Chapter- VII

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on how different communities spread in different regions on the banks of Bharathappuzha in relation to the celebration of their respective belief system and allied congregational annual festivals. The river in the thesis is interpreted not only as a natural landscape that served sustenance of people and shaped their life style patterns but also as a cultural landscape that has been modeled (scaped) by communities associated with it to suit to their socio-economic, politico-cultural and religious needs. The symbiotic relationships existing between nature and culture connected with river system is explained by depicting the Bharathappuzha river as a cultural construct of the people whose lore and life are well converged. In the process, each community articulate itself as being a part of the larger community and express overtly through the actions, objects, performances, ideologies etc., their own identity as well as live in solidarity with the other communities. Among the rivers in Kerala, Bharathappuzha is the biggest river 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 three districts have many villages on the riverbanks and different communities live on these banks.

The study on Bharathappuzha is significant for two reasons: Firstly, The river divides the state flows through the central part and thereby divides into Northern and Southern regions. Incidentally, this part of Kerala is known as Cultural Capital. 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. Secondly, the river Bharathappuzha is dying due to various natural and human interventions. 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 in the worldview and consciousness of various communities sustaining on its banks. The river is being regarded as a commodity for some communities. The process and
purpose of ritual festivals performed by people on the river banks are in the dimension of rigorous change.

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 to four types. The first type of literature gives an understanding on the issues related to ‘nature/culture’ dichotomy and how humans have negotiated it through the ages by incorporating ‘nature’ 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’ with regard to water resources which are the basic elements of sustenance. The fourth type of literature is to construct a folkloric approach to understand rivers and their lore.

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, in the academic researches, the dynamics of folklore/ oral traditions of the communities connected with the river in different regions through out its course of flow were not considered as a serious matter of study and are being neglected as an authentic source of study. Such abeyance towards folklore blindfolded the people’s perspective, an important factor in hermeneutic studies. Thus Folkloric approach which brings out the
perceptions and the worldview of the folk, by the folk and for the folk that had been overlooked in the previous researches is well pursued in the present study.

To carry out this task, three fold methods are followed; the observation method is primarily employed. This warrants for watching the performances of the folk communities in their performative context living on the banks to understand their practices and the belief system and later an intensive ethnography and discourse methodology techniques are used for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data to bring out the folk perspectives.

In the thesis, the life and lore of the communities living on the bank of river Bharathappuzha is studied in three zones of its course, (i) origin (ii) middle and (iii) ending part of the river, to understand the symbiotic relationship existing between the river and the people associated with it. 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 padayani. The study postulates that the ritual performances connected with the river and the temple goddess Bhagavathi got originated on the banks of the middle part of the river Bharathappuzha. Thus the mid region emerged as an axis for dissemination of ritual performances. 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.

As such river and water resource are culturally constructed by all cultures in order to consume them as cultural product. There are two qualities of water that accentuate its central place in cultures and faiths. Firstly, water is a primary element of life. Water is depicted both as a savior and a destroyer. Hence in all most all creation myths flood and water are referred. Life is said to have been emerged from waters. Secondly, water is the purifier that cleanses pollution. The communities on riverbanks
attribute these two meanings to river through their various cultural expressions both verbal and non-verbal. The communities living on banks of the rivers are connected to it directly or indirectly thus, the river becomes integral to the belief system of the people associated with it. This could be the reason for the existence of plenty of folklore about any river. The cultural construction of river has revealed the existence of various beliefs, rituals etc. Water has a significant role in Hinduism because of its life sustaining properties and its use in various rituals. Purification is an internal to Hinduism. It is believed that, a devotee can purify sin by taking a sacred bath in a river. Since ritual bath is mandatory to visit the temples the ancient temples were constructed on the banks of the rivers or in the vicinity of the waters. Many temples and pilgrim centre are situated on the banks of rivers. The running water of rivers is used for purification. Thus river and religious visits were made complementary. The Hindu ritual tradition makes it clear that purification must not be conducted in stagnated water, but it should be done in flowing water. The ritual power of running water can be seen in various cultures.

There exist religious beliefs around the world in the mythologies such as Greek, Egyptian, Chinese etc., water is associated with sexuality. The Greek notion is that the heavens send rain, like seed, to the earth in an enormous outburst. In certain cultures, river attains either male or female qualities. In Greece, Rivers are strongly masculine. In the Egyptian mythology, the river Hep or Hapi, the god of Nile River, is always depicted in the form of a man, but his breasts are those of a woman. They are indicative of the powers of fertility and of nourishment possessed by the god. In the Chinese mythology, a man named He Bo tied heavy rocks to his back and jumped into the water as a supreme sacrifice to stop the flood of the Yellow river. Plunging into the river, he thus gained immortality. For his pains he was granted immortality and promoted to the status of the god of the Yellow River. He spotted with a red moustache, dressed in white robes and wears a black crown. He rode a white horse and had twelve boy attendants. He Bo, the god of the Yellow river is the combination of ‘He’ literally means river and Bo means master or god. Thus, around the world, the cultures transformed the natural object, the river to cultural object and revered as god/goddess.

There are many myths about the origin of rivers even in India. These narratives give an overview of the sacredness of the rivers and their association to ritual
enactment. The origin myths of major Indian rivers such as Ganga, Brahmaputra, Indus, Godavari etc., with versions and variations are given in the thesis to understand the significance of cultural construction rivers. From the description of myths in brief one can find that some of the rivers in India are born out of body parts of the divine beings. Likewise, Ganges is formed out of the plaited hair of Siva according to one version whereas the other version states that the Ganges is created out of the feet of Vishnu. The river Narmada is born out of the sweat of Siva-Parvathi as per one version and as per another it is created out of Siva’s genital organ. The river Godavari is believed to have been formed out of Siva’s head. In the analysis of the myths, it is also found that some of the rivers in India are formed owing to the verbal expressions of the gods/goddesses. In the popular belief it is considered that the divine beings are bestowed with powerful tongues whose curse or blessings results in the creation of the rivers in India. In the case of Sarasvati, the co-wife of Hari, Ganga cursed Sarasvati to be born as river on earth leaving Kailasa, the abode of Hari (Siva). The lord Brahma blessed his son to grow as Brahmaputra. The river Krishna is born as the result of the curse of Savitri, the wife of Brahma. The origin of river Kaveri is attributed to the blessings of the lord Brahma who happens to be her father.

The river is personified around the world as god/goddess. Each culture has depicted the river in iconic form or in figural form of human or super human being. The depictions are quite interesting to observe as in most cases the river is endowed with royalty, virginity, or motherhood. For example the river Sindh (Indus) is depicted as a royal person with crown. Like wise the goddess Ganges is also attributed with a crown, whereas the goddess Kaveri is depicted as a virgin (young bride). Generally, in India, rivers are considered to be feminine (river names are attributed to daughters). The names of rivers are almost all grammatically feminine (except Indus, Brahmaputra, and Bhrathappuzha) and they are used freely as the names of girls and women.

From the mythologies of the Indian rivers, some of the rivers are born as old, whereas some others are born as young or infant stage of human life. It is interesting to note from the above table that Ganga and Godavari are shown as grown-up ladies having the status of mother due to their perennial and lengthy flows of water cutting across different states. In the case of Brahmaputra, though is perennial and long, it is
depicted as a child and masculine. When it is feminine they are shown as mothers whereas when it is masculine it is shown as child. This dichotomy is interesting to note in the world-view connected with the gender perception in India.

The banks of rivers are loci for almsgiving, ancestor rites, sacrifices and pilgrimage. It could be that the sacrifice, almsgiving and *sradha* are acts of feeding. Through sacrifice one feeds the gods, as in *sradha* in which one feeds one’s ancestors and as in almsgiving in which one feeds ascetics, Brahmans or other worthy humans. Because rivers are important sources of food, they are appropriate sites for conducting such rites of feeding. The sacrifices observed on riverbanks bless the devotees with long life, good health, victory, sons, wealth, and realize their legitimate desires.

The custom of pilgrimage is widely prevalent among Indians. In Indian tradition, *tirtha* is sacred. There are hierarchies among the *tirthas* and many *tirthas* is often related to god Siva. Bathing ghats in *tirtha* (river) is known as upa-thirtha. Bathing at sacred places is not simply an act of physical purification; it is an act of symbolic purification of the soul. This could be seen in case of Ganga river. Ganga river is physically polluted even though the devotees are bathing without considering the physical condition of the river. It also means that hygiene and ritual purification by bathing are two entirely different concepts.

In the natural phenomenon of river course in South India in general one can find river in three forms based on seasons. During the monsoon the river flows with full vigour wherefore appears with life. Antithetical to this phenomenon, during the summer seasons, the river almost dries-up denoting the death of the river. In between these two seasons, river is also found in stagnant stage wherein the water never flows but remains in small pockets of low lying beds of the river indicating the state of ‘onto’ which means being or in existence. In the ‘Rivus Triangle’ it is shown that the natural phenomenon of river depends on the presence or absence of water in the river. Flowing with water represents life and without water represents dry/death. In between, the river is also found in stagnant form (Onto form). From stagnant form river can come to life with flow of water or evaporation of water can cause dry/death of the river. Therefore, flow and dry are oppositional and this symbolically equational to life and death as binary. In the natural phenomenon of the river, the first stage is two opposite’s i.e. flow
and dry without any mediation which is the core of the structural feature of the river. The next process is that this binary is replaced by a triad of two opposite poles i.e. flow and dry and mediation as stagnate. In the next stage one pole and the mediation are replaced by another triad i.e. life and death which comprises two opposites and its mediation is ‘onto’ (or being or in existence). Thus, there are very many mediators; mediators of the first order second order and so on. The river can be found in three different forms or in combination of these three forms. Through the analysis one can go from the different order of triads into the deep structure where the core of the binary system that regulates the whole human knowledge system can be found. The same binary structural feature is reinforced even in the cultural phenomenon of the river. The ‘Rivus Triangle’ exemplifies this phenomenon. The cultural phenomenon of the river reveals human attitude towards rivers in India. The belief related to rivers show that the rivers are revered as they have ability to deliver the soul from sin and rebirth. This idea pervaded in almost all religions in India and people therefore use river or river waters for purification. Dipping in the water would attain purification which eventually would lead to moksha and binary to this act would result in pollution causing rebirth. Pollution can be caused by drowning one own self in the river (suicide/accidental death) thereby the belief is that the soul gets polluted and wander as demon (evil spirit). If the cultural phenomenon of ‘rivus triangle structure’ is superimposed over the natural phenomenon of ‘rivus triangle structure’ the following emerges.

At the ideational level both ‘nature and culture’ structures are congruous and infact not antithetical as viewed by Claude Levi-Strauss but reinforces the idea of binary structure prevalent in nature as well as in culture. The human mind understands nature through sensory organs by conceptually placing the phenomenon in binary oppositions and mediations. This forms the basis of human knowledge. What is true of human understanding is true of human creation i.e. culture. As the binary opposition and its mediation to understand nature is the basis of knowledge, all human creations also follow the same paradigm to construct culture. Binary opposition and mediation get different transformations and manifestations in culture resulting in complexity of culture. To get a clear understanding of culture one has to go deep into the process of finding out the basic binary opposition and its mediation. In both the triangles water
becomes an essential feature for demarcation. This signifies the role of water in not only in the physical realm but also in the cultural sphere. That is why it is found in different genres of the lore of the folk such as mythologies, tales, proverbs, beliefs, rituals and practices etc., as discussed in this chapter. Thus, the study on rivers as cultural phenomenon is as important as the study on the physical phenomenon for, it’s sustains not only the life on earth but also the life that is emergent.

A close study about the river system and its people’s life on the banks of Bharathappuzha give a new insight into the natural landscape and the cultural landscape of the river, Bharathappuzha. The natural landscape is a place under the current control of natural forces and free of the control of people for an extended period of time. As implied, a natural landscape may contain either the living or nonliving or both. A cultural landscape is a physical representation of how humans have related to, and transformed their environment; it highlights the significance in built form, natural features, and the interaction between the two. The main natural resources attributed to a region are landforms, soil, climate, vegetation, water etc., and they act as pivotal element in molding the culture of the people.

Kerala is situated on the southern part of Indian peninsula and is divided into three major natural divisions- highland, midland, low land. The land is rich in terms of availability of water and there are forty-four rivers flowing through the state, of which forty-one flows towards the West and the remaining three towards the east. It is interesting to note that 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). Even though it is very small, it never denotes the English word river which is a large natural stream of water flowing into the sea.

Bharathappuzha River is also known as Nila (long/blue), Perarua (peru+aaru) and Ponnanippuzha (Ponnani+puzha). It is considered that, Bharathappuzha is originated from a small lake of Anamalai hills in Western Ghat. Each region attribute local name to the river that flows in their region. In India, most of the rivers are
considered as goddesses. But it is interesting to note that Bharathappuzha is not
recognised as god or goddesses for the worldview of the folk of Kerala perceived it as a
stream rather than as a river. This is because of the very geographical local of the State
of Kerala. It is situated in a strip of territory between Western Ghats and the Arabian
Sea, infested with thick vegetation obstructing the eyes from clear and long view of the
water flows at any given point of space. In the neighbouring States the river flows are
visible clearly for very long distances unlike in the State of Kerala. Perhaps due this
very physical feature, the folk of Kerala considered the river as puzha or aar denoting
stream.

The river culture of a particular area will be affected if there is any change in the
availability of water on the riverbanks. There are no hills in the eastern part of the
Bharathappuzha valley, and this is one of the distinguishing features of the
Bharathappuzha river in Kerala flowing to the western area. In summer, it is very hot in
Palakkad and the extreme eastern part of the Bharathappuzha (the plains of Coimbatore
and Pollachi of Tamil Nadu). Edavapathi (south west monsoon) wind blows through
these slopes throughout six months in a year (from May to October) and the remaining
months have dried in eastern wind. As a result, a good amount of water loss occurs with
evaporation. Moreover, the earth heats the geographical features of this land and the
atmosphere heat is very high. The compression due to funnelling effect of this area and
the receiving capacity of heat in the black soil in Chittoor cause high temperature. The
increasing amount of paddy fields leads to the destruction of the density of the forest.
The peculiar nature of this land gives a special pattern of river discharge. The river
basin has a wide area of natural forests in two areas. They are the reserved forest on
hilly tract of mountain belt in the side extremities of the river basin and the local forests
of private parties in central part (plain land of river basin) of the basin area. The lower
land and some area of the middle land are situated in Malappuram district which is on
the coast of Arabian Sea. The river Bharathappuzha flows along the length of the
‘Palakkad gap’ and the wind which blows from the Bay of Bengal passes through this
gap. The intensity of wind on the river basin is a peculiarity of the Bharathappuzha that
causes more evaporation from the water surface of river and the land evaporation.
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. In the process the non-verbal genres such as beliefs and practices exist to appropriate nature for social solidarity, economic organisation and politico-religious ideology. Generally folklore about water and its sources can be classified as verbal and non-verbal. Thus, the legends, myths, proverbs, songs, tales, beliefs and rituals knitted around water sources, rivers streams, as part of cultural landscaping on one hand 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.

Natural landscapes have been undergoing various transformations over the ages. The spatial and temporal changes in land cover and land use will be helpful to understand the environmental status of a region. Decay of rivers is a crucial concern discussed in different parts of the world and it is one among the major challenges that humans are facing. There are various reasons behind the decay of a river. Two issues arise out of this, namely; the environmental problems/reasons that lead to the damage of Bharathappuzha river system and what would happen to the culture on the banks of this river, if the river is dying. Human intervention and adaptation to natural environments inevitably led to cultural landscape. In order to exploit the natural resources like rivers and streams for their sustenance the folk communities habituated on the banks and made huge settlements. The constant interaction and activities of the communities with the water resources caused disruption to the course of the river. 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. To understand the ritual activities and the worldview behind these activities it is imperative to know about the communities living on the banks of Bharathappuzha.

To understand the emergence of different communities on the banks of Bharathappuzha one has to look for the historicity on the life on the banks of the river. During historical times, several political powers facilitated the settlements of different caste groups and communities for their sustenance. As a result, several social groups
with different occupations were encouraged by the rulers to settle on the banks for the expansion of agriculture, trade, commerce and industry for augmenting the resources. For this reason a brief account of history is traced from the first century A.D of Chera kingdom referred to in Sangam literature to the Advent of the Europeans and the supremacy of the British rule in Kerala. The banks of the river Barathappuzha is one of the places of early inhabitants of Kerala. 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.

No formidable political processes which can create history were present prior to the Brahmin implantation. For this reason the oral tradition of Kerala created a myth on the Brahmin implantation which is quite popular even to this day. The myth is known as Parasurama myth in the Origin part of Bharathapuzha. The Parayipetta Panthiru kulam, literally meaning the ‘twelve castes born from Paraya woman’, is an important legend which highlights the evolution of the social structure on the middle banks of Bharathappuzha. The legend is centered on the village of Shoranur, Pattambi and Thrithala areas i.e., middle part of Bharathappuzha. According to this story, a Brahmin named Vararuchi married a lower caste woman without knowing her true identity and begot eleven communities which reside mostly in the middle part of Bhatatapulazha. Muslims in Kerala are densely populated in the Malabar area and are known as Mappilas. The Mappilas are found all over the banks of Bharathappuzha and they are densely populated in the ending part of Bharathappuzha, i.e Ponnani and Tirur. The non-Hindu migrants in Kerala are generally known as Mappila. Kerala Muslims are recognized as ‘Jonaka Mappila’, Kerala Christians are called ‘Nasrani Mappila’, and Kerala Jews are termed as ‘Juta Mappila’. The word mappila is a compound word maha (great) + pillai (child or son-in law) which denote honored status. As time progressed the ethnic composition of Kerala Jewish and Christian communities diversified and ‘Mappila’ came to be used only to refer to the Muslims. It is evident that the banks of Bharathappuzha being fertile attracted all communities even from historical times to the present. 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 communities of Kerala attribute different characteristics and conceptualize the presiding deity of the temple at Bharathappuzha as Bhdrakali. The Bhdrakali is one of the forms of supreme deity mentioned in the Devi Mahatmyam. The myth of Kali as narrated in the Devibhagavatham, the divine power of Kali is created by a combined effort of the gods. With all the gifts of gods, the female Shakti in the form of Kali makes a fierce battle with the demon Mahisasura and kills him thereby restores peace for which act she is venerated and worshiped in bhooloka.

The Kali concept in Kerala is the expansion of the puranic one, and is attached to the local environment of the land. The general Kali myth narrated in the Devi Mahatmyam forms the last part of Sristikhanda of Markandeya Purana. In Kerala, the Kali myth is explained in a narrative form and each community has their own version of this myth. Kali is the main Goddess concept inherent among the Kerala people. There may not have been any kavu or village without Kali. Most of the goddess idols are constructed in wood or kadasarkara. She carries a trident, head of Dharika, sword, vattala and vethalam is her vehicle. She has three eyes, four or eight hands. The appearance of Kali in Kerala is in sitting position. Kali originates from vision, which means eyes. People believe that there is a presence of Kali in the kavu and each house lights lamp in the kavu of their house. This light is bhadra deepam (bhadra means Bhagavathi Kali). The Bhagavathi/Kali visits the houses of her children in the annual ritual performances of the kavu and it is believed that Kali visits the houses of the people. In north India, Durga killed Mahisasura where as in Kerala Dharika (Dharuka) is killed by Kali. Dharika is a typical character in the Kali myth of Kerala and the subject of most of the Kerala ritual such as theyyam, thira, mudiyettu, padayani etc enacts the fight between Kali and Dharika. Bhdrakali is a popular form of Bhagavathi worship in Kerala.
The origin myth of Bhadrakali, is published in Malayalam and Sanskrit as *Bhadrakali Mahatmyam, Bhadrolpatti* and *Dharikavadham/Dharukavadham* (Death of Dharuka/Dharika). The myth is also alive and narrates well in oral tradition. The entire myth of Dharikavadham of Kerala does not appear in any of the Purana but appears to have its origin in oral tradition such as *thottampattu* (ritual song) in various versions.

Bhadrakali worship on the banks of Bharathappuzha is carried out on specific sacral spaces known as *kavus*. In the case of Kerala, there are no authentic survey accounts available about the number of sacred groves. In the local survey, the banks of Bharathappuzha was said to have nine hundred and seventy sacred groves. These sacred groves are the key to understand the cultural treasures of a region. The settlement pattern of the communities on the riverbanks and the intercommunity relations are based on the sacred grove. The Malayalam word *kavu* means a garden/the multitude of trees/consortium of trees and *kavu* is the sacred place where the Goddess resides. No structures were erected around the stone which is erected under the shade of a tree and it is considered as the image of goddess. Generally a platform is constructed around the goddess. Most of the *kavus* face to the north. The *kavus* place an important role in the socioeconomic life of the villagers. These provide a place for village gatherings during the festive occasion. The *thattakam* (jurisdiction) is a territory under a Goddess and each community of the *thattakam* is supposed to contribute money and paddy to the *kavu* during the festival period. The myth of Kali though prevalent as pan Indian phenomenon, when it is coming to the soils of Kerala it acquires a distinct and variant occurrence in the form of legend. In the *kavu* associated with the God/Goddess/ancestors in North Kerala, a ritual dance is performed known as *theyyam*, in central Kerala the performance is *velalpooram/thalapoly* and in South Kerala, the ritual is known as *mudiyyettu* and *padayani*.

Most of the *kavus* in the origin part of the river Bharathappuzha are under the control of the Nayars. They are the patron *ooraaalar* (hereditary trustees) and the *kavus* are the basic element of Nayar domination. There are some *kavus* where the priests are Nayars They conduct forty-one days Nambuthiri *puja* in a year. In the Palakkad area mostly Nayars act as priests to the *kavus*. Later they have appointed Nambuthiri priests in the *kavu* and make decision on the matters of the *kavu*. The Nayars were the
landlords of the village and the base of all their activities was Bhagavathi. They conduct weekly rituals on Tuesday and Friday and offer payasam and k(g)uruthi to Bhagavathi. In middle part, kavu is the place where the village deity resides who is trusted to be protecting the village and its property from natural calamities and diseases. The villagers would regularly conduct annual ritual performances in the kavu. No one can change the rituals in the kavu because most of the kavus are under the control of kavu committee which include the members of different communities reside around the kavu. The kavus on the end part of Bharathappuzha are under the control of individual family. They consider the Bhagavathi as their familial deity. The members of the family are the executive committee members of the shrine and they have the right to decide all matters related to the shrine. As part of fieldwork, legends on Bhagavathi are collected from the three parts of the banks of Bharathappuzha starting from Palakkad area (origin part) to Ponnani area (end part). The total number of legends collected from the three parts is fifty. The dispersal of these legends is not uniform but in fact increases in the first and second part and decreases in the end part

The ritual performances on the banks of Bharathappuzha are attached to the annual ritual performance of the shrine and each community around the shrine has their own ritual enactment to perform in front of the shrine. The annual festival on the banks of Bharathappuzha is a congregation of many communities. The performances known under different names such as thalapoli, pooram and vela are ritual expressions of different communities on the banks of Bharathappuzha structured to articulate certain meanings. It is conducted after the harvest and for the protection of the community and region. The ritual performances are performed all over the banks of Bharathappuzha. The structure and performing communities vary from place to place. It is elaborated in a series of ideologies, sects, forms and meanings. This makes the major difference between the annual festivals in the other parts of Kerala comparing to Bharathappuzha. The ritual performances of Kerala such as theyyam, thira, padayani performed in the shrine of Bhagavathi as an offering during the annual festival of the shrine. The annual ritual performances except thalapoli, pooram and vela are ritual enactments by an individual community in a shrine and all other communities in and around the shrine do not perform any ritual enactment in the annual festival of the Bhagavathi shrine. These
performances are oriented to individual communities and it has been performing since
time immemorial. Each community on the banks has their own identity and that is being
expressed by participating through their ritual performance in the annual festival of the
shrine.

As stated already the first part have the ritual performances known as *vela*, the
second part have *pooram* and the third part have *thalapoli*. The number of performances
from the first part to second part increases and at the third part it decreases. The trend of
*vela*, *pooram* and *thalapoli* seem to be of caste, community and family respectively.
The *vela* is dominated and represented by certain castes such as Nayar, Pannan and
Paraya. In the middle part the *pooram* is incorporating several castes and appeared as a
communal ritual spread over a wide geographical local. At the end part, the *thalapoli* is
more confined to familial level than communal level. In a way, this is in accordadance
with the flow of the river, i.e., Bharathappuzha. In the beginning part the river is in the
formation stage wherein several tributaries flow into Bharathappuzha. Therefore, *velas*
are predominantly connected with agrarian communities such as Nayars, Paraya etc. in
the middle part the river is formed as a distinct feature and known as Bharathappuzha/Nila. The banks are clearly marked in the middle part of the river and
inhabited by several communities and thereby, *pooram* becomes a congregational ritual
having participation of wide spread social groups. At the end part, the river joins the
Arabian Sea and thereby loses a clear demarcation of the banks. This feature is reflected
in the *thalapoli* wherein the families engage in the worship of Bhagavathahi through
ritual offering.

In all the rituals of the three parts of Bharathappuzha, one can find sacrifice
(*guruthi*) as an integral element of the ritual performance. However, the sacrifices to
Bhagavathi are interpreted in three different ways by the folk of the particular region. In
the beginning part, sacrifice is given for the protection of the region; in the middle part,
it is for pacifying the deity; and in the end par it is to seek blessings.

The plot structure of Kali story as narrated in the myth is of pentapartite i.e.,
five parts: (1) Interdiction or Exposition (2) Progression or Rise (3) Climax (4) Return
or Fall and (5) Catastrophe. This structure shows unilinear progression of the story of
Bhadракali. The story has a clear beginning, wherein she is created to kill Dharika and
to restore peace. Accordingly, she accomplishes the task and thereby becomes the deity. The five partite plot mentioned above represent the worldview of the folk who venerate and worship Bhadrakali. 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.

Findings:

- In the analysis of the myths, it is found that some of the rivers in India are born out of body parts of the divine beings and some others are formed owing to the verbal expressions of the gods/goddesses.

- From the mythologies of the Indian rivers it is found that some of the rivers are born as old, whereas some others are born as young or infant stage of human life. Ganga and Godavari are shown as grown-up women having the status of mother but in the case of Brahmaputra it is depicted as a child and masculine. When it is feminine they are shown as mothers whereas when it is masculine it is shown as child.

- From the Study it is found that water-associated with pilgrim sites are 84 (59%) and out of which 60 (42%) pilgrim sites are located on the banks of the river which means that flowing water is more important in Hinduism, especially for ritual bathing.

- Based on the study on the river it is found that in the ‘Rivus Triangle’ of both ‘nature and culture’ structures are congruous and in fact not antithetical as viewed by Claude Levi-Strauss but reinforces the idea of binary structure prevalent in nature as well as in culture. This forms the basis of human knowledge. As the binary opposition and its mediation to understand nature is the basis of knowledge, all human creations also follow the same paradigm to construct culture.
In India, most of the rivers are considered as goddesses. But it is interesting to note that Bharathappuzha is not recognized as god or goddesses for the worldview of the folk of Kerala perceived it as a stream rather than as a river.

The appellative derivation of Bharathappuzha and the tributaries comes from the very worldview of the folk. The naming of the river is almost akin to the physical appearance. Both in the case of Bharathappuzha and its tributaries the naming system of the folk is directly derived from the physical appearance of the water/river in a given geographical local therefore different names are found for the same river/tributary. This suggest that the worldview of the Kerala folk is related directly to their physical realm i.e., the natural surroundings and later to the metaphysical realm i.e., supernatural. Ritual and mythology in Kerala are prominently found as explanations for the unknown phenomena that are seen in the world of known.

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.

There are three kinds of settlements in the Bharathappuzha banks. The first one is that of the earliest inhabitants of the land from the hilly forest on the banks of Bharathappuzha such as velar, Kuravar, Ayavar who migrated from the deep forest and settled on the riverbanks. The second one is the Brahmins batch who reached Kerala in BC 3rd century, following the Buddhists and Jains (Jains and Budhists reached the banks through Karnataka and Sravanbalgola). The Brahmin settlements grossly contributed to the history of Kerala. The third one is in the beginning of Aryan invasion of north India wherein the Dravidians joined their kinsman such as the Nayars, Vellalars, Kammalars, and Ezhavas etc.

It is evident that the banks of Bharathappuzha being fertile attracted all communities even from historical times to the present. However, the settlement
pattern reveals that the tribals and indigenous communities who 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 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. This paradox is quite visible in the ethno centric overtones of the lower strata of the society and often reflected as anti-barhminical attitude especially, against Nambuthiri-Nayar alliance.

As the major land owning and ritual management communities which exercise control over the land and people are from immigrated castes, their mythologies and ritual practices connected with sacred complexes also show the migratory nature wherein ritual and belief is constructed with the ideologies of non-native communities. For instance, the myth and ritual of Bhagavathi on the banks of Bharathappuzha is borrowed from the northern India (Kali version) and Tamil Nadu (Kannaki version).

The banks of the sacred rivers are considered as the abode of gods and goddesses and pilgrimage developed accordingly. In the shrines on the banks of Bharathappuzha, contrary to the belief of attaining moksha, i.e., for the benefit of the other world, rituals and worship is performed for the merit of this world and to bring prosperity to the life that is in existence. Instead of practicing ritual for liberation and other worldly merits, various communities on the banks of Bharathappuzha seek blessings of Bhagavathi for the protection and welfare of their life in this world. They need agricultural prosperity, protection of life from
all calamites like diseases, earthquake and so on. This is the main concern in the worship in the kavu (sacred grove).

More number of temples for male deities (71%) is found on the banks of the major rivers in India. Only 29% of temples are dedicated to goddesses. Except Brahmaputra River, all the others are considered as feminine and host temples for male deities. This appears to be a pan-Indian phenomenon. However, in the state of Kerala more temples for goddesses are consecrated than to male deities on the banks of the rivers. For instance, on the banks of Bharathappuzha there exist 223 Bhagavathi shrines from its origin to ending part and 11 shrines are dedicated to male deities. Most of the temples on the banks of other Indian rivers are the seats of gods, whereas, the banks of Bharathappuzha are the land of goddess shrines. The goddess is worshipped as Bhadrakali and Bhagavathi.

The myth of Kali as narrated in the Devibhagavatham, the divine power of Kali is created by a combined effort of the gods. The jewel and armory of the Devi is given by twelve divine powers and each one is bestowed with them by either their own penance or by the supreme deity and how these divine powers acquired by them is narrated in different myths enumerated in Puranas and Bhagavatha stories. The following attire and physical feature of Devi are also due to the combined creation of the gods. With all the gifts of gods, the female Shakti in the form of Kali makes a fierce battle with the demon Mahisasura and kills him thereby restores peace for which act she is venerated and worshiped in bhooloka.

The myth of Kali that appear in the Devibhagavatham is made up of two myths; one, the myth of Mahisasura, the other the myth of Kali. Both the myths are sequentially narrated in a linear fashion and therefore logically constructed as a complete story. The absence of Mahisasura in the form of a son is ‘lack’ and being born conquering the worlds is liquidation of the first part of the myth. The second part is ‘liquidation of liquidation’ wherein the Kali is created to liquidate Mahisasura who himself is the source of ‘liquidation’ of peace.
BhadraKali is a popular form of Bhagavathi worship in Kerala. The origin myth of BhadraKali, is published in Malayalam and Sanskrit as *BhadraKali Mahatmyam*, *Bhadrolpatti* and *Dharikavadham/Dharukavadham* (Death of Dharuka/Dharika). The myth is also alive and narrates well in oral tradition. The entire myth of Dharikavadham of Kerala does not appear in any of the Purana but appears to have its origin in oral tradition such as *thottampattu* (ritual song) in various versions.

In the analysis of the three versions of the myth it is found that the myth is not appearing as a single entity but dispersed into at least three myths; the myth of Dharika; myth of Bhadrakali and Dharikavadham (killing) and Bhadarakalis return to earth and being worshiped as Bhagavathi; and the third myth wherein Bhadrakali with the face of small pox is enacted in the Northern and Southern part of Bharathappuzha (in the form of *theeyam* and *mudiyettu*) respectively.

If one makes a comparative study of Kali myth in *Devibhagavatham* and *Dharikavadham* of Kerala versions, one can find out that the Kerala versions reflect the process of ‘nativisation’ and ‘oico-typification’ of the myth of Kali. In *Devibhagavatham*, the very Kali is created and bestowed with powers by gods. In the Kerala versions Kali is created by Shiva from his third eye and known as Bhadrakali, the daughter of Shiva. All the attire and weaponry of Bhadarakali is also described in the ethnic categories. In Kerala, trickery is used by Bhadrakali to kill Dharika by disguising herself as Brahmin old lady to learn the sacred and secret *manthra* (chant) from the wife of Dharika, Mandodhari. The Dharika’s wife is depicted as pious and noble lady whereas in the northern version there is no mention of wife and her role in the killing episode of Mahisasura. In the third version of the myth, Bhadrakali is picturised as having faced with scarce due to small pox which was quite a common disease in the soils of Kerala. Therefore she is also worshipped for warding of small pox especially in the Northern and Southern parts of Kerala. However, on the banks of Bharathappuzha she is worshipped for prosperity and wellbeing by the folk.
Two significant interpretations can be drawn from the analysis of the myth of *Dharikavadham*: Firstly, Bhadrakali disguising as a Brahmin lady and learning *manthra* from Mandodhari suggests the migration of Brahmins into the Kerala soils (even Parasurama myth attests to this) and killing Dharika with the knowledge (*manthra*) acquired from Mandodhari (insiders) implies the Brahmin superiority over the locals. Secondly, there is a gender perspective in the myth. The society of Kerala formerly is matrarchal and therefore the role of women is kept in a higher pedestal. Bhadrakali is shown in the myth as all powerful and invincible on one hand, and on the other, Mandodhari as the protector of Dharika (through her *manthra*) signifies the role of female in the Kerala society. After the war Bhadrakali is depicted as amorous and to quench her fury, Shiva lies down on the ground and Bhadarakali dances up on his naked body. This also suggests the dominant role of females in Kerala society.

It is evident that more number of *kavus* is dedicated to local goddesses than to gods of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic. One interesting thing to observe is that the male gods and zoomorphic gods prevalent on the banks of Bharathappuzha are sustained due to mythological base whereas the Bhagavathi *kavus* are constructed based on local legends. Within the verbal genres of folklore myth has wider geographical sphere of influence than the legend. This phenomenon attests to the fact that myth has the inbuilt potential to migrate from elsewhere. The legend contrary to this acquires local character and remains as the belief of the locals. This is crucial to understand that the Bhagavathi/Kali legends manifest the local aspirations, idioms and ideologies thereby forming worldview of the locals. For this reason the myth of Kali though prevalent as pan Indian phenomenon, when it is coming to the soils of Kerala it acquires a distinct and variant occurrence in the form of legend.

The *kavu* or the shrine got its name due to the local legends or the local origin myths of goddesses. Most of the *kavus* in the origin part of Bharathappuzha are under the control of the Nayars. They are the patron *ooraal* (hereditary trustees) and the *kavus* are the basic element of Nayar domination. In middle
part, *kavu* is the place where the village deity resides who is trusted to be protecting the village and its property from natural calamities and diseases. The villagers would regularly conduct annual ritual performances in the *kavu*. The *kavus* on the end part of Bharathappuzha are under the control of individual family. They consider the Bhagavathi as their familial deity. The members of the family are the executive committee members of the shrine and they have the right to decide all matters related to the shrine.

- As part of fieldwork, legends on Bhagavathi are collected from the three parts of the banks of Bharathappuzha starting from Palakkad area (origin part) to Ponnani area (end part). The total number of legends collected from the three parts is fifty. The dispersal of these legends is not uniform but in fact increases in the first and second part and decreases in the end part.

- From the legends that are found in the origin part the motif table above is arrived at. Motif is an important element in folklore to understand the ‘type’ and the type is an ethnic category for both motif and type originate due to tradition and remain as constant feature. Therefore in the study of motifs reveal the ways that the folk appropriate the narrative (for example: legend/myth/tale). Based on the above table a typology of motifs can be enumerated.

- In the origin part from the study of motifs one can notice that the Kali myth is migrated to Kerala soils from elsewhere. That is one of the reasons why Kannaki and old lady as Kali is found in the motifs of the Bhagavathi legends. The motifs, dream and human action (penance and consecration) form the foremost in perpetuating the Bhagavathi/Kali *kavus*. These two magic elements are very significant in not only consolidating but also perpetuating any religious belief. The Bhagavathi *kavus* are no exception to this. Both these motifs form 62% which attest to the fact that in the process of appropriation of a myth such as Kali, the dream and penance form an integral part of religious beliefs to construct the ritual of Bhagavathi. It is also interesting to note that religion has capacity to transform natural objects such as stone, tree etc., into cultural objects. For this reason 16% of the motifs in the legends of Bhagavathi are
associated with natural objects and thereby worshipped as religious objects. In the case of motif of 16% associated with woman (Kannaki/old lady etc.) one can find that appropriation of one myth/legend into another myth/legend is visible. In any religious history the migratory myths are localized and consumed as part of the religious behaviour of that local.

- In the middle part the number of legends is increased to twenty-two from the origin part of eighteen. This reflects that once the myth is migrated and internalized, gets crystallized and appears as if it is native to the culture. Therefore, the versions of motifs also increase resulting in the increase of variations. However, it need not necessarily result in the increase of ‘types’.

- In the middle part one can find four types of motifs. Out of which 40% are associated with cultural objects such as umbrella, iron spear, pot etc. in the middle part of the banks of Bharathappuzha as stated earlier, the myth of Kali got crystallized and therefore, the cultural objects are attributed with divine power and personified as Bhagavathi. In other words the presence of goddess Bhagavathi is seen in the cultural objects and therefore, attributed with the sacrality and worship through ritual performances. The next type of motif that is dominant (33%) in the middle part is connected with human actions such as bath, thirst, battle etc., reflects typically the ‘oicotypification’ of motif with localized environmental and cultural behaviours.

- In the middle part, the myth is performed and enacted as a ritual obligation and therefore the motifs of Kali are directly connected with the ritual manifestations.

- In the end part, the legends of Bhagavathi are decreased to ten from twenty-two of the middle part. It is not only the decrease in the legends but also the decrease in the types of motifs.

- It is interesting to note that kavus in the end part are built for Bhagavathis based on the belief of transfiguration from umbrella, plant, hen, spirit etc., to the goddess. It is found that 50% of kavus emerged out of the belief of
transfiguration. In any religion, the belief of transfiguration signifies the growth and dispersal of religious ideology.

- As observed, in the beginning part it is natural objects that are transformed into goddesses; in the middle part it is the cultural object which got transformed to goddesses and in the end part it is from transformation to transfiguration that makes the presence of goddesses possible. In other words, the concept of Kali is migrated from elsewhere into Kerala through Palakkad area (origin part of Bharathappuzha); crystallized as a cultural object in the middle part and in the end part it has acquired to form. So the process of natural objects via cultural objects to transfiguration can be seen from the legends of Bahgavathi on the banks of Bharathappuzha. If analysis is done on the legends, one can find the underlying formula at the deep structural level for the construction of the legend of Bhagavathi.

- From the legends reported one can observe that in the origin part of Bharathappuzha legends connected with Nayar (landlords/agrarian) community is dominant (i.e., 12 numbers; 66%). In the middle part the Nambuthiri (priestly) community (i.e., 14 numbers; 63%) and in the end part the backward/lower community such Thiyya and Paraya are dominantly (i.e., total 6 numbers; 60%) associated with the legends of Bhagavathi. It is interesting to note that along with Nambuthiri, the lower (Pulaya/Paraya) communities and the landlord community are also associated with the legends of Bhagavathi. This shows that the Nambuthiries acted as pacemakers in the incorporative process of Bhagavathi kavu and this is also reflected in the ritual performances of Bhagavathi kavu. The incorporation of different communities is done through the myth and worship of Bhagavathi on the banks of Bharathappuzha.

- The annual festival on the banks of Bharathappuzha is a congregation of many communities. The performances known under different names such as thalapoli, pooram and vela are ritual expressions of different communities on the banks of Bharathappuzha structured to articulate certain meanings.
The trend of *vela, pooram* and *thalapoli* seem to be of caste, community and family respectively. The *vela* is dominated and represented by certain castes such as Nayar, Pannan and Paraya. In the middle part the *pooram* is incorporating several castes and appeared as a communal ritual spread over a wide geographical local. At the end part, the *thalapoli* is more confined to familial level than communal level.

This is in accordance with the flow of the river, i.e., Bharathappuzha. In the beginning part the river is in the formation stage wherein several tributaries flow into Bharathappuzha. Therefore, *velas* are predominantly connected with agrarian communities such as Nayars, Paraya etc. in the middle part the river is formed as a distinct feature and known as Bharathappuzha/Nila. The banks are clearly marked in the middle part of the river and inhabited by several communities and thereby, *pooram* becomes a congregational ritual having participation of wide spread social groups. At the end part, the river joins the Arabian Sea and thereby loses a clear demarcation of the banks. This feature is reflected in the *thalapoli* wherein the families engage in the worship of Bhagavathi through ritual offering.

It is interesting to note the linear arrangements of the events that are connected with *vela* ritual in the origin part; the *kanyarkali* performance precedes *pavakoothu* performance. These two are narrative centric wherein the stories of Kannaki and Ramayana are narrated. The story of Kannaki is basically migrated from Tamil Nadu and in the soils of Kerala; it is imported as the story of Bhagavathi. The search of missing anklet in the story of Kannaki is the major theme and when it was found, Kannaki burns the city of Madhura to avenge the killing of her husband. However, in the story of *kanyarkali*, the protagonist Kannaki is still searching for the lost anklet even to this day in the form of Bhagavathi. Since, the lost anklet is not found, the story remains in complete and warrants for recurring enactment. In the name of searching Bhagavathi visits the households and blesses them. In this myth, there is no mention of war with Dharika.
The next major performance that follows kanyarkali is pavakoothu (shadow puppetry). The story of this performance is the story of Ramayana by a Tamil performing community known as Pulavar. Both kanyarkali performers (Nayars) and pavakoothu performers (Pulavar) are suppose to have migrated from Tamil Nadu and both communities figure in Sangam literature. It is believed that pavakoothu performance is meant for Bhadrakali who happened to have missed witnessing the war of Rama-Ravana as she herself was engaged in the war with Dharika. It is at the behest of Shiva’s command that the Pulavar is enacting this performance. Therefore, this performance denotes that the pavakoothu is a post-war event of Dharikavadhanam (killing of Dharika by Bhadrakali). In the first performance (kanyarkali), there is no reference to war of Bhadrakali with Dharika whereas in the second performance (pavakoothu), there is a reference of war of Bhadrakali with Dharika as a foregone event and no description of whatsoever is connected with the war itself.

The events (Parayeduppu, Kathirvaravu, Paana, Pankali etc,) that follow these two narratives denote the worship of the deity not as Kannaki nor as Bhadrakali but as Bhagavathi. In a way, myth is narrated and the ritual is performed. But there is no enactment of myth as such. Which means myth and ritual are in non-coexistence in the origin part of banks of tributaries of Bharathappuzha.

The pooram is the annual ritual festival on the central banks of Bharathappuzha. Pooram denote incorporative process of the ritual of Bhagavathi. In the origin part it is in the formative stage and in the middle part it not only got stabilized but also became incorporative thus manifested as community ritual cutting across several caste groups. The enactment of the narrative of Bhadrakali’s war with Dharika becomes the focal theme of the performance. In the middle part there is a narrative tradition associated with the ritual but it takes the secondary position. In other words, the myth of Bhadrakali becomes vibrant and manifests as an enactment of the myth. The enactment is visible in two forms: the one as Dharikavadham where the characters of the myth are enacted as performative play, the other as floral drawing (kalam) where the figure of Bhadrakali is drawn...
and later destroyed in the process of narration (thottam). It is interesting to note here that myth as narrative and the enactment of myth as ritual co-exist thereby, reinforces faith of the folk on the concept of Bhadrakali as Bhagavathi. In the beginning part there is a clear ambiguity between myth and ritual whereas, in the middle part the ambiguity is nullified by combining both narrative and ritual. In the epistemology of myth-ritual, one school of thought argued that myth and religious doctrines are the resultant of rituals. This is known as the primacy of ritual hypothesis which claims that every myth is derived from a particular ritual and that myth is a reproduction of the succession of a ritual act. The migrated myth of Bhadrakali is totally incorporated and owned as their own by the folk of Kerala in the middle part.

- The thalapoli is a ritual conducted in Bhagavathi kavu (shrine) on the end part of Bharathappuzha once in a year. Women are the main participators of this ritual. The myth of thalapoli ritual is that after the death of Dharika, Bhadrakali became so furious. Women carry thalam to pacify her anger.

- In the end part of Bharathappuzha, the ritual is performed neither as enactment nor as narrative. It is a simple offering to seek the blessings of Bhagavathi. One interesting feature is that woman participation is overtly visible and the ritual appears as more of domestic ritual than a public. The goddess Bhadrakali image as Kali is totally undermined and an image of ‘mother’ is attributed to Bhagavathi. As a result, no vibrancy is found in the ritual. Moreover, both narrative and enactment of the myth being accomplished in the beginning and middle part of Bharathappuzha, the ritual in the end part appears like ‘mangalam’ which means happy ending of an event.

- 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 Bharathappuhza 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.
In the beginning part as stated already, the concept of Bhadrakali 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.

Suggestions:

- The thesis is an attempt to study the cultures on the river banks by taking the entire river course for analysis and interpretation. However, an in-depth study on each site/division on the banks of the river would certainly yield a comprehensive understanding of the cultures of the banks with variations and versions.

- In this thesis the concentration is more towards understanding worship and ritual performances of Bhagavathi on the banks of the Bharathappuzha as this phenomena is vibrant an overtly visible. However, by following the same methodology one can study other forms of life and lore from a folkloric perspective.

- The methodology adopted in the thesis is based on the linear (horizontal) model of enquiry to understand the cultural performances of Kerala in general and on the banks of Bharathappuzha in particular. The previous studies followed the vertical model and hypothesized that the cultural influences on performing traditions of Kerala have largely come from the North i.e. Tulu and Karnataka regions. However, the Bhagavathi ritual which is mostly pervading the entire Kerala soils is found, in this thesis, to have come from the Tamil Nadu and other parts of India. Infact, Kerala State is having a common frontier with the State of
Tamil Nadu to a greater extent than with the State of Karnataka. Therefore, the linear model of study would be more appropriate to understand the cultural history of Kerala.

➢ The thesis has not attempted much on the contemporary issues such as the decay of the river and its impact on folklore. This would be an exclusive study which requires much attention to formulate a theoretical paradigm.

Thus, this thesis is a humble endeavor to understand the river and culture from a folkloric perspective which hopefully would add to the epistemology of river as cultural construct.