CHAPTER II

ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A. WAYANAD IN GENERAL

The locale of the study is Wayanad District in Kerala State, South India. Wayanad that lies among the mountains of Western Ghats is one of the beautiful hill stations of Kerala. This place is located at a distance of 76 km from the seashores of Calicut, lies at a height of 700 to 2100 meters above sea level, on the north-eastern part of Kerala state. This district came into being on November 1, 1980. Until then, it was part of Calicut and Kannur districts. Wayanad lies between north latitude 11° 27' and 15° 58' and east longitude 75° 47' and 70° 27'. The boundaries of it are: North, Coorg and Mysore (Karnataka); South, Malapuram district; East, Nilgiri (Tamilnadu); and West, Kannur and Calicut districts. Wayanad is a fertile land that is blessed with the cash crop plantations like pepper, coffee, tea, cardamom, and other spices. It is constituted by three taluks: Vaithiri, Sultan Bathery and Mananthavady. (source :Wayanad-District handbook of Kerala 1997) (See Fig.1 and Fig.2).

The name, Wayanad, might have been derived from the word Vayalnadu meaning 'the land of the paddy fields' or Vananadu meaning 'the land of the forests'. Most of the reserve forests in the Kerala state are in Wayanad district. Tribals constitute 17% of Wayanad population. They are the natives (adivasi meaning the original inhabitants) of this region. The names of these communities are the Paniyas, Mullu Kurumbas, Adiyas, Ooralis, Kurichiyas, Kattunaikas, etc. The Paniya tribe is inhabited in all parts of Wayanad region. The other non-tribal communities who are settled in Wayanad at various period of its history are: Jains, Chettis, Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

1. History

Historians are of the view that organised human life existed in Wayanad at least ten centuries before Christ. Evidence about the New Stone Age civilisation can
LOCATION OF WAYANAD IN KERALA
SOUTH INDIA

ARABIAN SEA

BAY OF BENGAL

Kerala

Wayanad

Tamilnadu

Karnataka

Thiruvananthapuram

Map not to Scale
ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF WAYANAD
be seen in Edakkal caves at *Ambukuthi mala* located between Sultan Bathery and Ambalavayal (Johny2001: 21-22). Recorded history of the region is available from 18th century onwards. In ancient time, *Veda Rajas* ruled this region. *Mullukurumbas*, one of the tribes in Wayanad, claims that they are the descendants of Veda tribe (ibid.pp.32-33 and Gopalannair1910: 9-10). Later days Wayanad came under the rule of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam, Hyder Ali of Mysore and Tippu Sultan. From Tipu Sultan, Wayanad fell into the hands of the British administration through Sreerangapattanam treaty (Gopalannair1910: 26).

A new turn in the history of Wayanad had taken place during the British period. The famous Pazhassi Revolt\(^1\) had taken place during this period (ibid.pp. 30-31). The British opened up this region for the plantation of tea, coffee and other cash crops. Roads were laid from Calicut and Thalassery to Wayanad and were connected to the cities of Mysore and Ooty. Settlers from South Kerala started coming in big groups and occupied the virgin land for cultivation since 1940’s.

2. *Salient Features*

The geographic position of Wayanad is peculiar and unique. The difference in altitude of each locality within the district presents a variation of climatic conditions. Nature has blessed the region with mist-clad mountains, sylvan valley, paddy fields and plantation crops. East flowing river *Kabaini* starts from this region. Wayanad has an agricultural economy and it has no major industry.

\(^1\) It was the battle between Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam Regime and British East India Company in the year 1792-1805. The Raja was killed in the encounter on 30th November 1805. It was a struggle against the British rule where the tribals of Wayanad played an active role supporting the cause of Pazhassi Raja.
Table 2.1 The Salient Features of Wayanad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>2126 sq.k.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Total: 6,72,128 Male : 3,41,958 Female: 3,30,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe Population</td>
<td>1,14,699 (17.1% of Wayanad Total Population)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste Population</td>
<td>27,835 (4.1% of Wayanad Total Population)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Total: 4,74,590 (70.61%) Male: 2,55,679 (74.8 %) Female: 2,18,933 (66.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural land</td>
<td>1,243 sq. Km (53.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>787 sq. km (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>Kabani, Narasipuzha, Karapuzha, Panamarampuzha and Mananthavadi puzha, Bhavalipuzha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>Chembara Peak, Banasura Hill, Aumbuhutti Mala, Bhramma Giri Hill, Vavul Mala, Thala Mala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Maximum:35° C Minimum: 18° C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>Male: 47,903, Female: 26,907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.Flora and Fauna

The flora of Wayanad is characteristic of the Western Ghats and the plantation crops grown in cool climate. A major portion of the district is covered by coffee, tea, pepper, cardamom and rubber plantation. Wild type trees like rosewood, anjili (Artocarpus), Mullu Murikku (erthrina); several species of caussarina and many other non-identified varieties are seen in the reserved forest of this region. Of the 20,864 hectors of reserve forest, the major portion is teak plantation. The soil and climate of Wayanad are suitable for horticulture produce like vegetables, flowers and orchids. Much of the flora of this region has undergone changes due to deforestation, uncontrolled and unscientific ways of cultivation.
The animal life is affected with the clearing of forest, yet one can see the bonnet monkeys, mongoose, jungle cats, wild buffalo, jackals, bear, deer, wild goats, and tigers, elephants, snakes, etc. Muthanga forest (wild life sanctuary), Bhrammagiri forest and Banasuran hills have got monkeys, wild squirrels, deer, wild goats, wild buffalo, elephants and tigers. The fauna of this region also are facing threats due to the illegal activities of the forest mafia and the drastic climate change (Logan 1989:cccxxi- cccxxiv).

4. Climate

Wayanad had a pleasant climate. The average rainfall in the district in the year 1992 was 2322 mm. Lakkdy, Vythiri, Meppadi are the high rainfall areas in Wayanad (3000 mm to 4000mm). High velocity winds are there during Southwest monsoon. High altitude regions experience severe cold. Generally, the year is classified into four seasons: Cold weather (December - February), Hot weather (March-May), Southwest monsoon (June - September), Northeast monsoon, (October - November). Now this area experiences drastic change in climate. There is a decreasing trend in rainfall in this region. Wayanad is declared one of the most drought- hit districts in Kerala. Pulpally, Mullenkolly, Bathery, and Ambalavayal are the most affected area by drought. People are struggling hard to get even drinking water. The temperature this area on summer has gone up to 36 degree centigrade.

5. Religions

No religion is predominant in this region. There are Tribes, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains. Though the tribals practise or attend Hindu or Christian traditions and festivals, they have their own religious practices and social customs. Ancestor worship and animistic religious practices are very common among them. They have their own worship places, sacred groves (kavu) both in their village and in public places. Valliyoor kavu and Thirunelli temple once belonged to the tribes of this land (Gopi 2002: 205, Johny 2001:103-106). Now those were taken over by high-caste Hindus. Sanskritization process is taking place in all the aspects of tribal life. For example in Paniya tribal marriage, the introduction of tying tali, garlanding the bride and the groom, the looking for auspicious time, etc. are the imitation of the other major communities.
Brahmin settlements are seen in Thirunelli and Manathavady area. A small group of Jain community consists of Goudas who came from Karnataka also seen in this region. Muslims who came from Malapuram, Calicut and Tellichery settled here even before Independence. Christians have come here in groups from 1940 onwards. All Christian sects are settled here under various Church leadership. (Wayanad District handbook of Kerala, 1997. Trivandrum) (Plate 2.1).

6. Wayanad as a Culture area

Wayanad has a unique place in the cultural history of south India. Geographically, culturally and historically this region has its own identity that is different from other parts of Kerala. It is believed, and there are archaeological evidence also, that human beings inhabited here even before 10\(^{th}\) century B.C. (Great Stone Age culture period B.C.15\(^{th}\) cent-A.D.1\(^{st}\) cent.). As a culture area, Wayanad region is extended to Nilgiri biosphere in Tamil Nadu and Coorg – Mysore area in Karnataka State. Climatic condition of this region is similar and something peculiar. The presence of many human communities from ancient period onwards, (Tribals and other caste communities, Jains, Nairs and other Hindu communities, Muslims, British people, Christians, Chettis, etc.), provide a variety of cultural patterns and life styles to this region. It is the beauty of this sylvan land.(See Plate 2.1)

B. TRIBES OF WAYANAD

Wayanad has got the highest concentration of tribals in Kerala (1,14,969; 35.8% of the total tribal population and 17.11% of the Wayanad population). (Source: Scheduled tribes of Kerala at a Glance, KIRTADS, Kozhikode,2003.). Majority of them are small cultivators and agricultural labourers. They practised shifting cultivation and gathered food by hunting and fishing in earlier times. Due to the large migration of non-tribals, the tribals in Wayanad are forced to move to the interior forest or became landless people living in colonies being dependant coolies to the Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Christian landowners. The greatest sufferers were the bonded labourers: the Paniyas and Adiyas.

According to Rao Bahadur C.Gopalan Nair there were fifteen tribal communities inhabited in Wayanad. (Gopalan Nair 1911:49-50). Among them, there were Hill tribes and Aborigines (Predial slaves and Forest dwellers). Their names are:
PLATE 2.1
WAYANAD GENERAL FEATURES

1,2. Wayanad - Geographical Features (Vayalnadu or Vananadu)

3. Lourdu Matha Church Festival, Pallikunnu where the Paniyas participate

4. Kabini River

5. Valliyoor Kavu - Mananthavady,

6. The Paniyas bringing the flag stand for Valliyoor Kavu Festival

7. Mariamman Festival ritual at Nellickal village

8. 'Thalapoli' Procession of the Paniyas to Kalpetta Mariamman Kovil
Kurichiyas, Mullu kurumbas, Oorali or Vettu kurumbas, Kunduvatyas, Karimpalas, Kaders, Pathiyas, Uridavas, Thachanad Moopens, Kalanadis (hill tribes) and Adiyas, Paniyas, Pulaya,(aborigines-predial) Then kurumbas, Kattu naikas (aborigines-forest dwellers). At present all of them are not found in Wayanad. The reasons for the reduction of tribal communities in Wayanad are: administrative reason (earlier Wayanad was under Kannur and Calicut districts), migration, natural induction into major communities and natural extinction due to adverse life situation.

The communities who are there right now are: Kurichiyas, Mullu Kurumbas, Adiyas, Then- Kurumbas, Oorali Kurumbas (vettu-kurumbas), Wayandan Kadars, Kattunaikas, Hill Pulayas, and Paniyas. There are a few communities in Wayanad that are not included in the Scheduled Tribes of the Govt. list. They are, Wayanadan Kadars, Wayanad Hill Pulaya, Then- Kurumbas, Kunduvadiyas, Kalanadi, Thachanad Moopan,and Pathiyans. (Plate 2.2)

1. Kuruchiyas

The name ‘Kurichiyan’ was given by the Kottayam Raja to this group, as they are experts in archery. The expression is ‘Kuri-vachavan’ (he who took an aim). They belonged to a class of ‘Nairs’ known as ‘Theke Kari-nair’ meaning ‘Kari nair of south’ indicating Venad or Travancore. Kottayam Raja brought them to Wayanad to fight against the ‘Veda’ rulers ‘Aripan’ and ‘Vedan’. Traditionally they were settled cultivators. Today a major section of them are marginal farmers. Their houses are called ‘mittam’ and their family head is called ‘pittan’. Their special deity is ‘malakari’ an aspect of Siva as hunter. They follow ‘marummaka thayam’ (matriliney). They take non-vegetarian food; observe strict caste segregation (pollution). They do not take food with any caste except Nairs and Brahmins. At present, their life style has changed considerably. The younger generation moves freely with other communities, share food with them, join in other communities celebrations and rituals. At Eachome in Panamaram pachayath there are five Kurichiya settlements. I have close contact with them. Their main occupation is cultivation and they are good at hunting. At Eachome they have an archery sangam under the leadership of Mr.Achappan and Mr.Rajan. They participated at state and national level archery competition. They have a tradition of folk medicinal practice. Some of them are experts (Nattu vaidhyam) in
PLATE 2.2
WAYANADAN TRIBES

1. Kurichiya Pittan
2. Kurichiya Women - experts in archery
3. Adiya Women
4. Adiya - 'Gadhika' ritual
5. Adiya 'Pole' ritual
6. Mullukurumba's 'Kolkali'
7. Paru Chachamma and Leela Thoongady singing 'vattakali chollukal'
8. Annu and Vellachi Nellickal explaining Paniya Kinship structures
this field today. Mr. M. Rajan Vaidyan at Eachome is a famous indigenous medicine man, who runs a hospital in Eachome.

Apart from Wayanad the Kurichiyas are found in Kannur and Calicut districts. According to 1991 census, their population is 28287 (8.81% of total tribal population in Kerala.). 60.11% of them are literates and they speak Malayalam using lots of native words and phrases. The population growth between 1981 and 1991 is 27.33%. They occupy highest status among the Wayanad tribes. There are two studies on this tribe.²

2. Mullukurumbas

The Mullukurumbas are traditionally bowmen and hunters, with Kurichiyas they formed an army to fight against British power in early 19th century (Tribal revolt in 1812)³. They claim that they are the descendants of Veda dynasty. (Rulers). Their origin was in ‘Poothadi amsam’. Kirathan, Siva the hunter, is their god. Their village is called ‘Thara’ and village head is ‘Thachil mooppan’. They follow ‘makathayam’ (patriliney). They are non-vegetarians. They speak Malayalam and their festivals are vishu, ucharal, onam, and sankaranthy. Their dance is called Kolkali. In the present day, they enjoy a better status among the tribal communities.

According to Kerala government, Census report Mullu kurumba community belongs to Kuruma sect of which Ooralis also is a part. The Ooralis were traditionally potters and Mullu kurumbas were settled cultivators. Today majority of them are agricultural or casual labourers. Most of them own land. I have direct contact with the Mullu kurumba community in Nellarachal and Muthanga. Mr. Sankaran from Nellarachal told me that they are the original inhabitant and the rulers of this region. Their total population is 23444 (7.3% of the state tribal population). The literacy rate is 60.27%. Now there are employees in the Government department, educational institutions and other social organisations. There are many members in the state administrative field like panchayath members, taluk officers, and there is one MLA

3 It was a resistance against the British rule by the leadership of Kurichiya and Mullu Kurumba tribal sects in Wayand in the year 1812. It was an agricultural and political revolt.
from this community. Manu Jose collected their folk songs and published in a book form (Jose, Manu 2001).

3. Oorali (Vettu Kurumbas)

They are artisans and are experts at all kinds of skilled works: black smith, pottery, carpentry, basket making, etc. They are good at cutting trees; hence, they are called Vettu Kurumbas (vettu means 'to cut'). They speak their own dialect at home, to outsiders they use Malayalam mixed with canaries words. Their houses are called 'padi' and god is 'masti'. They follow ‘makkathayam’(patriliney). Though they are a class of artisan, now they live by coolie work (agricultural labourers). They are found all over Wayanad and they are supposed to be the one of the original inhabitants of this region. Economically they are very backward and many of them live in poverty. This situation is affected in all other aspect of their life; health, education, social life. I have found a group in Nadavayal in Kenichira panchayath. In the present Government Scheduled Tribe list, they are included in the Uraly of Idukki district that is not correct ethnically.

4. Adiyas

Adiyas migrated from Coorg (Karnataka). They were slaves and agricultural labourers. They speak a dialect of Malayalam with Canaries mix. Their gods are Kuttath Karinkali, Malakari and Kuliyan. Village head is called Mooppan and the next rank is Muthali. Their landlords gave these titles. They also use tudi and kuzhal for their religious rituals and festivals like Thira and Vishu. They inhabit in the north Wayanad. ‘Marumakkathayam’ (matriliney) is followed among them. Gadhika is a ritual to ward off the evil spirits, which cause sickness and disharmony in a village.

As per the 1991 census, their population is 9690. They form 3.02% of total tribal population of the State between 1981 and 1991 the community has grown by 18.87%. However, the growth rate is lower than the state level tribal population, which is 22.75%. The literacy rate is 36.03%. Gothra Maha Sabha leader Ms. C.K.Janu(33) is an Adiya woman who made a breakthrough in the tribal struggle for land in the
recent years. Sri. P.K. Kalan (63) from Trissilery is another tribal leader from this community who was the Block panchayath President in Mananthavady block. He is the Mooppan of the community and an expert in adiya rituals and traditions. I visited some of their settlements in Trissilery area. Today their living condition is very poor. They do not get daily work and many go hungry due to lack of food materials.

5. Then Kurumbas and Kattunaikas

These two hill tribes are practically identical in all ceremonies and customs except in three matters: namely Then (Jenu) kurumbas do not eat monkey’s flesh, they gather honey, and they do not take meals with Kattunaikas. They are migrated from Mysore. There they are called as Jenu kurumbas and Kadu kurumbas (Jenu means honey). They live in Padi and their village head is Muthali. They were living in the interior forest, but now have come to the plains in search of work. ‘Masti’ is their god and ‘pena’ is the spirit of the ancestors (deceased). They perform a dance ‘kolkali’ for marriage celebration and ‘ucharal’ festival. They follow ‘makathayam’ (patriliny) as law of succession. They speak a dialect that is a crude form of Malayalam and Canaries. I have visited two settlements of Kattunaika community. They belong to the primitive group having very limited living facility. They are good at music and dance and I have joined in one of their dance performance.

6. Wayanadan Kadars

The Kadar lives in the North Wayanad, i.e. Mananthavady taluk. They were about 503 (1991 census). They were Nairs, who accompanied the Raja of Kottayam, with Kurichiyas and settled in the forest. (Gopalan nair 1910:80) Kadar means forest men. They worship ‘Malakari’ (Siva - the hunter) and their house is known as ‘illam’. They follow ‘Marumakkathayam’ and follow some of the customs of Nairs. They were the lords of the forest, experts in archery but now they are agricultural labourers. Their elders are known as karanavan and senior among them has the title piriyan. This group is not included in the present ST list of the Kerala government. There is another

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community having the same name, which is found in Palakkad and Trissur districts in Kerala.

7. Hill Pulayas

There are about 526 Hill pulayas in Wayanad. They are found in the south Wayanad: Kottathara, Vaithiri, Edavaka, Porunnanur and Anjukunnu areas. They are considered primitive tribe, lower to Paniyas in the social status. They follow marumakkathayam. They do not claim kinship with Malabar Pulayas. Their headman is called ‘Maruthan’. Bride price is given for marriage ‘Patha’ and ‘Bhadra kali’ are their gods. They are agricultural workers, employed by Muslim and Christian landowners. Wayanadan Hill Pulayas are not included in the ST list. Another group is found in Idukki district bearing the same name. They are included in the list. These are happenings in this area due to administrative and political reasons. (See Plate 2.2)

8. Paniyas

Paniyas are the biggest tribal group in Kerala. They are the original inhabitants of Wayanad region. They were slaves and belonged to the primitive tribal sect. They are seen in the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Tamilnadu. More details on this tribe is given in the next section.5

C. THE PANIYA TRIBE

According to 1991 census Paniyas are the largest tribal sect in Kerala. They come about 67,948 out of 3,20,967 of the tribal population in Kerala (21.2%). Paniyas are the original inhabitants of Wayanad region. Of late there have been some migration by them into the neighbouring districts of Kerala namely, Kozhikode, Malapuram, Kannur and Kasargod, etc. There are Paniyas in other part of Kerala also but a few in number. The Paniyas are migrated to Coorg and Mysore in Karnataka State and Gudallur and Niligiri in Tamilnadu State. According to K.S. Singh (1994), there are 6393 Paniyas in Tamilnadu 482 in Karnataka (1981 census). It is stated in the

Imperial Gazetteer (101-1) that Paniyas are the most characteristic representatives of the Dravidian type, probably the ‘original type of the population of India’ (Gopalanair, 1911: 51). (See Fig.3)

1. Etymology

Paniya comes from the word ‘pani’ meaning ‘work’. Therefore, Paniya means ‘one who works’. Their masters, Goudas or Chettis, might have given this name. The non-tribals call them as ‘Paniyan’ and ‘Panichi’ (male and female Paniya). Even other tribes also call them in these names. It is not their name. Their name might be Chettadiyan as told by an informant, Polan mooppan (75). They are agricultural workers particularly experts in paddy cultivation. Cheru means soil or mud adiyan means a slave. One who does work in mud or one who is a slave of mud is called as Chettadiyan.

2. Origin

a. Ippi Mala Myth

Paniyas are the original inhabitants of Wayanad regions. They come from a mountain called Ippi mala, which is an imaginary mountain, told Chimban Moopan (80). Some writers have the opinion that it is somewhere near ‘Thamarasserry ghat’. Banasuran Kotta (Balarakottu mala) near Thariode in South Wayanad is identified as Ippi mala.(Gopalan nair 1911:100, Somasekharan flair 1976:58). The myth goes like this: (as told by Chimban Moopan (80)). Originally, there were only two persons. One male named Chimban and female named Kempi. They were brother and sister. They were living in the caves of the thick forest of the Ippi mala. While wandering in search of food, they came near a Goundas house. With the help of the Chetti they trapped them in a net and enslaved them. They found that they were good workers and told them to live in the nearby field. Finding out the fact that they have no children the landlord advised them to live as ‘brother and sister above the waist, as husband and wife below it’. They had five male and five female children. The progeny constitute the Paniyas. They formed themselves in to various clans and migrated to other regions. Thus, they became KaudarinaPaniyaru, ‘Chettiana Paniyaru’ and ‘Achana Paniyaru’.
Fig. 3 Distribution of Paniya settlements in Wayanad

State Boundary
District Boundary
Taluk Boundary
Panchayat Boundary
State Highway
Other Roads
Lake & Rivers

District Headquarters

Taluk Headquarters

Paniya settlement

LIST OF PANCHAYATS AND NUMBER OF PANIYA COLONIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANANTHAVADY TALUK</th>
<th>5 POZHUTHANA</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 THIRUVELLI</td>
<td>6 VENGAPPALLY</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MANANTHAVADY</td>
<td>7 KALPPATTA</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 THAVINHAL</td>
<td>8 MUTTIL</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 THONDARNAD</td>
<td>9 MEPPADY</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 EDAVAKA</td>
<td>10 VYTHIRI</td>
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</tr>
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<td>6 VELLAMUNDA</td>
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<td>3 POOTHADY</td>
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<td>4 MEENANGADY</td>
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<td>6 NENMENI</td>
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<td>7 SULTHANSBATTERY</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>8 NOOLPUZHA</td>
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They still believe that Chimpan and Kempi are their first parents (*Uthappan and Uthamma*). It is mentioned in their *Pena pattu* which means the song of the soul. During the death ritual (*kakapola*) the priest (*attali*) sings these songs. It contains Paniya’s ethnic history. Cf. E.T.Raju, 1999. *Penapattile Chettadiyan*.

b. Chettadian Myth: Another story about their origin goes like this. The *Padachavan* (the creator God) divided the whole humanity into 101 kulams (family or clan). Paniyas belong to the *Chettadiyan kulam*. One day the *Padachavan* God divided the land (earth) to all the *kulams*. The Paniyas came last, they did not get their share as it was all given away to other communities. Then, with the recommendation of *Kalimala thampuran* (another god) they received a pinch of soil from *Padachavan*. The God advised them to live by doing work in the *cheru* that means mud or soil. Thus, they confirmed their name as *Chettadiyan*, which means one who is a slave to the soil or mud. (Told by Polan Mooppan (75), Nellickal, Eachome).

c. Paniyas are the descendants of the Negroes brought from Zanzibar by Moors trading with Malabar Coast. They were migrated to the hills and interior places. The Kottayam Raja domesticated and protected them when he occupied the Wayanad region.

d. Another belief is that there existed a submerged continent of Lemuria extending from Madagascar to the Malay Archipelago linking India with Africa on the one side and with Australia on the other side (Imperial Gazetteers, Vol. 1). A theory that finds an affinity between the Aborigines of Australia, Negroes of Africa and to the Aborigines of South India is still discussed among the historians and anthropologists. Paniyas were one of the primitive groups who inhabited in this region (Gopalan Nair, 1911:51-52).

3. Language

The major section of the Paniyas is in Kerala. A minor section inhabits in the neighbouring regions of Wayanad like Gudalur, Niligiri areas of Tamilnadu and Coorg, Mysore areas of Karnataka. They have a common dialect called *Paniya Bhasha* (Paniya language) but it has got regional variations. Paniya language is a primitive

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6 It is the name of the Paniya clan (*kulam*) given by God. Cf. E.T.Raju 1999: 22
Malayalam mixed with Tamil and Tulu. It is in oral form. Among them they speak in Paniya dialect. Elders are good at it, but the younger generations are not well versed in it. It is due to the influence of other written languages, which are promoted in the schools, where they study.

a. Phonology

The vowel system does not exhibit much difference from that of Malayalam. There are five short vowels and their elongated forms (a,i,u,o,e). The vowel in the second syllable of many words is elongated before it stops, in contrast to Malayalam. E.g. Aniaatti, Kitaakke. There are 19 consonant phonemes in Paniya language.

The masculine gender suffix is - en, corresponding to the Malayalam - aan or -an. There are six suffixes indicating the feminine: -alu, -i, -icci, -eetti, -atti, -etti. There are three plural suffixes, such as: -a, -eru, -maru e.g. avalu, kuruti, panicci, thamburatti, mottetti. The pronominal system, Paniya language differs from Malayalam. It is similar to Adiya language.

In Paniya language there are only feminine and non- feminine genders, and no neuter gender. Same form is used for masculine and neuter genders.

E.g. Aven aaru ? = Who is he?
Aven ennatte = What is that?

Negation: Paniya uses ‘alla / illa’ which is in Malayalam. They use another form peculiar to itself and Adiya community, that is, copular verb ‘ula’ could be used for affirmative version. Its negation is ‘kani’ or ‘kane’. ‘Kane’ is used for past tense and ‘Kani’ is used for present and future tense.

Eg. Aven atte ula = He is there.
Aven atte kane = He is not there

At home or at spontaneous occasion, they speak Paniya language among themselves. However, with non-tribals they converse in Malayalam. Younger generation is good at Malayalam language, for they study at Malayalam medium school. Elders speak Malayalam but most of them do not write Malayalam. Paniya language is rich with songs, stories, proverbs and riddles. 8 Elders have great respect

for their language where as youngsters feel ashamed of speaking in their dialect in public. It is due to the negative influence of the non-tribals with whom they mingle with every day.

4. Present status

The Paniyas are the largest tribal community in Kerala. Traditionally they were bonded labourers. This community is landless and their major economic activity is agricultural labour. The Paniya, numbering 67948 (as per 1991 census) forms 21.17% of the total tribal population of the State. In Wayanad they are present in all the three taluks. Largest concentration of Paniyas are in Kottathara. Panamaram, Noolpuzha, Tiurnelli and Thariyode Panchayaths.

Table 2.2 The present Status of the Paniyas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location (District)</th>
<th>Wayanad, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malapuram</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Paniya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (1991)</td>
<td>67948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex ratio (for 1000 males)</td>
<td>1042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population growth between 1981 and 1991</td>
<td>19.37 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban %</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural %</td>
<td>97.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of the community to the total tribal population of the state</td>
<td>21.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>33.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Literacy</td>
<td>39.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Literacy</td>
<td>26.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional occupation</td>
<td>Food gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major occupation (current)</td>
<td>Agricultural labourers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paniya settlements outside Kerala</td>
<td>Guddalure, Nilgiri (TN) Coorg, Mysore(KAR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Scheduled Tribes of Kerala at a Glance, Kirtads, Calicut 2003
D. MATERIAL CULTURE

The Paniyas are basically a food gathering tribe. However in the course of time they became the slaves of the Goundan and Chetti, landowners. Being a dependent worker at the master’s field, they did not have the facility to develop their traditional technology and science. Yet, in a limited fashion they too developed their material culture that is very much in tune with simple society’s culture.

1. Settlement Pattern

Traditionally Paniyas were settled in the drier part of master’s land or along the fringes of wet paddy fields. When the contract was renewed at Valliyoor kavu festival they were sold to new masters resulting in a change of settlement. Therefore, in the past they did not have permanent settlements.

Their huts were called pire, generally single roomed, partitioned by a wattle divider or small mud-wall. This room is used as kitchen and living room. Varandha at the back and front served for all other purposes. The walls were of bamboo-wattle, plastered with mud while the roof was made of bamboo, thatched with paddy straw or grass. There were 5-10 households usually in one settlement. They all would be slaves of one master.

At present they settled in colonies that are built by government agencies. Most of the families have tiled houses with three rooms. Water and electricity facilities are available to them. In Eachome area where I did my fieldwork, most of the houses are built by contractors and they are in a very bad condition. The houses built by tribes themselves are an exception. Nellickal colony is an example. There, Mr.Annu and family built their house without the help of the intermediary or contractor. Hence, he could build a good house with the government financial assistance.

2. Household Items

Normally each household of the Paniya has an urelu (mortar) and ulakka (pestle). A miniature mortar and pestle, used by aged members for pounding betel leaves and areca nuts. They had kalam (earthen pot) and kooda (bamboo basket) and illikumbam (inter-nods) as storage vessels. They make baskets and mats out of reeds and bamboos. Bachi, Uchichembu, Marai, Chingechatti, Chumatte, Uri, Muram,
(winnowing basket), *Chool* (broom), *Chade* are some of the other household items of the Paniyas.

Today there is a change in the type of household items today due to the impact of modern society and market. They have plastic and aluminium vessels for the kitchen use. They buy all the stationery items for their use according to their capacity. *Korambakuda* is replaced by umbrella and *illikumbam* is replaced by money purse or moneybag.

3. Food patterns

In the past as slaves, whatever they get from the masters house, they take it to the *pire* and eat. Usually they were given paddy as wage (*valli nellu*)\(^9\). They pound it and make rice and it is used to make gruel (*Kanji*) as noon-meal. They also had *raggi* and *chama* as food items. They took food at two times a day, noon and night. They are non-vegetarians. They catch fish and crab from the paddy field and make curry out of it, tubers and fruits from the forest and vegetable leaves (*chappu*) from the fields are their dishes. Some of the tubers they collect from the forest are: *Nooraikizhangu, Chembu, Marakizhangu, Bolle, Monni, Naattanki, Kalengi, Kavile* etc. Some of the vegetable leaves they used are: *Kire, Mathacheppu, Kumbale and Thumbe*. They trap small animals like monkey, mongoose and wild pigs and birds and eat them. They drink coffee and tea made out of raw coffee and tea leaves. Some of the Paniyas are addicted to alcoholic drinks and betel nuts (*murukkan*).

Today the food pattern of the Paniyas has changed considerably. Those who go for work they take breakfast from the tea shop, noon food is given at the work site and for the night meal they buy rice and fish or vegetables from the shop and prepare them at home. In the morning, the women and children who are at home eat what is left over from the previous night. When there is no work some families do not have even one meal a day. Starvation and malnutrition have affected their health very adversely.

\(^9\) *Valli* means the slave’s subsistence allowance. In olden time the Paniya slaves were given paddy as their daily wage. Men get 2seers and women 1seer and this is called *valli nellu*.
4. Dress and Ornaments

In the past, male used to wear only simple loincloth and underwear. Female wear loincloth around the waist, reaching down just above the knee; with both ends brought up and knotted together at the right shoulder covering the breasts. A sash (aratti) is worn around the waist and it may be used as a purse. In the past men and women had the habit of growing their hair long. Now men gave up this fashion. Elder women have the fashion of ‘Monkey crop’, trimming it up to the shoulder.

Men do not wear ornaments. Women wear ireli (a bamboo - comb) bead necklace (kallumale). Ear ornaments are kammal and kathil ola. Kuppi vale (glass bangles) worn their wrist and thol vale, on their upper arms. mookuthi, finger rings, and toe rings also are used by women. Tatooing was done in the past. The chains they wear are: kurikalle, thathi kalle, and velli kalle. Kuri kalle is the normal bead necklace used by all women. Thati kalle, which is made of coins, is used by Attali during ritual time. Velli kalle is used for marriage as tali.

Today most of the Paniya except some older people follow the modern life style in their dress pattern and ornaments. Men wear dhoti, pant and shirt and women sari, blouse and churidars as according to the fashion of the time. They use all the modern ornaments that are available in the fancy shops and jewellery.

E. Economic Activity

The Paniyas are agricultural serfs from time immemorial. From the very name ‘Paniya’ which means ‘worker’, we can understand that they were the slave workers of the landowners. Being the largest group among tribes, they are the real labour forces of Wayanad. Without them Wayanad would have been in a different situation. They earn their livelihood by working as coolie in the paddy field, dry land and estates of the non-tribals. In the forest settlements, they practised shifting cultivation of ragi, thine and paddy. Now they are not permitted to do this in the forest.

Bonded labour system prevailed in Wayanad till 1950's. During the 'Valliyoor Kavu Festival' the Paniyas borrowed money from a landlord with the promise that they would work for him in the following year. The Mooppan or Kuoottan of the group took an oath before Valliyoor amma on behalf of the Paniya group and they would not
break this promise. For the entire year they worked as bonded-laboures getting the minimum wage for their survival in kind, that is, paddy. This system of work was known as *Kundal Pani* or *Kurugettu Pani* or *Aandukettu*.

There was another type of work system existed in Wayanad for paddy transplantation. It is known as *Kambala pani*. And the dance related to this work is known as *Kambalam dance*\(^\text{10}\). It is a manipulative way of making use of the maximum labour force within a short period of time for paddy cultivation. *Koottan* or *Mooppan* according to the direction of the masters (land-owner) would gather the Paniya workers for this work. They prepare the paddy field, collect the paddy seedlings and start the planting of paddy in large groups. The whole work would be done in a festive mood. Drums (*Tudi*) and pipes (*Kuzhal*) would be played by experts, songs (*nattipattu*) are sung, common food is served and by evening 10 - 20 acres of paddy field would be planted with new paddy seedlings. This system of work was there in Wayanad especially in Mananthavady taluk till 1970's.

According to 1981 census 46.6% Paniyas are coolie workers. (Male: 50.7% and female: 42.7%). Of them 85.2% are agricultural labourers 11.5% are engaged in fishing and forest produce gathering, and the remaining 2.8% are doing other works (K.S. Singh 1994: 976). Now their economic status is in very pathetic condition. Many live their life without work. Some may get one or two days work in a week. During off-season (non-harvest season) they do not even get one-day work in a week. It is due to the crisis happened in the agricultural sector in Wayanad since 1999. The daily wages for a man is Rs. 75 and for a woman is Rs. 55. Half of the male workers are addicted to liquor, which results in ill health, village and family disputes, and starvation in the family. Some tribals who work in the non-tribe’s field get liquor and some money as wages. It is spent in toddy shop or hotels, and as a result, their health is spoiled, and family and social life is disturbed.

Some Paniya household has 0.5 to 1 acre of paddy field or dry land. But it is cultivated by the non-tribals. On emergency needs one might have borrowed some

\(^{10}\) *Kambala* is the name given for buffalo race in the south Canara region. In Wayanad there is no buffalo race but there is a tribal dance as part of the paddy transplantation among the Paniya and Adiya community. Cf. A. Aiyapan. 1992:53.
money from the non-tribal giving his land as mortgage. Because they charge heavy interest on the amount, a stage would arise where he is unable to repay the amount. Hence, he becomes a life long debtor to the non-tribal master and his land will be in the hands of this master. This way an indirect bounded labour system prevails in Wayanad even today.

The following cases will give an understanding of the present day Paniya’s economic status. Following few cases would give an understanding of Paniyas economic states.

1. Vijayan Ettukayam (40): He and his wife were ‘indirect bounded labourers’ in a Christian family. During the work season, he went to another place for work for three days without telling the master. Knowing this the master’s group caught him, gave him liquor and manhandled him so much that for two months he was bed ridden with serious stomach injury.

2. Kaima Panniody (38): A good agriculture labourer, who goes to work in three Christian families. Everyday they give him country liquor as wage. He comes home drunk, beats his wife and children, quarrels with his own relatives in the village. Now his health is spoiled: his elder son Baiju, a smart student has failed in SSLC and his family life is not peaceful.

3. Velli Mooppan Mottamel (58): He has one acre of paddy field in Naduvil village. He had taken a loan from the Panamaram Panchayath for some emergency need. He could not repay it. A Christian family interfered in this case and with their political influence, they settled the issue and caught hold of this land. For the past five years, they are using this land for cultivation not giving any share to the owner Velli. When once Velli went and asked the land for cultivation, they threatened him with false allegations.

4. A group of five women were working in a coffee plantation since 1990. On 2003 July the owner told them that there is no work for them. He also accused them saying that “you don’t know how to work”. They had to stop going there for work; as a result, their families are struggling hard for their survival. This is the situation faced by many Paniya families today.
(All these cases are shared by the Paniya informants, Leela, Raju, Velli, and Baiju)

As a food gathering tribe in the past and as agricultural workers in the present their equipment's are mainly 'arival' (Sickle), 'Kozhukuthi' (bill-hooks), 'Karikathi' and Kolukathi (Knives), Kaikottu (Spade), Mazhu and Kodali (Axes). For fishing, they had small nets called Kuthuvala and Veechu vala, and Chada. To catch birds they used thettali. During the work to protect from rain they have, a rain shield called Koramba Kuda or Murakuda. Kondai is the cap used by male workers.

During the paddy-harvesting season there exist a work called Okkal ideel. It is a way of threshing out the paddy from the paddy bunch (Nellu Katta). In the past buffalos and bullocks were used for Okkal ideel work. Now they use tractors for this work. Due to the mechanization in the agricultural field, the tractors and tillers replaced the traditional equipments kalappa and nukam. Paniyas also are experts in handling them today.

F. SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The Paniyas were slaves in all through their life. As the myth goes they were captured by Goudas and Chettis domesticated them and treated them as bonded-labourers. Slavery continued and the neighbouring Hindus, Christians and Muslims became their masters. They were not allowed to travel or move out from their settlements. When the slaves were sold to another master, the whole family was shifted from one place to another. Therefore, against the background of slavery we have to understand their social system.

Anthropologist A. Aiyappan's observation on Paniyas is as follows. 'A dialect, a style of dress, rituals, art forms, a common name, a lowly status in the caste-ladder as a polluting caste are the common qualities which give Paniyas their ethnic identity. Unlike the serfs in the plain they do not have sub-castes. They will not come in the caste system of the Hindu dharma.' (Aiyappan, 1992:78).

11 It is a Wayanadan phrase for threshing out the paddy from the paddy straw. It is a community event during the harvesting season. There are songs related to this work and it is called as okkal pattu.
1. Social Titles

The social organisation of the Paniya is very simple. Being a slave tribe, some of the offices like Koottan, Mooppan are given by the masters to control the labour force. The titles like chemmi, koyma and karaimma are borrowed terms from the upper caste people (non-tribals). Attali is purely a Paniya term.

a. Koottan

Landlords having large number of bonded labourers, appoint leaders from the group itself and they are called Koottan. Koottan means ‘one who gathers the people’. Such appointments are done in a religious ritual context where he is given a pair of armlets (vala) as the sign of this office, by the master. Koottan is vested with the authority over the group and he has to look after the interest of the master. Koottan may be the trustee of the local temple, where he is assigned certain special role like cutting and fetching the banana bunches for the festival, bringing fire wood for food preparation etc. (E.g. In Valliyoor kavu, Koottan of the local village has the special privilege to light the fire at the kitchen house). The Koottan ceremoniously initiates the ploughing, sowing or transplanting of seedlings in the agricultural field. Velukkan Mooppan told me that this title is not used at present, because there is no kundal pani or nattipani as in the olden times. Now a Paniya can go anywhere for work, he or she is free to work under any property owners. But the fact is that they do not get work as in the olden period.

b. Mooppan

Small farmers usually appoint a senior Paniya as Mooppan by giving him an armlet (vala) in a special ceremony. Paniya gods are invoked, the priest (Chemmi) gets possessed and he throws rice grain on the Mooppan. Therefore, a religious colour is given to such appointment. Now this term is used as a polite word to call the elder person in the community. Elderly Paniya woman is addressed as Morathi or Chachamma.

c. Koyma, Chemmi, Karaimma

Paniyas of each village have a hereditary headman called Koyma meaning ‘the ruler’. His assistants are called Chemmi meaning ‘the landlord’. The Chemmis have
assistants or messengers called *Karaimma* for each village. *Koyma* is a political term used for highest rank of power. The *Chemmi* and *Karaimma* were used in the feudal system, as ‘landlord’ and ‘tenant'. The traditional role of *Koyma* was to preside over all social activities and meeting of the elders to settle disputes. *Chemmi* had parallel powers in their respective village; his role was more of an appellate authority. He was entitled to various payments for approving and validating functions. *Chemmi* had the right to permit the digging of the grave for burial. *Chemmi*’s wife acts as leading personage in the puberty rite. *Chemmi* could punish people, guilty of violating norms with fine.

All the three titles are non-functioning ones today. I hear them using these terms on ritual and festival occasions. While asking about this, Chimban Mooppan said that when the Paniya were following the old *ooru* system all these titles were given to them by the community. Now we do not have *Mooppans* to perform the rituals for the community. The younger generation is not interested in all these titles. We cannot give this status to anybody; only those who have the charisma and those who learned the rituals and prayers are allowed to hold this position.

2. Kinship Behaviour

The kinship system of the Paniyas resembles the general Dravidian pattern of Kerala with the identical terms of reference: a) for father’s sisters husband (FZH) and mother’s brother(MB) and their children b) for own siblings and parallel cousins. Proto-Dravidian terms are used for father, mother and mother’s brother. The word for elder brother is ‘ayyan’ and for elder sister is ‘achi’. These two words are replaced by ‘annan’ and ‘akka’ respectively in other castes. The word ‘achan’ for father has been introduced from ‘Prakrit’ language, which is borrowed by Paniya recently. The terms ‘Myttunan’ (husband’s younger brother) and ‘Myttuni’ (brother’s wife) are a peculiar Paniya usage. A strange term for son-in-law is ‘Munnaikkaran’ meaning ‘the one who is of three measures, presumably of paddy’ (Aiyappan 1992:135).

Paniyas broadly follow the same kinship behaviour patterns of other groups in Kerala. They take care of their children; do not beat them with sticks. The relationship between mother and children is closer than that between father and children. They have clear preference for daughters. It is because the daughters remain with them even
after marriage, whereas sons go to the wife’s house. In addition, parents of a girl child get bride price (penpanam) when she is given in marriage. Because of this reason, they consider that to have a girl child is a blessing in family. Mostly arranged marriages take place in the village. There are love marriage cases also. Marriage alliance from father’s or mother’s close relationship (clan) is forbidden even today. Husband-wife relationship also is praiseworthy. They respect each other and consider themselves as equals. They go together for works, shopping and also for festivals. In a settlement, most of the families are relatives. Mooppan has only nominal powers over them. All these features affirm that they were a wandering tribe in ancient time and not now.

3. Clan and Totem

A group of closely-knit and inter related families is called a clan. Paniyas do have clans. But they may not say it in public. Some of the names of the Clans are Koyimutton, Nattilappadam, Padikkan, Maniankodan, Pappali, Vallatte, and Muttettan. These are their family names. They also tend to identify each with the lineage name of their masters. Eg. The serfs of ‘Etill Nambiar’ would describe themselves as ‘Ettil Paniyar’. Similarly ‘Naduvil Paniyar’, ‘Thoongadi Paniyar’, etc. (Aiyappan 1992 : 82-86).

Divorce may be sought for adultery; the ‘Chemmi’ levies a fine on the guilty. They practise monogamy. Relationship within the family is cordial. Inheritance is a combination of both patriliny and matriliny. The personal properties of a deceased person are divided equitably between his sons and daughters, as well as his nephews and nieces under the supervision of the ‘Chemmi’ and elders. Double exogamy is practised, i.e. marriage is forbidden from the clan of the fathers and mothers. Patrilineal clan is called ‘illam’ or ‘kulam’ and matrilineal clan is called ‘kudumbam’. Some of the names of the illams are: Anjillam, Aarillam, Manikillam, Moonillam, Ettillam, Koyleri, Modukuzhi, Mayampalli etc. Here illam means ‘a settlement’ (village). In Kerala the Namboodiri’s house is also known as ‘illam’. 
Table 2.3 Genealogy of a Paniya Family

Name: Vimala Thoongady, Eachome
Family Name: Kidachulan Clan (Mother's line) Clan god: Mambiyaty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Clan Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Vimala</td>
<td>Kumaran</td>
<td>Kunchumarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Pathiri</td>
<td>Palan</td>
<td>Pandiakaran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Kungi</td>
<td>Vellan</td>
<td>Manikalan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Njadukka</td>
<td>Oonan</td>
<td>Maniankodan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Thanki</td>
<td>Velukkan</td>
<td>Kadarian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Told by Leela (Pathiri) Thoongadi (38) Eachome, Wayanad

a. Totem

It is a natural object, animal or bird believed by a particular society to have spiritual significance and adopted by it as an emblem. All tribes have its own totem. **Chempoope** (a bird) is the totem of the Paniyas, told by an informant, Palan (50). He told a story related to **Chempoope**. Palan heard this story from his grand father. Chempoope was the name of a Paniya who worked under the local landlord. One day the **thamburan**, (the landlord) sent him to fetch paddy from the field. While coming from the field with the paddy bag he felt very hungry. Seeing a snail on the way he desired to eat it to get rid off his appetite. Thus, he became the **Chempoope** bird, picked up the snail, and went to the forest.

4. Paniya Household

Paniya household tends to be small. Their huts are flimsy with semi-permanent structures. Clusters of 5 to 10 households are usually found located on the edge of the
paddy fields or on the side of the main road. There are 3 to 8 members in a family. It is the custom that the newly married couple settle in the girl’s village.

**Ooru Sabha or Ooru Koottam:** It is the tribal village committee. In olden time Paniyas were together under the leaderships of Koyma (the traditional village head) to plan for the village festival, to settle disputes, to punish the guilty and to do the village rituals during the seasonal festivals. This institution kept them united. Now it is not found in the villages where I have conducted the fieldwork. Yet, the titles like Chemmi and Mooppan are respected among the village.

Paniyas live in small colonies. Each colony consists of seven to twenty houses. Many of the houses do not have individual pattas (land document). The problem of alcohol and other anti-social elements affects the social life of the Paniyas. Family disputes, wife beating and misuse of women by the tribals and non-tribals and illegal relationship are found among them. Social discrimination by the non-tribals and other tribal communities are also seen during the fieldwork. Most of the children between age five and fifteen go to school. There is some drop-out cases also (20-30%). A few children from this area passed SSLC. In the year 1999, Sunitha, Naduvil veedu passed SSLC in the first chance. This is the first case from this area.(Plate 2.3 and 2.4)

**Cases:**

1. **Njana (36) and Balan (33), Kurumbalakotta:** They are brother-in-laws. One day after drinking country liquor given by a non-tribal dealer, they quarreled with each other. In the quarrel, Njana got a severe kick on his back from Balan, which resulted spinal injury. He was paralysed. Seeing this situation Balan committed suicide. Njana also after one year of suffering killed himself by poisoning. Both of their families became destitute and they experience severe insecurity in their life today.

2. **Bindhu Panamaram (20):** A smart girl in the village who was misused by one of the tribals from the same village. She conceived and gave birth to a boy child. Her parents are no more. Now she lives in her auntie’s house as an unwedded mother losing her family life and security.
PLATE 2.3

PANIYA LIFE TODAY

1. Chimban Mooppan with his 'Murukkan Kallu'
2. Polan Mooppan in 'Deivamkanal' ritual
3. Vellachi Chachamma in her traditional ornaments
4. A Paniya Mooppan and Morathi
5. A Paniya Family
6. A Paniya Woman before her house
7. Paniya traditional house
8. Paniya modern house
PLATE 2.4

PANIYA LIFE TODAY – YOUNGER GENERATION

1. Youth playing ‘tudi’
2. Paniya girls in ‘vattakali’ dance
3. Paniya children
4. Paniya youth
5, 6. Paniya life in transition
7. Paniya girls in ‘Thiruvathira’ dance
8. Paniya girls in ‘Oppana’ dance
3. Biji Narakakandi (16): She was sent to a tribal hostel for study in Attapadi. Due to the harassment of the hostel authority, she had to discontinue her study. Her father arranged an early marriage for her. A smart girl she was in her studies but spoiled her future by the anti-social elements. Similar cases are reported from other places too.

4. Balan Malankara (40), a father of four children, who went to Coorg with his Christian master for ginger cultivation. After two months, he was brought back to the village with serious illness. He was admitted to the district hospital and there he died on the same day. In a quarrel with the workers or the master he was severely injured resulting in his sudden death.

5. Ramani Panniyodi (26): She has a family with one boy child, but she was misused by the non-tribals of the locality and thus her health is spoiled resulting in disturbance in the family and village also.

6. Shankaran’s house warming ceremony: Paniyas were given food on the ground (courtyard), whereas others were served at table inside their house itself. I witnessed many such cases of social discrimination of the Paniya community by others.

G. RELIGION

1. Thine – Thare and Kavu Pattern

The Paniya religion is constituted by three main institutions called thine, thare and kavu. Each paniya family is attached to these sthaanams (places) in their own respective villages. Every auspicious and important event in Paniyas life starts from these places (Fig. 4).

a. Thine: it is the sacred place which is found inside the Paniya house. It is an elevated platform having 1.5 feet width, 2 feet length and 0.5 feet height that are made of mud which is neatly plastered by cow dung. The clan god the spirit of the ancestors (nizhal), the tudi and kuzhal, Mooppan’s cane and sword, pictures of some gods are kept on the thine. They consider this as the most sacred place, where they keep certain privacy and secrecy. All the major events in their life
Fig. 4  CORE PRESERVING PATTERN OF THE PANIYAS

(Thine – Thare – Kavu )
begins from thine. The Chemmi begins the ritual always after placing a lighted wick on the thine and gets the blessings of the gods and ancestors.

b. Thare: it is the sacred place found in the courtyard of the Paniya house. Usually it is seen in front of the Mooppan’s house. It is a platform in circular or square shape that is made of mud, bricks and plastered by cow dung with a foot height. There would be one to three sacred trees on the thare. They are pala, jackfruit, chethi, chemparthi, thulasi, etc. One of them would be milk-secreting type that symbolises amma (mother goddess) told by polan Mooppan. The gods like vellattu, gulikan, mari, vallooramma, idivetti, etc, are kept there in the form of stones. All the important events in the village begin only after getting the blessing from these gods. The Chemmi or Mooppan performs rituals on all festivals and places lighted wick, incense, murukkan, and for some god liquor also.

c. Kavu: it is the sacred grove of the Paniyas. It will be a little away from their settlements. Each paniya village is attached to a particular kavu where their clan god is instituted. Usually the kavu is situated in a forest area, which has an area of 0.5 acre to one-acre land. It is kept as a small forest, an untouched area, where their gods live peacefully. On festival occasions like vishu, onam or uchal the people visit the kavu and do the necessary rituals. Some of the names of the kavu with its deity are: Kotte kavu (Mambiyati and Kottelamma), Oottumpara kavu (Mampiyati), Cholayil kavu (Malakari and Kariyathan), Pucha vayal kavu (Mambiyati and Vallooramma). (Plate 2.5).

The Paniyas have great belief in celestial gods like Sun, Moon, Mother Earth, god of lightning, etc. Ancestor worship is another important belief. They believe that certain trees, birds, animals and snakes have divine power in them and they pay homage to them during special occasions. (E.g. Vishu celebration, Uchal festival, Marriage occasion.) Later they borrowed and adopted the religious practices, gods and rituals of their masters (Aiyappan 1992: 87). Now this process is on the increasing line. Thus we could say that Paniya as a community is open to all types of religious beliefs but they are very faithful to their own religious practices, which are the core-elements of Paniya life.
PLATE 2.5
THINE - THARE - KAVU OF THE PANIYAS

1. ‘Thine’ in Appu’s family, Alumthatta
2. ‘Thare’ in Appu’s village, Alumthatta
3. ‘Thare’ in Chimban Mooppan’s village, Athirathil
4. ‘Thare’ in Palan’s village, Naduvil
5. ‘Kavu’ in Kezhavayal village (Kottekavu)
6. ‘Mari Thare’ in Kottekayu, Kezhavayal
1. Attali, Velichappadu, Vaidyakkar

The important religious functionary in the community is ‘attali’ meaning ‘dancer’. He combines many roles like ritualist, hymnist and medium-dancer who is engaged in rituals in honour of the gods, the spirits of the dead, and for exorcising evil spirits. Thus, they are ordinary medium dancers. The velichappad, who is a specialist in sooth-saying, astrology and divination, practise their trade of sorcery (kodi vakkal, mani ital). It is a borrowed term from non-tribal group. The Vaidyakkar are medical practitioners who can cure those suffering from sores by symbolically ‘drinking’ the blood, and can charm thorns, hairs and other hurtful foreign bodies from the sufferer’s body by means of the manipulation of magic sticks (Ayiappan, 1992: 78-82). Polan Mooppan in Eachome, Chimpan Mooppan in Vilambukandam and Karikkan Mooppan in Pallikunnun and Velukkan Mooppan in Kurumbalakotta are some of the present religious functionaries in Panamaram panchayath. I have seen two women religious persons who do the rituals. Their names are Chunda chachamma and Ponni.

In Madakki, near Kalpetta there is a medicinal man (vaidyakaran) called Polan (66). He is a specialised person in stopping the drinking habit of people and healing other sickness. I had an experience of one case. Velian (30) from Nellickal village, who was addicted to liquor, was taken to this vaidyakaran for treatment. We had to take half a bottle of liquor, two raw chicken egg, a cup of aval (beaten rice), mixture, 25paise coin, and incense sticks for the ritual. Early morning we reached his house. Velian was told to sit in front of him and he started the mantras and rituals. The raw egg that was placed inside the aval before him became cooked one and it was given to the patient with mixture and the liquor after offering it to their particular god, (Chathan) by the vaidyakaran. He drank it some but could not finish it. That was the end of his drinking habit. He has stopped drinking for the past two years. He has taken this treatment on September 12, 2002. Annu and Vellachi from Nellickal village also shared their experience of getting cured by Polan’s treatment. He accepts some money for this treatment.

2. Gods and Odiyans

Following are some of the deities worshiped by the Paniyas. Padachavan (great Creator God), Pakal Bhagavan (Sun, god of the day), Iravu Bhagavan (Moon, god of
the night), many gods and goddesses and spirits, distributed among seven worlds above and seven worlds below. Sun and Moon are responsible for sending life down and taking it up at stipulated intervals. Spirit of the dead is called ‘pena’. Inside every Paniya house a small platform, ‘thine’ is constructed to accommodate the spirits. It is the sacred place set apart in side the house for the gods and goddess. It is here the spirits of the ancestors dwell.

For the gods and goddesses, the shrines are in the open place, under the trees. At the foot of the tree a cane is kept that is the symbol of the Moopan. Shapeless boulders (stones) represent the deities. Borrowed gods are: Mariamma (goddess for small pox), Malakkari (Siva, the hunter), Bhagavati (Mother goddess), Kariyaathan (Kadar’s god).

Odiyans

They are powerful spirits who can cause troubles to human beings as well as their livestock. Paniyas believe that if they give due respect to them at due time they will be very benevolent to the community. Odiyans are used for sorcery, curing the sick and divinations. Some of the Odiyans are: Gulikan, Kali, Kooli, Kuttichathan, Ankama:lan, Ko:chikirani. Polan Mooppan at Madakki and Chimban Mooppan at Athirathi! are experts in doing odiyan’s duty.

3. Rituals

Rituals are religious or solemn ceremony involving a series of actions performing according to a prescribed order. Paniyas have two kinds of rituals: a) rituals related to life cycle ceremonies b) rituals performed on other occasions. Rituals related to life cycle ceremonies are: 1) Pregnancy and birth, 2) Puberty rites, 3) Marriage, 4) Death rituals.

a. Pregnancy and Child birth

The pregnant woman has her confinement and delivery in the house of the husband. In the eighth month of the first pregnancy, a ritual called pu:layatte is performed to ward off evil spirits; at subsequent pregnancies, the rite conducted for this purpose is called muriyattu. The woman is assisted at delivery by her own elder female relatives or a midwife (pettichi) belonging to the community. The baby is
bathed in water boiled with turmeric; this is continued for twenty one days. On this
day, the neighbours and relatives are invited; the house is cleaned thoroughly, the new
mother is bathed and dressed, and a vegetarian feast served. This marks the end of the
pollution period. Nowadays most of the deliveries take place in the hospital. One of
the informants Smt. Vasantha told me that her first child was born at the government
hospital, Kalpetta and her second child’s delivery was in Lourdu matha private
hospital. In both cases they did not do any special ritual attached to childbirth.

Even though Luiz (1962) had reported that ear-boring used to be performed
within a month of birth, Somasekharan Nair (1976:89) found that it was only when the
child attains three years of age. In my fieldwork I have found that this ceremony takes
place at their own convenience usually between the age three and six. The child is
taken to the courtyard by its maternal uncle; the elder relatives make token movements
and two of them pierce the ear lobes with sharp thorns. A vegetarian feast is served
and the guests disperse after making presents to the baby. The thorns are retained in
the ear lobe until some suitable ornament can replace them when the family affords it.

2. Puberty

The pubescent girl at this stage is separated in a corner of the house, and is
considered polluted until the purification ceremony conducted. It may be postponed
until the family gathers the required resources, but is usually on the 7th day. In two
cases in Naduvil veedu village the puberty rites of Kumari Sindhu and Prabha were
postponed due to economic problem. They needed some money to perform the ritual
and give meal to all the relatives who would attend the ceremony. The girl is seated
near the thine, facing the sun, on a mat placed over some paddy. An elderly man and
an elderly woman feed her with some puttu, prepared out of rice dough. She is then
taken for the purificatory bath by the women, while the young men recite songs to the
accompaniment of the drums (tudi). As she returns, the men and women start dancing
vattakali. The girl is received at her door by a woman who washes her head and feet
with coconut water; she in turn washes the feet of all elders with coconut water and
seeks their blessings. A vegetarian feast is served. (Somasekaharan Nair 1974: 90-91).
3. Marriage

Even though the most popular mode of finding mates is by negotiation, there are cases of "boy meets girl" before the negotiations start, as they have opportunities for doing so at their work sports and elsewhere. Usually, the weddings are conducted in summer, after the harvest, when the families would have received their wages and bonuses. The ceremony is held at the girl's house. On the day, customarily, a full measure (para) of paddy, and some amount of money as penpanam\textsuperscript{15} (bride price), ornaments etc., are presented by the groom's family. The groom arrives with tudi and kuzhal accompanying. The boy's Maami (mother's brother's wife) decorates the bride with the ornaments and dress brought by her.

The couple are seated before the same plantain leaf and served with some food. After tasting the food they are led to a pandal, where they listen to the advice from the elders, which may be summarized as: "If the boy does any wrong, let it be known to the girl's people; if the girl does any wrong, let it be known to the boy's people". The girl is taken to the groom's house once the rituals get over in girl's house. There the eldest member of the household (Karnavar) gets the blessings of the family deities, waves a coconut over the couples head, and breaks it. The coconut water is poured on their feet and he catches hold of the hands of the couple and leads them into the house; they in turn touch the feet of the elders and receive their blessing. This completes the ceremony, and the nuptials are at the husband's house the same night.

During his field work the researcher attended six marriages at different villages. Though there are variation in the marriage rituals the main element in all the cases are the same. The impact of the modern culture is seen in all the cases. For example one informant Sri. Annu was saying that for his marriage he and the marriage party walked throughout the previous night to reach the bride's house. To keep them awake and to ward off from the wild animals, they used to have tudi and kuzhal and vattakali dance on the way. Now we use jeep to go to the bride's house and we do not have tudi, kuzhal and vattakali performance on the way.

\textsuperscript{15} It is the bride price given to the girl's parents by the bridegroom's party. The amount will be fixed by the uncles of both parties. Usually this will be given before the marriage.
4. Death

When a person is about to die, any close relative who may be present gives water. After death, the thumbs and big toes of the corpse are tied together with a string before the death rites set in. The news is sent around; the Chemmi and other elders assemble. A bier is made of banana stems; the corpse is bathed by the affinal relatives and placed on the bier. A measure of rice and the two halves of a coconut broken over it are placed near the head, and over them, a lighted cotton wick. The Chemmi pours a few drops of coconut water into the mouth of the deceased. The relatives place coins around the rice. The Chemmi collects the rice and the coins in a banana leaf and hands it over to the son of the deceased. He ties it in a piece of cloth and keeps it in the small platform inside the hut, where it remains for seven days.

Arapula, Takapula, Kakapula

The pollution is for seven days (arapula or “half pollution”), during which the close relatives of the deceased should not chew betel, take non-vegetarian or fried foods but take only gruel, refrain from shaving or using hair oil, washing of clothes and participating in religious rites. Ornaments and coloured sashes should not be worn. The closest matrilineal relatives, viz., brothers, sisters, etc., observe the takapula (“full” pollution) of twelve days. But on the morning of the 7th day, or somewhat later if resources do not permit the indulgence, the kakkapula, which is also known as valiya pula is performed after a year. (Madhava Menon, 1996:307-309).

Rituals performed at other occasions are: 1) Deivam Kanal, 2) Ucharal, 3) Peyattu.

1. Deivam kanal (Seeing the god)

The attali of the community has the power to see god or gods on special occasions like festivals, life cycle ceremonies or on particular event like house warming or thanks giving ceremony. It is an occasion for conversing the gods through their shaman (Chemmi/ attali) and gets his / her blessing for the event, e.g.: marriage ceremony, tribal festival, building a new house, sickness in a village. The god would answer the queries of the people; find solutions for their problems etc. The Shaman of the Bhagavathi wears the following items: sickle sword, two strings of pellet bells for
the two legs of the shaman, black sash around the waist and red cloth for the head, ‘tali’ as neck ornament. The Shaman of ‘Gulikan’ also uses the same dress. The shaman of the great grandfather (Moothappan) god carries a walking stick (chooral). Tudi and kuzhal has to be played for this ritual. For Paniya gods, music and dance are essential part of their being (Aiyappan, 1992: 90-92).

2. Ucharal

This agricultural ritual is celebrated in the month of February. On that day people stop all works and give rest to Bhoomi Amma (Mother earth). Because, it is believed that this day is the annual menstrual period of Bhummi devi. Food offering are placed inside the house on the thine for one day. Nobody enters there on that day. This ceremony is also known as Uchal.

3. Peyattu

Peyattu is done by the Chemmi to cure the disease of the people. They believe that sickness is due to the work of the evil spirit. To get rid of this evil spirit from the sick person the Chemmi does the Deivam kanal ritual. Usually it is followed by komaram thullal, which is the dance of the village gods. Peyattu ceremony is done at night.

4. Ritual Dances

In any folk society dance and music are essential part of their rituals and ceremonies. Kerala is blessed with rich ritual dance tradition. Eg. Theyyam, Thira, Padayani, Thullal, etc. Paniyas also have many forms of ritual dance which are described below.

a. Thira dance

Paniyas borrowed this dance from the Malaya, spirit dancers. Thira dance is performed by Malayan, Mannan and Munnu:ttan castes as part of Theyyam ritual. It is performed in an elaborate form with colourful costumes, masks and ornament. But Paniyas take a simple form and they make composition of the text spontaneously. It is performed during Vishu festival and other festival occasions. In Deivam kanal ritual on particular occasion like marriage, village festival, etc. they perform thira dance.
b. Komaram thullal or velichappadu thullal

It is also a ritualistic dance by the shaman (attali / chemmi) on the occasions of puberty rite, marriage, death ceremonies, and rituals connected with cure of disease. This shaman is called Velichappatis by Paniyas. They are specialist in invoking spirits and of curing disease by warding off the evil sprits that cause sickness. They are called attalis by Paniyas, meaning ‘dancer’. They get this skill (songs and prayers) in dreams. The shaman goes into trance and then dance, holding sword or shield in his hand. He takes a coconut place on the heads of the individuals present there saying ‘My children will not be afflicted by heat and cold here after’. Then he breaks it and if it breaks into two halves it is an auspicious sign. The Velichappadu then bless all those gather there with good words. Tudi and Kuzhal performance would be there as accompaniment for all these rituals (source: Aiyappan, 1992:104-108).

5. Festivals

The Paniyas celebrate life. Festivals are part of their life. As a tribe, they have their own festivals as well as they participate in other community’s celebrations. Some of the festivals where the Paniyas do have an active participation are given below.

a. Valliyoor Kavu Festival

Valliyoor Kavu is situated two km away from Mananthavady town in Wayanad. The goddess here venerated is Valliyooramma which is a manifestation of Kodungalloor Bhagavathi. This festival has got centuries old tradition. Kottayam Raja, the ruler of the place in later half of 18th century promoted this festival. It is celebrated in the Malayalam month of Meenam 1 - 14 (March - April) where all the tribal sects of Wayanad gather to get the blessings of Mother goddess Valliyooramma.

In this festival the Paniyas of the locality have a special role to play. The ooppan of the village has got special status during the festival. He is the one who brings firewood for the festival and lights the fire in the kitchen, which is built for the festival season. It is the right of the local Paniyas to bring the Kodimaram (bamboo - flag stand) from the nearby forest. On the 7th day of the festival they cut the bamboo and bring it to the festival ground ceremoniously. For the festival each tribal sect is allotted special places for taking rest and gathering. The market and fares associated
with the festivals is very famous in Wayanad from last century onwards. People belong to all religion and sects participate in the festival and there is no restriction about it. In fact, Valliyooramma is the mother of the place (Plate 2.1).

There are various legends related to the origin of this festival. Each tribe has its own version. The Paniya legend is as follows: Long ago, Amma came to Wayanad with the desire of staying there. First she went to Banasuran kotta and expressed her wish to the Malakari god (Kurichiya god) but he did not allow her to stay there. Then she came to Thonichal side and sitting on a big creeper (valli) that was hanging down from a Koli tree. Paniyas were searching for edible tubers in the forest. One paniya woman hearing a particular sound looked up and saw a woman resting on the creeper. The woman looks very beautiful and her hair was white and bright. They ran towards the house and told the Mooppan about this and they all came to the forest. Seeing them the lady asked for food and shelter and said that whatever they gave she would eat. They took her to their house (pire) and gave food. Then they made a house for her on the other side of the river and the Paniyas were looking after her for long time. Since they found her on a creeper (valli) they gave her the name Valloor Amma. Chimban Mooppan added. Now everything is taken over by the Hindu rulers and landlords but we did not leave her. We brought her to our Kavu and Thara. (Legend told by Chimpan Mooppan (80), Athirathil on 16-04-2003). At Valliyoor kavu in Mananthavady the local Mooppan still have the right to bring firewood from the forest and make fire for preparing the food for the festival. The researcher himself had witnessed this in the year 1997.

Paniyas from Coorg, and Nilgiri also come for this festival. It is one of their spiritual ambitions and beliefs that if you go to Valliyoor kavu and pay homage to ‘Amma’, she would protect you from all dangers throughout the year. And they faithfully follow it. It is at this festival that the Paniyas meet their relatives who stay in far away places. In addition, it is the time where boys find their partners, exchange gifts, and fix their marriage.

Another significance of this festival is that it was during the festival time the purchase of the tribal slaves took place. The Paniyas and Adiyas were sold to the new masters for the succeeding year. They would be given some amount of money prior to the festival and they take an oath before the Bhagavathi (Valliyooramma) that they
would be loyal to the new master in the following year. This system was known as *kundal pani* (Bonded - labour system). Now it is not practised in Wayanad.

I participated in the festival for three consecutive years (1995, 1996 and 1997) and had done extensive fieldwork on this festival. However, there is tribal presence during the festival days, the organizers of the festivals are the non-tribals, that is, the caste Hindus and the temple trustees. The presence of Hindu organisations are very much seen all over the place. It has become a *mela* where people of all religion and all walks of life come there in any one of the fourteen days, participate in the festival and get the blessings of Bhagavathi. A trade fare and exhibition is organised by the temple authorities as part of the festival. On main days of the festival, that is thirteenth and fourteenth days the tribals from the nearby places would be there during day and night to watch the various *thalapoli varvu* and entertainment programme.

**b. Mari Amman Kovil Festival**

This festival comes after Valliyoor Kovil festival, that is, in the month of April. It is celebrated mainly in Kalpetta, Sulthan Buthery, Meenangadi and many other parts of Wayanad. Mariamma is a borrowed goddess for the tribals. This celebration has come from Tamilnadu. The Paniyas has great belief in this mother goddess. She wards off all sickness, especially small pox and protects their children from all calamities.

During the year they take special vows (nercha) for the children, observe seven days of special prayers before the festival, take their children to Mariamman Kovil, carrying *thalapoli* (an offering) on their head, offer it to the mother goddess (mariamma) and get her blessings for the whole year. *Thalapoli* contains coconut, rice, turmeric powder, incense sticks, and money. The ‘Chemmi’ of the village after ‘seeing god’, blesses the gathering and prophesies on matters related to that village. Then they take the ‘kodi’ (flag) that was brought from the *kovil* seven days ago and go in procession to the *kovil*. Musical instrument *tudi* and *kuzhal* will be used for the rituals and for the procession. On the way they go to their master’s house and get his blessing for the ceremony. (This is one way of showing dependence or lenience to their master.) The whole night they remain in the *kovil* premise, participate in the temple rituals, perform vattakali dance, chew betel leaves and arecanut, and meet their relatives. At this occasion boys exchange gift to their future partners, men drink.
liquor and make merry on the road. Early morning they return home carrying whatever they brought from the vendors (Plate 2.2).

During the year 1998 and 1999, I participated in this festival at Kalpetta town. I went with a Paniya group along with the thalapoli procession. There also the temple belongs to the high caste Hindus. The tribals especially the Paniya gather there and spend the whole night on the roadside. They have strong belief in the goddess Mariyamma. To honour her they have a special ritual dance called marikali.

c. Vishu Celebration

Vishu, an agricultural festival, is celebrated all over Kerala. It falls on Medam-1 (April) according to Malayalam calendar. With regard to Vishu festivals the Paniyas also have special rituals and celebrations which extend for 3 - 4 days. On the first day the koyma (village head) prepares Vishukkani in their respective villages, which is followed by a vegetarian meal. Vishukkani is an offering to Mother Earth (Bhoomi Amma) for all her blessing for the whole year. It is a thanks-giving ritual. On the second day Koo han or Mooppan perform the ritual called Vithidal (sowing the seeds) on the prepared soil. Then the villagers go the Gulikan kavu to do the rituals and dance to please the Gulikan deivam. Plantain fruits and beaten rice (aval) are offered to the gods in the kavu.

In the evening they all gather at the village courtyard and performs rituals like Deivam kanal, venna kallu pooja (blessing of a special stone to prepare karayappam), Tira dance etc. It is a special ritual of the Paniya during the vishu celebration. A special granite stone with sixteen small pits is blessed by the chemmi and give to the elder woman of the community to prepare karayappam for the function. Karayappam is a type of unleavened bread that is given as prasadam to the members as they leave the sacred place on the last day of the celebration. With the accompaniment of tudi (drum) and kuzhal (pipe) the whole group joins in dance and music. It goes on till next day morning. On the third day afternoon they perform entertainment like kolkali, thengamuttukali, vattakali,etc. On the fourth day morning the celebration ends with

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13 It is a special ritual of the vishu celebration. Kani kanal is part of this ritual that is done early morning on the vishu day. All the first fruits of the earth are arranged in the sacred place with konna flower and nine types of grain.
thanksgiving ritual called *deivathinu kodukal* and *karayappam* is being served by the *Moopathi* (wife of *Mooppan*).

**Onam Festival**

Onam is the harvest festival of Kerala. It is celebrated all over Kerala in the Malayalam month of *Chingam* (August - September). Paniya community also takes part in it. The main events of this celebration are making of *Pookkalam* (flower bed), *Ona Sadhya* (special meal), sharing of gifts especially clothes, sports and games related to the festival. In the strict sense, Onam is not a festival of the tribals but being a folk festival, they also take part in it. This shows their openness to other culture, customs, and practices.

**5. Exorcism, Sorcery and Divination**

Exorcism is a ritual practice where the shaman *attali* drives out off the malignant spirits (evil spirits) from the person who is suffering from some sickness or mental disturbance or imbalance. This practice is common among the Paniyas. There are various forms of exorcism; some are simple and others are complex. The Paniyas believe that medicines are ineffective if the evil spirits are not propitiated. Some of the malignant spirits are: *Kuttichathan, Ankamaalan, Kochi kirani*, etc.

**Exorcism**

One simple ceremony of exorcism is called *anthi-attu* (night dance). For this ceremony the householder prepares fried rice, molasses, and *attali* (the priest) offers them with coconut and 25 paise to the evil spirit. The coin and coconut are wave round the head of the patient and place near a small heap of rice. The attali takes an arrow or nail and goes around the patients and pins down the evil spirits in front of the left foot of the patient. Then he prays to the gods sing a song holding the cane on one hand and jingling the pellet bells on the other. (Aiyappan, 1992: 110).

**b. Sorcery**

Cases of sorcery among Paniyas are now on the decline. It may be due to the change of socio cultural situation. As slaves in the past Paniyas did exercise sorcery against their masters. Now the social situation is changed. Paniyas become conscious
of their strength and values. Paniyas are seldom subjected to the harsh treatment, which was prevalent during the feudal epoch.

c. Divination

As other tribes in Wayanad have methods of divination, The Paniyas also practise two methods of divination: Kodi vekkal and Mani idal.

i. Kodi vekkal

The specialist usually Chemmi takes a small quantity of rice grains and places it on a plank. He divides it into seven little lots and sorts each lot into pairs of grains. If the majority of the little lots have odd numbers, the answer to the question put is negative; if even the answer is positive. The process is repeated several times for confirmation. This is called Kodi vekkal.

ii. Mani idal

A string of small pellet bells (mani), which are tied on the legs of the shaman. A pair of these bells is placed in a winnowing basket, which the diviner holds in his hands, and he goes on shaking the winnow. The diviner poses the problem, mediates on his gods or goddesses and then shakes the winnow rhythmically. If the answer to the question is negative, the pellet bell stops making sound; if positive (yes), they will continue to jingle. The simple law of probability is unknown to the Paniyas. But when the ‘god element’ comes in these methods, they simply believe what the shaman says (Aiyappan, 1992: 118).

7. Religious life

Paniya’s religious practice and beliefs undergo fast changes due to acculturation. They are slowly absorbing into Hindu religious practice and beliefs. Nowadays they are allowed to go into the temple of the Hindus for dharshan and other rituals. They attend Christian festivals like Lourdu Matha festival, Pallikunnu; St.Jude’s festival, Chundel, etc. They have great reverence to Muslim saints and mosques too.
In their houses we can see, the photos of many of the Hindu gods like Parama Siva, Rama, Vishnu, Krishna, Ayyappa and Ganapthi, etc. I have seen, pictures of Jesus, St. Mary, St. Antony, etc. in some houses. Sabarimala pilgrimage is a new phenomenon seen among them. During the pilgrimage season, they also conduct bhajana at each village at night for lord Ayyappan. With regard to the use of personal names, we see change. Now they take the names of Hindu gods and goddess, instead of their indigenous names.

Along with the sanskritisation trends, they uphold their native ways of religious practices also. Their own sacred places like thine, thare, and kavu are seen among their villages. Deivam kanal and other rituals related to the rites of passages are common among them. On special occasions, the chemmi or attali is called to perform rituals and prayers in their houses.

Cases:

1. Rahavan (25) and Devan (25) Naduvilveedu: In the year of 2002, during the Sabarimala season they were initiated by the Hindu person (Gurusami) to go to Sabarimala. During the preparation period, they observed fast (mandala vrutam), conducted bhajana in their houses. All the bhajana songs were related to various gods and goddess of Hindu religion. I attended their Kettunira function on that year.

2. Marriage ceremony of Sunitha and Govindan: The bride groom's family was particular about muhurtham (a Hindu custom of seeing auspicious time for a special event) for the marriage. In the bride's, family they were not keen on that. Yet, they had to yield to the demand of the former. During the marriage, they also followed the Hindu rituals like thalikettal and mala ideel (tying the thali and garlanding each other).

3. Valliyoor kavu festival: In an ancient time, this kavu belong to the tribal communities and they conducted the festival in their own ways. Later, in the 18th century, the Hindu groups who were the landlords and rulers of the place (Naaduvazhikal) established their right over it. Now this festival is conducted according to the Hindu beliefs and customs and its organisers are Hindu families of that locality. The Paniyas and other tribals have certain rights for these festivals.
Now, they are on-lookers at the festival ground. The researcher himself observed this during the festival time in the years of 1995-1997.

H. FOLKLORE

The Paniyas have rich cultural tradition. As an ethnic community, they are blessed with songs, stories, proverbs, and riddles, myth and legends, drama, dance and music. They are good performers filled with lots of emotion and imagination. All their oral literature and art forms are the product of their social context, which is marked by slavery, domination and the control of the upper-caste people. Due to close contact with the non-tribes, they have adapted and adopted many art forms from them, in their oral tradition.

1. Songs

Paniya songs are expression of their life-situations. It is sung in their own dialect. They depict the experience of slavery, oppression, poverty, misuse of women by non-tribals, their dreams and aspirations and their joys and sorrows of everyday life. It is sung rhythmically, with the accompaniment of _tudi_ (drum) and _kuzhal_ (pipe) at various occasions. There are many types of Paniya songs used for various contexts. They are classified here according to the performance context.

a. Ritual Songs

They are songs sung for the life cycle rituals. There are puberty songs, marriage songs and death songs. During the _kaka pola_ ritual for the deceased person the _attali_ sings the songs called _pena pattu_ that last for one day and one night.

b. Vattakali songs

Women sing these songs during _vattakali_ dance. According to the rhythm of _tudi_ and tune of _kuzhal_ the elder member in the group starts the song and others repeat it, in between they make the sound _hoi-hoi_ to boost the group.

c. Work songs

Being a working class Paniyas do have many songs in this collection. They are _natti pattu_ Okkalu pattu, _Kambala tudi pattu_, _Koithu pattu_, etc. They sing this on the
work site to ease out the tiredness of the heavy work. These songs are not practised now due to the absence of Kambalam kottu and Nattipani. The old generation knows some of the songs even today. Paru chachamma (82) at Pallikunnu sang a few songs for me during my fieldwork.

d. Urakka Pattu

These are lullaby songs sung by mothers and elder ones of the children (girls) who look after the younger ones. These songs clearly depict their socio-economic conditions. There are other songs like story songs (katha pattu), joke songs, teasing songs and kuthu pattu in Paniya song repertory. Most of them sung in groups with tudi (drum) accompaniment. (A detailed study on Paniya music and songs are given in chapter IV).

2. Dances

Paniyas are very good for dance. Both men and women, young and old are good at taking steps according to the rhythm of tudi (drum). Dance and music are in their blood. The typical dance they have is vattakali (dance is circular form). Only in Paniya tribe we see this type of dance. According to the rhythm of tudi and kuzhal (pipe) they take steps in a circular form swinging their body and lifting their hands rhythmically. The dance would continue for 3-4 hours. Usually they perform it at night. Vattakali is performed for various life rituals like marriage, puberty rites, kaka pola and festival occasions. (See chapter III for vattakali dance in detail)

Another dance of this community is ‘Kambala dance’. It is a work dance and is used for transplantation of paddy seedlings at a large scale. A group of 100 people (workers) men and women under the leadership of Ku:ttan (muppan) do the work (Nattipani) in a dance style according to the rhythm of ‘tudi’ (drum). There are thullal dances for the religious rituals like deivam kanal (seeing gods), komaram thullal (death ceremony), Velichappadu dance (healing the sick), etc.

3. Stories

There are many stories prevalent in Paniya community. These stories tell a lot about their socio-economic and cultural conditions. Older generation is good at telling stories. Some of the stories are: 1) The monkey curse 2) The Boar and his wife 3)

4. Proverbs and Riddles

There are proverbs and riddles in Paniya community. Elders are good at proverbs and children are equally good at riddles. It is said in their dialect. Somasekharan nair had collected 22 riddles and 4 proverbs during his fieldwork among Paniyas in Wayanad ( Somasekharan nair, 1976: 313 - 316).

Eg. For riddle:

1) ‘Uttal Pottatha Kengire Motte’ (Kurumulagu = Pepper)
   (The small egg, it will not brake when you drop it)

2) ‘Oru ammena makka muyumen chundu neetti anju’ (mulavu = chilli)
   (All the children of a mother are like middle finger)

Eg. For proverb:

1) ‘Pennum mannum nancha kuthalu nanjakade ikkumo?’
   (Land and woman, you can make them better)

2) ‘Pochu makkalum patta kandavum kuda undava kane?’
   (Children and the paddy field on lease are the same, they will not be with us always)

5. Myths and Legends

Paniya’s myth and legends are related to their origin, gods, divine persons, folk heroes, and sacred places. The elders of the community know about it. Eg. Ippimala myth is about their origin and first parents (Uthappan and Uthamma). This myth is very alive even now among them (Chimban Mooppan (80) and Polan mooppan (75) shared this myth with the researcher). There are legends regarding Valliyooramma and Mariamma (cf. Aiyappan, 1992: 100).
6. Dramas

Paniyas generally are a celebrating community. During Vishu festival and other calendrical celebrations, they have drama, skits and vattakali dance along with other programmes. Kurathi natakam is a special item; they learned it from other caste people. The researcher could identify three drama troupes during his fieldwork. Olden time they perform this drama in the paddy field during summer, but now it is confined to a stage programme. Purana themes are used for the plot of the drama. It is the story of Siva and Parvathi (kuravan and kurathi) coming to the Earth to see their people. During the Vishu festival they have a drama called kattunayakka natakam and other dances like thengamuttu kali and kolkali.

7. Present status

Due to the impact of the modern electronic mass media, Paniya cultural life undergoes a drastic change. Younger generation is influenced by the cinema and TV culture. They are imitating the cinema stars in their dress patterns, ornaments and life style. In general, Paniyas are good at music and dance. They do have their traditional dance, vattakali and tudi kuzhal performance during village celebration and rituals. Youth are reluctant to perform these art- forms today. The negative remarks and comments received from the non-tribals is one of the reasons for their withdrawal. I myself have heard negative remarks and comments from the non-tribals during my fieldwork. Paniyas are exposed to the modern cultural values which are consumeristic, competitive, and individualistic in nature. Acculturation takes place in their life and they easily follow the ‘mainstream people’ in their life style.

Cases:

1. TUDI Festival at Eachome: Though the festivals, aims at the promotion of tribal culture and values the tribal youth show more interest in performing cinematic dance or cinema songs, etc. While asking about it, Binu said; “people like such programmes, and it is the fashion today”.

2. Vattakali performance at TUDI festivals: Many villagers participated in their traditional dress and forms for vattakali performance. But some groups showed reluctance and shyness for the performance, saying that others (the non-tribal)
would mock at them. Such cultural conflict was experienced during the TUDI festival in the year 2003. Young girls are showing more interest to perform modern dances than their own traditional ones.

3. Vishu celebration at Kurumbalakotta, 2003: The community participation for this festival was minimum compared to the previous years. The reason they said is that the group oriented values and life is replaced by individual oriented life style. Each one is searching for their own happiness and conveniences. Youth are not interested in their traditional practices rather they like to go for cinema to the cities. There is other reason for this situation, the expense of this celebration is met by the villagers. Now a days due to lack of work, they do not have enough money to conduct the festival in a grand scale (told by Vellukan Moopan).

4. Mariamman Kovil celebration at Kalpetta: Business people encourage such celebrations in order to get good business, especially liquor sale. All the Paniyas in that region are gathered there on the eve of Mari amman festival. Their presence in the festival is looked down upon by the non-tribals. But these non-tribal business people and the festival organisers take advantage of these tribal groups.

5. Harmonious life: Though the paniya are coolie workers, they keep good relationship with their masters and neighbours who are Christians, Hindus and Muslims and other tribal groups. During the Vishu and Mariamman festival, they get the co-operation and financial help to conduct these festivals. The researcher himself experienced this fact during his fieldwork among them.

I. POLITICAL ACTIVITY

As a slave tribe, the Paniyas were not directly involved in political activity. They were not allowed to go out of their settlements except on religious festival and marriage occasion. During the rule of Kottayam Rajas, they were sold as properties to Pvarious Jenmies (landlords) of various desam (region). During the British period, though slavery was officially abolished (1843), their life was in bonded status. Till 1947, Paniyas were unorganised, illiterate slaves. Most of them were agricultural workers, some worked in the estate of the British people. There was no organisation for tribals at that time. The presence of Communist party in Wayanad made the
situation different. Two projects were started by the Kerala government for the welfare of the tribals in Wayanad, namely Cheengeri Project (1957) and Sugandhagiri Project (1976). But as the projects envisaged, there was no substantial development taking place in the lives of the tribals.

At present various political parties and Tribal organisations are actives among the tribals in Wayanad. The Left (Marxist) and Right (Congress) parties have their fractions (party units) among them. The exploitation of the party leaders continue. Paniyas and other tribals are considered as their ‘vote banks’ during elections.

1. Tribal Movements in Wayanad

With the support of the established political parties some associations and unions were formed among the tribes in 1960’s, for the socio-economic development and political awakening of these communities. Some of the major movements are:

   a. The Wayanad Advivasi Swayam Sevak Sangam (WASSS). It was founded in 1963, December by C.M. Gulikan, an Adiya leader. Some Kurichiya and Paniya tribals also joined the Sangam. It was purely a tribal organization. The WASSS was actively involved in the tribal issues till 1972. They had the support of the Marxist Party.

   b. The Wayanad Adivasi Sangam (WAS) A. Chappan and C.A. Kunhiraman left the WASSSS and started Wayanad Adivasi Sangam (WAS). They were mostly Kurichiyas. They had close association with Jana Sangh leaders both at state and national level.

   c. Kerala Girivarga Sangam .It was formed by Annan (Ex- Tribal MLA) in 1973. They got the support of ‘Karshaka Thozhilali Union’.

   d. Naxalite movement in Wayanad. In 1968, Marxist led Karshaka Thozhilali Union started functioning actively in Tirunelly area in North Wayanad. There were Paniyas and Adiyas in it and they were bonded labourers. Under the leadership of A. Varghese they joined the Naxalite movement. The movement was shattered by the repressive measures of the police machinery.

   e. Kerala Adivasi Samajam Mullu kuruma tribe started it in 1973. 75% of the Samajam members were mulukkurumbas. The other groups were Pathiyar,
'Thachanad Mooppan’, Kattunaikan and Urali. The congress party supported it. During emergency period WASSS, Grivarga Sangam and ‘Wayanad Adivasi Sangam’ (WAS) did not get government support and gradually they became powerless. (Mathur1977: 185-206)

2. Changing Scenario

Tirbals had their own political system (ooru sabha), which had withered away due to modern political system. At present parties like Congress, Communist Party, and Bharathiya Janatha Party are pitching their tents among the tribal colonies. These Parties consider them as their vote banks. At the time of election all the colonies become alive due to the frequent visit of the political leaders and party meetings. They catch hold of some of the leaders in the village; give them money, liquor and some other benefits. During this time, there would be clashes in the tribal village due to the presence of various political parties in the same village.

The projects and welfare programmes allotted to the tribals are controlled and manipulated by the local political party leaders. They get a good share from all the projects allotted to the tribals. Only 30-40% of the project amount would reach the people. This is the case in all the development programmes like drinking water, road scheme, electricity, housing scheme, etc. In order to understand the present political life of the Paniyas I narrate some cases that came across to me during my fieldwork.

Cases:

1. Chandran (35) Kurumbalakotta: He is a head load worker, living in Kurumbalakotta hill, the local party leader caught hold of him in order to organise the villagers for his party meeting and election work. He gets some monetary benefit by doing it.

Naduvilveddu colony: There are twenty-one families in this colony. They live in harmony until 2001. Now they are divided based on party politics. CPI (M), CMP parties are asserting their rights over them which resulted in family clashes and rivalry.

Vilambukandam Colony: During the election days, the political workers distribute country liquor (arrack) to every body in the village both to men and women, and keep them under their custody throughout the night. On the Election day morning, they
would be guided to the booth by the party workers. On the way, they will be shown their party symbol for voting. This is the way they exercise their franchise.

Nellikal village: To build a retaining wall in the colony the government allotted Rs. 75,000/- during the year 2002-2003. The project was kept pending till the end of the financial year. Finally, through the intervention of the local political leaders, they got Rs. 45,000/- for the work and the work is done by the village committee. They did not get the rest of the amount. It has gone to the pocket of the intermediaries.

There are cases where the tribals are aware of the exploitation of the political leaders and government officers with regard to their development programme. Realising these, Sri. Annu Nellikal, built his own house without the help of the contractor or the middle man. The grant was allotted to him by the government. It is a positive initiative by the tribals to act against the intervention of the intermediaries and political workers.

Advasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS) headed by an Adiya woman, C.K.Janu(33) from Wayanad led the historical struggle for tribal land, and organised all the sections of tribals throughout Kerala. They formed a political organisation called Rashtria Maha Sabha (RMS) to contest the parliamentary election in Kerala. (Indian Express daily dated March 23, 2004)

J. GOVERNMENT AND NGO’S INTERVENTION

Even before 1947, various govt. and non-govt. agencies worked for the development of Paniya tribe. But they became 'victims of development'. In the name of tribal projects the bureaucrats and Non Governmental Organisations made their own life safe and secure. The Cheengeri Colonization Scheme (1957) at Ambalavayal, The Sugandhagiri project at Vaithiri (1976), Pookot diary project, Priyadarsini tea estate at Mananthavady were also a failure as far as tribal development is concerned. In all the Five-Year Programmes of Government both at national and state level, a good amount of money is allotted for tribal welfare. However, no substantial change is seen in their life, except responding to their basic needs that also to the minimum level. According to the census report the population ratio of the Kerala tribes shows a decreasing trend. In 1971 the tribal population was 1.26% which has come down to
1.03% in 1981 and 1.01% in 1991. The literacy rate of the tribes in Kerala is just 11.02% (1981). (For details See, Prakash P.K. 2002: 103-104).

In this chapter, we were discussing the ethnographic details of the Paniya tribe. From this discussion we have identified some of the core-elements of Paniya life such as tudi and kuzhal musical instruments, vattakali dance performance, Ooru system based on kinship structures, reverence and communion with their ancestors, and the relationship with the cosmic world. (Fig. 5). All these elements would help us to go deeper into the performance tradition of this community especially their music and dance performance. The next chapter deals with the vattakali performance of the Paniya tribe in detail from a folkloristic perspective.
1. Tudi and Kuzhal
2. Vattakali Performance
3. Ooru System
4. Communion with the Ancestors
5. Cosmic Relationship