

**SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE KATTUNAYAKKAN TRIBES
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NILAKOTTAI TALUK IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT:

The *Kattu-Nayakar* is literally, 'The King of the Jungle' or 'The Lord of Forest' and has no fixed residence. The term of Kattunayakkan is derived from the words *Kadu*, meaning is forest. *Nayakkan* means leader or head man. They speak Telugu languages, within family and in the kinship group they speak Tamil language. The Tamil script is used for writing a letter. The Kattunayakkan tribe of N. Puthupatti village, Nilakottai Taluk still follows their traditional customs and rituals as earlier. This Community people mostly were nomadic in nature.

Keyword:

The Kattunayakkan Tribes is adapting to the new Culture, their dress code is adapting to the modern culture, and still they adhere to their old puree code too. The community has their traditional politics even today. Disputes within the community were always dealt by the community leaders.

Introduction

The *Kattu-Nayakar* is literally, 'The King of the Jungle' or 'The Lord of Forest' and has no fixed residence. The term of Kattunayakkan is derived from the words *Kadu*, meaning is forest. *Nayakkan* means leader or head man.² Kattunayakkan is a primitive tribal group of the Southern States of India. They spend half of the year in the forest and rest of the time they used to travel among the people. The time of contact with the world is known as thangal during which

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² P.K. Mohanty, *Encyclopedia of Primitive Tribes in India*, Vol. 1, Kalpaz publication, Delhi, 2004, p.276.

they move alone and no one of them might go in the same guidance. The group of people has a religious head known as sallipetha.

Kattu-Nayakar has also influence the spirit and recites mantra and in addition inscribes magic seed letters on copper-foil to conserve or to deter dosam. The two recurring magical letters are approximate to the letters la and llaa in Kannada.³

The Settlement of the Kattunayakan is called 'Kudi'. The settlements are seen distributed inside the forest and in revenue land. They are, settled mainly in the states of Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Kattunayakans believe that they are the progeny of Padmakhya (Padma) alias Hundadabhata, the gourmand son of a Heggade chief by his rakshasi wife, who was the daughter of Hidimba. Another belief is that, Kattunayakans are the modern representatives of the ancient Kurumbas who dominated Southern region in India and when they were defeated by the Cholas, Konga and Chalukya Kings, and end of the Chola King Adoni in the seventh century they were forced to live in the forests. This Community is believed to be the modern representatives of the ancient Pallavas. At local level, the same community is referred to by different name like Josyakarar, Kadu Kurumba, Jenu Kurumba, Kudukuduppai Tottiyar, and Kudukuduppunayakkar, Tottiyar Nayakkar, Kambalathu Nayakkar, Kodangi Nayakkar, Thuluva Nayakkar and all groups among the Kattunayakkans⁴. They speak Telugu languages, within family and in the kinship group they speak Tamil language. The Tamil script is used for writing a letter.⁵

³ R. Saraswathi Nandhini & K. Sathyamurthi, 'A Qualitative Study on The Health And Education of Primitive Tribal Groups of Gudalur, Tamil Nadu', *International Journal of Information Research and Review*, Vol. 03, Issue 04, April 2016, p. 263.

⁴ Seetha Kakkoth, *The Primitive Tribal Groups of Kerala*p. 49.

⁵ C. Kalarani, 'Kattunayakkans the Tribal People', *International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol. 6, Issue 7, January 2017, p. 1.

Definition of Tribe

The English term “tribe” or “Tribal” was first introduced in Bengal by the British colonial administration and foreign anthropologists. Since then the word has become incorporated into the Bengali Language.⁶

Maunders is that “a tribe is a group of families bearing a general name, members of which take up the same territory, They are speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, professional and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of aid. The term tribes was derived from a Latin word root, the middle English term “tibuz ” meaning the three divisions into which the early Romans were grouped.”⁷

The term ‘Adivasis’ has become current among certain people. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has identified such people as ‘indigenous’.

Tribes in India

Scheduled Tribes (STs) are indigenous, have their own distinctive culture, are geographically solitary and are low in socio-economic conditions. For these centuries, the tribal groups have remained outside the realm of the common development process due to their residentiary in forests and hills tracts. After independence, Government of India has scheduled the tribal groups in the Constitution and provided special provisions for their welfare and developments in the case of ST communities across these people has seventy five percentage most backward class in overall India and are termed as Primitive Tribal Groups. Most of the tribal areas are hilly, inaccessible undulating plateau lands in the forest areas of the country resulting in the by passing of common developmental programmes.

Social Life of the Kattunayakkars in the Nilakottai Taluk

Social Life of the Kattunayakkars in the Nilakottai Taluk Kattunayakkars are the one of the primitive tribal group in Nilakottai Taluk.They believe that they are the chief community of

⁶ Deep Kumar Behera & Geor Pfeffer, *contemporary Society: Tribal Studies* , Concept publishing Company, Volume 5, New Delhi, 2002, p.1.

⁷ Prakash Chandra Mehta, *Ethnographic Atlas of Indian Tribes*, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi, 2004, p.12.

the forest. They are called *Jenu Kuruba*, *Ten Kuruba*, *Ten Karumban*, *Venukoyyo*, *Sholanayakan* and *Naickan*. The two sub divisions of *Kattunayakan* in the district are *Pathynaickan* (who inhabit in the pathis or slopes of hills) and *Cholanaickan* (who inhabit in the chola in the forest). The *Kattunayakkan* tribal groups are living in *N.Puthupatti (Nilakottai Puthupatti) Village in Nilakottai Taluk in Dindigul District*. The *N.Puthupatti village is near to the Nilakottai town panchayat in Dindigul District*. In this village the tribal are occupied by this *Kattunayakkan Community*.

Dindigul District Population

Different Tribes in Tamilnadu: According to the census report of 2011, tribal population is 6,51,321.⁸ The total number of Schedule Tribal Population in Dindigul District is 8,064.⁹ Nilakottai Taluk N.Puthupatti Village Tribal Population of 1939 there are Male 1009, Female 930 present.¹⁰

Tribes In Dindigul District

The tribal groups like the Paliyans and Kattunayakkans live in the Dindigul district. The tribal distribution is in four taluks viz., Kodaikanal, Palani, Sirumalai and Nilakkottai. These two tribals are nomadic and semi –nomadic. They constitute 0.37 percent of the total population of Dindigul district. The well know hill stations of this district are Kodaikanal, Sirumalai and Palani hill. It is also famous for its iron locks, leather tanneries, textile mills and educational institutions.¹¹

Nilakottai Block

Kottur is one of the 23 village panchayats in Nilakottai union of Dindigul District. This panchayat union is dominated by the SC community. Nilakottai block is located at the southern

⁸ D. Thirumalraja, ‘ **The Problem of Elderly Tribal Women in Kodaikanal Hills: A Sociological Perspective**’, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Volume 3, Issue 6, June 2013, p.1.

⁹ **Tamilnadu District Factbook™ Dindigul District.**

¹⁰ V. Balamani, Headmaster, **Panchayat Union Primary School, Annual Report- 2018-2019**, N, Puthupatti Village, Nilakottai.

¹¹ L. Thilagavathi, ‘ **The Paliyan Tribes of Dindigul District Life Condition, Challenges and Remedies for Their Upliftment**’, in S. Pubhpalatha(ed.) *Empowerment, social Justice, Inclusive development: Issue & Perspectives of Tribal Tamilnadu*, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, 2018, p.129.

part of the Dindigul district. The Nilakottai town is famous for gold ornament, flowers and brass vessels.¹² where the famous Madurai 'Malli' is cultivated, were taken on an exposure visit to a perfume manufacturing unit in Nilakkottai in Dindigul district to promote value-addition in their produce.¹³

Ethnography Profile of the Kattunayakkan (Origin)

The studied Population claims that they belong to Kattunayakkan. They have migrated to this district, about 40 year back from Thalan Kadu region which is a border land between Coimbatore district and Kerala state, the community perceives its distribution at local level in a few Taluks of Coimbatore District, but having kinship relations with their people living in Madurai, Dindigul districts. The community people were nomads gradually becomes semi nomads by settling in the villages, which are located on plateau and plains retain, they speak Telugu languages within family and in the kinship group and speak Tamil language with others. They are using Tamil script for writing letters or other documents. The community identification marks are male and female tattooing female ornaments and male head gear during nomadic profession, long size iron oil lamp and flat bronze plate, with wood stick, which prudence's bell sound are also become a part of community identification.¹⁴

Kattunayakkan Tribes in Nilakottai

Kattunayakkan is one of the scheduled tribe lives in Dindigul district, TamilNadu. The Kattunayakkan people live in N.Puthupatti village Nilakottai block of Dindigul district claims their identity as Kattunayakkan tribes.¹⁵ At local level the community called Kudikuduppukarar. In N. Puthupatti at present totally in one settlement of 600 houses are occupied by this community.¹⁶ The Kattunayakkan tribes are living in area up to four acres in N. Puthupatti village in Nilakottai Taluk.¹⁷ The community people also living some other districts like

¹²G.Palanithurai, *New panchayati Raj in Tamilnadu*, concept of publishing company, New Delhi, 2003, p. 187.

¹³ *The Hindu*, 23 may 2011.

¹⁴ P. Ganesan, 'Social Customs of the Kattunaikars in Tamilnadu', *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 6, January 2015, p.6.

¹⁵ *The Hindu*, 09 June, 2015.

¹⁶ Interview with M.Karuppaiya, Village president of Kattunayakkan Tribe, N.Puthupatti, Village, 18 June, 2018.

¹⁷ A. Balamurugan, Village Administrative Officer, Report on Nilakottai Taluk, Nilakottai.

Virudhunagar, Coimbatore, Tiruchirapalli, Theni, Dindigul and some other parts of TamilNadu.¹⁸

Family Structure

The Kattunayakkan live mostly in nuclear families. They have, exogamous divisions called '*inteperulu*' (family names) literally means the house names. The intrepid is attached as prefix of one personal name and a person's identity is often referred to by his family names. The intrepid of boy remains the same throughout his life, but a girl changes her family name. When she married it becomes that of her husband's family name few name of the intiprelu founding the community are mentioned below:

1. Galivandu 2. Koruvuvandu 3. Pasalodi 4. Kolavodu 5. Matungodu 6. Pasimodu 7. Pillodu 8. Bandamodu 9. Thannerodu 10. Seeralodu 11. Naidodu 12. Kavittodu 13. Alantlodu 14. Pandodu 15. Muanhalodu 16. Gorantaludu 17. Gongamodu 18. Chinatomodu 19. Mosamodu 20. Ollivotodu 21. Matunga 22. Korivi 23. Kavari.

The Kattunayakkar has the social divisions. Each clan is affiliated with their own deities. They have, brotherly clans based on their language, which indicates descents. The clans regulate the marital alliances. There is no change in their clan names and titles. The communities self perception, in terms of food, social status at the regional level is middle. Others perceive it as low. The differences of these groups are in the occupational level. Intra- marriage alliances of these groups are traditionally not permitted, but because of small population, marriages are happening between these groups. Communities self perception at local level is low with higher. Hindu communities, but high with scheduled castes groups. They follow rules of exogamy in regulating marriage alliances.¹⁹

Marriage

All tribes are endogamy in nature. Within the group they have clan system and it has been strictly followed. Their marriage is through elopement. The young couple elopes from the settlement and then come and gets solemnized by the community. There is no Brahmin to

¹⁸ Ajeet Jaiswal & E.Tamil Selvan, '**Estimation of Stature from the Facial and Upper Lim Measurements among the Kattunayakan Tribes of District Madurai**', TamilNadu, *International Journal of Research in Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, 2016, p.35.

¹⁹P.Ganesan, **Social Customs of the Kattunaikars**, p.7.

commence the ritual; from their own community, elders will perform the ritual.²⁰ They follow monogamy sorrel polygamy serrate symbol of marriage is (Karukumani Thali), nose ring and nowadays ear ring.²¹ Sprinkling Tulasi water on the bride and bridegroom is an important ceremony of marriage.

Widow Remarriage is permissible in the community; widows and divorced women are allowed to remarry. They do so in a simple Ceremony known as *Cherakatinchadam* in which the man offers a sari to the women to wear it in the name of the man. The man must serve the woman's family for a period of time decreed by the village council. Family toes among them are nuclear, but a few vertically extended family types are found in the village Pilathu Vendasandur, village Pudupatti in Nilakkotai, Valichetti patti, Vendasandhur in dindigul district.²²

Elopement

The people those who eloped come next day and they surrender before the Village Panchayat and seek for pardon.²³ Such Marriage by capture (also known as marriage by elopement) which is later regularized and the couples formally get married after the parents of the boys and girls sort out other formalities.²⁴

After the bath, the bride and bridegroom will stand in front of panchayat and *pattakarar* (Head of the tribe). The Pattakarar will offer them tulasi water thrice to drink and then it will sprinkle on them. The bride groom has to pay Rs. 6, as a Fine to panchayat for eloping. But if the father of bride has any objection with the marriage, he can cancel it by paying Rs.3 to the Panchayat. But if marriage is sealed then Grooms' father will pay Rs.52 to brides' father. When they appear in front of the panchayat after eloping, they will apologies by bowing down on their knees in front of elders by touching their head and hand on ground.

²⁰P. Mathikumar, 'Socio Cultural History of Kattunayakkans of Tamilnadu with Special Reference to Dindigul', in S. Pushpalatha (ed.) *Empowerment, Social Justice, Inclusive Development: Issues & Perspectives of Tribal Tamilnadu*, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, 2018, p.94.

²¹ Interview with S.Vengadesh, Post Graduate Student, N.Puthupatti Village, 16 June, 2018.

²² P. Ganesan, *Social Customs of the Kattunaikars*, pp.8-9.

²³ Interview with R.Ganesan, Village Committee Member, N.Puthupatti Village, 22 June 2018.

²⁴ S.K. Ghosh, *Law of Enforcement in Tribal Areas*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, p.91.

Divorce

The divorce is permissible with Social approval and barrenness can be a reason for it. Both husband and wife can divorce and children of divorced women are always allowed to be with the father. Widowers and divorcees are allowed to remarry. The divorce and remarry are practice in Kattunayakkan Community. The divorce is given by the Caste Panchayat after enquiring their grievance. The Children of the divorced Couple live either with the father or mother. The woman should submit 'Thali' to the Panchayat. The wife, who initiated divorce, through the Panchayat should return the entire amount of parisapanam Rs. 52- to the husband. If the divorce is demanded by the husband the Panchayat directs him to pay Rs. 42.²⁵

Puberty

When a Kattunayakkans girl attain puberty, all her relatives will be invited for the ritualistic ceremony. She will be made to bath and given a new half saree to wear. After that many rituals will be done by her maternal uncle. She has to stay alone for nine day in a hut where others were not allowed to enter. On the tenth day she will be given bath again. The maternal uncle will heap betel leaf on her Tongue and place a piece of hot Gold plate on it. After this ritual, she will be permitted to enter into the house. Then the girl will be considered as one of them again.²⁶

Funeral Ceremonies

The last stage of man is death. A few die a natural death while the others become diseased and then meet their end. During their life time men live with their family, relatives and society. But when death assails them a great change occurs. The death news of the Kattunayakkan is informed to the relatives. The dead body will be kept until the arrival of the relatives. After their arrival they do the funeral rituals. Sometime it may take two days for the relatives to reach. The dead body will keep for two days. Then the traditional musical instrument will use to sing from the time of death till the funeral ceremonies are over. When a person dies, his body is placed in laying position and 50 paisa coin will place on the forehead. The corpse is bathed and kept on the bier later *namam*(*name*) is painted on its forehead, a pounded mixture of

²⁵Interview with G. Vadivel, Marketing, Village Committee Member, N.Puthupatti Village, 23 June,2018.

²⁶ Interview with R. Ammavasai, Village Committee member,N. Puthupatti Village, 24June, 2018.

betel leaves and nuts is set between its lips, and the corpse is shrouded in a new chute cloth. The Parayan will beat flat drums and lead the procession. The chief mourner is eldest son in the case of the father and the youngest son in the case of the mother. They observe death pollution for three days. On the third day they conduct *Palupoyadam* or milk pouring ceremony in which the chief mourner offers milk and others items, like beedis, liquor and the favorite food to the deceased at his grave. On the third day, the bereaved family arranges a feast for all the relatives. During this ceremony, the wife of the deceased is declared a widow after she removes all her marital symbols. Thereafter, the widow wears a white sari. All the guests are served a non vegetarian feast.²⁷

Conclusion

Indian Scheduled Tribes are the group of tribal communities and was given the name Scheduled Tribes during the post- Independence period, under the rule of Indian Constitution. Kattunayakkan is a Primitive tribal group in Southern India. They are, settled mainly in the Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataga, and Andhra Pradesh. In Tamilnadu, the Kattunayakkan Tribes can be found in Madurai, Dindigul, Viruthunagar, Namakkal, Selam, cuddalore, and Coimbatore, etc.

The Kattunayakkan tribe of N. Puthupatti village, Nilakottai Taluk still follows their traditional customs and rituals as earlier. This Community people mostly were nomadic in nature. Now they are changing into Semi nomads because they started to live in one place or a settled life. Their mother Tongue is Telugu. But, they read and write in Tamil only. The interested Men and Women still follow the tattooing but it is not mandatory for all. The community has their traditional politics even today. Disputes within the community were always dealt by the community leaders. The community leader is highly respected and his decision is taken as a final version. The Kattunayakkan Tribes is adapting to the new Culture, their dress code is adapting to the modern culture, and still they adhere to their old puree code too. The village panchayat follows the same rules and regulations. They follow the same traditional customs of marriage like sprinkling the water on the new couples. If a man from the Kattunayakkan community married the woman who belongs to the other cast, he will be accepted to the community after giving the Twelve Thousand rupees as fine of elopement.

²⁷P. Ganesan, *Social Customs of the Kattunaikars*, p.9

They live in temporary tents or huts, near to the temples, gardens and public grounds. Before starting their work at midnight they will pray to gain the blessings of Jaggamma and other deities of the cremation grounds. They follow their own techniques of foretelling. Again in the morning time they will go to the same village to predict about the future. And, as a payment, they collect some rice or cereals. Permanent abodes, shedding their nomadic tendencies.