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KATTUNAYAKKANS THE TRIBAL PEOPLE

Mrs. C. Kalarani

Assistant Professor in History ,
N.M.S.S.Vellaichamy Nadar College
Nagamalai, Madurai.

ABSTRACT

Kattunayakkans, the adivasis and dwellers of forest and hilly tracts are primitive tribal people of Dindigul district. The eldest son succeeds the father and maintains the family. Being traditional hunters of small animals such as rabbits, squirrels etc., They are adopting the tradition of having family names called intiperulu. The kattunayakkans have their own customs and rituals of social divisions which are affiliated even to their clayish deities. They live in temporary tents near the temples, gardens and public grounds. Before starting their work at midnight they gain the blessings of Jeggamma and other deities of the cremation grounds. Thus the Kattunayakkans, the tribal people of Tamilnadu stand as a model for a successful life by their personal harmless pursuits and activities. They stand also an example for the fact that one should work and earn his livelihood. They explore the filial affection for the families.

KEYWORDS: adivasis and dwellers of forest , blessings of



Jeggamma.



Mrs. C. Kalarani

INTRODUCTION :

Kattunayakkans, the adivasis and dwellers of forest and hilly tracts are primitive tribal people of Dindigul district. They are included in the list of scheduled tribes. These semi nomadic people are divided into Kadukurumban, Tenu Kurumban, Cholanayakkan, Patti Nayakkan, Palani and Sirumalai hills have their original habitations. Kudukuduppai, Tottiyar, Kudukuduppunayakkar, Tottiyar Nayakkar, Kambalathu Nayakkar, Kodangi Nayakkar, Thuluva Nayakkar, and Tholuva Nayakkar are all groups among the Kattunayakkans. As a main occupation they concentrate on collecting and gathering forest products like honey and wax.

Being traditional hunters of small animals such as rabbits, squirrels etc., with their hunting dogs they are experts in catching and capturing jackals, wild cats with the use of cages and nets. In addition to the above for caring their daily bread by following the future with the use of decorated bulls and musical drums. The common public are captivated by their traditional behaviour. Their personal and individualistic appearance too are unique and absorbing. Their uniform and organised social behaviour also enable them to maintain their personal identities. In general they are endogamous group of people.

Their organised social set up centres on their own specific behaviours and attributes. Family, particularly joint family system, is their basic unit and they adhere to patrimonial system. The eldest son succeeds the father and maintains the family. The women are assigned only a secondary status and they have no say on any account. Any how they are devoting to fetch the income for the family.

With regard to marriages negotiation plays a significant role. Child marriages are in vogue. They follow cross cousin rules for their marriages. Widow remarriages are allowed. Marriages by service, elopement and symbolic capture are practiced. Monogamy is the common order. The married women are identified with the use of pottu thali, more and toe rings used by them. Their marriages are mostly ritualistic. For sanctifying the marriage the family members sprinkle tulasi water both on the bride and bridegroom. The bridegroom has to pay a sum of Rs.42.25 paise as a pride price to the parents of the girl. Two bags of ragi also should be given along with the money. The bride groom cannot tie the tali without making such payments. With the consent of both the parties divorce is allowed and either of the partners can moot out divorce. The marriage customs and rituals offer a special and specific identity to their community.

The personal relationship between man and women is achieved by their social and economic pursuits and conditions. In group relations also the same kind of practice is followed. Their social relationship causes an unshakable structure and edifice to the community. Their behavioral pattern is yet another aspect among them. In a dynamic and decisive manner they strengthen their clanish affinities. Age is also a criteria for their placement in the social set up. Their institutionalised way of life exposes their individuality and ethnic style. Adoption of social subdivisions is absent among the Kattunayakkans. But the economic variations and disparities have brought schisms and factions among them. While a man is expected to avoid relations with mother in law but it is not allowed with the sister in law, grandparents and grandchildren.

They are adopting the tradition of having family names called intiperulu. Every family has its own name. To identify a person they utilise it. While the family name of a girl changes due to her marriage that is permanent with regard to boys. In this regard they fall in line with the other communities. A girl gains the family name of her husband after matrimony. Galivandu, Koruvandu, Pasalodu, Pillodu, Moromodu, Glivodu, Matunga, Korivi, Kavari etc., are few of the family names. This is more or less identical with the Vahayara or division employed by the vedar community people.

The kattunayakkans have their own customs and rituals of social divisions which are affiliated even to their clayish deities. The descendants are specified by their affiliated deities. Their matrimonial alliances also are regulated on that basis. Their inteperulu serves as an axis around which the relationship resolves. They never acknowledge and approve inter marriages because it is feasible to arrange marriage within the groups which are small in number.

The status of the kattunayakkan women is not at all an appreciable one and it is always having secondary importance. They go to streets and Houses and forecast the future by seeing the palms. The women undergo many rituals. As instance the seemantham ritual in the seventh month of the first pregnancy. After delivery on the third day puruthira chandaru ceremony is arranged to avoid pollution. On the 22nd day after the child birth the wilabetti peelupoyatam or purificatory bath is given to the mother.

The tonsuring and earboring ceremonies are arranged. To make a boy to enter into the rank of alm seeker at his age of 15 the ceremony called Sanchiveyadam or Joliveyadam is conducted by his maternal grandfather. The pollution period of puberty is adhered for nine to twelve days. On the last day the matured girl is given a purificatory bath and led to a pot or vessel which contains varieties of dishes. The child birth takes place not in the house but it is arranged in a separate hut called Kuria or Kumba constructed temporarily. The husband lives there with the mother and baby and cooks and arranged for food. But sleeps outside. The ritualistic

tonsuring of the baby in called Randajagu. After three months the father of the newborn baby arranges for a feast called bandipoda for the entire village.

Excommunication or veli is the punishment given to adulterous women. It is done mainly to purify or to adopt upacharam or ruddi at the time of readmission Veliterpu. Both man and woman have the right to divorce after paying a divorce fee of Rs.5.25. After the divorce the children will stay with the father. The widow remarriage and the marriage of divorced women are approved. The ceremony called cherakatinchadam is associated with it.

Their economic standard is a stagnated one. As it is mostly a landless community, Patto lands are possessed only by a few members. They utilize the weekly standees for their commercial transaction which are done only through cash dealings. Majority are daily wage earners and serve as casual, agricultural and plantation workers. Forest clearance work is also an income fetching source for the kathumayakkams of Dindigal region. At present the kollors devote their attention towards the education of their children. But such avocations are not all prominent. The Kudukuduppai Nayakkans are involved in palmistry during days. At nights they utter prophecies.

They live in temporary tents near the temples, gardens and public grounds. Before starting their work at midnight they gain the blessings of Jeggamma and other deities of the cremation grounds. Between 12.30 p.m and 3.00 p.m they visit the villages and repeat what they stated during night. They follow their own techniques of foretelling. As a token they get grain of small amount. With the use of suvadi of palm leaf they tell the future. Even for using the suvadi they adopt a specific technique. By using a thread of rope they open the suvadi and read out the content in it, While men and women are involved in palmistry they touch the palms of others with a stick and not by hands. They have 16 suvadis having the figures of Siva, Parvathi, Karuppan, Rama, Seethe, Krishnan, Madurai veeran and others. They even suggest parikarams for removing the evils.

The Petha kaurollen kapu Nayakar sits on a wollen blanket and solves the problems as a Panchayat. The Kulathalaivar also plays the role of Pethakapu Nayakar. They are firm and stern in executing the rules of the panchayat. Through muri kattuthal or thrubu kattuthal, the one who committed a mistake explains the fact to one person. While the one who committed a mistake is called mayil, the man who listens to the mistake is known as Muruthari, Excommunication is the higher punishment. By exchanging vetrilai pakku (betel and arecamut) compromises are undertaken. Thus by their own community panchayat, which is known for its traditional and customary practices, they settle their issues. Though the kattunayakkans are the weakest of the weaker sections they are appreciable for their uniform panchayat schemes.

For promoting the economic and political status of kattunayakkans numerous welfare schemes are introduced by the Government of Tamil nadu. Self help groups. Non Governmental organisations and kattunayakkam Youth Welfare Association etc. too contribute to promote their education, employment opportunities, traditional occupation and socio-economic life style. Self employment facilities are also made available to them under the scheduled tribes category. By providing proper housing facilities, giving facilities to set aside their illiteracy and problems of indebtedness they are relieved of most of their difficulties.

They adopt their own indigenous medical system for saving them from varied types of bodily ailments. They offer no importance to family planning and family welfare schemes. With regard to religion they are worshippers of the spirits, stones, plants, trees, sun, moon and stars. They even utilise their hunting weapon only after placing them before the fire and uttering certain words in the form of prayer. Pattakararu the village headman is treated as their priest. At times of festivals and execution of rituals they invoke ancestral spirits, demons and folk, deities, they recognize and sanctify certain days and numbers. They maintain their own small temples. Rituals and festivals are associated with them. Offering blood sacrifices are undertaken mainly to appease their deities. They celebrate their festivals with the music by various instruments. Clannish, village and family deities are worshipped along with regional Gods and Goddess. Burring of camphor is a common practice. They worship kattukkali everyday. Only after worshipping the ancestors they leave the house for getting alms. Tolanji Kadu Kondayamman, Jaggamma, Muthumariamman are other goddess that community.

Greater importance is offered to mother's brother (maternal uncle) in all their ritual and ceremonial activities. 18th day of the Tamil month Adi is treated as a day of worship of elders. They are accustomed to use various kinds of musical instruments such as lay, diva, pipi at times of marriage. Puberty and death ceremonies

are adopted in simple ways. Dance and music are their part time activities. The custom and faith oriented Kattunayakkans use stories about love, ghost etc. They are known for their trans generational interaction with nature. Local environment and health care practices are treated as essential features of life. Majority of them are accustomed to consume intoxicants and their women are also not exceptions.

For both curative and preventive purposes they depend upon indigenous medical practices. Much stress and values are attached to the diagnosis of the causes of ailments and then steps are taken for curing. They believe that the leaves, barks, roots, flowers and fruits of specific plants and trees could be used for medical treatments. Mainly due to economic considerations they avoid the modern devices and techniques in various aspects.

Their nomadic nature has prevented them from devoting and development of education. By practical experience they satisfy their needs and requirements in all masks of life without clinging to the newly conceived devices. Their work participation rate is above average. Along with agriculture and other avocations they engage themselves in many household industries. The children of the Kattunayakkan families are also trained in agricultural activities domestication of animals and domestic activities. They are included in the group of plantation workers too.

They adopt unique techniques for the removal of the curses in a family. They also identify persons who are haunted by ghosts. For driving away ghost from the affected member they use holy ash, black thread etc and utter certain unidentifiable magical words. With the make up like Murugan, Krishnan and Hanuman they visit the houses and beg. If they are not able to get anything by this means. They seek other jobs for their earnings.

They adopt certain customary practices with all earnestness. They avoid getting food from low caste people. They keep away from those who committed mistakes. Illegal contacts with the members of other families are treated as sinful act. Floating anybody, with a chapel is forbidden among them. They are specific about the availability of women within the four walls of the house. They expect them to be in the house in time even when they go out. Those who were imposed a fine should pay it in time without any delay. Excommunication is the top one among varied types of punishments. Generally they prefer compromise among the two members who contradict each other. These facts testify to the fact that they are always law abiding.

Thus the Kattunayakkans, the tribal people of Tamilnadu stand as a model for a successful life by their personal harmless pursuits and activities. They stand also an example for the fact that one should work and earn his livelihood. They explore the filial affection for the families.

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