



Vol. 2, No. 1; Jan – Mar (2026)

SAKHA: Multidisciplinary Journal of Science, Arts & Technology

Available at <https://sakha.co.in/journals/mjsat>



An Ethnographic Study of Kattunayakan Tribal life and cultural practices

Mrs.S.Sivaranjani^{1a}, and Dr.P.Nandini²

¹Project Associate, Department and Centre for Women Studies, Mother Teresa Women's University, Madurai campus.

²Assistant Professor, Department and Centre for Women Studies, Mother Teresa Women's University, Madurai campus.

Abstract

A closer look at the Kattunayakan people reveals daily rhythms shaped by forest and village alike. This community, part of South India's diverse tribal landscape, lives closely tied to land and tradition. Through observations and conversations, their ways of gathering food, organizing families, and honoring nature come into view. Beliefs about spirits, seasons, and healing are woven into routines - not set apart but lived. Forests provide more than resources; they host ceremonies, medicines, and quiet reverence. Subsistence methods shift with weather yet remain rooted in long-standing knowledge. Rituals often center on plants, trees, and cyclical change. Life here does not separate culture from ecology - it blends them without pause. Still, the group struggles against heavy losses from deforestation, limited forest access, rapid change, along with being economically left behind - each pressing danger puts their traditional way of life at risk. Insights show how gender expectations shape life, how elders pass down knowledge across generations, yet outside efforts often alter who these tribes are and how much independence they keep. By bringing forward what Kattunayakan individuals actually say about their daily realities, the work helps guard native traditions while suggesting better ways to design progress that respects local values. Looking closely at tribes reveals more than surface facts - it shows how people live when shaped by history and constraint.

^a Corresponding Author: email@gmail.com

Research like this works better when voices guide direction instead of outsiders guessing right. Preserving identity becomes easier when respect drives policy choices day after day.

Keywords: Kattunayakan Tribe, Ethnography, Indigenous Knowledge, Cultural Practices, Forest Ecology, Tribal Life.

Introduction

Kattunayakan tribe

The Kattu-Nayakar is literally, 'The King of the Jungle' or 'the god of Jungle' and that they do now not have a permanent residence. The time period of Kattunayakan is non-herbal from the words Kadu, that means forest. Nayakkan method leader or head man (Mohanty 2004). Kattunayakan is a crude ancestral collecting of the southern a part of India. They go through portion of the 12 months in the timberland and relaxation of the time they used to move among individuals. The length of touch with the world is referred to as Thangal throughout which they circulate by myself and no one in every of them might go within the equal course. They normally stay together in camps. Their sole occupation is rearing their children. The community has a non-secular head known as allopathic. Tamil Nadu is domestic to a big population of KattuNayakar.

They worship Goddess Malliyar and Jakkamma.

The sanctuary to the god is in Padiyur headed immediately in the direction of Karur and Dindigul. The number one sanctuary of Jakkamma is situated within the west of metropolis Kadallur. In addition to invoking the spirits and reciting mantras, Kattu-Nayakar may additionally engrave magical seed letters on copper-foil to prevent or prevent dosam in Kannada (R. Saraswathi Nandhini & K. Sathyamurthi, 2016). There are settlements spread while the Jungle and the revenue land of as well (Kakkoth S, 2006). Kattunayakan is known as 'Kudi'. They're settled predominantly in the territories of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. As indicated by means of a fable commonplace among them, "Kattunayakan are the offspring of Bheema (the second one Pandava and child of Kunthidevi) and Hidumbi of Mahabharata". Kattunayakans accept that they're the lineage of Padmakhya (Padma) assumed call Hundadabhata, the gourmand baby of a Heggade boss by way of his rakshasi partner, who was the daughter of Hidimba and Sumalini, a bit woman of Sunanda (Luiz, 1962). Another conviction is that, Kattunayakans are the cutting edge delegates of the old Kurumbas (Pallavas) who ruled South India and they were crushed by the Cholas, Konga and Chalukya Kings; lastly by the Chola King Adoni in the seventh century they were forced to live in the

forests(Ganesan P, 2015). This community is believed that they constitute the historical Pallavas. At neighborhood stage, the equal network is mentioned with the aid of distinct name like Josiyakarar, Kadu Kurumba, JenuKurumba, Kudukuduppai Tottiyar and Kudukuduppunayakkar, Tottiyar Nayakkar, Kambalathu Nayakkar, Kodangi Nayakkar, Tuluva Nayakkar and all businesses among the Kattunayakan's. They communicate Telugu languages, inside circle of relatives and Tamil within the kinship institution. Tamil is used for writing a letter.

Kattunayakan is one of the scheduled tribes that lives in Dindigul, theni district, Tamil Nadu. The Kattunayakan humans stay in N. Puthupatti village Nilakottai block of Dindigul district claims their identity as Kattunayakan tribes. At local level the community is known as Kudukuduppukarar. In N. Puthupatti at present totally in one settlement of 600 houses are occupied by this community. The Kattunayakan tribes are residing in regions up to 4 acres in N. Puthupatti village in Nilakottai Taluk. In Tamil Nadu, the community also lives in Virudhunagar, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Theni, Dindigul and other places.

Social Life of Kattunayakar

They accept as true with that they are the most crucial community inside the forest. They also can be known as Jenu Kurumba, Ten Kurumba, Ten Kurumba, Venukoyyo, Sholanayakan and Naickan. In Kattunayakan, there are two sub-divisions: Pathynaickan (who live in the hills) and Sholanayakan (who live inside the forested Chola)¹¹. The Kattunayakan tribal organizations are residing in N. Puthupatti (Nilakottai Puthupatti) Village in Nilakottai Taluk in Dindigul. The N. Puthupatti village is near Nilakottai metropolis panchayat in Dindigul. On this village, the tribal are occupied via this Kattunayakan Community.

Profile of the Kattunayakkan (Origin)

The studied population claims that they belong to Kattunayakan. They migrated to this district, about 40 years again from Thalankadu location which is a border land among Coimbatore district and Kerala state, the community perceives its distribution at local level in some Taluks of Coimbatore District, but having kinship family members with their human beings living in Madurai, Dindigul districts. The community humans wherein nomads gradually come to be semi-nomads by using settling in the villages, that are positioned on plateau and plains retain, they speak Telugu languages inside the circle of relatives and in the kinship organization and

talk the Tamil language with others. They use Tamil script for writing letters or different files. Similarly, tattooing lady ornaments and male Head equipment in the course of nomadic professions, the lengthy size iron oil lamps and flat bronze plates, Which Prudence's bell sounds additionally function community identification.

Family Structure

The Kattunayakan stay broadly speaking in nuclear households. They have got, exogamous divisions referred to as 'Inteperulu' (family names) literally approach the house names. The intrepid is hooked up as a prefix of one personal name and someone's identity is regularly noted via his own family names. The intrepid a boy remains the equal during his existence, however a female changes her circle of relatives call. While she married it turns into that of her husband's circle of relatives Inteperulu founding the community.

The Kattunayakar has the social divisions. Each extended family is affiliated with their own deities. They have got brotherly clans based totally on their language, which suggests descents. The clans regulate the marital alliances. There's no trade in their clan names and titles. The community' self-notion, in phrases of meals, social fame at the regional level is center. Others perceive it as low. The differences of those agencies are inside the occupational degree. Intra- marriage alliances of those groups are traditionally not accredited, but because of small populace, marriages are taking place between these companies. Groups 'self-belief at local degree is low with higher. Hindu groups, however high with scheduled castes agencies. They observe regulations of exogamy in regulating marriage alliances.

Marriage:

All tribes are endogamy in nature. Within the group they clan device and it has been strictly accompanied. Their marriage is through elopement. The younger couple elopes from the settlement after which come and receives solemnized with the aid of the community. There's no Brahmin to start the ritual; from their very own community, elders will perform the ritual. They observe monogamy sorrel polygamy serrate symbol of marriage is (KarukumaniThali), nose ring and in recent times ear ring. Sprinkling Tulasi water on the bride and bridegroom is an important ceremony of marriage. Widow Remarriage is permissible inside the network; widows and divorced girls are allowed to remarry. They achieve this in a simple rite known as Cherakatinchadam wherein the man gives a sari to the girls. The man ought to serve the girl's

circle of relatives for a period of time decreed by using the village council. Family amongst them are nuclear, but some vertically extended family types are found within the village Pilathu Vendasandur, village Puthupati in Nilakottai, Valichetti Patti, Vendasandhur in Dindigul district.

Elopement

The people who eloped come subsequent day and that they give up before the Village Panchayat and search for pardon. Such Marriage by capture is later regularized and the couples formally get married after the dad and mom of the men and women kind out other formalities. After the tub, Couple will stand in front of panchayat and pattakara (Head of the tribe). The Pattakara will offer them tulasi water thrice to drink and then it will sprinkle on them. The bride groom has to pay Rs. 6, as an exceptional to panchayat for eloping, but if the daddy of bride has any objection with the wedding, he can cancel it through paying Rs. 3 to the Panchayat. However, if marriage is sealed then Grooms' father pays Rs. 52 to brides' father. After they appear in front of the panchayat after eloping, they' apologize by bowing down on their knees In front of elders by touching their head and hand on ground.

Divorce

The divorce is permissible with social approval and barrenness may be a purpose for it. Each husband and wife can divorce and kids of divorced girls are always allowed to be with the father. Widowers and divorcees are allowed to remarry. Divorce and remarry are practiced in Kattunayakan network. The divorce is given via the Caste Panchayat after enquiring approximately their grievance. The kids of the divorced couple live either with the daddy or mom. The female ought to publish 'Thali' to the Panchayat. The wife, who initiated divorce, through the Panchayat need to go back the whole quantity of parisapanam Rs. 52- to the husband. If the divorce is demanded by way of the husband, the Panchayat directs him to pay Rs. 42.

Puberty

When a Kattunayakan woman achieves puberty, all her household might be invited for the ritualistic ceremony. She may be made to bath and given a brand-new half saree to wear. After that many rituals will be completed by way of her maternal uncle. She has to stay on her own

for nine days in a hut in which others have are not allowed to go in. On the tenth day she can be given bath again. The maternal uncle will heap betel leaf on her Tongue and place a chunk of hot gold plate on it. After this ritual, she could be authorized to go into the house. Then the lady could be taken into consideration as one among them again.

Funeral Ceremonies

The last level of guy is loss of life. Some die an herbal death at the same time as the others turn out to be diseased after which meet their end. During their life time men live with their own family and society. But whilst demise assails them, a terrific exchange occurs. The demise news of the Kattunayakan is knowledgeable to the spouse and children. The dead body may be kept till the advent of the family. After their arrival they do the funeral rituals. Sometimes it is able to take two days for the relatives to attain. The dead frame will preserve for two days. Then the conventional musical tool will be used to sing from the time of loss of life until the funeral ceremonies are over. Whilst a person dies, his frame is located in laying position and 50 paisa coins will place at the brow. The frame is to bath and saved on the bier later namam (call) is painted on its forehead, a pounded mixture of betel leaves and nuts is set among its lips and the body is shrouded in a new chute fabric. The Parai will beat flat drums and lead the procession. The chief mourner is first son if it's miles Father and the ultimate son if it's miles the mother. At the third day they offer Palupoyadam or milk pouring rite wherein the leader mourner gives milk and other objects, like beedis, liquor and the favorite meals of the deceased at his grave. At the third day, the bereaved family arranges a dinner party for all the family. For the duration of this ceremony, the wife of the lifeless declared a widow after she removes all her marital symbols. Thereafter, the widow wears a white sari. They're served a non-vegetarian feast.

Conclusion

The Kattunayakkan tribe of dindigul district, 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. 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 Rs. 12,000/- as fine of elopement. 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.

References

1. Ganesan P, Social Customs of the Kattunaikkars in Tamilnadu, The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies, 2015; 3(6):1.
2. Kakkoth S. 'The Primitive Tribal Groups of Kerala: A Situational Appraisal', Studies of Tribes and Tribals, 2005; 3(1):48.
3. Mohanty, S. (2007). The decline of traditional forest-based livelihoods among tribals. Journal of Tribal Affairs, 3(4), 210-225
4. P. Mathikumar, 'Socio Cultural History of Kattunayakkans of Tamilnadu with Special Reference to Dindugul', in Empowerment, Social Justice, Inclusive Development: Issues & Perspectives of Tribal Tamilnadu, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, 2018, p.94.
5. 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, 2016; 3(4):263.