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**INTERLINKING MONEY AND SOCIAL LIFE :  
A CASE STUDY OF PANAPAYATTU OF  
NORTHERN KERALA**

**Introduction**

This paper is based on a traditional economic exchange called Panapayattu which occurs in the Indian state of Kerala with close parallels in other southern Indian states. In this event a person in need of money, calls a set of close relatives and friends personally by placing an invitation and treat them with certain snacks and Tea. In return, the guest pays a certain amount whatever possible for them to the invitee. The money given by each person is carefully noted down in an account book. The basic principle behind this exchange is that if A has gone to B's Panapayattu and donated money, it's obligatory that B goes and donate money when A conducts Panapayattu, even if B is not invited. Ideally, a person should return double or more than the double amount of the principle. The paper attempt to understand the principles of such a system running parallel to the modern day financial institutions and has been written in the background of anthropological literatures of exchange. It also tries to figure out the context, and importance of such parallel systems in the contemporary India.

In 1922, **Bronislaw Malinowski** published his well known and detailed ethnographic account *The Argonauts of Western Pacific*. The book, apart from its methodological and theoretical contributions is well known for its descriptions on a form of intertribal exchange called the Kula. The description and implications of Kula, sparked a new debate in social anthropology that of gift exchanges. Marcel Mauss, a few years after the publishing of the Argonauts of Western Pacific published his volume titled *The Gift: Forms of exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925). Mauss was interested to look into the principle which urges an individual to repay a gift and was bothered about the force that compels such a return. The answer for his question and his theory of gift was based on the Maori concept of Hau. Mauss identifies the inner spirit Hau which is inalienable from the gift as the motivation behind returning a gift. Following Mauss, various scholars like

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Levi Strauss, Raymond Firth, Marshall Sahlins and Karl Polanyi have contributed widely towards the understanding of the concept of exchange in anthropology and have devised their own theories of gift exchange. These scholars have also arrived at their own schemes of reciprocity continuums.

Most of the theories on reciprocity and gift exchanges in anthropology were initially developed as part of an attempt to study Melanesian and Polynesian communities and were proposed by Firth (1951), Sahlins (1972), Malinowski (1922) and other classical anthropologist at an early stage and by theorist like Annette Weiner (1976,1992), Maurice Godelier (1986), Nancy Munn (1986), and others in a more recent phase. Apart from the exchanges discussed by these scholars, study on a new set of exchange and reciprocal relations started as scholars did African and Asian ethnography. Scholars like Paul Bohannan's (1955) study among the Tivs, Frederick Barth's (1959) study on Swats of Pakistan are a few to mention. As the discipline grew, more critical theories on gift and exchanges have emerged like the feminist and postmodern interpretations of the gift theories. In an Indian context, Gloria Raheja's (1988) work on dandharma concept and Jonathan Parry's (1986) work on the "Indian Gift" needs special mention.

Gift exchanges, thus has been a matter of anthropological research and a wide variety of literature on gift exchanges has been produced. The debates on the motivations for giving, receiving and repaying a gift has been the aim of most of the studies on gift starting from Mauss. Anthropologist has been curious to know the underlying principle of a gift exchange and in this process has come up with theories and schemes of exchange types. The study of exchange and its social and political implications has been the focus of yet another group of anthropologists. The study of exchanges started with the exchanges in primitive societies like Kula ring, but the focus has slowly been shifting now towards exchanges in contemporary societies. The amount of literature on the gift exchange and its implications shows the importance of understanding such exchanges for understanding the cultures with which anthropologists are dealing. With this academic scenario in background, the current paper would deal with a form of exchange called Panapayattu.

### **Panapayattu: A Brief Account**

Panapayattu is a type of exchange which is popularly seen along the northern parts of Kerala especially in the districts of Kozhikode and Kannur. The word Panapayattu comes from two words *Panam* meaning money and *Payattu* meaning fight. Together the word Panapayattu literally means fighting out for money. The event Panapayattu is also sometimes called as *Chaisalkaram* or *Teyilasalakaram*. In some parts of Kozhikode district like the Ballussery taluk, Panapayattu is also called by the name *Kurikalayanam*. The words *Chaisalkaram* or *Teyilasalakaram*, comes from two words *Chai* or *Teyila* meaning Tea and *Salakaram* meaning treat. Thus the word literally

means Tea party. This term is usually used by Government employees while conducting Panapayattu as it is illegal for them to conduct Panapayattu. In olden days Panapayattu was also referred by the term *Sadire*. The term *Sadire* is no longer in use, and was abandoned due to the slang meaning associated with the term *Sadire*.

The system of exchange in simple terms can be explained as an event in which a person in need of money, invites a set of close relatives and friends personally by placing an invitation written in postcard and treat them with certain snacks and Tea. In return, the guest pays a certain amount whatever possible for them to the invitee. The money given by each person is carefully noted down in an account book.

The basic principle behind the Panapayattu network is that one should return the same amount or more than the same amount to the contributor, when he conducts his Panapayattu. Ideally, a person should return double or more than the double amount of the principle. For example, if A contributes Rs 200 to B then B is supposed to contribute 400 or more than that when A conducts a Panapayattu. Here Rs 200 is the principle amount, and another Rs 200 is his contribution to Panapayattu network. If B contributes 500 instead of 400 to A's Panapayattu the principle amount becomes 300 and when A returns to B he should return 600 or more. A person can conduct Panapayattu, when almost all his repayments are over. At least 90% of money should be repaid before conducting the next Panapayattu. Unnecessarily conducting Panapayattu year after year is not considered as a decent practise.

Panapayattu is usually conducted to meet the expenses of a marriage in family, medical treatment, repaying debts, construction of house, money for gulf visa, purchase of vehicle, educational expenses, capitation fee for jobs, starting new business or any other urgent financial requirements. Sometimes it is also conducted to receive the money they have been contributing to other members. The network of Panapayattu is based on certain sets of rules, customs and prohibition and people who do not abide by these are set to be removed from the circle of Panapayattu.

Panapayattu is usually conducted at the local tea shops or at the host house. In some regions, there are separate places called "*Payattu Halls*" for conducting Panapayattu and these are exclusively used for conducting this event. The place for conducting the event is decorated with *Eentholapatta* and a name board showing the date and name of person conducting the Panapayattu is hanged.

The first step in conducting Panapayattu is fixing of the date for Panapayattu. The date of Panapayattu is fixed almost 2-3 months prior and a notice is fixed in the nearby tea shop or Payattu halls informing others that a Panapayattu will be conducted on the specified date. Once the date is fixed, the next step is inviting people in the network by handing over the invitation

card in the specific format. The invitation given for Panapayattu is called as “*Payattu Kathu*” (Payattu Card). The invitation is either written or typed in a white or brown colour sheet or postcard. The invitation will include the date; time and place of the event. The purpose of the Panapayattu is mentioned only in case of the specific purpose Panapayattu. In some of the invitations, the date of the last conducted Payattu is also mentioned. Sometimes the invitation of Panapayattu is combined along with the invitation of an event which is its purpose. In such cases, like where Panapayattu is conducted for marriages or House warming ceremony, the invitation letter for the event would have an additional line at the end quoting that Panapayattu would also be conducted on the same day.

Followed by this is the event Panapayattu. During the event, food is served and an accountant carefully notes the amounts contributed by different individuals in a book commonly referred as “*Payattu Book*”.

The money received through Panapayattu ranges from Rs 30000-Rs. 50000 normally. In the area under study, money received during a Payattu currently are in range of anywhere from Rs 30000 to 15-20 lakhs. On an average one receives around 3-4 lakhs from one Panapayattu.

The following section looks into the social significance of Panapayattu. Here, importance is given to understanding Panapayattu and its significance in the social life of the people in the area under study.

### **Local sayings on Panapayattu**

This section tries to look into how some local sayings or proverbs relate to the institution of Panapayattu. In the area under study, being accepted as an adult male member, necessarily mean that he is a member of the Panapayattu network. The elders here often opine that a young man would be more responsible and will let go of his casual attitude if he is engaged in two institutions. One is to include him in a Panapayattu network and the second is to get him married. The elders opine that if once he becomes a part of the network then he will run around and work hard to earn enough money to participate in the Panapayattu networks.

Another common saying goes on as “*Peettu Novu ariyatha pennum, payattu panam kodukaatha aannum Manucharala.*” The saying when translated means that a woman who do not know the pain of giving birth to a child and man who does not repay Payattu money are not human beings. The individuals here talk about two big shames in a man’s life. The first one is when a man fails to pay the expenses of his wife’s delivery. The second shame is the non repayment of the Payattu money. A common proverb used in these areas also supports this statement. The proverb is as follows

“*Payattu panavum, eetu panavum kodukathavan purushane ala*”

The saying literally means that a man who does not repay Payattu money and one who does not meet the expenses of his wife's delivery are equally shameless and are not considered a man. The equivalence of man's incapability to pay the expenses related to his wife's delivery and he not repaying Payattu money clearly demonstrates the significance of Panapayattu for an individual's identity and status in the society. The saying also shows how the status of a good Payattu member is crucial for his identification as socially acceptable male member of the society. This saying definitely depicts how being a righteous and active member in the Payattu network is essential for the identity of being a man in the community "*Nalla Payttukkaran Nalla Maryadakaran ane*". This is a phrase which means that a good and prompt member of Panapayattu is usually an ideal man with good manners. This phrase is yet another example which can be used to note the centrality of Panapayattu in the life of the people in this area. The involvement in Panapayattu network and being prompt in the dealings of Panapayattu is thus an essential part of status and prestige in the society.

### **Network of Panapayattu**

The Panapayattu network is a mix of friends, family, relatives, neighbours, colleagues and people who are in any sort of personal relation with each other. The network of Panapayattu based on obligation and trust, and aspects like economic class, religion or caste do not act as barriers.

The membership to a Panapayattu network can be obtained through two different ways. A new entry into the Panapayattu network is sometimes called as *Puthiya Payattu* and the person is often referred to as *Puthiya Payattukaran* (New Payattukaran). The simplest way to be the part of network is by accepting an invitation to Panapayattu or by contributing to the network without being invited. Even if no one invites, and if an individual wishes to be a part of the network, he can start attending all possible Panapayattu happening and contribute money. The only requirement being that contributor should know the receiver. Thus, in this way in the long run, he will belong to the network. Observations in the field revealed that one should attend a minimum of 70-80 Panapayattu to be considered a part of the Panapayattu Network. A person can be invited for Panapayattu at any time and place. Like marriage or other occasions, it is not necessary that the person should invite others formally by going to each one's house. The invitation to Payattu can be made orally even on a roadside or a casual meeting.

To discontinue from a Panapayattu network, one returns exactly the same amount as the principle amount. This is called as "*Payattu Murikal*". In olden days, breaking a Panapayattu can also imply breaking up of the personal relationship between the two individuals. But such conceptions are no longer in practise. Sometimes, if the receiver feels that he can't repay the principle

amount given by a contributor, he can reject the money. This act will also lead to the breaking of the Panapayattu relation.

If a person accidentally gave the same amount of money as the principle amount, both the receiver and contributor check the accounts together and settle as early as possible. Mostly by the next morning, the accounts would be settled. Such accidents are not appreciated by the Panapayattu network and are considered as inappropriate behaviour.

In the network of Panapayattu, one can notice that there are members who bear different kinds of relationship with each other. In the network of Panapayattu, affinal relatives have a special importance. In olden days, it was an unsaid norm that once the date of Panapayattu is fixed the host would first inform his son-in-law or his mother's brother. The significance of affinal relatives can be also noticed, in the account books of Panapayattu. Informants opine that, if affinal relatives are not present at the beginning of the event, then the first few lines are left empty so that when they arrive they can make their entries. It seems that, there are instances where the affinal relatives like the brother-in-law or father-in-law has picked up fights with the host as they did not leave the first few lines blank. Many of the affinal relatives consider it as their right to make the first entry. In instances of Panapayattu, conducted on the occasions of marriage, it is an unsaid norm that the very first entry on the Payattu book would be that of the new groom. It is said that, if he is not present when the Panapayattu starts, then the first line of the Payattu book is left blank for the groom. Sometimes the first few lines are also left blank for very close friends. Thus, Close friends, are important members of the network.

When affinal relatives are informed about the Panapayattu it is almost compulsory that they have to accept the invitation. If the affinal relative does not accept the invitation then it means that the affinal relative is not giving the requisite respect. Such acts of rejecting the invitation are considered as highly irresponsible and humiliating. The affinal relatives are supposed to be a part of the Panapayattu network and rejecting Panapayattu invitations can hurt the sentiments and relations between the affinal relatives and the host.

Close kin relatives like a father and son are not usually a part of the network. In olden days, close relatives like brothers or father were also excluded from the network of the Panapayattu. But nowadays, brothers are a part of each other's network. But, even now, a father and a son are not a part of each other's Panapayattu network. It is said that, a son and father cannot be part of each other's Panapayattu network, but a grandfather and grandson can be a part of the network. There are no written rules, emphasising all these, but these are some codes followed in Panapayattu.

### **Social considerations in being a part of the network**

Individuals when inviting new members consider a number of factors. The important factor for passing on an invitation for a new member is the

relationship both individuals share with each other and the trust they have between each other. Individuals also invite some new members sometimes because you know that these individuals can potentially contribute a good amount to the event. Sometimes one invites new people into the network because of mutual friends.

Accepting new invitation, are based on various factors like purpose of the event, relation to the individual, the economic capability of the individual, because individual invited is in the same neighbourhood, and the status of the individual in the society. New individuals choose to be a part of the network, mostly because of the relationship they share with other Payattu members. Friendship is a major factor that influences the decision on whether or not to accept a new invitation.

Individuals who are new members of the locality can be a part of the network, after certain periods of time say three or four years. The new individuals in the locality can conduct their Payattu after participating and contributing in other's Panapayattu. It is said that, unless and until individuals stay in the locality and build a network of relationship, one cannot conduct a Panapayattu. Even if one conducts a Panapayattu, no one would feel obligated to contribute to the event.

Sometimes individuals reject the Panapayattu invitations. People reject invitations due to various reasons like, lack of trust in the person's reliability to repay, the persons causal and irresponsible attitude, some personal discontentment with the individual, as one is economically not capable to accept new members into their network, plans to quit the network, old age, and lack of continuous and stable source of income. Some individuals take the rejection of Panapayattu invitations personally and get annoyed with the person who did not turn up for the event. Sometimes, the individuals understand the economic and financial liabilities of the individuals and continue to maintain social relations with the individuals who rejected the invitation. Some individuals, while receiving the invitation, clarify that they will not be able to make it to the event due to certain reasons and such denials of Panapayattu requests are considered more appropriate.

It is generally considered that the more the number of Payattu relations and Payattu member's one has in their network, the more sociable they are. The locals of the area quite often comment that an individual with large number of *members* essentially means that he has a lot of social connections with the people around. Individuals who are economically and politically powerful also tend to have a large number of members in their network. During the 1950's when Panapayattu was a sort of competition, and individuals used to boast about the number of persons attending their Panapayattu. Having large number of Panapayattu members means that one will have more number of Payattu per week. It is said that a big landlord named Thekela Soopika, due

to the large number of members in his network, had to employ a person to represent him and go around and attend the Panapayattu events. Having a large number of Payattu members adds to the prestige and social status of an individual.

Having more number of Panapayattu members also means that the money pooled in is also more. The amount of money received in a season by different Payattu members is quite often compared. Members of the network are aware about the total money pooled in for different individuals and often comment that some of them are big Payattu members while some of them are small Payattu members. The members informally distinguish big Payattu as *Valiya Payattu* and small Payattu as *Cheriyā Payattu*.

### **Repayment of Payattu Money**

The re-payment of Panapayattu is a measure of self respect and dignity. It is said that people with self respect and dignity would repay the Panapayattu under any circumstances. In this instance one always quote the story of the goon of the area. Once the goon, in the village conducted a Panapayattu and after repaying the initial few Payattu money, found it difficult to pay back the money. Scared of losing the identity and dignity, the goon came out with a story that the book got burned. The locals still comment that the goon came out with a story of burnt book to avoid the loss of honour in non-repaying the money.

Sometimes one can notice that individuals arrange money for Payattu by borrowing from other members. In many of the Payattu venues one can notice smaller monetary transaction in the form of borrowing or lending money between the members. This reaffirms the common saying "*Kadam vaangichum Payattum*" which means that one would even borrow money and repay Payattu. It is said that to arrange the money for Payattu one would even tend to pledge his wife's *Thali*. A common saying in the area under study clearly demonstrates this aspect. The saying goes as "*Kettu Thali vittum payatum*". This means that one would take part in Payattu and repay the amount even if it means he will have to sell his wife's *Thali*. The locals state that even if one is in utter poverty and have only enough money to feed his family, even then he will repay the Payattu money. The use of the phrase "*Ooone Aari vanagane vacha kaasu eduthu payatti*" which means that he used the money he has been putting aside to buy rice to repay Payattu money reemphasises the importance of paying Payattu money on time. Due to the social significance associated with repaying money on time, individuals tend to arrange the money required for Payattu in one way or the other. It seems that once, Kanjirekandi Basheer, a rich land owner received a big amount in Panapayattu and to repay double the amount of Panapayattu, he conducted another Payattu.

One would even take big risks and try to reach the Payattu place in correct timing and repay the Payattu money. Even if it is late in the night one



would make attempts to reach the venue of Payattu and repay the amount. While receiving money on days after the original Panapayattu day, one would only receive the principle amount. Not accepting more than the principle amount shows the dissatisfaction and displeasure of the host. In many cases, even if the person repays double the amount, the host just receives the principle amount and then returns the extra amount. Sometimes such act of delay in payment can also lead to the end of a Payattu relation.

### **Non Repayment of Payattu Money**

Non-repayment of at least the principle amount is considered as a highly irresponsible and dishonourable act and people tend to look down on such people. The host after the event cross checks the amount received and makes a note of all the individuals who did not turn up for the event. In olden days, there were instances when host were frustrated and irritated at members who did not pay and used to insult those individuals who did not pay. One way of insult was to light a *Choote* (traditional fire light) in the morning and walk all the way through the streets to his house. In this way, almost everyone on the streets would ask where the individual was going in day light by lighting a *Choote*. The individuals then announce that he is going to collect the Payattu money from so and so person and thus the whole locality would come to know that the particular person has not paid the Payattu money. This was considered as a big insult by the individuals. Similarly people would go and ask for Payattu money by holding Payattu book in their hands. Some individuals also go and ask for Payattu money by holding Eentholapatta.

In some places, there is practise of announcing the names of members who do not come and contribute the Payattu money. Such practise is prominent in the areas of Koyilandi, Kozhikode and Vaddakkara. The name and address of the individuals who do not contribute Panapayattu money are announced towards the closure of the event and this is considered highly disgraceful. Once announced in the mike, whole village comes to know that the particular person has not repaid the money and this is considered as a form insult. Such people's names that are repeatedly announced in the mike are then looked down upon and slowly removed from the Panapayattu network. In the areas of Ballussery taluk, there is also a system where, individuals who do not repay the amount are added into a list and are termed as *Karinkutti*. Individuals, who are considered as a *Karinkutti*, are removed from the Panapayattu network and are treated as a virtue less person.

Non-repayment of Payattu money is a serious social offence, and individuals get really annoyed if one does not repay the amount on the Panapayattu day. In one such situations one would try to insult the individuals hoping that at least then he would repay the money. One such incident is described below.

In the study area, there was an individual named Zakir. He conducted his Payattu and after the Payattu he noticed that one of the members named Asif, of Payattu community, in spite of being financial well off has not attended the event. He waited for a day before going and asking him the money and then when he realised that he is purposefully not repaying, he got furious and snappy. Zakir, the next day afternoon, went to Asif's house and seeing that Zakir is coming and realising that it was for the Payattu money, Asif went inside his house and hid. Zakir, realising the ploy, after a casual enquiry on whether Asif is home untied the cow which was in front of the house and walked away with it. When Asif's wife questioned what he was doing, Zakir replied that Asif has not paid the Payattu money and added that Asif get back his cow from Zakir's house after paying the Payattu money.

This incident is still talked off and laughed by the locals. The locals were all on the side of Zakir and opined that what Zakir did was the right and such lessons need to be taught to people like Asif who in spite of having money do not repay. Some of the aged informants add that, such individuals like Asif are only responsible for losing the values associated with Panapayattu and cites such incidents of dishonesty as reasons for the decline in Payattu networks.

Another incident in the area which is quite often laughed about was the Panapayattu conducted by the village officer. Being the village officer, he had many relations and was a member of multiple Panapayattu networks and thus the number of expected participants of his Payattu was around 400. But, unfortunately only around 180 members turned out for his Panapayattu. The next day, the enraged village officer started moving around the village in search of the Payattu members and then the people jovially started commenting that usually one goes to Payattu and pay money, but now Payattu is coming in search of us.

Such ways of asking for Payattu money are no longer practised and the newer generation of individuals consider the whole act of asking Payattu money as a shameful act. Most of them would note down people who did not repay back and comments about such individuals are made. But, acts to insult individuals to a larger extend is no longer practised.

### **Attending without Payment**

In earlier days people who have Payattu only will attend the event. The food served at the tea shop or the community halls are meant only for the people who are in the Panapayattu network and to those who are contributing. The people involved in the Panapayattu network considers eating the food given at Panapayattu without contributing as an activity done by those who has no shame and self respect. Even if someone accidently eats, without knowing that Panapayattu is happening, such individuals are considered as

one with less or no social status and self respect. An incident which depicts this is given below

Once a mahout was walking around with his Elephant and on the way had a tea from a Panapayattu shop, without knowing that it is a Payattu shop. Unfortunately, he did not have enough money to contribute to the Payattu. He was feeling embarrassed and humiliated as he did not have enough money to pay. So he waited for someone whom he knows, so that he can borrow money and pay for the Payattu. As he was waiting, he noticed that the elephant's owner was coming this way. The Mahout went ahead and described the situation, but unfortunately the owner was also not carrying money in hand. The owner thought for some time and then announced that he would give his elephant for the Payattu. Then the host of the Payattu, refused the offer and commented that if I take this Elephant as the principle amount then the next time I will have to return two elephants. Further, he added that till the next Payattu, I will have to take care of this elephant also and that would be double my expenditure (*Chilave*).

People who come to this area, without the knowledge of Panapayattu quite often get embarrassed when they accidentally have a tea at a Panapayattu shop. Once, a migrant from the southern Kerala accidentally walked into a shop and had tea without realising that it was a Panapayattu shop. He after finishing tea, walked up to pay for his tea. Then the shop owner told that he will not accept the money of the tea as it was a Payattu. The informant tried convincing him to take the money of his tea, as he did not want others to think that he had tea for free. But the owner was reluctant to accept the money for tea. After some time of argument the informant came into decision that he will contribute the money of tea and food into the Payattu and he went ahead contributed the money and made a note in the Payattu book. This was the start of his Panapayattu network.

Nowadays, the shame, boasting and prestige associate with Panapayattu has reduced to a great extent and acts like having a tea from a Payattu shop is not considered highly dishonourable. But, even today, among the older generation the attitude on how to attend the event and have tea or food without paying remains strong. The Panapayattu members in the older generation still feel ashamed to have even a tea from the shops of the Panapayattu and say that it is embarrassing to have tea without contributing to the event. In this context, one of the older members of Panapayattu mentioned about Chai Payattu. Kunju Raman, aged 65, had quit the Panapayattu network some years back. But recently while he was walking near one of the tea shops where Panapayattu was happening, the young host who was in his neighbourhood told that it was his Payattu and insisted that Kunju Raman, should come in and have tea and food. Kunju Raman reluctantly accepted the offer and added that he did not have money to contribute. Further while having tea, he added that the host had to come to Kunju Raman's Payattu

and without contributing has to have a tea and said let this be a Chai Payattu. This incident is yet another example to show that the event Panapayattu was not just an economic transaction of money but factors like status and prestige had a pivotal role in the events dealings and functioning.

### **Conclusion**

Panapayattu was a necessity and essential system of sustenance in the olden days. It was a mechanism for not just pooling in money for conducting events like marriage, but a mechanism which ensured that individuals in the society cooperate to help an individual economically. Being a network which is not legally recognized, there is no guarantee that the money would be returned, yet the network has been in practise for decades and is still continuing. The trust that members of the network by any means would repay the Panapayattu money forms the backbone of the system.

The association of social status and Panapayattu still continues to be prevalent and this is one significant aspect which helps the system to function effectively. In the area under study, the measurement of social status and prestige by having bigger Panapayattu, larger number of members and more luxurious food is quite common. This tendency to associate status and Panapayattu was extremely common during the time period of 1950's where Panapayattu was considered as a competition. The concept of competing with each other based on factors like the total amount one receives, and boasting about the food served and number of participants present can be compared with the potlatch of Kwakiutl. Helen Codere, (1956) discusses the concept of fighting with property. Similarly here, Panapayattu can also be considered as fighting with each other for more status and prestige by pooling in more and more money and thus receiving a higher amount of money. Similarly more lavish food with more elaborate menu, suggest a bigger Panapayattu and thus purport a higher social status. Such purposeful and strategically acts essentially means there is a power structure involved and Panapayattu is one way in which an individual tries to re ascertain ones position or is a way through which one tries to move up the social ladder. The concept of it being a competition during the 1950's re-affirms the fact that Panapayattu can be considered as a fight: A fight without weapons or physical harm, a fight with money to ensure an individual's power and position. Looking at Panapayattu in this angle widens the scope of the institution from just being an economic institution, to an equally powerful social and political institution. The success of this traditional system in the current social and economic atmosphere can be attributed to the social significance of the event.

On a concluding note, in the light of my understanding on Panapayattu, I would tend to revisit the traditional economic anthropology debate between the substantivist and formalist based on the question of acceptability of dominant economic themes for understanding exchanges in societies. The school

of thought which believed in the applicability of dominant economic themes for understanding all sort of exchanges was the Formalist school and they believed that the difference between different economic systems were that of a degree. Opposing the ideas of the Formalists, were Substantivist influenced by the writings and ideas of Karl Polanyi. They believed that the difference between different economic systems were of a kind, and rejected the applicability of the premises of general economic theory to all kinds of economic systems.

For understanding Panapayattu, in an anthropological framework of exchange the typological division by Polanyi of the substantivist school of thought seems useful. Polanyi looks into exchanges from a Maussian framework and believes that exchanges are embedded in the cultural context and further distinguishes three forms of exchange namely reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange. Looking into Panapayattu in the light of the scheme of Polanyi (1957, 1944), one can conclude that the institution of Panapayattu transcends the typology of Karl Polanyi in terms of reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange. It is a combination of all the three, evolved to suit the contemporary needs and exigencies. The members in the network have a symmetrical relationship with each other and the institution is rooted in the bonds of social relations like friendship. Thus reciprocity forms the basis of the institution called Panapayattu. But, a closer observation on the working of the institution shows that the institution is not just based on the principles of reciprocity. The institution can also be conceptualized as a redistributive exchange, where the redistribution takes over a period of time. The market mentality can be seen in the calculations and expectations of people conducting Panapayattu. The extension of the institution of Panapayattu in the current period for catering to needs like the construction of a school auditorium or a road repair can be considered as a form of redistribution. The variant of Panapayattu called Sahayapayattu shows how the system bends itself and how it is not strictly a financial institution. In Sahayapayattu, repayments are not expected and the individuals contribute money not with a motive of economic benefits. Members consider Sahayapayattu as a mutual help. The institution of Panapayattu continues to exist in a market economy and the members of the network can be seen as calculative of the economic benefits of Panapayattu. One can notice that, the institution has successfully adapted itself to the changing and ever increasing economic needs of individuals in a capitalistic society.

Panapayattu can be viewed as a perfect example to the Polanyian concept of how the three schemes of exchange works together in a market oriented system. According to Polanyi, the three schemes of exchange can be found in every economic system, but only the capitalistic western society have a price system of money functioning. He believes that traditional economies work on the basis of the concepts of reciprocity and redistribution, while modern economies are based on market exchange. He further adds that due to the

difference between a capitalistic and traditional economic system, one needs two different ways of understanding the economy the substantivist and the formalist. In this context, if one looks into Panapayattu a traditional institution functioning in capitalistic system, one can see how the three different typologies specified by Polanyi namely reciprocity, redistribution (delayed) and market exchange fuse and function together.

Attempting to understand the in a substantivist perspective, has widened the scope of the institution into the social sphere of individuals. A formalist approach with the pre assumed notion of rational choices between scarce resources, sees the economy as an isolated from social sphere. The use of such a framework to understand an institution like Panapayattu would be a futile attempt. The substantivist framework which sees economy as not disembodied from social life would act as a better framework to understand the institution in a more holistic manner.

The ideas and viewpoints made by scholars like Herskovits on the idea that maximising economic benefits is a universal phenomenon do not completely apply to the institution of Panapayattu. Economic gains and maximising their benefits is definitely a goal of being in the network, but that does not imply that this is the only purpose of the event. The ideas of reciprocity and redistribution are equally prevalent. The institution of Panapayattu is a dynamic institution, and can neither be placed as an exchange in a capitalist economy as transactions are not completely based on maximising profits and appropriate bargaining nor can the contemporary Panapayattu be placed in a reciprocal society where transactions are socially valued. The institution of Panapayattu is thus an amalgamation of the social value system of the society along with the individual economic needs and wants.

The traditional institution of Panapayattu has continued to persist in a market economy with minimal change in its customs or practises. The institution of Panapayattu have transformed and adapted to the changing economic and social sphere and the successful functioning of Panapayattu in a market oriented economy shows the potential of traditional exchanges to perpetuate to contemporary societies.

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