

Mannankoothu Songs and Structure

The Mannan community believes that there are about eighty-five Koothu songs in existence. These songs have been passed down through generations as part of an oral tradition. They narrate the story of Kannaki and Kovalan — from their birth to Kannaki's arrival in Kerala. While the songs are inspired by the Silappathikaram epic, the Mannan version introduces its own variations in narrative and detail.

In earlier times, Mannan-Koothu was performed over seven days, with each stage presenting a portion of the Kannaki-Kovalan story. Today, the performance is usually limited to a single night due to changes in lifestyle and livelihood patterns.

The first three songs, known as Daiva Pattukal (divine songs), are particularly significant. They express the community's reverence for the gods, ancestors, and the king, and are sung to seek permission and blessings before the performance begins. These songs are usually performed separately in a corner near the main arena.

The performance concludes with the Mangalam song. During this final act, a bowl of water is placed at the centre of the arena; it is later sprinkled around the space to mark the ritual end of the Koothu.

Traditionally, Mannan-Koothu included a blend of songs, verses, and storytelling. However, this older structure is now fading, with most performances featuring only the songs. Some elders in the community still remember the complete version and share their knowledge to preserve it.

Folk songs called Muripaattukal were once interwoven with the Koothu to depict scenes from everyday life — such as farming in the forest, interpersonal relationships, or lullabies. These songs also provided rest intervals for the lead singers. In recent times, Malayalam songs are often used in place of Muripaattukal, as many traditional tunes have been lost.

Efforts are now being made to revive the older form of Mannan-Koothu and its traditional songs. Mani from Chinnapara notes that younger members of the community are learning the ancient

methods, working to bring back the authentic rhythm and essence of their cultural heritage.

MANNAN KOOTHU SONGS SAMPLE :

SI No.	Name of the Song	Type of the Song	Description	Link to the Archive
1	Nalla Ennoorunthan Thevarkalellam	Daiva Paattu	Mannan Koothu performed to the prayer song 'Nalla Ennoorunthan Thevarkalellam', traditionally sung in the beginning of the Mannan Koothu performance, offering respect to the 800 Mannan deities of the land and seeking their blessings. It is performed before the enactment of the Kannaki - Kovilan segment of the Koothu.	

2	Nammal Arare Pere Cholli Aaduvane	Daiva Paattu	<p>Adapted version of Mannan Koothu performed to the prayer song 'Nammal Arare Pere Cholli Aaduvane'</p> <p>This song is sung as a tribute to the ancestral founders of the Mannankoothu, Panchanpoolan and Periyankan, according to Mannan belief. They are praised in the song as a way of seeking their blessings.</p>	
3	Oh Raja Raja Chola Raja	Daiva Paattu	<p>Mannan Koothu performed to the prayer song 'Oh Raja Raja Chola Raja', also sung at the beginning of a Mannan Koothu performance, paying tribute to the King and the great elders of the community.</p>	

4	Nalla Rottoram Veettukari	Kaattu Paattu	<p>Mannan Koothu performed to the Muripaattu song 'Nalla Rottoram Veettukari'.</p> <p>The song describes a rural woman and admires her colorful saree, graceful walk and adornments.</p>	
5	Cholam Vithakkapona Muthamma	Krishi Paattu	<p>Mannan Koothu performed to the folksong 'Cholam Vithakkapona Muthamma'.</p> <p>The song describes an elderly woman, Muthamma, and her actions in cultivating crops like corn, ragi, and millets such as sowing the seeds, cutting the weed in the process.</p>	
6	Inji Manji Valinadandho Vanjikodiye Paaru	Idavela Paattu, Kaattu Paattu	<p>Mannan Koothu performed to the folksong 'Inji Manji Valinadandho', a song that describes the natural landscape, including rocky terrain, dense forests, and wild animals.</p>	

7	Chandramathipinen Kuyilo	Kannaki Kovalan Song	<p>Mannan Koothu performed to the Kannaki - Kovalan song 'Chandramathipinen Kuyilo'</p> <p>The song is a dialogue with the moon, asking it to light up the forest with moonlight as Kannaki and Kovilan walk through it.</p>	
8	Chinnankara Vanthath Ennen Karayo	Kaattu Paattu (Kotharai Paattu) Prema Song), Idavela Song	Mannan Koothu performed to the folk song 'Chinnankara Vanthath Ennen Karayo', a song describing the land praising the land of the king.	
9	Nalle Kallu Mele Makale Eera Venda	Kannaki Kovalan Song	Mannan Koothu performed to the Kannaki-Kovilan song 'Nalle Kallu Mele Makane Eera Venda', in which the young Kovilan is advised to be careful and cautious while playing in the forest, climbing rocks, or scaling trees	

10	Oh Raja Raja Chola Raja	Daiva Paattu	Adapted version of Mannan Koothu performed to the prayer song 'Oh Raja Raja Chola Raja', also sung at the beginning of a Mannan Koothu performance, paying tribute to the King and the great elders of the community.	
11	Ayya Varaaru Theppethu Madura Vittei	Kannaki Kovalan Song	Adapted version of Mannan koothu being performed to the song 'Ayya Varaaru Theppethu Madura Vittei'. This is a hunting related song, where the preparations, journey and sights during the hunting are explained through the lyrics.	

12	Kalludachu Kinarum Ketti	Pani Song	<p>Adapted version of Mannan koothu being performed to the song 'Kalludach Kinarum Ketti'.</p> <p>This song is referred to as 'pani paattu', where daily life activities are sung. In this song, tasks related to digging a well, fencing the yard, and caring for an infant are described.</p>	
13	Nalla Chandena Mamaram Allelallo, Chami Puranthayidam Allelallo	Kannaki Kovalan Song	<p>Adapted version of Mannan koothu being performed to the song 'Nalla Chandena Mamaram Allelallo'.</p> <p>This is one of the Kannaki - Kovalan songs of the Mannankoothu. Here in this song, a pleasant spring season is described within the lyrics, reflecting the happy phase in the life of Kannaki.</p>	

14	Periyath Thanniyile Vadivela, Penkalellam Neeraduthe Vadivela	Murugan Song	<p>Adapted version of Mannan koothu being performed to the song 'Periyath Thanniyile Vadivela'.</p> <p>The song is used to describe a woman in her daily routine,taking bath, brooming, getting ready in a playful banter.</p>	
15	Nalla Chathiyumilleyo Chanangalomilla	Kannaki Kovalan Song	<p>Adapted version of Mannan koothu being performed to the song 'Nalla Chathiyumilleyo Chanangalomilla'.</p> <p>The song describes the situation where Pandya King orders to execute Kovalan and Kovalan's loneliness is reflected in the song.</p>	
16	Mangalam Paattu	Mangalam Song	Mannan Koothu performed to the Mangalam song, as the concluding act in the arc of Mannan Koothu.	

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