



Caste and Gender in Folk Religious Practices of Tamilnadu

Gastvortrag von
Dr. M.D. Muthukumaraswamy, NFSC, Chennai

Donnerstag, **9. Nov. 2017**, 19:15 Uhr
OSA-Keplerstr. 2, Hörsaal 001

Folk religion in Hinduism can be loosely defined as non-brahmin and non-Vedic worship of village deities by different caste groups. In Tamilnadu, folk religious practices are characterised by vibrant festivities involving votive offerings, animal sacrifices, storytelling events, the procession of deities and trance occurrences. They are also intimately related to ballads and narratives sung or performed during ceremonial functions, describing the birth and growth of the deities and relating folk deities to classical Hindu Gods such as Viṣṇu or Śiva. In Tamilnadu, folk deities such as Aiyānār, Maturai Vīraṇ, and Kāttavarāyan are referred to as guardian deities and are also worshipped as caste or clan deity. Others, such as Sutalaimātasāmi and Pachaiammaṇ are regarded as burial ground goddesses. After delineating the general features of Tamil folk religious practices, I will present ethnographic details of a festival involving Aiyānār and some aspects regarding Sutalaimātasāmi to elaborate how gender and caste boundaries work in their contexts and permeate folk religious practices.





Votive offering of terracotta horses to the deity Aiyānār, Tamilnadu.

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Dr. M.D. Muthukumaraswamy is a Tamil writer, Director of the National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai, and Consultant at Sahapedia, an Open Online Encyclopaedia on the arts, cultures and heritage of India, New Delhi. He edits *Indian Folklife and Indian Folklore Research Journal*. His publications include edited volumes such as *Voicing Folklore: Careers, Concerns and Issues*, *Folklore as Discourse*, *Many Voices One Nation*, *Essays in Folklore* and the co-edited volume *Folklore, Public Sphere and Civil Society*. His works in Tamil include short stories, poems, essays, plays and a novel. His book on *Transgender identity and the Tamil theatre and festival of Mahābhārata* is due for publication in 2018.

