



Vol. 1, No. 3; Jul – Sep (2025)

SAKHA: Multidisciplinary Journal of Science, Arts & Technology

Available at <https://sakha.co.in/journals/mjsat>



Eruthazhuvuthal (Alias) Jallikattu – A Unique Culture of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The origin of the Tamil race has not yet been definitively established in any studies. However, the Tamil language and culture, even after the passage of time, continue to convey the greatness of our ancestors to us through various ways. They have proven their intellectual prowess to the world in all aspects, including language, land, spirituality, medicine, architecture, and astronomy. One such example is Jallikattu, which is still celebrated today as a symbol of Tamil identity that showcases our culture to the world.

Jallikattu, which is inseparable from Tamil culture and tradition, not only showcases the valour of the Tamils but also reflects their respect for the bulls with whom they share a close bond. For this reason, the people, kings, and poets have supported and praised Jallikattu. It has been celebrated in literature, paintings, sculptures, coins, and seals. Language, literature, marriage, the bravery of men, the expectations of women, love, societal appreciation, and affection for the bull—all are encompassed in Jallikattu (alias) Eruthazhuvuthal.

Although the pronunciation has changed from 'Eruthazhuvuthal' and 'Sallikattu' to the current 'Jallikattu', the valour and culture of the Tamils remain unchanged. This topic covers the origin of

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Jallikattu, its cultural significance, literary and other evidence, the types of Jallikattu, the political changes it has faced, the types of bulls and their importance, and the legal battles fought for Jallikattu. This thousand-year-old cultural tradition has been comprehensively presented within these few pages.

Keywords: *Eruthazhuvuthal, Sallikattu, Jallikattu, Tradition.*

Introduction

Agriculture is the baseline of Tamilnadu and out of all the fairs, Pongal has robust emotional connectivity with the humans of Tamil Nadu. The villages of Tamil Nadu turn colourful at some stage in Pongal celebration with the houses decorated gorgeously without diluting the traditions. Sugar canes, sweets product of rice and pulses are specific to Pongal, adding fervour to the Pongal. Early within the morning on the day of Pongal, colorful Rangolis are visible anywhere with unique poojas and services to sun God.

Farmers have used cattle for various agricultural tasks. Bulls were used for all kinds of work, from ploughing and levelling the soil to drawing water from wells and threshing grain. Mattu Pongal is celebrated as a festival to bathe, adorn, and worship the bulls, who are considered the farmers' closest companions, and to express gratitude to them. Jallikattu (bull-taming) is an ancient, traditional sport of the Tamils, dating back several thousand years.

1.1 Meaning of Eruthazhuval or Jallikattu:

“Eru Thazhuval” (Eru means bull and Thazhuval means Taming). The name Jallikattu refers to the heroes who retrieve the bundle of 'salli' (coins) tied to the bull's horns. There was a custom of tying Indian coins called "salli kasu" in a cloth bundle to the horns of the bull. The warrior who subdued the bull would win this money bundle. This custom later evolved into Sallikattu. It is also said that in colloquial usage, it transformed into “Jallikattu”.

1.2 Origin of Eruthazhuval:

In ancient times, this was a custom for selecting the groom in a marriage, and a ritual where the man who tamed the bull was chosen as the groom.

There is no mention in literature of people from any other geographical region engaging in bull-taming except for those from the pastoral region (Mullai land), it is recognized as a distinctive cultural practice of the Tamils. In those times, land was considered immovable property, while cattle, which were synonymous with wealth, were considered movable property. Raiding the enemy's territory and seizing their herds of cattle was a war tactic used to provoke conflict. Since both those who stole the cattle and those who recovered them had to subdue the bulls, highway robbers and the warriors of the royal army were skilled in this art.

While bull-taming was a tradition only among the Ayar community during the Pandya rule, during the Nayak rule, they too conducted bull-taming events, and people from other communities also began to participate.

Eruthazhuval in Literature

Jallikattu is referred to as “Erutazhuvuthal” in Sangam literature. Works such as Kalithogai (Mullaikkali) Purapporul Venbamalai, Malaipadukadam, Pattinappalai, and Silappathikaram.

The people of the pastoral region would also make the powerful bulls in their lands fight against each other and celebrate with great enthusiasm. They would rejoice, considering the victory of these bulls as their own victory.

“கொல்லேற்றுக் கோடஞ்சு வானை, மறுமையும்

புல்லாளே ஆய மகள்

அஞ்சார் கொலை ஏறு கொள்பவர் அல்லாத நெஞ்சலார்

தோய்ப்பதற்கு அரிய -

உயிர் துறந்து நைவாரா ஆய மகள் தோள்.

In the commentary written by Nachinarkiniyar on this poem, it is stated that a cowherd girl will not desire a man who fears the bull's horns, even in his next life. At the end of the poem, after the subdued and unsubdued bulls have crossed the cattle pen and run into the fields, the bulls and the cowherd women dance and offer praises to Vishnu and the king. In ancient times, this bull-taming ritual was practiced among the cowherd people of the Mullai land, one of the five geographical divisions. The women of that time had sworn, "A cowherd girl will not embrace a man who fears the horns of a fierce bull, even in the next life."

The Sangam literature work Kalithogai clearly describes bull-taming.

‘எழுந்தது துகள்;
ஏற்றனர் மார்பு;
கவிழ்ந்தன மருப்பு;
கலங்கினர் பலர்”.

These lines provide clarity regarding the bull-taming arena.

Similarly, the humpbacked bulls pawed the ground with their hooves, raising dust. They kicked the earth with their feet and stood defiantly, facing each other. These bulls resembled warriors going to battle with pride and valour.

“இனத்தற் றீர்ந்த துளங்கம் னல்லேறு
மலைத்தலை வந்த மரையான் கதழ்விடை
மாறா மைந்தன் ஊறுபடத்தாக்கக்
கோவலர் குறவரோ டொருங்கயைந் தார்ப்பு
வள்ளிதழ்க் குளவியுங் குறிஞ்சியுங் குழைய
நல்லேறு பொருடும் கல்லென் கம்பலை”

as the Malaippadukadam text mentions.

‘நீர் எடுப்பவை, நிலம் சாடுபவை,
மாறுபேற்றுச் சிலைப்பவை, மண்டிப் பாய்பவை
துளங்கு இமல் நல் ஏற்றினம் பல களம்புகும்,

மள்ளர் வனப்பு ஒத்தன’ - Thus, the Kalithogai poem describes it.

In the section of the Kalithogai anthology dealing with the Mullai landscape, the colour and type of the bulls, their ferocity, the actions of the young men who tame them, the conversations of the women watching the bull-taming from atop platforms, and the nature of the parents of the young women are all vividly depicted. This bull-taming event, which had already become a structured practice two thousand years ago, must have originated many thousands of years before that.

Also, in Kalithogai states,

“தொழுவினுள் புர்பு புர்பு புக்க பொதுவரைத்
தெர்பு தெர்பு குத்தன ஓறு. – kaliththogai

Within the area where the bulls were confined, the bulls deliberately gored with their horns the herdsmen who willingly entered to catch them.

Other Sources of Eruthazhuval

A white kaolin cave rock painting found at Kalluthu Mettupatti near Madurai suggests a lone guy trying to govern a bull. other great, older rock paintings displaying bull-taming scenes were determined in the Theni district (Chitrakalpudavu) and near Usilampatti. It became greater than 1500 years antique painting.

The earliest proof consists of rock art work located at Karikkiyur within the Nilgiris district, which can be predicted to be over 3,500 years vintage. those paintings depict men chasing and trying to tame bulls with huge humps and lengthy, horns. The paintings on a large rock floor at Karikkiyur are carried out in white kaolin or red ochre, and display men chasing bulls, which appear to be a sturdy lot, with large humps and lengthy and horns.

Tamil-Brahmi Scripted coins (3rd Century BCE): An historic tin coin, doubtlessly dating to the 3rd or 4th century BCE at some point of the Sangam period, talents a more youthful man chasing a bull.

A 400-year-old "Hero stone" (Natukkal) located in Pethanaickenpalayam in Attur (Salem district) in 1976 is a noteworthy piece of evidence. It functions a sculpture of a bull tamer seeking to snatch the prize from the horns of a bull. The hero stone was installed is probably 17th century. The 6-foot stone structured Tamil text in seven lines that reads, "Kangan Magan Periya Payal natta kallu". It interprets to a dedication with the aid of a son, Periya Payal, for his father, Kangan of Kovur village, who died whilst collaborating in a bull-taming game at Karuvandurai.

A seal from the Indus Valley Civilization, preserved in the National Museum in New Delhi, vividly depicts a bull and a warrior attempting to subdue it, with the bull throwing the warrior into the air. This indicates that bull-taming was practiced as early as 2000 years ago.

We can hear many such incidents in many villages of Tamilnadu wherein the bull is honoured and revered as a 'nadukkal' deity, some other custom of the tamils to reward and worship the courageous and valorous soldier.

3.1 Types of Bulls:

The Tamils were familiar with many types of cattle. There were various breeds such as the black bull, Ninru Kuththi Bull, Pillai bull, Karampasu, Pullimadu and Mayilaikaalai

In 'Mullai Kali' songs from Sangam literature refers multiple bull names like suri nitri kaari, ven kaar kaari, thiran sandra kaari, nun pori vellai, pulli vellai and semaru vellai.

Similarly, Pallu literature mentions a few other bulls namely kudai komba, kuthu kulamban, madapulai, mayilai, mangal valan and extra.

Presently, pure native livestock breeds consisting of Pulikulam, Kangayam, Umblachery, Palingu cattle, and Malai madu are utilized in Jallikattu.

3.2 A Dance that Enhances Bravery (Kuravai Kooththu)

In those times, the Kuravai dance would be performed on the evening before or after the bull-taming event. Men and women of the shepherd community would dance together in this performance. The songs sung by the shepherd maidens would be either to encourage their lovers who were about to participate in the bull-taming, or to praise those who had successfully tamed the bulls.

3.3 The Foundation of Culture:

The Pongal festival which falls on mid of January, is widely known for three days. First day Pongal is thank giving for the sun god and nature, second day Mattu Pongal is thanks giving for the domestic animals specifically bulls and cows and the third day Kannu or Kanum Pongal is for young girls and women.

Jallikattu holds vast cultural significance in Tamil Nadu and is deeply rooted in its records. for plenty communities, the sport isn't always simply a leisure occasion but a quintessential part of their identification and traditions additionally to asses him for the wed-lock. The winner of the occasion offers a warranty that he is eligible to manage and keep his spouse and her assets. while a woman is born in a respectable circle of relatives, a bull was breed along with the female. It became the women within the households who reared the bull with wealthy food and rigorous practices for the competition. Even after the gradual decline of Tamil dynasties the sport was endured and celebrated as an image Tamil lifestyle, history and valour. at the identical time the game additionally has many political affiliations from the start of thirteenth century. for the duration of the Vijayanagar Nayakar reign, constant struggle and territory expansion, compelled the feudal

lords and Chieftains of the of Polygar or Palayams to encourage the sport to gain extra valiant youths for their army troops. Prize cash idea became famous, because the sponsors no longer willing to give their daughters for the winners because the caste differentiation began rooting its tentacles within the Tamil society.

Proponents of Jallikattu argue that banning or seriously restricting the sport infringes upon their cultural rights and deprives future generations of the possibility to connect with their ancestral background. They trust that retaining and celebrating Jallikattu is important for the cultural continuity and delight of the Tamil people. Jallikattu is a non-secular and sentimental cultural sport that had been carried out for more than thousand years ago. the sport is does now not have any caste, creed or religion, all people can participate in the game.

3.4 Importance of Bull:

In ancient times civilization depended more on animals and birds for shipping and communication, that may be domesticated. Horses entered the later era. Bulls and Bullock carts have been used for numerous purposes within the battle. In Tamilnadu for religious rituals, elephants, bulls and cows are patronized. The Hindu religion worship the Bull as Nandi Thevar and special poojas given to him on Pradhosha day.

The history of Tamils and their subculture praises the sport as an action of valour and an intimacy with the animal. the game also kills fear of the Bull and to tame the Bull, which serves in all domestic cause. when cattle are considered as a movable and profitable wealth, to seize the livestock as a warning or invitation to war was step one to invade one's enemy region. This action become praised as 'Aaaneeraai Kavarthai' (Aaa –farm animals, neerai- wealth, Kavarthai- seize). Aaaneeraai Kavarthai refers to a warning or a struggle invitation to the enemies.

3.5 Bull Training:

They are wild and handiest experienced cowherds can mingle with them correctly. The calves were decided on with in a position traits and physical structure. The calves are fed with nutritious food regimen to grow as a well-made

and strong beast. They are given swimming exercising now after which to strengthen their muscle mass. once they reach youth, they're taken to small competitions to familiarize with the surroundings, unique practices are given to the Eruthukattu Bulls. After initial enjoy the Bull understand concept the game of battle.

It's far groomed to be valorous, not to allow anyone to touch him, except his master. A skilled Bull is clever and tactful in the sport, as practiced by using his master. Many bulls are a proud member not simplest to the individual circle of relatives however to the complete village. The maximum powerful bull who has added great honour to the village have been even worshiped.

3.6 The Process of Eruthazhuval:

- 1) The name of the spot where the bull-taming festival takes place is Thozhuu.
- 2) They will announce that this festival is going to take place by making a public proclamation the day before.
- 3) The valiant man who is about to tame the bull will send word to his relatives.
- 4) On the night before the bull-taming event, the women and men will dance the Kuravai together.
- 5) The herdsman would often declare with a vow, "There is no one equal to me among the cowherds."
- 6) The common women go to greet all the injured and take them away.
- 7) Everyone will praise and glorify the wounded man.
- 8) They erected memorial stones and worshipped them to honour the bravery of those who had died

Types of Jallikattu:

Jallikattu is conducted in different ways in each region of Tamil Nadu.

4.1 Vadivasal Jallikattu:

Young men chase after the bulls that pop out through the 'Vaadivaasal' (entrance gate), grab the bull's hump, and preserve the bull under their manipulate for a certain distance or time.

4.2 Manjuvirattu:

"Manji" refers to a type of rope made by twisting fibers from the agave plant. Manju Virattu is a sport in which participants chase and catch bulls to retrieve gold coins, money pouches, new clothes, and bells tied to the bulls' horns with this "Manji rope." Later, the word "Manji" evolved into "Manju Virattu."

4.3 Vadam Jallikattu:

Vadam Manju Virattu, a bull is tied with a some-feet-long rope, and men pull and grip the bull from each side, even as a few individuals stand in front of it and try and take hold of the prize cash tied to its horns.

4.4 Veli Jallikattu:

In 'Veli Manjuvirattu', bulls are released into a field. They run without any restraint, and young men chase after them.

The Jallikattu event is not just about bravery; when a bull is embraced, if it manages to go a distance of 50 feet overcoming the resistance of the bull tamers, that bull is considered to be very virile and is sent for breeding. The bulls that are caught are used for agricultural purposes.

Political Influence

After the decline of bigger Palayams, Zamindari system took its turn to sponsor the game. It has become the 'gallery sport', a slim pathway with a gate is built that's referred to as 'vadivasal'. The game became ego based totally and the Zamindars breed sturdy ferocious bull, to retain their honour and pride.

The game took a political flip from nineteenth century. in the course of the Colonial Raj after eliminating the Polygar Chieftains, the British government banned independent troops and the Kaval groups. Within the Colonial Raj, the main sponsors of the sports were Village heads. The advent of the criminal Tribes Act in 1921, sluggish down the Jallikattu as most of the village heads had been either arrested or deported as criminal tribes, which affected the Jallikattu bull. But the game survived in spite of numerous obstacles resulting from the British Colonial Raj.

When the Independence movement annoyed from 1935, and the propaganda for abolishing criminal Tribes Act in Madras presidency severed, the period in-between congress government of C. Rajagopalachari popularly called Rajaji, then chief minister who supported the British to keep the criminal Tribes Act arranged government sponsored Jallikattu at Sindupatti near Madurai. The touring governor of Madras presidency became invited because the chief guest of the event.

The concept to sponsor the sport is to convince the British officials that the game became wild and barbaric and people who tame the Bull had been similarly barbaric and to justify the criminal Tribes Act. understanding the motive of conducting the sport, the occasion became definitely ignored by using the people under the command of Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar the chief of forward Bloc and the only protestor of the inhuman criminal Tribes Act in Madras presidency. His request turned into at once spoke back with great respect, humans disregarded the event.

After independence sport became persevered with enthusiasm and with freedom. In 2004, the sport faced a brand-new risk, The Animal Welfare Board of India took the case to the Supreme court, considering an outright ban on jallikattu because of the cruelty to animals and the danger to public protection worried.

A committee was formed known as ‘Tamizhar Veera Vilayatu Peravai’ which become headed by P. Rajasekaran from Madurai. With the help of the Tamil Nadu government, he appealed against the claim of Animal Welfare Board in supreme court of India. On November 27, 2010 the supreme court in accordance with the regulation enacted at the regulation of events, accepted the Tamil Nadu authorities to allow Jallikattu for five months in a year from January 15 with the terms and conditions.

Jallikattu in Southern Districts

The Tamil cultural festival of Jallikattu is held in places like Alanganallur, Palamedu, Avaniyapuram, and Peraiyur in Madurai district; Siravayal, Singampunari, Puthur, and Araliparai in Sivaganga district; and Narthamalai in Pudukkottai district, as well as in Trichy and Theni.

Struggles for Jallikattu

The Bench ordered that the events should be conducted strictly in compliance with a series of interim orders passed by the Supreme Court on the issue January 2008, the safeguards provided under the Tamil Nadu Regulation of Jallikattu Act, 2009 and additional safety measures.

In 2012, The Madras High Court permitted the conduct of Jallikattu to conduct Jallikattu in eight places between January 15 and 29. But, PETA has filed a case to ban Jallikattu in Supreme Court. Subsequently, the Supreme Court was banned Jallikattu in 2014.

From that onwards, Jallikattu didn't take place in Tamil Nadu for 3 consecutive years. The Pro Jallikattu protest started in Alanganallur (Madurai district) and rapidly spread to all parts of Tamil Nadu. The 2017 Pro – Jallikattu protest is the protest against Supreme court's order to ban Jallikattu in Chennai Marina. The protest was done by various groups of youngsters & students in mass without specific leadership. The Pro Jallikattu protest was held in all over Tamil Nadu and also in some places across India and in foreign countries. On Jan 23, 2017 the protest ended when the Tamil Nadu Government passed an ordinance to amend the PCA act to revoke ban on Jallikattu. On February 2nd, 2018, a Supreme Court Constitution Bench will also decide whether States have the powers to enact rules under the PCA Act and refers all petitions filed against the sport to a Constitution Bench. 18 May 2023: A five judge Constitution Bench dismissed petitions challenging constitutionality of Jallikattu and upheld the validity Tamil Nadu laws protecting the sport.

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