

**Tribal Literature: A Study with Special Focus on Oral
Traditions and Myths of Tribes of Wayanad District of
Kerala**

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Chapter-1

Introduction

Human beings are different from other animals as they are symbol making, meaning-seeking and meaning assigning creatures. Pre-literate societies, like contemporary tribal societies, make symbols and give meaning through various art forms. Myths, legends, songs and storytelling play an essential role in transmitting these assigned meanings to the next generation. When myths and legends act as the storehouse of information thus evolved, performances like songs, dance, drama, music, drawing, painting, etc., are the communicative devices. In their search for a functional relationship between culture and the development of different art forms, much has been researched by social anthropologists and folklorists. To understand the meaning of such art forms, they should be studied in their specific cultural setting and context. Anthropologists and folklorists see self-expression of communities' life, aspirations, belief systems, worldviews, and social behaviour and value systems in such artistic expressions. Here in this study, the effort is to understand the relationship between different myths, legends, songs, stories and other art forms and their ramifications on the culture of that society where it belongs.

The intimate association of the everyday life of the tribal and the crises in their lives are reflected in their different art forms and performances like dances. Planting new seedlings, harvesting, hunting, and life cycle rituals on the occasion

of birth, first feeding, ear boring, puberty, marriage, death etc., are all occasions to celebrate by performing dances and engaging in other art forms. One of the essential aspects of tribal dance performances is that there are no differences between performers and observers. All who assemble will participate in it and at the end of the performance, the entire community will become emotionally one. The tribes mostly have a myth for every occasion, a song for every myth and a dance for every song. The prime function of such arrangements is the building of group solidarity. They were mostly attached to the community's ritual performance, giving it a sacerdotal or spiritual ambience. Thus it ensures the community's solidarity, at least at the emotional and expressive level. The dynamic sharing makes the community, which is otherwise tensed and worried some, forget their troubles for the time being and enjoy the companionship and the community togetherness. Tribal dances are natural, informal, and intuitive and everyone in the community participates in them voluntarily. According to Joseph (2004:89), three types of dances are found among the tribes of Kerala: war dance, ritual dance and festival dance. Among them, ritual dances are the most prevalent type of dance. *Onakali*, *vettu thada* of the Malavedars are instanced as the examples of war dance. *Gadhika* of Adiyar is an example of ritual dance. It is performed to cure diseases and ward off evil eyes. *Vattakali* of Paniyan and *Kolkali* of Mullukuruman are performed during festivals.

Though *vattakali* is performed by many tribes in the Wayanad district of Kerala, like Adiyar, Paniyan, Kattunaikkan, Mullukuruman and Wayanadan

Chetti, the style, the pattern of movement, dress, and occasion are all different. It is known by different names among them; *Paniyarkali* among the Paniya, *Naicker kali* among the Kattunaickans, *Kurumar kali* among the Mullukuruma etc.

The patterns of movements of tribal dances are varied and different among different tribes and according to different types of dances of the same tribe. The standard form of dance among the tribes is a circular pattern. Line dance, curve dance, serpent dance, spreading out and returning to the centre type of dance are the other pattern of movement of tribal dances. The postures of dances are also different among different tribes. Some will be dancing standing erect, and in many cases, they lean forward and dance. In some instances, they clap while they dance.

Musical accompaniment is an essential aspect of tribal dance. We can hardly find any society dancing without the accompaniment of different musical instruments. The tempo, mood and manner of the dance are decided and controlled by the rhythm and tune of the musical instruments. Sometimes the dancers themselves play the musical instruments while dancing, and at other times the musicians will be separate from the dancers, and they decide the mood. The tools they use are simple and made by the tribal people themselves with readily available materials found around their habitat. Dance and music go together in tribal dance. 'Music is the dancing of words, and dance is the music of the body' (Iyer, 1968:123). The musical instruments used by many of the tribal

communities of Kerala can be seen having a myth or history deeply rooted in the customs and practises with origin history, legend or belief system. The *Haddikka Buruda* of Kattunaickan, *Kokkara* of Kanikkar, *Eluppam Petti* of Uralis, *Chini* and *Tudi* of Adiya and Paniya are not mere musical instruments but have great significance in terms of their relations with their magical, shamanic and ritual practises. *Haddikka Buruda* is a dry fruit case of a creeper into which tiny seeds or beads are put in through a small hole drilled on one side and then sealed with wax and produces a rattling sound when shaken. During *Haddikayadal*, the shaman dances around the patient rattling away and calling on the spirits and deities and getting possessed with an afflatus which enables him to divine and declare the cause of a problem. The *Haddikayadal* of Kattunaickan, *Chattu* of Kanikkar, and *Gaddika* of Adiyar are religious and magical rites known after the name of the musical instruments such communities used. The intervention of the supernatural is part and parcel of Kanikkar's life. The *plathy* (the magico-religious functionary), the musical instrument *kokkara*, and the *chattu* can invoke blessings and relief in every conceivable situation. The multiplicity of deities is reflected in a corresponding variety of magical practices. At all life cycle rituals, the *plathy* recites specific *mantrams*. The medicinal knowledge of the use of herbs is closely associated with the *Plathy's* magico-religious lore. Among the Kattunaickan, diseases are sought to be cured by prayer. The headman takes the *Haddikka Buruda* (holy seed-filled gourd), shakes it, and sings for an easy cure to the gods. This is repeated until the patient is either cured or dies. So strong is their belief in

this treatment. So is Uralis, who have great faith in the supernatural powers of the *plathy*. They believe that he can save the life of a person on the verge of death and diagnose the cause of ailments by simply playing music on hand drums and singing *chattu* songs. The *kokkara* is a tube about 23 centimetres long made of sheet iron, serrating joining and the opposite side. The player holds it in the left hand and draws an iron pin over the serrated edges to and fro, quickly producing a rasping musical note. It is used to accompany the recital at the *chattu* or religious functions of the tribe. Thus one can easily assume the relationship between the belief system and the different art forms among the tribal communities of Kerala. The mythical stories of the origin of the musical instruments of Bettakkuruma of Wayanad have been discussed in this report in some detail.



Kokkara of Kanikkar



Haddikka Buruda of Kattunaickan

When we talk about the oral traditions of the communities, especially tribes, it is generally categorised under the branch of studies called folklore. According to Alan Dundes (1965), the term folk “refers to any group of people who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is- it could be a common occupation, language or religion- but what is important is that a group formed still has some traditions which it calls its own”. Generally, though wrongly, the term folk is believed to be associated with pre-literate or rustic societies. Folk lore thus is the lore of the folk. William John Thomas coined the term in 1846. Nowadays, the term tribal-lore is increasingly used in discourses to distinguish it from the oral traditions of rural communities. The theory of structuralism in folklore owes a great deal to Claude Levi Strauss. Levi Strauss

analysed myths as binary oppositions. Strauss based his theory drawing the ideas heavily from the linguistic theory of de Saussure and others.

Folklore comprises different genres as per its art forms like verbal folklore, performing folklore, physical folklore and scientific lore (S.Nair, P 1993). Folklore expressed in verbal forms like oral narratives, songs, proverbs, riddles, myths and legends will come under verbal folklore. The performing lore is those who are mostly part of the ritual performances as part of the folk tradition. *Theyyam* performances which are a prevalent form of performances in the *kavus* (a shrine) and temples of north Malabar are an actual example of this. Physical folklore includes all those which have some form of visibility. The archery among the Kurichia tribe of Wayanad and the *Kalari payattu* of North Malabar are examples. Fortune telling and folk medicine are examples of scientific folklore.

It would be a pertinent question in the Indian context to know who is a tribe. During more than two hundred years of British colonisation, different typologies and expressions have been introduced like tribes, non-tribes, primitive tribes, hill tribes, forest tribes, animists, criminal tribes, backward tribes, notified tribes, de-notified tribes etc. The term indigenous people, which is prevalent in the rest of the world, has not been used in the Indian context because every citizen in India is considered indigenous. The tribals are not a special kind of human beings, but every community has unique relations with the environment in which they live, which is reflected in their way of living. Others sometimes describe this particular kind of relationship. The terms used above distinguish one from the other and

categorise them into specific categories. These categorisations have nothing to do with their worldviews and ways of living and the special relationship they maintained with the natural environment in which they are living. Most of the art forms the tribal people developed are their immediate response to their living environment. Their strict observation of the natural phenomena, their understanding of such phenomena, and their reaction towards them are formed in the way of rituals and ceremonies. Most of the phenomena they do not have an answer to, or understanding are visualised to view by giving a religious tone relating it to the almighty. All strategies for managing forests and water are a matter of tribal art- whether it is song, music, painting or dance. The tribes maintained constant communication with the world of spirits. Many of the dances and other art forms we see today have their origin as rituals that they have developed to maintain their relationship and appease these spirits. Many of the artefacts with which they held a special kind of relationship could be found assigned with sacred and auspicious meanings. Tribal arts are conceived to access nature's generative, benignant, and malignant forces through exorcism, benediction, propitiation, and fecundation. It would be appropriate to associate tribal art forms with their immediate response to the environment and cheerful, active and sustainable approaches to life management, mainly in an unfriendly and difficult natural setting they live in.

The major art forms of tribes primarily consist of dance, storytelling, painting, riddles etc. Though some degree of sophistication is apparent, these art forms are

not sophisticated as the classical art forms of the mainstream cultures. A considerable part of them have developed as part of their religious rituals, and some of them have by now attained the stage of performing arts. Studying a particular instance and finding its socio-cultural context has become a significant genre of study. The levels of sophistication of different art forms in other communities are also relevant.

Alan Lomax, the renowned American ethnomusicologist and folklorist, who recorded thousands of folk songs, in his book on “folksong style and culture” (1968) evolved a set of tools known as *Cantometrics* for ethnomusicological analysis. Using these tools, he tried to study Ethno music in its cultural context. Lomax thought that ‘song among the tribal is usually a joint communication often combined with dance that links the whole community in a concerted action’. Tribal songs, stories, myths and legends are mainly oral narratives. Oral narratives are of different kinds. These narratives range from tales and songs to long stories and verses with several subplots. The Adiya and Paniya songs are short stanzas compiled momentarily/instantly as per one’s imagination and ingenuity. The songs of Paniya and Adiya, other than those related to their belief system, are simple non-sense. At the same time, Kurichia songs are found to be long stanzas and have seen the influence of the *vadakkanpattu* tradition that existed in North Malabar. One problem with the long stanzas is that one respondent always found it challenging to provide the full version as he has forgotten the lines in between. The Kurichia have a rich treasure of songs. The

verses' fullness and poetic beauty are explicit. The tribal songs can be broadly identified into two groups, ritual and non-ritual songs. The ritual songs are sung at different life cycle ritual events to appease their gods, goddesses and innumerable spirits. It is also sung to cure diseases. These songs are sung mostly by their religious or ritual specialists, who sometimes act as the intermediary between them and their gods. Because of their association with their gods, ritual songs are different from non-ritual songs in their content. Exceptions are also there. For example, the songs of Paniyar sung during the *deyvakkoduti*, the annual worship to appease their gods, are mainly nonsense verses. At the same time, non-ritual songs are primarily compiled for entertainment and enjoyment purposes, and sometimes it reflects the complex realities of their life.

Most of the tribal communities have their origin myths. The origin myths of Adiya and Paniya and that of Bettakkuruma are found astoundingly similar. Though there are differences in minute details, all these communities trace their origin from a brother and sister forced to marry due to the outside intervention, mostly supernatural. The different art forms that are evolved and developed among the tribal communities can trace their origin to their different rituals and ceremonies performed during life cycle events and in their belief systems. If we want to understand the meaning and evolution of such art forms in their cultural context, studying their life cycle rituals is an essential prerequisite.

Apart from what we have discussed above, many folk games, culinary habits, and customs are on the verge of extinction among the tribal communities, which

can also be seen as part of their folklore. One such practice that is becoming obsolete is teeth chipping, which was prevalent among some tribal communities of Kerala and discussed in some detail by Edgar Thurston (1909) and Iyer LKA (1909). It was commonplace among the Kadar and Mala Veda tribes. The custom was that of chipping all or some of the incisor teeth, both upper and lower, into the form of a sharply pointed cone. The chipping is done with a chisel or bill-hook by fellow tribesmen on the boys at the age of eighteen and the girls at the age of ten. A similar practice existed among some tribes in the Malay Peninsula, Africa and Australia. Another such practice which was once prevalent among many tribal communities was tattooing. The skin was pricked using a needle or a long thorn of the citrus plant. Blood would flow, and the pain was severe. Charcoal powder from the burnt coconut shells mixed with breast milk was applied over the pricks. Tattooing is considered to be done to enhance personal beauty.

The tribals also have a well-established tradition of herbal medicine associated with magico-religious practices for curing diseases. Their pharmacopoeia includes plants in their habitat. Proverbs and riddles are also folklore materials that are apt to reveal the people's worldview. Many of these proverbs and riddles are more or less similar to them existed among the non-tribal Kerala communities. They have ideas regarding earthquakes, thunder, rainbow, eclipses etc. For example, the Muthuvan tribes believe that earthquake results when the goddess who bears the earth aloft shifts the weight from one shoulder

to another. Thunder is attributed to their belief that devas roll heavenly stones, and lightning result when the wind god move stones. When the heavenly serpent coils around the sun, eclipses are caused. The rainbow is believed to be the bow of Arjuna.

From the oral traditions, including their songs, tales and myths of origin, one thing is sure. The oral traditions of each group are reflections of what they are and what they aspire to be. That is why the folklore of the Paniya are broodings of a passive group while that of Kurichiar is ambitious and full of courage. The two different levels of social positioning of the two communities living in the same locality can be understood from the self-pity of the one and the self-confidence of the other, a reflective of the history and anthropology of the two communities living in the same environment and different cultural planes.

The Present Work

The present work attempts to collect and analyse the folk tales, songs, myths of origin, dance forms etc., of tribes of the Wayanad area of Kerala state. The effort is also made to understand the cultural background of each tribe to understand them in its cultural setting and backdrop. Their customs and practices are also discussed in some detail, without which the understanding of their folklore will be incomplete. The following tribes have been studied as part of this project.

1. The Adiya/Adiyan/Adiyar
2. The Paniya/Paniyan/Paniyar

3. The Kurichia/Kurichian/Kurichiar
4. The Bettakkuruma/ Bettakkuruman/Bettakkurumar/
Bettakkurumba/Uralikkuruma
5. The Thachanadan Mooppan

The present work has tapped only a tip of what is in stock in the vast realm of tribal folklore. The outbreak of the pandemic has affected the collection of data drastically. Mythology is timeless and ageless. It keeps on changing. The peripheral studies like this open up the scope for further research in the vast ocean of tribal folklore.

Chapter-2

The History of Wayanad and its People

Wayanad is a projection of the Deccan plateau in Kerala. It is a continuation of the Mysore plateau and is contiguous to the Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu. The historical past of the human habitation in Wayanad is unknown; still, it is presumed that Wayanad has been inhabited since Neolithic times. The Paniyan, the most numerous tribal community in the state, and the Adiyar are the representatives of the earliest food gathering settlers of Wayanad. The Kurichian and the Mullukuruman, on the other hand, represent the first farming communities that migrated from the plains of Kerala and settled in different parts of Wayanad. Tribal communities like Bettakkuruma and Kattunaickan are believed to have migrated from the Mysore region as their language has an affinity with Kannada. Besides, there are also other communities like Kunduvadiyan, Thachanadan Mooppan, Kanaladi, Urindavan etc., who exhibit tribal characteristics. Castes and communities like Nayar, Ezhava, Muslims and Christians from the plains of Kerala, Gounders and Chetties from the Mysore region migrated and settled in Wayanad during different historical times.

The early political history of Wayanad is also not clear. The Kottayam Rajas extended and established their rule over Wayanad towards the end of the seventeenth century. During their regime, the area was divided into different *Nadus* like *Moothor Nadu*, *Elor Nadu*, *Muttill Nadu*, *Tonder Nadu* etc., each under

a Nayar chieftain for administrative purposes. The rivalry among these local Chieftains widened during this period and witnessed large-scale immigration of plainsmen from the Kottayam area and the consequent spread of agriculture in the valley lands of the region. The new owners confiscated the fertile lands, and the tribes were enslaved. As the permanent cultivation expanded, there was a corresponding increase in the incidence of slavery. The Nayar lords who possessed the *Jenmom* lands of the Nambudiri Brahmins and the Nattu Rajas on *Kanom* tenure subleased tenancy to Ezhavas and Muslims (Kunhaman, 1989:44).

The Chetties and Gowdams from the Mysore region purchased forest lands for permanent cultivation in 1773. They faced acute labour shortage as all the available labour force was already attached to individual landlords. They, therefore, brought with them large numbers of Paniyans and Adiyans from the Mysore and Nilgiri districts (Kunhaman, 1989:43).

The tribes were held in three types of tenure system-*Jenmom*- in which the total value of the enslaved person was paid, *Kanom* – under which the labour was utilised by the master on the payment of a loan and be redeemed on the cost of the loan and –*Pattom* – under which the enslaved people were rented to another master for his work (LAK Iyer, 1968:60).

The Mysore ruler Hyder Ali and his son Tippu defeated Kerala rulers and established their authority in 1766, and their regime continued till 1792 when the British conquered them. In the first decade of the 19th century, after the defeat of the Tippu Sultan, Pazhasi Raja rose in revolt against the British. He had to

withdraw to Wayanad, where the Kurichiyas, under the leadership of Thalakkal Chandu opposed the British baffling them with their guerrilla tactics. The Kurichiyas continued the skirmishes. The leading cause of discontent was the collection of land revenue in cash. In 1812 the Kurichiyas rose in revolt, and though they had some initial success, the British finally suppressed the revolt. The British regime continued till 1947.

Relics of Hindu and Jaina religions dating back to the 10th century AD are found in different parts of Wayanad. The Gounders are the modern representatives of the Jaina religion. The famous Vishnu temple at Thirunelli is believed to be 1200 years old.

The Pazhasi revolt of 1800-1805 against the British resulted in the developing of internal communication in Wayanad. From 1810 to 1830, the Kannur-Nidumpoyil road and the Peria Ghat roads were constructed. The large scale cultivation of plantation crops has resulted in the construction of roads to the seas at Thalassery and Kozhikode for export.

The opening up of the Wayanad plateau to outside people was greased with the expansion of plantations in Wayanad. At the end of the 18th century, the British company started a plantation at Anjarakandi to cultivate cardamom, coffee etc. It found its way to Wayanad with its success, and coffee became the major plantation crop. By the end of the 18th century, several tea estates also sprouted in Wayanad. The plantation that the Brown Sayippu started in Anjarakandy in

1797 (five years after the British rule was established in Malabar) at about 200 acres of land had expanded to 3000 acres by the end of 1810.

In 1886 the population density in Wayanad was 147 per sq. km, and it increased to 675 in 1981. Till 1931 the tribal people constituted the majority in Wayanad, and today they are roughly one out of six. It is roughly estimated that about five lakhs of people from central Travancore belonging to about 80,000 families immigrated and settled in the hill tracts of Malabar. The process of immigration began by the end of the 1920s and reached its peak by 1945-55.





Map of Wayanad District

The people

Wayanad is the abode of several communities, both tribes and non-tribes. They migrated and settled in Wayanad during different historical periods. While Nairs, Christians and Muslims form the numerically dominant groups, Kerala and Tamil Brahmins, Tiyas, Harijans, Kannada speaking Gounders and Chetties form the less numerous communities. The Muslims came to Wayanad along with Tippu Sultan and settled in various parts of Wayanad as petty traders. The Christians “invasion” started after establishing British rule in Wayanad as workers in plantations, and their later migration began by the end of the 1920s.

The major Scheduled Tribal communities of the district are Adiyar, Paniyan, Kurichiar, Mullukuruman, Kattunaickan and Bettakkuruma. Brief descriptions of these communities are given below.

The Adiya/Adiyan/Adiyar

The Adiyans used to be bonded labourers under the absentee landlords (*janmies*). They are concentrated in the Thirunelli, Thrissileri and Vemom villages of Mananthavadi Taluk. They are also sparsely populated in the adjoining areas of the Kannur district. The population of Adiyans, as per the estimate of the 1991 census, were 9,640, out of which 4,792 were males, and 4898 were females. According to a survey conducted by the Scheduled Tribe Development Department of the Government of Kerala in 2008, the total population of the Adiyans in the Wayanad district was 11196, spreading across 2570 families (GOK 2013). The 2011 census enumerated 11526 of them.

The Adiyans were bought and sold during the annual festival in the shrine at Valliyurkavu near Mananthavadi. Though slavery was abolished in 1842, they continued to be attached to the lands of the lords just like slaves as bonded labourers. These conditions have ceased with the enforcement of the Bonded Labour Abolition Act of 1976. But it had curtailed the social security enjoyed by them when the landlords disowned the responsibility of looking after them even when they were not actually employed. This situation has forced them to join the mass of landless labourers, competing for job opportunities with the settlers. The Adiyans are primarily landless. Non-skilled casual labour on a daily paid basis is the main source of income for the community. Decrease in the agricultural land and the spread of the plantations, changes in the cropping pattern etc., have curtailed the availability of job opportunities to the Adiyans to the minimum.

Since they were agricultural serfs in the paddy lands, their expertise in the works associated with plantation was limited, so they were rarely employed. Many of them had to migrate seasonally to the nearby Karnataka areas searching for work in the ginger fields there. Sometimes the whole family, including the children or the husband and wife, will shift temporarily to work there. The children will be left under the custody of elders or other relatives.

One of the significant evils prevalent among them is the addiction to liquor. A substantial part of the income of the community's male members goes for the country liquor that is readily available at the interstate borders with Karnataka. The community members, irrespective of their age and sex, are attracted to the hotel food and cinema.

Divorces and remarriages are prevalent. This has a negative impact on the socialisation process of the children. In the absence of proper parental care, the children could not continue their studies and had to find their way from a very early age. Non-availability of land for cultivation, scarcity of work, illiteracy, seasonal migration in search of work, loose family ties, excessive expenses on liquor, sexual exploitation and attraction for hotel food, cinema, tobacco etc., have become the main barriers to their development prospects. The Adiyani women became susceptible to sexual exploitation. Many tribal women were enticed by promises of marriages and then abandoned after they bore children. There are several unwed mothers and many more fatherless children in that community.

The Paniya/Paniyar/Paniyan

The Paniyans are the largest single tribe in Kerala, with a population of 67,948 as per the 1991 census. According to a survey conducted by the Scheduled Tribe Development Department of the Government of Kerala in 2008, the total population of the Paniyans in the Wayanad district was 69116, spreading across 15876 families (GOK 2013:43). 88450 is their total population in the state as per the 2011 census. The Paniyans, like the Adiyans, also were bonded labourers under the absentee landlords called the *janmies*. The centre of the bonding contract was the famous Devi temple at Valliyurkavu near Mananthavadi. When the British opened up the area for forming coffee and tea estates, Paniyans were employed at meagre wages. The prosperity of Wayanad as an exporter of coffee, cardamom, pepper etc., has been founded on the profuse sweat of many and the occasional blood of some martyred Paniyan families.



A Paniya woman

When the forest regulations were not so strict, they often engaged in hunting small animals and birds using traps. They also collected different varieties of roots, tubers, fruits, flowers and leaves for their subsistence. Fishing

and crab catching also contributed substantially to the food supply. Today they are totally dependent on wage labour for their subsistence.

The history of Paniyans is the history of exploitation by different groups of people. They had been enslaved by the Nayar overlords and exploited by Muslim traders. Whatever the few possessions they had in the form of land had been grabbed by land-hungry immigrant settlers. Like their Adiyani counterparts, they are addicted to liquor, and a significant share of their earnings go for this purpose. They have an attraction towards hotel food and cinema. The literacy rate of Paniyans is also meagre compared to other tribal communities like Kurichiya and Mullukuruman, and only 11.02% of them were literate during the 1981 census. The mass literacy campaign in Kerala has succeeded in making adults literate. The poor economic base, indifferent attitude towards education, loose family ties, problems in the socialisation process etc., caused for the frequent dropout of children from schools. Non-availability of land for cultivation, scarcity of work, illiteracy, addiction to liquor, tobacco etc., are the major problems faced by the community.



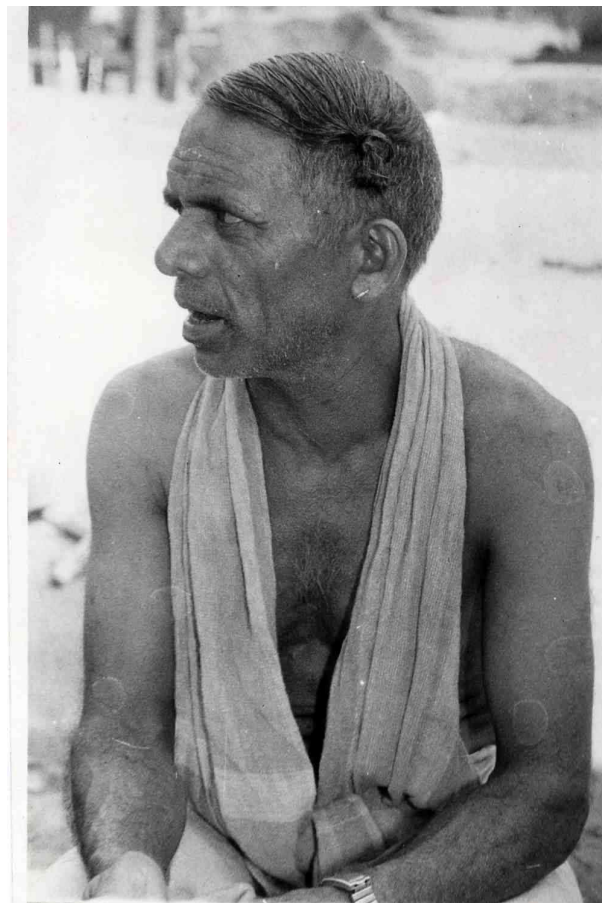
Paniya Dance

Paniyar has different ritual songs related to different life cycle rituals. There are three main rituals related to death. They are *Karimpola* (seventh day), *Kakka pola* (second year) and *Adakampola* (third year). During these rituals, the priest (*Attali*) sings songs for hours, narrating the ethnic history of the Paniya tribe. They also remember their ancestors in these songs and bring them to the ritual ground. This song is called *Penapattu*. Paniya belongs to the *Chettadian* clan (*kulam*). Therefore, each Paniya is called *Chettadian* (Raju 1999:1).

The Kurichia/Kurichiya/Kurichiar/Kurichian

The Kurichiar are the first agricultural tribe to have settled in Wayanad. According to the 2011 census, the total population of the Kurichiar in the state is 35171. They used to observe untouchability with all except Nambudiri Brahmins and Wayanadan Nayars. A Paniyan or Adiyar pollute the Kurichia even at a distance of nine feet. They have their own language, but they speak a dialect of

Malayalam. The chief occupation of the Kurichiyas is agriculture. Most of them owned land even though the British confiscated the bulk of their holdings. They adopted settled cultivation with paddy in the low lands and *ragi* (a millet) in the uplands. They retained the natural woodlands for their fuel and timber needs and as a habitat for wildlife, which they culled during their ritual hunts. With the incursion of encroachers and settlers, much of their lands fell into the hands of the settlers and were denuded. Agriculture, animal husbandry and hunting are their major economic activities.



A Kurichia Man

They continued to follow matriliney and, till very recently, lived in joint families with thirty to a hundred members. The Kurichian joint family called *mittom* constituted the self-sufficient economic unit of Kurichian society. Members of three or four generations lived together, sharing a single kitchen, and all ancestral property was owned collectively and inherited strictly matrilineally. The Kerala land reform act gave a jolt to the Kurichian joint family system as it imposed ceiling limits on the area in which a joint family could hold. Legal provisions enabling deemed partitions in such cases tended to break down the monolithic structure of the *mittom*.

Though they were reluctant to accept changes initially due to their cultural exclusivity, economic self-sufficiency and conservatism, they could easily sense the trend of global change and slowly adapted to the situation. Though taboos about pollution initially inhibited Kurichian parents from sending their children to schools, they are better and more educated than other tribal communities in the area.



A Kurichia couple

The Mullukurumans/Mullukuruma/Mullukurumba

Agriculture is the main occupation of this settled landowning community. The main crop is paddy, which is cultivated in the hollows and flatlands and on the moderate slopes. Generally, each household has three categories of land-based on topography. The first is the *vayal* (wetland); the higher level lands adjacent to the *vayal* are called *thottam*. Still higher up on the slopes, the land is known as *vettuparambu*, literally meaning slash and dry land. Besides paddy, they cultivate *ragi*, *sama*, chillies, coffee, banana, pepper, vegetables etc. Hunting and fishing were part and parcel of their economic and ritual life as both these activities have social and ritual significance.

All, including children, engage themselves in the collection of Minor Forest Produce (MFP). Poultry and animal husbandry are usually the concern of the women; women also used to engage in hand pounding paddy for the local landowning families of other communities like Nayars and Wayanadan Chetties. Still, nowadays, the rice mills have made hand pounding economically and technologically obsolete. Several men and women are employed as casual and regular workers in various coffee and tea estates.

The Mullukuruman have clan divisions among them, and the generic term for the clan is *kulam*. They believe that all the members of a particular clan are descended from the same female ancestress. A person belongs to their mother's clan. Inheritance of property and succession to traditional offices is patrilineal. There are several patrilineal lineages which determine the residence pattern, authority etc. A few decades back, they had a strong tribal council called *muppanmar kuttam* headed by a chief, and the council is now obsolete. Most of the lands of this traditionally landowning community had been alienated by the settlers who flowed into the area after independence. Many of the Mullukuruman are compelled to become casual labourers in what had been their land. Compared to other tribal communities, the Mullukuruman show greater eagerness to get their children enrolled in school education.



A Mullukurumba House

Mullukurumas have a rich collection of folk songs sung as part of *Vattakali* or *Kolkali* dances. They perform these dances during the marriage or their village festivals. Only men folk participate in these dances. It is entirely different from *Paniya Vattakali*. These songs are sung in Malayalam, and their themes are related to their gods, heroes, and other topics.

The Kattunaicka/Kattunaickans/Kattunaickar

In Kerala, the 1991 census reported their population as 12,155. It has increased to 18199 by the 2011 census. They are now in the third phase of their economic transformation in the history of the community from a self-sustained group who lived in the forest by foraging and hunting to a stage of agriculturists and agricultural labourers through an intermediary phase of bonded labour under landlords. They were mainly hunters and gatherers of forest produce with

sporadic shifting cultivation around their settlements. Now, non-skilled casual work on a daily paid basis with some agriculture on the plots, which they possess, and occasional foraging in the forest form the mainstay of the majority. The other tribal communities of Wayanad consider themselves the lowest in the social hierarchy.

The Kattunaickan as a community lacks a highly patterned or structured social organisation. The nuclear family is the base of their social structure; even the family is loosely united. A husband or wife may desert his / her partner after a quarrel. The Kattunaickan are generally found living in uni-ethnic settlements in the deep forest isolated from others. These factors have made it difficult for the development process to reach them. The literacy rate among the Kattunaickan is low compared to other tribal communities, and their children do not do as well as other tribal children in the schools. One of the positive things regarding Kattunaickan is that those living in the outskirts of forests mingled with different groups of people are quickly taking up innovations.



A Kattunaicka woman

The Bettakkuruma/Uralikuruma

The Bettakkuruma, one of the few tribal artisans in India, is found in the north-eastern and central parts of the Wayanad district. This community provided earthenware, agricultural implements, baskets, etc., to their neighbouring communities in their traditional social set-up. Their handmade pottery was very famous. The census authorities have not enumerated them as a separate community as they are returned along with the Mullukuruman. Now their traditional occupation has become more or less obsolete, and they are mainly finding employment as casual agricultural labourers in the estates and paddy fields. They also find work in the forest department as firewatchers, seed collectors etc. Women are finding subsidiary occupations in basketry, mat

weaving etc. Educationally they are better off than the Adiyans and Paniyans but far behind the Kurichiya and Mullukuruman. Breakdown of their traditional occupations like basketry, pottery and black smithy and non-availability of raw materials for baskets, scarcity of employment etc., are the major problems the community faces today.

The Bettakkuruma, one of the few tribal artisans in India, is found in the north-eastern and central parts of Wayanad, with their concentration in Thirunelli, Panamaram, Poothadi, Nool Puzha, Mullan Kolli, Kaniyampatta, Ambalavayal and Nenmeni panchayats. This community provided the earthenware, agricultural implements, baskets etc., to their neighbouring communities in their traditional social set-up. Their handmade pottery was very famous. The census authorities have not enumerated them as a separate community as they are returned along with the Mullukuruman.

Thurston (1975 (Reprint): iv, 165), quoting the Malabar District Gazetteer, has described them as one of the three subgroups of Kurumbas, the other two being the Jen or Ten (Honey) Kurumbar (also called as Kadu or Shola Naykkan) and Mullukurumbas. Kapp(1985: 454) has pointed out that “ Kurumba” as a collective term is used for the following seven communities viz, Alu Kurumbar, Palukurumbar, Muduga, Bettakurumba, Jenu Kurumba, Mullukurumba and

Uralikurumba. However, a household survey conducted by Babu (1992) records 4370 Uralikurumba, out of which 2233 were males and 2137 were females. Though they were not scheduled separately, they enjoyed all the benefits of Scheduled Tribes under the general category of “Kurumbar”. They have been included in the Scheduled Tribes list of Kerala separately as Bettakkuruma.



A Bettakkuruma House

The local people usually refer to the Bettakkuruma as ‘Uralis’, but the Urali Kuruma themselves prefer to be known as Bettakkuruma. The Urali tribe of the Idukki district is entirely a different ethnic group, and they have nothing in common with the Uralikuruma of Wayanad.

They have a language of their own called “Uralibasha”. They can converse both in Malayalam and Kannada. The settlements of Bettakkuruma are found either in the forest or in its margins, and they live primarily in cluster settlements. Their traditional houses have one

sleeping room, one kitchen and one veranda. The roof is made of a wild variety of grass which is locally available, and the walls are made of plaited bamboo reeds filled the gap with mud and cow dung. The houses are built on a raised platform from the ground. Nowadays, most of them stay in mainly designed homes provided by the government. These houses have tiled roofs, one sleeping room, one kitchen and a veranda.

One thatched shed erected on four wooden pillars without any sidewalls, almost at the centre of the settlement, called *ambalam*, is a unique feature of the Bettakkuruma settlement. It is the working house cum council room cum dormitory, or in other words, it is the centre of Bettakkuruma life itself. Visitors from the neighbouring settlements are received and accommodated here.

A notable feature of their social organisation is the patrilineal clan system, and each clan comprises several *keera*, viz., exogamous grouping equivalent to lineage. Some of the clans among them are mooroli, eytholi, aroli etc. There are certain preferential *keera* of a preferential clan for the marriage relationship.

Tribal endogamy and clan/lineage exogamy are strictly observed in marriage. However, several cases of marriages with members of other caste groups have been reported recently. It is found that those who married from outside castes are still living in their settlement itself

without having any social stigma. Cross cousin marriages are preferred. Monogamy is the rule; however, polygynous marriages are also reported. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees is permitted. Union with the deceased wife's sister (sororate) is in practice. Payment of bride price at the time of marriage is still in practice. A *minnu* is the symbol of marriage. The marital bond among them is becoming looser and looser. The nuclear families are becoming popular. The eldest male member is the head of the family, and he wields some control over other members.

They have a traditional political organisation at the settlement level with *megalan* as its chief. He usually comes from some specific clan, and the appointment is lifelong. In the past, the *megalan* exercised much power over the community. Still, today their traditional social control mechanism is declining as they are becoming part and parcel of the modern political system. At present, village panchayat leaders, political parties and courts adjudicate the disputes.

They have belief in life after death and the existence of spirits. Besides various deities of their tribal pantheon, they worship gods and goddesses of the wider Hindu pantheon. They observe certain rituals at the *ambalam*, with *binjakalan* (the priest) as the chief functionary to invoke their deities to ward off their anger and for their blessings to

avoid disease, death and natural calamities like flood, drought etc. Their chief deities are *Pootheri*, *Kuttichathan*, *Malkori*, *Karimkali*, *Tampuratti*, *Pottentheiva* etc.

They observe several rituals throughout an individual's life span. Delivery takes place in a separate hut built for the purpose under the assistance of a midwife. In the case of difficult delivery, a special ritual called *ajjadeth* is conducted. The first cereal feeding ceremony and the name-giving ceremony are conducted either in the *ambalam* or in the nearby temple on an auspicious day under the presidentship of *megalan* or an elderly male member of the father's lineage. Pollution connected with childbirth lasts for seven to ten days. On the attainment of puberty, a girl has to be segregated for seven days in a shed erected at a distance from the settlement.

The dead body is usually burned with its head towards the west. The son of the deceased is the chief mourner. The body is washed and covered with new clothes and carried to the graveyard in a bamboo bier. A coin or a metal piece is placed at the lips of the corpse, and the wife, if the deceased is a man, throws the *tali* into the grave before it is filled with soil. In the past, everything used by the dead person also would have been buried along with the body, and now this practice is not in vogue. The chief mourner throws the first handful of the soil. Death

pollution lasts for nine days, and at the end of it, a special ritual called *Blume binj* is observed.

Besides these tribal groups, a few vanishing small communities like Kunduvadiyan, Thachanadan Moopan, Kalanadi, Wayanadan Kadar, Urindavan, etc., are also found. Many of them exhibit tribal characteristics. Though these communities are not included in the list of Scheduled Tribes (ST) of the state, they are entitled to benefits under OEC(B)

The Kunduvaidan

The Kunduvadian are found in the villages of Puthadi, Purakkad and Pulpalli of the Wayanad district. They used to be expert hunters with bows and arrows in the past. Formerly they used to practise shifting cultivation, but now most of them have to take up a job as agricultural wage labourers under the settlers who own most agricultural lands.

The Thachanadan Moopan

The Thachanadan Moopan form a small community with their concentration in the Kalpetta, Meppadi, Muttill and Ambalavayal Panchayaths. They used to be hunters, practising shifting cultivation. Today they are primarily landless and find employment as workers in the neighbouring plantations. The Thachanadan Muppan are later

included in the Scheduled Tribe list of the state by an amendment to the constitution of India.

The Kalanadi/ Kanaladi

The Kalanadi/ Kanaladi are found in the south-western portions of the Wayanad district. Their traditional occupation was the *tirakettal* (devil dance), including fire walking. They were formerly hunters, but now they subsist on farm labour. A few cultivate their lands.

The Urindavan

The Urindavan are a very small community found in the Thirunelli and Pulpalli villages. They were shifting cultivators, now practising settled agriculture. Those who do not own land would work as labourers, rear cattle, and be interested in poultry keeping.

The Wayanadan Kadar

The Wayanadan Kadar are primarily found in the Thariyode, Vellamunda and Meppadi villages. Once they were the lords of the forest, and now they are degraded to the status of coolies under the settlers. They are also found engaged in the collection of MFP for subsistence. The Wayanadan Kadar are later included in the Scheduled Tribe list of the state by an amendment to the constitution of India.

Besides these groups of people, several other non-tribal communities, both small and large, are found in Wayanad. They migrated and settled in Wayanad during different historical periods. While Nayars, Christians and Muslims form the numerically dominant groups, Kerala and Tamil Brahmins, Tiyas, Harijans, Kannada speaking Gounders and Chetties form the less numerous communities. The Muslims came to Wayanad along with Tippu Sultan and settled in various parts of Wayanad as petty traders. The Christians 'invasion' started after establishing British rule in Wayanad as workers in plantations, and later migration began by the end of the 1920s.

All these different groups of people have developed a system, which can be described as the "Traditional System". The goods produced and services rendered by every community are mutually complementary. The people were tied to each other by a chord of more or less *jajmoni* relation, preferably described as the "tribal jajmani", as was the system that prevailed in Hindu Villages; the link was not so binding, but they had a close economic interdependence.

When the alien cultures intervened, they could successfully integrate them within the system at the initial stage when the number of immigrants was comparatively less. With the large scale infiltration by plains people, they could not accommodate them, destroying their

traditional social set-up. The large scale migration also had damaged the original floristic composition of the area and the vast number of wildlife in it, the foundations on which the structure of their life was raised. The tribal communities were gradually alienated from their lands until they became virtually landless; the monetisation introduced by the immigrants changed the social insurance implied in their social system. They have been deskilled in their original crafts, and wage labour became the hallmark of tribal society. The depression of employment demand for tribal labour caused starvation and widespread distress. The traditional social system comprises Kurichiyas, Mullukuruman, Bettakkuruma, Paniya, Adiya, Nairs, Chetties and other small communities. Among them, Nairs, Chetties, Kurichia and Mullukuruman were primarily agriculturists. Each of them possessed their own landed property. The Kurichia and Mulukkuruma themselves did cultivation, whereas the Nayars and, to a certain extent, the Chetties depended on the Adiya, Paniya and other agrestic labourers for agricultural operations. The Kattunaickan, on the other hand, were more or less a self-sustained group practising hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation. But all these communities are solely dependent upon the Bettakkuruma for their artefacts like pottery, baskets and iron tools and implements. Thus a system based on economic interdependence developed, and it was ecologically and socially self-balancing.

With the incursion of British planters and other plainmen, the area became the pastures of all sorts of people, which mutilated the region's traditional system of socio-economic balance. The British brought a band of Tamil speaking labourers to work as coolies on their plantation, and in the wake of these developments, a commercial group of petty traders and merchants sprang up. The tribal peasants, Chetties and Nairs lost their holding to planters and their agents. Because of the influx of cheap labour force and poor landless settlers from the plains, the demand for tribal labour waned. The commercial group of traders and merchants produced cheap and sophisticated utensils and implements which reduced the need for the products of Bettakkuruma, and their craft declined. The self-sustaining pattern of life of the forest groups like Kattunaickan was disturbed by the denudation and degradation of forests. In short, with the breakdown of their traditional system, the survival of these tribal communities itself is at stake as they could not adapt quickly to the changing situation.



Tudi of Adiyar

Chapter-3

From Ritual Act to Popular Folk Art: Gaddika as the Manifestation of Life of the Oppressed

Adiyan is one of the six tribal communities of the Wayanad district of Kerala. The Other tribes being Paniyan, Kurichian, Mullukuruman, Uralikuruman and Kattunaickan. The tribes were the major population of the region till the 1940s as it fell within the “Malaria” belt and remained virtually inaccessible to non-tribals till then. After the elimination of Malaria, especially after the Second World War, the region witnessed large scale infiltration, virtually an invasion, by the non-tribal population mainly the Christians from Central Kerala. Today the tribal people became a minority in their land. The transplant plains people frequently articulated cultural genocide of the native people but in spite of that, the culture of the native tribal population survived. Their religion, culture, language, dialect and even identity have been influenced and damaged but still exist. The transplant communities’ indifferent and contradictory attitudes further pushed them from the margins to the periphery.

The Adiyan and the Paniyan were bonded labourers bought and sold like cattle during the annual festival at the famous Valliyurkavu temple Near Mananthavadi. They were used by their masters, mostly landlords, for the work in their agricultural land for the barest of the minimum wages which generally includes a place to erect their huts for stay and the rice to cook for food sufficient enough just to make them survive. When the system was abolished with the

passage of the Abolition of Bonded Labour System Act, the minimum security they enjoyed in the form of food and a place to stay were even denied because the feudal masters disowned that responsibility. As they were tenants under absentee landlords (*janmis*) they were not having any lands under their possession and the passage of the above Act made them in a state of absolute frivolity searching for agricultural works, the only chore they know, in the open market. The depression of the employment demand for tribal labour caused starvation and widespread distress. The government stepped in with some ambitious plans for rehabilitation like Sugandhagiri Cardamom Project in 1975-76, Pookote Dairy Farm in 1976-77, Priyadarsini Tribal Co-operative Tea Plantation in 1986, etc., but it all helped to address the distress very marginally. Perhaps the Adiyani and the Paniyan might have been the only communities who have been least benefited from the passage of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 as they traditionally did not own any land as they were bonded labourers under landlords. The life of the Adiyani was one of oppression, suppression, exploitation and sexploitation, as the community registered as the single small community in the State wherefrom the largest numbers of unwed mothers were reported. The state government came forward with an ambitious project “Priyadarsini Tea Estate and Factory” specifically to rehabilitate the unwed mothers from this community. All of it shows the range of oppression and exploitation the community has undergone in the recent past.

Their life and history have an impact on the folk tales, myths, and oral traditions of the community as well.

P.K.Kalan, the Performer who Designed Gadhika as an Art Form

P.K.Kalan was born in 1937 in the Kaithavalli settlement of Thrissileri Village as the eleventh child of Kolumban and Karutha. Many of his elder siblings passed away in childhood itself due to the poverty of the family only one of his elder sisters and he survived. The situation that existed in the area at that time was not supportive for him to get any type of formal education. He accompanied his parents at an early age to work in the land of the *janmies* attached by them as any member of his community was supposed to do or to the forest to graze the *janmies* cattle, to earn the livelihood for the family. But he had shown great interest in learning the religious rituals of the tribe and tried to understand them from their roots. Kalan mastered all these religious rituals in his childhood itself. Kalan who have no formal education tried to learn the Malayalam alphabet from his friends and he learnt how to read and write. He found that the deeds of the *Janmies* were not only oppressive but exploitative too. In the 1960s the Wayanad district, especially the Thirunelli and Thrissileri areas which is the main habitat of Adiyar, witnessed the development of the Naxal movement. A.Varghese, a contemporary of Kalan and a member of a migrant Christian family bigoted by the injustice heaped upon the poor tribal people by the *janmies* were attracted to Naxalism and started working in the Adiyar area and as a culmination, at the peak of the movement, a local landlord was assassinated. Kalan was having some

sympathies with that movement. But with the killing of Varghese in a Police encounter the movement was weakened. Much later it was proved with the confession of a police constable that the encounter was fake and Varghese was killed when he was in police custody. The then ADG of police who lead the police team was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Court. With the killing of Varghese, the movement debilitated.

Kalan became the first elected Adiyani President of Thirunelli Panchayath, later the president of the Mananthavadi Block Panchayat and much later the Chairman of the Folklore Academy of the State, a recognition for his contribution to developing and popularising *gaddika* as a popular art form and to showcase this tribal art to the world. He was at the forefront of the many agitations which the community lead for a decent living. Kalan was instrumental in popularizing *Gaddika*, one of their ritual act performed for relief from illness and diseases, as one of the popular art forms under the brand “Gaddika or the Story of Starvation Deaths”, fighting as a one-man army both with the leaders of their own community, who were reluctant in displaying a ritual closely attached with their religious beliefs and practices in the public platforms and also with the “prevalent misconceptions” maintained by the mainstream communities and agencies about the Adiyani tribe. The myths surrounding this ritual act of the Adiyani show how it is intertwined with the real life of the Adiyani and how oppressors exploited them in the past. Today “Gaddika” has become a popular brand name as being

given to different initiatives undertaken among tribes both by Government as well as other agencies.

Gaddika

Gaddika is a sort of dance drama of the Adiyen tribe. Earlier it was having only the ritual importance and hence part of their religious rites and rituals and hence their dances cannot be distinguished from their beliefs and practises. The types of dances prevalent among the tribal communities are generally categorised into three; war and hunt dances, sacred dances and social dances (Iyer and Balaratnam:1961:201). Gaddika belongs to the category of sacred dances.



Gadhika Performance by PK Kalan

The Adiyen have various ritual practices to invoke and appease their Gods and Goddesses. *Gaddika* is one of them. It is practised to cure diseases and illnesses, which they believed is caused due to the anger of their Gods towards them. *Gaddika* is of three types. The first type is known as *marineekkal*. It literally means the removal of diseases. It is performed, as the term denotes, to drive away diseases, ward off spirit possession, safe delivery of children and remove all other

miseries. The second type is *puja gaddika*, it is an offering to God as a gratitude for being relieved from illness and diseases. The last one is *nattu gaddika* performed for the goodness of the entire village. It is performed annually in the Malayalam month of Mithunam (June-July). The performers visit each household in the village, dance as possessed by the god, rhythmically to the tune of the *tudi* (drum) and *kuzhal* (wind instrument) and drive away all the diseases and illnesses symbolically. The performers are men but dressed as if women. The particular way of wearing the cloth on the head (turban) gives the performers a female appearance. The simple but colourful red clothes, the shining rich metallic ornaments and anklets, the rhythmic dance to the tune of the *kuzhal* and *tudi* as possessed by the spirit, the occasional screaming, the music and the songs, etc., in the light of the lighting lamp, will give the entire episode an awe-inspiring and spiritual ambience. Firstly the *nattumuppan* (head of the tribe) invokes Lord Shiva with invocations followed by other gods and goddesses like Chamundi, Mariamma, Malakari, Karimkali, Chuvani, Siddappan, etc. Mariamma is believed to be the goddess of Smallpox. The performers are supposed to take seven days of fasting. There is no proscription for food but one should abstain from sexual relations. Children are not generally allowed to participate in the performance.

It is an exercise of encounter with their gods and supernatural powers. The dancer go into a stage of trance and directly interact with the supernatural. The bodily gestures and the expressions create a real divine-human encounter in the

minds of the spectators of those events. The dancer would be a mediator and communicator between the divine and the human encounter in the minds of those who witness it. The healing of the sick is the main purpose of *Gaddikamadal*. Thus they exercise authority over the nature and culture.



Kalan During a performance

The Myth

Two lords known as Aaryan and Banian who were living in the heavenly abode decided to create a human being in order to serve them. Thus they created a man using the soil of the anthill and gave it life. But it could not speak or move. Its creators got worried. The mothers of two lords who created the human being advised them to walk northwards so that they could find out the remedy. As advised by their mothers both of them started walking in the north direction and reached a dirty pond full of muddy water and fell down in it. Meanwhile, a lady named Mali appeared before them and inquired about their problem. She expressed her willingness to help them but on one condition that she will eat all the human beings coming across her to appease her appetite. The lords agreed to

that condition. The Devi then left them for a bath with the towel used by the lords. But on her return, she turned into a fearful creature with thousands of legs and tongs, the speed of a whirlwind and the sound of thunder. She started eating all those who came across her and people started running hither and thither. Finally, only two remained. The Banyan advised the Aaryan that he should try to appease the Devi somehow by the time he will hide the remaining humans somewhere. Banyan flew to a place called Pakkam with the remaining human beings and hid them in the fort of Pakkathappan (Lord of Pakkam- Lord Shiva). But the Devi reached there also but the Pakkathappan stopped her and asked about the matter. She explained what had happened to her. Listening to her Pakkathappan advised her to go and sit under the shade of a jackfruit tree till he returns from his bath. Devi conceded to his advice and went and waited under the shade of the jackfruit tree for his return from the bath. Pakkathappan after the bath started chewing betel nuts and leaves and took a lot of time to return. Devi worried about the delay and started thinking about what would be she eating hereafter if all the humans are finished. These thoughts worried her a bit and calmed her. Once she calmed down Pakkathappan appeared before her and asked: if you finish all human beings what do you do from tomorrow. She was having no reply. He advised her that she should relinquish her fearful appearance and to be patient. The humans will take care of her food. She should take the form of rats and chameleon and move through the dry leaves so that the humans get scared and get diseases and illnesses out of fear. In order to get relief from the illness, they try to please her with

offerings. Since then the Adiyans started to perform *gaddika* to prevent and cure illness and after curing as a gratitude to the merciful act.

The Discourse

Myths are oral traditions having no written texts. However, it creates an impression that the narrator as well as the listener believe it as if it really happened not at the distant past. Myth is also closely associated with the ritual aspect of life. For Levi Strauss “Myth is language functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at ‘taking off from the linguistic ground on which it keeps rolling’” (1963:210). Myths were never considered part of history but their historical significance cannot be ignored. It satiates the primitive man’s inquiry to know the unknown. Though it is not scientific it helps to understand historical facts, primitive social structure and tradition. The myth narrated above has no direct link with the history of the Adiyans tribe. But a close reading of the text would reveal that it is a reflection of the life of the Adiyans themselves. The forefathers of the humans in the myth are the creation of the Lords themselves. They created and protected them. But the evil forces around them in different shapes and forms approached them and utilized their simplicity to exploit them. They were once the sole owners of the land and forest and managed to survive fighting deadly diseases like smallpox and malaria on the one side and the wild animals on the other. The early migrants to the hills were the Nair landlords. They subjugated them to the status of agrarian slaves to work under them in their land. Tribes like Kattunaickans managed to avoid this by withdrawing themselves into

the interior of forests and hills. Whereas better developed among them like Kuricians and Mullukurumans managed to occupy landed properties of their own to work and to make a living. They remained better positioned compared to the poor Adiyans and the Paniyan. Even after the independence, the plight of the Adiyans has not changed much. From agrestic serfs, their status changed to bonded labourers. The passage of time and the eradication of smallpox and malaria from the hills attracted the invasion of new sets of people from the plains especially the Christians from Central Kerala. The abolition of Bonded Labour System by the Central Government during the days of Emergency though progressive in principle was disastrous to the Adiyans and the Paniyans. The security of one square meal ensured by the system was even denied by their erstwhile masters. There was a lull in the demand for agricultural labour as the migrant Christian population depended upon their own labour for work on their land. Further, the migrants from Central Kerala started growing cash crops like tea, coffee, cardamom and rubber which required specialized labour. The Adiyans and Paniyans know only the work in the paddy fields. The distress and sufferings of these people only mounted. The worst sufferers before, during and after independence in the district among the tribes were Adiyans and the Paniyans. The Myth narrated above also discloses how they were cheated and exploited though they have a divine origin.

Though they were subjected to intensified exploitation it could not subdue the creative energy of the community and the tribal identity and existence. In the last

decade of the 20th century especially after the United Nations' decision to observe the year 1993 as the International Year of Indigenous peoples, India witnessed a host of new movements like women, farmers, Dalits, Tribals, etc. with its reflections in the tribal literature as well. Though the official reaction of the Government of India was that the Indian tribes and the STs are not indigenous people as defined by the UN and in that respect, every Indian are Indigenous people, for the tribals the declaration opened new doors for self-realization and movements realizing that their exploitation is due to their specific identities and emerged at different quarters movements like tribal literature which could not be addressed hitherto through the established political and theoretical system. The state of Kerala was not an exception to this type of movement and at the forefront of such movement was the person like P.K.Kalan among the Adiyani tribe. The emergence of newfound leadership was not only on the literary front but on the leadership and in the agitation front as well. Kalan's niece C.K.Janu emerged as a leader of the tribal movements of the state through the Kerala State Karshaka Tozhilali Union (KSKTU), an agricultural labourer's Union, later left the organization and spearheaded the movement forming Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS) which was in the forefront of the famous "Muthanga" agitation and Janu emerged as the national leader. It is natural for any community to resist threats to their existence through different platforms; sometimes it may manifest in socio-political movements or through their arts and literature. Kalan in addition

to his political activism used their traditional art forms to spearhead such movements which was a new beginning for the Adiyen people of the state.

Gadhika from Hamlet to Stage

The transformation of *gaddika* from the status of a ritual act to an art form as we witness it today was not simple and easy. When Kalan understood that it is not the exploitation of their masters alone that the root cause of the destiny of their community but also the superstitions and other beliefs are also equally responsible for their miserable state of plight. Kalan slowly thought of changing them. He told that religious rites like *gaddika* and *kooliyattu* are outdated customs the practice of which alone cannot help them from curing diseases and removing miseries. As *gaddika* is intertwined with their life he thought of using the same as a means to display the issues faced by his community to the larger audience. The first and foremost obstacle for this before him was nothing but the strong resistance from his own community. The elders of his community objected to this as they feared that watering their long-standing tradition may cause the warmth of their innumerable gods and goddesses who are helping them to protect themselves for generations from small poxes, malaria and many other calamities. But in the process of dialogue, the success was ultimately for the Kalan. He succeeded in convincing them of his stand and with the half mind, they allowed them to perform it for their audience. It is not an easy task to perform a ritual art which lasts for hours and days to the taste of the audience to a half an hour or one

hour programme. More than that the ritual acts and the adornments are no more something which generates interest in outsiders. It took several years to transform the ritual to become an art form to develop as we witness it on the stage today. It was really a challenge for him. After the death of Kalan in 2007 Karian another Adiyar member of the community is carrying forward the tradition with the same vigour and interest as Kalan has shown.

Through *gaddika*, Kalan tried to display the problems faced by the community and to show the historical injustices the community has undergone by aptly naming the programme “gaddika or the story of starvation deaths”. Now it is not alone the performance of a ritual on the stage. He brought many changes to it: the costumes were made colourful and more attractive, started to use makeup using colour powders, the prolonged rituals involved have been avoided suitable to the stage, and brought many such changes appropriate for a stage show.



Gaddika on stage

Below is one of the Gadhika songs of the Adiyar.

Song No.1

devuro devuro adava devamma..

akkamma chikkudeviya..

devuro devuro adava devamma

vettatha chikkudeviya..

devuro devuro adava.. devamma..

akkamma chikkudeviya..

akkamma chikkudeviya.. devamma..

yenuba betuvolu..

akkamma chikkudeviya.. devamma..

chinkara betuvolu...

akkamma chikkudeviya.. devamma..

yenuba betuvolu..

akkamma chikkudeviya.. devamma..

bojaba betuvolu..

karikambi chelayethi devamma..

bojaba botuvolu..

chittikambi chelayo devamma..

bojaba boduvolu..

karikambi chelayethi devamma..

bojaba boduvolu
karikambi chelayethi devamma..
kaluke boja.. boo..
kanchi kari valayethi devamma..
kaike.. thumbi thalom
devuro devuro ada..va devamma
akkamma chikkudeviya
kanchikari valayethi devamma..
kaike.. thumbi thalom
aaluruppu thaliyethi devamma..
yethaelu thumbithalom..
kaluke jambara..devamma..
kaike..umguraa..
chinkara bangara.. devamma..
udugara uduthalom
(devuro devuro)
thanteva mokathinu devamma..
thaneye nottuvolo..
chanthakarathi devamma..
akkamma chikkudeviya..
kannadiyethithado devamma..
thaneye nottuvolo

(devuro devuro)

chanthkarathi devamma..

akkamma chikkudeviya..

kopakarathi devamma..

akkamma chikkudeviya..

(devuro devuro)

Akkamma - elder sister

Yenuva - what

Beduvolu - what you want

Chinkaram - bangle, necklace, ornamental dots, cosmetic eyelids etc.

Chela - sari

Boja - beauty

Karikambi - black line

Chitti - small

Thumbithalom - drop

Aaluruppu - like human figure

Yetha - neck

Jambara - beauty

Umkura - beauty

This is one of the popular Gadhika songs of the Adiyar sang during the *naduneekkal* ritual. In the initial part of the song, they are asking the *Devi* (goddess) what she accepts for the welfare of the Adiyar. The reply of the *Devi*

forms the second part of the song. When they ask *Devi* what she wants she replies that she wanted necklaces, bangles and decorative and cosmetic items to beautify herself. By adorning them *Devi* enjoys herself her beauty. After that, she dances. In the song, the main content is speaking about *Devi* and describing her beauty.

Gaddika is, thus, essentially a ritual act. A ritual is generally defined as a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions, or objects performed according to a set of sequence as prescribed by the traditions. “Ritual has been defined as the social aspect of the religion. If we may define religion as a system of notions about the supernatural and the sacred, about the life after death and so on, then ritual is the social process which gives a concrete expression to the notions. Rituals are rule-bound public events which in some way or other thematise the relationship between the earthly and the spiritual realm” (Eriksen 1995). Anthropologists like Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown argued that the ritual act should be distinguished from technical action. Brown pointed out that “ritual acts differ from technical acts in having in all instances some expressive or symbolic element in them”. In *Gaddika*, the performer through various facial expressions and bodily gestures, postures and actions and groaning and screaming communicates non-verbally, not only with the spectators but with the supernatural world. In other words, he is the intermediary communicator between the supernatural powers and the community. The man in his woman attire and all other colourful adornments in the splashing light and the sound of the drums and

wind instruments and the verbal wraths create an atmosphere of awe and become the communicator in between. The man in the dress of woman become visibly different from others, perhaps express the status of a third gender to differentiate themselves from the ordinary spectators. The Adiyar, who is otherwise downtrodden and unworthy will become godly even for their masters who used to approach them for performing *nattugaddika* for the removal of evil spirits and illness and diseases. In short, the *Gaddikamadai* have had the following functions in the Adiya society.

1. It is essentially a cultural identity marker unique to the Adiyar. It has emotional, sentimental and expressive planes.
2. The Muppan/ Kanaladi/Thammadikkaran who performs Gaddika, connects the human beings with supernatural powers and is the communicator between the innumerable ancestor spirits and their living relatives.
3. Communication removes misunderstanding and helps appease the supernatural beings, resulting in the removal of calamities and curing illnesses and diseases.
4. It ensures the solidarity of the community and makes them emotionally one.

Other Rituals and Songs of Adiyar

1. Peyattu

One of the important rituals observed by the Adiyar is *peyattu*. *Peyattu* literally means the removal of the spirit. It is believed by the Adiyar that the possibility of possessing the spirit of the deceased persons is high if the required rituals to propitiate them were not properly done. If somebody is possessed by such spirits this ritual is observed to relieve the individual from its possession. *Peyattu* is mainly conducted in order to drive off (*attu*) evil spirits (*peyi*) from the pregnant women (*barukarathi*). It is to be conducted between the sixth and eighth months of the pregnancy. It can be performed either at the home of the pregnant woman or at the house of the *chemmakkarar* (head of the *chemmam*-clan). If it is performed at the house of the *chemmakkarar* it can be performed for all the pregnant women of the *chemmam* together to reduce the financial burden involved. They share the expenditure. The participation of all the chiefs like *nattumuppan* (Chief of the tribe), *kunnu muppan* (head of the settlement) *chemmakkarar* (head of the clan) *thammadikkaran* (oracle) and close relatives are to be ensured. It starts on the evening of a designated day and continues till the night of the next day. Different stages are involved in the performance of the ritual like *athi vellattu*, *ucha vellattu*, and *urappikkunnnattu*.

Besides, to get rid of certain diseases also the Adiyar perform *peyattu* rituals. Normally these rituals are performed during night time under the overall

supervision of the *kunnu muppan* (the headman). The ritual is performed to the tune of the *tudi* and *kuzhal*. While the music is played the main functionary dance to the rhythm of the music. The attire of the dancer includes red and white clothes and bell anklets. Through these songs, they are ensuring the presence and blessings of goddesses like *badrakali*, *karimkali* etc. (different incarnations of mother goddess Durga). When the ritual starts the person possessed by the spirit will be brought and made to sit in the *pandal* (shed) constructed for the purpose of the courtyard. The *muppan* (headman) will ensure the presence of spirit in the body of the person. Then he speaks to the spirit which entered the body of the possessed. The *muppan* will identify whose spirit it is and asks why he is not leaving the body. Through this process, the *Muppan* could understand the reason behind such spirit possession and suggest appropriate measures to get rid of the spirit and complete other rituals involved. Once the ritual is performed the *peyi* (spirit) would leave the body. The expenditure involved is to be met by the family or relatives of the inflicted person. Below are some of the *peyattu* songs of Adiyar.

Song No.2

aadalado machuniya..

lanippirinholado (2)

lanippirinholadake

kununkikondulado (2)

kununkikonda ladake

manikilukki lado (2)

(aadalado..)

bavilappalle baggiyado..

koovilappalle kumbado.. (2)

chutilappalle thoonchado..

modappalle moggilado.. (2)

(aadalado..)

moodu mutha monnakkayi

nhakkulama thendame (2)

narumutha poovakkozhi

nhakkulama thendame(2)

(aadalado..)

badipootha bappamu

nhakkulama thendame (2)

uralikuthina vellavulu

nhakkulama thendame (2)

(aadalado..)

madamathilathil modininto

annilum kilithilumodininte (2)

(aadalado..)

arelum minnelum modininto..

kindi kinarilum modininto (2)

(aadalado..)

Anni - paddy field

Bappamu - banana

Bavila - banana leaf

Chuttila - storm

Moda - sky

The above song is sung during the *peyattu* ritual. It is like instructing the person who dances to the tune of the musical instruments. In the first few stanzas, he is requested to dance shivering his anklets to the tune of the music. He is further instructed to dance firmly like banana leaves, dance kneeling down like the leaf of a *kuvalam* plant. Like whirlwind dance round, like sky dance freely. The matured coconuts, ripened coconuts and banana fruits are all given to the *Devi* as offering. He was further requested to get ward off evil spirits at home, paddy fields, well, and tank. Go around, dance and get rid of all the evil spirits which cause much danger to the living people.

Song No.3

thanekku thanthana thanenava..

thanekku thannana tha.. na.. (2)

mukilupule muladana undannenilla..

kadalupule ponthire undanney..(2)

thekkumum vadakkumu kanintunilla..

kuvakkum padincharum kaninto.. (2)

evanoru rajya kanintunila..

evanoru pattana kaninto.. (2)

mudala rajya kanintonila..

paduvannoru pattana kaninto.. (2)

karimanalu vellimanelu kanintonila

karimanalu vellimanelu kaninto.. (2)

(thanekku thandana)

saugathu galiyanku puranthnilla..

saurathu galiyanku nokkinne.. (2)

(thanekku thandana)

Saurathu yethinkaru makkalanilla..

Saurathu vandinkaru makka.. (2)

aatti muttiyalanthunilla

aatti muttiyalannakala.. (2)

(thanekku thandana)

Surathuyethikkaru makkalinilla

Sauratha vandiyanku theruva..(2)

(thanekku thandana)

thekkilayi vadakkilayi ppondarilla..

kalale kadumontaru..(2)

(thanekku thandana)

eroru marathinte vandiyavva..

kokkepple marathinte vandiya (2)

(thanekku thandana)

vandikkanku chakkara padutharava..

onte chakkara randa chakkara maneyi (2)

(thanekku thandana)

vandikkanku munto nalo chakkaramanu

vandiyanku panithirincha kala (2)

(thanekku thandana)

yethikkaru makkada vandiyantu

bauvakke baunadannuppottu (2)

(thanekku thandana)

mullalakke munnadanthuppontonilla

vandintetalilanku muruthey (2)

(thanekku thandana)

vandiyanku gotamarinchu bundenilla..

vandiyanku godamarinchu bundey..(2)

(thanekku thandana)

Karutha kannu kattiyanku chatharilla..

Chovvanthanavu neettiyanku chandaru..(2)

(thanekku thandana)

In this song of *peyattu* the subject matter is something like telling something to goddess Kali. Calling Kali the attempt is explaining their worries and try to appease her. When she is travelling from the Karnataka region to Kerala what she is watching around is found in the song. *Kali* has taken away all the evil spirits and perished them by showing red and long tongue and black eyes.

2. Lullabies

Song No.4

chikkekkirecheki cheenikkuponu

kali birana...thi

malentakkudu mallikeppuvu

kali birana.. thi

pennunkurancheki puvukkuponu

kali birana.. thi

malentankudu mallkepoovu

kali birana.. thi

odakolappeli nirinkukonda

pullukku bakkuma

devarupothina mundikkukonda

pullakkupothu ..ma..(2)

(chikkekirenchenki)

enne thanthene kudichonduponne

kali bira..na..thi..

kanchi thanthenne ..chechonduponne

kalibira..na..thi (2)

(chikkekirenchenki)

aaryakutta kavunchalamma..

kalibirana..thi..

nuru pankili oppinalama..

kalibirana ..thi

podiyathe cherathe nokkuvullama..

kalibirana..thi

irade korade thunkingupponey

kalibirana..thi..

(chikkekirenchenki)

chakkemum mangemum thirunchalama..

kalibirana..thi

ininamu ennenu cheyvu

kalibirana.. thi

(chikkekirenchenki)

chanayo chappeyo kadathuvelamma..

kalibirana.. thi (2)

chakkemum mangemum thirunchalama..

kalibirana.. thi (2)

(*chikkekirenchenki*)

This is a song that falls in the category of lullabies called *tharattupattu*. This is used to sing to make their children sleep. In the first few stanzas, it is about a boy and girl both of them are crying for different reasons. The boy wanted *kuzhal* and whistle to play and the girl wanted a jasmine flower to adorn. The mother tells that to collect flowers one has to climb the hill. It is by drinking porridge and applying oil to the body that one has to climb the hill. Bring water in the bamboo internodes to wash the child. Bring the cloth used to cover the goddess to cover the child. In the end, it is telling bring cow dung, leaves, jackfruit, mango etc. The actual meaning of the stanzas does not have much importance in the song. It is the music and rhythm that calm the children.

3. Thirandu kalyanam/Nirayancha kanniyala/ Manchal neeru

One of the important rituals of the Adiya is *manchal neeru*. It is generally performed on the 12th or 15th day of onset of puberty or on an auspicious day thereafter. From the day of onset of puberty, she should be isolated in a separate room. If a separate room is not available a temporary shed adjacent to the home will be prepared for the purpose. She is advised to keep an iron knife all the time in order to avoid a possession by evil spirits. The ritual starts on the evening of the designated day and continues till the next day. She dresses in her traditional style, applies turmeric paste on the body and takes bath early in the morning before others wake up. The ritual is performed in a hut erected for the purpose in

the courtyard called *chappora* (a hut made of leaves) and will be erected on six poles. The presence of the head of all in the hierarchy from *kunnumuppan* to the lowest is ensured. Firstly the girl will be brought by an elderly woman and given a bath under a canopy of cloth. They sing aloud during this ritual bath. After this purificatory bath, the girl comes back to her room either walking over a sari spread on the ground or being carried by elderly ladies. This is to avoid direct contact with the earth. This ritual is called *pavadapudikkal*. The *muppan* and the oracle recite aloud their *sasthra*- the sacred oral traditions. After the purificatory bath, she wears new clothes and brings her back to the *pandal*. The *nattumuppan* in the absence of any of the *muppan* in the hierarchy present there purifies her by sprinkling turmeric powder and shaking a cock. The cock will be used later to prepare curry for the people assembled. On the next day, the girl seeks the blessing of the *muppan* by offering him rice, *murukkan* (betel nuts, lime and tobacco), cash etc., in a piece of cloth. She also seeks the blessings of all the elders assembled. During the rituals also songs were sung to the tune of the *kuzhal* and *tudi*.

4. Marriage Rituals and Celebrations

Marriage is an important occasion for Adiyar to get together, celebrate with dance and music and rejoice. It is also the occasion to recite the *sasthras* (oral traditions of the community). Reciting the *sasthras* is the occasion for the younger generation to learn them and transfer them to the next generation. They

have a glorious collection of folk songs. *Sopana pattu* and *poigavana pattu* are sung during marriages. They represent part of their sacred *sasthra* (oral tradition).

Marriage is held at the house of the leader of the *chemmam* (clan) called *chemmakkaran*. The girl goes and stays there two days in advance of the actual marriage day. The boy reaches on the evening of the previous day along with the *Kunnu Muppan* (head of the settlement). An elderly man of the girl's clan called *peruman* receives them by washing the feet of the groom and distributing betel leaves and areca nuts to all the assembled. A fowl is killed as an offering to the gods, goddesses and ancestral spirits. The boy and the girl are required to take bath in hot water. A feast follows. Next is the time for dance and music. The whole night the assembled will dance to the music of their musical instruments.

The next day morning the important ritual is *pavadapudical*. The girl wearing a new sari and ornaments and the groom in his dhoti, shirt and a turban is escorted to the *pandal* under a canopy of cloth held aloft by four men. It is called *pavadapudical*. They are seated side by side facing east, the boy generally on the right side of the girl. Rice and a lighted lamp were placed before them. The *nattumuppan* and *kanaladi* recite the marriage *sasthra*. The sister of the boy ties the *tali* (marriage symbol) around the neck of the girl. A *tali* is a black thread with a silver coin as a locket. Then the boy and the girl exchange the garlands handed over by the *Nattumuppan*. He then places the hand of the girl in the groom's hand. This is called *elpichukodukkal* (entrusting). More *sasthras* are recited. A coconut

is broken and its water is sprinkled over the newlywed couple and a portion of it also will be given to them to drink. They first seek the blessings of the *Nattumuppan* followed by others as per their seniority and their position in society. All the assembled, elder to the couple, bless them. A feast follows. Again it is the time for dance, song and music. After that, the couple goes to the groom's house there also the *pavadapudikal* ritual is observed upon arrival.

5. Chavu

One of the most expensive and elaborate rituals of Adiyani is rituals associated with death. Removal of pollution is important to ward off the displeasure of their gods and ancestral spirits. The oral traditions (sacred *sasthras*) are recited throughout to appease the gods. Death pollution lasts for thirteen days. The family members during this period have to observe certain food taboos like avoiding non-vegetarian food and oil. A widower is prohibited from taking bath, changing clothes, cutting the hair or shaving and eating tasty food for one year. Those who break such taboos are punished with a *tappu* (fine). Fines are charged in terms of *tappubala* (propitiatory bangle). The widows are also supposed to undergo such restrictions. The *kunnupula* is to be observed on the 13th day under the supervision of *kunnukaran/kunnumuppan*. It has several stages like *nallukettu*, *pundamiduka*, *alavupattu*, *olakettu*, *kaipudupikkal*, *peyi kunanathi*, *muramketu* and *peyi madakkal*.

Tattooing

Adiyan women are very fond of tattooing their bodies. Some of them are experts in body tattooing. They do this job not only for the women of their own community but also for the customers from other communities. The right to tattoo and the knowledge of tattooing is passed strictly from woman to woman.

Myth of Origin

The Adiyan trace their origin from Achan and Ithi who were brother and sister. When there was a deluge the whole world was underwater. This brother and sister saved their lives by floating in the shell of a *churakka* (bottle gourd). The *churakka* moved on all sides depending upon the direction of the flow of water and wind direction. When finally the water level receded the *churakka* finally settled at a place. They were very young then. They came out of the shell breaking its outer cover and landed in the soil. They stayed there for a long and became grown-ups. When they grow up Achan and Ithi began to live like husband and wife. Their progeny is the present-day Adiyan. When the children of Achan and Ithi grew up they also married each other and when the population increased in order to avoid the marriage of siblings they divided into different *chemmams* (clans). Each *chemmam* has been given separate names to identify. After that, all belonging to the same *chemmam* were considered brothers and sisters and ruled that one can marry from a different *chemmam*. After that, they strictly follow *chemmam* exogamy.

The Sacred Sasthras

The Adiyans possess a rich oral tradition called *sasthra* which they handed over from generation to generation orally. They consider this tradition very sacred and misuse of this knowledge would invite displeasure of their gods. The *nattumuppan*, Chief of the tribe, is believed to be the repository of such a knowledge system. The post of *nattumuppan* is not hereditary, a person well versed in *sasthra* is preferred for this position. It is usually a *mutha kanaladi* (eldest of the *kanaladis* by experience) who succeeds. The *kanaladis* are assistants of *Nattumuppan*. There will be more than one *kanaladi* under the *nattumuppan*. The *kanaladi* learns the *sasthra* from the *nattumuppan* and officiates the community functions in his absence. Anyone can become a *kanaladi* if he learns the *sasthra* through a long apprenticeship.

Thera

The most important festival that the Adiyans celebrate at the village level is *thera*. It is celebrated annually. Before celebrating the festivals all the *pola*, the death pollution, of all the villagers who passed away that year to be completed. If any pollution removing ceremony is pending during the previous year on account of any reason it is also to be completed.

The date of the *thera* is decided in a meeting chaired by the *nattumuppan*. All the *kunnumuppans* (head of the settlements) and *chemmakkarans* (head of the clans) and other important functionaries attend the meeting. Once the date is fixed

they start all the arrangements for the successful conduct of the festival. Resources to be gathered, both in cash and in kind in the form of paddy, rice, coconuts, vegetables etc., from all the families. Before the *thera* a *pandal* (shed) has to be erected known as *chappora*. It will have five posts one at the centre and one each at four corners. It is in the evening the rituals start. The *nattumuppan* presides over the function. As a first step, they discuss and dissolve all the disputes among the community members. Disputes, divorce matters, social sanctions for elopement and similar crimes, breaches of mores etc., are presented, deliberated over and decided on. Disobedience of the order of *nattumuppan* entails ex-communication. Offenders are punished with a *tappu* (fine).

It is after settling all the disputes the actual *thera* begins. *Pakkathappan*, *karinkali*, *malakkari*, *pukkarimakan*, *kalappan*, *gulikan* are the gods whose figures are performed during the *thera*. Each god has its own dress pattern, ornaments and pattern of adornments. It is those who have got training in the form of apprenticeship that performs the character of such gods. Turmeric powder, rice powder, and charcoal are all used to colour the face of such figures. All the *chemmams* have their respective deities and all of them are figured in the rituals. Each god has its own set of songs which is to be sung while dressing and at different stages of *theyyam* performance. The first deity which is performed first in all the villages is *pakkathappan*. It is followed by *ulankariyan*. Then each *theyyam* is to be performed in the order prescribed by the tribal council. Facial

and body painting, turban, and red cloths are the general decoration of the *theyyam* but differences could be observed in detail in each deity. The last deity to be performed is *gulikan*. *Gulikan* does not represent any particular *chemmam* but belongs to all the Adiyans irrespective of their *chemmam* affiliation. *Malakkari*, *pakkatheyyam*, *muthumalayan*, *vengarian* are some of their popular deities to whom animals and birds are sacrificed. They worship spirits and ancestors and believe in the existence of the soul after death. Their gods and goddesses are not identified with specific temples or locations but the temples at Thirunelli and Valliyurkavu are considered sacred centres. They worship the spirit of their ancestors. *Thera* is the occasion of a social assemblage of the Adiyans, which ensures social cohesion and easement of all sorts of disputes and differences of opinion among the community members.

Conclusion

The Adiyans have a glorious collection of songs, music and dance forms. The songs that they sang during marriage and other rituals are called *sopana pattu* or *poigavana pattu*. These songs are not independent entities but part of the oral sacred traditions of the *sasthra*. Dance and music are integral to all the milestones of life. *Tudi* and *kuzhal* are popular musical instruments. The intangible properties or social behavioural norms are not readily visible or perceptible to the outsiders' eyes, and for the insiders, they may not consciously appreciate. The *sasthras* of Adiyans which are the foundation stone of their socio-cultural and behavioural

dynamics are not at all comprehensible to the outsiders. It is a treasure of knowledge blended with tradition learned by only a few among them through long apprenticeships. Chants and songs are an integral part of the *sasthras* and it is interwoven into the very fabric of their daily life. Be it a celebration in times of marriage, the birth of a child, at menarche, a festival, mourning for the dead, or even settlement of a dispute there were chants for all occasions covering every aspect of life. These *sasthras* are an integral part of the oral tradition of the community and the art was passed on from one generation to the other.

Chapter-4

The Oral Traditions of Paniyan: A Socio-cultural Analysis

The Paniyan are the largest tribal community in the State of Kerala. According to the 2011 census, their population was 69,116 spreading across 15,876 families. Their major concentration is in the Wayanad district of Kerala and they are also sparsely populated in some parts of neighbouring Kannur and Kozhikode districts. The neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka also have a Paniyar population. The ethnonym signifies 'one who works'

Myths of Origin

According to the legend prevalent among them, their origin is from a place called Ippimala, a mountain near Banasuram peak. Originally there were two of them, one male and another female. They are the progeny of the same parents and hence brother and sister. While the siblings were wandering the forest unknowingly they reached the house of a Wayanadan Chetty whom they refer to as Goundan. The Wayanadan Chetties are an ethnic community of Wayanad believed to be migrated from the Mysore region of Karnataka state. The Goundan trapped them in a net and made them his slaves. The Goundan advised them as follows;

arena meethalekku

ankaleum penkalun

arena thakeku

aanum pennum

(*arena* -Waist, *meethalekku* -above the waist

ankaleum -brother, *penkalun*- sister

arena thakeku - Below the waist

anum- man, *pennum*- woman)

As they were brother and sister, the Goundan advised them to live as brother and sister above the waist and as husband and wife below the waist. The present-day Paniyan is believed to be their progenies. They increased in number and populated the entire Wayanad. They worked under different landlords like Chetties, Tiyas, Muslims and Kurichias as their slaves.

There is another version of this origin myth popular among them. *Patachon*, meaning the creator, designed the earth and sowed seeds on it. The forests and hills were created. According to the Paniyar, the sky is male and the forest is female. It was then *patachon* broadcasted the seeds. As a result, several plants sprouted. The creator god granted boons to all. Thus, the frog was given one boon, the snail, another and the earthworm,

yet another. He also created the wild animals like elephants, leopards and tigers using mud. To make them breathe, *patachon* brought the golden pearl containing golden powder from the goldsmith's plate. He poured the golden powder into the mouths of these wild animals and sprinkled water. This made them breathe.

Human beings were created next. For this, the *ammamanmaar* (different gods) brought soil, fowl excrement and gold. Stones and sands were removed from the soil. All these three ingredients were grounded in an oil press and made balls out of it to make human figures. Thus one man and one woman were created for each community. Unfortunately, the man and woman created for Paniyan were brother and sister. They worked under the *thampiran* (landlord). The man requested the landlord to provide him with a mate. But the landlord advised him to go and search himself for a mate. The brother and sister travelled in two directions covering north, south, east and west. But the result was disappointing. Then, the *tampiran* advised, "If you don't get a mate, you siblings can become brother and sister above the waist and man and woman below the waist". The woman then became pregnant and their progenies were the Paniyar, who got their name because they were labourers.

(In this origin myth, *patachon*, the creator god gives life to all the beings on earth. God gives life to his creations, by sprinkling golden powder in

their mouths and pouring water into their faces. Here they consider the sky as man and earth as woman, so that they can marry and produce their sorts. However, as per this myth, human beings are created by gods called *ammamanmar* meaning mother's brothers in the local language, through a process of mixing and grinding three ingredients such as fine soil, fowl's excrement and gold in an oil press. The importance of these three items in their life is not known. But soil is important for them as they are born and live working in it and die there. Fowl is the only bird which is affordable for them to possess considering their poor economic status. Gold is only imaginable for them. It is not known why the term *ammamanmar* is used to refer to gods other than the creator god, who is known as *patachon/patachavan*, meaning the creator. Might be because of the high status and importance of the mother's brothers in the life of a Paniya. The importance of landlords in their lives is evident in both versions of the myth. The Paniya were the bonded labourers under landlords who bought and sold like animals every year during the annual festival at Valliyurkavu temple in Mananthavady, Wayanad. The bonded labour system ensured their meal at least twice a day and a place to stay on the outskirts of the landed property of the landlord. They first approached their landlord for a suitable mate. It shows the importance of landlords for each and everything in their life).

Every community have their myths regarding the origin of the community and the origin of life and different natural phenomena. The Paniya community is not an exception to this. Though the Paniyan is a self-contained group without having many internal differences among them, there existed regional differences or regional variations in myths and folk stories. Though local variations are available about their origin myth in detail all such stories ultimately connect them with a place called *Ippimala* regarding their origin. It all sprouted from very basic things which could be observed in their surroundings. Regarding the origin of earth and sky, they have the following stories. In earlier times earth and sky were together; one inseparable from the other. The story tells that when the *aakasamuthi* (literally, great grandmother of the sky- one of the several goddesses of Paniyar) pounded it five times the sky separated from the earth. She again pounded it thrice. Then, the earth came down. Thus the sky and earth were separated. After that, the story tells how water, light, air and other living organisms originated. When talking about the light they mentioned about *kankadimuttikaramma*, a small flying creature which makes unusual sounds while hiding in the jungle. The *kankadimuttikaramma* helped to separate light and darkness.

Regarding the movement of the earth, they believed that the earth rests on the horns of a bull. The earth moves when the bull carrying the earth shakes its head. Different natural phenomena occur when the bull

shakes its head in different directions. Then during *pariyakulam* or *pandhiraikulam*, a period of time as per Paniyar mythology, different creatures originated on the earth. When life originated there occurred a necessity to provide water for its sustenance. But no water was available on the earth. To find out the source of the water goddess, *muuchandappan panthiri theyyam* sent *sreshtiswaranmar* (the gods of *srishti* (creation)) to all four sides. But they failed to find out the water source. Finally, they found that one particular bird called *chemboth* in the local language (Crow pheasant) is getting water and only these birds could find out the source. The *sreshtiswaranmar* decided to follow them secretly to identify the place where from *chemboth* is getting water. Only this bird could find the source wherefrom the water is oozing out. They waited to observe the bird for seven days. On the eight-day, they saw the bird flying down a grassland where the water is oozing out. After drinking the water the bird covered the source with the leaf of a particular tree called *vatta*, (*macaranga peltata*) which is why others could not find out the water source. When the *sreshtiswaranmar* removed the leaf cover the water overflowed and caused a deluge and the whole earth was flooded. The deluge can be solved only by a rat snake residing at *kunnathukodapputtu*. The snake resides in an anthill. *Sreshtiswaranmar* were sent to bring the rat snake. In order to appease the snake, it was told that it can eat frogs as its food but the earth

should be protected from the flooding water. Thus the ways the snake travelled became rivers and streamlets and the water receded to the sea.

The Paniyar believed that originally the earth was not as firm as it is seen today. They believed that it is only *Chathamkottu muthi* who can help them in this regard. *Chathamkottu muthi* appeared before them in the form of a bird. The bird is called *valattipakshi* (a bird with a long tail). They approached this bird to come and help them to make the earth firm so that they can cultivate it. Initially, the *Chathamkottu muthi* refused to listen to them. But they offered her all types of insects as food. The *Chathamkottu muthi* in the form of the bird accepted this offer and it is believed that after this incident the birds began to eat insects. As pleased by the offer of the Paniyar the *Chathamkottu muthi* came and flew all the four directions (west, east, south and north). It is the west side she strengthened first. She gave three thrusts, three pecks and three quivers each to all the four sides and thus strengthened the earth. Thus the earth got strengthened and hills and forests were formed and took the shape and landscape as we see it today.

The place called *ippimala* has an important position in the origin myths of the Paniyar. In almost all the versions of the stories, *Ippimala* has been referred to. They believed that all these things have happened in Ippimala. It is a place believed to be located near the Banasurasagr of Wayanad district. In Ippimala there were Ippimala Gowdan, Ippimala

Tampiran, Ippimla Kuruman, and Ippimala Nayakan. Ippimala Paniyan was formed last. When Ippimla Tampiran cleaned his hand after taking food, to eat the waste one male *kidavu* (a creature) and a female *kidavu* have come. Seeing this Tampiran asked Kuruman and Nayakan which creatures they are. They replied that they are useful creatures, we can make use of them for *uppapani* (the work in our garden) and *kudippani* (for the household work). So they decided to catch them. Then they caught them by using traps like *chavittu keni* and *kalu keni* (keni-trap). They are *aankala karu* and *penka karu* meaning brother and sister. After that, they gave a hoe and sickle to the brother and cloth and broomstick to the sister to do the gardening and household work respectively. They did their jobs well and Ippimala tampiran was pleased with their work. He decided that their lineage should be continued for that they have to get married. Their progenies are believed to be the Paniyar. They are believed to be divided into two branches, *illathiri mancham* and *pattolathiri manchum*. They are believed to be the two original *kulams* or clans of the Paniyar.

There were many superstitious beliefs that existed among the neighbouring communities about the capabilities of Paniyar. According to one described by Thurston (1909), the Paniyar can change themselves into animals and can entice any woman of the higher caste for their pleasure. Hence though a slave class, the higher castes were afraid of them because

of these capabilities. Aiyappan (1992) have instanced a few cases where Paniyar man kept liaison with Nair women.



Paniya women during a festival

Paniya Songs

The Paniyar have a rich oral tradition and a good repository of songs rhyme and tunes. Songs and music form an integral part of it. In all spheres of their life, the influence of music and dance are discernible. The different genres of songs of Paniyar are *Vattakalipattu* (Vattakali dance songs, *nattippattu/kambalappattu* (songs sung at the transplantation of paddy), *okalapattu* (work songs), *naadanpattu* (songs sung for entertainment), *katha pattu* (story songs), *penappattu* (death songs) and *urakka pattu*

(lullaby). The Paniyar dance for all festival occasions, ritual ceremonies, and life-cycle ceremonies. *Tudi* (drum) and *kuzhal* (pipe) are the two important musical instruments played by them. For every function associated with life-cycle ceremonies, festivals and fairs and for religious festivities *tudi and kuzhal* is an essential requirements. There are various tunes for different occasions and in such cases, *tudi* and *kuzhal* go together. Paniyar music and rhythm create a special ambience effect on the listeners. Paniyan music is simple in style but deeper in emotion. It holds together the community. It creates special feelings and moods among the group which is sacred and secular in character. There are various musical styles (tunes and rhythm patterns) for various occasions such as marriage, sacred rituals, or community entertainment. It was told that there are 101 *kuzhal* tunes and 101 *tudi* rhythms as there are 101 gods for the Paniyan community. But nowadays nobody knows all these tunes and rhythms. They may know a few as they learnt it from their ancestors.

These musical instruments are made by the Paniyan themselves and there are experts among them in this art. The wooden part of the *tudi* is made out of locally available wood called *kumil* or *pilavu* (Jackfruit tree). Its membrane will be prepared out of the skin of goats or monkeys. *Kuzhal* is made out of the wood of *chunda* wood. The musical party of the Paniyan dance troupe generally consists of three *tudi* players and one *kuzhal* player. The *tudi* will be generally of three different sizes; big, medium and small.

The *tudi* players play them in a standing position whereas the *kuzhal* player will sing it in a sitting position. There will be only one *kuzhal* at a time. Though some of the women among them are knowledgeable of the use of *tudi* and *kuzhal* generally it is sung by the men in their dances.

The Paniyar have different types of dances. The popular dance form of the Paniyan is *vattakali* also known as *paniyar kali*. *Thullal* is another form of dance performed as part of the religious rituals like *deivamkanal*, *tira* and *vellattu*.

The Paniyar sing songs on many occasions. Most of these songs are found to be made instantly and to tease one another. Most of them do not contain any specific meaning and are mainly compiled for the purpose of entertainment. At the same time, there are also devotional songs which are sung during religious rituals and performances. The folklore of the Paniyar is not as rich as that of Kurichiar or Kattunaickar. The poverty and traditional slavery may also found reflected in their folklore as well. Most of the songs and tales are rarely reflective of their poor economic status and hand to mouth existence. These songs are down-to-earth mainly focusing on the poverty and penury of the group.

Song No.1

ukkumee chettiyane ukkumee

pulle kirenchalum kirayatte

uppunte mulavinte katatheeratte

pantheru polinchalum poliyatte

(If the child is crying let it cry

Let the dues of salt and chillies be cleared

If the hut is falling let it fall

Chettiyar you try upon me).

This is a song they sang among them. It is the story of a Paniyar woman who is forced to engage in extra sexual relations for feeding her children.

Song No.2

Having seen the mushroom here,

(I) having thought it was the father-in-law

(I) having thought it was mother-in-law,

Went out of the way

My leg is the fowl's leg.

Song No.3

From where did the pipe come?

Is it from Palakkad?

Is it from Manjeri?

Is it from Maplappuram?

Is it from Kozhikode?

My leg is the fowl's leg.

My leg is the cow's leg.

Song No.4

Oh, daughter's, what are the things, new?

Made a *kumpil* (leaf plate) with water

Making rope from sand,

You go ahead, I shall follow,

After weaving the spotted mat.

Song No.5

The fowl's leg is the fowl's leg

My leg is also fowl's leg

An open nose is like a hole

My nose is also like a hole

My leg is also like the peacock's legs.

(These four songs from song No.2 to 5 are sung by the Paniyar during their annual festival *deyvakkotuti* and are nonsensical verses. Still, one can infer

some hidden connotations behind them. In general, they portray the conditions in which they live. Song No.2 could imply the respect one should exhibit to one's in-laws. That could be why the song the singer sing says that having mistaken the mushroom for father-in-law and mother-in-law, he/she moved out of the way. Song No.4, mentions two humanly impossible acts, viz. making a leaf plate out of the water and making a rope out of the sand. The analogy of the singer's leg with the fowl's leg is found in the song No.5).

Song No.6

kambalachorukku kumbalakkari

kutharichorukku thalunda thade thade

madathile maruku nrangakandi

kothalu varuthu cheechi udu kutti

(*Kambalam* is the term used to denote the process of transplantation of paddy saplings. The Paniyar and Adiyar tribes are well known for this work. They work under the different landlords as bonded labourers. The song said that for the workers engaged in *kambalam* it is only raw rice and curry made of pumpkin and curry made of the stem of the colocasia plant. However, the landlords, have orange/lemon plantations. They are fed like children with all the fondness.

This song belongs to the category of *kambalakkalippattu*, songs sung during sapling transplantation. These songs are mostly compiled based on their sufferings in everyday life and the exploitation of landlords. The landlords lead a better life merely by exploiting their labour. In one way these songs are public expressions of their depressed anger towards their exploitative masters. The song conveys the message that for those who work like cattle it is hardly the rice, and those who exploit them have all the comforts.)

Song No.7

puttilu kandili pulli kirayincho

thuvaru vave thuvaru

thuvaru vave ...thuvaru

thuvaru mave..Oh hai Oh hai

ammaykku veyya kanchina volla

kali pirandathi kudichondu pottolu

appenku vecha kunchina volla

kali pirandathi kudichondu pottolu

This particular song belongs to the category of *urakkupattu* (lullabies). The mother sings this song to soothe the crying child and make him/her sleep. The mother in the song says that a cat is crying in the backyard and the *kanchina volla* (the water cooked with some rice) prepared to eat for the

mother and father has been taken away by Kali, an insane woman. Though it is a lullaby the hard realities of their life are also reflected in the song. It shows that the family is just surviving on water boiled with a few grains of rice.

Vattakali of Paniyar

The popular dance form of the Paniyan is *vattakali* also known as *paniyar kali*. *Vattam* in Malayalam means round or circular. The name may be derived from the fact that they move while dancing in a circular fashion. *Kali* means to play or performance. Thus *vattakali* means the dance in a circular fashion. As it is performed by the Paniyan or Paniyar it is also popularly called *Paniyar kali*, the dance of Paniyan. It is performed on the occasion of the celebration of different life cycle ritual events like marriage, puberty ceremonies and other social ceremonies. *Vattakali* dance is a common dance form performed on all occasions except death ceremonies. Since it is a joyful dance, it is not performed during death rites. Hence it mainly has ritual significance. It is a collective dance. All the assembled irrespective of their age and sex can participate in it. Sometimes men and women dance separately. Usually, they perform the dance at night. During ceremonial occasions, they dance the whole night. On special occasions, they dance during day time also. There is no specific dress code for the dancers. Nowadays they began to perform such dances as part of

different programmes for the public in which they limited the number of participants to 10 to 12 and try to wear the same colour dress and wearing in a similar pattern as the performance here is for the audience and not for the self- celebration. The dance is accompanied by songs and music by musical instruments like *tudi* (drum) and *kuzhal* (pipe).

They form a circle standing close to one another but not touching each other and take steps to the rhythm of *tudi*. All will take steps in the same fashion and speed. While dancing the circle move in a clockwise direction and each person revolves in a circular style. They dance to the rhythm of the *kuzhal* and *tudi*. While dancing one among them recites the *vattakali chollukal* (rhymes) aloud and the others repeat it. At the end of every stanza, they repeat hi...hi...hoi....hoi. Group formations are spontaneous. Each circle will be having 10 to 15 members and if more members are there they form many such circles. But dance will be to the tune of the same musical instruments. Some will go into the state of a trance while dancing and even interact with the spirits of their ancestors to discuss some family or community matters. *Murukkan* (tobacco, betel leaves, areca nuts, and lime) will be freely distributed and eaten by the participants. Some of the participants, irrespective of sex, take liquor, but that will not affect the general mood of the dance performance. No specific costume or ornaments are prescribed for the dancers. They do dance in their regular attire. However, during dances when they are invited to perform for the audience,

they limit the number of participants and follow some sort of dress code to make it more attractive to the spectators. There is a fundamental difference between the first, two and the third occasions of dances. On the first, two occasions they are dancing for self-entertainment and on the third, their dance is for the audience to entertain them.

The Paniyan perform *vattakali* dance on different occasions like the social, ritual, festivals and recreational purposes. Marriage is the most important social occasion the dance is performed. The grandness of a Paniyan marriage is assessed based on the extent, vigour and vitality in the dance performed. Festivals like *ucharal*, Vishu, Mariamman festival, and festival at the famous *valliyurkavu* temple are the festive occasions the dance takes place. Nowadays, the Paniyan were invited by the different political parties and NGOs to perform their dances paying money to gather a crowd for their functions. Different government organizations and agencies like the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Development departments are organizing annual programmes in which different tribes are invited to make their performances. Paniyan dance is one of the important items of such programmes. Though the first two occasions are characterised by involuntary and spontaneous the last type is voluntary following certain rehearsal and planning. During dances, they make cynical comments about the secret or illicit relationship of someone if known to others. Thus it is an occasion for self-jubilance and rejoices.

At the time of Paniyan marriages, dances are performed on many occasions. These dances are normally not pre-planned but spontaneously organized. Joseph (2004:104) mentioned eight such occasions of marriage during a marriage ceremony which may last for about four days.

1. On the previous night of the marriage
2. While the bride groom's party leaving his house for the marriage
3. On the way to the bride's house if the marriage party is walking
4. After the reception of the groom's party by *the Chemmi* (head of the clan/settlement) and the bride's relatives
5. Soon after the wedding ritual
6. Before leaving the groom's party to his house from the bride's house
7. After reaching the party at the groom's house
8. During the thanksgiving ritual (*deivathinu kodukal*) to the gods on the next day of the marriage.

The Paniyan do not get any formal training in their dances. They said that it is in their blood. The younger ones get it learnt as part of their socialization process while growing up. It can be seen that the elderly ones dance with their kids on their shoulders or hands while dancing. They observe the elders and learn by taking part in it.

Vattakali Songs

Song No.8

thekke velliku thengana poolu-poolu

vadeke velliku mangena poolu-poolu

thekke vellikku nee iripu

vadekke velliku nanipe (eyha hooi.....hoi...eyha hooi.....hoi...)

(Joseph, George 2004:100)

For the south velli it is the pieces of coconut

For the north velli it is the pieces of mango

For the south velli you sit

For the north velli I sit

Most of the Vattakali songs are transmitted from generation to generation orally. But Paniyan is also expert in compiling on the spot songs and reciting them during the dance. There can be observed many such songs created extemporarily.



A ritual of the Paniya

Paniya Stories

There are also many stories that display the relationship between the wild animals and the Paniyan. As discussed earlier there are beliefs among the local people that the Paniyar can transform into wild animals and disturb them. Here we discuss some prevalent stories that describe the tribe-animal relationship. Once a Paniya woman married a tiger. The tiger was very loyal to his wife and tried to satisfy all her wishes. He used to bring rice, groceries, coriander, onion and whatever she wanted to please her. Once she wanted to wear bangles, the tiger killed the bangle seller and brought as many bangles as she wanted. Her husband also brought *dhoti* and silk to satisfy his wife's wish.

One day she wanted to eat meat. The tiger killed a cow and brought its meat home. But she refused to accept it. She said she will not eat cow's flesh. The tiger persuaded her to cook a portion of it. But she retorted that, tigers and dogs can eat anything raw, but I will not cook and eat cow's meat. The disheartened tiger brought pig's meat the next day. His Paniya wife was happy. They cooked it and both of them shared the meat happily. The cow's meat was thrown into the river. The tiger also did not take it. The Paniyar have still a proscription against eating cow's meat. Though some of them are still not practising it strictly.

(This story describes the unusual marriage between a tiger and a Paniya woman who looks after his wife with all care and love. However, she was annoyed when the tiger brought cow's meat for her to eat. This shows that eating beef is taboo for the tribes, and they think that it is inhuman to eat it. However, for the Paniyar, pig meat is not taboo).

Kondaram

The document which is believed to be pertaining to the Paniyar tribe is *kondaram*. But this document was not mentioned by many in any records pertaining to the history of the Paniyar tribe or any historians. There is a story for this prevalent among them. In the earlier times, Paniyar used to light a campfire and Paniya elders tell stories to their youngsters assembling around this fire. There is a story regarding the destruction of the *kondaram* as well. The lineage of the Paniyan was known as *illams*.

The eldest male member of the *illam* is called as *uthappans*. Each *illam* has thus an *uthappan* who enjoyed some respectable position in the community and the last word on conflicting issues. *Kondaram* was believed to be written in *kayalmungam*, that is, in the stem of the bamboo. Once the Paniya elders were dividing their land among them sitting around the campfire. During the process of division of land; one of the *uthappan* called *payiruthappan* began to read the *kondaram*, expressing his disinterest in the process of division of land. Annoyed with the action of the *payiruthappan*, another *uthappan* named *malakottathappan* snatched it and threw it into the fire around which they assembled. This is the story behind the destruction of the Paniya document called *kondaram*. There are many among them who genuinely believed that if such documents are still there, it could have been beneficial to the community to claim their titles under the provisions of the Forests Rights Act. One of the tribal communities that have benefited least from the implementation of the above Act was Paniyar. Because they were not forest-dependent but were agrestic serfs under local landlords.

Aattupattu/ Melippattu

The song sung by the Paniyans during the observance of the pregnancy ritual *aattu* is called *aattupattu* or *melippattu*. The ritual may be observed anytime between the third to seventh months of the pregnancy as per the convenience of the family. It is one of the very important rituals

being observed by the Paniyan for the well-being of the mother and the child in the womb, for a trouble-free delivery and for warding off any evil spirits if it is possessed by the mother. The ritual is observed at the residence of the wife.

The ritual starts on the evening of a designated day and lasts till the next day morning. It is the *chemmi* or *urumuppan* (head of the settlement) who presides over the entire ceremony. His presence will add prestige to the occasion and bring discipline. It is during the first pregnancy that *attu* is performed. During the subsequent pregnancies, it may perform depending on the financial condition of the family. During the observance of this ritual, the pregnant woman will be adorned in her finery and a red cloth called *pattu* is used to cover her upper part. She is made to stand holding a pot filled with water mixed with turmeric paste. While singing *aattupattu* she is made to dance as if possessed by the evil spirit. During her dance, she enters into a state of trance the entire water in the pot is to be spilt out. It is believed that by doing so the evil spirit, if any, possessed her would leave the mother and ensure the wellbeing of the mother and the child. Not all the villagers and relatives are generally invited to the function. It is close relatives of both boys and girls who actively participate in it.

One of the *aattupattu* sung by the Paniyan is given below.

Song No.9

*chekkiri poove nalla poove
nallaru pennu neeyalle
ninakku manjalum neerum
ninakkulla koyum theyum
ninakkulla....
aadam aadam thaiyamme
kollum poluvum ninakange
aathem bathem niyange
kamhe neeye kanathei
poothe poothe pootheye
poothelattam kanatte...
poothe poothe pootheye
poothelattam kanatte...
kayla kuthi paluvechu
nellukuthi nilathuvechu
manjavellam kuthivechu
nine nalu varuthinge...
kalan koyi ktilu vechu
kayam koyine kettivechu
nine nalu inju nalu
varuthinche...kala...
vari vai vari poothe...
vari vai vari poothe...
poothelattam kanatte...
poothe...lattam kanatte...
poothelattam kanatte nine*

poothelattam kanatte.
ninakku karuthakoyi karimolakum ninakku
nanu thanthe...
nirapara ninachuvecha anthithiriyadivecha
nirachu ninna kanniponnu kathuninna
nocki veche
va.. va... va... pootheye...
poothelattam kanatte...
va.. va... va... pootheye...
poothelattam kanatte...
karuthakoyi ninakkulla
meringa koyi ninakkulla
va.. va... va... pootheye...
poothelattam kanatte...

The content of the song is that the pregnant woman is praised with all the good words and tells the evil spirit that the turmeric, black pepper and the black cock are for you. You come by dancing so that all the evil spirits possessed by a pregnant woman will be averted. They invite the spirit, in the song, to have paddy, turmeric, milk etc., which are made ready for their use and leave the body of the woman. The song will be sung repeatedly until the woman became tired. The Paniyans believe that by doing so all the evils can be evaded ensuring a trouble-free delivery. If the dues are not paid by observing these rituals they may harm the mother and the child.

Attalippattu

Attali is the important religious functionary of the Paniyan. He is a combined hymnist, ritualist and medium dancer engaged in rituals in honour of the gods, the spirits of the dead, and for exorcising evil spirits who possess persons. There are other religious functionaries like *velichapads* who get the afflatus of various deities and also specialists in soothsaying, divination and astrology who practise their trade known as *kodivekkal* or *mantidal*. There is another set of practitioners known as *vaidyakar* who combine their knowledge in herbal medical practices with beliefs, who can cure those suffering from sores by symbolically drinking the blood, and can charm thorns, hairs, and other hurtful foreign bodies from the bodies of the sufferers by manipulation of magical sticks. One of the main songs of the Paniyar is *attalippattu* or the songs sung by the *attali*. *Attali* is a designated person who used to guide/perform the death rituals. After the death of a Paniya, a ritual has to be observed on the 7th or 9th or the 11th day of the death. The *attalippattu* is sung during the observance of this ritual. It is sung in such a style in which the singer describes and communicates to the almighty about the deceased person's personality.

After the death, the *pola* (pollution) starts on the seventh day. On this day before dusk, the post-death rituals will begin. The party will go to the place where the deceased was cremated and bring home the *athma* (spirit) of the deceased. Then the rituals are performed there and send the

athma back to heaven after due propitiation through rituals and songs. The spirit of the deceased is called *nizhal* (shadow). Till the morning the spirit will be kept at home and one of the female members of the family guard it till that time. Such sittings and guarding are called *meliyirippu*.

The *arapula* (pollution) is for seven days. During which the close relatives of the deceased should not chew betel, take non-vegetarian food or food prepared in oil and mostly rely on *kanji* (gruel). They also have to be refrained from cutting their hair or shaving, applying oil or washing their clothes or participating in any religious rites or rituals. Ornaments or any other adornments are to be avoided. The closest matrilineal relatives of the deceased observe *takapula* meaning full pollution for twelve days. On the morning of the 7th day if the economic conditions of the family permit, or somewhat later days by that time the family accumulate or borrow enough resources for its observance, the *kakapula*, *karipula*, *karukapula* is performed.

This after-death ritual which is performed mainly to get eternal peace to the spirit of the deceased is called *aeey*. On the first day, they erect a shed in the courtyard using bamboos, Palmyra leaves and hays. For the ritual which lasts for seven days, they erect a shed which has seven posts. One at the centre and three each at two sides. The main post at the centre is called *uttarakalu*. It is after that the *Atma* or spirit of the deceased is brought to the home from the burial/cremation ground. The *Chemmi* who

is believed to be the owner of the burial ground is paid a nominal amount for this purpose. The ritual begins with dance by the young men, the musical instruments are being played by the *chemmi*. Women do not join. The *chemmi* wears his traditional dress associated with his position consisting of bangles and bead necklaces and takes two winnowing baskets. Two kilograms of husked rice is put in one such basket and an equal amount of paddy in another. Near them, two earthen pots, two leaf spoons and lighted wicks are placed. He puts small quantities of grains into the pots, taking care to ensure that the grain from the left winnow goes to the pot on the right and vice versa. He then waves the two winnows up and down, facing the four sides in turn. The contents are then deposited near the corner of the hut. The *attali* then daubs sandal paste, ties the red cloth around his waist, and wears a red turban, wears bangles and bead necklaces and bells on his legs. He then takes a walking stick symbolic of the oldest ancestor of the bereaved family and gets possessed and communicates with the spirits of the dead ancestors of the family. A dialogue ensues between the *chemmi* and the ancestor spirit speaking through the medium of *attali*. In the end, the ancestor spirits bless the family and ensure their wellbeing. Below is one such *attalippattu* song.

Song No.10

mayo....ho...ho...

ithranagaluyelna...aa..aa...ha.

ithrapothavanna othanao...ho...he
mu...ninthabavathuna
mame kottilee poyingachu...
kayyu panitheerthu van china
ithranaluyalno...ho...ho..
mame kottilee poyingache...yeh..yeh..he
avana yenkilum aakatte...yeh... yeh... he
ethranangathuna
kathu kathu kathukondu
kothu kothi kothikondu
avayenelu aakatte...
mameyakayulakathu poyi
mame panitheerthu
mame kottana pani...hoo...hoo...hoo
avanechelumakatte...
kayyu paniyo .. ho...ho.
perthumkondu he...he...
ethranagu pokatha...
aalumelu meyluna
kayyum paniyum kachum kachum
kedalukootti vancho... oh..ho...hey
kayyu kadalna... mah...mah
nikku bolathane kayyu kazhalukakkana
irunaktheyumbole iruvaykuda theyumbole
inchi manthatha chavu thadikalyade
nale sambbanu pogade oh..oh..
ethrananakkacha kalliaka
ethranakakalu makkakku
inchi vantha poya

*nakeri nalupana
naleru sambu pogade..oh..oh..
vanthupoda nadathivaruva
inchimachlu konduvatte
nan mechalam
anchu kadkam paranchu
inchu kuthukam paranchu kayincho..mayo..oh..
ivanu manchalam
inchi vanthathiya, inchi vanthathiya
nalkandam mungu, nakeri nalpana
nalomudi padathikanka vanthu pokane oh..oh
enna panthenoothiya
kalu kazhaluna..kayyu kalu ketti vanche..oh..
ethrananga ncha kalyakathu*

*enna panther theyyam panthiru gurukkanmare
panthiru theyyamare hey.. hey..hey
24 achalam paye..24 ponthiya
Achu merakkuranu
pattilu they panthiru karanamare..mu.mu..mu
nadanu panchakku athine adakkiketti
ithranankacha kalyakathu
inchi vanthupoya chave thadiarum
nalaru divas am ee budokathikku
ee kanchi kalyakathekku badippo mu..mu..mu
panthiruna panthiru gurukkanmare mu..oh..oh..
ingadukku inthirikku pudichu manche..
danam paranchu warmam paranchu pudichu vanche..
malathu ninna pambakathu mu..mu..mu..*

ennathottu punnakathu oh.. oh..
kuttana kuravu varatte..nadamavunaravu vannavaratte
avanekkanu..
anchu adakkam paranchu..
onchu thake paranchu..
onchu virinchu paranchu vanche oh..oh..
ninkanelu aakatte
ithranakachu kalyakathu
ithrana mancha kathu oh..oh..
vattiya chappa kathu..
kachiya kanchi kathu..
inimelalu ethoru thettum
kuttam menthade mu..mu..mu..
nadathi varula nadathi kaippale mu..mu..

More Vattakali Songs

The Paniyar perform Vattakali dance during all their festivals and celebrations. This dance is performed by all the assembled irrespective of sex and age. During the marriage, puberty ceremonies etc., such dances are performed. It is performed to the accompaniment of the Paniya musical instruments like *kuzhal*, *tudi* etc. Steps are made in accordance with the music. The songs which are sung during Vattakali are called Vattakali songs. Vattakali songs are usually small stanzas. One of the dancers sang the song loudly and the others will repeat the same. When one song ends another song will start. Any one of the dancers in the group initiates the

song. Any aspect of their daily life can be the subject matter of the song. Sometimes such songs are phrased and sung instantly as per the talent of the singer. Subjects like the plucking of the jackfruits, working in the field, affairs of the girls and boys, extramarital affairs, fishing and anything can be the subject. Thus unlike the ritual songs these songs are compiled instantly and mainly for the purpose of entertainment.

Song No.11

appayolu kolimara vetti vetti chanchu
ammayolu kuravakanda natti nattu chanchu
ammaya...papaya...
chuchina kayla valayirunkipo...ya...
kuthiyoorinokkutelukkutte
arangoori nokkutelukkutte...

kolimara - big tree
chanchu - tired of
chuchi - elder sister
kuravakanda - large plot of agricultural land

The song is sung by a younger sister looking at her father, mother and elder sister. The father is tired of cutting big trees and the mother is tired of planting paddy saplings on a big plot of land. Oh my father and mother the bangle in the hand of elder sister is now got tightened. It could not be taken

out. Though effort has been taken to beaten up and remove it that also failed.

Song No.12

*va..va.. varikka chakke..
chu.. chu.. chuttala kandi.. kandi
varikka chakkelu vavval kande.. kande..
chuttala kandilu chundane kande.. kande
aanatha valiya chakkene
chulley niyamma thinche
ponne.. ponne..
aanatha valliya uralanade
niyamayinte ponne.. ponne*

Chuttla	- burial ground
Chundan	- ghost
Uralanade	- husband
Thincho	- to eat
Kandi	- land
Vavval	- bats

The song is sung as if sung by the woman while going for collecting jackfruits. On the big jackfruit tree in the cremation ground, there are jackfruits. Let us go and pluck them. On one tree we saw bats. We also saw ghosts on cremation grounds. One of the girls was asked by others if the jackfruit has been eaten by you? Are you sleeping with such a big husband?

Mostly the songs do not make any sense. But it has a rhythm; so that they can dance according to the rhythm of the song and music of the *tudi* and *kuzhal*.

Song No.13

thekke volli vantheno
nenchakku nere vantha..
vadakke volli vandeno
nenchakku nere vantha..
thekke vollikku tengappulu.. pulu
vadakke vollikku mangappullu..pulu
thekke vollikku neeyippe
vadakke vollikku nanippe

Volli - lightning
Thekke -south
Nenchu - chest
Vadakku - north
Thengappulu - coconut pieces
Mangapulu - pieces of mango
Ippe - to stand

The song was compiled in the style of a conversation between two people. The subject of the song is lightning. One says that the lightning is coming from south straight to our chest. It is also coming from the north direction. The lightning coming from the south may be given pieces of coconut and

pieces of mango to the lightning coming from the north. You wait on the south side. I shall wait on the north. This is the content of the song.

Song No.14

*kanni meenum kanniluyuttu ayana
kanne.. kanne..
thodameenum thodayilittu ayana
thonde...thonde
kakki kova thirakkinch..
karikova thirakkincho..
payttukodu pilluttukodu
kakkem kotte karimkotte*

kanni	-small
ayana	-my
meen	- fish
thirakkincho	- to feel

The content of the song is that a thorn of a fish was stuck into the throat of a man. He is crying aloud and saying that the thorn is stuck in my throat and I feel to cry and vomit. Hearing this the women around are telling that the grass may be spread and mat may be spread. He can vomit into it.

Song No.15

*cholapori vonava kuyala..
chandapputtu vonava kayala..
kodakkattu vari thanche*

kotti thanche..

meesavanda paniyakku meenkari venda

ppo.. venda..

taadi vanda paniyakku meenkari venda..

ppo.. venda

kuyalan - the person who plays the kuzhal (flute)

chandapputtu - a dish made of soft pulp of Palmyra tree

cholapori - popcorn

mesa - moustache

taadi - beard

The song is about the person who plays the *kuzhal* (flute), which is one of the important musical instruments of the Paniyar. The women around are asking the flute-player; do you want popcorn or *panapputtu*; the dish is made out of the pulp of a Palmyra tree. You show your *dhoti* (dress) we will provide it. You can take it away. The Paniya man who has moustaches need not want fish curry; the Paniyan who have beards do not want curry made of stems of colocasia.

Song No.16

achi.. achi.. achi

achi nammala vachi

achina makane thandilelo

kumbala vallime thoonguve...

mundiri vallime thoonguve..

achi-elder sister

makan -son

kumbala valli - the creeper of the pumpkin plant

mundiri valli - the creeper of grape-fruit

thoonguve - to hang.

The song is narrated in the way of a girl expressing her desire to marry the son of a particular woman. If she does not allow her to marry her son, she says she will commit suicide by hanging with the stem of a pumpkin or grapefruit.

Song No.17

chachamo chachamo chachikavo..

nanga....katha parate vega

kekkenenchu nanga..

leela loli lolilla...

leela loli lolilla...

leela loli lolilla...

leela loli lolilla...

Chachama- grand mother

Nanga- we

Chichi- sleep

When the girls come of age there is an important ritual called *therandukuli kalyanam*. As part of this ritual, Vattakali is also performed. This song is

sung continuously for a long time and played Vattakali during such celebrations. In this song, the children are asking their grandmother to tell stories so that they will get to sleep early.

Song No.18

achuvolla arippevolla
nammakku mochakka nalla
kindi volla kinaru volla
nammakku mochakku nalla
uchu volla uravu volla
nammakku mochakku nalla

Achu-river

Arippe- streams

Kindi- a type of water container made of brass

Kinar- well

Uchuvolla- water used to wash raw rice

This particular song is about the water. It says that the water in the river, streams, well and the water kept in the brass container are good for all. But the water after washing rice and coming from drains is not good.

Song No.19

keeri ree...kina... tha...tha... tha...
kinattilittum kulukki tha...tha... tha...
mullapoovum choodi tha...tha... tha...
ekkoruthane katti tha...tha... tha...

The song is sung as if a girl speaking to a mongoose. The girl asks the mongoose whether he give her a *kinnam* (a brass vessel used to use eat rice) and clean it by putting it in the well. Could you adorn my head with jasmine flowers and could it help her find a suitable boy for marriage.

Song No.20

ayala meenum chuttittu

ayatha kanji vanthittu

nanum kuyalem kuchathu

ammem pullem aduppilu

Ayala - mackerel fish

Chuduka - to toast

kanji - porridge

kuyale - husband

pulla - child

The song was compiled as if sung by a wife. After roasting the mackerel fish and preparing rice porridge the wife and her husband sat outside the house and the grandmother and children sat inside the house to eat.

Song No.21

kovalakke kai thandatakke valli

appayittu thandatee ammaittu thandatee..

arakkum murukkum thandatee..

ennathilum changala vale valey..

kuyalanethilum changala vale valey..
ennathilum chippuna mata mata..
kuyalanethilum chippuna mata mata..
aanatha kuyalu chayichakku- kuyala
kuyala.. pove
ellum mutteem thedi
nadum narambum thedi..

kovalakka - a vegetable
appa - father
amma - mother
ara - waist
changala - chain
vala - net
kuyalan - the person who play the flute (*Kuzhal*)

The plant of *kovakka* has been planted and guarded by the mother and father together. That has grown now up to the waist level. My hair is curly like the chain net. The hair of one who plays the flute is also like that. My hair has become coarse so is of *Kuyalan*. The reference is mainly about the person who plays the flute during dances.

Song No.22

villu villu villu kule kule
volka volka vothappotti potti
vayakandilu chennu ppette ppette..

ammaya.. papaya..
thadthoy pidithoy
valliyurkavum thatathuda kadathu..
kuthamalem kerida kerida
vayola changaley
kuthamalay kadu key

Villu kula - a large bunch of banana
Ppette - crab
Vayakandi - the garden of bananas
Kutha malem - the big hill

In this song, the storyline is narrated as if talking to a person named Volukka. Please hold the big banana bunch properly. There are a lot of crabs in the garden of bananas. Catch them going with the mother and father. With the catch do not come via Valliyurkavu (a temple in Wayanad) and do not pass the big hill.

Song No.23

kayalu kundaliya kalliyum botti..
muttukku muriye mundum chutti..
uurichakka parichu kundiylumittu..
kandachakka parichu kandiylumittu
akkareyum thodu ikkareyum thodu
palene kandappa chavittipolichu
kadappa.. pullanene thokkuva..
volla kerida thokkuva..

kayal	- bamboo
thokkuva	- to take
kandi	- field
kundaliya	- the tender leaves, shoots, buds
kundi	- in the earth, in the floor

The storyline in the song is narrated as if the conversation of people on two sides of a stream or rivulet. Cutting the shoots of the bamboo, folding the *dhoti* at the knee level, plucking and placing the *kuzhachakka* in the ground and plucking the jackfruit how you will come as there are rivers on both sides? As a reply, the person on the other side is telling come by kick breaking the bridge. Then the person on the other side is asking how I will carry the child? The answer is to carry him defeating the water.

Song No.24

*koyikkotte komba molaku
parichu thinthondu vandey..
patte chatha palu kiyanku
vangi thinchondu vandey
patte chathum poya..
palam polinchum poya..
patte chathena nokkanda
plapolinchnum nokkanda
aa.. eee.. kuu.. kuu.. kuu..
kumbala kandilu kumbittu vindey*

vindey..
mancha kandilu malanthu vindey
vindey..
amma paranchalum kekke..
appa paranchalum kekke.
poove koyina pole
chinakki chinakki nadappe

patte chatha	- the elderly who died
mancha	- turmeric
kekke	- not listen
vindey	- to fall
appa	- father
amma	- mother
kiyanku	- tuber
palam	- bridge

In this song, the reference is about a person who came from Kozhikode (a town in Malabar). He came from Kozhikode after plucking and eating a bit of chilly. He came by eating tubers grown in the place where elderly people died. Do not care about the people who died and the collapse of the bridge. In the field where *kumbala* (pumpkin) is planted you knee there, in the field where the turmeric is planted you lay back. Without listening to the words of mother and father you are living like a cock.

The folk songs of the Paniyan speak about love, marriages, extramarital relationships, merriment and most importantly forests, birds, animals and their innumerable spirits.

Believes and Practises

Aiyappan(1992) who studied the Paniyan, mentioned that the Paniyan had only scraps of religious rites and had a very superficial knowledge of the attributes of the gods and goddesses of the folk Hinduism which they borrowed and adapted from their masters. They believed in a great creator god *patachavan* literally meaning one who created. They conceived the sun as a type of god called *pakal bhagavan* meaning god of the day and the moon *iravu bhagavan* (god of the night). The sun and moon are responsible for sending the life down and taking the life away at intervals (that is birth and death). They have a belief in 24 worlds; 17 above ours and 7 below and in all of these worlds there are thousands of gods and goddesses and millions of spirits both benevolent and malevolent. As per their belief system, life is *chima* which they conceptualise as small as one-seventh of a mustard seed in size. Aiyappan (1992) believed that *chima* might be a corruption of the Sanskrit word *jiva*. While *chima* is in human beings it is comparatively less powerful but after death, it becomes *peena* (spirits)go as high above the place where the sun sets.

Inside every hut, one can see a raised platform kept neat and tidy by plastering with a mixture of cow dung paste and charcoal. It is called *tina*

the place for their innumerable number of spirits. The place of their gods outside their hut was mostly under the big trees. Under the trees, some shapeless boulders represent their gods and goddesses. “The Paniyas seem to have been only borrowing the gods and goddesses of their employees. In eastern Wayanad... the Paniyas include ... the smallpox goddess... *Mari Amma*, whose shaman is expected to speak in Kannada. Some Paniya families have borrowed *Malakkari* worship from the Kurichiyas and the Paniya shaman of *Malakkari* uses typical Kurichiya idioms and slang terms” (Aiyappan 1992).

The Paniya belief system is typical of adoption of gods from different belief systems from all types of people irrespective of their religious, linguistic, and nationality affiliations. A Muslim saint has been featured as a god and when impersonating this deity, the *attali* the Paniya mediator uses intonations and slang typical of local Mappila (Muslim) and goes through the motions of smoking *bidis* (cigar) and tasting non-vegetarian food after mimicking the performance of *namaz*. The Paniya also have adopted and incorporated in their corpus of belief system a *sayippu or sahib* as their god with solar *topi* (cap), pants and European dress representing the typical British Officers who had first come to the area in the days of East India Company from Bombay- hence, interestingly, the deity is also known as *kumpani* (company) *teyyam* and Bombay *teyyam*.

The mother Goddess at *Valliyurkavu* has been worshipped by all the local Hindus as a prominent regional deity. This particular deity has a prominent place not only in the belief system of the Paniyar but in their history, anthropology and present state of affairs. They believed that an oath taken on the premises of this temple should not be violated and if violated it has immediate and dire consequences. That is why in the past the Paniyas were bought and sold by the local landlords during the festival at this temple so that they will not break the contract fearing the dire punishment by the goddess.

The Story of Karinthandan, the Paniya Chief who became the Deity of All

Any person who is travelling from Kozhikode to Wayanad via Thamarasserry pass might have observed a huge tree near Lakkidi with a huge iron chain. It is believed that the chain is used to chain the spirit of Karinthandan, the Paniya Chief who has shown the Britishers the route of the present Thamarasserry pass. During the colonial period, the British were trying to find a route to Mysore via Wayanad to transport especially the spices. The attempts by different engineers went in vain as they could not find a way. But finally, with the help of Karinthandan, the Paniya chief who was well versed in the topography and geography of the region they could find the route. The British were amazed by the way in which Karinthandan travelled through the foothills and forest that they were

scared to enter for many reasons including the presence of wild animals. Earlier a reward was announced by the Viceroy that whoever finds the way through the forest. The engineer who constructed the road wanted to take credit for it and the reward promised by the Viceroy. So he has taken Karinthandan to the top of the hills and murdered. During the 1880s the Thamarasery pass witnessed a lot of accidents and loss of human life. Everybody who passes the pass lands in one or the other troubles. It was then believed that the spirit of the Karinthandan is roaming the area and was the real cause of all such troubles. A priest was engaged to solve the issue who by magical means captured the spirit and chained it to a huge banyan tree at Lakkidi. The tree and the chain are still visible. The tree is called *changala maram* (chained tree) and the small shrine was erected recently as the Karinthandan temple.



Changala Maram and the Small shrine erected there

Mattolikkuttu

It is during the marriage, pre-puberty ceremony and different ceremonies and rituals the *Vattakli* is performed. The dance and songs which are sung and performed during the marriage ceremony are called *mattolikkuttu*. The Paniyan celebrate marriages with different types of observances and rituals from other tribal and non-tribal communities of the region. One of the important ritual which the Paniyar observe and celebrate is the marriage. Perhaps this is the most important occasion they assemble and reach the zenith of their enjoyment with songs, music and dance.

Though the marriages are performed under the supervision of the *chemmi* (the head of the settlement) the important functionaries are *munnayikkaran* generally the boy's sister's husband and *munnayikarathi*. The boy's side has to present some ornaments and a small amount of cash to the girl during the process of negotiation and confirmation of marriage which is known as *atayalam kodukkal*. The ritual in which the cash and other gifts are handed over is called *panam kettal*. The obligation extends even after marriage as an annuity called *anhaippanam*. After the *panam kettal* ritual all the expenses of the girl are met by the boy and these are generally given in kinds like rice, oil, salt etc. which is called *kolumbelli*.

It is on the day of the marriage the *Vattakali* is performed. Several rounds of *Vattakali* are performed at different stages as part of the different rituals. The celebration and performance of dance reach their zenith on the

night of the marriage day. On the day of the marriage, early in the morning, one *munnayikkaran* from the boy's side will go to the girl's house and another from the girl's side visit the boy's house. The *munnayikkaran* from the girl's side accompanies and guides the boy's party to the girl's house. Halfway to the girl's house, the *chemmi* of the girl's village asks to perform *nalu muchu kayamkali* (four rounds of Vattakali). Only after the performance of four rounds of dance they can proceed to the girl's house. On reaching the girl's house they perform *pathu muchu kayamkali* (ten rounds of Vattakali). In the night of marriage they perform *irupathu muchu kayamkali* (twenty rounds of Vattakali). Though it is twenty rounds in meaning, it may last the whole night till the participants are exhausted fully. Locally available liquors will be provided amply. The *pattu* and *attam* (song and dance) performed by the boy's party will be seen assessed by the girl's *chemmi* and *karanavanmar* and if only satisfied the actual *kettu kalyanam* (tying of *tali- marriage string*) take place. The ritual of tying *tali* is called *thiruvana kettu*.

Conclusion

The elements of bondage can still be traced from the everyday lifestyle of the Paniyans as they remained slaves for generations. The institution of bonded labour survived in Wayanad, especially in so far as the Paniya were concerned. The centre of the bonding contract was the famous temple of the regional deity the Valliyur *kavu* shrine located near Mananthavady. The

traditional manner of recruiting them for the purpose was by advancing loans at the annual festival in the last week of March. During the festival, the Paniyan take a pledge that he and his family members would work for the creditor for the next one year. The Paniya believe or made them believe that breaking a pledge taken in front of Valliyur *kavu* may invite supernatural punishment. Hence they attach themselves to their creditor family for the next full year working in their fields for meagre payments in kind. The workload of the masters of the family was equally divided among the family members, the male children engaged in grazing the cattle, the girls for household chores and the elders for the different works in the field. Besides the meagre payments, they were also eligible for some “luxuries” like oil and a pair of new clothes during festivals like Onam. In short, the Paniyas were subjugated to the status of enslaved. This psychology of serfdom and over lordship is reflected in the myths and songs of the Paniya. It is a reflections of what they are, what they aspire to be and what they claim to be.

Chapter-5

Myths, Rituals and Traditional Crafts of Bettakkuruma

It is assumed that the name Bettakkuruma originated from the word 'bottu', meaning hill. The name Bettakkuruma is used because they are dwellers of the mountain. The origin myth of Bettakkuruma relates them to the Neruthimala (Neruthi hill). Some of them believe that Neruthimala is somewhere near present-day Nilgiri Hills. Like many other tribal communities, their origin myths also link them to a period when there was a big deluge in which all the world was under water. To save her two grandchildren named Kali and Soman, one of the old ladies put them in the shell of a gourd. This gourd floated in the water for days and finally settled in a hillock named Neruthimala. In Neruthimala, the god stopped them and took them out by breaking the gourd's shell. The god advised them to continue to stay in Neruthimala. In return, the god asked for a gift in the form of coconuts and anything of their wish. Kali and Soman have not eaten anything for days. They were starving. They felt very hungry. The god has given them some ash in their hands. When they poured it on the ground it grew as paddy, millets, and different types of vegetables and fruits. From the ash, pots and other containers were also formed. Thus they cultivated crops and prepared their food.

When they became elder, Kali and Soman began to live as if husband and wife. They have got children and grandchildren. When they grew up in to a bigger society under a leader, they dispersed in different directions. Each group has

earned a name. Each group came to know in name of the *Karanavar* who led them. Those who followed *Cheengeri ajja* came to know as *Cheengeri Makka* (Makka means children), and those who followed *Kuppadi ajja* became *Kuppadi Makka*. Thus they have *Putheri makka*, *Kugurpadi makka*, *Thirumangal makka*, *Chembakapodi makka*, *Kuppachi makka*, *Edacheri makka*, *Vellattu makka* and so on. Then they divided into *oli*, (a division like Phratry) and *kire* (clan). They have four *oli*-s like *Mooroli*, *Eytholi*, *Aroli* and *Bandaroli*. There are several *kira*-s which are patrilineal. There are certain internal status groupings, similar to lineage among them like *elime*, *mupp*, *kanavan* etc. Each clan has a headman called *megalan*. When they brought a set of customs and practices based on traditions from Neruthimala as discussed below, they enforced specific regulations in terms of marriage preferences and avoidances. The tradition says that all cannot marry as per their wish. One can select their spouse from a permissible *kira* of a permissible *oli*. The Bandaroli has only one *kira* named *Mareer*. Among all the *karanavars*, the eldest one is Somajjan, who is considered as the valia karanavar (big karanavar). They believe that he still lives with Thirunelli Perumal the local deity at the Thirunelli temple (It is an ancient temple on the side of the Brahmagiri hill dedicated to the Lord Maha Vishnu. The river here is locally known as *papanasini* (meaning destroyer of all *papas* (sins) once you take a dip bath in it).

When they dispersed to different places, they thought of bringing some discipline in the day to day life by following certain customs and practices. But such tradition was absent among them as they were not given such practices by the god when they were created. They were provided with only the seeds to cultivate and utensils to cook their food. When they grew up in a bigger society, they felt the need for such customs. They decided to visit their original place of birth, Neruthimala. For that, they required carts and bullocks to travel. Preparing the cart was assigned to Januvar Megalan, the head of the Eytholi clan. Januvar Megalan, with the help of Pattali of *kukor kire*, designed three bullock carts with stones. The bullocks were also made of rocks. These bullock carts were known as *mur-banti* (three carts) or *kallu banti* (carts made of stone). In this cart, they went to Neruthimala. In Neruthimala, they collected all the customs and practices, rites and rituals, healing and medical practices, medicines, and all required things for the coming generation to sustain. When they returned from Neruthimala, they reached Edacherry Chemmad Kadavu (ferry). The river was full of water and flowing with great speed. There was no bridge to cross the river. They believe that the river mentioned in their tradition is the river *Kabani* (Kabani is one of the major tributaries of the river Kaveri in Southern India. It flows through Wayanad district eastward and enters Mysore district to join the Kaveri River). When all the ajjans were stunned, Januvar Megalan came to their rescue. He made a bridge using *paikolu* (a sort of grass used to make a mat) and crossed the river. Thus they got their different traditions, rituals and ceremonies and knowledge systems. As

the *megalan* of the Eitholi Phratry got all the knowledge the Bettakkuruma brought from Neruthimala, they became more influential and prominent. They enjoyed a higher status in the community. They are the most populous clan in Wayanad, followed by *mooroli* phratry.

Binje

The myth, ritual and different art forms of Bettakkuruma are not separate entities of Bettakkuruma life and culture. One ritual or myth cannot be understood fully without knowing the interrelationship with others. They are complementary to each other. All the art forms of Bettakkuruma have their roots in their origin myths and belief system known as *binje*. *Binje* is the system of ritual worship of the Bettakkuruma. It is specially designed to invoke the ancestral spirits *binjakaluk*. One who officiates and mediates between the spirits and humans is called *binjakalan*. In other words *binjakalan* is the shaman of Bettakkuruma. According to the Encyclopedia of Shamanism, a shaman is “a specific type of healer who uses an alternate state of consciousness to enter the invisible world, which is made up of all unseen aspects of the world that affect us, including the spiritual, emotional mental, mythical, archetypal and dream worlds”. Without understanding what is *binje* and the role *binjekalan* in their life, it is difficult to assign meaning to the different activities they engage in their everyday life.

There are different types of *binje* being performed by the Bettakkuruma on different occasions. Generally, a *binje* is performed for relief from illness, relief

from difficulties, blessings of the almighty, welfare of the family etc. The following are some such *binje* observed by them.

Ajjadath- A woman during pregnancy is helped by a midwife called *tambarakkan*. If it is normal delivery no ritual is normally being performed. In the case of difficulty, a special *binje* is performed. The *binje* performed on such occasion is called *ajjadath*.

Bulmel binje- The *bulmel binje* is performed at the end of the pollution period after death. The pollution period will be ceased by the 9th day. This *binje* may take place immediately after that. The *bijekalan* along with the *megalan* officiate this ritual.

Keermeggak- The ancestral spirits of women is called *ajji-s*. This ritual is performed mainly to get introduced the newly born in the family and to the world of ancestors. It is performed after the end of *pettupula* (pollution attached to the childbirth).

Oyily Binje

This is one of the important rituals performed by the Bettakkuruma at the lineage level. The other types of *binje* discussed above are need-based and family-based. That is to get rid of certain difficulties faced by the family. The expenses are also to be met by the family. *Oyili binje* is an annual affair being performed by the *taravad* (lineage) as a whole for the welfare of its members. The meaning of the

word *oyily* in Bettakkuruma language is *taravad*. This is celebrated to please all their ancestors, remove all the difficulties they faced and begin a new and problem-free life. It ensures the welfare and happiness of its members. The date of the ritual will be decided well in advance by the *megalan* in consultation with the elderly members of the *taravad*. The arrangements will be begun at least one month before the function. The money and other required items are collected from the family members as per their ability. They collect new mats, white *dhoties*, (a cloth) things required for the feast during the celebration and firewood.

During the celebration, all the lineage members living near and away will be invited. Besides, members of other lineages living in the neighbourhoods will also be invited. They may contribute towards the expenses as per their wish. Like all other major celebrations, *oyily binje* is also performed in their *ambala*, the sacred place. The ritual will be officiated by *binjekkalan*. There will be more than one *binjekkalan* to guide and perform the ritual. The senior-most among them is called *doppu binjekkalan* (*doppu*- big), the next senior as *ede binjekkalan* (*ede*-middle). They have to be consulted and confirmed their participation well in advance. The rituals involved will last from one evening to the next day morning. The rituals will start after the night food. The *bijjekkalan*s and the women who sing the song during the rituals will be provided food first. After food, they have to be given betel leaves ritually. Besides that, each of them has to be provided with a white towel. The eldest member of the lineage will give this. This towel is

known as *mojjathi gedde*. After this, they worship the *binje morra* (*morra* is a conical shaped bamboo basket used to keep small idols of their gods and other sacred things). The *morra* is placed in the *mojjathi gedde*. Once worshipped the *morra* should not be touched by the women till the whole ritual is over. Besides *bijje morra*, they also place other puja articles like coconuts, raw rice, betel leaves, areca nuts, lamps etc. At two places they will also set small fires. It is between these two fires the *bijjekkalan*s sit on a mat. Besides them, five women will also sit to join the *bijjekkalan*s while singing. They only repeat what *bijjekkalan*s sing. They just sit back to back with *Bijjekkalan*s. Only the *megalan* will sit against *bijjekkalan*'s face to face.

Then the *Bijjekkalan* start singing by holding the *bijjemorra*. The first song must be related to the legend of the tribe. The story of their ancestors bringing tradition from *Deruthimala* etc., is the contents of such songs. The song which is sung first is called *binje minsic*. It is initiated by the *doppu binjekkalan*. For this first song, they will not use their musical instruments. Only after *binje minsic* do they start to sing other songs. When the *doppu binjekkalan* sings the first song he will get possessed and he calls the elderly members assembled there. They will communicate with their ancestors with the medium of *doppu bijjekkalan*. After that, they start singing other songs. He will be followed by *ede bijjekkalan*. The *bijje* songs are said to be 101 *pattukal*. Till the morning they sing the songs one by one and the women assisting them to repeat the lines.

Early in the morning, all the elderly people of the lineage are again called. They speak to the ancestors again through the *Bijjekkalan*. The *megalan* replies to the queries raised by the ancestors through the *Bijjekkalan*. The steps he will take in the future to remove the displeasure, if any, due to the improper conduct of rituals and ceremonies. The elders will not disperse immediately after the completion of the ritual. They sit together and promise that all the promises they have made to their ancestral spirits will be implemented to their satisfaction.

Gona Binje

If any individual or family is suffering from any type of health-related or other issues *gona binje* is performed to get relief from them. This is also known as *nalla binje*. Unlike the *oyili binje*, *gona binje* is to be arranged by the person or the family who is suffering from illness. For this, the family consult the head of the lineage and the *megalan*. Once the date is decided they invite the *bijjekalan*. The family may also receive some help from other family members and neighbours. Though they do not invite many people to the performance all those who are interested can also participate. If any other family is suffering from such problems but could not arrange a *gona binje* at their level due to financial or other reasons, they can also come and attend the *gona binje* and submit their problems.

The rituals start in the evening. It may arrange either in the *ambala* or in a temporary shed made for the purpose. It is under the supervision of the *bijjekalans*

that the rituals are performed. As in *Oyili binjje* the *bijjekalans* are to be provided with new *dhothies* (clothes) and mats. Fires are lighted at two places. The ladies who sing in the ritual will sit back to back with *bejjekalans* and the *megalan* in front of them face to face. Two special posts are also posted inside the shed which are known as *musambala* and *naduvambala*. Other rituals are more or less similar to the *oyili bijje*. Unlike in the *Oyili bijje*, the women who are the fellow singers in the ritual will also get possessed by ancestral spirits. The women will be possessed by the spirits of the female ancestors called *ajji*. Once possessed they jump and scream and run to the houses where there is some sort of problems. In such cases, the *bijjekalans* follow them and give a broom to her. She with that broom clean the surrounding of the house. The singing and rituals continue till the next morning. The *bijjekkalans* share the details of the communication he has made with the ancestors with the *megalans* and he explains the problems the family face and the remedial measures he has made to solve them and the suggestions made by the ancestral spirits. All the assembled will request that the mistakes if any committed by the family be pardoned and will not repeat such mistakes in future. If the problems were not solved fully next year also they may be advised to perform *gona binjje*.

Pela Binjje

Pela Binjje is observed on the ninth day of the death. Till that day the close relatives of the deceased will not take any food containing oil, coconut, pumpkin,

banana, bitter gourd, milk etc. Besides that, they will not take oil baths or chew betel leaves. In the case of death of the husband or wife, the surviving partner should not have come out of the house for nine days. Only after the performance of the *pela binjje* all these are allowed. This is observed only for the family of the deceased. But there is no restriction on close relatives and neighbours in participating in it.

On the previous night of the *pele binjje* they go and examine the burial ground. If the deceased person has done some mischief during his life time the burial ground may be disturbed by some animals. The main rituals will be more or less similar to the *oyili binjje* and *gona binjje*. During the *binjje*, the ancestors will come and speak about the mistakes committed by the deceased person when he was alive. By midnight they also call the spirit of the deceased and ask him to confess the mistakes committed by him during his lifetime. Once he confessed, the next ritual is to join him with the spirits of those who died earlier. For that purpose, they make a box through the song. That box is known as *polge*. The spirit will be kept in it through the songs and entrusted to other ancestral spirits. With that, the rituals end. Suppose while confessing the spirit refused to reveal all his mistakes another *pela binjje* to be arranged within another fortnight. A maximum of three *pela binjje*-s are performed. In order to confess all the mistakes and to keep him fully under the control of the other spirits, this *binje* is observing.

Otherwise, the spirit of the deceased will keep creating problems for the surviving family members.

Ke enn Kade

The Bettakkuruma's traditional songs sung during different rituals and celebrations are known as *ke enn kade* or *thatha pattu*. Marriage, ceremonies related to ear piercing, and other rituals and celebrations *ke enn kade* songs are being sung by them. Regarding the origin of the song, one story is prevalent among them. In the olden days, there was one brother and his sister. They lost their parents and all their relatives when they were very young. As nobody remained to support them, they have to support themselves. They together prepared their land by digging with the hoes for the cultivation of paddy and *muthari* (a millet). When they grew and the grains came out, parrots began to come even from distant places. When the brother goes to work the sister sits near the field and chases the parrots in order to save their crop. Thus it is believed that when she guard the crop she compiled the *ke enn kade* or *thatha pattu*. This is one of the most popular songs of the Bettakkuruma.

swaipee pothire mevvali kweela

kadu kadu noreere mevvali kweela

baththa kadu noreere mevvali kweela

thontee kadu noreere mevvali kweela

thontee kathare noyeere mevvali kweela

baththa katharu noyeere mevvali kweela
mera kombukka noyeere mevvali kweela
ke-enn kokku kempundo mevvali kweela
bellalla thinnu kempundo mevvali kweela
ke-enn kerkkile pachundo mevvali kweela
ke-enn kalu kempundo mevvali kweela
kallupatha noreere mevvali kweela
nadu nadu pereere mevvali kweela
swaippee pothire mevvali kweela

kweela - parrot
mevvali kweela - the parrot which searches food
mera kombukka - branch of the tree
kempu - red
kokku kempundo - do you have red beak
nadu nadu pereere - going all the areas
batham kadu - paddy field
thontee kadu - dry land

The song is about the parrot which comes in a group to the field to collect paddy. *Swaippee* designates the sound the parrots make while stealing the paddy sheaves. The song refers to the red colour of their peck and the green colour of their wings. The girl asks whether your beaks are red because of eating betel leaves. Thus the song explains the outward features of the parrot. The song proceeds as if a

conversation between a girl and the parrots who came to paddy and *muthari* fields to steal grains. The parrot which pecked the sheaves and went to the tree branch was asked if they did not get grain and whether they eat stones.

Kambala Gaddika

Kambalam is the traditional rice transplanting festival of Wayanad performed mainly by tribal communities like Adiyar and Paniyan. Other communities like Bettakkuruma also have such festivities. While men sing folk songs and play traditional bugles and percussion instruments women will plant the saplings to the rhythm of the music. The songs which are sung as part of the *Kambalam* are called *kambala gaddika*. During *kambalam* a large number of people together plant a huge plot of land with the accompaniment of the music of their traditional instruments like drum and wind instruments. Those who will not participate in transplanting will also engage in dancing as well. Such practices are believed to be to complete the work so quickly along with merry-making. Among the Bettakkuruma there is a ritual in which on the *kambala* day one elderly woman take bath early in the morning and with her wet dress she hands over hoes and sickles to those who are engaging in the work. This elderly lady is known as *kabbalajji*. While transplanting the plants one lady sings the song aloud and the others repeat it. Two of them will play musical instruments.

mangale gadde mangale gadde

mangale gaddil narubishude lajja

puncheli gaddil puncheli gaddil
puncheli gaddil narubishude lajja
puncheli gaddil puncheli gaddil
puncheli gaddil narubishude lajja
kambala gaddil kambala gaddil
kambala gaddil natti nadu lajje
kambala natti kambala natti
kambala natti nattukodu lajje
mangale gadde mangale gadde
mangale gaddil narubishude lajje
puncheli gaddil puncheli gaddil
puncheli gaddil narupizhiye lajje
kambala gaddil kambala gaddil
kambala gaddil natti nadu lajje

Gadde - paddy field
Mangale gadde - muddy field
Puncheli gadde - puncha (a crop) field
Lajje - elderly lady
Naru piriya - pluck the seedling

In this song, the content is very simple. It is referring to the plucking of seedlings and their transplantation. The rhythm and music encourage the people to work quickly.

Kem Kadha

There are two types of songs prevalent among the Bettakkuruma. One type of song is those which are sung by the religious functionaries during different rituals associated with their traditional customs and practices. These songs are of magico-religious significance mainly to appease their gods and goddesses and innumerable ancestral spirits. Those songs are believed to be part of their tradition brought by their ancestors from Neruthimala, the place associated with their origin. It has a direct linkage with the mythical stories of *binjje*. Besides them, there are other types of songs which are sung by them on different occasions of coming together and celebration for entertainment. Such songs are collectively called *kem kadha*. In this series of songs, one song is sung at the beginning as a prayer to the great gods of Siva and Vishnu. That prayer song is given below.

sivani sivani sivani narayina

sivani narayina

palu theyya pannu theyya

kayimu theyya- kayimu theyya

sivani sivani sivani narayina

sivani narayina

enka theyva mariyamman

enkalilu theyva

sivani sivani sivani narayina

sivani narayina

bale theyya bale theyya

karimbalayu theyya surunu theyya

sivani sivani sivani narayina

sivani narayina

pathiri bole pathiri bole

enkajjangavo theyya enkajjangavo theyya

sivani sivani sivani narayina

sivani narayina

enkka makku enkka makku

pethappundu methanu thare

enkka makku pethappundu methanu thare

kathan pude kathan pude

sivani sivani sivani narayina

sivani narayina

sivani	-	lord Siva
narayine	-	lord Vishnu
palu theyya	-	shall offer milk
pannu theyya	-	shall offer fruits
kay theyya	-	shall offer coconut
surunu	-	trissul (spear)
pithiri	-	new rice

enkajjavo - the spirits of the deceased ancestors

thare - to give

Besides the Lords of Siva and Vishnu they also commemorate and please their *karanavanmar* (ancestor spirits) who have left for their eternal world. Besides them, they also call and praise the main deity of the community Mariyamman. They promise to offer milk, fruits, coconut, spears and black bangles as offerings. This is to protect them from all types of problems. For the *Karanavanmar* they promise to offer new rice.

Rajante Kadha

Rajante kadha is one such song which falls in the category of *kem kadhe*. On special occasions like marriage, puberty ceremonies etc., the Bettakkuruma sing this song. These songs are not part of ritual songs but sing when they get together for enjoyment and merry-making.

reja raja raja reja raja raja ..

reja raja raja reja raja raja..

reja raja raja reja raja raja..

reja raja raja vana raja..

thai theyndu theyndu

thai theyndu theyndu

kayyilu jankkate lakka thare jo lankave

kayyilu jankkate lakka thare jo lankave

bina binno binno.. bina binno binno

mandilu kireeda lakkathe jo lankave

kila keela keelu kila keela keelu
kayyilu udavalu lakka thare jo.. lankave
reja raja raja reja raja raja..
reja raja raja vana raja..
katturaja kanave nechave
bolla kuthire lakkathare jo nenchave
katturaja kanave nechave
kartha kuthire lakkathare jo nenchave

raja	-	the king
lankave	-	the king
mandilu kireeda	-	the crown in the head
lakkathare	-	give me
kayyilu	-	in the hand
bolla kuthire	-	white horse
kartha kuthire	-	black horse
udavalu	-	the sword of the king

The reference in this song is about one Kelu Thambran (thambran is the reference and address term for the king). During a war, the Bettakkuruma are telling him to give him the crown, sword and the white and black horses to fight back the enemies. This type of song is sung just for merrymaking and enjoyment. These songs are recent compilations and not part of their traditional magico-religious tradition of songs recited on ritual occasions.

Kal Kettalu

We have seen earlier the prayer song sung as an initiation song by the Bettakkuruma as part of *Kem kadhe* songs. They used to start singing *kem kadhe* with that prayer song. Similarly, they conclude the *kem kadhe* songs also with a prayer song. *Kal kettalu* is the concluding song which is given below. They believe that if this song is not sung as a concluding song there is a possibility of falling and getting injured when they play music to their traditional instruments and dance after the singing.

gangale puvu samthinke puvu kiyathongba noreere

nerike mullu keetali mullu kiyathongba noreere

puve thotta puvenode kiyathongba noreere

nankka theyva vara thare kiyathongba noreere

nankka theyva vara thare kiyathongba noreere

puve thotta puvenode kiyathongba noreere

lale lalo puvo thare

makkayya puvu gangale puvu kiyathongba noreere

nerike mullu keetali mullu kiyathongba noreere

puve thotta puvenode kiyathongba noreere

narayananka vara thare sivani naale laale

laale laale puvo thare

enkka theyva vara thare sivaninarayana

laale laale puvo thare

gangale puve - the white flower

samthinke puve - a type of flower

kiyathongbe - hand full

norire	-	look
nerinke mullu	-	thorn of the lemon plant
keetali mullu	-	thorn of another plant
makkayya puvu	-	flowers of chilli plant

In the song, they are seeking all the blessings of Gods like Siva and Vishnu and from their *karananavanmars* by offering flowers and other presents.

Jjo Jjo songs

Jjo jjo songs are usually sung by the mothers to make their children sleep. There is no specific meaning to the song but the tune and intonation of the song are important. Mothers can add lines and use names as per their creativity and the names of the children.

jjo jjo jjo jjo jjo jjo jjo jjo
ba va vo ba va vo bavo vavo
ba va vo ba va vo bavo vavavo
enthakku chinch nee allu boda
enthakku chollu nee allu boda
jjo jjo jjo..

jjo jjo jjo
enthalakku chinnu pemi
enkalakku chollu pemi
bavavo bavavo entha marvlin
bava gu go
jjo jjo jjo entha kunchee
jjo jjo jjo..jo..jo..

Cradle songs

The lullaby or cradle song is a soothing song or piece of music sung to make the children sleep. Though the content of the song and modulation may change as per the situation and creativity of the mother the tune and intonation remain the same which they passed from generation to generation as cultural knowledge or tradition. As the main purpose of the lullabies is to aid the children to sleep, music is often simple and repetitive. The tune and modulations usually convey heightened emotions, often love and affections.

*chinna thottilu thigire nerivare musa
nan kemi erukodina notbare mosa
balli thottilu thigire nelivare aaga
nankunchi nedkodna notbare aaba
kayil thottilu thigire neribare mama
nanpemi oralna notbare mama
china thottilu thigire nelivare aaga
nankukku ergatna notbare mama*

This is a song sung by the Bettakkuruma while cradling their children. In this song, they describe different types of *thottilu* (cradles) based on their size and the materials used. They also talk about the child sleeping in it and request different people around, to take care of the child without falling from the cradle while sleeping.

Bettakkuruma Stories

Story of paddy and *muthari* (finger millet)

When Soman and Kali, the primordial ancestors of Bettakkuruma, received the ash-like powder from the god and planted paddy and *ragi* (finger millet), paddy was not having its outer skin. So it was very easy for the people to collect and eat rice. Those days *ragi* also was having different textures as per the belief of the Bettakkuruma. The passing people used to pluck and eat rice because it was easy for them to eat it as it did not have outer skin. Paddy got annoyed of this. One day out of sheer anger paddy tried to run away from there leaving *ragi* alone. This made *ragi* sad. *Ragi* followed paddy and tried to console paddy. But remained to be adamant. Finally, *ragi* put a nose string to the paddy and stopped it from moving. Bettakkuruma believes that because of this nose string paddy got its present texture.

Story of Kelu Thambran

In the past there was a raja (local king) in Wayanad. He has accumulated lot of gold and property. Knowing this the white people decided to attack Kelu Thambran (thambran is the reference term of raja) and capture the gold and other properties. The Kelu thambran sought the help of Bettakkuruma. The white people was much bigger in size. The Bettakkuruma cut down bamboo and prepared *thamburu*, a musical instrument and blew it. When it was blown a huge sound arose. Hearing this sound the white people thought that Kelu's army is much bigger than theirs. So they returned without attacking Kelu thambran.

The story of the creation of Kuzhal and Chenda (wind instrument and drum)

In the beginning, when the *Karanavanmar* brought customs and practises of the Bettakkuruma from Nerutimala, they felt tired and sat under the shade of a big banyan tree. They wanted to talk something to their creator god. But there was no means to call the god. Thus they wandered in the forest in search of some means to communicate with the god. Suddenly they heard some sweet sound coming from a bamboo tree. It was from a bamboo on which beetles has made a few holes. When the wind blows it is producing some sweet sounds. Immediately they cut down the bamboo and blew. Sweet music began to flow. This is the story behind the origination of *kuzhal*.

But along with the *kuzhal* there was nothing to beat like a drum. In order to make a drum the skin of the dead animal is required. Touching the skin of the dead animal is taboo for them. Then they saw a cow eating grass in the nearby grassland. Nobody wanted to take the skin of the cow by killing it. But the *ajja* of *kalikkeel* clan came forward for their help. He removed the skin of the cow without killing it. Though the skin was removed the cow continue to pasture as if nothing happened. Thus using that skin they prepared the *chenda* (drum). Thus they blew the *kuzhal* and beat the drum. Hearing this the god appeared before them and blessed them. After the god left the *ajja* again put back the skin again to the cow. This was the story behind the origination of their musical instruments. Though the content of the story is the same, different versions of the story are available among the Bettakkuruma depending on the localities they live.

According to another version of the story, after the *karanavanmar* brought their *binje* and *birdu*, they found something missing in their life. They found that it is the music which they lack to appease their gods and ancestral spirits. They were not having any musical instruments. Without the music, life became horrible for them. So they decided to make drums to create music. But there occurred a problem. In order to make drum the skin of dead animals are required. As they considered using the skin of cows a taboo no one among them was ready to touch the skin of the dead cow. When they think so one calf appeared before them. The skin of the calf seemed to be appropriate for the drum. But no one was ready to remove the skin. Finally, the *megalan* of *kalkeer* clan came forward to de-skin the calf. Other *ajjan*-s promised him that once the drum is prepared he will be given back the purity which lost due to the touching of the skin. Then he de-skinned the calf and prepared a drum. But after the preparation of the drum, the *ajjans* were not ready to return the lost purity, so easily, to the *megalan* of *kalkeer* clan. They kept certain conditions before him. He followed all the conditions and finally, the impurity caused due to the de-skinning of a calf was removed. But other clan members never considered him and his clan equal to them. They always considered the *kalkeer* clan as much lower in the hierarchy and even today they are lower in status and hesitate to give girls in marriage to the men of this clan.

The Story of how they Compiled *pattu* (songs)

When the *karanavanmar* brought customs and traditions from Nerutimala in the beginning, there was no songs in that. Without songs it is impossible to appease

the gods and the innumerable ancestor spirits. Singing song is the only way to reach their gods and ancestors. Then *Evthara Megalan* alias *Sundajjan* decided to compile songs for the Bettakkuruma. He spread sand on the floor and sat to draw songs in it. Letters were drawn in it. Then he sang the songs which he draw in the sand throughout the night. When he sang the *Sundajjan* removed all the drawings in the sand unknowingly. That is why they do not have any alphabet. In the absence of alphabet they could not write these songs and other traditions in the written form. It preserved and transmitted to generation after generation orally. The Bettakkuruma used to sing the songs sung by Sundajjan in their various rituals and ceremonies.

Traditional Crafts of Bettakkuruma

Pottery

Pottery an artificial substance, is regarded as a Neolithic invention. Archaeologists view that it is likely to have originated independently in one or another part of the Central America and the Andean region, but in fact, it is reported that, pottery was made by pre-Neolithic societies in Denmark and Sudan. All Neolithic pottery was made without the aid of a wheel, instead several methods of free hand building being employed. The Bettakkuruma also employed the Neolithic technology of non- rouletted pottery.

The Bettakkuruma is the only tribal community in the entire south India who involves in handmade pottery and for them it is the specialized job of the women folk. They practice the scooping method and are unaware of wheel technology. At no stage of its making male labour is generally involved.

Pottery Making Techniques

Several steps are involved in the making of pots of even the simplest type. The identification of clay appropriate for the purpose is the first step. One must know where she can find the suitable clay. Usually the Bettakkuruma had to go to distant places to collect such clay. The quality of the clay for pottery purposes is tested by tasting a pinch of it. The clay which is used by the Bettakkuruma is different from the ordinary clay used in the wheel made pottery. Compared to the wheel technique clay consumption is much more in hand-made techniques. If the suitable clay is not available they have an alternative method. They mix two different varieties of a particular kind of clay in certain proportions to get the secured quality. Females collect the clay from the forest with the help of other co-workers and transport it to their settlement on their heads.

During the second step the clay is prepared. It is being dried up and the grainy and the extraneous materials are removed. It is then spread on a

plank and pounded with a pestle like strong wooden rods to make it smooth and to attain a homogeneous texture. The clay is then moistened to give it a proper working consistency. Now the clay is ready for pot making.

At the third stage they make lumps of clay. They beat the exterior with a wooden rod and scoop out the surplus clay from inside the lumps of clay with the help of a bamboo strip till they get a thin pot shape. Later water is smeared both inside and outside and softly beat it with a pebble and shaped it into a vessel. Decorations are also made on the pot during this stage. The scooped out clay can be used again for making pot. In the next stage it is dried up either in sunlight or by smoking by keeping it above the kitchen hearth.

The firing of the pot is the final step. It can also be considered as the critical stage because if the preparations made so far is not properly done it may break down and the entire effort becomes a waste. The Bettakkuruma, do not have a kiln for firing purposes and no contrivance for driving air into fire is used, but several pots are fired together to save labour. Bamboo splits are piled up in the courtyard and the pots are spread on it. These pots are covered with another heap of bamboo splits. It is fired and burnt till it gets red colour. They added sufficient

bamboo splits if needed. They use bamboo splits instead of timber for firing as it emits extreme heat.

Basketry

Basketry is an ancient craft. Archaeological evidences show that basketry is again a Neolithic technique. Baskets of interwoven reeds, bamboos and grass have a worldwide distribution and it had been widely used as an artificial container.

The Bettakkuruma are specialists in making a wide variety of bamboo baskets. Till recently a major share of their income for their subsistence came from making and selling the baskets. The baskets of Bettakkuruma had a high demand among the neighboring agricultural communities, both tribal and non-tribal. The tribal agricultural communities like Kurichia and Mullukuruma and the non-tribal agriculturists like Nayars, Gounders and Chetties extensively made use of these artifacts for storing their grains and other provisions.

Unlike many other tribal communities, the Bettakkuruma mainly use the bamboo for making baskets and very rarely reed and cane. Collection of the bamboo from the nearby forests is the first step to be followed in the process of basket making. Though basketry is a specialized job of men many women are also found engaged in this activity. They usually collect the bamboo from the exterior of forests

and never go interior of it due to fear of wild animals especially the elephants. If they found any scarcity of this raw materials in their surrounding forests they generally depend on the neighboring Adiya community, who are said to be much more specialized in collecting bamboo etc., from the interior forests even neglecting the threat of wild elephants. For this service they are paid in kind, more recently in cash also.

In selecting the bamboo for felling they take extreme care. It should not be neither very tender nor fully ripened. They usually avoid the full moon days and their immediate preceding and succeeding days for the collection of bamboo. They believe that the bamboo collected on these days will have a sort of “sweetness” which attracts the insects and spoil the baskets. Sometimes they immerse the bamboo into water in the nearby streams or paddy fields for two or three days to remove the “sweetness” if any, to make it much more durable.

Tools and Implements used

The Bettakkuruma basket makers use very simple tools and implements like a hand axe, for bamboo felling, a bill hook, to split the bamboo pieces into small strips or splinters, a hammer, either of a solid bamboo or of iron and a slab of stone. No other implements are normally used.

Modus operandi

The bamboo pieces splits into different strips or splinters of about 50 cm in length. These strips are then slightly dried in the sun. To make it a soft, pliable and workable material they keep the strips in the mist for one or two days. The width and thickness of the strips will vary as per the nature of the artifacts proposed to make. With these strips they then plait baskets of different structure, design, style and size. The various artifacts of the Bettakkuruma includes *mura* (sieves) *kutta*, *vatti*, *petti* (all baskets of different structures), *thottil*(cradle), *chada*, *kudu*(fish traps) etc. From a single bamboo of an average size they can make five to eight sieves. An average of one man's labour is needed for the preparation of a sieve.

Basket Making Technique

The general basket making technique followed by the Bettakkuruma is that of wicker make or plaiting. It is the “alternating over- and- under technique”. The baskets they make are rigid and built up on its own frame. The body is produced by the interlocking of split bamboo.

The baskets (plaited bamboo containers) are made on the foundation of six strips arranged in a star pattern and then plaiting several layers of slender bamboo splits in a circular manner. The user

lamine it with a mixture of cow dung and mud and then dry it in the sun.

The most demanded artifact which they usually make is the *mura* (sieve). It has two varieties- *ottamoola* and *randumoola*. The sieves are woven and the whole process starts from the region of the jibs. They can make various designs of star, birds etc., on the body of the sieve using the coloured outer bark.

The Bettakkuruma, now, have acquired new skills in the fields of basket making and have thus diversified the produces. They have started to weave baskets, out of dried grass, instead of using traditional bamboo strips, in crochet patterns. The various items so made includes not only bags and baskets of different structures, and designs but also those things like fancy and showcase materials like flower basins, candle stands, lamps, figures of birds and animals etc. Compared to the rigid bamboo baskets, they are of semi rigid type. The non-tribal people, out of curiosity, purchase these items even paying a very reasonable price or more. The grass are knitted together using a hooked needle made out of bamboo strip and plastic twine, instead of the twisted fiber cords.

Here the Bettakkuruma substituted a “simple” artifact, i.e., the fiber thread (the fiber thread is, of course, not a nature fact as it involves

prior modification by human) with a “complex” artifact like plastic twine, the product of a very complicated technology. The production of which involves a knowledge base “external” to them. Here, the substitution is only a matter of choice based on “efficiency” and “sufficiency” conditions and no outside technology is actually transferred on them.

Interaction with the non-tribal people helps them to understand the new needs of their neighbors and to adjust the means of production to produce such items of use to satisfy the needs of their neighbours. One such item they so make is a loose open weave plant cover such as that of plaited coconut leaves, to protect the rubber plants from the direct rays of sun. This item has a high demand among the growing planter population in Wayanad.

The Bettakkuruma women are also found engaged in making grass mats (Parambu). The required grass (*pai pullu or pai kolu*) is collected from the nearby forests or paddy fields by the women and mildly dried it in the sun. Later, they keep it in the mist to make it a soft and pliable material. They are then woven together with a bamboo needle using fiber thread. It may take two to three days to weave a mat of an average size. No Bettakkuruma is at present relying on it as a primary and full time economic activity but it serve as a subsidiary occupation for them.

They engage in such activities only during their leisure time or when no other employment is available. They also make brooms of different kinds using grass (*mani pullu*) or *kurunthotti* (a shrub).

Black smithy

Black smithy is not of course, a simple craft as it requires much more and complex skill endowment. The Bettakkuruma have acquired this skill and they were the sole distributors of agricultural and other iron implements in Wayanad. A Bettakkuruma blacksmith use manifold type of tools to make weapons and other implements. The tool kit of a blacksmith consists of hammer, knives, chisel, axes, saw, anvil, fan and furnace, hand bellow etc. They purchased iron either from the market or salvage from the wheels of bullock carts.

Techniques used: They followed the method of heating and hammering in the process of black smithy. The iron piece of adequate size are heated in the forge till it get red hot colour. Using the anvil the red hot iron is taken out and beat it into shape using the hammer placing it on the slab of stone. The process repeats till it get a desired shape. Sometimes an assistant will help the smith to hold the iron tightly with the anvil to enable him to give more powerful beat using both his hands.

Using this technology they make a wide variety of iron implements like axes, spades, hooves, iron-tipped digging sticks, knives, pen

knives, sickles, iron blades, plough tips etc., and implements for their own use like hammer, chisel, saw, anvil, fan and hand bellow. Though they are not hunters themselves they make different kinds of bows and arrows and sell it to Kurichian and Mullukuruma.

Among the local people their products still have a preference to industrially manufactured items as they are more comfortable to use and they made considering the particular local conditions of environment and soil type. More than that, certain “cultural products” made specifically for certain purposes would be available only among the Bettakkuruma. Even the industrially manufactured iron tools and implements bought from the market are brought to the Bettakkuruma for a retouch to make it a usable instrument.

Though their tools and implements are still in demand, the number of Bettakkuruma practicing it is decreasing due to several reasons. The “false” scarcity of certain items necessary in the productive process is one reason. Charcoal is a necessary item required for this industry. Forest regulations prohibit them from entering the forest and preparing charcoal. For the installation of fan, furnace, hand bellow etc., and to avail various other implements required to start the work, needed some initial capital investment which they always lack.

Another major reason for the decline of this household industry is the negative attitude of the younger generation. They seldom shows interest in getting training in this art as they are busy with wage labour for which they get ready wages and involves no risk factor or uncertainty but at the same time these are the common features of black smithy. Recently small scale industrial units have been established in different parts of Wayanad which also had an adverse effect on black smithy.

It is a matter of fact that, this Bettakkuruma industry is facing increasing competition from the products of organized sector and it is one of those household industries which are affected by the installation of advanced technology. Still, the Bettakkuruma smiths are often approached by the people of the locality to get “culturally specified artifacts”, to remould or remake the original ones and to retouch the industrially manufactured tools and weapons.

Frying Pans

The Bettakkuruma are also specialized in carving out frying pans, hearths etc., from the butter stones which are found in plenty in the locality. Using a hammer and chisel they carve out a round pan from the stone. The local people have a preference to these items as they are non-stick, material and consume only less fuel and oil and the dishes

preparing in these pans are believed to have a special taste. Besides, these pan have a high demand among the neighboring Mullukuruma as there is a custom among them as per that the bride has to be presented at the time of her marriage with a frying pan of this type by her parents. Nowadays, the number of people engaging in this activity is declining as more convenient alternatives are available in the market. Besides, it is a time consuming activity needing extreme patience. Youngsters show no interest in this type of activity as they consider it as a non-viable occupation.

Conclusion

The Bettakkuruma of Wayanad are one of the few tribal artisans in India. In the whole of South India, they are the only tribal community which pursued a wide variety of artisanal occupations such as pottery, black smithy, carpentry, basketry etc. The Kota of Nilgiri Hills will be an only exception to this. Artisanal occupations have now become subsidiary subsistence strategies.

The Bettakkuruma society is rich with different myths and legends. In the realm of art, music, dance, rites and rituals and even in their traditional crafts, which are all part and parcel of their everyday life, the influence of their mythical tradition are discernible. This, in turn, has a strong influence on the socio-cultural and political structure

of the community. Whether it is their art, music, dance or musical instruments, its origin is directly connected to their tradition called *Binje* through a series of mythical stories. The stamp of their mythical tradition is tangible in every action of their everyday life. The musical instruments of Bettakkuruma are neither mere instruments which produce music and rhythm nor magical instruments used directly to connect and communicate with their supernatural world; one just like that of *Haddikabaruda* of Kattunaicka, but it has strong influence even to decide the traditional social structure and religious order of the community based on the concept of purity. The origin myths of these instruments are best testimonies. The myth, ritual and different art forms of Bettakkuruma are not separate entities of life and culture. One ritual or myth cannot be understood fully without knowing the interrelationship with others. They are complementary to each other. All the art forms of Bettakkuruma have their roots in their mythical tradition and belief system known as *binje*.

Chapter-6

Oral Narratives and Songs of Kurichia

The forte of Kurichia culture is the existence of different types of folk songs among them. These songs were sung on different social occasions like *thirandukulikalyanam* (observance of puberty ceremony), *talikettukalyanam* (pre-puberty ritual marriage) and actual marriage. Though there are different songs among them, they are all not reflective of the true cultural heritage of the tribe. Such pieces are not written but transferred from generation to generation orally. One can observe several additions and deletions in these songs as per the articulateness and creativity of the singer. The length of these songs is varied from song to song. Some are very lengthy and narrative of a long story. At the same time, there are songs which comprise only a very few stanzas. A singer may sing only a portion of it or the full text according to the situation and his expertise. Kumaran Vayaleri (1996:80) have mentioned the existence of the following songs among them: *Ganapathipattu* (pattu in Malayalam means song and Ganapathi designates the lord Ganapathi), *narayapattu*, *narippattu* or *pulippattu* (*nari/puli* means tiger), *kattippattu* (*katti*- the wild buffalo), *kuman pattu* (*kuman*-owl), *mampattu*, *onthupattu* (*onthu*- chameleon), *pakshippattu* (*pakshi*-bird), *mayilppattu* (*mayil*-peacock), *marappattu* (*maram*-tree), *chovippattu*, *theepattu* (*thee*- fire) and *poopattu* (*poo*-flower). These songs are sung on different occasions both for ritual purposes as well as for entertainment. As shown above, most of the songs denote the names of birds, animals and trees and flowers. It was

told that while singing the songs, some among them act as if the animal mentioned in the songs with its expressions and gestures.

The Kurichiar though a Scheduled Tribe, have many cultural elements, unlike their counterparts in Wayanad, similar to that of higher castes of the plains like Nairs and Nampoothiris. They practised untouchability till very recently with all communities except Nampoothiris Brahmins were called Mala Nampoothiris (Hill Nampoothiris). They have many cultural elements in common with the Nairs of the plains like the practice of a matrilineal system, observance of *thiradukuli kalyanam* and *thalikettu kalyanam*. Similarly, their songs are also influenced by elements of *Vadakkenpattu* tradition. *Vadakkenpattu* is an important stream of songs narrating the heroic deeds of the then folk heroes of North Kerala. The Kurichiar also have narratives of these heroes like Thacholi Othenan, Thacholi Ambadi, Thacholi Chandu, etc. Kumaran Vayaleri (1996) have observed that these songs have similarities not only in terms of their theme but also in terms of language, the structure of the songs, way of narration and deliberation. In Kurichia households, after the death and the burial of the dead body, the relatives assemble at night for the next three days and sing songs of *Vadakkenpattu*. It lasts for the whole night. One of the elders of the family sing the song and others repeat it in the same rhythm. The Kurichiar have a language of their own. But interestingly only in very few songs, their linguistic influence is visible. Their folk songs have linguistically very close connections with the local language of the North Malabar.

Kurichiar_Songs

The Kurichiar sing different types of songs as part of rituals and celebrations. Marriage, *puthari* (new rice eating ceremony), puberty celebration, *thulappathu*, death rituals etc., are the important occasions the family members assemble and sing songs. On such occasions, they sing songs throughout the night and celebrate. One of the elderly member of the family sing the song and the others repeat it. This is the way the younger generation gets introduced to and learns the oral traditions. Aromal Chekavar, Kunchikannan, Kunchikelu, and Muthasiyamma are some of the characters in their songs. These songs have close similarities to the songs in the Vadakkenpattu tradition. The names in Vadakkenpattu and the personal names of Kurichiar are similar. Both the men and women sing together. All songs start with eulogizing god Ganapathi. Though they have a musical instrument called *chenda* (drum) on such occasions they do not use them. The most striking aspect of Kurichiar songs is that in structure, style of recitation, and at an ideological level, they maintain close similarity with Vadakkenpattu.

Pulippattu/Narippattu

Narippattu or *Pulippattu* is one of the important and popular streams of songs of Kurichiar. The Kurichiar perform *pulippattu* at the time of festivals in the local temples. *Puli* means tiger and *pattu* mean song in Malayalam. The *pattu* is sung to the tune of the *chenda*. *Chenda* is the only musical instrument used for this purpose. There is no specific dress code for this but they cover their ordinary

dress with a red cloth called *pattu*. It is around a lighted lamp the *narippattu* is performed. One among them beats the *chenda* walking around the lamp and sing. Two others accompany him and repeat the same stanza beating the drum. The *narippattu* is sung in the style of narrating a story. It enthrals the audience as it contains a storyline, funny and jocular aspects and emotional moments all to capture the attention of the audience. Unlike the Adiyar and Paniyar songs, the Kurichiar oral tradition is rich with its linguistic beauty, and storyline and transfers specific meaning and messages. Whereas Adiyar and Paniyar songs are momentary compilations, short and do not communicate any message except the rhythm. The characters in the songs are mostly imaginary but it contains and conveys a certain value system of the community. As a performing art form the *narippattu* tradition of the Kurichiar stands between the *ottan thullal* art form and the *kadhappresangam* (lyrical narrative or story telling performance) art forms once very popular in Kerala. (*Ottan thullal* is a recite and dance art form of Kerala, introduced by one of the famous Malayalam poets, Kunchan Nambiar in the eighteenth century. The folk performance is often laced with humour intended to criticise the society). If the audience could not follow the storyline in the song, *narippattu* may end up as a boring affair to the viewers. Some of the researchers have opined that *narippattu* have a very long tradition among the Kurichiar and opined that, it existed among them even before 1800s, that is, even before the arrival of the British to Wayanad. Though *narippattu* is generally performed on the stage for the viewers there are songs compiled for singing during paddy

transplantation, marriages, death rituals etc. The influence of the *vadakkenpattu* in the Kurichiar style of compilation and singing of *narippattu* is obvious. (*vadakkenppattu* is a rich oral tradition prevalent in north Kerala during the medieval period. The songs present stories of heroes such as Aromal Chekavar and Tacholi Othenan).

Song No.1

kalakamala mele kalaka puli

oruvellam tediyrangi

onnam malakeri

randam malakeri nokkumbol kandallo

moonnam malayude thazhvarayil atha

kotha lechi payyum kannum meyanallo

ithukandu puliyallo

idamkaikuthi valam kaikondum aasayum katti

porunnundu kalakapuli

ithukandallo kothalechi

naalam malakeri

ancham malayirangi

ithukandu puliyalle

idamkayi valamkayikondum aasayum katti

porunnundu kalakapuli

appozhallo kalikkaran

kaikkolan chekkan

chakka kaithachakka vetti uruttunnu

ithukandallo puli

aaram malakeri vazhimari

ezham malayilethi

appol kandu kotha lechi payyum kannum

ezham malayil

udane puliyallo chindichu

ammaye pidichal kunchinu vishama makum

kunchine pidichal ammaykku vishamamakum

eevaka chintha aayathinal

koottathil medhavi

kuttane pidichallo puli

ithukandu kaikolan chekkan

mooppaane vivaram ariyichallo

appol vannu nayattu veeran

puliyekonno veeran

ithukandu santhoshichu

kuttaneyum kooti thirichallo koth lachi payyu. (Song courtesy V.Naina 2018 p.92)

This song is only a shorter version of a long narrative. As the songs are not written and transferred generation to generations orally many of the Kurichiar respondents do not remember the full text. Many of the respondents have

accepted that what they remember is only a shorter version of a long song. The characters described in the above *narippattu/ pulippattu* are a cow, a calf, a tiger and a hunter. The storyline narrated in the song is of the tiger's attempt to catch the calf and the cow's instructions to the calf to face and escape from such attacks. When the hunter finally shot the tiger with his bow and arrows the song concludes. Only men of the community engage in such singing. However, some of the respondents have narrated the storyline as they remembered it. The *kalakappuli* of *kalakamala* and *chingathan puli* of *Chingathan mala* felt to mate as they got the smell of mating cows. As the *chingappuli* became pregnant she felt to eat the flesh of animals which have heads and horns. The tiger went out in search of such animals. They reached near the *kotharippasu* and its calf. As the pregnant *chingappuli* felt that if she catches the cow the calf will cry and if catches the calf the cow will cry. So they left them unharmed. Then they so the *chekaruthu* (bull) and caught and ate them. The *chekaruthu* got such a fate as he did not listen to the warning the boy who herd them has given. The tigers ate the flesh of the bull and filled their belly and the *chingathan puli* was delivered in the *pulipettapara* (the rock where the tiger has given birth).

The Kunchan Namboothiri of Manissanpalli *illam* (the term *illam* is used to refer to the residential house of Nampoothiris) wanted to go to Pairumala Muthappan where the Uttum Vellattavum ritual is taking place. In order to go there, he has to cross Pulipettapara. He was thinking about the *sadya* (feast) with which he is supposed to treat at the venue of Uttum Vellattavum. The people who

met him on the way warned him of the tigress who had given birth to a kid and the possible risk of taking that route. But the Kunchan Namboothiri was unmindful of such warnings as he was thinking only about *sadya*, the feast. He was asking all those he met on the way about the grandiose of the feast. He walked like that daydreaming the *sadya* and it got dark by the time he passed *pulipettapara*. Till this moment the description of the Kunchan Namboothiri went totally in a humorous way making the Kurichiar viewers euphoric and excited. At the peak of this lighter and joyful moment, the description entered into a tragic stage. The tigers saw the Namboothiri. They caught him and ate. Till that moment he was a jocular character. Suddenly he became a tragic one. After this tragic incident, the Naduvazhi (ruler of the Nadu) called for a hunting expedition to kill the tigers which became a threat to the life of the people. Again there are situations where there are enough narrations of incidents and descriptions which makes the listeners laugh and enjoy. After the Naduvazhi's call for the hunting expedition the Kaimals (a community) had occasions to see the tigers. They were having firearms with them to shoot the tigers if required. In the *pattu* (song) the Kaimals were again described as funny characters. When they saw the tigers they began to shiver and fell down the gun. The *pattu* describes how cowardly and funny they are. The *pattu* also gives enough description of the ways in which the *nayattu* (hunting) is organized in those days. Finally, a brave Kurichiar hunter with his bow and arrow shoot the tigers in their ears and killed them. It explains the expertise the Kurichiar maintains in hunting. The Naduvazhi openly praised

the Kurichiar hunter and the community as a whole and were pleased by the brave act declared the Kurichiar as the *kaduvazchapattam*. It means the ruler of *kadu* or forest. Though the characters in the song are imaginary it has a close association with the situations that existed in those days.

Song No.2

Makeelyamkotta kunchikannan

narayo narayo narayanam (2)

pattuganapathi narayanam (2)

pattu ganapathi thuthikkendanki (2)

ganapathikkendellam venam boleem (2)

vilakkum narayavum ganapathikku (2)

kettuday vettala ganapathikku

karalodayaykka ganapathikku

chandangalondirum ganapathikku (2)

vettipolannalle vekkunnathu (2)

anneram ganapathivelayadillo..

pattu ganapathi thuthikkanallo''

nalla thuthikkanam ponnum nathan (2)

nallathuthichalu kekkeem pinnem (2)

padunna pattinu rummyam venam (2)

kelkum janangalkurummyam venam(2)

pattlu thappe varutharuthu(2)

narayo naryo narayanam(2)

makeelyam pokunna kunchikannan(2)

nuttonnu kutyola paduppallonu(2)

anganeyirikkunna nerathilu (2)

anganeyirikkunna kalathilu
anneram parayunnu kunchikannan(2)
onnunde kakkanam kunchangaley(2)
angalyo keezhlokam ponenakku(2)
keezhlokam keezhlokam ponenakku(2)
kaikalyam kazhmandam kananallo(2)
ithallom paranchondu kunchikannan
kalariyaladachalle puttiyane(2)
nuttonnu kuttiyolallepinna(2)
avaravare veetikayachu kannan(2)

vegam theerngana kunchikannan(2)
pettoriyammene vilichukannan(2)
makeelyam kottelu keru kannan(2)
vilich vilikettu pettoramma(2)
ovam thiriyadi vannolamma(2)

enthey vilichappo entemone(2)
mattonnumallayo pettorammey(2)
orukaleykenna tharanentamme
yennayum pakatharanantamme
ambakku kekkembo pettoramma
yennayum pakayum meduthoramma
kannanu kondu koduthallomma
ennayum pakayeduthu kannan(2)
pakayeduthu moyi thadanchu(2)
kulikka kolathumme ponnu kannan(2)
kulikka kolathumme chennu kannan(2)
kulikka kolathilu chennuttalle(2)

avananteduppalle mattunnona..
irmanuduthona kunchikannan(2)
kolathilirangunnu kunchikannan(2)
arayola neettilirangi kannan(2)
mungi kulikkunnu kunchikannan (2)

angane kuliyo kazhikkona (2)
neettunnu kerunnu kunchikannan (2)
thevara kallumma kerininnu..
karmman kidakka pizhinchondana..
mudiyila bellam valichu kannan..
melum kaiyuokke thorthunnu (2)
thevara kallumma kerininnu..
chandan kallumma chennirunnu..
chandanorassunnu kunchikannan (2)
ayiru kuriyancham potta kuri (2)
angane kuriyokke thottu kannan (2)
angane vekana kunchikannan..
ontuduppellam ittukannan (2)
makilliam kottakku kerum kannan..
makilliam kottelu kerittolley (2)
pettoriyammene vilichu kannan (2)
ovam thiriyadi vannallomma (2)
yendey vilichappo yenta mone (2)
pandaya chorundo pettoramme (2)
anneram paranchallo pettoramma..
chorum kuttanu undu moneyi..
vegam theerngana pettorammey (2)
navoli kindilu vellalallo..

vellom kondu kodukkunnamma..
kai kaiki vega va ente mone (2)
thuvana yelayittu lamma..
chorum kuttanum belambunnamma (2)
ambakku kelkumbo kunchikannan (2)
chottum thalathilu vannirunnu (2)
choru veyikkannu kunchikannan
kuttan veyikkannu kunchikannan

venunna choru veyichu kannan (2)
venala chorada neekkeem vechu (2)
chottum thalatheennu eneechu kannan (2)
kaivai mughathithambarichu (2)
angane vannallo kinchikannan (2)
padinchattem kolayimmalu vannirunnu (2)
vettila thalikelum vedukkum kannan (2)
kilivalu nalloru vettila (2)
nakkum mukkellam nullittalle..
vettila porathalle nuru vethari (2)
chankkeennu neettiya kaliyadakka..
chappalu nalla pokeleduthu (2)
nayippathum kutti murukki kannan (2)

In this song the story is about Kunchikannan who lived in a fort called Makeelyam Kotta (kotta/kottai- fort) along with his mother. He has no one else with him in the fort except his mother. This song seems to be incomplete, discussing only the first part of the life of Kunchikannan. The song has been compiled in the style of

Vadakkanpattu, (songs of the north- that is songs prevalent in northern Kerala) a popular style of narration in north Kerala in the 18th and 19th centuries. Kunchikannan is earning his livelihood by teaching *kalari* (a popular martial art prevalent in north Kerala) to local learners in the fort. One day an idea struck his mind that he wanted to travel around and see the world. The various efforts that he has made to make his dream true are the subject matter of this song. However, this song is incomplete and it describes only the initial part of the life of Kunchikannan. Kunchikannan advised his disciples to stop learning the *kalari* and go back to their respective homes. Kunchikannan returned to his fort fast and asked his mother to give him oil and a towel to take bath. His mother did so and he applied oil to his head and body and went to the nearby river for a bath. After taking a dip bath in the waist-deep water and applying sandal paste on the forehead he returned to his home and wore a new dress. He asked his mother to provide with him the food. The mother fed him with rice and curries. After taking food he kept aside the balance of food. He came to the front yard of his house. He sat and started taking *murukkan* with nuts, betel leaves, lime and tobacco. The *pattu* ends here at this point. What had happened to him next was not known to the respondent. Obviously, it seems the song is incomplete.

Song No.3

Aalumkarakotta Kelu

aangalum pengalum oll randalum

anganeyirikkuvolennapoleem

anganeyirikkuvolannalu
anganeyirikkunna kalathilu
anneram parayinnu pengalakka
nammalu randaleem irunnoyalu
ee kottayilingane irunnoyalu
nattu janangalu paranchovallom
palathum parayamone kunchangale
athukondu kekko nee kunchangale
nattupolachakku ponam neeyu
nattile bandune konderanam
ennalavakka parayum melliam
ariyonchoodi vannu kelu nalley
povanniringale kinchikelu
thante padinchatta keezhthotannu
vathilu thoraneettu nokkum melley
ponbillum bencharum kondu kelu
ponbilleduthana .. kinchikelu
kottennirangeet ponnukelu
anneram nee jeevichu kunchikelu
ambuva villuyeduthupoyi
villukolaykanariyillekku
charam thodakkanariyillekku
eythu nhan padichittilla
eniyippedunnu padikkendenki
villu kulachu padikkendenki
nallapolulloru chengathimaru
avarude kuttathil pova venam
villukolachu padikkendekku
charam thoduthu padikkendukku

*eythu padikkenam nalliyone
chengathi veetilu keru kelu
chengathi veetilu keriyekkumbo
chengathimarokke kudinade
eythu kalikkunnu orellannu
eythu padicholu chengathimaru
angana kelunnu.. kandaneram
angottum ingottum logiayoru
kelune avalude kuttathilu
angane kuttittu olallannu
villu kolachu padippikkunnu
charam thoduthu padippikkunnu
eythu padippikkum kunchikelu
angane kelualle eyyunnathu
kutykka thennelle kondu charam
anneram parancholu chengathimaru
eythu padichallo chengathiye*

In this song, the storyline is about Kelu who lived in the Alumkarakotta (fort) along with his elder sister. Kelu and his elder sister Ammini are the lone inhabitants of the fort. One day his sister asked him to get married. She feared that as they stay alone people may say many unwanted things. The request of the sister hurt Kelu as they lived in the fort with all the love and care of his sister. He has mistaken that his presence in the *kotta* is disliked by his sister. Offended by the sister's advice Kelu got out of the fort taking his bows and arrows. These bows and arrows were of his ancestors'. Coming out of the *kotta* Kelu realised

that he does not know how to use bows and arrows. He thought that without learning to use bows and arrows it would be difficult for him to survive. He thought that he would meet his friend and seek his help to learn the use of bow and arrow. Thus thinking he reached his friend's house. When he reached his friend's house he saw all his friends there getting training in the proper use of bow and arrow. He established friendships with them and joined them to learn the art of shooting. He got training there and soon he could shoot to the aim. All the friends became so happy that Kelu could learn to shoot so early and easily.

Song No.4

Muthachiyamma

*elumkarakotta muthachiyamma
orukanottompathu pettanamma
ettum patachonum kondupoyi
onnikku jeevanulla kunchullammaykku
chenayenpoleyulla nadakunu
kunchina nikkoru penkunchannu
kunchana thayoru kandoyalu
kunchan pidichangu kondupokum
ennumparanchittu pettammalle
kallarelittu valathunnamma
angane valathunna nerathilu
anneram parayunnu kunchalannu
kallaralittu valathittenna
evonnu pattu lla pettammode
poratherangiyayekku nadakka venam*

*ennalum kunchan parayumella
kallaraporathalle vittulamma
angane nadakkunna nerathilu
padverathangadi chenoyimaru
elumkara kotta pennundonnu
anganeyarinchoyi chenayimaru
padavesthangadi uthamkutti
ezhellam pennukettoyonna
anneram nirivichu pempaithalu
jeevichirunnittu karyollalo
aakasakondolam bandompotte
keezhbhumi kondolam chthappidichotte
ennu niruvichu ponnumolu
aanavolam nattu kadannuvoyvolu
aa anthi muvanthi nerayollo
annolu nadakkum pesivayimma
pathi thalamudi virichuvolu
pathi thalamudi virichuvolu
angane kedakkunnu pen paithalu
kanjeem vellomnumillavokku
oh hom visannittayirillallo
angane kidakkunna nerathilu
aavandhi muvandhi nerayallo
angane porunnu aanakuttam
vanu vannadutheyi aanakuttam
angane vannoru aanakuttam
angane vannalla ninnuvolu
anneram parayolu penpaithalu
enthinnu nikkanu aanakutte*

*enney ningaluthinnoyile
pittennu neram velutha neram
avidennum ponnallo pempaithalu
pampayum naattalu kadannoyolu
pampadum nattole ponnuvolu
aa anthi muvanthi nerayallo
pampolu nadakkunna perivayimma
pakuthi thalamudi virichuvolu
pakuthi thalamudi pothachuvolu
angane kedannuvolu pembaithalu
angane kedakkunna nerathilu
angane peruvolu pambum kuttam
pambulu marachittu nokkumneram
ivale thonnalle kandoyille
anneram parayinnu penpaithalu
enthinu nikkana pambumkutte
enna pidichondu thinnoline
avanem kekkunna pambinkuttam
olu thirichondu poyidunnu
anneram parayuvolu penpaithalu
aanaykku thennallam vendayippo
pambekum thennallam vendayippo
athraykkum theeketta pennallo nhanu
nhanippoyengana marikkum pinna*

The *pattu* says the story of the Elumkarakottai Muthachi Amma. She was having nine children. All the eight have died and only one girl child survived. Hence she has taken special care for the safety and security of her surviving

daughter. There were a lot of Mappilas (local Muslim community) in the village where they lived. If they see her daughter, she is afraid that they may capture her. Hence she was kept in a secret chamber built inside the *kotta*. No one knows anything about her child. One day the daughter told her mother that she wanted to come out of the chamber and play. So one-day Muthachiyamma allowed her child to go out of the *kottai*. Then the villagers came to know about her and finally the news reached the ears of local Mappilas. The news also reached Padaverathangadi Utham Kutti who was already having seven wives. He wanted to marry the girl as his eighth wife. He went to Elumkarakotta and expressed his intention to Muthachiyamma. Muthachiyamma initially refused the proposal. But Utham Kutti influenced her by giving a lot of gold and cash as gifts. It came to be known by the girl and felt cheated by her own mother. She decided to go out of the *kottai* and commit suicide. She walked along the way she find and in the evening she reached a forest. She was tired devoid of food and water. She laid down on the way. Half of her hair was used as a mat and half as a cloth to cover her body. When she so laid down, a herd of elephants came that way. She requested the elephants to eat her. But the elephants calmly returned without hurting her. The next day she reached the land of snakes. As in the previous night, she slept using half of her hair as a mat and another half like a sheet to cover her body. That day she so a group of snakes and asked them to eat her. But the snakes also returned without harming her. Then she thought how unfortunate a girl she was. Even the elephants and snakes do not want her. Finally, tired of lack of food

and water she reached the sea. Where she drank a drop of water and died falling into the sea. With this, the song ends.

Onthupattu

As mentioned earlier there are different genres of songs among the Kurichiar. Some of the songs describe different creatures found around their habitat. One such song is *onthupattu* in which the description is about chameleon. The *onthupattu* given here is from the collection of songs by Bindu Ramachandran (2003:38). In this song the description is about different types of chameleon like *aalonth*, *paronth*, *vellonth*, *neelonth* etc. Each types of chameleon reside in different types of habitats. For example *aalonth* (*aal*- banyan tree) finds their habitat in banyan tree, *paronth* (*para*-rock) in rocks, *vellonth* (*vellam*- water) in water etc.

Song No.5

akkaraechaenila vannathanikkoran
akkaraechaeroodae chellunnanerath
therum kalathimmalonthinae kandappol
kunthameduthange onthinaekkuthootte
kuntham vayuthippoy onth parannootte
oonapparambilae thaneendae keelunne
onthaya onthokkae koottam parayunne
koottam parayunnu kurikalay theerunne
paronth ennoru onth parayunnu
paraemmal thakkanne vannam ngan veppikkum
allenkilu vannathaninganae kutharu
vellonth ennoru onth parayunnu

vellathile mukkunnath nganillandakkuvae
neelonth ennoru onth parayunne
neelathile mukkunnath nganillandakkuvae
allenkile vannathan kunganae kollanam
allenkile vannathan veedoyichi pokanam
allenkile vannathan olae oyikkanam
allenkile vannathaninganae kuthare (Source: Bindu Ramachandran 2003:38)

Pandal Pattu

The *Pandal pattu* ceremony similar to the *talikettu* ceremony among some other communities of Kerala like Nairs, used to be performed among the Kurichiar. It was a group ceremony for girls aged five years and above who had not attained puberty belonging to the different *mittom*-s (matrilineal joint family) of the same clan. For the conduct of this ceremony Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays are considered as auspicious. The date of the ceremony is fixed by the *puppan* (the senior most male member in the *mittom*. Also known as *pittan*, *karanavan* etc.) in consultation with other members and the *munnaman* (the third ranking person). Before that they seek the blessings of the ancestral *nizhals* (the ancestral spirits) and other gods. A big *pandal* is constructed to hold the invitees. All the relatives are supposed to reach one day in advance.

On the day all the girls, relatives and invitees take a ritual bath. Oil to be applied before the bath would have been kept in the temple of the female deity Karimpili Bhagavathi or in the room of the *nizhal*. The girls take bath in the nearby stream under the guidance and supervision of *muthachi* or *ammaiyi* (the

wife of *Karanavan/puppan*). The *munnaman* also finish his purificatory dip bath and sprinkle *punyaham* (sanctified coconut water) all around. The *padal* in which the main ceremony is conducted would be decorated in its finery with flowers, ripe plantains, oil lamps, paddy sheaves and the flowering spathes of coconut.

The girls who are undergoing the ceremony would be taken to the temple of the *nizhal* and then made them to sit in a row in the *pandal* age wise. The *munnamman* sings the prescribed song (*pandal pattu*) while *ammayi* goes around tying the *tali* of silver or gold around the neck of each girl. It is reported that in some cases the *tali* tying would be performed by a boy who had the relation of *machunan* (maternal cross-cousin) with the girl. This has nothing to do with the actual marriage of the girl. He may either marry her or not marry her in future. The *puppan* of the *mittom* made the *tali* ready for the ritual. After the ritual a feast follows. The guests leave in the next morning.

The song sung on the occasion contain advice to the girls on how they should conduct themselves, particularly as wives. They should have restraint, be careful in domestic chores; if at all they have to run away from their households, they should ensure that they are accompanied by a younger brother-in-law. It is a prayer to all the gods on the occasion for the *pittan*-s to announce their willingness to accept particular girls among those presented as future brides for their nephews after considering clan affiliations.

Translation of a song recited during *pandal pattu* ceremony given by Dr. A.Aiyappan (1990:64-65) is given below to understand the nature of such songs.

Oh flower, opened by the goddess!

Oh girl who has to join another house!

You who have to fill the granaries of the family!

Don't be tempted by youths who have nice umbrellas, nice knives, and gold

Chains

Don't love anyone except him who has married you.

After marriage, don't leave him after the first quarrel.

Don't leave him even after the second quarrel.

Don't use a damaged *muram* (sieve)

Don't take out rice with a damaged spoon

Then if you have to leave, take with you the youngest of your husband's brothers.

Tulapathu

Tulapathu is one of the important ritual celebration of the Kurichiar. The Kurichiar are expert hunters and trackers. The Kurichiar are well known for their archery. Though they use fire arms they prefer bow and arrows for hunting. Vettakalan is the god of the hunt. Born of a Kshatriya chieftainess and her Kurichia servant. After a mischievous childhood, he displayed his divine powers, accepted toddy from the Pudiyaattombi and a knife from the Nelleri *mittom* respectively. He is invoked at every hunt. The heads of the killed animals are dried, powdered and preserved for a year and then cooked and offered to Vettakalan.

The *tulappathu* ceremony is observed on the 10th of the Malayalam month *Tulam*(September-October). They make elaborate arrangements for its conduct. As a first step they propitiate the mediator god *munnaman deivam* about its origin

we have discussed in the section on Myth of origin. If any displeasure on his part it should be removed by propitiation. Three days prior to the ceremony men observe abstinence from sexual intercourse. They believed that breaking of this taboo may cause death by accident during hunting expeditions. They clean the courtyard early in the morning and conceal the brooms as they consider seeing broom in the early morning is a bad omen. The weapons for the hunting are cleaned and purified them by sprinkling coconut water. Then the weapons and the gods are worshiped. They ensure the physical fitness of the hunters. Those who miss the aim are ridiculed by fellow hunters. They tell “You dog, go and kill lice on your wife’s head”. After offering puja to their god of hunt Vettakalan, they stand on one leg and the leader of the party shouts:

“Collect together, collect together;

Arrive here, arrive here;

Wake up, wake up

Slowly reach the passage”.

Then he fires a shot to the air and sing the following song:

“Don’t cross the left line

Don’t cross the left line

Don’t cross the right line

Don’t cross the right line

Don’t get in front or behind the line

Gather together, don’t relax the watch over the passage

Guard the passage well

Don’t loosen the grip on your bow”. (Aiyappan 1990:80).

Origin Myth of the Kurichiar

The Kurichiar tribe is the ‘aristocrats’ among the tribal communities of Wayanad. It is interesting to analyse the origin myths, customs and practices and other tribal lore of the Kurichiar that will explain explicitly their worldviews. They claim themselves as *Malanampoothiris* and at times their folk tradition explains them as *Kari Nairs* (Black Nairs). The *Nampoothiris* and Nairs are the two higher castes in the caste hierarchy of Kerala. Though the first one belongs to the Brahmin Varna the second falls in the *Sudra* Varna (Colour) category. However, there existed some type of marital relationship between these two communities in the past. Among the Nampoothiris only the eldest son of the family have the right to marry from within the community and have a family. Other male members have to engage in conjugal relationships with the Nair ladies. This type of relationship is called *sambandham*. But the Nair man cannot enter into a relationship with the *Nampoothiri* woman. This type of relationship is generally called in anthropological literature hypergamous marriages.

The Kurichiar origin myths, tales and songs always try to establish that they are equal to Nampoothiris and equal to or even above the position of Nairs. At the same time, all these tales and stories consider other tribal communities of the area as much lower than them. As per the prevalent custom practised in the areas of present-day Kerala they observed strict untouchability with all communities including Nairs but except the Nampoothiris till very recently. Even today a section of them reside in the Kannur district of Kerala called Kunnam

Kurichia and observe this practise strictly. In the following paragraph, my effort is to narrate the origin myth of the Kurichiar community and certain other songs and stories and examine different cultural practices of the Kurichiar to explain how they associate themselves with the Nairs in their effort to ensure their elevated position in the regional local caste hierarchy.

The Lord Brahma created the earth. At the time of its creation it was surrounded by four seas named; northern, southern, eastern and western seas on all sides. Originally it was a rock filled with earth and got its present shape when the rain fell on it and spread the earth on all sides. Other than humans a number of animals also lived on the earth. In order to guard the land created by Lord Brahma, the creator send 101 Karinairs/Karinaayanmar (Black Nairs) as soldiers with bows and arrows. These Karinaayanmar are believed to be the ancestors of Kurichiar.

After this, the Creator has sown different sorts of seeds on the earth from above. When the seeds were sprouted the Karinaayanmar shouted "*roo roo piti piti*". Later, the plants flowered and bore fruits. But the humans were not allowed to go near the plants to pluck the fruits by the animals. The Karinaayanmar again shouted "*roo roo piti piti*" and chased the animals to sea and built boundaries on all sides to protect the fruit-bearing trees from the animals. Thus four mountains came into existence on all four sides; Udiyan in the east, Ajnaan in the west, Yaan in the south and the Mahaa mountain in the north. The Karinaayanmar then ordered the animals that they should not have to enter their area unless they were

called. That is why there are no animals like white elephants, bison, rhinoceros and bear in the forests.

Thus, when the Karinaayanmar (Kurichiar) were living on the earth happily the *jinnus* (devils) became jealous of them and decided to cheat them. They came to earth with their magnetic tube. In order to protect the Kurichiar from the devils the *malakkari*, the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, came to earth travelling through the wind. Kurichiar caught him mistaking him for a thief. They showed him the ownership deeds as sanctioned by Lord Brahma. Malakkari explained to them that he is Lord Vishnu who came to help them from the mischievous deeds of evil *jinnus* who came there to perish them. He then went with them to the eastern mountain and western mountain and stood alone at the northern seashore. The 101 Karinaayanmar were also following him. The *jinnus* thought that this is the right time to cheat Malakkari as he is alone. They know that as long as Malakkari is there it is not possible to cheat Kurichiar. Hence Malakkari was to be avoided first. Pointing the magnetic tube at him the *jinnus* told Malakkari that they would burn him to death. His chest was burned as deep as a tank in which a human could take his bath.

Being cheated by the cruel *jinnus*, Malakkari reached the eastern seashore. He cursed himself for being cheated by the devils. The evil enemies surrounded him with the magnetic tube. While his chest was burning his eyes split and fell at a distance and it shined like the sun. It became the *munnam deivam* (third god) and stood between the magnetic tube and the Malakkari. The *munnam deivam*

raised a question to the *jinnus*; whether there was one truth or two truths? They replied that there are two truths- they are sky and earth. Though they gave the correct answer the god thought that there is no harm in killing them. The *munnam deivam* asked them to show the magnetic tube in his direction and then to their own direction and confirm the truths. They obeyed the *munnam deivam*. When they show the tube to their direction their eyes burnt due to the heat from the magnetic tube. By this time the *munnam deivam* catch hold of the magnetic tube and made them to wander through the whole world. While roaming they reached the northern sea and fell into it unconscious. The *munnam deivam* warned them not to ascend as long as the world exists. A boundary was also fixed there. If at all they wanted to ascend they have to seek the permission of the *munnam deivam*.

According to their faith, the *munnam deivam* is their almighty and not the son of any mother. The magnetic tube is with him and if he turns it against the earth it will burn into ashes. He is the source of all the good and bad things and he is to be propitiated properly (Somasekharan Nair. P, 1993:39-40). According to this myth, the earth is surrounded by sea on all sides. The Kurichiar who are valiant soldiers believes that they were sent to the earth to protect and watch over it. The strength and power of the Karinayanmaar are evident from the way they fix boundaries on all four sides of the earth preventing the animals from entering their domain. This shows that the earth for them is the place where they occupy and everything is beyond it. In the narrative, mention has been made of *jinnus* who come with their magnetic tubes to cheat the karinayanmaar. The term *jinnu*

has its origin in the Muslim culture which means devils. The impact of the Muslims on this group is clear from this usage.

Thus in the myth narrated above, they establish a link with the Nayars/Nairs, a higher caste who live throughout the state with slight regional variation in culture. The Nairs were also traditional soldiers under different regional landlords. Thus prefixing *kari* meaning black or dark the Kurichiar in the story tries to establish a relationship with the Nairs and call themselves Karinayanmar in the story. But interestingly they also claim superiority over Nairs by practising untouchability even with the Nairs. The only community they do not practise untouchability is Nampoothiries (the Brahman). The Kurichiar also claim a status equal to Nampoothiries by calling themselves Malanampoothiries, that is, by prefixing the term Mala meaning hill with Nampoothiries.

This is not the only story among them to establish their relationship with the Nairs. According to another story, they descended from Nair soldiers inducted from Travancore by the Raja of Kottayam in order to help get Wayanad rid of wild beasts and unruly humans. They were not readmitted to their caste as they had crossed the river, a taboo among the Nairs in those days. In terms of many of their cultural traits, for example, the forelock of hair, house pattern, ornaments, style of offerings, observances of purity and pollution and many other cultural practises one can find many similarities between Kurichiar and the Nairs. These

cultural traits make the Kurichiar entirely different from other tribal communities of the region.

There is also a different story prevalent among them about the creation of Kurichiar, the landscape and the different animals and plants. Long before the creation of the different castes and communities and animals and plants, the sky was on the top and the earth was much below covered by the sea. During that time the almighty appeared before the *Vadakkari* Bhagavathi (one of the Kurichiar deities) in a dream and advised her to find out an appropriate place to create 1001 castes. These castes originally created by the almighty have grown into innumerable castes and communities as we see them today. Vadakkari Bhagavathi was also provided with young virgins to assist her in their work as labourers. Bhagavathi along with the young virgins proceeded towards the sea in search of a suitable place. They find out a place and completed the work of creating the earth for the 1001 castes. On completion of work the young virgins went and met the almighty and asked for their wages. The almighty replied that the wages will be paid only if the work is completed to his satisfaction. The almighty created a bird named Chenthamarapakshi (red lotus bird) and instructed the bird to fly around and oversee the quality of the work. The Chenthamarapakshi did so and reported to the almighty that at one place the work was incomplete. Two hills are standing so close but not touching each other but with a water source in between. This might be the present day Wayanad. On these

hills, god created 18 castes and different animals, birds and plants. Kurichiar is one among the 18 castes created by the almighty initially.

Discussion

An essential aspect of the Kurichiar culture is the rich tradition of folksongs, tales and myths. These songs, stories and legends portray their traditional way of life, occupational patterns and belief systems. It gives a picture of how the Kurichiar as a community imbibed immense ecological knowledge adapting themselves to the inhospitable terrain of their habitat. Most folk songs, especially those sung during different life cycle ritual events, are intended to teach the norms and values of the community among the members of the younger generation. It can be viewed as a social control system, linking every individual to his own culture or other cultures through symbolic expressions. It reinforces the value system of the community in the younger generation and the do-s and do not-s in their everyday lives, including those during their regular hunting expeditions. These value systems make the Kurichiar worldview and ecclesiology different from the other tribal communities of the region.

Other songs are narrations of some environmental aspects of their life. These songs are mainly for entertainment. However, it conveys meanings and ideas pertaining to different events in life explicitly or implicitly to the audience. If we examine the list of songs available among the Kurichiar could see songs in the name of different gods (*ganapathipattu*), birds (*kumanpattu-owl*), (*mayilppattu-peacock*), *pakshippattu*(birds), animals *narippattu* or *pulippattu*,

(tiger) *kattippattu*, (wild buffalo) *onthupattu* (chameleon), plants (*marappattu*) (tree), flowers (*poopattu*) and natural phenomena like wind, rain, fire (*theepattu*) etc.

Kurichiar uses its rich folk tradition as a medium to transmit its traditional norms, values and knowledge system to the succeeding generations. It communicates through the different processes of socialization. For example, it tells them the type of offences which invite supernatural punishments and those which are punishable by the community by imposing fines, ex-communication etc. The norms to be followed while hunting is explained in the song sung during the propitiation of the hunting god Vettakalan or the celebration of *tulapathu* ritual. Similarly, the songs sung during the *pandal pattu* ceremony explain a woman's role and responsibility in society. The very purpose of their existence is to work as cementing force for the unity of the family/joint family/*mittom* and the community at large. Being a strict matrilineal society the status and role of women in the Kurichia society are commendable. These songs also have an important role in shaping the behaviour pattern of the members of the community. It also gives reasonable answers to the questions regarding the origin of the universe, different natural phenomena etc., and finds solutions to the complex relationship between man and its physical environment. The Kurichiar knowledge of the medicinal plants found around them is magnificent, which could claim no other community of the region.

Compared to the other tribal communities of the area the Kurichiar have a very rich collection of songs, tales and legends which make them different from other tribal communities. This may be so because of their contact with the other communities of the region from the very early period and partly due to the anthropology and history of the community. Unlike the other tribal communities like Adiyar and Paniyan, the Kurichiar had an elegant past and is believed to be kept allegiance with the rulers of the region like Pazhasi Raja of Kottayam (North Malabar) as his warriors in their fight against the British Raj. Their efficiency and expertise in the art of archery are well-known. The Kurichiar warriors following guerrilla warfare using bows and arrows made the British forces worthless in the early years of the 19th century. A series of revolts that Kurichiar fought with the British really baffled the colonial power. In the first decade of the 19th century, the Pazhasi Raja rose in revolt against the British. In Wayanad, the Kurichiar under the leadership of Thalakkal Chandu baffled the British with their guerrilla tactics and brilliant archery. It may be because of this historical contact with the mainstream population the *Vadakkenpattu* tradition of North Kerala has much influence on the Kurichiar folklore. The most striking aspect of Kurichiar songs is that in structure, style of recitation, and at an ideological level, they maintain close similarity with *Vadakkenpattu*.

Chapter-7

Myths, Rituals and Arts of Thachanadan Muppan

The Thachanadan Muppan is a small community with a limited geographical spread in the Wayanad district of Kerala and the adjoining Nilambur area of Malappuram district. The main concentration of Thachanadan Muppan in Wayanad are in Kalppetta, Meppadi, Muttill, and Ambalavayal panchayaths. According to A.A.D Luiz, the name signifies their origin in Thachanad and Muppan “signifies nothing in particular” (1962:225). According to some, the term is derived from two root words, *thachu* and *odichu*, meaning beaten and driven away. Probably they were driven away from their initial place of origin in Nilambur by its ruler Nilambur Raja. But the community members disagree with such speculation. They claim that they got that name because they came to Wayanad from Thachanad in the Nadukani Ghat, hence Thachanadan Muppan, signifying the area’s leaders.

Myth of Origin

The former Lord of Thachanadu, Maruviittukkarar Nair, had a wife, Lakshmikutti Amma, who had two Malayadiyar servants. The Nair’s progeny in Malayadiyar became the Thachanadans. The Lord called the Thachanadans together and asked one of them to become the Muppan (chief) of the tribal group. None came forward. The Lord became angry and called all of them by the term Muppan, and from that day, they came to be known as Thachanadan Muppan.

Whatever be the history, all of them agree that they were either brought or migrated to Wayanad from Nilambur Kovilakam (the local chiefdom). Unlike the other tribal communities of the region, Thachanadan Muppan has only a shallow history and myth of origin. Some of them say that they migrated to their present habitat when the Government, after independence, took charge of the properties which were under the Nilambur Kovilakam. Another version is that their traditional occupation was plaiting of baskets. When the plantation work got momentum in Wayanad, they were brought to plait baskets for providing shades to the tea plants in the Meppadi and Rippen area. However, they believe that the Nairs migrated to Wayanad after them. Nairs were done supervisory works under Nilambur Kovilakam, and after reaching Wayanad, they became landlords and kept Thachanadans under them as labourers. They believe that initially, they settled at a place called Nallannuru/Thinappuram in Wayanad. It was here their original *taravad* (ancestral home) was situated. They shifted to other sites like Ambalavayal, Muttill, Kunnambatta, Meppadi, Kadur, Erumakolli, Vaduvanchal, and Chundel. There are 36 divisions (*padi or kunnu*) mainly based on geographical considerations, each with separate chiefs called *Muppan* assisted by *Leppan*. The wife of the *Muppan* is called *Muppathi* and of *Leppan* as *Leppathi*. All these functionaries have specific roles and responsibilities regarding the different ceremonies and practices of the community. *Muppan* will be succeeded either by his son or another senior group member. The community together have a headman known as *rajyakkar*, who is generally come from the *Melakkurumata*

padi of the community. There is also some Phratry organization among them called *chali*. They are a matrilineal community with descent, inheritance and succession reckoned through the female line. The rule of inheritance has changed now, and the rule of inheritance is equi-geniture, with all the children having equal rights on their parental property.

They were hunters and shifting cultivators in the past. They also earned their livelihood by collecting forest products like beeswax and other forest produces. Nowadays, they are primarily landless agricultural workers and plantation labourers.

Marriage

One of the main ceremonies, which is also an occasion for the community to come together and celebrate with their traditional songs, music, and dance, is marriage. There are certain restrictions regarding marriage about marriageable *padi*-s. One cannot marry from all the *padi* divisions. There are certain preferences and proscriptions. For example, marriage between *Kattrukkaru* and *Melakkurumata* (the term *mata* signified *padi* or settlement) divisions are prohibited. So is marriage between *Kattrukkar* and *Kurummatuttumata* *padi*-s. The boys of *Njeerjeerumata padi* can only marry from *Katturkkar padi*. Union with the *chali* of the father is preferred, and marriage with the *chali* of the mother is not permitted. No marriage can be arranged without the knowledge of the

Muppan and *Muppathi* of the *padi*. They have certain vital roles in the rituals and practices associated with marriage.

There is no objection to marrying the daughter of the maternal uncle or paternal aunt (MBD or ZSD), but the present generation prefers a non-related family. The prevalence of the term *katama pennu* (obligatory bride) for maternal uncle's daughter suggests the existence of the practice of cross-cousin marriage in the past. There are some very interesting proverbs prevalent among them that explain the popularity of the practice in the past; "If you marry your maternal uncle's daughter, you will have to look after the field near the gate" and "The maternal uncle's daughter remains even if you live or die".

The predominant mode of acquiring a mate is by negotiations. The negotiations were initiated by the boy's party. The *Karanavar* of the *padi*, and other elderly members visit the *Muppan* of the girl's settlement and propose. The *Muppan* of the girl's village introduces the girl and her relatives to the *Muppan* and relatives of the boy's village. Once the boy's party likes the girl and her family, the next ritual is *kalyanakuri*. One of the important features of the Thachanadan *Muppan* marriage is that the boy and girl never meet before their marriage. It is only on the marriage day they meet each other.

On the day of *Kalyanakuri*, a group of elders including the *Muppan*, *Leppan*, an elderly member of the *chali*, and a few others, visit the girl's village and meet their counterparts there. The meeting will be arranged at the *Muppan*'s

house in the girl's village. The main event on that day is to decide the measure of *kalyanappanam* (bride price) and fix the marriage date. The Muppan of the boy's village has to give *kunnupanam* or *deivapanam* to the Muppan of the girl's village. This is a traditional privilege of the girl's Muppan. One and a half rupees is the *kunnupanam* traditionally fixed among them. It is intended for the *deivam* (gods) of the girl's village. That is why it is also called *deivpanam*. The money is to be kept by the Muppan of the village. After that, *Pennupanam* has to be handed over to the girl's relatives. Other traditional obligatory payments like *achanpanam* and *ammapanam* (money to the father and mother of the girl) are also being given directly to them by the Muppan of the boy's village. After making all these obligatory payments, the marriage date is fixed. After that, a ritual called *kunnum kunnum muttuka* means the meeting of the two settlements is observed. In it, *Muppans* exchange country liquor and drink and disperse very happily. Thus the *Kalyanakury* ritual ends.

The actual marriage rituals last for two days. Generally, it takes place after two months of the *Kalyanakuri* ritual. The boy, his friend and the *Muppan* or *Leppan* of his village come and stay with the *Muppan* of the girl's village on the previous night. The father and mother of the boy is not supposed to attend the marriage ceremony of their sons. That night the girl and her friend visit the *Muppan's* house, but the girl and the boy are not supposed to meet. There is a ritual on the eve of the previous night at the girl's village. It is called *kuppayil*

veraku kothuka, meaning splitting of firewood. The girl's Muppan would ask the boy's party to split the firewood of the *aamappetti* tree. It is solid wood. It is a very strenuous job. If they do so, they believe that the boy is capable enough to protect the girl.

After the above ritual, the girl's party invite the boy's party for *Mattakali*. It is a form of dance played on such occasions. They make steps according to the songs. But no musical instruments were used. It is played only by men. Women remain as mere spectators. The girl's party instigate the boy's party to make them dance throughout the night, and they finally get fully exhausted. The boy's party has to defeat the girl's party in the dance. The central ritual of marriage will be performed at *Muppan's* house. The girl will be adorned and dressed by the women of the boy's side. White *Dhoti* is the dress of both the boy and the girl. Two mats will be spread on the ground, and the girl's party will sit in one and the boy's party in the other. The rituals will be observed while sitting on the mat. The girl placed a lighted lamp on the mat. After that, it is the *tali* tying ceremony. The complete responsibility of the ritual is with the *Muppan* and *Leppan* of the girl's village. The boy ties the *tali*, and they sit together on the mat. A feast follows. When the boy's party returns to their village with the girl, the women start playing *kaikottikali*, a dance form.

Death Rituals

One of the important rituals observed by the Thachanadan Muppan is the death ritual which they observe on the 16th day of death and lasts for three days. Among them, *chali* affiliation is important as far as the death rituals are concerned. The members of the dead man's *chali* conduct and participate in the death rituals. The dead are buried after the corpse is washed by the *chali* members. Before burial, the corpse is covered in a new cloth. On the day of the death, his/her daughter and other relatives pour a pot of water on the corpse. After that, the corpse is neatly washed and covered with a new cloth. The *chali* members, under the supervision of *Leppan*, prepare a bier using bamboo and keep it in the front yard. The corpse is laid on this bier, and the new clothes brought by the close relatives of the dead person are held above the body. Getting new clothes (white or red) is obligatory for the close relatives. Then the body is taken to the burial ground. By this time, other members of the *chali* might have prepared a pit of about six feet deep. One of the important features of the hole is that it is dug deep with a gallery or cellar opening off one side at the bottom. This cellar is called *ala*. The corpse is pushed into the cellar, and the grave is filled with earth. The *ala* is to protect the dead body from the stray animals. Women and children also follow the funeral procession. The corpse is placed in the *ala* as if looking towards the east. After filling the earth, all the elder members of the *chali*, the Muppan and the *Leppan*, stand above it pray for the departed soul, and send the

spirit happily to join the company of their gods and ancestral spirits. After that, they take a purificatory bath in the nearby streams, clean all the implements used to dig the grave, prepare the bier, etc. By this time, those who remained at home also had to take bath and ensure purity. After the bath, all those who have returned from the graveyard have to sprinkle the cow dung water kept ready in front of the houses on their feet thrice. After that, Muppan spreads a mat where the dead body was kept. In that mat, the husband or wife, as the case may be of the deceased, has to sit for three days. If both husband and wife died, any of their children who have not yet married may sit. A lamp also will remain lighted at the corner of the mat all these three days. After that, all the assembled will go before the lamp and prays. With that, the rituals on that day are complete. For the next three days, no food is supposed to prepare in the house. The Muppan will do arrangements for the food for the family members in the house of their close relatives. On the third day, the elders of the *chali* reassemble and prepare the food there. That food is served in a banana leaf and prayed. That mat is folded and kept safely till the 16th day when the pollution ending ceremony is observed. On the day of *chavali*, only the mat is unfolded again.

Adiyanthram or Chavali

As discussed earlier, *Chavali* has three days ritual. On the 14th, 15th and 16th days, different rituals are performed. The information about conducting the rituals is first discussed with the *Muppan* and the *Chalithekkan* (the eldest man of the

Chali). After that, all the members of the *chali* of the deceased are to be informed and invited to the function. The presence of *Chalithekkan* is compulsory and inevitable. The leading functionary of the ritual is called *Karmmi*, and his assistant is *Manikki*. The first day's rituals are called *oruner kanji* because, on that day, the family members and the functionaries can take food (gruel) only once a day. On the first day, only the *chalithekkan* and a few members of the *chali* will attend the function. The main function on the first day is the erection of a *Balippora* (hut to perform the ritual). It is small but erected on four posts with an opening towards the east. All the three sides will be covered with leaves of a plant called *kuva*. In that hut, one can just spread one mat. The first ritual is bringing the mat, which they tied and kept at the home on the day of death after burial. The person who performs the *bali* has to come and sit on the mat. On the mat are a lighted lamp and some raw rice in a *mura* (bamboo basket with only one corner). On the head side of the person, a coconut shell is also kept. With that, the *oruner kanchi* ritual is over.

Kedkka

The second day's ritual is called *Kedkka*. The person who makes the offering to the departed spirit should not have to take any food that day. He has to observe complete fasting. On this day, it will be a type of trial about the deceased person for which the Muppan has to give a proper answer. The assembled will ask many queries. The queries include the reasons for death,

whether they suffered any mental trauma because of the behaviour of the close relatives etc. On that day, no food is to be kept in the *Balippora*. But some water is to be poured on the coconut shell kept. It is called *neeruvellam*.

The trial continues till the morning of the third day. The older adults take a lot of locally distilled liquor. The next ritual is the ritually offering of the rice by the Muppan to cook rice to be served in the *Balippora*. One of the members of the *chali* of the deceased cooks rice and prepares different dishes like vegetables, pappads, fish etc. Fish curry is compulsory. This is followed by *ennathottu kuli*, in which a leaf plate is prepared to which oil is poured. 21 pieces each of *manjal* (turmeric) and *inga* (bark of a thorny creeper) are to be placed in it. This is then the *Karmi* handed over to the *Chalithekkan*. *Chalithekkan*, in turn, calls all the male members of the *chali* and applies a bit on their forehead. All of them take a ritual bath in the nearby stream with that the pollution is supposed to cease. After that, in the *Balippora*, food is served first to the deceased. The food served in the *Balippora* to the dead is later taken and mixed properly and kept as an offering. A bit of it is served in the food served to the *chali* members. After that, the person observing the main fasting takes the water kept in the coconut shell and pours it onto the feet of the *Chalithekkan*. After that, he throws it in the western direction over his head. After this ritual, the mat is folded and taken out. With this *chavali* ritual will end. After that, they removed the *Balippora* erected for the purpose. If the deceased is a man without progeny, his wife and if the dead

is a woman without progeny they will be sent to their respective houses. So that they can remarry, only childless people are allowed to go back to their homes and get remarried.

The Story of Vella kurkka and Chuvanna kurkka

There was a lady in a big bungalow where she do the work of pounding paddy. She became pregnant. There was a pregnant dog too in that Bungalow. The lady used to irritate the dog. One day both of them delivered. The dog gave birth to two humans and the lady to two dogs. She was worried about it and decided to steal the human babies from the dog. The dog sensed the plan of the lady. It hides its children in a cave and kept some milk in a bowl for them. She also kept two flowers in the milk and advised her children; that if anything happened to her life, the milk in the bowl would turn into blood and the flowers would fade. When the dog visited the Bungalow to have her food, the lady has beaten her on the head. The dog died immediately. The milk in the bowl kept near the cave turned into blood, and the flowers faded. The children understood that something bad had happened to their mother. They came out of the cave and went to the forest. They got a fort to live in, and all the animals became their friends. When time passed, they grew into two beautiful young ladies.

One day the younger sister among them went out to graze the cattle. The elder one took a bath in the nearby stream. One of her long hair flew into the water and was eaten by a fish. The fish was caught by a fisherman who was

fishing for the king. When he cut the fish, he saw the long hair. To know the person who has such long hair, he went to the upper stream. He saw the beautiful lady taking a bath there. Seeing them, she became frightened and ran to the fort. But they stopped her and requested them to marry their king. She felt so sad and cried the whole day. By this time, her sister had returned. The elder sister asked her to enter the home without touching the upper or lower part of the door and take a bath. Obeying her sister's words, she took bath and came and enquired about the reasons for her sister's worries. She explained to her what had happened during the day. She consoled her sister and told her that if she got married, it would be good for us and that our lonely life in the forest would end. She agreed but told her that when she go, she will put some *pattu* (silk) yarn on the way and you should follow it and reach the palace. It is believed that this *pattu* (silk) later became turmeric. As promised, the younger sister followed the *pattu* and reached the palace; a man was cutting firewood. He stopped wood cutting and began to stare at her. Then she asked him to look at the sun. When he did so, she took the axe and killed him. She has taken his skin and worn it. As she wore the skin of the woodcutter, her sister could not recognize her. However, the king ordered him to stay in the palace and care for the cattle. She used to take the cattle for grazing. But the cows used to look at her and will not eat grass. So all of them became lean and thin. Doubting her activities, the king asked his servant to follow her and secretly watch her actions. One day the king's servant followed her and found her washing the skin and keeping it dry in the sun. The servant was taken away and

spoiled the skin. Seeing the sister of his wife more beautiful, the king married her too. Both of them got one male child each. When the time passed, differences of opinion arose among them, and the children fought every day. Finally, they decided to separate and went in two different directions. Thus the elder sister went away over the surface and the younger one below the earth. The elder sister went above the ground and became *vella kurkka*, and the younger one went below the ground has become *chuvanna kurkka*.

1. Korathi Nadakam Pattu

nalintemmaye valacha
ente nanuvine kandarundo
chollee vinangal
vikkuva nadakkayamu
ente chettadikal muttadikal thanka nirammo
acha koravane pirinchee
irikkave enakkoru kalam vanne
nalillam mayakanacha
ente nanuvine kandarundo
chollee vinangal
vikkuva nadakkayamu
ente chettadikal muttadikal thanka nirammo
thumbamalar choodungan pudarachayo
chembrankulangara deva deva deva
deva deva ninte nameemanachina
nameeyurathikku kanni vanthe
pula thinnoru chappikurathiku
iswara sankara deva deva

deva deva ninte namam ninnu theyyunnu nnu..

One of the traditional art forms popular among the Thachanadan Muppan was *Kurathinadakam*. It is a dance drama. During nights they assemble at a common place and play this drama. Only men participate in it. The men also played the characters of women. The songs will be sung from the background. Their traditional musical instruments like *chenda* (drum) and *salra* (wind instrument) were also used.

The storyline of the above song is like this. One Koravan and Korathi (Koravan and Korathi are some folk communities who visit the local houses with their tame monkeys or parrots and are futurists. By telling the future of the people they seek alms) once went to see *Thrissur pooram*. Trissur pooram is one of the famous festivals in Kerala. There is an excellent firework associated with Trissur pooram. When they started fireworks, the elephants arranged for the pooram got wild and people began to run hither and thither. In that mix-up, the Koravan and Korathi got separated. Thus separated Koravan and Korathi began to enquire each other. That is the content of this song. The get-together and dance dramas have a significant role in cementing the solidarity among the members of this community.

2. Adiyanthrakkali pattu

pattemele thodalacheeva

pattemele thodale

kanthakkaree malavinte ri

*choodelachi choodale
lachiyo lachanumthane
thalu nale pove
vellananum kudineeru
nane monere
chathalanu maka inukudi
neeruname pove
rachiyoo rachanum thane
thalu nale pove
pakichuru ulluru
thalalachi thalele
pakichuru ulluru
thalalachi thalele
pattemele thodalacheeva
pattemele thodale
ngeeri reese ngeei re
ngeeri reese ngeei ra
pattemele thodalacheeva
malathodu malathu
kanthangari malavinte ri
chudelachi choodale
achikeele lachanunda nanare
yeralachi roomanu volarare
ennude barthavu veettu kutti marame
bola rereekle nee
aaladiyankappilu yalale
meelu murinchanku entee pokalenne
tententu tentuma tentumole*

The festivities in the Thachanadan Muppan language is called *adiyanthram*. On such occasions the women in the community play *adiyantrakkali*, a dance, in which women move their legs in a typical fashion. *Adiyanthrakkali pattu* are songs sung on such occasions as an accompaniment to that dance. The women sing the songs while dancing, but the musical instruments like *chenda* and *kuzhal* are played by men.

3. Songs were sung while cultivating muthari and chama (millets)

tariga rigana parambu metheeke venankee
venda mara marumakka manodu kuchale
tariga rigana parambu methikko venankee
pangamaru marumakka manodu reekine
mada madannu padiangu mechala kannu melankee
pangamaru maumakka manodu rikkine
cherivirennu padaiyangu medalu kannu melangee
pandamaru marumakka thinnodum pokare

arayante monicha moneechane
chundanum poruchiyaye thinnanele
valiya pillakku cheriya pillai doru doru
cheriya pillakku valiya pillai deere deere
chundakai valichu valicheriyanere
aareyante moneecha moneechane
chundariva choru theeva thinte nalu
valiya pillakku cheriya pillai doru doru
cheriya pillakku valiya pillai deere deere

kolambankala mannathee mannathee nee
kothankale nharine kettuko lelo lelo
kothankale nharune mendappo nekku
kothankale nharune kettala tento tento
ocheri therakku marimanne nee
kallayu valayu vangi yundaruve
ocheri therakku malambu nhane
kallayu valayoo mendamo mendaye
arayante maneeche maneechane
chundano choruchiyalle thinne lelu
valiya pillku cheriya pille doru doru
cheriya pillaku valiya pille deere deere

pangamaru - sisters
marumakka - children of sisters
padi - muthari (finger millet)
medla kannu - to cut
chundanum choruchiyum - flies and other insects

In the past, the primary source of livelihood for Thachanadan Muppan is the cultivation of different millets. For the cultivation of millets, there were many works like preparation of the field for sowing, sowing, harvesting, threshing, drying of grains etc., in which men and women had to work hand in hand in a group. When they engaged in such works, they sing the songs given above. They developed a piece combining different events and stories and sang it in some rhythm as per their creativity.

The first part of the above song is a conversation between a husband and his wife. When they harvest the millet, the wife tells his husband “do the harvesting fast. If your sisters and their children are coming, they eat it and finish it. In the second part, a lover of a married lady goes to the field to see her lover there. In the field, she was working with her husband. Seeing her husband, he is hiding in the bush. The lady is indirectly telling her boyfriend that now her children and husband are with her, so it is impossible to meet him today. She is telling this as if she is singing a lullaby to make his child sleep to not understand her husband. In the third part, a boy was teased in a girl’s name. Though the songs are sung as a time pass while engaging in different works it is very simple and close to the life situations of the Thachanadan Muppan. It is discernible from the songs how they are making life enjoyable even when engaged in hefty works.

4.Songs they sung while going to collect Forest produces

nhanumanne nhanumanne nhanumanne po..
thekkebeyile meen pidikkedi nhanumanne po
nhanumanne nhanumanne nhanumanne po..
thekkebeyile meen pidikkedi nhanumanne po
chatatukkelle koodedukkelle koottedukkelle maaloo
thekke beyile meenioruthi koottanakkalle maloo
chatatukkelle koodedukkelle koottedukkelle maaloo
thekke beyile meenioruthi koottanakkalle maloo
nhanumanne nhanumanne nhanumanne po..
theakkan chorathile keyngale kadi nhanumenne po
kathiyedukkalle kaikottedukkalle meygedukkalle maloo

thekkan chorathile keygeduthittu chakkiakkelle maloo

nhanumanne nhanumanne nhanumanne po..

thekkan malayile thenedukkeddi nhanumanne po

koledukkalle nooledukkalle kodamedukkalle maloo

thekkan malayile theneduthitu kodam nirakkalle maloo

thekkebeyile - the hill in the south

keyangu - tubers

meygu - digging stick

This is a song sung by the Thachanadan Muppan women when going for fishing in the streams and collection of forest products like roots, tubers and honey. Men and women together and separately engaged in such works. In this song, the main reference is about the South hill. They also mention the implements used for each work separately. The bamboo traps and baskets are mainly used for fishing. For collecting roots and tubers they used a digging stick, hoe and a sickle. There are mentions of all these implements in this song. There are also mentions about keeping the collected roots and tubers in a separate gunny bag. To collect honey a special methodology has been found to be used. A fiber thread is tied to a small stick and thrown into the beehive. The honey will flow down through the thread. The honey thus flown is collected in a pot. These songs reflect how they earned their livelihood in the past and also how beautifully they used their creativity to make the routine works enjoyable and remarkable.

Discussion

From the above narratives, it is evident that the legends and myths of Thachanadan Muppan are very superficial. It can be seen that many of their songs and stories are much more recent in origin and content. That is, it is packed with recent incidences. Thachanadan's oral narratives and traditions are not comparable to Kurichiar and Bettakkuruma's richness of fictional accounts, the diversity of themes it touches, and their ingenuity. Their oral tradition does not have a comparison, even with that of Paniyan and Adiyar. The songs and dances of Thachanadan are mainly sung and performed on ritual occasions like marriage, death, festivals etc. However, they also have pieces to be sung during the different day to day activities like collection of forest produce, sowing, weeding, harvesting etc. Such songs are purely for entertainment and to make their work enjoyable.

One of the vital art forms of the Thachanadan is the *Mattakali*. It is a form of dance played during the celebration of marriage. They make steps according to the songs. But no musical instruments were used. It is played only by men. Women remain as mere spectators. The girl's party instigate the boy's party to dance throughout the night till they get fully exhausted. It is performed by both the groups (the boy's party and the girl's party but at the girl's village). Hence the girl's party have a psychological edge. There is some competence involved in it. The belief is that the boy's party has to defeat the girl's party in the dance. Then only the marriage takes place.

Another traditional art form popular among the Thachanadan Muppan was *Kurathinadakam*. It is a dance drama. They assemble at a familiar place at night and perform this drama for amusement. As in *Mattakali* only men participate in it. Men also played the characters of women. They sing the songs from the background. Their traditional musical instruments like *chenda* (drum) and *salra* (wind instrument) were also used. However, *kurathinadakam* is not specific to the Thachanadan Muppan. Traditionally this folk art had been popular in all parts of Kerala. The mention of Thrissur *puram* etc., in the song suggests that it is of a recent origin or that such pieces have been incorporated into the storyline recently.

The festivals and celebrations are called *adiyanthram* in Thachanadan Muppan language. On such occasions, the women in the community play *adiyanthrakkali*, a dance form in which women move their legs in a typical fashion. *Adiyanthrakkali pattu* are songs sung during *adiyanthrakali* as an accompaniment to that dance. The women sing the songs while dancing, but the musical instruments like *chenda* and *kuzhal* are played by men.

In the past, the primary source of livelihood for Thachanadan Muppan is the cultivation of different millets. For the cultivation of millets, there were many works like preparation of the field for sowing, sowing, harvesting, threshing, drying of grains, etc. Men and women had to work hand in hand in a group. When they engage in such works, they have certain specific songs to sing. They

developed a piece combining different events and stories and sang it in some rhythm as per their imagination.

The Thachanadan Muppan also have songs to sing when fishing in the streams or collecting forest products like roots, tubers, and honey. In these types of songs, the description would be about the rivers they go for fishing, the different types of fish available, the features of each type of fish etc. If it is a song intended to sing during forest collection, the narrative would be about the nature of the forest, the wild animals in it, the different types of tubers and roots they collect, etc. They also mention the implements used for each work separately. The bamboo traps and baskets are mainly used for fishing. For collecting roots and tubers, they used a digging stick, hoe and a sickle. There are mentions of all these implements in the song. There are also references about keeping the collected roots and tubers in a separate gunny bag. A unique methodology has been found to be used by Thachanadan Muppan to collect honey. A fibre thread is tied to a small stick and thrown into the beehive. The honey will flow down through the thread. The honey thus flown is collected in a pot. These songs reflect how they earned their livelihood in the past and how beautifully they used their creativity to make the routine works enjoyable and remarkable.

Chapter-8

Concluding Remarks

India is rich with diverse cultures, art forms, customs, traditions, and languages. Though the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution recognized only twenty-two languages as "Scheduled Languages", hundreds of other languages/ dialects are spoken in the country. All these languages are rich with folk tales, songs, narratives, rituals, proverbs, myths, legends, etc., which are mainly oral. Much of them are about everyday life, their ancestors, gods, cosmology, nature and culture. It reflects their collective consciousness, pain as well as joy. Most of these rich folk traditions and literature gradually fall into nothingness in the absence of proper documentation, translation, conservation and transmission to the next generation. Suppose this primarily ignored literature of the tribes is adequately documented, interpreted and translated. In that case, they offer an array of cultural diversity to their audience and reveal the exemplary creative literary exploits of the marginalized.

The cultural, linguistic, historical and geographical context of the tribal literature differs from the rest of the literature, making it distinct from others. Understanding these cultural contexts is fundamental for the proper perception of the content of this literature. The tribal literature can no longer be ignored as it reflected the country's rich folk tradition and kept its diverse languages alive. Modernization brought about by improvement in transport and communication facilities in tribal areas changed the lifestyle and socio-political structures of the

tribal groups. New political and educational systems introduced in tribal areas also impact the rich tribal literature. Dominant regional languages are slowly swallowing the tribal dialects. In the "Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger" (2009), UNESCO identified 196 endangered languages in India. Of these, the majority are tribal languages.

The nineteenth-century ethnographers and folklorists like Edward Sapir and Franz Boaz and the twentieth-century anthropologist Levi-Strauss considered the analysis of narratives the best way to read the cultural blueprint. Later with the works of Barthes and Geertz, the idea that stories could be read as culture and that cultures could be read as stories gained dominance. To call something literature, it should be the product of human imagination. If we call it tribal literature, it implies that it is the product of the collective imagination of people of a particular culture whose voice remains unheard even today.

The Wayanad district of Kerala is the abode of many tribal communities. Adiyar and Paniyan are the major tribes of the region who used to be bonded labourers under absentee land-lords. The Mulla Kuruman are a patrilineal tribe who used to practise shifting cultivation but had gradually taken up settled agriculture. The Kurichian are matrilineal, representing an 'aristocracy' among the tribal communities. The Kattunaikkan mostly live inside the forest, practising hunting, gathering and horticulture. They are one of the state's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Today, the tribal communities are a minority due to the large scale migration of the settler population belonging to different

communities in this once tribal-dominated region. Thus the various tribal groups though they share the same geographical space, are distinct in terms of their culture, economic organization, social life, language, tradition, etc.

They speak different dialects, and their languages were unwritten. The need for literacy was not felt in the past because of the tight-knit cultural community; each settlement had its oral traditions and was part of the total consciousness of the tribe. The process of socialization of the successive generations was achieved by oral transmission of the community's knowledge base, enshrined in its myths and traditions, sung and re-enacted in the rites and rituals. Skills were similarly handed down, fathers teaching sons and mothers the daughters. Education in this broad sense was part and parcel of life itself. The tribal child learns not merely through using its eyes to decipher symbols but totally through all its senses. The rich oral traditions maintained and transmitted for generations by these tribal communities are gradually fading from the collective consciousness of the community, owing to different factors like the emergence of the regional language Malayalam as the common language, loosening of the tight-knit nature of the tribal culture due to the migration of settler population into their area, the introduction of school education, etc. If it is not properly collected and documented, these rich traditions may fall into nothingness soon.

The Adiyani have a glorious collection of songs, music and dance forms. The songs they sang during marriage and other rituals are called *sopana*

pattu or *poigavana pattu*. These songs are not independent entities but part of the oral sacred traditions of the *sasthra*. Dance and music are integral to all the milestones of life. *Tudi* and *kuzhal* are popular musical instruments. The intangible properties or social behavioural norms are not readily visible or perceptible to the outsiders' eyes, and for the insiders, they may not be consciously appreciable. The *sasthras* of Adiyar are the foundation stone of their socio-cultural and behavioural dynamics. It is a treasure of knowledge blended with tradition learned by only a few through long apprenticeships. Chants and songs are an integral part of the *sasthras*, and it is interwoven into the very fabric of their daily life. There were chants for all occasions covering every aspect of life, whether it was a celebration in times of marriage, the birth of a child, at menarche, a festival, mourning for the dead, or even settlement of a dispute. These *sasthras* are an integral part of the community's oral tradition, and the art was passed on from one generation to the other.

The Adiyar have various ritual practices to invoke and appease their Gods and Goddesses. *Gaddika* is one of them. It is practised to cure diseases and illnesses which they believed were caused due to the anger of their Gods towards them. *Gaddika* is a sort of dance drama. Earlier it had only the ritual importance of being a part of their religious rites and rituals. As *gaddika* is intertwined with the life of the Adiyar tribe, they used it to display the issues faced by the community to the larger audience. It took several years to transform the ritual into an art form. *Gaddika* reveals the problems faced by the community and the

historical injustices the community has undergone. It was aptly named "gaddika, or the story of starvation deaths". In *Gaddika*, the performer, through various facial expressions and bodily gestures, postures and actions and groaning and screaming, communicates non-verbally, not only with the spectators but with the supernatural world. In other words, he is the intermediary communicator between the supernatural powers and the community. The man in his woman attire and all other colourful adornments in the splashing light and the sound of the drums and wind instruments and the verbal wraths create an atmosphere of awe and become the communicator in between. The man in the dress of a woman becomes visibly different from others, perhaps expressing the status of a third gender to differentiate themselves from the ordinary spectators. The Adiyar, who is otherwise downtrodden and unworthy, will become godly even for their masters who used to approach them to perform *nattugaddika* to remove evil spirits and illness and diseases. In short, the *Gaddikamadal* have had the following functions in the Adiyar society: It is essentially a cultural identity marker unique to the Adiyar. It has emotional, sentimental and expressive planes; the *Muppan/Kanaladi/Thammadikkaran* who performs *Gaddika*, connects the human beings with supernatural powers and is the communicator between the innumerable ancestor spirits and their living relatives; communication removes misunderstanding and helps appease the supernatural beings, resulting in the removal of calamities and curing illnesses and diseases and it ensures the solidarity of the community and makes them emotionally one.

The elements of bondage can still be traced from the everyday lifestyle of the Paniyan as they remained enslaved/bonded labourers for generations. The institution of bonded labour survived in Wayanad, especially in so far as the Paniyan were concerned. The centre of the bonding contract was the famous temple of the regional deity, the Valliyur *kavu* shrine, located near Mananthavady. In short, the Paniyan were subjugated to the status of enslaved. This psychology of serfdom and over lordship is reflected in the myths and songs of the Paniyan. It reflects what they are, what they aspire to be and what they claim to be.

The Paniyar have a rich oral tradition and a good repository of songs, rhyme and tunes. Songs and music form an integral part of it. In all spheres of their life, the influence of music and dance are discernible. The different genres of songs of Paniyar are *Vattakalipattu* (Vattakali dance songs), *nattippattu/kambalappattu* (songs sung at the transplantation of paddy), *okalapattu* (work songs), *naadanpattu* (songs sung for entertainment), *katha pattu* (story songs), *penappattu* (death songs) and *urakka pattu* (lullaby). The Paniyar dance for all festival occasions, ritual ceremonies, and life-cycle ceremonies. *Tudi* (drum) and *kuzhal* (pipe) are the two important musical instruments. For every function associated with life-cycle ceremonies, festivals and fares and for religious festivities *tudi and kuzhal* is an essential requirement. There are various tunes for different occasions, and in such cases, *tudi* and *kuzhal* go together. Paniyar music and rhythm create a unique

ambience effect on the listeners. Paniyan theme is simple in style but deeper in emotion. It holds together the community. It creates unique feelings and moods among the group, which is sacred and secular in character. There are various musical styles (tunes and rhythm patterns) for numerous occasions such as marriage, holy rituals, or community entertainment. It was told that there are 101 *kuzhal* tunes and 101 *tudi* rhythms as there are 101 gods for the Paniyan community. But nowadays, nobody knows all these tunes and rhythms. They may know a few as they learnt it from their ancestors.

The Paniyar sing songs on many occasions. Most of these songs are found to be made instantly and to tease one another. Most of them do not contain any specific meaning and are mainly compiled for entertainment. At the same time, there are also devotional songs sung during religious rituals and performances. The folklore of the Paniyar is not as rich as that of Kurichiar or Kattunaickar. Their songs are down-to-earth, mainly focusing on the poverty and penury of the group.

The Bettakkuruma is one of the few tribal artisans in India. In South India, they are the only tribal community that pursued a wide variety of artisanal occupations such as pottery, black smithy, carpentry, basketry, etc. The Kota of Nilgiri Hills will be the only exception to this. The Bettakkuruma society is rich with different myths and legends. The influence of their mythical tradition is discernible in the realm of art, music, dance, rites and rituals, and even in their traditional crafts, which are all part and parcel of their everyday life. This, in turn,

has a strong influence on the socio-cultural and political structure of the community. Whether it is their art, music, dance or musical instruments, its origin is directly connected to their tradition called *Binje* through mythical stories.

The stamp of their mythological tradition is tangible in every action of their everyday life. The musical instruments of Bettakkuruma are neither mere instruments which produce music and rhythm nor magical instruments used directly to connect and communicate with their supernatural world. Still, it has a strong influence even to decide the community's traditional social structure and religious order based on the concept of purity and pollution. The origin myths of these instruments are the best testimonies. The legend, ritual and different art forms of Bettakkuruma are not separate entities of life and culture. One ritual or myth cannot be understood fully without knowing the interrelationship with others. They are complementary to each other. All the art forms of Bettakkuruma have their roots in their mythical tradition and belief system known as *binje*.

An essential aspect of the Kurichiar culture is the rich tradition of folksongs, tales and myths. These songs, stories and legends portray their traditional way of life, occupational patterns and belief systems. It gives a picture of how the Kurichiar as a community imbibed immense ecological knowledge adapting themselves to the inhospitable terrain of their habitat. Most folk songs, especially those sung during different life cycle ritual events, are intended to teach the morals and values of the community among the members of the younger generation. It can be viewed as a social control system, linking every individual

to his own culture or other cultures through symbolic expressions. It reinforces the value system of the community in the younger generation. These value systems make the Kurichiar worldview and ecclesiology different from the other tribal communities of the region.

There are also songs purely for entertainment. However, it conveys meanings and ideas about different events in life explicitly or implicitly to the audience. If we examine the list of songs available among the Kurichiar could see songs in the name of various gods (*ganapathipattu*), birds (*kumanpattu*, *mayilppattu*, *pakshipattu*), animals (*narippattu* or *pulippattu*, *kattippattu*, *onthupattu*), plants (*marappattu*), flowers (*poopattu*) and natural phenomena like wind, rain, fire (*theepattu*) etc. The ecological references in these songs are significant.

Kurichiar uses its rich folk tradition as a medium to transmit its traditional norms, values and knowledge system to the succeeding generations. The norms to be followed while hunting is explained in the song sung during the propitiation of the hunting god Vettakalan or the celebration of *tulapathu* ritual. Similarly, the songs sung during the *pandal pattu* ceremony explain a woman's role and responsibility in society. The woman's most important role in the community is to work as cementing force for the unity of the family/joint family/*mittom* and the community at large. Being a strict matrilineal society, the status and role of women in the Kurichiar society are commendable. These songs also have an essential role in shaping the behaviour pattern of the community members. It also

gives reasonable answers to the questions regarding the origin of the universe, different natural phenomena etc., and finds solutions to the complex relationship between man and its physical environment.

Compared to the other tribal communities of the area, the Kurichiar have a vibrant collection of songs, tales and legends, which make them different from other tribal communities. This may be so because of their contact with the other communities of the region from the very early period and partly due to the anthropology and history of the community. Unlike the different tribal communities, the Kurichiar had an elegant past and is believed to be kept allegiance with the region's rulers like Pazhasi Raja of Kottayam (North Malabar) as his warriors in their fight against the British Raj. Their efficiency and expertise in the art of archery are well-known. The Kurichiar warriors following guerrilla warfare using bows and arrows made the British forces worthless in the early years of the 19th century. A series of revolts that Kurichiar fought with the British really baffled the colonial power. It may be because of this historical contact with the mainstream population the *Vadakkenpattu* tradition of North Kerala has much influence on the Kurichiar folklore. The most striking aspect of Kurichiar songs is that in structure, style of recitation, and at an ideological level, they maintain close similarity with *Vadakkenpattu*. In Wayanad, there are no *Kottais* (Forts). But in the songs, the term *Kottai* used to emerge. This also might be the influence of *Vadakkenpattu* tradition among them.

The legends and myths of Thachanadan Muppan are very superficial. It can be seen that many of their songs and stories are much more recent in origin and content. That is, it is packed with recent incidences. Thachanadan's oral narratives and traditions are not comparable to Kurichiar and Bettakkuruma's richness of fictional accounts, the diversity of themes it touches, and their ingenuity. Their oral tradition does not have a comparison, even with that of Paniyan and Adiyar. The songs and dances of Thachanadan are mainly sung and performed on ritual occasions like marriage, death, festivals etc. However, they also have pieces to be sung during the different day to day activities like collection of forest produce, sowing, weeding, harvesting etc. Such songs are purely for entertainment and to make their work enjoyable.

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Thrissur *puram* etc., in the song suggests that it is of a recent origin or that such pieces have been incorporated into the storyline recently.

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The social positions and conditions of the tribes and their subjective self-evaluation are reflective in their folklore. While the Paniyan and Adiyana songs

and stories are evidently about the pangs of hunger and their complex realities, the Bettakkuruma stories are concerned with problems in everyday life. The Kurichiar tales obviously are of their bravery and boldness. When the Paniyan traditions are self-pity, and down to earth, the Kurichiar's are of self-pride and claim to be one with the higher groups.

One thing is sure from the oral traditions, including their songs, tales, and myths of origin. The oral traditions of each group are reflections of what they are and what they aspire to be. That is why the folklore of the Paniyan are broodings of a passive group while that of Kurichiar is ambitious and full of courage. The two different levels of social positioning of the two communities living in the same locality can be understood from the self-pity of the one and the self-confidence of the other, a reflective of the history and anthropology of the two communities living in the same environment and different cultural planes.

The present study is only a peripheral glance into the depths of the vast realm of tribal folklore. A thorough and exhaustive study of tribal lore is imperative.

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