



past for a positive future

MAARIYATTAM

EXORCISING PANDEMIC IN A RITUAL WAY

Speaker

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Chair

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Maariyattam: Exorcising Pandemic in a Ritual Way

The two questions that the talk would address are, why does the exorcism rite called *Maariyattam*, believed to have originated sometime in the medieval period in Malabar, continue in the present despite the changes that happened in the socio-political and economic order in the last several centuries, and what reality does it generate when this rite is invoked in the present. The birth of *Maariyattam*, as the myth says, was at a critical moment of the outbreak of a pandemic, inscribed as *maari*, that had the potential to 'end the world'. The human community in the present is experiencing a pandemic that is increasingly redrawing the horizon of human existence. While performing *Maariyattam* in the present, history and the present, and myth and reality are brought into conjecture. Looking at the kind of experiences we learn from it about the social world, human relations we envisage, and the 'reality' that the exorcism -*Maariyattam*- brings forth in and through its rites, the talk will move on to argue that, the demon's occupation and release of *maari* (death/pandemic) could be a kind of totalitarianizing moment.



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Dr. Dinesan Vadakkiniyil teaches history at the Government Arts and Science College, Uduma, Kasaragod. His areas of research interests are ritual studies and contemporary Kerala.

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