CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

An in-depth ethnomusicological study on vattakali music dance performance reveals the fact that it is a symbolic expression of the Paniya life and culture. It is a miniature form of Paniya society expressed in a performance context so much so that it gives a natural, genuine picture of Paniya life. The socio-cultural context, the community involvement, the festival mood of the group and the interactions of the performers and the audience in their own dialect really make a real Paniya world on the performance stage. The vattakali music dance performance does play a significant role in preserving and promoting the Paniya life and culture.

A. PANIYA MUSIC TRADITION

The Paniyas have got a good music tradition, which is treasured with lots of songs and dances. Almost all spheres of their life are associated with music and dance. Vattakali songs, work songs (Nattipattu and Okal pattu), entertainment songs (Naadan pattu), story songs (Katha pattu), death songs (Pena pattu), and lullaby (Urakka pattu) include their music repository. The Paniyas dance for all festival occasions, ritual ceremonies, and life-cycle ceremonies. Vattakali dance is the common performance for all the occasions except death ceremony. Since it is a joyful dance, it is not performed during death rites. Kambala dance is the work dance performed as part of the paddy transplantation work (nattipani) which is facing endangerment now. Thullal is another form of dance performed as part of the religious rituals like deivam kanal, thira and vettattu.

The Paniyas’ musical instruments tudi and kuzhal give a good number of tunes (melodies) and rhythm patterns for their musical performances. All the men folk in the community, young, and old are expert performers of tudi and kuzhal and they learn this through enculturation. In community gatherings during leisure time they play these instruments. The Paniya society gives due respect and high social status esteem to skilled performers in tudi and kuzhal. There are many vattakali chollukals
expressing this idea. For marriage alliance, the relatives of girl’s party look for such boys who are skilled in tudi or kuzhal performance.

**B. VATTAKALI MUSIC**

*Vattakali* is a musical dance performance of the Paniya society. It is performed in all contexts, except death rituals to express happiness, community solidarity and community’s aesthetic talents. When we think of the musical aspect in vattakali performance, we have to consider primarily its *tudi* rhythms, its songs sung by the womenfolk, its *kuzhal* tunes and the dance performed by the group. Here the whole performance becomes a musical expression.

There are four elements in *Vattakali music* namely, 1) Vattakali songs, 2) Vattaakali Tunes, 3) Vattakali Rhythms, 4) Vattakali Dance.

1. Vattakali songs

They are called vattakali *Chollukal*. They are two to eight lines songs. These are in oral form, sung in Paniya dialect. Each region in Wayanad will have its version of *Vattakali* songs. The songs are sung usually by the women folk. Elders in the group know a good number of *Vattakali* songs. This performance is called a *kathaparachil* (story telling). Based on themes there are five types of vattakali songs. They are: 1. Friendship songs, 2. Family songs, 3. Work songs, 4. Nature songs, 5. Humorous songs.

2. Vattakali tunes

The tunes of vattakali songs are simple in nature. They use maximum three to five notes in a scale. Medium pitch is used in all these songs so that all in the performance group can actively participate in the music session. Most of them are the same or similar; tetra tonic or penta tonic. This tune shows that the structure and style of this music is very ancient in nature.

From my field observation and analysis, I would say that *Kuzhal* music is similar to the *magudi* (a pipe instrument) music of the snake charmers. It is very close to *nagaswaram* music in tune and effect. *Nagaswaram* literally means 'the sound of the snake' and *magudi* is an aerophone used by nomadic people for snake show
performance. In addition, it is a reed instrument where as flute need not be. Hence, I would say that it couldn’t be included in the flute category. This may be because Paniya society was a food gathering group, living in the forest. Such group were used magudi type kuzhal whereas flute traditions comes from the sheep-gracing (shepherded) society. (e.g. Santals). They are settled communities and their life style also is more organized one. Such communities go for settled cultivation where as the Paniyas are only domesticated labourers. Most of them do not have their own agricultural land.

Paniyas are basically timid and quite people. Their music also is quite and simple in nature [tune and rhythm]. There are three kuzhal tunes for Vattakali performance. They are named as Kaya tudi-kuzhal, Parakameethal- kuzhal and Nakku tudi-kuzhal. Same name is used for kuzhal tune and tudi rhythm.

3. Vattakali rhythms

Vattakali rhythms are simple and very much communitarian in nature. Every body in the community know these rhythm patterns so much so that as soon as they hear them they shake their body and begin the dance. More than vattakali tunes, rhythms influence their life very much. Every aspect of their life is very much rhythmic in nature. One of the informants (Chandrar) told me that a child is born by hearing the tudi rhythms. It was the custom in the past that when a baby is born in a village the whole members gather together and have vattakali dance and community meal to express their joy and unity.

There are three types of tudi rhythms used for Vattakali, such as Kaya tudi, Parakameethal and Nakku tudi. These rhythms are similar to 6/8 or 4/4 type of rhythms in Western style or Adi tala or eka tala-thisra jati in Carnatic style. Each rhythm is indigenous in nature that there is variation in each performance.

Vattakali tunes and rhythms reveal that Paniya life is rhythmic, and dynamic in nature. They give more importance to rhythms than tunes or melody in music. All their performance are rhythmic and they will not loose or brake the rhythm. That is why though they live in uncertainties; they follow certain rhythm in their life. The rhythms and tunes may vary, but they will not go out of the Vattakali performance structure as well as Paniya life-structure.
Vattakali rhythm is a combination of three tudi, one big and other two small in size, being played in harmonious manner. Three performers will get into the speed and rhythm of the dance and it will not break its tempo or rhythm. The notes and timing of the big tudi is different form the other two small tudi yet they will not break the rhythm or the speed. This is the special effect of this performance.

4. Vattakali Dance

Vattakali dance is a combination of three musical elements, such as songs, kuzhal tunes and tudi rhythms. All the elements of this performance are totally related to one another. One cannot perform Vattakali without tudi or without kuzhal. This musical performance reveals one of the important aspects of the Paniya life namely the inter-relatedness of one person to another, one family to another, one community to another. When the dance reaches its climax stage, the performers enter into a stage where they all feel as one body, one mind and one heart. They take steps in one rhythm; they swing their bodies with one music; and they sing the song with one melody and rhythm. This is the climax unity-experience of the Paniya community in Vattakali performance. Each one forgets their individual identity and become part of a group. A natural movement from the individual mind to the community mind takes place in Vattakali performance. This is an important experience of this performance. (Movement of individual consciousness to community consciousness and vice versa) This I have seen in all the case studies; Vishu celebration context, marriage context and festival context.(chapter III)

Vattakali is a musical-dance performance of the whole group. The group consists of men, women; both young and old, and the children. Their dreams, aspirations, inner urges etc. have taken shape in the form of a musical dance in the background of kuzhal music and tudi rhythm. Usually the Moopan of the village plays the kuzhal and the skilled men folk perform tudi. It is a musical expression of the Paniya community in its natural set up. It is also the life expression of the Paniya community in a spontaneous manner.

Usually Vattakali dance continue for two to three hours. On special occasions like marriage, temple feast or village feast it will continue for six to eight hours. All these performance usually take place in the evening or night. In marriage context,
people come as individual to take part in the marriage. By participating in Vattakali and other rituals they became part of a larger community.

C. MAJOR FINDINGS

When we look at Vattakali, the musical dance performance as an organic unit, it reflects many aspects of Paniya life and culture. Being a living folk form it expresses the pulse of the Paniya community. Perhaps this is the only performance for the Paniyas, where the whole community takes part in it actively. Other communities like Mullu Kurumbas, Christians and Nairs also have vattakali dances. But the Paniya vattakali stands apart in terms of its style, features and community participation. Some of the major findings, observations and analysis on Vattakali performance, which express the culture and worldview of the Paniya society, are given below.

1. Circular form of Vattakali dance represents the cyclical nature of Paniya life. Their festivals, rituals, concept of time and seasons, etc. are cyclical. Circle is the symbol of wholeness. Paniya life also is holistic in nature. It is related to their past, present, and future. The special reverence and memory they keep for the ancestors, the respect of the cosmic elements (Pancha bhoota), the rites of the dead (penapattu) are some of the signs of this character. Being in the circle will have some other merits to the community and to the individual. The first one is, the community energy is not dispersed or disintegrated rather it will be centered. Second one is, in a circle group communication is at an equal basis and direct. Nobody dominates or imposes leadership on the other, so much so that each one experiences a sense of dignity and freedom in the group. The third merit is, in a circular movement nobody looses one’s rhythm or track. The other on your left and right in the circle will guard your movement and you will be safe in the circle throughout the performance. This enkindles self-confidence in each one of them in the community.

2. The dance style is quite unique in nature. It is not a vigorous dance. There are no jumping or taking steps in fast tempo; rather it is an earth bound dance. They move their feet slowly according to the rhythm of the tudi: There is a peculiar movement involved here. With the swinging of the
whole body in a circular fashion, they move their legs rhythmically. This shows that they are very much rooted and grounded on earth. They have a strong foundation for their life that is being earth-bound. They consider Earth as their Mother. This aspect is expressed well in their vishu celebration.

3. Tudi rhythm tells the truth that their whole life is rhythmic in nature. From beginning to end throughout the dance the whole troupe keeps up the tempo and rhythm. Their life also is the same. For work, eating, game, doing the ritual, building a house, paddy cultivation, learning, walking etc. they follow a rhythm, through which they are sure that they would reach the goal. Paniya rhythm of life is distinct from that of any other group. In order to understand this group at a deeper level we have to follow their rhythm, which is manifested in their vattakali performance.

4. The participation of the whole community in vattakali performance expresses the nature of Paniya social life. The whole community is allowed to take part in the performance. The structure of the performance is such that anybody can enter into the dance circle at any time. Paniya society as a whole is communitarian in nature, not individualistic. Sharing of life in every aspect is part and parcel of their very being. For any special occasion the whole community comes together and they help one another and share the burden of the function. It is quite spontaneous not compelled by any external pressure. This could be seen in their marriage celebration, Vishu celebration and death rites, etc. The value they project through this performance is that we are all related to one another and we need each other for our existence. This relationship is not only extended to human beings but to the whole universe (cosmic relationship). When they begin the performance, they pay homage to Mother Earth, gods of the four corners and the Sun god.

5. The setting, make-up, and costumes they have for this performance are quite natural. This also tells something about their culture. They are very close to nature and their habitat. They wear their traditional dress and ornaments and take part in the performance. On usual performance, they
are in their casual dress and there is no make-up at all. It is not a ‘make-belief’ world, but a real world on the stage. This is the greatness of this performance.

6. Paniyas are open-minded people. They are not rigid in their life, performances and worldview. I have seen this in vattakali dance. They are open for improvisation. There is no strict rule with regard to the songs, the number of performers, the costumes or the accompaniments. They are open to new ideas, beliefs, and cultures in life. So they absorb a lot from other cultures. (e.g. Kurathi natakam of the Paniyas is an imitation of the Kuravan Kurathi natakam, which is seen in Palakad, Trissur area).

7. With regard to the concept of body and relationship they give respect to one another. There is no inhibition with regards to one’s own body. In the performance context men and women mix with freely. They dance together in the same circle, share murukkan and even drinks. In fact this is one of the free occasions where the boys meet the girls and make healthy relationship with them.

8. A sense of humour is seen in vattakali performance. It is expressed in their dance as well as in their vattakali chollukal. (e.g. song nos. 10, 12, 25). In a free, relaxed manner they tease each other, speak ill of the other, etc. This reveals the fact that Paniyas are not much worried about their life, they take life in a light manner. So much so, that their life is not filled with tensions and anxieties. They have learned to live in the present. Compare to other communities the suicidal tendency is very less among the Paniyas.

9. Vattakali is celebration of Paniya life itself. It is an expression of their happiness and companionship. Though their daily life is filled with agonies and trifles, they raise above all their pains and struggles and enjoy life in its fullness. By their sharing of life, they forget their divisions and pains and rejuvenate themselves for a better future.

10. Vattakali songs reflect Paniya life and culture. Some of them give a picture about their love relationship. They consider it as quite natural and the elders encourage healthy boy-girl relationship. Usually they respect one
another. Some other *Vattakali* songs give details about household matters. It clearly gives a picture about family life and social life of the Paniya society. In a family, husband-wife relationship is important. Yet there are illegal relationship by men and women. Men folk have upper status and power on the family now. Women folk have to bear the burden of the family. In some cases husbands are lazy and they will not go for work. Some other songs give details about their work conditions and economic status. The experience they have at the work site, with landlords and their officers, the wages they get, the hardship of the workload, etc. are narrated in some of the songs. Paniyas were slaves, and the slavery continues even today with a different form. Many songs give lots of information about Paniya social relations. Their relationships with in the community and others are expressed in their songs and music. Majority of the songs I collected deals with love relationship. Some of the songs are filled with double meaning [*dhwani*] or poetic imageries.

11. *Vattakali* is one of the means for the community to express freely their pend-up emotions and repressed feelings. Being a slave society they are not allowed to express their opinion or resentment in a direct way. During the music and dance they spontaneously make comments on their masters and meaningless sounds and howling (*hi...hi...hoi...hoi...ya...ya...*) to release their pent-up emotions. Also along with the song, they add obscene words or bad words in a humorous way. So much so that after one performance the group look much relaxed and free.

12. A sense of sacredness is seen in the *vattakali* performance. They give much importance to religious beliefs and rituals. Religion is part of their every day life. The performance begins only after the ritual pooja done by the *mooppan* (the priest) on the *Thine* (Sacred place inside the house). He then puts up a lighted lamp on the *Thare* in the courtyard where the dance takes place. He remembers the gods, goddesses and ancestors and receives their blessing for the performance and for the special ceremony. Only then they begin *tudi* performance that is followed by *vattakali* dance.
13. Kuzhal music in vattakali performance tells something about the Paniya society. There are only three main notes (tones) and some other sub-notes in Paniya vattakali music. All are in their own dialect and its themes also indigenous in nature. It is in tetra tonic (three notes) or maximum penta tonic (five notes) style. Some of the Kuzhal music has got certain words that convey a certain meaning. Generally, this music reveals the fact that the Paniyas were food-gathering group (wanderers) living in the forest. In such society, there is equal status for men and women; in a family context they work together, eat together, walk together, and take decisions together.

14. The kali (play) aspect of this performance tells a lot about the Paniya’s worldview. They believe that life is a game or play. We are all actors in the hands of God (Padachavan). Whatever happens to us is according to the plan of God (Vidhi), which we cannot alter. The playful, humorous aspects of human life are also expressed in this dance. In the midst of poverty, disease and troubles they are able to dance with the rhythm of tudi, which they believe as the rhythm of nature. They are also aware of the impermanent nature of existence. We all are travelers and we have to go to the underneath world (Keelokam) and join with our ancestors.

15. As agricultural labourers, they have close contact with Mother Earth and Nature. In olden times, they lived in the forest. Vattakali during Vishu celebration (harvest festival) reveals their close relationship with Nature. They perform Bhoomi pooja (rituals to Mother Earth) and give offering to her in the form of fruits, paddy, flowers and all agriculture produce. They give rest to Mother Earth on Vishu day. The vithu ideel (sowing the seed) ritual on the third day after Vishu also expresses their veneration to Nature.

16. Vattakali highlights the role of women in Paniya society. They have equal status with men. Women take the leadership in vattakali. Olden days only women perform the Vattakali. Men were playing the tudi and kuzhal. (It is told by the informants Chimban Mooppan (80) and Velukan Mooppan (60) but there is no other evidence). Now men also take part in the dance. They form separate group at the performance stage. Vattakali songs (Chollukal) are sung by womenfolk. They have a good repertoire of songs that are in
Besides that being a food gathering tribe, men and women have equal status in the community. One old woman commented during a marriage ceremony, 'it is a blessing to have girl child in a Paniya family, because they get 'bride price' (bride wealth) for the marriage'. Parents like girl child because they are more loyal to them in their old age.

An important psychological process takes place in vattakali performance. It has got three phases namely pre-performance, performance, post-performance. People who come with an individual mind-set (consciousness), by participating in the music-dance performance, a change take place in them and they become part of the community mind-set (consciousness). They go out of the performance stage as new persons with a different worldview that is communitarian in nature. This movement from individual consciousness to community consciousness in vattakali performance may be called as Vattakali Process. This process would be cyclic in nature so much so that each vattakali performance creates and re-creates Paniya society.

Vattakali performance- a critique

When we look at the present Paniya situation, at least in some contexts I have seen negative attitude towards vattakali performance especially by the younger generation. They were not so much enthusiastic about this performance and did not show much interest in participating in a vattakali dance. There are many reasons for this phenomenon.

1. The impact of 'modern culture' on Paniya life. Today Paniya society is much exposed to the modern mass media like cinema, television, and cable networks. They are attracted by the cinematic dances and brake dances. In every Paniya house we can see the pictures of the film stars in various styles and fashion. The younger generation easily imitates these styles and fashion.

2. Due to poverty and unemployment they have to migrate to cities and other places for livelihood. This has affected their community life and traditions. They had been encultured into other cultural values and traditions.
3. The impact of the 'mainstream cultures' and religion. The signs and messages they get from the 'mainstream cultures' are that their culture is 'primitive' and not good. So naturally, they show an aversion to their own customs and art-forms and accept the life style of the affluent groups as the best and to be imitated.

4. The anti-social elements that creep into the community spoil the group spirit. The drinking habit of the men folk, the misuse of womenfolk by the tribals and non-tribals, the conflicts and division create by the political parties among the Paniya villages, the disputes between the families, etc. discourage the community to perform a vattakali in a free atmosphere.

5. The present tribal development model is not enhancing the tribal culture properly. The planners and executives are not sensitive to the tribal culture and models in designing or implementing the projects like the educational programmes, the developmental programmes, and other socio-cultural initiatives. So eventually they become alien to their own culture and traditions. One of the adivasis in Vattachira village told me that they do not have the Chemmi (the priest) in their village to conduct their marriage and other rituals. So they started following the Hindu customs and rituals in their marriage. (Vattachira farm is a government initiative to settle the tribals who were scattered in different part of the Kozhikode district).

6. In some villages I have seen the absence of tudi and kuzhal as their own, which also discourage the group to perform vattakali dance. The above-mentioned issues are some of the reasons for this state of life. The scarcity of materials to make tudi and kuzhal, the increase in expense and the lack of encouragement by the community itself are the other causes for this situation. One of the informants, Raju Naduvil (27) shared this view.

7. Another observation I have to make is the impact of Tourism on Vattakali performance and other folk-art forms. Government agencies and other groups make use of these art-forms for tourist week celebrations and other public functions. Sometimes the organizers are not much sensitive to these performances and the performers, so much so that it will become 'a mere tourist show' loosing its life and flavour.
Kuzhal music and tunes in Paniya ritual performances also reflect Paniya culture and life. Some of the findings are:

1. According to the Paniyas, kuzhal is a divine instrument given by god and so its tunes are god’s voices. The kuzhal performer has a special status in the society. One of the informants said that kuzhal symbolize the Mooppan of the village. Usually the village head (Mooppan) is an expert kuzhal performer. It is believed that only those who have the divine power can play the kuzhal in the proper way. For vattakali, kuzhal is a must and only by hearing the kuzhal music tudi player starts it performance that is followed by the dance.

2. The kuzhal music creates a special effect and feeling on the participants according to the situation. For example during death ritual, the kuzhal for the pole really leads the participants in to deep sorrow and grief. We could hear their loud cry during the function. This music gives consolation and peace to the community. They feel the presence of God, through the music.

3. Paniya kuzhal and its music are different from other tribe’s music and musical instruments. E.g. the Adiya tribe has got kuzhal. They use it only for ritualistic contexts and not for entertainment dance like in vattakali dance. The seel (melody) of the kuzhal also varies for the Adiya tribe. For the Paniya most of the seels are connected with vattakali chollukal. Therefore, Paniya kuzhal music gives a cultural identity to the Paniya society. Also they do have a good variety of kuzhal tunes (18 types), which shows that Paniyas are having their own ancient musical tradition. Some of the musical presentations express Paniya uniqueness as an ethnic group.

4. Kuzhal and its music are considered as sacred by the Paniya people. For all the rituals they use kuzhal, to invoke the gods and spirit of the ancestors. ‘Deivam kanal’ (seeing the god) is an important ritual among them. For this ritual various Kuzhal tunes are used for various gods. Vellattu kuzhal, Vellattu Kali, Muthassi kuzhal and Mari Kuzhal are some of them. Their belief is that the god comes to their midst only by hearing the kuzhal music. Therefore, kuzhal music brings the blessings of gods, as well as it unites Paniyas in a spiritual realm.
5. Different type of music is being played for different occasions (contexts). There are 101 kuzhal tunes of which many are forgotten because of its oral nature. Kuzhal music is like nagaswaram music because it is also a reed instrument. It is like snake charmers magudi music but its tunes are different. In a music performance, it stands out due to its high pitch and primitive style. Kuzhal seels (melodies) are simple in style having three to five notes (tetratonic to pentatonic) and it is played repeatedly in a particular context. Same melody will be played differently at different occasions.

Like kuzhal, tudi also is considered as a divine instrument by the Paniyas. They believe that tudi sound is God’s sound and tudi is given by God. So with great respect and preparation one touches the tudi. Both kuzhal and tudi are indigenous musical instruments. The Paniyas themselves make them. There are various rhythms (thalams) and styles of performance for various occasions. The Paniya can recognize them by hearing the sound from far away. From the rhythm they are able to predict, that what programme or function is being conducted in that village. Some of the important observations and findings regarding tudi and its performance are given below.

1. For the Paniya, tudi gives a social identity. Tudi brings people together for a performance. Tudi unites Paniya community. It gives a tempo and rhythm to Paniya life. Tudi is not an individual object, but it is considered as a family, which consists of three tudi (one big one and two small ones). Only men folk play tudi and all the male members (young and old) is supposed to be expert in tudi performance. One of the requirements of a boy for marriage is that he should be an expert tudi player. Paniyas considered tudi and kuzhal as their ancestral property (pithru swathu). So the ownership is vested on the Moopan of the village.

2. Tudi is a symbol of Paniya culture and it is their identity marker. For all the cultural activity, they use tudi. It has got great cultural impact on Paniya society. Tudi gives life to the gathering; it gives the mood and rhythm to a group. For festivals and marriages tudi takes the lead, to gather the people together, to inspire them for the performance (vattakali), etc. Tudi vibrates with Paniya mind and its sounds are the pulse of the Paniya people. Other tribal groups have got similar instruments. But Paniya tudi differs from them in its shape and style of performance.
3. Tudi plays an essential role for all ritualistic practices. It is considered as a sacred object. For tudi, Paniya give even the status of human being. Tudi performance is needed for life cycle ceremonies, temple festivals, seasonal gathering, curing the sick, house blessing, etc. For the ‘Deivamkanal’ ritual (seeing the god) tudi is needed. With the rhythm and mood of tudi the priest get the possession of the god or sprits. Tudi is needed for the dance of the gods (thullal). It is very much needed for vattakali. So the tudi embraces all aspects of Paniya ritual life. They believe that tudi’s sound is god’s sound and it creates certain emotional vibrancy among them. The rhythms impart special divine experience on the participants. Tudi sound and rhythm leads some of the participants to into the stage of trance.

4. Twenty tudi rhythms are collected from the field. There will be many more rhythms (thalam), one informant mentioned. It is produced in the mind of the performer and he plays it spontaneously. Lots of variations in tunes and tempo take place due to the oral nature of tudi performance. They follow mostly simple rhythm patterns like 4/4 or 6/8 (common rhythm). There may not be much difference, when we analysis it according to the parameter of Indian or Western music. But in its totality each rhythm is different form the other: the effect or the experience of the music is different.

We have seen that how the vattakali performance unveils the Paniya life and culture. From the above discussions and analysis, we also have seen some of the important elements that mould Paniya society. They are the musical instruments (tudi-kuzhal), the vattakali performance, the village system based on kinship behaviours, the communion with the ancestors, and the intimate relationship with the cosmic elements, gods, and goddesses. These are the core-elements of Paniya life and culture. From their experience and local knowledge of the ancestors, they have developed a system to maintain these elements in their life. This core preserving system of the Paniyas is centered on their thine-thare-kavu pattern.

Core Preserving Pattern of the Paniyas

Thine is the most sacred and important place (sthaanam or idam) for the Paniyas. It is an elevated place set apart for sacred matters, which is seen inside the Paniya house. It is the abode of their ancestor’s spirits, clan god, and other important gods. Thare is the
sacred platform built in front of the courtyard where Mooppan resides. It is having the
sacred trees, symbols of their gods and goddesses, and the nagathan god (snake god).
All the important ceremonies in the village take place in front of the thare. Kavu is the
sacred grove that is seen a bit away from the village. It belongs to all the Paniya
villages that are nearby and on special occasions like vishu or onam they go to the
kavu and do the rituals and ceremonies.

Paniya performances, kuzhal – tudi and vattakali, have got direct relationship
with all these three sacred institutions. All the performances start and end in thine and
in the middle it will go to thare and kavu. Mooppan or Chemmi begin the performance
after doing the necessary rituals on the thine, he lights a wick, and keeps on the thare.
After the performance, they keep the tudi and kuzhal on the thine. In all the cases i.e.,
the marriage ceremony, the vishu celebration, and the TUDI festival, I have seen this
pattern. During the celebration, they remember and recollect the core- elements of
their life and bring them to the performance context. For this purpose the thine, thare,
and kavu provide the space (idam) for the rituals and ceremonies. This is very clearly
expressed in vishu celebration. This shows that Paniyas have a very strong, deep-
rooted relationship with thine-thare-kavu pattern.

Another important element in the Paniya life is the journey of the Paniya from
center to periphery and vice versa. It is a continuous journey, which embraces all
aspects of Paniya life. Thine-thare-kavu pattern is the guiding force for this movement
is seen in their vattakali performance as well as in their religious realm. In vattakali
performance, hearing the music and rhythm of kuzhal and tudi which is performed at
the center of the courtyard, the whole group dance around the kuzhal and tudi
performers and slowly the dance reaches out to the whole community. At certain
moment of the performance, some of the performers go to trance and they starts dance
with their ancestors spirits. (muthassi kali). Finally, at the heights of the performance
they dance with the gods and goddesses. (vellattu kali and mari kali). They will not
stop the dance at the climax stage, rather slowly they will bring the group down to the
ground (thare) and to oneself. Here lies the skill and wisdom of the kuzhal and tudi
performers

In the religious field, they travel with their gods and ancestors from thine to
kavu and other religious centers of the periphery (temples, churches and mosques).
They participate in their festivals and they have strong beliefs in those gods too. However, they are not washed away by the tide of the affluent cultures and their belief patterns. Chimban Mooppan (80) shared with me one instance. He said that they have not lost their goddess like Vallooramma and Mariamma due to the invasion of the affluent groups on their kavu at Mananthavady, Kalpetta and other places. Rather they brought back their gods and goddesses to their thine, thare and kavu. So they have mari thare and vallooramma thare in their village itself. This I see as a wise and prudent mechanism they have adopted, which is important, to safeguard their gods and customs from dominant forces. For this also, their thine-thare –kavu pattern provides a space.

CONCLUSION

In our study, we have seen how the Paniya community celebrates its life in marriage ceremony, vishu celebration, and TUDI festival. Tudi- kuzhal performance and vattakali performance are the essential factors in all these celebrations. From these celebrations and the performances, we have identified the five core elements of Paniya society that shape and determine their life and culture. They are: the tudi and kuzhal, the vattakali performance, the village system exercised through kinship behaviours, the communion with the ancestors and the cosmic relationship.

Tudi and kuzhal are one of the important elements in Paniya’s life. They are not merely musical instruments but they take the role of an identity marker. All the male members of the Paniya community are experts in either of these instruments. These instruments are considered as divine objects, which have got wider social, religious and cultural significance in the Paniya life. Another important element, which gives life and entertainment to the society, is the Paniya’s vattakali performance. In its totality, it is the life expression of the Paniya community. Through the vattakali performance the whole community is energized and they create new life in their living context. The Paniya Ooru system (village structure) though it is not manifested today, is very much active among them through their kinship behaviours. The Mooppan and Chemmi status are very much respected, their clan and clan gods are venerated, and their customs and beliefs are observed and preserved. They strongly believe that this system has got certain role in keeping their community stable and united.
Communion with the ancestor's spirits is another important feature of the Paniya life. Their great grand parents, Uthappan and Uthamma and all other ancestors are well remembered and venerated during all their celebrations. In fact their ceremonies start with paying homage to their ancestors who are dwelling in the thine. In deivam kanal ritual the Chemmi brings all the Pancha bootha and the gods to the thare, and pays homage to the four directions of the Cosmos and invokes the blessings of all gods for the ceremony. This way of intimate relationship with the gods and the cosmic elements is also an important feature of the Paniya life.

To preserve the core-elements in the Paniyas' life, they have developed a mechanism in their religious (symbolic) realm, namely, thine–thare-kavu pattern. It is the core of their religious belief system. The Paniya life and its manifestations are centered on this pattern. This we have seen clearly in all the case studies, in their vattakali performances, in their music tradition, and in the construction process of tudi and kuzhal. From this analysis, we come to the conclusion that for the Paniya society for the maintenance and preservation of their core-elements in life, they create unique patterns or systems in their symbolic realm.