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REVIEW ARTICLE

SPECIAL ASPECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF THE KADAR- THE PRIMITIVE TRIBE IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Kadar one of the aboriginal tribes of Tamil Nadu live in groups in the Anamalai Hill region of the Coimbatore District. This hill is situated in Pollachi Taluk of Coimbatore District and is surrounded by Kerala State in the West and South and Udumalpet Taluk in the East. Etymologically the word Kadar derived from the Tamil word Kadu which means forest. The Kadars are those who reside in the forest territory and rely up on the forest area for their livelihood requirements. In Tamil Nadu according to the census of India, the total population of Kadar was solely living in Coimbatore District, Chennai, Chengalpet, Villupuram, Salem and remaining persons are living in the districts of Tanjore, Erode and Vellore. As already noted Kadar are also found in Kerala. According to Parthas. Arathy, the Kadar are basically a food gathering tribe and they are non-vegetarians and eat mostly the same. The study of Socio Cultural background of the Kadar is both inevitable and new attempt. In social organization, the Kadar observes strict community endogamy and Widow remarriage is permissible within the family. The Kadar did not perform child marriage. The custom of working in father in law's house for one year before marriage is prevalent among the Kattu Nayaks, Paliyans, Irular and Kadar etc.,

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INTRODUCTION

In Tamilnadu, according to the censuses of India, the total population of the Kadar was 760, out of which 574 Kadars are solely living only in Coimbatore district, in Pollachi and Udumalpet taluks on the hill of Annamalai's, where Indira Gandhi wild life sanctuary and National parks are located. The remaining 186 Kadar, according to 1981 censuses are dispersed in the Districts of Chennai, Chengalpet, Villupuram, Salem and remaining persons are living in the districts of Tanjore, Erode and Vellore. As already noted Kadars are also found in Kerala. The aim of the research is to carryout the Socio-Cultural background of the Kadar.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present research consists the following methodology. However the Socio-Cultural approach is inevitable in the research. In addition both Analytical and Descriptive methods are adopted here. Most of the researchers observe that the Kadar are the aboriginal settlers of Coimbatore region.

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At Valparai their settlements exceeds more than 21 places: Ulakkankudi, Eruppukkal, Sankarankudi, Velloney, Savamalai, Thenjamalaikurukku, Nedungundram, Karungundru, Kavarkal, Keelvalayambarai, Kadambarai, Miluthurai, Kalyarkudi, Vellimudi, Udumalparai, Pannimudi, Eathakulli, Meenkothi, Vahamalai iyankulam, Arichilthotti. At Pollachi their settlements are as follows; Thennampathi, Sarkarpathi, Nagaruth Chinnarpathi. In Amaravathi range of Udumalpet their settlements are as follows; Karuthapathi, Thalinsi, Manjampathi, Mungilpallam. The above mentioned places, Kadars are living scattered. But in some places, more number of kadars are living. The Topslip of Anamalai and Sethumadai range is the permanent settlement of Kadar.

Socio-Cultural Background

As noted, the Kadar settlements are generally found on the slopes of the hills, each settlement may consists of 15 to 30 huts. In the sanctuary the biggest Kadar settlement is Nedumkundru in Valparai range where 38 houses of Kadar are there whereas Ettakuli village is smallest in the same range in where only 6 houses are occupied by the Kadar. Generally, Kadar remove the shrubs and erect their huts under the trees without creating an open space in the forest. One can find Kadar settlement only after approaching closely to the huts.

Today, the typical **kadar house** or hut is simple character, erected on four posts on the corners of needs and with walls of plaited bamboo splits. The floor plan is generally rectangular with a single room with the five place in a corner near the entrance. In every settlement of the kadar, there is a secluded small hut, called in their dialect, ettavati, which is used by the kadar woman during their menstrual period.

The Kadar are living in groups and each group selects their leader called '**Moopan**'. The Moopan is also called as Kanikkaran. The Moopan's wife is respectfully called as Moopathi. Thus the Moopan settles the dispute among the Kadars and is responsible for maintaining peace in the settlement. He also give solutions to all sorts of problems in their settlements. Generally the Kadars are peace loving people. They amicably solve their problems themselves. Only in times of necessity the Moopan assumed his headship. The fine collected from the Kadar are used only for their public welfare. They never approach police station for solving any kind of their problems. They settle the disputes within among themselves. He even a days the forms of punishment like cash fine, communication etc., the usual offences comes before the Moopan are adultery, disrespect for traditional norms and insult to traditional tribe council or moopan. As most of the Kadar settlements are inside the sanctuary. Now a days even moopans of different settlements approach the respective area forest officers for suggestions and guidance to tackle their problems outside their settlement but with in the wildlife sanctuary.

The **Kadar community** is having other synonym name like kadir, kadam and kadal. The word kadan, in Tamil, means the dweller in a forest.¹ Kadan represent singular person of the community and its plural form is Kadar. According to Luiz 'their name connotes that they are 'al'(people) of the kadu ie., forest kadir is an alternative name in the forest fracts adjoining and within the Tamil Nadu state²

The tribe thus had the name because of their exclusively forest habitat. This may be the reason, why the Kadar is considered as the best representative of the integrated food-gathering tribes of southern zone of India. While discussing about the Kadar habitat of Kerala, the encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes mentioned that, until the world war II, the Kadars were comparatively isolated with very little contact with others, except for the forest officers who had started highly selective task plantations in some of their homelands. A forest tram way built by the erstwhile Cochin government for the extraction of timber swept a swathe through their territories representing their means of contact with the plains people.

According to Parthasarathy, the kadars are basically a **food eater** tribe and they are non-vegetarians and eat mostly non-vegetarian foods. But they obtain from eating the flesh of vow, bison or bison or buffalo. They also avoid to eat the flesh of pig. During the festival occasions, they prepare a sweet dish by using kashurimanjal tuber. They also like to eat the following varieties of roots that are available in the sanctuary. Northern (Dioscra Penta phyla), Vethilaikilangu (Oiper betel), Sandana Kilangu (Pterocarpus Santalinus), Kannisar kilangu, Strychnous Cowbriona), Nar kilangu (Atlantia Monophylla),

and Saval kilangu. Most of the kadars are now getting some employment opportunities. So they are getting cash as wages and they are purchasing food grains like rice, ragi and other millets. Cook them and eat along with vegetables. But still today, the sanctuary is like good mother to all the kadars. They also consume banana fruits and guava fruits. They use milk and milk products and mostly men and women chew tobacco and betel. They use coconut oil as cooking medium.

This tribal group is the kadar who **speak** among themselves kadar basha, a dialect with mixed words from Tamil and Malayalam languages. They also speak Tamil with others and the use the script of Tamil in writing and reading. Almost of the kadars living on the barders of Tamilnadu and Kerala, their children going to school learn either Tamil or Malayalam, depending upon whether the school is in Tamilnadu or in Kerala.

In social organization, the kadar observes strict community **endogamy**. They do not have any further social divisions, or organized clans for purposes of marriage system. Even the Ehrenfels held the view that clean did not exist among the kadars. There is difference between of the community at levels social, economic religious and territorial. Though they follow community level of endogamy but strictly the practice settlement level endogamy. They follow cross cousins consanguinity of father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter are maternal uncle niece. They also allow the system of junior sorarate i.e., if wife dies, husband can marry again his wife's younger sister but they avoid senior sorarate. They are no cases of junior and senior levirate. Mostly they practice adult marriages. The normal age of marriage for a tribal boy is 25 and that of a girl is between 16-18 ages.

The Kadars strictly follow monogamous form of marriage. But it is also found during the field work in the settlements of Kallarkudi and Etakuli that cases of polygamy i.e., man marrying women. It is reported among the Kadars that the more wives a man had, the richer and more esteemed he was. While commenting on polygamy of the Kadar society, Thurston remarked that with a view of small population that the world must be peopled and hold more. Especially that the numerical strength of their own tribe must be maintained. The plurality of wives seems to be mainly with the desire for offering and the father in law of the one of the forest guards informed one that he had four wives living. The first two wives producing no off spring. He married a third who bore him a salutary male child. Considering the result to be an in sufficient contribution to the tribe, he married a fourth, who more profile than her colleagues, gave birth to three girls and a boy, with which he remained content. In the code of polygamous etiquette, the first wife takes precedence over the others and each wife has her own cooking utensils. Polyandrous form of marriage is completely absent among the Kadars. Divorce or separation is permissible in the society between married couple with the reasons due to adultery, due to barrenness, due to male impotency and also due to cruelty. Divorce compensation decided by the Kadars tribal council be given to aggrieved party. Either party can divorce. After declaration of divorce by the council, the children are liability of father. The Kadar, in early days followed strict rules regarding divorce or separation.

The favorite occupation of the Kadars is hunting. They are clever in smelling the movements of the animals. They trained dogs specially, for this purposes and take with them whenever they go for hunting. They move in groups or collectively to hunt wild animals. The Kadars bury the dead in far-away graves. The grave is in a North-South direction and has to be preferably dug by a non-related male members. Now a days they have adopted the practice of wrapping a corpse in a new white cloth before the burial. All the implements and articles used by the deceased are also buried along with him. After the burial, they collect a few stones from the burial ground and keep near their settlement for ancestor worship. During the funeral ceremonies, the eldest son of the deceased has to slave only the beared to peace the soul of the deceased.

The kadar traditionally follow certain customs and ceremonies from time immemorial. They are certain customs from the birth of a child and death of a man. Their customs and ceremonies can be highlighted as below. The customs and ceremonies differ from race. The kadars still follow some of their unique traditions. The pregnant mother is housed in a separate hut and she should deliver her baby only in the new hut specially constructed for her. Even after delivery she is supposed to live along with her baby for three month only in that hut. She is considered as impure for three months after delivering the child. The taboo is maintained until the entire take purification bath in the river. This kind of customs is mentioned found in the Nadaraikanchi, the classical literature of the sangam period. From Madurai Kaneli we can infer "the mother who delivered her baby was considered as impure and for purify themselves she performs pulavup pinuru (taking bath in the river) with her entire family.

Similarly the classical literature Narrinai provides information about whitewashing the house and taking holy bath in the river after delivering the baby. The kadar also clean their houses and bath the child and mother with hot water. They prepare a special kind of tea for the mother with cumin, ginger and asafoetida. The uncle presents new cloth to the child. The mother deliver the child in sitting posture. This shows the physical strength of the kadar women. The pregnant women never go to the hospital for delivery. An experienced old women attends the delivery case. She is called 'Maruthuvachi' in Tamil. Due to poverty and lack of medical facilities are risk in delivery. The kadar also do not believe is family planning and they want to increase their population. However for preventing the birth of the child men and women consume some kind of herbs. They refused to tell then name of the herbs.

They believe the herbs loser its medicinal value if they tell the name to others. According to Edgar Thurston, the kadar men use opium and women do not consume opium on the fear that they would become steroid. As some of the kadars perform this ear boring ceremony too, some of the kadars perform this ear boring and name the child within two months. Moopan preside over all these functions and ceremonies. The close relatives are also invited. They give presentation to the child either in cash or in kind. The mother feed the child with mothers milk for 2to 3 years. She used to carry the child on her book to all the places.

The **puberty** ceremony is called Theratti by the kadars. Kadars construct a separate hut for the girl as soon as she attains puberty. She must remain aloof in that hut for seven days with few girls of her age who have not get attained puberty. That is maintained for seven days and after that they burnt the hut and permitted the girl to- mingle with them freely after the purification bath. To avoid pollution of the stream the adults do not allow the puberty girl taking bath in nearby stream. Moreover every month during the period the girl is put up in a small hut attached along with their house. The kadars strict maintain taboo. The girl is not allowed to cross the border of their place during the period time. Only after five days she is painted to enter into the house. The puberty ceremony is celebrated after six days the relatives are invited and good hospitality is given to them. The material uncle presents new clothes, stud, bangles, silver anklet, pottu, flower and mirror to the girl. The relatives too offer presents to her in the form of cash or in the form of vessels.

The young kadar manufacture a nice, beautiful comb by himself for his would be wife or ladylove. The comb is presented to her before or after marriage. The wife proudly wear the comb on her hair. The wife respect the gift offered to her by her men. The kadar young men compete with each other in the preparation of combs for their ladylove. Sometimes they do floral designs and other ornamentation works on the comb. This type of custom is strictly practiced by the kadars. This custom is in vogue among the kadars from the ancient past.

The same practice is seen among the Muduvas. The Muduva woman is presented with golden colour bamboo by her would be husband. The birds should wear the comb on her hair at the time of marriage. From this it is clear that the presentation comb to bride was an ancient custom the tribes. The proverb in Tamil, "will the marriage get stopped if the comb is hidden" might have come into vogue from this custom. It is interesting to not that nigrito tribes in North Australia are also having their customs. They believe that are the wearing of comb would protect them from suniyam (Black Magic). But the comb manufactured by the groom has nothing special like mantra or any other thing-it is just an ordinary comb, but they believe that this practice wearing comb offer protection and safety to them.

The kadars practiced the custom sharpening or shaping their incisors (front part of the teeth). However this custom was not in vogue among the kadars to-day. But in the earlier days to custom of sharpening teeth was made compulsory for youngmen. It was considered as one of the necessary qualifications for marriage. Women need not sharpen their canines or incisors. At the age of 18-20 the men folk involved in the practice of sharpening their incisors. During the field survey the scholar is able to find out that the kadars are aware of this ancient customs but they are not practicing it²⁶. The kadar young men is supposed to prove his bravery and valour in all possible ways. One of their brave activities is climbing on smooth sliding oily tree. In Madurai during the chitra festival the program of climbing on sliding tree is performed and their custom is one of the ancient one in Tamil country. The kadars are still presenting this custom. Their life

simply reflects the life of the sangam people, who were noted for valour and love the kadors are still maintaining their separate identity by preserving their kind ancient custom and traditions. On the top of the sliding tree a pot containing money is kept and the winner takes this prize amount. The winner is considered as qualified for marriage and he is looked upon by their fellow men with regards.

The kador did not perform child marriage. Generally male and female get ready for married life after attaining maturity. The parents did not intervene in their married life. The youngsters enjoy full freedom in selecting their spouse. During the times of engagement the room pay 7.50 Rs as a gift to bride. Both the parents exchange the plates with each other that contains new dresses, betel leaves and betel nuts and flowers in the presence of Moopan. On that day itself they fix the date for marriage. There is no dowry system among the kadors. Marriage are performed with the consent of bride and grooms.

The kadors have simple customs & traditions in conducting marriage. In the ancient past they did not have custom of wearing tali (holy turmeric thread). But at present the tali wearing ceremony is performed and the tali is made with 2 to 4 grams of gold. On the previous day of the marriage the bride is given holy bath with water and paddy. The paddy in due course began to grow. This symbolizes the couples life get flourish like paddy and water. After bathing the bride is decorated and brought to the marriage pandal.

In the pandal the bride and groom stand mother tie the tali other. The groom's the neck of her daughter in-law. Likewise father put a turban on the head of his son-in-law. This kind of marriage ceremony was followed by Anaimalaiyam and thali kador. Among palisuritans instead of tali they use "black beads at the time of marriage". The kador groups like kottran, kudumalayan and kollankondan brought the bride to the temple on an auspicious and perform the marriage ceremonies in the temple itself. Both vegetarian and Non-Vegetarian food are served to the relatives. The relatives eat, drink and dance according to the tune of their traditional music. Generally they wish to get marry only among relative. The bride also prefer to marry uncles or aunts daughter. They do not marry sisters daughter and consider her as his own daughter. They believe that their gold do not tolerate inter-caste marriage and so they marry within their own tribes.

Rain water is the main resource for the tribal people. They offer prayer to nature for seasonable rain and also for the stoppage of rain. They put numerous small holes in much pot and place this pot over the image of goddess Mariamman. The water from the pot flows out like rain and cool down the deity. This kind of custom reduce the anger of the deity and she makes the rain fall into the rain for the welfare of the kadors. The kador believe that they also can stop the rain their prayer. They create fire and put a piece of iron on it. Then a hang a coconut over the fire and like water in the coconut evaporate slowly, the rain also will get stopped slowly. These kind of beliefs give confidence and security to them.

The kador have faith superstition like pilli, sunyam and they believe that their sufferings are due to black magic. For curing

their disease the kador do not go to the hospital but to the temple priest. The priest gives some to god incessantly for curing them from disease like fever stomach ache and cough. The kador who considered as possessed is brought to the temple and the priests chant mantras in the midnight for driving out evil spirit. With neem leaves the priest bear the body of the possessed person and ordered the spirit to not among the kador but also among the villagers in Tamilnadu.

Conclusion

A good number of them lack education and some of their custom like presenting comb to ladylove, system of marriage are very interesting. In this fast moving competitive world the birth of female child is not welcomed and considered as a social burden. But the kador treat male and female alias. Both the member of the family share responsibility is maintaining household, their wants are limited and they live along with nature.

Thus the Kadors are living in remote forest areas without adequate necessary facilities. They lead simple life. They are hard working and peace loving people. In spite of that they are living in poverty, the government and non-government organizations should come forward to provide them with basic necessities like good house, road facilities, transport facilities, educational and institutions etc. training should be given to them in the modern method of cultivation and all the people in plain areas should behave in a friendly manner with them and help them to enjoy the benefits of our freedom.

Thus the kadors have unique custom and traditions. They are living all of in the dense hilly forests by preserving their own identity. Their life depicts life of our ancestors, who lived two thousand years ago during the sangam age. But due to their isolation they lost their economic prosperity and other urban elements in their life. Even after 50 years of independence the sons of the soil remain unnoticed in the hilly area without proper attention. Their life in the forest is not a roses. They face danger from wild animals and natural calamities. Yet they satisfy themselves with their beliefs, customs and traditions.

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