CHAPTER-II
LOVE-SONG

Among the folk songs of the Muduvans, Āśaippāṭṭu (Love-songs) plays a vital role in their life and culture. It is to be noted that the written love poetry of the ages, taught in traditional literature syllabi, are more self-contained in expressing love than the Asaipliantu of the Muduvans. In order to appreciate or comprehend the Asaipliantu of Muduvans, much information needed to be collected and analysed outside the songs and herein lays the importance of ethnopoetic study. So the information available is drawn directly from the Muduvans for each song apart from the meanings inside the text. The classifications of songs are based as inferred from the information directly got from the Muduvans during researcher’s the stay with them. The explicit and implicit meanings are hence, part of the discussion that follows in each section. The two broad divisions of Muduvan’s Āśaippāṭṭu are based on the context and various themes as mentioned in the following table.

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<th>S.No</th>
<th>Themes deal with</th>
<th>Various Contexts</th>
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<td>Puberty (1-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Desire</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Desire/praise</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>S.No</td>
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<td>Puberty (1-2)</td>
<td>Courtship (3-36)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Mocking</td>
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<td>Reminiscences</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Assurance and pledge</td>
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<td>Determination</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Counsel</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Domestic life</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>Reconciliation</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>History</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Virtue</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I. The Contextual Frame

As indicated in the above table, the various contexts are discussed below in this section and further the songs are classified and examined on the basis of the various themes of significance that each song carries. The themes of the songs are thus worked out for better comprehension and this forms the main approach to this chapter. This classification is one by which the Muduvans themselves view these songs.

a. Puberty:

The puberty ceremonies in any culture signify the physical and mental maturity of a girl and the implications of that are quite clear in Muduvan’s Āśaippāṭṭu. When a girl in the Muduvan culture attains puberty, pollution is observed for a few days and during that time she is secluded in a hut attached to their settlement. ‘Pollution’ here means that the tribe considers that the girl, who is maturing, especially the first time, is undergoing certain biological changes that are extraordinary and thus needs to be kept in seclusion. In reality the seclusion gives the girl the time necessary to recuperate and also mentally prepare herself for the future responsibilities. Once the pollution period is over she is taken back home where the members of the settlement celebrate her attainment of puberty with songs and rituals which are followed by a feast. The songs usually
emphasize the growth of the girl and the happiness of the members of the community. For example:

Mūngapū pūkkāto?
Mutumuttāi tiralāto?
Pātiripū pūkkāto?
Pattupēṟ santōṣam.

Translation:

Will not the bamboo blossom
Into pearls, rich and round?
Will not the pātiri blossom
And bring happiness to all folks? (Song 1)

These songs that are sung as post-puberty ritual draw generally from images of fertility and youth. They are also temporally located in the season of spring and summer rather than in those of rain or winter. In this song the girl is compared to a species of bamboo which usually blossoms once in twelve years which here signifies the girl’s reaching puberty and becoming ready for marriage and motherhood. The line “Mutumutāi tiralāto” (drop seeds) indicates the society’s belief in a woman’s capability to perpetuate life, represented in an image that is familiar to them occupationally and culturally. It is expressed in the song that all are happy because she has blossomed to bring fortune to the community.
The mixed feeling evoked by the attaining of puberty of a girl in her family members is evoked in song 2:

Kāśi kaṭanna muttu,
Kaivilakyu vāṅgum muttu,
Ñāneṭtu koṅcum muttu,
Nāleyareṭtu koṅcuvāno?

Translation:

Pearl most dearly bought,
Most preciously paid for,
The one I take and caress,
Who will caress it tomorrow? (Song 2)

This song expresses the anxiety of the father regarding the future of his daughter, as she might be leaving the home soon as somebody else’s woman. This song also points to the grave issue of the sudden shift in responsibilities imposed on a girl by a physiological phenomenon, in quite an uncomplicated way.

b. Courtship:

Quite sequentially, following songs to celebrate puberty, the songs sung to celebrate puberty, the songs sung during courtship are placed. The Muduvan tribe gives a great deal of freedom to its unmarried adolescents to meet and voice their feelings for each other. Thus these moments of emotional exchange became excellent contexts for the expressions of love,
longing and feigned distress. The spontaneous and simplistic manner in which the universal theme of love emerges in these lyrics distilled of poetic extravagance but expressive of nuanced feelings. The social freedom enjoyed by the courting adolescents gives them the simultaneous freedom to draw upon suggestive, erotic images in their lyrics. These lyrics are generally traditional though like all other genres improvised from time to time. Damiana L. Eugenio, in *Philippine Folk Literature: An Anthology*, remarks about courtship songs:

> These songs express the whole range of feelings and attitudes that the lover and the loved one can have for each other, from comments on the appearance and virtues of the loved one to near-despairing laments of the rejected suitor. Between these extremes and forming the greatest number are songs that contain appeals and pleadings of the lover to the loved one (438).

The same holds true of Muduvan culture too in which the romantic feelings are expressed in songs before they get married, usually with the consent of both family and community. In Muduvan culture courtship songs are mainly sung by the male to woo a girl even though at times girls too participate in the process of singing to express their feelings. The mood of the songs changes according to the various themes interpolating the songs. The
various themes of the courtship songs that are available as per the collected list are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Song No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>3-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>14-16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Complaint</td>
<td>33-34</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sexual innuendoes</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Leaving Cāvaṭi:

The term cāvaṭi in general usage means a rest-house. It functions as a transit in between childhood and marriage. The cāvaṭi or bachelor-hall is a place where the unmarried Muduvans of a particular settlement gather
together, especially in the evenings, around a fire pit. It is a custom in Muduvan culture for the unmarried to stay in cāvaṭi till they get married.

While leaving for the marriage from the cāvaṭi, the boy sings a song (Song 37) to express his intention and feelings. In this song he addresses the whole cāvaṭi expressing his affection for it, though he is quitting the life he had been having there. He says that a girl of his choice and dream has come and so he is leaving to tie the knot. The song goes like this:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Uṭra tūne,} \\
\text{Ulari varum kanmaniye,} \\
\text{Catra cāvaṭiye,} \\
\text{Sirutāli muṭike ŋān pōre.}
\end{align*}
\]

Translation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{O beam and pillar,} \\
\text{O sweet girl with lisping words,} \\
\text{O sāṭra savaṭi,} \\
\text{I am leaving to tie the tāli. (Song 37)}
\end{align*}
\]

The song oscillates between the address to the cāvaṭi or bachelor-hall and the description of the girl he is going to marry. Revealing as it is about the boy’s desire to get married to the girl of his choice, the song like the others of its kind, points to the cultural and social structure and traditions of the Muduvans.
d. Before/after marriage:

The songs included in this section could be sung before or after marriage and these express aspects of romantic and domestic life. Songs 38 and 39 depict the desire of the lovers or married couples. Songs 40 and 41 illustrate the dimensions of flirting and tips for earning the girls’ love respectively through metaphors. The description of these will be given in the thematic analysis. Whether the songs are sung before or after marriage they express both love and desire. They celebrate physicality in its most spontaneous sense without inhibitions. Supported by larger cultural context and the celebratory acceptance of the songs both as cultural expression and as aesthetic self-construction; preserves them as indeed as it does the other poetic genres of the Muduvas from being evaluated through other-than-Muduvan poetic norms.

Ethnopoetics valorises the unique poetic and cultural identities of verbal expressions simultaneously and thus argues for the singular characteristic of such bodies of verbal art-forms.

e. After marriage:

The songs of this section are sung after the marriage and hence deal more with the complexities of life and hardships that a married couple is confronted with. Drawing various instances from life and experiences, the married couple expresses various feelings via songs in the guise of one
talking to the other. The various themes that are prevalent in these songs are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Song No.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>42-43</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>45-45</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Flirtation</td>
<td>46-47</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mocking</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assurance and pledge</td>
<td>49-50</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>51-53</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Disappointment</td>
<td>54-56</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Counsel</td>
<td>57-59</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Domestic life</td>
<td>60-63</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Domestic quarrels</td>
<td>64-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sexual innuendoes</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f. Leisure time – Songs of Relaxation:

The songs sung during leisure are also the communal space for self-assessment of the community. The songs record their memory of their achievements and trace their past. Songs given in this section are sung when the Muduvan get free time, especially, when they come back after
work and gather together in cāvati. Here, usually the elders start singing songs followed by others. One such song (Song 70) speaks of the Kāni (headman) of a particular settlement and how he got the talent or knack of making songs. It says that his ability is gifted by lord Shiva. The song goes like this:

Śūsanikuṭiyatile,
Śulivuḷa kāniyavar,
Pāṭṭelutum bāgyam,
Ātya paramaśivan koṭutāre.

Translation:

In the Susanikuṭi
Its elder with a mark of fortune,
Has been blessed with poetic gifts
By Ātya Paramaśivan. (Song 70)

The main aim of the songs of this section is to teach the younger generation and to remind the current one about their past and the socio-cultural variations that have crept into their society (Songs 71-74). Some songs sung during the leisure time revolve around familiar landscapes (Songs 75-77), their history (Song 78) and virtues (Song 79).

II. The Thematic Frame

This section of the chapter focuses more closely on the Muduvan Āśaippāṭṭu or love-songs as they may be translated in terms of their
themes. The various major themes associated with Muduvans’ Āśaippāṭṭu are listed and discussed here. They are:

1. Desire:

   One of the major themes of the love-songs of Muduvans is desire and it is relevant in their life at the time of courtship, marriage and even after marriage. The lovers’ wishes, hopes, dreams and longings are well incorporated in their songs, and all such songs collected are put together under this section.

   The man’s desire to marry a woman of his choice is expressed in Song 3. He sings:

   Kaṭṭanam māṅgalyam,
   Kāmākṣi māṅgalyam,
   Pūṭṭanam māṅgalyam,
   Peṇṇum peṟumāḷku,
   Poṟuttapōle poṟukka kaṭavu.

   Translation:

   The auspicious māṅgalyam must be tied,
   The māṅgalyam of Kāmākṣi,
   It must be secured,
   So must my bride be mine,
   By the consent of Peṟumāḷ. (Song 3)
In this song the man wishes his beloved be with him forever with the consent of ‘perumāl’ (Lord Vishnu). The intervention of divine characters is sought in this song while he says that the māṅgalyam or the jewel tied around the woman’s neck is Kāmākṣi, one of their goddesses. Even though the song speaks about the tying of māṅgalyam, it is to be noted that Muduvans do not have the custom of tying a māṅgalyam. It is a unique fact in their culture as compared to the Indian society in general. It can be seen that a māṅgalyam or tāli is a privilege symbol for any married women in Indian society, especially in Hindu culture. It is said by the Muduvans that they do not have the custom of tying a māṅgalyam or tāli but keep a bamboo comb on the tresses of married woman as a symbol of her marriage. The particular song that the male sings seeking the interference of divine characters at the time of marriage goes like this. In another song (Song 4) the man expresses his desire to see her. He sings:

Ura śuṭi puḷiyan maram,
Ulaki viṭṭā kalakalakkam.
Peru śolli kūppiṭiren,
Pennalaki iṅga vāṭi.

Translation:

The tamarind trees around town,
Will rattle noisily if shaken.
So shall I call your name,
Come here, you female beauty. (Song 4)

In the above song the man addresses his beloved as Pennalaki (female beauty) and expresses his desire to see his beloved. He says that he calls her by name as a way of confirmation for her even though Muduvans do not call the other by name on such occasions. Different ways of expressing man’s desire are seen in Muduvans’ courtship songs. In one song (Song 7) the man sings:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ānakāl paṭṭiyile} \\
\text{Alakusemba nellaratu} \\
\text{Koppatākuṭiku} \\
\text{Konṭupōṇam penmayilē}
\end{align*}
\]

Translation:

I wish to reap the

*Semba* paddy of Ānakāl paṭṭi

And take it to Koppatākuṭi

My beautiful lass. (Song 7)

It is clear in the song that the man is from the settlement or place called Koppatākuṭi and has come to marry a beautiful woman from Ānakāl paṭṭi’. *Semba* refers to a particular kind of rice crops. The reference that he gives is that he wishes to reap *semba* paddy from Ānakāl paṭṭi. Here the man indirectly compares the women to Alakusemba (‘Alaku’ means beautiful or
pretty). Even while comparing the woman to paddy, the man addresses the woman as *peṇmайile* (pea-hen). Likewise in song 10 the man sings:

Malayāṭivāratilu,

Manipprā mēyakaṇṭe.

Cembṟāntu vēșatilu

Centūkku tūkkīṭuve.

Translation:

In the valley I saw

A dove roosting.

In a kite’s disguise

Will I swoop down and pick you! (Song 10)

Here the man compares his beloved to a dove that is flying in the valley while he compares himself to a kite. He tells her that he will come in a kite’s disguise to get hold of her. The women’s consent is not asked here, but he asserts that he has seen her from a distance and is confident that he is strong enough to carry her.

Similar to the man expressing his desire for his beloved, the woman too explicitly expresses her desires through different songs at the time of courtship. The socio-cultural space accorded to Muduvan woman is remarkable in its liberalism. The visibility and speech of these women are brought to the fore when they too sing songs of courtship. The expression of desire, especially of the body is generally both in literature and society a
male prerogative. The social codes of urban communities and literate societies see the female enunciation of desire as lack of propriety. In one song the woman sings:

Kallīṭṭa poḷi veṭṭi,
Kāśera pāi moṭañcu,
Villēṅcara kayuku,
Velamatika ŋān āśai.

Translation:

Slicing the reed
And weaving a shining mat,
To the one who wields a bow,
I shall give the price-money. (Song 5)

The woman’s desire to have a man of her choice is indicated in this song. Here she says that she makes a mat by cutting and slicing kallīṭṭa (a type of bamboo) to value her man’s hand that holds a bow which indicates that she wishes to be cared for and protected. Through the lines she says that her desire is to get a man of the above type. Weaving a mat for her lover signifies her willing self-surrender to the man she loves. In another song (Song 8) the girl sings about a man of her dreams:

Ñāvapaḷam pōle
Ñān oruti penpiṟannē.
Ēḻu sūryane pōle
Enikyorutan vāikyavēnam.

Translation:

Like a jamun fruit
Was a girl born.
Let me have a man
Like seven suns. (Song 8)

She considers herself as not so beautiful but wishes to have a handsome man. To say that she is not beautiful, she compares herself to a jamun fruit is purple in colour, though it looks black and in this song the girl means to say that she is dark in colour and so not conceivably beautiful. But her dream is mentioned in the last two lines. She says that she wants a man who is bright and shiny like seven suns. But it is interesting to note what the woman sings in another song:

Ānayum āna,
Āśayuḷḷa matavāna.
Komburanṭum pāluvelle,
Kōṭā paśugiḷam.

Translation:

The elephant, such a one,
Truly a bull-elephant in rut,
With tusks milky white,
Bred at the king’s stable. (Song 9)
She says that the man of her dreams is dark in skin like an elephant with tusks white like milk indicating the contrast in colour between his skin and teeth. With the comparison to the elephant, the woman wishes to mention that he is strong and handsome. She uses the line “Āṣayulā matavāna” (a bull elephant in rut) that may indicate how she desires fascinating beauty and strength in her man. In the last line she says that the elephant is the property of the king. Her dream to have a strong and lovable man of high fortune is clearly mentioned in this song. In another song too (Song 6) the man is described directly as a dark one:

Āḷu kaṟuta āḷu
Āmeniku ēta āḷu,
Āśa vacen unakku.

Translation:

The man, the dark one
Best suited for the girl,
He longs for you. (Song 6)

In this song the third person, possibly a friend or companion of the man, acts as a messenger and informs her that his friend longs for her. Hence the man is portrayed in front of her in a very simple manner. The man is said to be dark in colour but best suited for her according to the speaker. Here the third person’s duty is to incite love and passion in her mind by giving a description of the man in limited words.
There are some songs which can be sung before or after marriage as mentioned above in the contextual frame but deals with the theme desire. As such in one song the woman sings:

Veļaņja tina kāṭile,
Vēppumāṛ nippatu.
Muḷlutina kāṭile,
Mūlineku vannavane.

Translation:

In the ripe millet-field,
The elders are standing.
By the thorny shrubs,
Come to meet me. (Song 38)

Considering this song sung before marriage, the situation is when the man has come to see his beloved in the weedy shrubs. The ripe millet field is not the right place to meet the beloved since elders are there which disrupts their privacy. But in weedy shrubs there is not much chance of interruption and hence the woman addresses the man and sings the particular song. In another song (Song 39) the man sings in the form of advice to have her:

Āṭuṇṭu māṭuṇṭu,
Aṅcakulaṭil tanniyyuṇṭu.
Puḷayēṛi kuḷiccu vā,
Ente ponnuniratāle.

Translation:

Sheep is there, cattle too,
Water too in the bathing ghat.
Cross the river, bathe and come (to me)
My golden-lass. (Song 39)

In song the man calls his beloved as *ponnuniratāle* (golden lass) and asks her to cross all barriers and reach him. The above two songs are sung after marriage too indicating domestic life. The references of millet field (Song 38) and cattle and sheep (Song 39) indicate the type of work they do daily.

There are songs that deal with the theme desire along with descriptions of life after marriage. In one song (Song 42) the man hopes and wishes to start a new life after marriage and hence sings:

Tekku vāsalile,
Tengumara ṭōpparike
Nammuṭe vayalile,
Nātunaṭa pōvamāṭi.

Translation:

At the southern gate,
Near the coconut grove,
In our own field,
Let us sow the paddy. (Song 42)
The man calls his beloved to come with him to sow paddy near the coconut grove. The place where they have to sow paddy is mentioned in the first line; “Tekku vāsalile” (at the southern gate) while the field is mentioned as “Nammuṭe vayalile” (in our own field). These references signify his desire to live together and start having children metaphorically. In song (Song 43) the woman expresses her earnest longing to have a baby and sings:

Eṭēṟu keṭi,
Eṭiyilorēṟu tān piṭippu.
Patēṟu keṭi,
Payarumukham pāṟppateppa?

Translation:
Eight yoked cows,
You hold in the middle.
With ten yoked cows,
When will the new seedlings sprout? (Song 43)

Here she asks her man when she can have the fortune to see a mukham (face), indicating her wish to see a baby. It is mentioned in the song that her man is working in the field with eight yoked cows. She then asks him to have ten yoked cows instead of eight to bring forth new sprouts. The patēṟu (ten yoked cows) indirectly suggests the ten months she has to carry a baby in her womb, the result of their love.
2. Desire/Praise:

In this section the three songs sung at the time of courtship deal with the theme/s of desire and praise were available to the researcher. In one song (Song 11) the man praises the beauty of the beloved and expresses his desire to unite with her. He sings:

\[
\text{Accilaṭiccu,} \\
\text{Aḷakāṛnṇna śilavāṛtu,} \\
\text{Aḷakāna peṇmayilē,} \\
\text{Āśaviṭṭu pōkavilla.}
\]

Translation:

Sculpted and chiselled into perfect form,  
O beautiful girl,  
My passion for you is unabated. (Song 11)

In this song the man’s desire for her is directly expressed to her by calling her “Aḷakāna peṇmayile” (literally, beautiful pea-hen). Earlier he praises her beauty by saying that she is like a beautiful sculpture. In another song (Song 12) she is praised for having beautiful tresses and later mentioned as a seductress with poṭṭu or a beautiful mark on the forehead. And later he tells her that he is a useless one but loves and longs for her. The song goes like this:

\[
\text{Aḷakāna koṇṭakāri,} \\
\text{Āle mayakkum poṭṭukāri.}
\]
Oru nātiyātra payyan,
Ñān āśappaṭṭēn.

Translation:

O girl with a beautifully rolled tresses,
The mark on your forehead is seductive.
This useless lad
Longs for you. (Song 12)

In the same way she is compared to a newly blossomed flower of an ash-gourd in another song (Song 13). He states that even if she is not liked by anybody else, she is attractive and desirable to him. He sings:

Pūsani pūve,
Pūttatellam ilam pūve,
Nātiyatta pūvuku
Ñān āśapeṭṭēne.

Translation:

O flower of ash-gourd,
Bloomed fresh all around,
For the blooms none care for
Do I desire. (Song 13)

The song indicates the simple and graceful way in which Muduvans express their feelings, especially love. Urbanised and consciously accultured poetry
will not describe the beauty of a girl as comparable to that of an ash-gourd flower.

3. Praise:

Praising the beauty, physical features and talent of the beloved is the main aspect of love poetry and songs in general. The love-songs of Muduvans also exhibit the unmasked expressions of their feelings towards the beloved in simple diction. At the time of courtship the woman is usually portrayed as a beauty to be possessed by the man. Such songs also show that their society allows a man to create an occasion to express his love which helps to generate love in the woman of his choice and it also helps to expel any feeling of strangeness towards him, and vice versa. It is to be noted here that the diction is not so vividly imaginative but simple and elegant to create a striking image in the listener’s mind. In one song (Song 15) the man praises the beauty of the woman and sings:

Kaṇṭaṅkalīṭtiye,
Kellayiṭum tōkayāle,
Maṭṛakaḷīṭtiye,
Malayēri piṭiyukāre.

Translation:

O lass with a beautiful neck,
Adorned with a drooping garland,
O lass with a fine neck,
You are a seductress. (Song 15)

The woman in this song is praised by the man as having a beautiful and fine neck wearing a garland. The woman’s physical features are a matter of praise for the man as physical features with big and broad neck is always desirous and attractive for men in their culture. Twice, in this song, the man addresses her with an attractive neck and finally states that she is a seductress which specifies that he has fallen in love with her. In another song (Song 16) the man indirectly praises the beauty of his woman:

Pākku pakiṭatu,
Palayōravum minnatu.
Kākkavāi koņcāme,
Kiḷimūkku māmbaḷamo.

Translation:

Looks beautiful
And glows all around.

A ḷiḷimūkku mango fruit,
Undetected by a crow. (Song 16)

The man here compares her to a “Kilimūkku māmbaḷam” (a type of mango that gets its name because of its shape like the mūkku (beak) of a kilī (parrot). The lover praises her indirectly by saying that the ripened mango looks so beautiful and it shines well which symbolizes her being pleasing to the eyes of the man. In the next line he states that the mango is not
touched or seen by any crow, which suggests that she is still a virgin and that he would be fortunate to have her. In another song (song 14), sung by the man at the time of marriage, the beauty of the girl is praised:

Kuñciyum kuñcipiḷḷe,
Nī pukāri sīpaḻaki.
Neñjukku amirnnaḷe,
Ninavonnu māṟuḷḷei.

Translation:

Oh, little girl, you are a beauty
Adorned with the pukāri, o fair one.
You dwell in my heart,
As a dream that never fades. (Song 14)

The portrait of the woman adorned with pukāri (bamboo comb) on her tresses is presented here which creates a picture of her and its associations in the minds of the people who have gathered for the marriage. It is clear through his words that he has conceived of her in his mind as most desirable to him as well as to those who have gathered for the occasion.

After marriage too Muduvans sing songs that deal with the theme of praise which exhibits their love life. For example, in one song (Song 44) the man sings:

Kannāṭi vaḷavi pōṭṭu,
Katirārakān pōravale.
Kannañi oñikanṭu,
Vannatāṭi unpuruśan.

Translation:
Wearing glass bangles,
You were leaving for harvest.
Sighting the glasses’ brilliance,
Your man has returned. (Song 44)

The man says that he has come to her attracted by the brilliance of the glass bangles that she wears when she is going to the field to harvest the crops. The image is as culturally significant for them as it is imaginatively conjoined with the actual fact of the girl wearing glass bangles. In another song (Song 45) it is the woman who praises the family and talent of her man:

Sāti samutramā,
Sāmikai pustakamā,
Enne toṭa mannavārku,
Enne kavipāṭu vannu?

Translation:
O, ocean of virtue,
O, divine book of wisdom,
To the prince who married me,
What song shall I sing? (Song 45)
She feels that she is not worthy enough to sing about him. Initially she says that her man’s family and its knowledge is as vast as an ocean and a book respectively. And later she says that he is the one who has touched her and recited poems for her, or in other words, that he has been her ‘muse’, so to say. Transformation by touch is a part of the cultural belief of the Muduvans reflected as a thematic feature in the love-songs of varied kinds.

4. Flirtation:

Flirtation is one of the predominant themes in the love-songs of Muduvans sing at the time of courtship and even after marriage. The songs 17 to 21 are fine examples for flirting at the time of courtship. In song 17, the man flirts with the woman:

Oru nīla karum kuyile,
Ninavu māṟāta pūṅkuyile,
Ñān iṅge nikkaṭṭamo?
Ñān pōkaṭṭamo?

Translation:

O! You blue-black cuckoo,
Sweet bird, unfaltering in love,
Shall I wait here?
Or shall I leave? (Song 17)
He asks her directly whether he should wait for her or leave as an act of flirtation. Before asking this he calls her a blue-black cuckoo. Here he is not sure whether the girl is already engaged or married to someone else, but expresses his interest and intention directly to her. As a response to his flirting, the woman sings:

Aṭa śanṭāla,

Ñān nikkaśonnāl neṭṭōram.

Ñān pōkaśonnāl pollāppu.

Ñān orutan ponṭaṭṭi.

Ñān ennate sollapōren?

Translation:

Why, you wretch,

If I ask you to stay, it’s at the ridge.

If I ask you to go, it’s also trouble.

I am another’s wife.

What can I say? (Song 18)

As a reply initially she calls him a śandāla (a wretch) but later expresses her confused state of feelings in the mind. She says that she does not know what to reply; whether to ask him to leave or stay back as she is already married to another. Through her reply it is clear that she is also interested in him but expresses her inability to act in his favour since she is
already married to another man. But in another song (song 19) the woman reacts to the flirtations of a man by mocking at him. She sings:

Maṉṇuruci kaṇṭavanō?
Maratturuci kaṇṭavanō?
Peṉṇuruci kaṇṭavanō?
Pōṭa sirupayalē.

Translation:

Have you known the soil?
Have you known trees?
Have you known woman?
Get lost, you little boy! (Song 19)

It is not clear whether the man too flirted with her but from the song it is clear that she is displeased, and that is the reason why she asks him whether he has known or tasted the real soil, touched a tree and known a woman. Later she calls him a mere boy which denotes that he is still not mature enough to know the many complexities of life. The woman assumes that he is not experienced in life. But to her questions and hostile talk, he answers her tit for a tat in the next song:

Maṉṇuruci piṭṭamaṇṆu.
Maratturuci cantanam.
Peṉṇuruci unnuṭe mukatalaku.
Unne piṭikāte pōkavilla.
Translation:

The best of soil is laterite.

The best of trees is sandal.

And of girls are you the beauty.

I wont be off without you. (Song 20)

He says that the best soil is *piṭṭamaṇṇu* (soil good for cultivating crop), the best tree is sandalwood and the best girl for him is the one who is standing in front of him with a charming face and so he is not ready to leave her for sure. In an interesting way, in song 40 the man flirts with a woman. He sings:

Ennaiṭu talavēisu,

Enikku munti pōravaḷe,

Eṇṇakarumkuyile,

Enne mayakkātaṭi.

Translation:

Going before me with oiled and combed hair,

You beautiful black cuckoo, don’t entice me. (Song 40)

By calling the woman as a black cuckoo the man tries to flirt with a woman. The man here portrays the picture of a beautiful woman with oiled and combed hair, walking in front of him. In a flirting tone he tells her not to entice him with her appearance and beauty. The same song is also sung to flirt with a woman after marriage.
The Songs 46 and 47 are usually sung after marriage deal with the theme flirtation. In Song 46, the woman tells a man not to allow the cattle to graze over the hills to eat tender grass. She sings:

Māṭṭaṇan ṭambiyē,
Māṭu meikum en puruśā
Un māṭu malayeri meyāte,
Mañjappullu ṭinnāte.

Translation:
O step-brother,
My man who herds cattle,
Let not your cattle graze over the hills,
Nor eat the tender grass. (Song 46)

With the image of cattle grazing over the hills the woman indirectly warns the man, who is her step brother, not to approach her as her man will not allow such things to happen. But he reciprocates in a stubborn manner in the next song (Song 47) and continues his flirtation by saying that he does not mind even if the cattle graze over her bosom. His response to her is:

En māṭu malyeri meńjālentā,
Un māṟumeleri meńjālentā?
Ne kulikum mańjalile,
Ñjan vilpiṭsu valuventu.

Translation:
What if my cattle went grazing over the hills,
Or even over your bosom?
The turmeric you bathe with,
Shall be my bow. (Song 47)

As in all cultures the tension that prevails between what is right and acceptable and what is wrong are reflected best in the love-lyrics expressive of undistinguished desire.

5. Mocking:

Mocking or making fun at the time of courtship or even after marriage is an interesting theme in some of the love-songs of Muduvans. One such song sing at the time of courtship goes like this:

Kattāḷa pāṟayilu,
Kariṅkuraṅgu vēṣatilu,
Kaṇṭēne unnayaṭi,
Karikuraṅgu vāypōle.

Translation:

Beside the large rocks.
In langur’s disguise,
Did I see you first,
Befitting a langur’s mouth. (Song 24)

Here the man mocks at the woman by comparing her to a langur standing on the rock. The image of the beloved portrayed in this comparison is
meant to evoke laughter among them. Here the reference is to her dark skin and this is reiterated by saying that she is like the mouth of the langur which is assumed as darker, than the rest of the animal’s body. In another song (Song 23) the woman sings:

Cintāṇtu maṇalile,
Cirumaṇalu koitiyile,
Cinnapiḷḷayennu solli,
Cir ICCUKOṇtu pōnavanē.

Translation:

On the banks of the stream
While I played in the sand,
You called me a liitle kid
And left, laughing at me. (Song 23)

Here the woman says that the man has mocked her by saying that she has not grown enough when she was playing in the sand like a child. She is unhappy since he laughed at her and called her cinnappiḷḷa (little kid).

There is one beautiful song (Song 48) that the man sings after marriage to mock at the woman. The song goes like this:

Iṭi iṭicu maḻa peye,
Irukarayum koḷam perake,
Koḷattil kiṭakkum manitavaḷa,
Innu vāi polambe keḻkeliye.
Translation:

While it thunders and rains,
And the pond breaches its banks
O, beautiful frog in the pond,
Your sweet words are not heard today. (Song 48)

In this song the man compares the woman to a manītavaḷa (frog) and says that his beloved has not spoken anything the whole day. The song has another meaning too, that the Muduvans themselves present; the frog in pond symbolises a baby in the womb of the beloved. This meaning is relevant when she is pregnant and when her husband asks her whether the baby is making any sound in her womb. In that context the first two lines of the song indicate the couple’s sexual life and the frog symbolising baby is it’s result.

6. Reminiscences:

Lovers at the time of courtship cherishes the lovely moments that they had experienced. Song 25 and 26 are examples for this type in which the man cherishes the moment of seeing his beloved at a particular time and place respectively. In song 25, the man sings:

Kallalayatile,
Kāṭumāḷa kālattile,
Kanṭene unnayaṭi,
Kānakattu karumkuyile.
Translation:

In the rocky cave,

In the wind and rain,

I saw you girl,

You wild-cuckoo! (Song 25)

The man cherishes the moment when he saw his beloved and hence says to her that he saw her when it was raining and windy and he was in a cave. He addresses his beloved as a “Kānakkattu karumkuyile” (black cuckoo of the forest) indicating how he conceived her when he saw her. While the emphasis in this song is of the time when he saw his beloved, the next song (song 26), speaks about the place where he saw her. He sings:

Varīgalākaṭavattile,
Valimariccu pēśayile,
Kanṭēne unnayaṭi,
Kānakatu penmayile.

Translation:

At the Varīgalā ghat,

When I waylaid you to speak with you,

I saw you,

Beautiful lass! (Song 26)
Here the man calls his beloved as a “Kānakatu penmayile” (pea-hen of the forest) and says that he saw her at Vaṅgalākaṭavu (‘Vaṅgalā’ ghat); a place near to the Susanikudi settlement of Muduvans. What is interesting to note is that the points of comparison emerge from recognisable specificities.

7. Assurance and Pledge:

Giving assurance and pledging one’s love to the beloved/partner is one of the major themes that can be seen in the love-songs of Muduvans. In one such song (Song 27) the man assures his beloved that he will protect her and take care of her throughout his life. He sings:

Kānakāṭu veṭṭi,
Kariṅkurāngu kāval vaitu,
Kanniyaliṅjālum,
Kāval aliyāte.

Translation:

Cut the forest,
With a vigil like that of the langur,
And even as the virgin is consummated,
The guard shall not fail. (Song 27)

In this song, the man gives assurance to his beloved on three levels. He says that even if the virginity of the forest is lost by cutting it to make agricultural land, he will continue to guard her. On another level it could be taken as his declaration that he would continue to guard her even if her
virginity is lost. The line, “Kanniyaliñjālum” (virginity is lost), can be applicable to the virginity of the land or the forest or virginity of his beloved. The line “Karinkuṟangu kāval vaitu” (with a vigil like that of a langur) denotes the third level of his assurance. Here, he compares himself to a langur. Mūduvans say that the langur is one of the most vigilant animals in the forest and it gives to other animals a warning with a special type of sound when there is any imminent danger in the forest. Here in this song the man tries to say that he will be very attentive and vigilant like a langur and she will not have to face any problems or dangers in future. He assures her that he will be there with her as a guardian and custodian. In another song (Song 28) the man sings:

Mūnū moḷam mallu vāŋgi,
Muppattāṟu śuṅgu vīṭṭu,
Śuṅgāsa maṟannālum,
Unnāśai maṟakkate.

Translation:

Even if I get the three-yard cloth,
And make the thirty-six folds,
And then forget the passion for the turban,
The desire for you shall not die. (Song 28)

Here in this song the man assures his beloved that even when the time passes by, his desire and love for her will not diminish. To express this he
says that even if he forgot his passion for a turban he will not forget her. It is a custom in Muduvan culture for the men to grow hair and tie a turban with a long cloth, approximately three yards long, as mentioned in the song. Tying the turban is the adolescent right and passion for a grown up boy in Muduvan culture. In this particular song the man assures his beloved that she is more important to him than any other passion, even the dignity of his head-dress.

The theme of assurance can be seen in two other songs (Songs 49 and 50), sung usually after marriage. In Song 49, the woman sings:

Uccimalayeri uḷiyaṭikum āsāri,
Śabtam pōṭṭu uliyaṭiccāl,
Śabtam keṭṭu, ūn varuve.

Translation:

O, carpenter who chisels atop the hills,
If you chisel loudly,
Hearing it, I shall come. (Song 49)

Here the woman assures her man that she is vigilant and that she will be ready to come on hearing his voice. Here the man is addressed as a carpenter working on the top of a hill and if he chisels loudly, hearing the sound she can reach him. Wherever the man may be working his wife’s guard is always on him, she assures. Another meaning that the Muduvans associate with this song is that, the wife is so vigilant that if her man has
any plan to go with any other woman, she will immediately reach there and wreck his plan. In another song (Song 50), sung by women when her man leaves her and go out, the singer recollects what her man had assured her earlier:

Eṅgāti mayaṅgāti,
Ennam ṭūkkam veikāti,
Kaṭṭa kailāsam uḷḷamaṭṭum
Kāṟpem bayapeṭāte.
Kāṟpenṭu sonnire?

Translation:

“Without misgiving or doubt
Without sorrow in heart
As long as the celestial kailasa is there
I shall take care, fear not”

Did you not assure me then? (Song 50)

Her man had earlier told her not to worry or sorrow and had promised her that he would take care of her as long as Kaṭṭa kailāsam (celestial Kailasa) is there. Now while he leaves the home, she is distressed and recalls his earlier assurance, asks him why he is leaving her alone when he had promised her to be with her always.
8. Determination:

In this section the man’s determination to marry a particular girl is presented. He is so sure in his heart that he wants this woman alone or else he does not want to marry at all and has planned to become a hermit in the forest. In the beginning of the song he says that \textit{vañci kāṭu} (a type of forest) is the best to be cut and cultivated to harvest more. Here the man compares her to \textit{vañci kāṭu} and says that he is determined to marry this girl. He sings:

\begin{verbatim}
Veṭṭanatu vañci kāṭu.
Veṭṭāṭṭi kaileṅgiri.
Keṭṭana inta ponnu,
Keṭṭāṭṭi vāna dēśam.
\end{verbatim}

Translation:

\begin{verbatim}
If harvested it is \textit{vañci kāṭu}.
If not \textit{kaileṅgiri}.
If I marry, it’s this girl.
If not, a hermit in the forest shall I be. (Song 29)
\end{verbatim}

9. Elopement:

The theme of elopement has a great deal of importance in courtship songs as the lovers express their wish to run away from the existing social constraints and overcome the hardships ahead to start a new life by uniting. In Muduvan culture, eloping from the community to live a life
together is hardly seen. But the theme is expressed in some songs, thus probably fictively, as an imaginative construct. In one song, sung at the time of courtship, the man calls his beloved to run away:

Kūṭanatu kuṭumbi tala,
Paḷaganatu pamba tala,
Oru vāḻum prāyam vanna,
Vāṭi pille ōṭi pōlām.

Translation:
If we unite, the hair shall be tied in a knot,
If we do not, unkempt like a hermit it shall be.
When you are old enough to live together,
Come on girl, let’s elope together. (Song 30)

He tells her that they are not young and so it is not the time for them to waste time in mere friendship but are old enough to live together. In another song (song 31), the man calls his beloved as “Māri kuḷantu vāsaniye” (smells like māri kuḷantu, a fragrant herb used mainly to make garlands). The song goes like this:

Māma makaḷe,
Māri kuḷantu vāsaniye,
Vaṭāte peṇmayile,
Vāṭi pille ōṭi pōkām.

Translation:
Oh my cousin,

Fragrant like mari kulantu,

You needn’t tire yourself, oh pea-hen,

Come, let’s run away. (Song 31)

As the smell of mari kulantu lasts for long, his beloved is also fresh and spreads fragrance, and he tells her not to be distressed for he is asking her to run away with him. In this song the man indicates that the woman is socially sanctioned for him. The reference for this is given in the first line when he calls her as “Māma makaḷe” (māma is mother’s brother and makaḷ is daughter). A Muduvan man can marry the daughter of his mother’s brother. It is interesting to note that in a socially sanctioned setup like this, there is no need for the man to call the woman to run away with him and in that case what he means by the song is the expression of his desire to live with her. These songs suggest the use of the idea of elopement by Muduvans to express intense desire for a woman.

10. Complaint:

The lovers complain about each other for various reasons at the time of courtship. In one such song (Song 33) the man sings:

Santana kāṭṭile,

Sāyamkālam poḷutiyile,

Santyaku sonnatāṭi.

Santyaku illayaṭi.
Translation:

In the sandalwood forest,

In the evening,

You said we would meet.

But it did not come to plan! (Song 33)

Here the man complains to her that she has not fulfilled her word because she had promised him to meet him and has not yet. The place and time of rendezvous has been fixed. As per that, sandalwood forest is the meeting place and time of meeting is the evening. But the plan has not worked out since she has not turned up and so he complains about her in the song.

11. Loneliness:

The lovers suffer loneliness when their partners/companions are not with them. This is expressed in song 35, in which man expresses his isolation. Through the song he portrays his situation, which he wants his beloved to hear. He says that he is left alone in a hermit’s cave when it is dusk and raining outside. This song which is one of the most poignant in the collection and remarkably etched in detail runs as follows:

Sāmiyāṟ alayil,

Saramaḻa kālātile,

Oru muniruṭṭu neratile,

Pin tunakārumilla.
Translation:

In this hermit’s cave,
In the season of incessant rain,
In the dusk,
There is none to walk with me. (Song 35)

12. Separation:

Songs dealing with this theme are sung mainly after marriage in Muduvan culture. The feeling of loss and anxiety are expressed while partners are away from home or separated and such feelings are put together under the heading separation in this section. In one song (Song 52) the man sings:

Veḷḷikălamayilē,
Vīṭuvīṭṭu pōnavaḷē,
Pōnakāḷ tirumalayē,
Penmayilē enneviṭu.

Translation:

O, peacock-like girl,
Leaving home,
Did you set forth on a Friday?
Will not you retrace your steps? (Song 52)

Here the man asks the girl who is leaving him and their home whether she will come back to him. He is anxious because she is going on a Friday
which according to Muduvans is a bad day to do any good thing. So her
leaving does not bode a good sign and it makes him sing a song like this.

In another song (Song 53) the loss of his beloved is expressed by the man:

Ēḻu malakaṭannu,

Eṭutuvanna sevuttupennu

Vaccirikyamāṭāme,

Veraṭiviṭe

Translation:

Crossing seven hills
Was brought a fair girl,
(I was) unable to put up with her,
And she was driven away. (Song 53)

Here he says that it is because of his fault that she left him. He remembers
how he got a fair girl like her in the first line of the song; “Ēḻu
malakaṭannu” (crossing seven hills). But his conduct repelled her off and
now he sings a song regretting the mistake he has done and expresses his
loss he feels.

In another song (Song 51), possibly the messenger or the
companion of the woman tries to incite anxiety in the mind of the woman
whose man is working hard in the field. The companion gives a picture of
the man ploughing in the field in knee deep water with the oxen in yoke.
The messenger expects her to go to her man and so sings:
13. Disappointment:

Even though one can see some apparent similarities with the previous section, the songs of this section deal with the disappointments of partners and are sung mainly after marriage. In one song (Song 54) the man sings to his beloved who is sad:

Seṭṭisi piḷḷe,
Saṭam kai selakāri,
Saṭam kai selayilu,
Saṅgaṭam vannatāṭi.

Translation:

O, traders’ daughter,
Wearing a traditional dress,
O, girl, does it bother you,
Wearing it in our fashion? (Song 54)

It is mentioned that his beloved is not from the Muduvan community, but is the daughter of a trader, a different class, and was brought here. She is sad since she is not sure about being able to dress like Muduvans. In another situation the woman sings a song (song 56) that describes the disappointment of her man:

Kōṭāli tōḷ pōṭu,
Maramuṭakyaṅ pōravane
Maramō uṭayilla,
Manasōṛnnu nikkunnu.

Translation:

O, man with the axe on your shoulder,
Leaving to fell trees,
It is not the tree,
But the heart that is broken. (Song 56)

Here her man is pictured as standing with an axe on his shoulder. He is disappointed because he tried to cut trees but failed in his attempt. The disappointment of the man is projected in the last line of the song. In Song 55 the woman sings about the sad condition of her life. After marriage, she is sent to a place/settlement called Koṭṭakuṭi which in her description is a wasteland. To reach that place itself is difficult, as she has to climb the hill called Ėnimala (literally, Ladder Hill) that is steep. In this song, the girl tries
to say that she is sent to such a wasteland by her parents without her consent and the song goes like this:

Ēnimalayēṟi erāṅgivanna Koṭṭakuṭi.

Pālātaṅja koṭṭakuṭiku,

Tayitāppa keṭṭivaccāre.

Translation:

I climb up and down the Ēnimala,

I reach Koṭṭakuṭi.

To this wasteland Koṭṭakuṭi,

My parents have sent me. (Song 55)

This song is unique because the young Muduvans usually marry only after courtship when there is both easy familiarity and desire for each other.

14. Counsel:

The Muduvans use love-lyrics to counsel the couple especially after marriage. In Song 57, the man advises the woman to serve him food:

Malakki maṅcu kappi,

Kuṭikūṭiki ālu varum.

Kūppiṭtu annam vayyi,

Kōṭiyana eḷamṭāriyē.

Translation:

When the hill is mist covered,

Thundering shall he come.
Invite him and serve him a meal

You lass, as tender as a creeper. (Song 57)

He calls her as “Kōṭiyana eḻamtāriyē” (a lass as tender as a creeper), which indicates that she is not well experienced and is probably married recently.

Initially he explains to her the possible way of his sudden entry to home. He says that while the hill is mist-covered and there is all possibility for a rain and thunder, he may come like the thunder itself. He also indicates it may rain and thunder at any time and so she should be well prepared to serve food to her man. The same song can be sung by a companion of the woman advising her to take care of the man. Almost the same mood prevails in another song (song 58) in which the man or the companion advices the woman to serve food:

Paṭṭaṭa nelloṭutta,
Parapayar nellu sikkī,
Āle pāttu annam veyi,
Annapaśam kilīye.

Translation:

Taking paddy from the granary and
Husking it on the mat,
Take care to whom you serve the rice
O parrot, of a gracious gait. (Song 58)
In another song (Song 59), the man asks the woman to give him a helping hand while he is climbing the ladder to reach on the tree-hut where Muduvans usually stay while guarding the field from wild animals. The song goes like this:

Ēṇi tiṭutiṭuke,
Ēṇikkāl nintalaya,
Ēnṭi varum tirumalaiku,
Eṭattukai tirumarivu.

Translation:

While the ladder is shaking,
And rungs are trembling,
Lend your left hand
For the husband who climbs it. (Song 59)

The image of the man climbing the shaking ladder is portrayed in this song. This song is more of a request rather than a counsel. There is another song (Song 41), which can be sung before or after marriage:

Veḷḷi veṭiyeṭuttu
Vēṭaiku pōravare,
Taḷḷi ninnu tī vecca
Kālamānu vilukam.

Translation:

Oh, those who go hunting with a gun
If you hide and shoot,

A horned-stag shall fall. (Song 41)

While considering this song at the time of courtship, the woman compares herself to a stag and advises the man to hide and shoot so that she will be conquered by him. Here she expresses her wish to be in the hands of the man. While considering the song sung after marriage, the mood shifts to advising her man who is going to forest with a gun to hunt. It is to be noted that the replacement of the bow and spear is seen in this song though the Muduvans do not have guns for hunting.

15. Domestic life:

Pictures of domestic life feature repeatedly in the love-songs of Muduvans, especially those sung in contexts after marriage. Daily activities and household work is embedded in these songs. In Song 61 the girl asks her man to bring flowers that make her tresses lovely:

Malakyu māṇalaku,

Malakyu kīle payaraḻaku.

Konṭakya pūvalaku,

Konṭuvāṭā pantārame.

Translation:

The deers beautify the hill,

The buds so do the vale,

You who sells flowers, bring me some
That make lovely my tresses. (Song 61)

As the hills and valley are beautified with deers and birds, the girl wishes to beautify her tresses and so asks her man to bring flowers. In another song (Song 62) the man gives a image of woman making garland. He sings:

İnāte vāḷaveṭi,
İlavāla nāreṭuttu,
Turati peṇgalaku,
Tuṭuttiṉiṭṭe pūntiram.

Translation:

Cutting tender-plantain
And peeling its soft-fibres,
Make garlands for
The elder women. (Song 62)

The woman weaves a garland by cutting tender plantain-stem and peels of its soft fibers. The song indicates the type of works women usually do in Muduvan culture. In another song (Song 63) the man asks the woman to clean the pyol, threshold and the rest of the house denoting the household work that the Muduvan women do:

Tiṅṇamuḷaku penne,
Tiruvāsapaṭi muḷaku.
Innum muḷaku penne,
Iniyuḷḷa kaṭṭaṭatte.

Translation:
Swab the pyol girl,
Swab the threshold,
Swab some more,
The rest of the floor. (Song 63)

16. Domestic Quarrels:

There are occasions of quarrel fight among married couples and such situations are well presented in some of the love-songs of Muduvans.

In one song (Song 64) the woman sings to her angry husband:

Maṇṭiyilu Māṭaṭayum,
Mantrīmakān cīṭeiḷutum,
Koṇṭayilu pūmuṭiyum,
Kōpamuḷḷa rājāve.

Translation:
Cattle will reach the shed,
The minister’s son will give away the wages,
O, king of wrathful temper,
With flowers on the top-knot. (Song 64)

She calls her man as “Kōpamuḷḷa rājāve” (angry king) and tells him that he need not get angry with her for the cattle has not reached their shed. The woman says that at the right time the cattle will return. Minister’s son is an
honorific the wife uses for her husband dispenses of wealth. As a continuation of the same song the woman sings the next song:

Rājāve nī,
Canṭrakulam sūryakulam,
Mantiyilu valakkapeśam,
Matikeṭṭa rājāve.

Translation:

Born of the lunar dynasty and solar dynasty,
Yet you speak unbecomingly in the cattle-shed.
O lord, o foolish king. (Song 65)

Here she says that even if he is born in a good family he speaks unbecoming words and gets angry as if he has lost his senses. It is clear that he is out of mind and hence as a continuation she again sings one more song in which she accuses her husband saying that he does not quite know what he says as he repeats the same problems. In the last part of the song she asks him to talk straight rather than just blabber and getting angry. She sings:

Tirippitṭu tiyūti,
Tīṛnta nyāyam tirippipēśi
Maṇṭiyiṭu nyāyam pēsu,
Matikeṭa rājāve

Translation:
Rekindling the embers,
Talking again about a solved problem!
Kneel down and talk justly
O, foolish king. (Song 66)

In the above three songs the woman calls her man rājāve (king) in different tones and suggesting different kinds of meaning. While he is presented as an angry king in the first song, he is presented as foolish king in the next two songs. As a reply to these songs the man sings:

Śaṅgu mutale,
Samutrakara kaṭālōram.
Kaṭalatanni tiṭiliṟumo?
Karantapāl mulayēṟumo?

Translation:
The beach scattered with councsh-shells
Lies by the sea.
Can the water of the sea be exhausted?
Can the milk return to the udder? (Song 67)

Here the man expresses his adamant nature and indicates that he is not ready for reconciliation. He says that the problem is not going to get over and for that he gives a beautiful comparison to that effect. He says that there is no chance of sea water getting exhausted and the milk going back to udder.
17. Reconciliation:

Among couples, after quarrelling the possibilities of getting reconciled to each other are given in the love-songs of this section. In Song 68 the man tries to reconcile with the woman with whom he has had fight. He calls her by soft words initially and finally asks her to return to be his love. This is the song:

Éntumuṭṭi elakkamuṭṭi,
Eḷavāḷa tanṭumuṭṭi,
Īnāta vāḷamuṭṭi,
Ennitattil enaṅgavāyo.

Translation:

When the plant matures and so does the cardamom,
When the tender plantain-tree matures,
When the plantain fruit ripens,
Will you surrender to me? (Song 68)

18. Sexual innuendoes:

Eroticism forms a vital segment in the uninhibited and spontaneous expressions of love-words by the Muduvans. Directly or indirectly expressing sexual desires or presenting sex related images are seen in many of the love-songs of Muduvans. In one song (Song 36) sung at the time of courtship the woman says:

Vānate pātu,
Valarṇṇatu raṇṭu tirukumuṭi
Tirukumuṭiyōratilu,
Raṇṭu tiruṭupayyanmāṟ pōkate.

Translation:
Staring at the skies,
Grew two hillocks.
Towards the hillocks,
Move two thieves. (Song 36)

Here in the song the woman indirectly compares two hillocks to her two breasts which denote that she is mature and attractive in the eyes of the men. The two thieves who come to the hillocks are compared to the two eyes of the man who courts her. In Song 69 the man expresses his desire to have sex with the woman whom he married. The first three lines do not have much connection but each presents sexual images. But in the last line he says that he is ready to father a child indicating his desire to have sexual relation. The song goes like this:

Kuttakkuttu ari veḷukum,
Kuḷanta vilayāṭā kuḷamunṭu.
Piriyumā pāl koṭu,
Pilḷavaram ūjan taruve.

Translation:
As you pound, grains are cleansed,
A pond is there for children to play in.

Give me some milk with love

And I’ll give you an infant. (Song 69)

19. Socio-cultural changes:

Socio-cultural changes are expressed in many love-songs of Muduvans, sung mainly when they have leisure time. Such songs deal with the changes in life style in the course of time. The influence of modern elements due to their interaction with mainstream society is seen in some of their songs. The elder people of the community sing such songs to make the younger generation aware of the life they had in the past which is different from life now. In one such song (Song 71) the man sings:

Kūraṉīṭu keṭi
Kuṭiyirunna akkālam.
Kāraviṇu keṭi
Kannāṭi pāppatu ikkālam.

Translation:

Putting up a thatched house
Did we live in those days.
Building in a house of mortar,
We live these days,
Gazing into fancy mirrors. (Song 71)
The man here sings about the way they lived in small hut instead of the big houses made up of cement and bricks. In another song (song 73) he sings about the changes in hair style. The earlier custom of growing hair among Muduvan men is now replaced by the urbanised hair-cut. He sings:

Uccikuṭumbi

Taṭi mūṭaratu akkālam.

Kōna krāppum

Kombusīppum ikkālam.

Translation:

It was beauty to

Wear top-knot and beard those days.

Haircuts and crop-cuts

And combs are of these days. (Song 73)

Women too sing about the socio-cultural changes that have occurred in their life-style. In Song 72 the woman sings about the changes in dress style in the course of time. This is the song:

Ottasutti puṭava keṭi,

Oluṅga naṭannatu akkālam.

Ippo tāntān šīla,

Šamboṭi lavukka.

Translation:

Wearing a single cloth as garment
Did we walk upright in those days.

Now he gives me a saree

And a waist-jacket to go with it. (Song 72)

This song narrates the past when they used only one long piece of dress to cover themselves. But nowadays they have saree, and blouse to cover their body. In another Song 74 the woman sings to narrate how they carried earthen-pots to fetch water in their olden days. But nowadays they go to the shop to get a plastic or brass pot of the right size they need. Even the words ‘shop’ and ‘size’ is used in the third line of the song, “Ṣōppukaṭa tuṟannu saisāke koṭameṭutu”, denoting the influence they have from the mainstream society. The song goes like this:

Maṅcaṭṭi tūkki,

Tanniku piyatu akkālam.

Ṣōppukaṭa tuṟannu saisāke koṭameṭutu

Taṇṇiku pōṇṭatu ikkālam.

Translation:

Carrying the earthen pots

For fetching water, was in those days.

At the new wares-shop choosing a brass pot,

To fetch water, is in these days. (Song 74)

The above songs of this section have the peculiarity of expressing directly the changes that have occurred in their life. These songs are
devoid of imagination but deals with real facts especially for those who stay near to the mainstream society. These songs also show their talent in composing songs dealing with real life experiences. These songs also throw light on the fact that soon or later their oratures will be replaced with film songs or any other literatures of mainstream society and hence the need to document them as early as possible.

20. Landscape:

The love-songs of Muduvans give visual pictures of their environment in a poetic manner. In the previous sections too, to express various feelings, landscape is referred to. But this section deals exclusively with songs that speak of the landscape alone. For example, Song 76 sung either by the man or woman narrates the particular features of the various places where Muduvans live or their life associated. The song goes like this:

Kūṭatakku Kūṭakāṭu,
Nāyatakkku Nāgamala,
Kāttatikum Kavalasūji,
Kambaḷitūkum Śālapāra,
Sōṟuku Sōlakāṭu,
Sukhamulḷa rāsiyuma.

Translation:

Kūṭakāṭu for counsel,
Nāgamala for justice,
Kavalasūji for a cool breeze,
Śālapāra for trading shawls,
Śōlakātu for food-grains,
O, this land of plenty! (Song 76)

This song illustrates how each place is famous for in their perception or how they associate each place with certain features that are part of their life. What they want to exhibit is that their land is prosperous and peaceful.

With the same mood in another song (Song 77) either the man or woman sings about the prosperity of their land:

Mānaṭayum Vaṭapāra,
Mayilaṭayum Śāntapāra,
Tēnaṭayum mutuvākkuṭi,
Tēṭivarum lakṣamkōṭi.

Translation:
Deer aplenty in Vaṭapāra,
Peacocks aplenty in Śāntapāra,
Honey aplenty in the Muduva land,
Sought after by millions. (Song 77)

Here it is said that Vaṭapāra is a place where deers are in plenty and Śāntapāra is a place where peacocks are in plenty. The Muduva settlements are rich with honey and many come in search of its resources.
The knowledge that they have regarding the various places in the mountains are well presented in these songs. Actual details are imaginatively presented in poetry and one has the unique experience of making a verbal tour of the Muduvan world.

21. History:

As mentioned in the first chapter the Muduvans are of the belief that they came from Madurai in the Western Tamil Nadu plains when the Pandyas ruled there in the ancient times. This historical reference is highlighted there in their love-songs (Song 78). The song presents how King Pandya set out with troops to the accompaniment of trumpet and clarion. When this song is sung in the context of a wedding it reveals that the bridegroom has started for the bride’s place with his relatives and friends. The song goes like this:

Sīkuḻalūti,
Siṅganāṟ paṭakūṭi,
Ponnukuḻalūti,
Puṟapeṭa Pāṇṭiẏār.

Translation:

Playing on the sweet flute
And blowing the royal trumpet,
Playing the golden flute,
Did the Pāṇṭiẏār set forth. (Song 78)
22. Virtue:

Here in this section there is one song (Song 79) that deals with the theme of virtue. The main purpose of this song is to make others aware of the some general principles and systems. The man says that there are chances of snakes and scorpions in rotten trees but there will be flowers on a virgin’s tresses, thus denoting the virtue of the woman. To the Muduvans, it is the duty of both the man and woman to uphold morality and virtue in life. This is reflected in their strict community behaviour. The song goes like this:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Paṭamaratilu,} \\
\text{Pāmbu varum tēḷu varum.} \\
\text{Taṭavāṇṭi koṇṭayilu,} \\
\text{Tappāmā pūvirikyum.}
\end{align*}
\]

Translation:

On a withered tree,

Snake and scorpion may crawl about.

A virgin’s tresses

Flowers shall always adore. (Song 79)

The love-songs of Muduvans touch on many aspects of life and are performed at various situations. The love-songs are in the form of dialogure reveal the inner feelings and emotions. The transliterated and translated versions of love-songs which were not mentioned in the above
discussions follow immediately. The Muduvans themselves classified to the researcher whether the singer in the context of the song or dramatic personae is a man or woman, though either may sing it while sharing it with the researcher. This is indicated in brackets following the English translation.

22) Unnaye toṭṭatakku,
Un anṇan sākṣi sonnatakku,
Maṟutukaṭa sayyalile,
Vaccirippēm kaimarunnu.

Translation:
For (the malady used by) my touching you,
-Your brother giving witness to it-
By the bull’s stable,
Shall I give you the remedy! (Man)

32) Koyyāpalame,
Kōvayilu vikkum paḷame,
Vāḷapalame,
Vāṭi piḷle ōṭi pōlām.

Translation:
You guava-fruit
Sold in Kovai,
You plantain-fruit,
Come, let’s run away! (Man)

34) Kolayāḷi kalavāḷi,
Kaṭumayulḷa śanṭāḷā,
Kōṭati munvayatu,
Kōṭār vititāre.

Translation:

In the court
The judge has pronounced
You a murderer, a thief and
A cruel wretch! (Woman)

60) Nillaṭi penne,
Nerutaṭi ninte kāḷnaṭa.
Sollaṭi penne,
Ninte sontakinavanōṭu sollaṭi.

Translation:

Stop there, girl.
Stop your ambling.
Talk girl,
Talk to your husband. (Man)

75) Ōṭa nillōṭa,
Osantanikum pūntōppu.
Tāḷam ceyum māppilakkun,
Tanipīṭaku nilōṭa.

Translation:

Big is the pond that stays on

In the high flower-grove.

For the groom who comes to wed,

Verily, it is the best to fetch water from. (Woman)

This chapter presented the Āśaippāṭṭu (Love-songs) of Muduvans and the next chapter will focuss on other genres of songs.