only take but do not give. Second, Simmel notes that only the visual sense enables possession and property; while that which we hear is already past and provides no property to possess (Frisby and Featherstone 116). The visual sense enables people to take possession, not only of other people but also of diverse environments. It enables the world to be controlled at a distance, combining detachment and mastery. This power of possession is best seen in the development of photography. Photography is thus a particularly powerful signifying practice that reproduces a dominant set of images and, at the very same time, conceals its constructed character (Urry, "City" 390). Photographic practices reinforce the dominance of the visual gaze, including that of the male over the bodyscape of women within the city. Luce Irigaray argues that for women, "investment in the look is not as privileged as in men" (qtd. in Urry, "City" 390). John Urry assumes that the visual sense is increasingly getting mediatized, as it shifts from the printing press to electronic modes of representation. By the nineteenth century, there occurred a "separation of the senses" through which visual experience began to be quantified and homogenized. He notes that "the city is both fascinated with and hugely denigrates, the visual." Our cities have become more a spectacle to be consumed, but mere sightseeing is ridiculed as being superficial ("City" 390). Presumably, in the posthuman condition, everything from the human body to its enterprises is ruthlessly commodified, reducing humans to the state of being an accessory.

Hal Foster makes a distinction between vision and visuality and posits that "Although vision suggests sight as a physical operation, and visuality sight as a social

fact, the two are not opposed as nature is to culture: vision is social and historical too, and visuality involves the body and the psyche" (ix). Thus, both vision and visuality can be approached as a biological as well as a sociological entity, or to be precise as a 'culture' in itself. Nicholas Mirzoeff proposes that visual culture will not sit comfortably in already existing university structures. It is part of an emerging body of post-disciplinary academic endeavors from cultural studies, gay and lesbian studies, to African-American studies, and so on. Thus, visual culture can be called as "a tactic, not an academic discipline." Visual culture is not only about taking pictures, it deals with visualizing experience, Mirzoeff argues. It is a fluid interpretive structure, centered on understanding the response to visual media of both individuals and groups (*Visual* 4). Thus, it is not a dogmatic narrow linear progression, but extensive, duly centered on the experience of both visual and visualized.

Mirzoeff suggests that visual culture is not simply the total amount of what has been made to be seen, such as paintings or films. It also involves what is invisible or kept out of sight. Seeing is actually a system of sensory feedback from the whole body, not just the eyes. Our bodies are now extensions of data networks, clicking, linking, and taking selfies. "Seeing is not believing. It is something we do, a kind of performance. What this performance is to everyday life, visualizing is to war. Hence, our bodies are now in the network and the world at the same time" (Mirzoeff, *Right* 61). Today it is impossible to talk about the development of the audio-visual without also talking about the development of virtual imagery and its influence on human behavior, or without pointing to the new industrialization of vision, to the growth of a veritable market in synthetic perception and all the ethical questions this entails (Virilio 36). So the act of

seeing is an act that precedes action, a kind of pre-action. But vision is more than the

ability to see and the bodily sense of sight. Vision's meaning incorporates imagination:

the ability to create images in the mind's eye, which exceeds in various ways those

registered on the retina of the physical eye by light from the external world. Vision has a

creative capacity that can transcend both space and time: it can denote foreseeing as well

as seeing (Mirzoeff, *Visual* 15). In short, seeing is a very complex and interactive

process. It does not, in fact, happen at a single place in the brain but occur in a rapid

series of back-and-forth exchanges. Further, this interactivity between the visual zones of

the brain and their associated areas happens at a series of ten to fourteen hierarchical

levels. That is to say, seeing is not a definitive judgment but a process of mental analysis

that goes backward and forward between different areas of the brain. It takes a brain to

see, not just a pair of eyes (Mirzoeff, *Visual* 61). Terms such as paranoia, narcissism, and

exhibitionism suggest how powerfully visual experience, both directed and received, can

be tied to our psychological processes (M. Jay 30). Thus, vision involves a complex

series of physiological processes coupled with cognitive psychological responses drawing

from the repository of memory, experience, and subjective emotions.

Jay denies the existence of a universal visual experience as vision is intrinsically

linked to language. Different people talk different languages. Hence, there can be

variations in visual experience as well (9). For Plato, vision seems to have meant only

that of the inner eye of the mind. He considered reliance on two eyes as partial, we see

through the eyes, he insisted, not with them. The celebrated myth of the cave, in which

the fire is substituted for the sun as the source of light too blinding to be faced directly,

suggests his suspicions of the illusions of sense perception. From this distrust followed

Plato's notorious hostility to the mimetic arts (M. Jay 27). Certainly, visuality can be a threatening phenomenon at times. We are always under surveillance, be it the CCTV cameras or mobile cameras, and they have emerged as the new mode of power in the present era. It is argued that we live in a "surveillance society," even when we are apparently roaming freely through a shopping center or the countryside (Lyon 94). Additionally, Mirzoeff feels that the visual is essentially 'pornographic' as it promotes mindless fascination. He argues that a drawing of a tree is accepted by its viewers as a tree not because of its being real, but they accept it as a representation of a tree. These representations or associations can change over time. Thus, in his words, "seeing is not believing but interpreting" (*Introduction* 15). Adopting a term from Longinus, he uses the word sublime to denote the pleasurable experience in the representation of that which would be painful or terrifying in reality, leading to a realization of the limits of the human and of the powers of nature.

Mirzoeff reflects that the two most important psychoanalytic theories of looking, namely fetishism and the gaze rely on the viewer's misrecognition of what he or she sees (especially he) (*Visual* 167). Sigmund Freud argued that numerous men could only achieve sexual gratification through a specific material object that he called the fetish object, such as fur or velvet which is always a "penis substitute." Another important concept put forward by Freud concerning sexual identity is gaze. The phrase 'gaze' is most often associated with the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey who is keen on the 'politics of images' and claims that the gaze of classic narrative cinema is masculine and active, while the feminine becomes a passive object to be looked at. In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and

passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly (Mulvey 19). She posits that "women are displayed for men as figures in an amazing masquerade, which expresses a strange male underworld of fear and desire" (8). The gaze is not just a look or a glance. It is a means of constituting the identity of the gazer by distinguishing her or him from that which is gazed at. Lacan placed the gaze at the center of the formation of the ego in his famed Mirror Stage. In Lacan's analysis, there is no existence that is not fetishistic (Mirzoeff *Visual* 103). Likewise, feminists have argued that the concentration upon the visual sense over-emphasizes appearance, image, and surface. Irigaray argues that in western cultures "the preponderance of the look over the smell, taste, touch, and hearing has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations. The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality" (qtd. in Urry, "Sensing" 40). This emphasis upon the visual reduces the body to the surface, marginalizes the multiple sensuousnesses of the body, and impoverishes the relationship of the body to its environment. And at the same time, the visual over-emphasizes masculinist efforts to exert mastery over the female body, particularly through the voyeurism affected via the pornographic picture. Seemingly, feminists viewed vision as misogynistic and hence oppressing. These notions throw light on the sexual dimension of vision and its relative importance in constituting or rather determining one's identity.

After the 'visual turn,' the claim about the naturalness of visual images is no more heard, the image began to be cataloged along with text, both of which are subject to decoding and interpreting to arrive at the original meaning. The human eye has its powers as well as its limitations. Human vision can see light waves that are only a fraction of the

total spectrum, in fact, less than one percent with such phenomena as ultraviolet light, visible to other species, excluded (M. Jay 22). In addition, the human eye has a blind spot where the optic nerve connects with the retina. Though the vision of the other eye compensates for it, the scholars feel the blind spot as a metaphoric 'hole' in vision. Thus, instead of trusting in the integrity of the visual, we now comfortably talk about 'the hermeneutics of seeing,' 'iconic utterances,' 'the rhetoric of images,' 'imagistic signifiers,' 'visual narratives,' 'the language of films' (Mitchell 19) implying that rather than taking the vision for granted, one has to interpret and deconstruct it to bring forth the underlying truth.

Now, moving to the 'liveness' of visuality, Nicholas Mirzoeff begins his book *Introduction to Visual Culture* by stating, "Modern life takes place on screen" (1). Again, Philip Auslander questions Herbert Blau's claim that "a performance combining live bodies and filmed images can produce a 'confusion of realms.' Such an approach presupposes that live and recorded images belong to different realms" (*Performance* 1). Peggy Phelan argued that "performance's only life is in the present," which was questioned by Amelia Jones who insisted that: "the body art event needs the photograph to confirm it's having happened." Later Philip Auslander weighed in claiming that: "the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such" (*Performance* 1). This quality of liveness is at the heart of performance studies as well. It tends to approach actions as behaviors and experiences and is thereby concerned with the notion of presence or absence.

In today's technical world the mediated experience is trying to give an intimate primary sensibility. We constantly shift between the roles of performers and spectators in

this mediatized environment. Esther J. Langdon states that performance studies is concerned with 'experience' and it brings experience to the fore- "an intensified, public, momentary, and spontaneous kind of experience" (qtd. in Newton 27). There is an unmistakable line of progression between spectacle, theatre, and performance. However, the total feel of the Bharani fest cannot be reproduced through any audio or video documentation of the event. The real essence of the life of this multitude is missing from any of the videos seen. The very structure of the event seems to be the underlying cause of its non-transferability. It is vibrant and ever-changing. Non-uniformity is seen in and out of this festival and what happens in one corner is markedly different from the other corner.

Fig. 4. 1. Advertisement given by a chief oracle in newspaper signaling *Bharani Purappadu*. *Mathrubhumi* [Thrissur], 06 Apr. 2019, pp. 04. epaper.mathrubhumi.com/. Accessed 08 Mar. 2019.

Each person or group has a subjective way of participating in the event though they follow the generally accepted form of the festival. Personal variations and attitudes

lend freshness and vitality to the whole of the performance occurring at the festival. Though much of the festival has been commercialized, it still struggles to maintain its rustic charm. Technological innovations have significantly changed the 'behavior' of the Bharani festival. Everyone competes to shoot the events going on there. Also, some groups have arranged for a personal videographer to exclusively shoot their movements. Recently, the oracles are seen advertising in leading newspapers about their *Bharani Purappadu* ("the ceremony of leaving their native place to Kodungallur during Bharani") along with their images (see fig. 4. 1). The economic security and the betterment of their living standards get reflected here.

This subaltern festival is rapidly evolving each year, changing its color and persona. Each space is different from others and the experience we gather from them can never be the same. New additions are incorporated into the visual narrative that is being told and performed in this fest. Each of the spectator and the participants inadvertently get involved in the making of this narrative which has been the practice for ages. Jacques Derrida cites in *Limited Inc,* "Each time we see a thing it is same but different" (45). Similarly, though the narrative that forms the basis of this festival is the same, its manifestations differ and each year something is added to or deleted from it, making it novel for the spectators. This flexibility and 'liveness' propels its continuity in this changing world. To its interested spectators, the Bharani festival has many stories in its store, stories that contain hushed up memories and histories. One can feel content by the fascinating narrative that it offers to the plain eye. It is the story of the evil King Darika and how Goddess Kali defeated him in a breath-taking war. This victory of goodness

over evil is celebrated through this festival; from day one to the last, this narrative is being told visually.

Notably, women's body is not objectified; rather it is not a festival in which the vision dominates, reducing the bodies to materiality. Every dimension of the human body is celebrated, and the songs accompanied by the careless rhythmic gait of the body conceive an air of sensuality.

Fig. 4. 2. Jayan, Nimisha K. Oracle after incision of forehead; turmeric applied on the wounds. 28 Mar. 2017. *Private collection.*

Bharani is a visual festival enticing eyes and minds. The very beginning of the festival is marked by the raising of flags. These flags are colorful, with intermittent patterns of bright colors, figures symbolizing demons, thus bringing the impression of a battlefield. Prayer flags are an important aspect of Tibetan culture. Prayer flags act as a reminder of Buddha's preachings-promoting peace, harmony, and joy. It originated before the advent of Buddhism in Tibet, evolving through the integration of Buddhist

practices from India with the pre-Buddhist Bon Shamanism. The most followed pattern

of these flags is the *lung-ta* horizontal line of symbols, *mantras* printed on to five

different colored clothes- blue, white, red, green, and yellow. These colors represent the

five elements- sky, clouds, fire, water (wood), and earth. There are also vertical flags

called *darchen*, made of colored or white cloth (Barker 15). Probably, the prayer flags

hung in Kodungallur temple is remnant of Buddhist establishments in Kodungallur.

Another ritual of color is *Kozhikallu Moodal*. The red color is the prominent color of the

festival; red representing blood, violence, and sacrifice. Heaps of red-colored clothes are

placed on the *kozhikallu*, creating an impression of a pool of blood. Red is the color of

the attire of the participants, most of the faces are covered with blood enhancing the

mood of the ambiance (see fig. 4. 2).

Fig. 4. 3. Jayan, Nimisha K. *Velavaravu* performance staged in temple premises during

Bharani. 20 Mar. 2018. *Private collection.*

Also, *Teyyam* with exotic makeup and costumes is terrifying and compelling at

the same time. It is a subaltern art form by the Velan community playing out the Kali-

Darika battle. Adding to it is the presence of virtually appealing performances as

Velavaravu (see fig. 4. 3), *Mudiyettam*, figures of bulls and horses, and huge effigies of mythical characters (see fig. 4. 4).

Hinduism is replete with such a visual representation of gods and goddesses. Sthaneshwar Timalsina suggests that constructing and worshipping images in Hinduism rests on cultivating a cognitive faculty of skillful imagination or visualization. Without imagination, the idols become mere material objects. There is considerable evidence to argue that image worship is a practice that originated in Buddhism (50). With the emergence of *Smarta* and *Tantric* Hinduism, image worship became a central part of Hindu worship (Timalsina 51). He notes that in India, the most important terms used to denote image is *murti, bimba, vigraha, akriti, and pratima. Murti* not only describes an image but also identifies the process of providing immanence to the transcendent; in its imagination, image and their relation to the transcendent are interconnected. *Bimba* corresponds to the English term 'image' and refers to the reflection or the mirror image of the absolute (Timalsina 54). They are manifest in multifarious forms reflecting the identity of the worshipper. Thus, the image is variable according to the person worshipping the goddess. Notably, other major religions of India as Islam and Christianity employ minimalist usage of images in worship. In Islam, visible representation of the almighty or any breathing entity is inappropriate as this religion is against any kind of idol worship. Thus, we garner the power of images in representing the visualized. In Hinduism, gods and goddesses are represented either as anthropomorphic figures or an abstract matter symbolizing the presence of divine power. Diana L. Eck identities two types of images in Hindu worship; iconic and aniconic. The iconic image is 'representational' whereas aniconic images are 'symbolic forms' (42).

The Vedic ritual tradition of Aryans was aniconic as there is no evidence of images or

permanent temples or sanctuaries (Eck 43). Iconic images appeared only later. The

tradition of sculptural representations of the gods served both "theological and narrative

functions." These images were 'visual theologies,' which are to be 'read' by the devotees.

The combination and juxtaposition of gestures and emblems express the ambiguities, the

tensions, and paradoxes of the deity worship. Goddess Kali simultaneously wears a gory

garland of skulls and gestures her procreation. This image world of India can be aptly

called "visible thought" (Eck 51). The disfigured body of the deity is believed to severe

the devotees' identification with the body culminating in the destruction of one's ego.

They are also visual scriptures or visual narratives as many myths are embedded in the

image.

Fig. 4. 4. Jayan, Nimisha K. A performer donning the form of Bhadrakali. 29 Mar. 2017.

Private collection.

As we have noted earlier, the *tantric* mode of worship used explicit *yoni* and *linga*

images, but later with Aryan cultural invasion and blight of British imperialism, and the

consequent ascending morale of the society, these figures were smoothened or carved out to fit into the acceptable realm. One pliable reason to frequent places of worship is that, while we gaze at these representations, we need to be gazed or be visible to the divine power. Thus, images are alive in the form of worship. In such worship, seeing a deity requires a recalling of memory associated with the myths of the respective deities. The active gaze (visualizing) bridges the binaries of subject and object, and this singular awareness is the ultimate meaning, encompassing both the act of visualization and its object, an image. Thus, in Hindu image-worship, external objects and human imagination collaborate in creating realities. Creating an image in the mental space, derived from external input becomes central to visualization (Timalsina 57). This image may be relative, nonetheless, it limit itself to the existing practices and concepts. In this practice, even *mantras* or hymns produce images in the minds of the listener. This is evident in Bharani songs, where the listeners attend to a detailed description of the goddess's body from head to toe, which absolutely culminates in the worshipper's mental construction of the image of the goddess. For the believer, the deity images are real, as they visualize them as such. The visible aspect of a god need not be a permanent idol but can be an image as represented in a transient form as *kalam* ("floral paintings with powder"). Gilles Tarabout notes that ritual articulates different registries of the god's visuality and iconic representation (10). The visual interaction of devotees with divine images in temples is the main component of Hindu worship. Thus, vision is an important act in worship, *darshan*, the auspicious vision warding off of *drishti*, the evil vision (5).

Cultures of viewing have a close relationship with cultures of reading and thinking. Art, spectacle, and performance are important aspects of viewing (Lovatt 10).

Foucault's panopticon offered a new perspective to vision, linking it to power. The gaze connotes an active subject versus a passive object. There is a 'male gaze' that reduces women to mere bodies to be consumed and an 'imperial gaze.' Foucault through his studies probes the questions as "How does the dominant look at the subaltern?" and "What happens when these looks are returned?" (Kaplan xviii). "Like everything in culture, looking relations are determined by history, tradition, power hierarchies, politics, economics... Looking is power as Foucault has shown" (Kaplan 4). In Kerala, where untouchability was practiced, the stigmatized groups were to flee away from the upper caste gaze; the mere seeing was pollution. However, in Bharani, obviously the look is returned. The 'polluting' bodies are moved into the center of the action, polluting the heretofore sacred spaces. The dominant view them with suspicion, disgust, and hatred and though the feeling is mutual, the festival offers the subaltern groups a space for the expression of these feelings. Feminist critics argue that the nature of representation is altered by the gender of performance and spectators, as well as by their sexual preference. Both gender and sexuality bring the dynamic of desire to play, informing the narrative's structure, the production's- 'look,' and the relationship between spectator and spectacle (Dolan 57). Bodies of participants corresponding to all sexes are adorned rendering them effeminate, negating the sexual gaze.

In Bharani, the gaze act as an instrument of power, the festival takes place under strict surveillance; the presence of policemen in large numbers in the festival ground validates this argument. Theatrical performances and spectacles in pre-modern societies have profound implications for the understanding of any society, particularly in terms of the integration of communities and the establishment and maintenance of asymmetrical

power relations, which are intricately intertwined with each other (Coben 22). Though not directly linked to Bharani, we see certain identifiable elements in Ramlila, a Ramayana based performance staged during the Dussehra festival in North India. The first obvious similarity between these festivals lies in the fact that these two fests in essence celebrate the triumph of good over evil. Ramlila is a celebration of the upper class sectors of the society whereas Bharani is a subaltern festival inadvertently celebrating and enforcing upper class values. In Ramlila performance, Maharaja is an indispensable factor as Lila cannot begin and end without the sacred presence of Maharaja. Maharaja is seen as the representative of Lord Siva and he acts as one of the characters of Ramlila. He interacts with Lord Rama as if he is the contemporary of Rama and thus enters into the performance. This situation is relatable to the power enjoyed by the royal head in Bharani. About Ramlila, Anuradha Kapur comments that "Here is a rare example of political power being buttressed by theatrical spectacle" (209). What appeals to the common man is the vivid spectacle and the entertainment it provides. The power relations and hierarchy it generates in the process are hidden by clever visual technicalities.

To conclude this section, since this social drama can have no tools available to aesthetic drama to reach out to its audience, it has to find its tools. In Bharani, each piece of this narrative is linked up in the minds of the spectator as a chain of events and thus it relies on the spectator's memory for its effectiveness. Thus, to each of them, Bharani can offer varying experiences. What is represented on the day of *Kaavutheendal* is the ancient war. To the modern minds, war is a distant memory, a memory that exists only in its racial past. This memory gets represented and re-enacted on this day with all its horrible

and violent characteristics; it is unlike a war that we see in motion picture or theatre. In films, the spectators are comfortable as their consciousness identifies the representation to be a simulacrum. The fact that this war happened in real, long ago may shock them to some extent. In contrast, the war that is represented in the Bharani festival is not the actual war but this is the closest war experience we can have in a representation. The participants cut their foreheads with a saber symbolizing the bloodshed that occurred in the mythical war. But this intimate experience is missing in any of its re-created versions. Ostensibly, seeing such a performance and participating in performance is way two different sensations. The primary experience still reigns over mediatized experience as an event is not about visual and auditory experience alone. To have complete experience other senses as the smell and touch are equally important. This holds true of a festival performance where the carnivalesque features are prominent. The following section of this chapter traces the organic use of space in the Bharani festival and delves into the nexus of body-space-ritual.

Organic use of Space in Bharani Festival

Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift begin their book *Thinking Space* by positing that "Space is the everywhere of modern thought" (1). In the fifteenth century, space was related to only visual experience; the body had but little importance in its conception. Noticeably, the concept of space has influenced thinkers outside this discipline. Earlier, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning; it simply meant an empty area. Till the 1970's the popular notion viewed space to be a neutral container, a blank canvas which is filled in by human activity (Hubbard 4). Space was denoted using the Euclidean geometry possessing X, Y, and Z dimensions. For a long time, space reigned in the

mathematical realm, but today it is more a 'human thing' or 'psychological place.' A proliferation of the concept of space has occurred, we often hear of literary space, ideological spaces, the space of the dream, etc. As the most basic dimensions of human life, time and space serve as obvious, almost trivial, contexts of human life. On the other hand, time and space are also compositional in their being resources and factors for human action (Kellerman 1). This view cataloged space as separate from human existence, only serving a backdrop against which human behavior is played out.

The contemporary theory of space, in turn, views space as a 'lived experience.' This shift has been propagated by theorists as Walter Benjamin, Henry Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Edward Soja. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre views space as something that is 'perceived, 'conceived,'and 'lived' (40). Lefebvre argues that each living body is 'space' and has 'space,' it produces itself in space and it also produces that space (170). He views space as a triad; the physical space, the mental space, and social space. The first space is real which can be sensed whereas the second is imaginary. Here, the physical space experienced through senses is the perceived space. Mental space or space imagined becomes the conceived space. These two "moments of space are reconciled by living space through the body and that is when the embedded social dimensions are rendered visible." Lefebvre argues that "the whole of the (social) space proceeds from the body… The body while living the space can construct and understand the social layers that make it up. Lived experience enables the body to coherent the physical, mental, and social aspects of space" (405). Thus, space cannot be understood or grasped in isolation as a container of people and things. This placing of the body at the

center of social space and treatment of space as a social product was obviously a concept that went far to inspire spatial theorists.

A. Kellerman notes that until the 1970s, the major concern of human geography was space and the human impact on it. Humans were mainly a macro or meso-entity, such as rural or urban communities and nations. Space was similarly interpreted as respective geographical units, such as villages or cities. In the seventies, this scenario got widened and gained more attention and stressed the interrelationships between humans and space. Humans could now be individual beings as well as institutes or structures, while space consisted of micro-units, such as homes, as well as the more macro communities. He opines that even in those times, human's impact on space was more central than were spatial impacts on society. To understand the significance of space it is important to understand the workings of its companion 'time.' Certainly, it is difficult to define time. Experiential time, or lived time, refers to personalized images of time as being short or long, passing fast or slowly. Time is a major dimension along which all events occur and around which human life-cycles evolve. It is an ordering framework for events in terms of 'before' and 'after' and in terms of chains of events or developments (7). Theorists of space identify two forms of individual spaces. On the one hand, there is the more fixed territoriality, the attachment of people to spaces such as rooms and homes; on the other hand, there is a rather more dynamic personal space, which constantly surrounds every human being like a bubble (61). Kellerman feels that societal space has not received thorough treatment as the individuals' space. The socio-spatial dialectic was proposed by Edward Soja, to view society and space within a unified framework, in which the two entities constantly influence each other (14). Thus, there is individual time

and societal time and individual space and societal space. It seems that societal time is the most flexible of the four. It is infinite and this is its most important asset.

Soja emphasized the distinction between contextual space and created space. The latter term, originally proposed by Lefebvre and Harvey, is at the center of Soja's spatiality (Kellerman 34). As mentioned earlier, space as a created entity is thus seen as a social product. Soja defines space as "a social product which is created, shaped and transformed by the same structural forces, antagonistic social relations, and periodic crises and struggles which affect the production process and social life more generally" (30). Building on Lefebvre's works, Soja introduced the notion of 'thirdspace' in *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. This third space is 'an-Other' way of conceptualizing space that extends and recombines the physical, material space with the space imagined, by living the space (5). It is thus simultaneously a product and force.

Nigel Thrift argues that space is unmistakeably linked to the embodiment. Similarly, Marcel Mauss suggests that acquired habits and somatic tactics, what he calls the "techniques of the body," incorporate all the 'cultural arts' of using and being the body and the world. The body is at the same time the original tool with which humans shape their world, and the substance out of which the world is shaped (50). Further, Pierre Bourdieu employs the term 'habitus' to characterize how the body, mind, and emotions are simultaneously trained and use this concept to understand how social status and class position become embodied in everyday life (Bourdieu 35). Bryan Turner points out that human beings "have bodies" and "are bodies." Human beings are embodied and everyday life dominated by the details of corporeal existence (Low and Zuniga 2). Thus,

the body is best conceived as a multiplicity: "the "two bodies" of the social body, and physical (Douglas 1970), the "three bodies" of the individual body, social body, the body politic (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987), or the "five bodies," which adds the consumer body and the medical body to the other three" (Low and Zuniga 96). Thus, the body is not an end in itself; it is in a constant process adding new dimensions to it.

Today, alteration of the human body is not impossible. At the same time, while the (living) human body has finally lost its integrity, the artist's body has become part of the artwork and thus part of public space (Hallensleben 9). Plessner has argued that "our body can be perceived as a 'thing,' an 'object of desire' and as a 'living body." Lefebvre feels that we can use our bodies (or parts of them) as tools, and at the same time we can be the tool that allows living, acting, interacting, creating life and producing spaces, creating ideologies and rituals, producing ideas and material realms, figural topics and urban topographies (5). A. Kellerman notes that:

> If we take Lefebvre's concept to be valid that our bodies are and have the space they are creating, then we create and constantly re-create and change our bodies by creating and producing our cultural space; then we perform ourselves, we do our bodies, or in the terms of performativity studies, we choreograph our bodies, which then not only means that we control our movements in space, but also that we design and redesign our bodies in space. (45)

Apparently, this ambivalence of being and having a body allows for understanding the human body as performative space. Georgio Agamben proposes that "If the image is text, then the body is space. If texts can create images, then spaces can change bodies and vice

versa. If images can change cultures, then the body can create text; it is and has the text that controls" (18). It is only through our consciousness, actions, and interactions that the physical landscape is brought into existence (Sen 8). Space is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from the global to the local (Massey 80).

Michel de Certeau feels that our society is characterized by a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or be shown, and transmuting communication into a visual journey. It is a sort of epic of the eye and the impulse to read (xxi). He sees practices as spatializing places. In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into space by walkers (De Certeau 117). Thus, he is skeptical of knowledge that 'map' cities from a 'god's-eye view,' and is more concerned with 'stories' as epistemologies of actually getting by in cities; and, in spatial terms, he saw walking as a form of practical narration. This may derive from the personal or social memories. The city for De Certeau is as much about dreams as things, and about doings not just knowings. The planner's approach while building a city does not always consider the everyday realities of living in a city. It is only through living in the 'everyday spaces' that one can comprehend the 'real text.' The text is real for the users of the space, as it is written by the users themselves, through their "narrative footsteps" (122). Thus, the bodies through their actions are creating their own stories.

Experience of a performer can never be the same as the observer, an 'otherness' is always present in it. Erving Goffman terms the insider's and outsider's views as 'emic' and 'etic' views respectively (*Presentation* 75). Bharani abounds in possession rituals and

the experience of trance felt by its performers is not to be fully understood by the observer. But one can certainly be what Lefebvre calls as a 'rhythmanalyst' and hear the echoes of memories, hopes, desires, and pangs while listening to the rhythms of the space of Kodungallur during Bharani festival. For this, the observers have to maintain a critical distance; they have to merge in its rhythm and come out of it at the right time to analyze it. Space is marked by the activities going on in it. It requires a 'quality' firstly through its physical elements, secondly through the ritualized actions being played in it, and thirdly, through the way the active body responds to space (Tiwari 313). Seemingly, bodies act under the guidelines provided by memory and tradition. Space too is layered with meanings, it becomes a system of significations, "a palimpsest" (Tiwari 16). To understand the real significance of space, one has to uncover the deeper layers of space, to plunge into its past. A practical way of achieving this is through deconstructing the rituals performed in these spaces. Rituals mirror the evolution of human beings, their culture, knowledge, and praxis. By probing into how rituals came into being, how they have changed, how they have transformed the participants and the onlookers we get to grasp the mankind's relationship to the spaces and reveal the elements behind the production of such spaces.

Global forces have diminished the importance of 'place' (Ellin 19). To counter this, there has been resurgence in a re-creation of spaces projecting past identities and memories. But Soja argues that these processes led to the 'city of signs' where the city was being read as a sign, devoid of its 'original' meaning and completely abstracted from the user's body. "The city became an image to be consumed by the users" (Tiwari 12). The city is read and re-read by different people from a series of perspectives, such that it

no longer appears to be the same city. It is both one city and a plurality of different cities (N. Leach 3). The place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other (Tuan 3). Everyday life is simply ordinary, real life. Lefebvre in *The Critique of Everyday Life* questioned why the concept of everyday-ness did not include the extraordinary, for he felt that these were 'moments' that revealed the ordinariness of life. For him, the surreal, the extraordinary, the surprising, and the magical were part of the real. There are two types of actions: routine actions and the more formal ones as dancing, singing, and festivities. The first type of action relates the individuals to their own bodies, creating a 'rhythm of the self.' The second one relates individuals to public spaces creating a 'rhythm of the other.' The concept of 'everyday' thus is a dialectic between ordinary and extraordinary, between the mundane and special, and their spatialization traverses from the private to public, from room, to home, to street, to square, to city (Tiwari 28). The body in its everyday practice becomes involved in the process of creation, a kind of poesis. Bharani festival constitutes an 'extra-everyday' ritual through which the lived space of Kodungallur is constructed and represented. In analyzing the space of Kodungallur we confront with its 'performative impulses.' Reena Tiwari assumes that the construction and representation of space are influenced by the way the body is constructed and represented socially; thus, a gendered body creates a gendered space, an empowered body creates a space of power. In contrast to the general notion, the place is not a fixed entity. It is "multiple, contested, fluid and uncertain" (Hubbard 7). Victor Turner argues that meaning sealed within the layers of socio-cultural life, which are rather inaccessible to everyday observation and reasoning, is understood through the performance process itself (Tiwari 28). Kodungallur during the Bharani

festival becomes a theatrical space. Bharani festival too becomes incomprehensible to the one who views it with eyes alone. For them, it becomes a mere spectacle. The performance going on unites the chaotic, fragmentary space into a unified whole. Kodungallur through years of evolution evolved from physical space to absolute, sacred space. In Kodungallur, even when the festival is being performed, two kinds of spaces are being produced. Two modes of being exist: a group of people living everyday life and foreign group living an 'extra- everyday' life. These two existences though share a physical space; never share a 'lived space.' To understand Kodungallur as a unified space amongst its heterogeneous nature, it is necessary to adopt different 'ways of seeing' proposed by Lefebvre in the construction of the modern, capitalist understandings of property, space, person, and use-value. As noted earlier, viewing the city as a *flaneur* projects a different space before us in contrast to the resident daily participating in its creation. In Bharani, a new space is created that cannot be comprehended even by the residents because the Bharani festival does not belong to their immediate personal experience. It is 'an-Other' space that is not 'lived.' For the participants in Bharani, Kodungallur is a foreign space but they make it their own, through the rituals they perform there.

As a matter of fact, these rituals define them and lend them identity. They reconstruct the absolute, 'lived' space from within the sacred and the abstract realm of Kodungallur. Particularly, the oracles mark their presence in space; they construct a strange halo around them firstly by their appearance itself. Their red clothes, blood-stained face, swords and demeanor, itself becomes a performance. A theatrical space emerges with an oracle as a performer and people moving around him as an audience.

Their bodies are inserted in space, shape, and re-construct it. The presence of oracles amidst the abstract space takes the audience to the realm of imaginary space; the body is the tool or agency to make their presence felt. The emotional response their body creates among the spectators is varied; they evoke the feelings of fear, reverence, power, and divinity. They are the representation of the Goddess on the earth, living amongst the profane space. They transform the profane space into sacred through their materiality and are also instrumental in making the spectators realize their presence in space.

Reena Tiwari in her study of *aghora* in Varanasi finds that *aghori* in the meditative posture and state is able to locate his own center. This involves his meditative movement in the vertical direction along the central axis of his body. He identifies this axis with the central summit of the Meru Peak (Hindu's *axis mundi* of the universe). A space, conical in volume, is generated (Tiwari 62). Thus, the newly constructed absolute, lived space becomes an extension of the oracle's body. Bharani festival produces a subaltern space; though the temple actually belongs to the high-caste, for some days it becomes defiled for the society. Thus, the irony is that even while becoming a sacred space for the participants, it becomes a profane, inferior space to the inhabitants of Kodungallur. For the time being, Kodungallur temple and its premises become 'periphery' of the city. "The peripheral body finds its place in the periphery of the city that holds a peripheral ritual" (Tiwari 62).

Thus, in Kodungallur, occurs a translocation of the center, it is not viewed as a sacred space, but a profane space with other-worldly power circulating in it. In the case of a temple, the presence of deity is enough for the devotees to deem it sacred. But in the Bharani fest, the deity herself is 'defiled.' There is a cutting off of sacred space by

'profane' practices and performances. Thus, by disrupting the central source of sacrality, the whole of the city suffers. The original inhabitants of the space see themselves in an eclipse, devoid of their protecting deity. During this time, for a whole month, no constructive events as marriage or house warming, etc. are performed in Kodungallur among the Hindu community. One reason might be the 'profanity' of the space during this time. Another plausible reason can be the creation of an imaginary battle space that represents the mythical battlespace of the Kali-Darika battle. The whole of Kodungallur becomes a battlefield, its memory is recreated.

Oracles through the rhythmic movement in space, like *aghoris*, construct a space (see fig. 4. 5). Similarly, there is a gendered space created by the interactions of different genders. In Kodungallur, the town has developed around Kodungallur Bhagavathi Temple as in the case of Vadakkunnathan Temple of Thrissur.

Fig. 4. 5. Jayan, Nimisha K. Procession of oracles inside Kodungallur temple amidst spectators. 29 Mar. 2017. *Private collection.*

The temple and its premises become the nodal center of all the activity. The buzzing cityscape is contrasted with calm, serene temple environs, full of tall banyan trees and large pools. Thus, right in the center of the city, sits this grove which maintains a balance between progress and nature. Even the four entrance points of the temple serve as the marking points of Kodungallur town, namely; *Vadakke Nada* ("northern entrance"), *Thekke Nada* ("southern entrance"), *Kizhakke Nada* ("eastern entrance") and *Padinjare Nada* ("western entrance"). The town plan is such that for any enterprise in the town, one has to go around the temple, doing a half circle or full circle. This relative position is not only physical but also psychological. A casual ride through the town reveals an interesting fact; most of the shops from small to big hotels, theatres, cars, auto-rickshaws, and lorries are named either Kodungalluramma or her synonyms namely Kannaki, Devi, Durga, Bhadra, Sreekaleeswari, Bhagavathi, Sree Kurumbha, Rudra, Ambika, etc. This reveals the extent to which this deity has been synthesized into the psyche and lives of the inhabitants of Kodungallur. The northern entrance, the main entrance of the temple has seen the most of the development, the major buildings in the area being a court, bus stand, two shopping malls among others.

Rituals play a significant role in re-creating memories. Similarly storytelling that may be a part of most rituals is one of the ways of transporting or translating memories and creating lived space. Aristotle believed that humans are born as a 'tabula rasa'- a blank slate and that we are the product of a life imprinted as a series of memories. But memory is not such a thing; it is not concrete, definitive and reproducible, but ephemeral, ever-shifting in shape and meaning. It is more like a house of cards perched precariously upon the shifting sands of time, at the mercy of interpretation and confabulation (Levine

1). Thus, memory is the recollection or reviving of past experiences and impressions. This can be about a place or a thing or an individual that can be created by a continued transmission of knowledge, through tradition. Collective memory is a part of a community's active life. It is a collection of multiple and dispersed memories that are relative to a specific community at certain space and time (Boyer 121). The grounds for this collective memory are social experiences, in a spatial and temporal framework (Douglas 198). Memory and imagination have always been thought of as critical in the perception of built form. The city is a site for both collective and individual memory as every space or building has a forgotten story to tell (Benjamin 79). Space and memory have a longstanding connection; certain spaces evoke certain kinds of memories in us. The layers of memories are embedded in each space, in the flow of time everything about the space changes, but the memories both conscious and unconscious, both acquired and experienced persists. It is constructed and re-constructed through culture and tradition.

Jean Baudrillard recognizes the "murderous power of images, murderers of the real, murderers of their own model" and his idea of 'representation' is evidently opposed to 'simulation.' Simulation is "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (3). To simulate is to feign to have what one does not have and implies absence and it threatens the difference between true and false, real and imaginary. He claims that simulacrum is powerful enough to threaten the existence of god, a belief that can create the belief that only the simulacrum existed; even the god himself was never anything but his own simulacrum. In representing the gods through a 'mirror of images' the iconoclasts are "enacting his death and his disappearance" (4). "Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and the real;

simulation, on the contrary stems from the Utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference" (Baudrillard 6). There are both memories in and memories (projected) upon our built environment. They, like a bank, are repositories into which both deposits and withdrawals may be transacted. Thus, the built environment becomes a memory bank, both individual and communal (Treib 1). Human constructors preserve the past, enabling us to experience the continuum of culture and tradition. We do not exist in a spatial and material reality but inhabit cultural, mental, and temporal realities (Pallasmaa 17). Simulated environments constructed to evoke memories as museums or themed spaces, monuments, and heritage sites may fail in producing the desired effect. The environment is experienced as only a spectacle and there is only a one-way relationship between the body and space, where the body does not play a role in the construction of the space. The viewers lose track of time and place due to their journey through unrelated and juxtaposed sites. They are unable to locate themselves within the space due to the continuous bombardments of juxtaposed images; the human body is unable to position itself in relation to space. Here, only two spaces are re-created; the physical and mental. The mental space is projected onto the physical space. The past dominates the present and the viewer and viewed becomes separate. These places fail to create Lefebvre's third space that is the 'lived space.' To create a lived space, the setting must not be based on visuality alone, but provide a space for the whole body to interact and perform. It must enable the performing body to attain a liminal state to "reconstruct a space based on memories" (Tiwari 69). Bharani festival does not possess a textual space as other performances. The whole of the ritual relies on the memory of its participants.

Everything is oral, passing on from generation to generation. The whole procedure of the ritual is internalized, occupying their mental space. Thus, the mental space becomes the textual space here. Coming to the physical space of the festival, it is restricted.

Bharani can be read as a text where the meaning or truth is located in the 'mini-narratives' rather than the grand narratives or discourses which form its backdrop. Such a blending, such a viral, endemic, chronic, alarming presence of the medium without the possibility of isolating the effects, we are doomed not to invasion, to pressure, to violence and blackmail by the media and the model, but to their induction, to their infiltration, to their illegible violence (Baudrillard 22). The media 'corrupts' the behavior of Bharani, they are aware of its omnipresence and hence design their movements to cater to its needs. The presence of media has relatively changed the behavior of Bharani performers, the camera as Baudrillard suggests has replaced the panopticon. Further, the popular media is focused on its superficial grossness, in its translation, the reality is lost, and the events are 'sublimed.' Vision is influenced by the subjective experiences of the spectator; in Bharani, the upper caste views are circulated through print and other popular media, which in turn have an impact on the performer's understanding of the fest.

Reena Tiwari identifies three processes that are vital in the interplay between textual and physical. They serve to activate the memories embedded in and create a lived space. They are markings on real/physical space, de-constructing imaginary or textual space through mimesis, and reconstructing lived space as a monument of memory through transgression (96). Precisely, the site of the Bharani festival in Kodungallur is marked. They may be visible or invisible markings. In Kodungallur no special alterations are made to the temple except the numerous flags that adorn trees inside the temple. The

raising of this multi-colored flags forms an important ritual in Bharani that officially

announces the commencement of the festival. Most of the markings are invisible,

contained in their oral tradition. The underlying text here is the Kali-Darika battle which

is projected onto the space of Kodungallur. This, although an imitation is not an 'exact

copy of the original,' there occurs a mimetic transformation of both setting and original

performance. In the second process, the participants deconstruct the space being

resurrected. In Bharani, no props or simulated environments exist. The mundane space

attains the form of a battlefield. They attain this through their bodily interactions and

"translate them onto the present environment" (Tiwari 88). Within the ordinary physical

space, they through their mental associations build a different world. In performance,

memory and space come together. "The past world is reconstructed by remembering,

imitating, and reiterating. It is a mimetic art" (Tiwari 90). The bodies through their

'experience' can locate themselves with space. The need is to construct a space that

appeals to the body (physically and mentally) through the imagination, within the

existing spatial framework. The third process is constructing a lived space. The

participants transgress the present space through their performance, as in a time machine

and journey to the ancient time. Thus, in this space, specifically called the 'lived space,'

the past and present merge creating an absolute experience. The Bharani festival though

linked to a narrative, and a representation of the original event, it is not a mere 'copy' but

an event in itself. It is not recreating the ancient past, but the ancient past is manifesting

itself through the mimetic environment produced within the space of Kodungallur. Here,

Lefebvre's third space, the 'lived space' unequivocally emerges. For a fact, this situation

is similar to 'play.' In Huizinga's conception of play there is stepping out of reality into

another order of existence, a transgression of both body and space, though not a physical one (56). Reena Tiwari makes a comparative study between the spatiality of Schechner's Plimoth Plantations, a live history museum, and Ramlila performance at Nati-Imli. In her comparison, she finds that in Plimoth plantation, although there is a movement in time and space, the spectators know that it is make-believe. In the Nati-Imli, the physical movement in space is nil as the sixteenth century is reconstructed within the 21st century (Tiwari 95). As the past is re-created from within the present, people are able to link and perceive space and time in continuity.

Fig. 4. 6. Jayan, Nimisha K. Oracle chief performing *tullal* in *avakashathara*. 28 Mar. 2017. *Private collection.*

In Kodungallur there is considerable physical movement in space. People travel far and wide to attain this transformation. They stay at Kodungallur, make it their second home. In Bharani, no 'fake environment' as Schechner finds in Plimoth Plantations is created. They live in ancient times for the time being suspending their memory of the present and through this state, they attain liminality. But the experience of liminality

varies from one person to another. For the spectator, it is a mere spectacle. Among the group of participants itself, liminality differs. The oracles attain the highest level of liminality. The pilgrims accompanying them, singing songs experience a different state of transformation. The psychic energy flows out and includes the object of perception and there is a merging of self and the other (see fig. 4. 6). It is here that the lived space is constructed, and becomes a monument of memory. This monument defines the past and articulates its relationship to the present, transforming the memoirs into a memorial by way of performance.

Regarding the same spatial movement, we have to take into account the changed scenario. Technological innovations have undoubtedly changed human behavior and extended the threshold of our movement. In earlier times, the pilgrims came to Kodungallur on foot or using waterways and this journey too was part of their pilgrimage. In those times a human's spatial reach was limited. They traveled for occupational purposes and covered only a limited space. In such an instance, coming to Kodungallur journeying hundreds of kilometers was not an easy accomplishment. This state of affairs changed with the advent of public transport systems. But matters have undergone a dramatic change in today's scenario with most individuals owning private vehicles. But even in the transformed existence, they have been able to retain the community bonding, they still manage to come in groups. In an interview titled "Ready to Wait: *Athava Savarna Sthreekalude Aachara Sneham*" ("Ready to Wait or The Upper Caste Women's Love of Ritual") given in 2019, J. Devika hypothesizes a sort of 'contract' between Brahmanism and Sudra groups in the earlier historical periods of Kerala. This alliance suffered a setback at the beginning of the twentieth century when

the Sudras protested and withdrew from the rituals that they found oppressing. She notes that not all rituals were erased; only those that could potentially heighten the conflict between the upper caste and Sudras were forsaken.

The earlier community was necessarily ritualistic; rituals pervaded both the private and public spaces. The rituals of *theendal* and the like were ceremoniously practiced. She cites the instance when Madhava Rao, Divan of Tiruvithamcore passed a law to accept the pleas of the subalterns in the courts during the times of untouchability. The Pulaya could not walk through the streets to reach the courts situated near temples; hence he further ordered a repeal of the untouchability rites for the functioning of his first order. This brings us to the question of the movement of subaltern groups in Bharani during such periods of untouchability. In 1917, Ezhavas were not allowed to travel through the public road, to the east of Kodungallur temple. The article that appeared in *Mithavadi* titled "*Ezhavan Nadannal Thallu*" ("If Ezhava Walks, He Will Be Beaten Up") records the incident of an Ezhava male being thrashed by a Nair for using this restricted public road. William Logan and L K. Anantha Krishna Iyer have recorded their personal experiences of Bharani pilgrims' mass movement calling out "*nada nada*" to reach Kodungallur (193; Induchudan 238). Thus, it can be presumed that during Bharani, along with the gaining of rights to enter the sacral premises of the temple, a liquidation of upper caste norms was realized in public spaces as well, thereby these groups enjoying the freedom to walk the paths. Bharani apparently is a validation of the Brahmin-Sudra alliance, which is clearly explicated in the origin story of Bharani as an anti- Buddhist episode; Nair community being Sudra themselves abetted the movement. Later, as

Devika suggests the Nair community probably aligned themselves closer to the Brahmin community, giving rise to a neo-Savarna collective.

Next, let us probe into the nature of the liminal space constructed during such rituals and analyze how the plan of the space aid in this transformation. In month-long preparations before the festival, the oracles separate themselves from the ordinary world. They live in a ritualized world, performing rituals, and observing *vratas*. They become 'detached' from their normal course of life. During the festival, they are seen to be experiencing a liminal state. They are both humans and gods; or rather they become ambiguous in state, treading through the narrow path between divinity and temporality. At the height of the liminal state, they experience a cathartic moment, thus the liminal phase reaches a finale. In Bharani, such liminal moments are plenty; they enjoy intervals of moving to and fro between liminal states. But the climax of this liminal state occurs during the *Kaavutheendal* ceremony. In performing the ritual, they seem to accomplish their goal; they have known their deity thoroughly, touched her, and experiences a converging moment. This sensation is fleeting; they are immediately suspended back into their original state. Squarely, the passage is consummated. They return completing a full circle, but the starting point and ending point are not really the same. Their experiences have changed them, this movement is a linear transgression, and not circular. The aura created by their attire aids the liminal experience. These markings on the body help in a smooth transgression into the liminal phase. Another arena where liminality occurs is the initiation rites of oracles. Initiants are disconnected from the mass, given blessings and a sword, they are allowed to be in the group of oracles for some time to get the 'call.' In the emotional arena created by the frenzied oracle troops and the high pitched enervating

songs they attain a liminal state, a contact with divinity, which they consider as a calling from the Bhagavathi herself, they break into tremors, cuts their forehead deriving energy from this point of contact and thus enter into the third phase. After *Kaavutheendal* the songs cease to play, the swords are suspended; they pack their bags and quietly leave the place. Even after the performance is over, the traces remain. The performance may have disappeared, but it has created a change in the performer and the performed space. However, the potency of performance increases by the fact that it has occurred; it has disappeared but has left 'traces' to be deciphered. An oracle chief cited that he shed tears only once a year; that is when he leaves Kodungallur after the *Kaavutheendal* ceremony. The pilgrims leave back to their native space carrying these traces or cinders in their mind, keeping it warm all through the year to ignite it on the next Bharani festival.

Further, in mapping the space of Varanasi, Reena Tiwari adopts the technique developed by Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi in their mapping exercise for Parc de la Villette in Paris, known as 'layering' (111). Each layer revolves around a separate aspect of the program of the site, has a logic and structure of an organization. These layers when overlaid on each other reveal the relationships between the different aspects of the program and context. Reena Tiwari develops a mosaic of Varanasi that works as a representational and performative model and re-configures based on the performance of the map maker now and then. In such an approach, the choreographed bodies inscribe their presence through rituals and help in continually reconstructing the maps. These maps have become the 'lived maps.' They do not represent the original urban space, but the urban space constructed through rituals of Bharani. The liminality of the participant finds a space in these mappings. For them, this is not a usual temple experience; they are

themselves transgressing into divinity here. Their body inhabits space constructing a personal meaning from it.

In tracings, the city is approached as a tourist; it is a 'postcard view,' highlighting the picturesque aspects of the city. Reena Tiwari feels that it is a 'documentary approach' and focus on capturing some visually appealing cultural icons representing the city as a cultural product to entice the viewers and to generate interest in the city. Here, the body is aloof and distanced from the city. The way we perceive the city and inhabit it affects the way we conceive the city. The planners or architects of the city often ignore the actual experience of living in the city. Understanding a city through maps and living in this city are strictly two separate experiences sharing nothing in common. Sometimes, while living in the city we get lost in its spatiality, and in order to get a grasp of our exact location in space, we may have to rely on maps. But maps are devoid of 'life' representing only the dry technicalities. But recently, there have been efforts to make the map-making process more creative and constructive. Maps are scientific representations usually marking territories, property rights, etc. But that is not the way people experience their space. Thus, space is not a neutral entity; it is laden with power and ideologies. We make our own spaces in life; it depends on the way we experience this world.

Today, with the help of technology giants like *Google Maps*, every corner of the city, every pocket road in the country is marked and has an identity. For a long time, space has been mapped from a visual perspective alone. But, the whole of the body should be brought into the study of space to have a complete understanding of it. Michel de Certeau in the chapter "Walking in the City" assumes that for a ritualized body moving in space, the city appears to be a 'writing.' This reading of the city by the user of the city is very

different from that of a detached observer watching from the top of a skyscraper. The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below' the threshold at which visibility begins. They are mere walkers; they write this urban 'text' without being able to read it (De Certeau 93). He too is a participant in its production. But the bird's- eye view of the space is panopticon-like and involves authority, power, and knowledge. The participants involved in this text- making play a role in the production of space and they are not merely the consumers of a spectacle. Benjamin's walker called *flaneur* watched and interpreted the 'city' by moving amongst the crowds, but he could never be a part of the crowd being an elitist and he viewed the city with an abstraction.

Apparently, the way a tourist grasp a city is different from that of mere representation on maps. Citizens of the city are concerned with 'textures' and not with the 'text' of the city. Visualizing alone is insufficient to map the real experience of the city. A map has to include the experiences and even the imaginations of its occupants. The mythical, symbolic, and mysterious attributes, which are invisible, hidden to the eyes, must find a space in a map. Cosgrove states that maps are not necessarily scientific and mathematical, but can also be a means of representing political, social, and cultural ideologies of the landscape. The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an "alleged competence" (Deleuze and Guattari 12). Deleuze and Guattari suggest that a representation can be termed as a map only when it gives a glimpse of reality. A ritualized map is different from a scientific map. It tells the story of the inhabitants, sheds light on their culture and tradition. These maps are not fixed and stable; each of the viewers creates their own mental map. Gender, age, caste, political disposition, spiritual orientation, etc. affect the process of this map-making. Mapping is

such a process, where the user gathers thematic fragments of the city by 'rhythmanalysis.' Mappings and tracings are not the same. Tracings rely on visual perception; they trace out patterns and do not reveal anything new. In contrast, mappings are experiential. They are not a mere copy but serve as a constructive device. Thus, maps not only represent the physical attributes, but also the intangible, hidden forces. These intangible aspects are the stories, legends, historical events, politics, and economics that give these maps the potential to reveal the reality more than the tracing (Tiwari 111). Thus, mappings through the traveler's experiential journey are able to produce a new space, a 'lived space.' The same techniques of tracings are used in mappings as well; use of texts, images, and two-dimensional drawings, but they ultimately communicate a 'live' space.

The path of the pilgrims becomes 'charged' space and they become a performative space through the movement of these 'choreographed bodies' (Kellerman 123). Space does not carry a fixed meaning; different pilgrims using the same space write different stories through their performance. Even constructing the space leads to a 'transformative experience' for the body. Being a distanced viewer does not reveal to us the layers of the festival. We get lost in the visual overload of the festival. Only by being a participant of the event, being one with them, knowing their dedication and journey, we experience the transformative power of this performance. Here, the body and space become one and whole. Thus, the process of mapping a space depends on the way the body has lived and constructed the space. Conclusively, in mapping one has to be a part of the space, to imbibe its rhythms and then distance oneself from it, to give a critical representation of it. In space-ritual-body nexus, ritual acts as the key and enables the

body to use the space and attains a liminal state. Thus, the ritualized body is important; ritual acts as a tool, creating a lived space. In the initial viewing, the festival appears to be a fragmentary spectacle projecting an abstract space. We gaze at material aspects like money, ideological issues as power, gender, and social hierarchy. But through positioning our own body into space, through 'rhythmanalysis' specifically, this fragmentary abstract space is replaced by an absolute lived space. It is the ritual and the ritualized bodies that enable this transgression.