FACULTY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

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Date of Event: 26 March, 2026

Faculty-in-Charge: Ms. Gigy Johnson



REPORT

As part of the Faculty Enhancement Programme, a presentation was held on 26 March 2026 at the Seminar Hall, Main Block, from 03:15 p.m. to 04:00 p.m., by Dr. Dhanumol C. M., Assistant Professor, PG Department of English. The topic of the session was "Curating Culture: Resilience and Recontextualization of Indigenous Performance in Kerala". The presentation examined how Kerala's cultural identity privileges codified classical art forms because their institutionalization and adaptability to state narratives of tourism and global recognition make them legible to official frameworks, while the marginalization of indigenous ritual traditions such as *Mangalam Kali* paradoxically strengthens their resilience, as communities recontextualize these practices into spaces of activism, urban performance and cultural resistance. The session was attended by 37 faculty members from various departments. Participants actively contributed to the session through questions and discussions.

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Prepared by:	**Verified by:**	**Approved by:**
Ms. Gigy Johnson	Dr. Sabu Varghese	Rev. Fr. Dr. Paulachan K.J.
FEP Coordinator	Director IT/ HRD Cell	Principal

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BROCHURE

FACULTY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME



Dr. Dhanumol C M
Asst. Professor
PG Department of English

Topic : Curating Culture: Resilience and Recontextualization of Indigenous Performance in Kerala

DATE : 26 MARCH, 2026
TIME : 03.15-04.00 PM
VENUE : MAIN BLOCK, SEMINAR HALL

Pongam, Koratty East, Thrissur District, Kerala State, India. Pin-680308.
Phone +91 9605001987, 04802730340, 2730341, 2733573
www.naipunnya.ac.in, mail@naipunnya.ac.in

PHOTOGRAPHS









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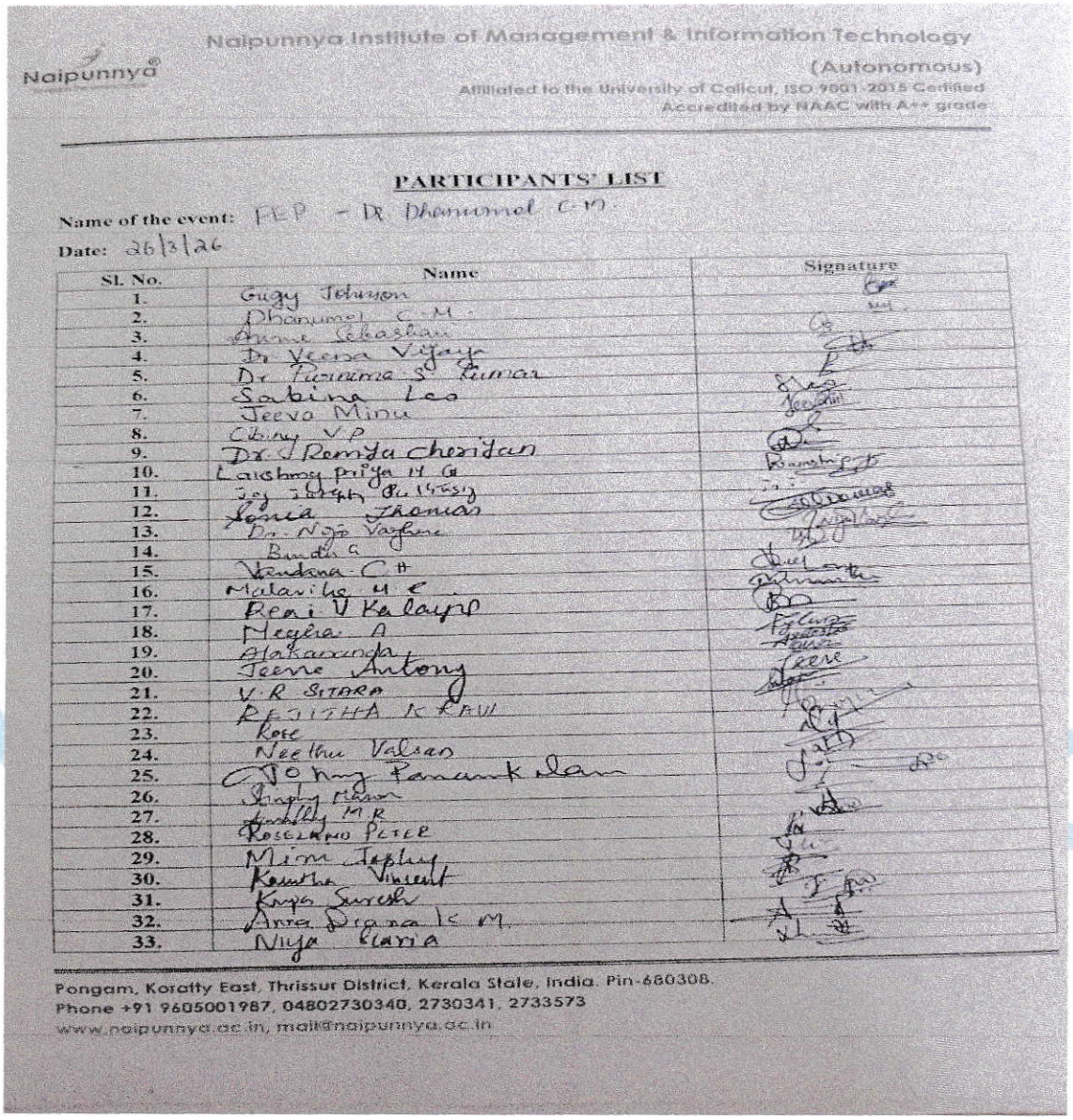
PARTICIPANTS' LIST



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PARTICIPANTS' LIST

Name of the event: FEP - Dr. Dhanumol C.M.

Date: 26/3/26

Sl. No.	Name	Signature
1.	Gugy Johnson	
2.	Dhanumol C.M.	
3.	Anne Sebastian	
4.	Dr Veena Vijaya	
5.	Dr Purnima S. Kumar	
6.	Sabina Leo	
7.	Jeeva Minu	
8.	Cibiny V.P	
9.	Dr. Remya Cheriyan	
10.	Lakshmy Priya M G	
11.	Joy Joseph Pulitsy	
12.	Sonia Thomas	
13.	Dr. Nojo Varghese	
14.	Bindu G	
15.	Vandana C H	
16.	Malavika M E	
17.	Reni V Kalaiyo	
18.	Megha A	
19.	Alakananda	
20.	Jeene Antony	
21.	V.R SITARA	
22.	REJITHA K RAVI	
23.	Rose	
24.	Neethu Valsan	
25.	Johny Panamkulam	
26.	Sinphy Manor	
27.	Anshy M.R	
28.	ROSELAND PETER	
29.	Mini Joshy	
30.	Kavitha Vincent	
31.	Kripa Suresh	
32.	Anna Diana K M	
33.	Niya Maria	

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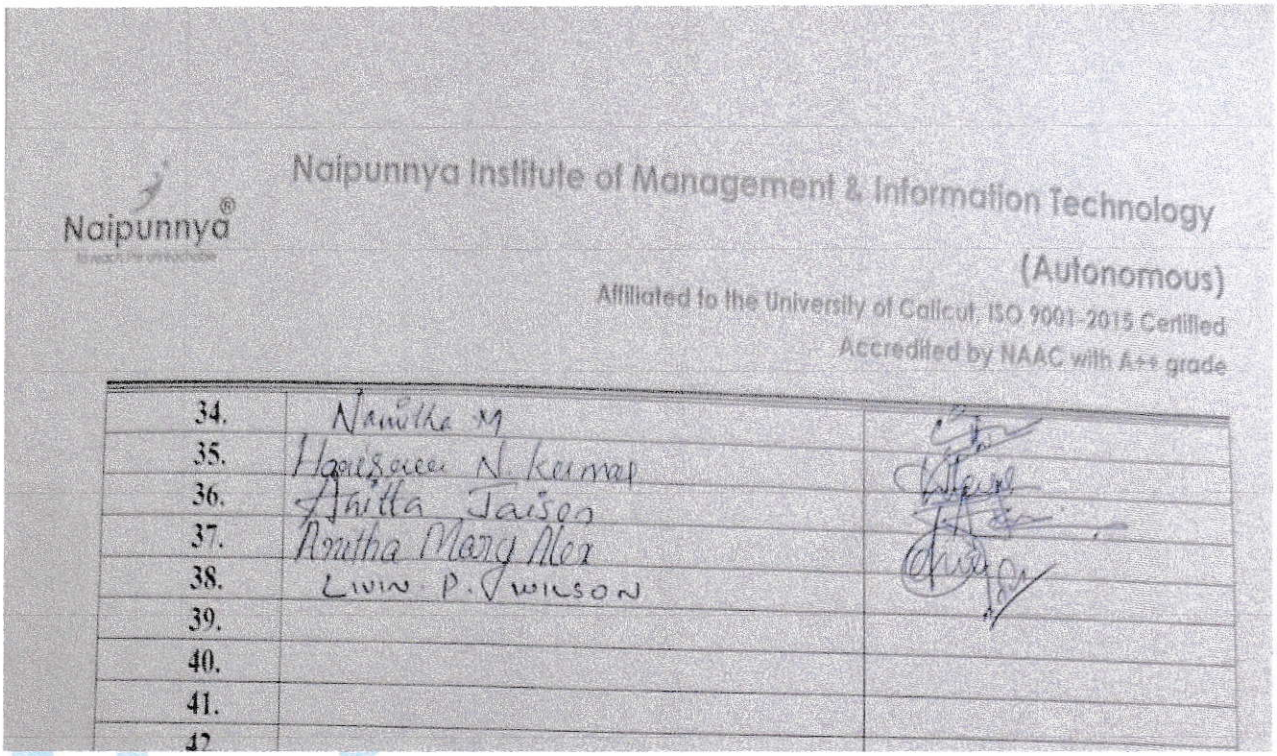

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34.	Namitha M	
35.	Harisaran N. Kumar	
36.	Anitta Jaison	
37.	Anitha Mary Alex	
38.	LIVIN P. WILSON	
39.		
40.		
41.		
42.		

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Curating Culture: Resilience and Recontextualization of Indigenous Performance in Kerala

Dhanumol C. M.
Assistant Professor, Department of English
Naipunnya Institute of Management and Information Technology (Autonomous)

Abstract

Kerala's cultural identity is curated through selective processes that elevate certain art forms as official symbols while marginalizing others. Classical forms have been privileged through institutional recognition, codified training systems and state patronage, positioning them as markers of refinement and continuity. In contrast, ritual and indigenous performances remain excluded from dominant narratives despite their deep roots in community life, social cohesion and spiritual practice. This paper examines the cultural, political and institutional mechanisms that produce such hierarchies, asking what processes elevate classical forms while sidelining indigenous ones and why Kerala's identity privileges codified traditions. It further explores how this marginalization shapes the resilience and recontextualization of indigenous performances, compelling them to adapt through tourism, proscenium theatre and digital platforms. By situating Kerala's indigenous traditions within broader debates on cultural politics and heritage, the study argues that exclusion not only challenges these art forms but also drives their dynamic strategies of survival, revealing the contested nature of cultural representation in a globalized world.

Keywords: Curating culture, cultural studies, indigenous artforms, resilience, recontextualization

Kerala's cultural landscape is often celebrated for its rich artistic heritage, yet the narratives that dominate official representations of this identity are far from neutral. State institutions, cultural organizations and political processes have historically elevated codified classical forms such as Kathakali, Mohiniyattam and Koodiyattam as emblematic of Kerala's cultural identity. These forms, with their

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formalized training systems and institutional recognition, are curated as symbols of refinement and continuity. In contrast, ritual and indigenous traditions such as *Theyyam*, *Mudiyettu* and other community-based performances are frequently marginalized, relegated to the periphery of cultural discourse despite their deep roots in local communities and spiritual practices.

This selective curation raises critical questions about the politics of representation: What cultural, political, and institutional processes determine which art forms are celebrated as 'heritage' and which are excluded from official narratives? Why does Kerala's cultural identity privilege classical forms, and how does this marginalization shape the resilience and recontextualization of indigenous traditions? Addressing these questions requires examining not only the historical trajectories of performance traditions but also the contemporary dynamics of globalization, tourism and digital mediation.

By foregrounding resilience and recontextualization, this paper argues that indigenous performances in Kerala are not passive victims of exclusion but active agents of cultural survival. Their ability to adapt to new contexts—whether through tourism, proscenium theatre, or digital platforms—demonstrates both the challenges and possibilities of sustaining cultural diversity in a world where heritage is continually curated and contested. In doing so, the study situates Kerala's indigenous traditions particularly, *Mangalam Kali* within broader debates on cultural politics, identity and the sustainability of intangible heritage.

In approaching Kerala's performance traditions, this study draws on Cultural Studies framework that interrogates the hierarchies of cultural value. The distinction between high culture, low culture and popular culture provides a lens to understand how certain art forms are elevated while others are marginalized. High culture in Kerala is represented by codified classical forms such as Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, and Koodiyattam, which are institutionalized through state patronage, formal training academies and UNESCO recognition. These forms are curated as refined symbols of Kerala's identity, accessible to elite and global audiences. In contrast, ritual and community-based performances such as Theyyam, Mudiyettu, and *Mangalam* Kali are relegated to the category of low culture, often dismissed as folk or peripheral despite their deep social and spiritual significance. Popular culture emerges as a third space where these marginalized traditions are recontextualized—through tourism, cultural festivals, and digital platforms—allowing them visibility and survival, though often at the cost of transformation. By

situating Kerala's indigenous performances within this tripartite framework, the paper highlights how cultural hierarchies are not natural but constructed, revealing the politics of representation and the resilience strategies that sustain intangible heritage in contested spaces.

Mangalam Kali offers a compelling example of how Kerala's cultural hierarchies operate through distinctions of high, low and popular culture. Traditionally performed in community settings, often during marriage ceremonies or auspicious occasions, *Mangalam Kali* functions as a ritual of social cohesion and blessing. Unlike codified classical forms such as Kathakali or Mohiniyattam, it has not been institutionalized or elevated as a symbol of Kerala's official cultural identity. Within the framework of Cultural Studies, *Mangalam Kali* is relegated to the category of 'low culture', valued locally but marginalized in dominant narratives that privilege classical traditions. At the same time, its occasional reappearance in cultural festivals or tourism circuits demonstrates how indigenous forms migrate into the sphere of 'popular culture', gaining visibility through recontextualization. This dual positioning—excluded from high culture yet sustained through community practice and popular adaptations—illustrates both the resilience of *Mangalam Kali* and the politics of cultural curation that shape Kerala's identity.

Kerala's cultural identity is not a neutral reflection of its diverse performance traditions but the product of selective curation shaped by cultural, political and institutional processes. Classical forms have been elevated as symbols of refinement and heritage, while ritual and community-based performances remain marginalized within official narratives. The framework of Cultural Studies, with its distinctions between high culture, low culture and popular culture, reveals how these hierarchies are constructed and maintained. *Mangalam Kali*, in particular, illustrates the tension between exclusion and resilience: dismissed as 'low culture' in dominant discourses yet sustained through community practice and recontextualized in festivals and tourism circuits.

This marginalization, however, does not signal decline but rather compels indigenous traditions to adapt, demonstrating resilience through recontextualization in new cultural spaces. By negotiating between ritual authenticity and popular visibility, these performances challenge the boundaries of cultural identity and expose the politics of representation embedded in heritage discourse. Ultimately, Kerala's indigenous traditions remind us that culture is dynamic, contested and continually redefined. Their

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survival underscores the need to rethink cultural policy and heritage frameworks so that resilience is not merely a response to exclusion but a recognition of the plural and lived realities that constitute Kerala's cultural landscape.

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