



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Arts

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF NATTU MALAYANS: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

KEY WORDS: *Nattu Malayan, Kongu Malayan, Tribes, Kerala, Thrissur.*

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ABSTRACT

Malayan is one of the important tribal communities of Kerala. The community divided themselves as *Kongu Malayan* and *Na:ttu Malayan*. This paper is a common study on the *Na:ttu* Malayan community of tribes found in the Peechi area in Thrissur district of Kerala state.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Malayans are tribal communities mainly settled as groups in the hilly regions of Idukki, Palakad and Thrissur districts of Kerala state. The word Malayan is derived from the word Mala which refers to hill in Malayalam. Anthropologists trace the homeland of Malayans as the Ernakulam district of Kerala, where they were known in the name as Panikar. There are two types of Malayan community; one known as Na:ttu Malayan who speaks Malayalam and maintain contact and communicate with the outer society. The others are Tamil speaking who are known as Kongu Malayan. The recent census shows that the community has a population around 7542 and literacy rate of 39.51% only. Forest and forest products are their main source of livelihood. Cutting bamboos, collecting the forest products, fire woods, are some other source of livelihood.

1.2 NATTU MALAYAN

Malayan colony is located in the Peechi region of Pananchery panchayath in the Thrissur district of Kerala. This study is done in accordance with the data and facts collected from the informers and elderly people of the community in the region. The twenty three families in the Malayan colony and the nearby region belongs to Na:ttu Malayan community. Na:ttu Malayan consider the Kongu Malayan as low class and untouchables. They refer the Kongu Malayan as Ka:tar - the tribal community. The use of modern costumes and their willingness to mingle with society makes them distinct from other tribal communities.

1.3 CULTURE

Being a rare tribal community, Na:ttu Malayan has their own customs and ceremonies on the life events. They celebrate the events like birth of child, death, marriage. These special occasions are very important in the community.

1.3.1 MARRIAGE

They follow the tradition and convention of Hindu religion in their marriage functions. The groom along with the elder ones of his family visits the bride's house. If they are ready for alliance, the bride's people visit the groom's house in return. Later they fix the time and date of the ceremony consulting an astrologer. Horoscope is strictly believed by the community. On the wedding day, the groom along with his relatives visit the bride's house. Taali tying ceremony is done. Garlands made of Thulasi is worn by couples. Uncle of the groom has the main role in the marriage ceremony. Wedding night is in the bride's house. On the fourth day after the wedding the couples are taken to the groom's house along with sweets and utensils. The whole ceremony and celebration is done within a month. Dowry system of the community depends upon the status of bride's family.

1.3.2 DELIVERY

Woman is brought to her house on the seventh month before the delivery. After the delivery, mother and child is taken to rest in a specially made delivery room called Pettumuri. Special maintained utensils, broom and clothes are used for their treatment. The traditional method of oiling (Ennayidal) and bathe is systematically done. On the twenty eighth day of birth, Noolu kettu (string tying ceremony) and naming of baby child is held. On the ninetyeth day,

the new born baby is taken to his father's house for the first time, along with sweets and utensils.

1.3.3 DEATH

The death and its related ceremonies are done according to the Hindu religious custom. A lighted lamp is kept behind the corpse. Paddy is kept in Idangazhi (a vessel used to measure the paddy) and chopped pieces of coconut are kept aside of corpse. The visitors drop Thulasi along with paddy on the corpse and touch the feet as a sign of respect which is a important method in the community. They have a system of burying the corpse but due the lack of space they now burn the corpse in the crematorium. After this some ceremonies are held on the seventh and sixteenth day after the death. The daughters of the dead one is made to sit in Nizhalpaaya (a mat meant for sitting near the corpse) for these days.

1.3.4 PUBERTY

The first menstrual period of the girl is celebrated as the Thirandu Kalyanam. The ceremony is held for the first seven days. Oiling (method of treating the girl with specially made herbal oil), medicinal treatment, bathe are important part of ceremony. On the seventh day the girl is taken to the nearest river. After the bathe, she is taken back to home with celebrations. Father's sister (Aunt) plays the main role in the celebration and ceremony.

1.3.5 OTHER CELEBRATION

Onam, Vishu, Sankraanthi, Karthika, Thiruvathira, temple festivals and National days are celebrated by the Na:ttu Malayans according to Hindu religious traditions. Other than that Pongal, Deepavali, are also celebrated by the community.

1.4 COSTUME

There is no specific costume type found for the Na:ttu Malayan community. They follow the same traditional clothing system of Keralites. They were the community who also implemented the use of clothes to cover the upper part as a part of reformation. They maintain neat and clean way of wearing clothes. They use the same type of ornaments and makeup that of Keralites.

1.5 PROBLEMS OF NATTU MALAYANS IN THE PRESENT SOCIETY

Even though they maintain healthy contact with the society, there are several problems in the society that poses a challenge to their living; Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of aim, problem of land, health problems, alcoholism, smoking and several bad habits which are challenge to healthy and prosperous living of the community.

1.6 CONCLUSION

The efficient working of the developmental programs and the uprising of backward community are inter-related disciplines. The collaborated works by Scheduled Caste developmental department, Health Welfare department and Social Welfare department had made their life situations more colourful and opened a new face to the Na:ttu Malayan community. There had been vast improvement in the life situations and educational facilities of the community. They had stepped to a new healthy situation. Today there are lot of people from Na:ttu Malayan

community who works as government employees. Due to the interaction with the common society, their culture is being subjected to change. They are now more culturally mingled with the common societies of the state. The Adimaali fest held in the Idukki district of Kerala is an example for this unity. We will be able to see the efficient contributions and involvement of Na:ttu Malayan community in the future developing scenario of Kerala society.

NOTE :

The informations in this article may have changes depending on the settlement variation. This paper is a common study on the information and facts that are given above.

COLOPHON

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