Chapter-I

Introduction

Kerala state is situated on the South Western part of the Indian peninsula. The land is rich in the availability of water and there are forty four rivers flowing throughout the state, out of which forty one are flowing towards west and the rest towards the east. Several places of politico-historical and cultural importance are located on the banks of these rivers. Such rich heritage reveals how the rivers of Kerala influenced different realms of the lives of the people. The water streams in Kerala are known as ‘puzha’. The Malayalam word puzha means a small river/stream of water or water flows. Generally in India, the large natural stream of water known as nadi. The word nadi is derived from Sanskrit root word ‘nad’ meaning channel, stream or flow. In the case of Kerala, almost all water streams are small comparing to other parts of India and the people name it as puzha (small water stream).

The Bharathappuzha is the biggest of all rivers in Kerala. It is also known as ‘nila’(means ‘long’) and ‘peraru’ (big river). The river originates from the ‘trimurthi sangam’ of Anamalai hills in Western Ghats and flows through the three district of Kerala (Palakkad, Thrishur and Malappuram). The river is located in the central part state and divides it into Northern and Southern area. Finally, the river joins with the Arabian Sea at Ponnani. The three districts have many villages on the river banks which are inhabited by different cultural communities. All the communities have their own worldview and perceptions of the river. Thus the river is considered not only as a material object, but also, as a symbol of their entire life of the people living in and around it.

Significance of the Study

The study on Bharathappuzha is significant for two reasons: Firstly, The River Bharathappuzha divides the state into Northern and Southern regions and flows through the central part of the state. Incidentally, this part of Keral is known as Cultural Capital. Like any other river in India, Bharathappuzha has its own role in molding knowledge, beliefs, customs, practices, material and culture of various communities which reside on its banks. The river has four major tributaries. They are thoothappuzha, gayathrippuzha, kalpathippuzha and kannadippuzha. All the
folklore on the river banks are transmitted from one generation to another verbally and non-verbally. There are many shrines and worshiping places especially dedicated to Bhagavathi on the banks which eventually become the basis for the existence of different folklore forms. The first six months in a year is the time of festivals such as *vela* in the origin part of the river, *pooram* in middle banks and *thalapoli* on the end part of Bharathappuzha in the *kavu* (village shrine). A rich tradition is embedded in the folklore forms performed by the people belonging to different communities. Therefore it constitutes a vital source material for the folkloric study which points out how they construct, represent and view their own selves in relation to the river. Hence, folklore is the expression of the folk that speaks about their own understanding of their lifestyle patterns. It means they view the world around them in a particular way. It can be called as the ‘worldview’ of their community. Worldview is the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the entirety of the individual or society’s knowledge and perspective including natural philosophy; fundamental, existential, and normative postulates; or themes, values, emotions, and ethics\(^1\). Different communities understand and interpret the river as per their worldview and call it by different names. It is a part of the cultural identity.

Secondly, Bharathappuzha is dying due to various natural and human interventions. The decreases of rain, sand mining, deforestation have been accelerating the death. The river is the sources of water to the villagers and agricultural activities on the banks. The life and lore of the people living on the banks depend on the river Bharathappuzha itself. Naturally, the changes which occurred in the flow and course of river may affect the life and culture of the people. Bharathappuzha is a centre of discussion both in the academic and the non-academic spheres of Kerala. The decay of river will affect the folk culture of different communities on the banks. With the onslaught of changes that have occurred in the geography on the river banks and due to modernisation and commercialisation, there is a transformation even in the consciousness of various communities living there. Thus, the river is regarded as a commodity since the ritual festivals performed on the banks have been changing in the course of time and space.

Nature and Scope of the Study

The Nature of present study is based on folkloric approach which focuses on the construction of various notions about an individual river and how they are expressed in the folklore of different communities in different ways. In India, rivers are centrifugal, centripetal and centrifocal forces that draw several communities to perform several rituals, sacred and secular not only on the banks but also in the places in and around their course. However, it is interesting to note that there are many Bhagavathi shrines that are situated on the banks of Bharathappuzha from its origin to end part and the folk communities conceive Bharathappuzha in their day to day life through the concept and ritual practices associated with the mother goddess, Bhagavathi. Each community looks at the river in relation to congregational annual festivals that are conducted on the banks of Bharathappuzha. In the process, each community articulate itself as being a part of the larger community and express overtly through the actions, objects, performance, ideologies etc., their own identity as well live in solidarity with the other communities.

Thus far not many studies have focussed on the ‘lore’ on the banks of the rivers connecting the physical landscape with cultural landscape and therefore, the scope of the present study can be extended to other such studies on rivers as cultural construct.

Area of the Study

To pursue the study in a meaningful way, after conducting several preliminary surveys, the area of study is fixed after considering convenience and feasibility. Bharathappuzha flows through three districts namely Palakkad, Thrishur and Malappuram. The river originates from the Western Ghats and enters Palakkad district. Then flows through Thrishur district and finally culminates in to the Arabian Sea. The banks of Bharathappuzha are taken as the larger area of study. Within the banks of the river, the geographical area is categorised into three broad regions: one is the Palakkad area (origin part) and the second one is Thrishur part (middle part); and the third is found in Malappuram district (end part).

Review of Literature

The present study will comprise various literatures that discuss the concept of river in general and this will give a comprehensive idea to the research questions.
In order to have a good understanding on the concept of river, the literature survey is done by looking at some of the works and then organised the literature survey in the following manner:

i. Literature related to theoretical and conceptual frame.

ii. Literature pertaining to river as natural landscape.

iii. Literature pertaining to river as cultural landscape

iv. Literature related to cultural life of the folk of Kerala especially, on the banks of the river Bharathappuzha.

The first type of literature gives an understanding on the issues related to ‘nature/culture’ dichotomy and how humans have negotiated with it through the ages by incorporating it with the sacral behaviour and religious ideology. The second type furnishes studies on rivers and their natural landscapes which constitute physical features of river courses and the human intervention against the river and how it affects the natural course of the river. The third type of literature provides a critical insight into the concept of sacred and secular notions of different cultures and how humans constructed their worldview on water which is a basic element of sustenance. The fourth type of literature is to construct a folkloric approach to understand rivers and their lore.

i. Literature related to theoretical and conceptual frame

This part will cover the conceptual issues regarding nature, culture and religion. The contemporary theoretical issues related to ritual studies are also discussed here.

The Evolutionary Approach

The first approach to explain rituals is to study the historical origin which shows the evolution of rituals through various stages of history. Scholars believed that if they could discover this origin, they would be able to explain the contemporary rituals of man. This approach seeks the origin of rituals by seeking the meaning of ritual, myth, and religion. For W. Robertson Smith, sacrifice was motivated by the desire for communion between members of a primitive group and their god. For Frazer, the search led to magic, a

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stage preceding religion. Both Smith’s and Frazer’s theories led Durkheim to seek the origin of ritual and religion in Totemism which is based on the study of Australia ritual. According to Durkheim in Totemism, scholars find the original form of ritual and the division of experience into the sacred and the profane.\(^3\) The ritual behaviour entails an attitude that is concerned with the sacred acts and things.

According to **Durkheim**, the reference, or object, of ritual is the belief system of a society, which is constituted by a classification of everything into the two realms of the sacred and the profane. This classification is taken as a universal feature of religion. Belief systems, myths, and the like, are viewed as expressions of the nature of the sacred realm, in which ritual becomes the determined conduct of the individual in a society expressing a relation to the sacred and the profane. The sacred is that aspect of a community’s beliefs, myths, and sacred objects that are set apart and forbidden. The function of ritual in the community is to provide proper rules for action in the realm of the sacred as well as to supply a bridge for passing into the realm of the profane. Freud was also convinced that the origin of religion and ritual is to be found in sacrifice.\(^4\)

**Veena Das’s** edited book *Handbook of Indian Sociology* is divided in three parts. In the first part she discusses the relation between religious beliefs and environment and the second part is about the combinational mode of subsistence. In the last part of this book she discusses the relationship between environment and public sphere.\(^5\) In an article from this book, ‘Ecology and environment by Rita Brara she argues that culture emerges in accordance with the environment of the area. Vedic hymns are a model of ecological engagement in the living world which is encoded in a religious world view. Religious beliefs implicate in the conception of nature, time and space at the dynamic interface of believers in a socio-ecological context. Vedic Hinduism has given importance to the physical environment and considers them as sacred. e.g., Ganga, Shiva. The landscape of India shows the connection between life and nature. Most of the temples located on the banks of tirthas show the beliefs in life after death. Hindu culture considers east as sacred and

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Muslims consider west as sacred. That means environment moulds the life of people. This relationship with environment expresses their culture. All these environmental concerns have led to the appraisal of religion and moral beliefs.

**The Functional Approach**

The origin-evolutionary approach of ritual behaviour has been rejected as quite an inadequate approach to explain human behaviour because none could verify any of these bold ideas. Therefore, they have remained as creative speculations that cannot be confirmed or denied. The second approach to explain ritual behaviour is based on the empirical data gathered by actual observation. The first approach was more concentrated on the ideas of origin whereas; the central idea of the second approach looked at the functions which means the nature of ritual is to be defined in terms of its function in a society.

The aim of functionalism is to explain ritual behaviour in terms of individual needs and social equilibrium. Ritual is thus viewed as an adaptive and adjustive response to the social and physical environment. Many leading authorities on religion and ritual studies such as Bronislaw Malinowski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Clyde Kluckhohn, Talcott Parsons, and Edmund Leach, adopted a functional approach to explain ritual, religion and myth.

Most functional explanations of rituals attempt to explain this behaviour in relation to the needs and maintenance of a society. Later this approach invited serious criticism. If the aim of functionalism is to explain why rituals are present in a society, it will be necessary to clarify certain terms like need, maintenance and a society functioning adequately. This becomes crucial if they are to be taken as empirical terms.

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The Structural Approach

Societies were formed on the basis of relatively closed systems. Its respective institutional structures determine objectivity in thought, basic values for emotive control and final authority for moral action for the members of their societies. Each institution was to be thought of as a shared predicate and thus was formed for each individual of a given society a constitutive category of the individuals thinking, feeling and acting. It means that an individual being which has its foundation in the organism and the circle of whose activities is therefore strictly limited, and also a social being, which represents the highest reality in the intellectual and moral order that we can know by observation. In so far as he belongs to society, the individual transforms himself, both when he thinks and when acts. His conclusion is that the reality which religious thought expresses is the society. The Belgian born cultural anthropologist, Levistraus, occupies a central position within structuralism. He continued a tradition from the Durkhiemian notion of primitive religion and joined it with semiotics. By synthesizing these two traditions, Strauss created structural anthropology. He describes culture in various aspects of human life like kinship, food and myth. In his, *The elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949)\(^{10}\), *The Savage Mind* (1966)\(^{11}\), *Structural Anthropology* (1976)\(^{12}\) various glimpses of nature are discussed and he puts forward a new tool to understand the analysis of culture.

In his view human societies are structured. The basic structure of human beings is binary (nature and culture) and it is expressed in different ways in different cultures. People create myth upon the basic human problems and try to escape from the disturbances of real life events. The myths examined are dual- either directly or indirectly with the discovery of fire and hence of cooking; the latter is symbolic in indigenous thought of the transition from nature to culture. It means cooking is the part of culture and is the transformation of natural object into a cultural one. It has also happened in the case of human development. The language is also the creation of humans and is a result of culture or a part of culture. He continues that myth is a


language. In a given language certain sequence of sounds are associated with definite meanings and they aim at discovering a reason for the linkage between those sounds. They are equally present in other languages although the meaning they conveyed was entirely deferent. Humans experience is the various connotations of communication codes. In every society the things are signified in various ways and society produce the meaning in accordance with those codes. That is why different meanings are created about a single event. This meaning production happens or expresses in various folklore forms. Conventionally, humans call it as ‘culture.’

**Bourdieu’s** idea is against the objectivist concept of Levi-Strauss. In Levistrausian view, society can be understood as an external force that determines or constrains the action of the human subject. But in his view, this objective approach fails to answer how human agents are involved in producing and sustaining the society. The concept of *habitus* and field are the basic outlines of Bourdieu’s in Sociology. The natural character of humans is acquired through a lifelong process of learning and socialization that gives the competence to respond to social situations. Society has a structural hierarchy. Man uses these resources and gain symbolic power. In other words, they become rich with the use of natural resources and gain social status. So nature is the way to get recognition and an attempt to transform the way of culture. In his view, man gains control over resources depending upon the capital. This capital later may change as the ‘symbolic one’ or a cultural one. This cultural capital transforms nature in the form of power or domination. It becomes actual capital in symbolic way.¹³

**The Historical Approach**

A third approach to the study of ritual is centered on the studies of historians of religion. Most historians of religions, such as Gerardus van der Leeuw in Netherlands, Rudolf Otto in Germany, Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade¹⁴ in the United States, and E.O. James in England, have held the view that ritual behaviour signifies or expresses the sacred (the realm of transcendent or ultimate reality). Each religion has the totality of a structure of knowledge and values. That must be a unique configuration. It must develop its own criterion of validity; it cannot judge

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the attention of empirical science or by that of another religion. Science’s way of looking at the nature or world is hypothetical, pragmatic and functional while religion looks at nature as goodness, sacredness, wicked, evil and taboo. It means religion is more related to human feelings. Each clan has a totem, usually an animal or a plant. The totem is a symbol. It is the emblem of clan. Actually religion is the construction of humans on the concept of nature. That’s why religion became an inextricably interlinking element of culture. Society is not only a biological or physical entity but also a moral reality. It is not reducible to the more fundamental laws of nature. Indeed, the knowledge of these more fundamental laws of nature has its source in society itself and he affirmed that any unification of sciences is possible only if man is taken as the centre. This approach, however, has never been represented as an explanation of ritual. The basic problem with this approach is that it cannot be confirmed unless scholars agree on the existence of a transcendental reality beforehand.

The Performance Approach

In the Aristotelian way, a performance is a mimetic behaviour whereas in the opinion of Clifford Geertz, performance is one of the most basic ways to study human interaction. A performance is always an ‘emergent’ phenomenon. The emergent quality of performance rests in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence and the goals of the participants in particular situations. The keys of performance such as genres, acts, events and ground rules for the conduct of performance create the structure of conventionalized performance for the community.

Richard Bauman conceives performance as ‘a unifying thread tying together the marked, segregated aesthetic genres and other spheres of verbal behaviour into a general unified conception of verbal art as a way of speaking’. The verbal art includes narration of myths, stories and related genres. The Performance brings them together in culture-specific ways that are to be discovered

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15 In 1984 with the work *Verbal Art as Performance* Richard Bauman sketch a new framework for the study of performances. His idea is that verbal communication carries an artistic or aesthetic dimension) which is connected to the specific setting and culture of those participating in the act of the communication. See Richard Bauman, *Verbal art as performance*, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984,p.5.
within the culture of a community. In a way people communicate during specific situations and settings and these communications are done for certain reasons that will have meaning to the members of folk groups and communities. Every performance differs from every other depending on the context and the group in which the performance occurs. Bauman explains that the emergent quality of performance rests in the interplay of communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants within the context of particular situations. In other words, everything that goes on during a performance and everything that surrounds it affects the nature of the performance. Performance becomes constitutive of the domain of verbal art as spoken communication.\textsuperscript{16} This approach highlights interaction between individual artistry and cultural expectations. It also encourages researchers to explore the processes of performing in particular situations and also the local ideas and practices that are related to this. By following the oral nature of performances, Ruth Finnegan explains the nature of oral performance.

According to \textbf{Ruth Finnegan} the idea and practice of performance clearly have a particular import for oral expression and is a major focus of research in verbal arts and traditions.\textsuperscript{17} The oral speaker is a performer and since speakers vary in the arts, so will the style, structure and even content of what he/she says. Unlike the author of a written document, the oral performers’ narrative account does not always remain as the same and different individual performer has different ways of presenting facts. This means that there is a constant interpretation and reinterpretation in terms of the current situation. She defined oral literature as unwritten literature which depends on the performer who formulates it in words during a specific occasion helping it to be actualized. Therefore, the words of the text alone cannot be the ultimate basis of interpreting and understanding the meanings embedded in a performance. It is essential that for a complete understanding of the oral words in performance, other aspects of performance have to be taken into consideration. In a way Finnegan was concentrated on the concept of oral composition which is a totality of many elements of the performance and

\textsuperscript{16} \emph{Ibid}

takes different forms in accordance with different cultures. First there is the whole aspect of performance. The oral speaker is by definition a performer, and all the arts of drama, rhetoric, display and verbal facility may be relevant in his performance. Unlike the author of a written document, the author of an oral historical account does not always remain the same. In the case of traditions handed down over long periods the author is necessarily different and different individuals will have different ways of presenting facts with different prejudices and different interpretations. Over a period of time, this is likely to result in many changes in a very complicated way. Oral tradition is also more constantly subjected to outside influences because of its close connection with the current social situation. Each performance is on a specific occasion and each occasion is in turn subjected to the whole changing social background. This means that there is a constant interpretation and reinterpretation in terms of the current situation. **Richard Schechner** defines two types of rituals: sacred and secular. The annual festival can be classified as sacred rituals because the specific form of performance is associated with expressing or enacting religious beliefs. According to Schechner ‘every action, no matter how small or encompassing, consists of twice-behaved behaviours’.  

18 The ritual is a cultural form and culture represents identity. Then this identity will be expressed through performance. The restored behaviour or repetition is an important characteristic in ritual performance. This signifies the performed identities that occur repeatedly through ritual activity. In another way, the relationships between beliefs and the enactment of the beliefs through ritual performance on one side and the respective rituals of communities on the other side have been influenced by historical and new social life of the community.  

In the view of **Victor Turner**, in his book Forest of symbols cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their rituals and performances. Rituals are highly context based and driven by the common intentions i.e., the conscious or unconscious agreements made by the participants. According to Turner the liminal experience of individual communities may lead to a social bonding to another community.  

19 By studying the rites of passage of *Ndembu* tribe

18 *Ibid*  

of Zamba, Victor Turner emphasizes the liminal status of the ritual subject and this status would create a feeling of social bonding between the members of a community.\textsuperscript{20} Turner’s concept of ‘liminality’, which he has developed from Van Gennep’s theories on rites of passage, points to the possibility that performed identity may emerge from within the ritual frame that guides the activity of the action.\textsuperscript{21} Liminal phase signifies a state where participants in ritual experience gets a temporary suspension of structural norms. Turner indicates ritual as the transformational dialectic of structure and anti-structure to serve as a vehicle for unfolding social dramas.\textsuperscript{22} Rituals are a performance that has structure and continuity. There are various kinds of rituals such as to mark passage of time (harvest festival, birthday), to transform social status (wedding, puberty) and to ensure good fortune (prayers).

\textbf{ii. Literature pertaining to river as natural landscape.}

S.M Haslam’s book \textit{River Plants} discuses the river plants in Britain and North America.\textsuperscript{23} The first part of the book describes the effect of different physical features of the river on the plants. The changes such as deforestation, industrial effluents, farming, domestic use of water in both rural and urban centres, use of fertilizers and pesticides for agricultural purposes etc., affect the flow of water stream and it also affect the decaying of plants on the river banks. In addition to this, it describes the vegetation of streams on soft rocks and hard rocks. Moreover, the


\textsuperscript{21} Victor Turner, \textit{From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play}, New York: PAJ Publications, 1982. Van Gennep defined rites of passage as the rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age. According to Van Gennep, all rites of passage are marked by three phases: separation (preliminal), transition (liminal) and incorporation (post-liminal). The first phase or separation signifies the detachment of the individual or group from an earlier fixed social structure or a cultural condition. In the liminal period, the ritual subject passes through a cultural realm. Liminality comes from the word ‘limen’ which means ‘on the threshold’ where one experiences a luminal state or space, one is the edge of something new, a transitional place. In the incorporation phase, the subject is consummated. In the luminal phase the subject are between the positions assigned and arranged by custom. In reincorporation when a person who has gone through a ritual return to society with a new status. See Arnold Van Gennep, \textit{The Rites of Passage}, London: Routledge, (1960) 2004.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid}

loss of these plants affects the entire nature of water flow. The author fails to suggest a solution to protect these river plants.

**Radhakant Bharati**\(^{24}\) in his book *Rivers of India* categorises Indian rivers on the basis of its flowing nature like flowing in to the Bay of Bengal and flowing in to the Arabian Sea. The minerals of the river and the Ganga, Brahmaputra and North West region are also a part of river system in India. This categorisation is on the basis of the geographical quality of this region. This book has offered the technical data about the rivers in India. River was an important way of transportation. This may be the reason for many temples are situated on the river banks.

**Grady Clay**’s edited book *Water and Landscape* \(^{25}\) explains that water is an essential ingredient in forming the life of the community. The communities living on the river banks consider rivers as a part of life. Natural resources and features of the area decide the land use pattern, transportation and economic considerations of the area. Land is also related to water availability such as circulation, commercial, residential and recreation.

**P.L.Madan**’s work *River Ganga: A Cartographic Mystery* describes that from the times immemorial, the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Greeks had different notion about India. \(^{26}\) It reflects the cartography of the above people. But they could not collect any scientific or empirical cartographical data. So they got a misguided notion of India. Here the author describes the changing perspectives and perceptions of cartography making. The fallacies of westerners can be seen. An example that in one map, two Ganga Rivers are flowing: one from south central India and another from North West. So in this work the author has collected the early geographical literature and tries to find out the reasons behind the mystery of cartography.

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Pabhat Chandra Sabhapandit’s edited book *Flood Problem of Assam-cause and remedies* discusses the different causes both natural and human that leads to the flooding of Brahmaputra and the pathetic condition of Assam. With the help of better planning these calamities can be prevented to some extent. Application of latest technology with national and international help will also help to solve the problem. People need food security, health and ecological securities for the welfare of their life. The editor argues that no scholarly work conveying different aspects of this problem is available. He says that this may be the first book on such a type. Most articles in this work give a peripheral study of the problem and none of the work deals with intensity and solution of the problem.

**INTACH** Environmental Series published a book, *The Tehri Dam-a prescription for disaster*. The work is based on the environmental impact of Tehri dam in the mid Himalaya. Under the direction of former Prime Minister a working group was formed and they submitted their final report on 1986 August. This Tehri dam project gain financial assistance from Russia. Tehri dam project consists of a 260.5 meters high earth and rock fill dam under construction near the confluence of Bhagirathi and Bhilangana rivers downstream of Tehri town in Uttar Pradesh (western Himalaya). There are many problems that are dealt with in this report and no scientific investigation has been carried out to establish the load bearing capacity of the rocks at tehri. A lot of technological aspects have been laid down about the dam but no studies have been made on the social aspects of its construction. Natural flow of a river is blocked by constructing a dam over it. The river bed of the reservoir begins to rise and that will destroy the towns such as Rishikesh, Haridwar and Munikireti. In short, there are some glimpses of social problem that are dealt with in this report. But they did not forward a clear cut idea about these aspects. They concentrate more on the scientific study.

Eberhard Czaya’s in his book *Rivers of the World* explains the nature of rivers and how rivers shape themselves in the landscape through which they pass, by

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means of erosion and deposition. Humans and rivers are closely connected. River shaping the valley depends on the alluvial erosion and the carrying capacity of water. The basic geological types of the world decide the climate of the land. This work is a scientific study about the major rivers of the world.

Avijith Gupta’s edited book *Large Rivers-Geomorphology and Management*\(^{30}\) has three parts. The structural controls of the river determine the change in its direction, gradient, shape and behaviour. Tectonics, climate and estuary may control a long river in combination. The author says that many rivers are undergoing large shift due to the climate change, flood, sea level changes, activities in the drainage basins and the channel. The second part is a case study about the major rivers of the world. The last part is on the structural changes of Nile river due to intervention creating negative impact on the river. It needs to study the river with the help of modern techniques such as satellite imagery, channel geometry analysis and mapping. In short this book focuses only on the physical environment of the river. The author hopes that this kind of studies will help the sustainable management of the river in the age of climate change.

John S Bridge’s book *River and Flood plains-forms, processes and sedimentary record*\(^{31}\) is about the origin, nature and evolution of alluvial rivers and flood plains. The author makes an overview of the river systems in the world. The main part of the book discusses geometry, water flow, sediment transport, erosion, deposition related to modern alluvial rivers and flood plains. At the end of the book, the author puts forward a method to study the rivers and its deposits. The aim of the author is to understand the nature of modern rivers and flood plains. This understanding will be helpful before any problem concerning rivers and flood plains past or present. The author suggests that by studying the life style of ancient land dwelling organism and organic remains in fluvial deposits will be helpful to understand the human interaction with river and flood plains.

\(^{30}\) Avijith Gupta (ed.), *Large Rivers-Geomorphology and Management*, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2007.

Dev.Raj Khana’s book *Ecology and Pollution of Ganga river*\(^{32}\) explains the pollution of Ganga river by a different cause. The Ganga is a holy river in India. Due to the increasing population and industrial growth, the water of Ganga became polluted. The human interventions such as the domestic wastes and the remains of human body affect the physio-chemical characteristics of the river. This study would help the environmental planning of the place Haridwar. In short it is a study about how human intervention affects the river system.

### iii. Literature pertaining to river as cultural landscape

In this section the general concept of rivers, various views and writings about it are discussed.

**Christopher Key Chapple**’s book *Hinduism and Ecology*, explores religions and the environmental role of the multifaceted Hindu tradition in the development of a greater ecological awareness in India.\(^{33}\) The ethical values of the society emerge from the human attitude towards other humans and nature. Hinduism considers ecology as sacred and it reflects in various religious texts. The intention of myth about water and river is to spread awareness among people about the sacredness of natural objects in human life. The different chapters of this book deals with how traditional concepts of nature in the classical texts might inspire or impede an eco-friendly attitude among modern Hindus and they describe some grassroot approach to environmental protection. They observe the Gandhian principles of minimal consumption, self-reliance, simplicity, and sustainability. They explore forests and sacred groves in text and tradition and review the political and religious controversies surrounding India’s sacred river systems. Many authors look Hinduism as a text oriented one and they do not look at the other oral texts.

**Debnath Debashis** in his book *Ecology and Rituals in Tribal Areas* explain the representation of ecology in tribal culture especially in West Bengal.\(^{34}\) He gave

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various definitions and also studied the relation between ritual and belief. Tribal festivals inextricably interlinked with the seasons of nature. The social function of festivals and rites are the result of it. It makes a distinction between Brahminical and tribal religion. In short the structure of rituals and its changing pattern will expose the individual and collective attitudes of tribes towards their ecological settings. It means that the tribals create their life as an integral part of their natural world. The author gives only some hints about what will happen to the changing scenario of their attitudes about nature.

Udai Prakash in his book *Motifs in Indian Mythology- Their Greek and Other Parallels* compares different motifs of Indian culture and the culture of other parts of the world. The removal of sin through the touch of water is in actual belief among different cultures around the world. The number ‘seven’ is sacred among Indians, Persians, Sumarians, Assyrians, Greeks, Teutonic, Celtic and other peoples of Europe. All these show the importance of water in people’s life in different parts of world. The legends of creation about birth and death of several characters of ancient Indian tradition is in one way or the other related to river. He argues that the fertility aspects of various natural forces may be seen in the birth legends of many traditional characters. The author has taken a few legends on which comparative mythology and folklore may throw some light. The legends picked up are mainly from the ‘Mahabharata’, a few from the ‘Ramayana’. The author generalized all those things and fails to explain how it happened.

Narendranath Bhattacharya’s book *The Indian Mother Goddess* proposes the transformation of matrilineal domination to patriarchal society. All religious practices and beliefs were modified according to the new ideals of society. People started to worship sky goddess. It is a hierarchical life. Women were considered as the symbols of fertility. Likewise girls used red colour of vermilion after the marriage and this colour was also used for the fertility rituals in agriculture. In short all the latter period fertility rituals were the continuation of matrilineal society. The


author failed in substantiating his argument. This study correlates the cult of the Indian mother goddess with similar cults found in different parts of the world. It reveals interesting historical process working behind the origin and development of the cult. In ‘The puranic texts relating to the rivers of India’, the author classifies the rivers flowing from different mountains like Mahendra, Sahya, and Vindhya. The main argument is that many rivers still retain its ancient name. The author makes a descriptive study and fails to establish how people consider river as a part and parcel of their lives. Author concentrates on puranic texts and describes the mountains and rivers on the basis of this assumption.

Kapila Vatsyayan’s book Prakrti: - The Integral Vision shows that in many parts of India, people create secular beliefs on the river sect. Many communities followed the worldview of their ancestors and their division of year was related to the natural phenomena. The various concepts of panchabhuthas (five elements) express the role of them in their lives. The dwelling place of evil was the water and explains the importance of water in their life. Water has two uses- it is a purifying element and an evil element. The author looks at the relation of ecology and morality. In short this book explores the concept of the primal elements (sky, air, fire, water, earth) which has governed and determined the evolution of civilization and culture.

Edward Morr’s book The Hindu Pantheon discusses the conceptual issues between Shaivaita and Vaishnavaits. He studies the origin of different myths of river Ganga and how they have paved way to the origin of different religious groups in Hindu religion. The author compares Indian gods such as Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma as a continuation of the Egyptian gods Osiris, Horus and Typhon. The Vaishnavaits argue that god Vishnu is more related to water. So the river Ganga came from Vishnu’s feet. This work was illustrated with examples from Morr’s own collection of Hindu artefacts, which are currently displayed in the British museum. This book is illustrative of the enlightenment concept of education of foreign culture and religion. It was significant as it broke from European preconceptions that


Hinduism was a largely inferior and mystical religion. So the major problems of the argument are based on secondary data and looks at Hindu religion as an oriental one.

Dubois A. Abbey & Henry K. Beauchamp studied the Hindu practices, rituals and ceremonies in their book, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. Abbey’s work represents the earlier stage of inquiry into Hinduism. The authors look into the south Indian Dravidian beliefs and argue that it is very different from the versions of the faith as expounded by the north Indian Hinduism. The connection between seven numbers, seven *risis* and seven sacred rivers were the influence of north Indian Hinduism. Most of the Hindu customs embedded with river was people making offerings for rain. Based on an 1815 manuscript by a French missionary, this comprehensive work offers a unique panorama of early 19th century Indian life related to caste system, ceremonial procedures, rules, marriage, fasting, widowhood, funerary rites, literature and religion. The basic problem is that the author has taken a more gloomy view of Hinduism and it is based on the European concept of Hinduism.

Hertel R Bardley and Cynthia Annttumes edited the book *Living Banaras- Hindu Religion in Cultural Context*. It introduces a group of people who considered that death on the banks of a river was something to be proud of. It looks at the relation between gods and natural objects. The origin of the name Varanasi means the city between Varna and Asi rivers. Banaras is the common platform of different communities in India. This study focuses on the new notion on the ‘urban popular religion’. Like in Banaras, it is the combination of traditions and various performances that have started from decades earlier are prevalent even now. It shows the communal identity and political conflict among the various groups. In this work one article, *The goddess of the Vindhyasin Banaras* by Cynthia Ann Hume focuses on local forms of worship to a deity called as *vindhyavasini*. There are six *vindhyavasini* temples situated in Banaras and the author argues that all these temples reflect the diversity of culture among the believers.

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Surinder Mohan Bharadwaj in his book, Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India- A Study in Cultural Geography,\(^1\) discusses the Hindu places of pilgrimage on the banks of river in India. Cultural geography which is profane to the secular world and the purification value of water are the major things that are discussed in this book. The influence and the expansion of Aryan culture in the south, the sacred place names mentioned in the epic are also analyzed in this work. Earlier, people might have lived on the river banks and that helps in the understanding of the spatial dimensions and interpretations of the Aryan and non- Aryan cultures of ancient India. Accordingly, the concept of ritual purification through bathing is a contribution of the Dravidian people of Indus valley. The author traces the origin and evolution of Hindu pilgrimage from the period of Mahabharata and categories the sacred places on the basis of distances travelled by the pilgrims and their cultural diversity. The authors include the patterns of pilgrimage circulation in India and their meaning in the context of Hindu tradition. He recognizes the pre-Aryan origins of Hindu gods, goddesses and sacred places. The work selects a region and shrines on the margins of three language areas and concentrates on the north Indian places of pilgrimage whereas, avoids the south Indian regions.

Enrich Zimmer’s book Myth and Symbol in Indian Art and Civilization looks at the Indian Concept of river. In India, rivers are regarded to be female and a mother. Ganga has taken an important role in Bengal life and the people considered it as the replica of human form\(^2\). Origin myth of Ganga depicted in Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavata purana also consider it as female. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva are the usual deities on the banks of many rivers in India. Ganga became a proto type because in India, cultivation first starts on the regions of the Ganga River. The emergence of Bhagirathi as a symbol of purity is because she belongs to solar dynasty. The author does not answer why Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva gain more importance on the river bank of India.

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\(^2\) Enrich Zimmer, Myth and Symbol in Indian Art and Civilization, Boligan Series,1946.
Anne Feldhaus’s book *Water and Womanhood: religious meanings of rivers in Maharastra* discuss the relationship between Indian River and religion.\(^{43}\) People worship flowing water and they believe in the cyclical nature of life. Both classical and folk religion looks at the river as sacred. People attribute human features to the river. The source of river is very sacred and people create cultural constructions on the material. Cows and water are essential for agriculture. So people consider it as sacred. The author deals with the different rituals associated with water, feminity of river and the natural elements related to river like fish. A river has two faces - destruction and prosperity. River festivals are celebrated after the harvests and it is a kind of thanks giving to the river goddesses.

Baidyanath Sarasvati’s book *The spectrum of sacred* discusses the concept of sacred and profane in the Indian context.\(^{44}\) According to Mercer Eliade, the concept of sacred is a special one or mental one. For religion some parts are sacred and another one profane. But in the view of Emile Durkheim both sacred and profane is a part of the mental and physical dialectics. On the view of Roger Callous the concept of sacred and profane are dichotomous and sacred is the source and secular is the life. The author argues that in the Indian context both are the two sides of the same coin and his first argument was that in the Indian context caste system is based on the hierarchical opposition of the pure and impure. Even in India the hierarchy can be seen on the *thirthas*. Some *thirthas* are more meritorious than others. This anthropomorphism came from the Aryan invasion of the south.

Sankaran Unni’s book *Ecology of River Narmada* describes that Narmada has more than twenty synonyms in Sanskrit literature.\(^{45}\) The sages of Vedic times made no reference to Narmada. But in the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature Narmada is referred. Many kingdoms have originated and flourished on this river banks. They are *Kalchuri* Kingdom, the *Gond rajas* who ruled at Garha region. The Jain religion emerged on the banks of Narmada. Many temples can be seen on the banks of the


river. The holy places like Amarkantak, Omkareshwar, and Sacred Ghats at Maheshwar are on the banks of this river.

Vasudha Narayanan’s article Water, Wood and Wisdom: Ecological Perspectives from the Hindu Traditions has discussed the way of life that followed many religions.\textsuperscript{46} It teaches how to live in accordance with nature. The non-violence in Dharma means non-violence of nature. So one of the intentions of puranic text is to consider nature as same as humans. The notion behind purity and pollution along with the attachment of nature with human are used for other purposes. Most of the rivers in India are considered as female. The festival that is celebrated on the river banks memorises the female nature of the river.

Colleen Kattau’s book Women, Water and the Reclamation of the Feminine explains that in folk religion, water and other natural objects were the integral part of their religion.\textsuperscript{47} But in a later period they give up the importance of nature. At the primitive period everything lays one. But in later, dualism has emerged like nature and culture. The author by considering nature as women and the compartmentalisation of universe like water, tree and air has created problems in modern days. The scientist and the village women are looking at the nature in different ways.

R.P. Masani in his book Folklore of Wells: Being a Study of Water Worship in East and West by is all about the role of wells in human life.\textsuperscript{48} Wells are a big source of water and water worship is a non Aryan custom. People all over the world conduct sacrifices before they construct bridges and dams (like London bridge, bridge over the Hoogly river etc). Even in India, people believe that spirits live in the river. The author discusses about the water gods and goddesses in the different areas of the world. There are different types of water spirits and in India, serpent is the only one animal god of water while in the west, they have many animal gods.


\textsuperscript{48} RP. Masani, Folklore of wells being a Study of water worships in East and West, Bombay: D.B Tarapekevala Sons Company, 1918.
Kuntla lahiri Dutt’s edited book *Fluid Bonds: views on gender and water* discuss the relationship between gender and water. In many societies challenges are faced by women with regard to water. Women’s lives and views are intricately linked to water and also the problem of access and rights. Their responses and extent of their empowerment will happen through their participatory role.

David Mosse’s book *The Role of water-state craft, ecology and collective action in South India* narrates many tales and anecdotes of warriors and kings that are related to tanks and rivers in India especially South India. British rule converted village common property in to state property and denied customary rights of the traditional village authority. It affected the indigenous knowledge of the communities and the result was the centralisation of water in certain hands. Due to the force of tradition people created social rights, value system and moral codes for water.

Frans Bartman’s book *Apah the Sacred Water-An analysis of a Primordial Symbol in Hindu Myths* argues that the sacred waters in the Vedic and later Vedic traditions in India unify the people. The mythical and the ritual aspects of Hinduism are surrounded by the sacred nature of water. The author tries to seek the answer of the question, how water is related to humans and in which way the water appears as a symbol in various Hindu myths. In every stage of human life water takes an important role: from the creation of the universe and its destruction, man’s birth to death and the dissolution to his ashes. The major religion of the world considers water as sacred. This book has four parts. In the first part, the author discusses the phenomenology and the notion of sacred. The second part studies the value system in Indian mythology such as the dharma, mukthi, bhakthi and also the origin myth of agni. While in the third and the fourth part the author studies how the water is picturing in the Vedic Hindu myth. The water is portrayed as the womb of the brahmanda, as mother, as flood, atman, and water as seed and also the creative power of water.

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iv. Literature related to cultural life of the folk of Kerala especially, on the banks of the river Bharathappuzha.

Kerala is the land of many ritual performances. The narrative of almost all the ritual performances such as bhootha worship, theyyam, thira, mudiyettu, padayani in Kerala is based on the Kali-Dharika war or Dharikavadham. The nature of one myth and its diversified manifestation is the discourse in folklore studies of Kerala. **Raghavan Payanadu** in his book *Folklorinoru Padanapadhadhi* explains this phenomenon.\(^52\) There are similarities among these ritual performances. The bhootha worship is more related to magical practices; theyyam is the enactment of the hero/god/goddess whereas thira is a ritual to satisfy the goddess. The intensity of the performances reduces when it reaches from Canara to Kozhikode area and it becomes further simple when it performs in Malappuram area. It shows that, these ritual performances such as bhootha, theyyam and thira are not oppositional but interrelated. The transmission of this ritual form is from top to bottom or it is from the vertical way. This methodology is prevalent among the folklorists in Kerala. This transmission further establish by studying the colour pattern of ritual performances of Kerala. The book, *Nerinte Mozhi*\(^53\) by Raghavan Payanadu explains the main colour of costume in the ritual performances is red. The intensity of red is diminishing when it reaches to South Kerala.

Thirayattam is the main annual ritual performances in the Malabar region. C. **Gopalan Nayar** in his book, *Malabarile Thirayattangal* says that, the origin period of thira is before one thousand years back.\(^54\) After the origin of thira ritual, it has further changed to other ritual performances.

**Ezhumattoor Raja Raja Varma’s** article, *Padayaniyile Kaalan Kolam*\(^55\) one consider Kerala as a cultural unity, the joining element from north to South Kerala is the kali myth performed in different ways. The ritual performances of Ernakulam (central Travancore) is mudiyettu and once it reaches from north Kerala,


the ritual element slowly fades away and it has added some comic character in the ritual course. The myth and its enactment have been loosing its ritual nature even in the case of padayani. The last part of kali dahrika myth i.e., the dance of bhoothagana of Shiva is enacted through padayani ritual performance. Magical practices and primitive characters are the core of bhootha performance. Though the theyyam ritual is predominantly structured, once it migrates to south Kerala, this feature becomes more lucid.

Sanjeevan Azhikode’s book *Theyyathile Jathivazhakam* explains the relationship of theyyam performance and caste system in North Kerala. Before the political unification of Kerala as a state, the folklore of Kerala created a cultural unity among the Kerala people. The migration of myth with its performance can be seen in the folk song and rituals of South Kerala.

The above studies follow the methodology of top to bottom transmission of cultural form of Kerala. Where as, the concept of Bhadrakali could reach from South to North Kerala. N.M Namboothiri’s book *Malabar Padanangal Zamothirinadu* argues that, after the attack of Pandyan, the Ay kingdom of Pothiyilmali scattered and they reached the southern part of Kerala, i.e., Venad. One of the group of Ayans, known as Nanjilvalluvvar migrated to central Kerala and established their supremacy. They also installed the goddess of Srivilli Puthoor in Angadippuram. Along with them, the myth of Kali could reach in Kerala. This studies confirms the migration of Kali myth from Southern part to Northern part of Kerala.

Apart from the above studies, there are very few studies done on the Bharathappuzha. Alankode Leelakrishnan’s book *Nilayude Theerangaliloode* deals the concept of river as a metaphor for the poets those who lived on the banks. His work concentrates more on the importance to the literary aspects of river. Rajan Chungath’s book *Nilayude Magal Sundhary* describes the kingdoms on the banks and the life of Kerala Brahmins on the banks. V.V.K.Vaalath’s book *Keralathile*

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Sthalacharithrangal-Palakkad Jilla analyzes place names of Palakkad district and the reason behind the origin of local place names both naturally and culturally. The study of Kerala Council for Historical Studies titled Vaniyamkulam Panchayath Vijnaaniyam explains the local history of this Panchayath. They had conducted the gatherings of elderly people in the Panchayaths and tried to understand the local history from the memory of people.

All the above literature gives different conceptual understanding about human, nature and culture. This literature survey helped in developing an outline of the river and cultural life associated with it in India. The outline looks at various concepts related to Indian rivers and the fairs and festivals on the river banks in India.

Lacunae in the existing literature:

The literature survey revealed certain gaps in the studies on rivers in general and the life on the banks in particular. Firstly, all the studies mentioned above viewed various aspects of cultural life associated with rivers, origin myths, and sacral behaviour associated with the rivers. No individual river is taken for a comprehensive study. As a result, cultural life associated with a (individual) river is absent in all the studies. In this thesis an attempt is being made to fill this gap by studying a river known as Bharathappuzha and cultural life constructed around it. Secondly, Bharathappuzha River has not been subjected to any serious academic enquiry. The limited works produced on this river were either confined to the literal aspects of river or have been less explanatory about the cultural specificities of the community or locality. Thirdly, inadequate scholarly attention paid to the dynamic nature of folklore among the various communities on the river banks is felt to be an omission in these academic inquiries. Folkloric approach which brings out the perceptions and the worldview of the folk, by the folk and for the folk is thus far not attempted by the studies mentioned above in the literature survey.


**Hypothesis**

After careful analysis of the data and the secondary sources from the preliminary survey it can be hypothesised that the cultural history of Kerala is knitted around the ritual performances of mother goddess, Bhagavathi. The prominent ritual performances are *theyyam* in the northern part, *mudiyyettu* and *padyani* in the southern part and *thira* in the Central part of Kerala. The banks of Bharathapuzha seem to be epicentre (core region) for the ritual of Bhagavathi in Kerala and manifested as different cultural performances imbibing local versions and variations in other parts of the State. The process of dispersal can be found by studying the banks of Bharathapuzha form its origin in Palakkad ghats to the end of the river in Ponnani region where it joins the Arabian Sea. The myth of Bhagavathi in the form of narratives and the enactment of the myth in form of cultural performances coexist and densely concentric on the banks and hence, this hypothesis is arrived at. Perhaps due to this phenomenal prevalence of Bhagavathi worship the Central Kerala especially, the banks of Bharathappuzha acquired the status of ‘Cultural Capital’.

**Aims and Objectives of the Study:**

1. To study the river as a cultural construct of the, by the and for the communities living on the river banks.
2. To study the socio-economic formations on the banks of Bharathappuzha river from a historical perspective.
3. To study the role of river on the life and lore of the people and to probe into the mutual relationship between the people and the river.
4. To study various folklore on the river bank and to understand the worship of Bhagavathi on the banks of the river from a folkloric perspective.
5. To study the changing concept of Bharathappuzha river and the cultural life of the communities in the new socio-economic, cultural and political milieu.

In short, the study will cover various representations of the river through the life of the people, who live on the banks. It also concentrates on the issue of why the communities look at the river in different ways and how they use the river as a part of their life circle ceremonies. From birth to death, the river takes a vital role in their life. A close study about the river system and its people’s life give a new insight into the representation of river in different forms. Moreover, the study tries to explore the
changing pattern of nature in relation to the changing condition of human life in the present context.

Methodology:

As the thesis aims at studying the myth and ritual of Bhagavathi on the banks of Bharathappuzha, a systematic approach has to be developed and hence, in this thesis an intensive ethnography and social reflective research methodology is deployed. Research methods may be understood as all those methods or techniques that are used for conducting a research. It is a scientific enquiry and a systematic process which is adopted to follow. To distinguish from other academic disciplines, in folklore studies, the folk is understood as a group that talk about themselves through their lore. It means that, rather than imposing a theory or philosophical assumption, the folk have to be studied through their lore. In this research, discourse methodology technique is used for the data collection to bring out the folk perspectives.

Basically three methods are employed in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Since the theme is on the river lore, it is imperative to understand the process of construction of the lore and its significant role in the life engagements of the communities living on the banks. For this reason, observation method is primarily employed. This warrants for watching the performances of the folk communities in their performance context living on the banks to understand their practices and the belief system. After observing, another method is employed which may be called as ethnographic method to understand the communities’ images and their conceptual understanding of the river. To achieve this goal using discourse method, unstructured interviews are conducted with the communities with regard to their ritual performances in general and the verbal performances in specific. This method further leads to the analysis of myths, which forms the basis of their images on gods and goddesses. This constitutes most in translating the images of those in the performance. Their attitude towards river and its ritual symbolism is also collected through discussions with the members of the community.

Tripartite method: As such, the flowing path of the river is divided into three parts: the upper, middle, and the lower parts. In the upper part, it flows through
the hilly tract of the Western Ghats and falls into Aliyar dam, constructed at 300 metres above Mean Sea Level in Tamil Nadu. In the middle part, it is travelling with average gradient from the dam to the Moolathara regulatory in Kerala-Tamil Nadu border. From the regulator, it flows in to Kerala with a variable gradient and falls in the Arabian Sea at Ponnani. For the sake of study in this thesis the river Bharathappuzha is observed following the course of the river and it is divided into three parts which is called as the tripartite method; (i) origin part of the river, (ii) middle part of the river and (iii) ending part of the river- based on the flow of the river to understand the relationship between the communities and the river. It is found from the preliminary survey and reading of the secondary sources, the methodology adopted in the earlier studies is a vertical type wherein the ritual performances are studied from North Kerala (South Canara) to South Kerala (Trivandrum) and it is hypothesised that the ritual performances originated in the north with the influences from Tulu land (bhootha worship) and percolated to south in the form of theyyam, thira, mudiyettu and payanadi. However, in this thesis the study of the ritual performances on the banks of Bharathappuzha postulate that the ritual performances originated in the middle part having Bharathappuzha banks as axis and dispersed to other regions of Kerala. This alternate model has developed by changing the very methodology from vertical to linear (or horizontal) and studying the ritual performances by juxtaposing them in order to find out the co-existence of myth and ritual on one hand, and on the other, its relationship with communities. Through this method it is found that the middle part of the river banks have myth and performances in a co-existing manner and thus reinforces the ritual of Bhagavathi. From the middle part which is considered as epicentre due to its intensity and density of the prevalence of the myth and ritual of Bhagavathi one can find the version and variations of the same in the beginning and end part.

Sources of Study:

The data is collected from the primary and the secondary sources.

Primary sources

A thick corpus of data is being collected during the fieldwork since field is the primary site of source for the study. The life and lore of the people and communities in and around the river banks along its course in different regions from
its birth till it reaches the sea get expressed in their verbal and non-verbal expressive genres. The audio-visually recorded genres—myths, legends, tales, ballads, songs, proverbs, riddles, tales, personal narratives of the people from different culture groups, ritual observances, practices, performances, yelling, folk speech etc., - are best primary resources of the study because the text, texture and context of the utterances and performances reflects the dynamics of the worldview and culture of the communities associated with the river through the ages. The material culture associated with folklife and worship patterns with regard to river constituted the primary source material.

The secondary sources constitute all published and unpublished written data viz: manuscripts, Journals, Gazetteers, District Manuals, Censes Reports, and Scholarly articles and books. The literature survey in the above pages delineated the status of knowledge and represent secondary source on the issue under study. Some other secondary sources used in research are given below:

- **Literatures related to Bharathappuzha**- There are many fictions dealing with the natural beauty of this river and the life surrounding on this river. The literary fictions and poetry of the prominent Malayalam writers like V.K.N, Radhakrishnan, Idashery, Aattoor, P.Kunjiraman Nair, M.T Vasudevan Nayar are some of them.

- **Cinemas that were scripted /shot on the river banks**- The nostalgic memory of Kerala people are clearly mentioned through the films that are created on the river banks. Most of the film narrates the life of the communities on the river banks. It means that, they considered the banks as the cultural region of Kerala people. The films *Aaraam Thampuraan, Narasimham, Naghashathangal, Naalukettu, Naatturajavu, Devasuram, Vadakkum Nadhan* etc are few among them.

- **Website related to Bharathappuzha**- There are some websites that disseminate the life and lore on the banks of Bharathappuzha such as [www.nilarivers.com](http://www.nilarivers.com), [www.theblueyonder.com](http://www.theblueyonder.com), [www.nilafoundation.org](http://www.nilafoundation.org) are some of them.

- In addition to it, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA, Trivandrum) conducts various seminars and workshops to spread awareness among the Keralities about the death of Bharathappuzha due to the unnatural activities happening on the river banks like sand mining and the increase in concrete buildings on the river banks. Likewise the NGO’s such as Nilavu, Vayali Folklore Group and The Bharathappuzha Protection Committee has also worked for the conservation of the different cultures on the river banks.
through travelling on the banks, documentation of community life and making awareness among the public through different media.

**Brief Chapterisation:**

The thesis is divided into **seven** Chapters.

**Chapter I: Introduction** deals with a general introduction to river and lore in India. Apart from the basic concepts, significance of the study, nature and scope of the study, area of the study, review of literature, gaps found in the existing literature, hypothesis, aims and objectives of the study, methodology, sources of study and chapterisation are also enumerated in this Chapter.

**Chapter II: River and Cultural Life - A Conceptual Frame** is divided into two sections; the first section discusses the general notion of river in different parts of the world and India in particular. The expressive behaviour associated with water and river has also been subjected to discussion. The second section, discusses the origin myth of Indian rivers and how river is represented in these myths. There are two qualities of water that accentuate its central place in cultures and faiths. Firstly, water is a primary element of life. Without water there is no life; yet water has the power to destroy as well as to create. In all most all creation myths one can find that life is created out of water. Secondly, water is depicted as purifying object in rituals. It means that water washes away impurities and pollutants and makes an object look as good as new. The communities on riverbanks attribute these two meanings to river through various cultural expressions both verbal and non-verbal. Through analysis of myths connected with river one can understand the role of river in people’s culture.

**Chapter III: Natural and Cultural Landscape of Bharathappuzha** introduces the general notion of river in India and explains the geographical and topographical features of the banks of Bharathappuzha. At one level, this chapter discusses the natural settings on the river banks and at another level, it attempts to illustrate how the above natural settings create a cultural landscape on the banks of Bharathappuzha. In the cultural landscape human intervention with nature is done to through the mediation of folklore such as myth, epic, legend, proverbs, songs etc., and transform the natural products into cultural products. On one hand it has enhanced the usage of water resources and on the other, abused the same affecting
the natural landscape. As a result the river Bharathappuzha is at the verge of decline. Nevertheless, the communities engaged in various forms using the water attributing sacrality especially with the construction activities of shrines and temples and thereby conducting rituals and ceremonies on timely intervals.

Chapter IV: Folk Communities on the Banks of Bharathappuzha examines different folk communities living on the banks and how they engaged with the river in their day-to-day life. On the whole, the migrations into the land of Kerala contributed to the development of history of the region. An overview of the time frame of the migrations of different religious and racial groups shows that all races and communal groups inhabited this region. The history of Kerala is the history of migrations which led to composite and complex social formation. However, the settlement pattern reveals that the tribals and indigenous communities which are the inhabitants of the banks and hilly terrains of Bharathappuzha replaced or subdued by the process of ‘Aryanisation’ wherein the ‘jatis’ (occupational ranking i.e. castes) of upper ‘varna’ (ritual ranking) encouraged to immigrate into the Kerala soils and expand the settled agrarian economy. The ‘Parasurama myth’ and the ‘Vararuchi myth’ as explained above attest to this fact. The Bharathappuzha banks are much used for acculturation of native communities into the ‘Hindu fold’ by attributing mythical origin and relationship between the ‘Aryan Varna system and the native jati matrix’. As a result the social hierarchy emerged on one hand, negating the ‘Aryan varna system’ and on the other, incorporating it with the native hierarchical system.

Chapter V: Bhagavathi: Myth and Worship discusses the myth and worship of Bhagavathi. The myth of Kali seems to have migrated from the Northern and Southern parts of India into the land of Kerala and formed as Bhadrakali myth/Dharikavadham and worshipped as Bhagavathi in sacred groves. In the process of incorporation of the myth several ethnic categories in the form of legends are deployed in ‘oico-typification’ of the entire worship Bhagavathi. The native cultural landscape has even affected the ‘mythification’ process of Bhadrakali. As a result, it is not only the incorporation of narratives but also the communities were brought under one umbrella through the worship of Bhagavathi. Ritual spaces are created to engage each and every community in the worship of Bhagavathi.
Chapter VI: Ritual Performances on the Banks - Towards Identity Formation elaborates the ritual practices on the banks of Bharathappuzha. It also examines the *vela, pooram* and *thalapoli* from the origin, middle and ending part of the banks respectively as case studies and looks how each community identifies themselves from the other communities in connection with the sacred space and ritual practices. The ritual performances of Bhagavathi on the banks of Bharathappuzha reveal that there is a pattern that emerges in the worship of Bhagavathi. Following the course of the Bharathappuza if one study the performances of Bhagavathi in the *kavus* in a linear/horizontal manner, a complete story of Bhadrakali emerge having the beginning and progressing then culminating with an end thus making it as a comprehensive story. Only when the performances of the three parts of Bharathappuzha are studied together, the story as narrated in the myth of Bhadrakali can be understood in a meaningful sequence. In the beginning part as stated already, the concept of Bhadarakali is in the formative stage and variedly depicted in the myths of *kannyarkali* and *pavakoothu*. Neither of them is directly connected with Bhadarakali. In the middle part the myth of Bhadrakali is proportionately connected with the enactment. In the ritual performances of the middle part, visual enactment in the form of floral drawings and in the performative enactment as play is crystallized and even supported by the narrative in the form of *thottam*. Both narrative (myth) and enactment (ritual) reinforced the concept of Bhadrakali as a goddess. In the end part, the ritual *thalapoli* is performed to seek the blessings of the deity. Thus the story of Bhadrakali is represented in its totality as the story of Bhagavathi.

Chapter VII-Conclusion gives a brief summary of all the chapters along with findings and suggestions. The major finding is that the Bharathappuzha played a central role in the culture of Kerala especially, the rituals and enactments connected with Bhagavathi. Kerala is known for art and culture associated with performing traditions and even some of them are used as national identity. The performing arts such as *theyyam, thira, mudiyettu* and *padayani* having colourful costume and make up influenced the classical genres such as *kathakali, krishnattam, koodiyattam* etc. the basis for such eruption of performing art tradition in Kerala, as found in the thesis, can be attributed to the epicentre which is on the banks of Bharathappuzha.