

Socio-Economic Life of Tribal Women in Pachaimalai Hill

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The tribal population is identified as the aboriginal inhabitants of our country. For centuries, they have been living a simple life based on the natural environment and have developed their own cultural patterns congenial to their physical and social environment. References of such tribal groups are found even in the literature of the ancient period, right from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha* periods. The tribes are the original inhabitants of Bharatvarsha, a social group with define territory, common name, common descent, common culture, and behaviour of an endogamous group, common taboos, and existence of distinctive social and political system, full faith in leaders and self-sufficiency in their distinct economy.

There are approximately two hundred million tribal people in the entire globe, which means, about 4% of the global population. They are found in many regions of the world and majority of them are the poorest amongst poor. According to India's most recent census (2011) report the Schedule Tribes (STs) population comprises of 8.6%.¹ The distribution of ST population varies widely across India's states and territories. In Mizoram and Lakshadweep, STs represent close to 95% of the population. Whereas in Kerala and Tamil Nadu STs represent only 1% of the population. Among the total ST population in India, the highest proportions are found in Madhya Pradesh (14.5%), Maharashtra (10.2%), and Orissa (9.7%). There are around 700 different tribes lives across India, predominantly in remote areas like forests, hills, and rough terrain in plateau areas.

Pachaimalai Hills:

The Pachaimalai Hills literally means green hills, are the most important hills in the Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. They are situated in the north western part of the district which falls within the jurisdiction of the Thuraiyur and Perambalur taluks. The total area of the Pachaimalai hills is about 442 sq.km. Of which 262.5 sq.km. Area is in Tiruchirappalli district and the remaining portion belongs to the neighbouring Salem district. The lengthiest distance from the north to south of the hills is about 32km. The average height of the hills being 600m. Above the sea level rise to the height of 1030m. In shape, the hill ranges resemble an "hour glass" being nearly cut into two in the middle by ravines of great size and depth opening out to the north east and south west; of the two parts into which it is thus divided, the north western portion is larger and reaches a higher average level than the south eastern. A striking feature of the range is the great steepness of the western slopes compared with those on the east. The latter are rarely precipitous and are broken by long spurs which project far into the low country. The Pachaimalai hills are covered by scrub jungles, tree, shrubs and medicinal herbs.²

Twenty two tribal residential schools are there for the benefit of the tribal students. There are four branches of post offices, one government hospital, one veterinary sub centre, ten public distribution centres and a co-operative society for the welfare of the tribal community. The community, who lives in this hill are called in general name Malaiyalis and they are scheduled in the government record as the tribal people.³ Most of the Malaiyalis are poor people. The Pachaimalai hill is inhabited only by the Malaiyalis and others are not allowed to migrate to this place. People, here seem to lives in union and in co-ordination with each other. This is evident from the fact that in all the past elections the presidents and ward members are elected unopposed.⁴

The Malaiyali the inhabitants of the Pachaimalai hills are one of the tribal communities in the State of Tamil Nadu, do not have a claim to be considered as ancient hilly tribes, but they are one set of Tamil speaking people who migrated to the hilly regions from the plains. Their figure and dress proved that they belong to the Dravidian culture. Their dress scantily, having an innocent charm but with suspicion at the sight of strangers. They are hospitable and warm to those who are friendly. In short, the social fabric of the Pachaimalai hill tribes is not only complex but interesting as well.⁵

Edgar Thurston defines the term 'Malaiyali' which has been derived from the Tamil word '*malai*' meaning hill and '*al*' meaning person, and is used to denote hilly people. Another meaning in etymologically, the word is derived from '*malai*' the hills and '*ali*' the inhabitants.⁶ Their legends of origin claim that they have migrated to the hills from Kanchipuram region. The legends says that three brothers, *periyannan*, *nadu annan* and *chinnannan* having become outcaste accidentally, left their homes and married respectively a Kaikola, a Vedans and a Palla girl and founded the settlements in Karayans, Pachaimalai and Kollimalai hills.⁷ The Malaiyalis are the only Scheduled Tribes living in the Hills areas such as Pachaimalai, Kollimalai, Kalrayan Hills, Shervarayan Hills, Seitheri, Pothamalai, Aranoothumalai and Javathu Hills. The Malaiyali settlements

located on the hills are called by the local people as *Ooru*. Like other Indian hills and mountains the Pachamalai hills are also home of Tribal community especially the Malaiyali tribe', who are the Tamil-speaking community with a population of 7,000. The Malaiyali tribes of Pachamalai have their own unique culture and traditions and the way of life. This mountain range in itself has different small regions like *Thenpuranadu*, *Kombainadu*, *Athinadu* and *Vannadu*. Pachaimalai forms part of the Uppilyapuram Assembly Constituency which has been reserved for the Scheduled Tribe's member to the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu Legislature.

The Scheduled Tribes of India in Hindu hierarchal order considered as lower social group. Though the Hindu social system has been considered them social discrimination that is untouchability due to their lowly based on their occupation and physical isolation, remote from civilization, therefore maintained their cultural uniqueness consequently and these the groups lag far behind others in terms of social and economic development. The Constitution of India had rightly recognized these segments of the population as weaker sections of society, based on their socio-economic backwardness and the age old social discrimination and physical isolation that they had been subjected to.⁸ The Pachaimalai Malayalis are the followers of Hindu religion. Among them, there are two sects namely Saivites and Vaishnavites. Apart from Siva and Vishnu, they worship a number of local deities as their traditional gods.⁹

Social and Community Life of Malaiyalis

The word social life refers to the human society includes many aspects such as a sense of sharing family marriage, food, dressing, ornaments, etc. The social life of a community makes clear the living habits, standard of life style and their problems, etc. The term 'community' is defined as 'an area of social living marked by some degree of social coherence'.¹⁰ The community is "a human population living within a limited geographic area and carrying on a common interdependent life",¹¹ community aspects of social life, a group of people, a particular locality, a community sentiment etc., are a few elements of a community. All these common character we find in the life of Pachaimalai tribal community.¹²

Family and Social Set up

The society of the Pachaimalai Hills Tribes is essentially a patriarchal arrangement, where the male members are dominated and occupied the premier position as head man in his family. In their domestic and public life, the female members occupy a subordinate position to the male counterpart.¹³ The unit of the society is the family which may consist of many members that is more than the average size of the family which is five. This is due to the fact that in quite a few cases, the family happens to be a joint family. There is another fact that among these tribes polygamy prevails. There are twenty to thirty families joined together and made a settlement in the Hills which is known as the Southern and Northern parts of the villages.¹⁴

Besides the family head man each village has a head man, called *Uran* or *Ur Goundan*. In some villages he also called as *Dharmakartha* (*Poosari*) and *Shanthikaran*. The word *Shanthikaran* means the person who attends in religious and other ceremonial activities, which are arranged by the village people themselves, which had been traditionally celebrated among them.

Ur Goundan or Uran

The village people of the tribal society select the aged and experienced man from their own village as the head man, who is known as *Uran*. The *Uran*, who has to serve his duty till his death and after his death the position of *Uran* handover to the elderly person of his own family member. However, if the villagers do not like the headman from the same family, they may consider the public opinion of the majority of the people of the village. This is the method of selection of *Uran* which reflects a combination of democratic approach as well as a conservative attitude. All the ceremonies and activities in the villages are conducted in the presence of *Uran*, who is virtually a friend, philosopher and guide to the village people. His advice, command and persuasion are effect full in ensuring a measure of uniformity among the villagers. Next to *Uran*, in every village there is a person called *Variyan*, who assisted to the village headman in community service. He served as a messenger and communicates whatever information given by the *Uran* to the people of the village.¹⁵

Nattans

The *Nattans* (*Patty Rajas*) generally called as Feudatories or Chieftains of the tribal region. Every group of village had one *Nattan* who is assisted by a Minister (*Manthiri*). Every group of 10 villages selected their *Nattan* and *Manthiri* in traditional way or in hereditary. Whenever the emigrations arise in any village, the village headman *Uran* invite the *Nattan* to solve their problem and also made arrangement for the needs of the villages. Finally, every *Uran* controlled by the *Nattan* then every problem solved by the *Nattan* during the time of village meeting and *Manthiri* also helped to the *Nattan*¹⁶ in decision making.

Guruswamy

Each *Nadu* has a *Guruswamy* who is a religious preacher, involved in all religious activities and performed all religious ceremonies and rituals in the *Nadu* unit. Moreover in the tribal community every function should be participated and his acts and guide through the *Nattan*. The last five decades he lost his position because, he is not belongs to tribal community. On the other hand, the Brahmins of Kanchipuram socially top position in the hierarchy order of society. Originally, the posts of *Guruswamy* rendered their importance from Kanchipuram where the members of the fore range *Guruswamy* family are still found. They are more advanced, highly educated, working class and other fields. At present preacher of Pachaimalai are not working as *Guruswamy* of the tribal group.¹⁷

Shanthikaran or Kariyakaran

It is a part tribal society the all types of ceremonies like marriage, temple festivals, communal oriented function, death or other common functions *Shanthikaran* or *Kariyakaran* should be participated in the villages. In every festivals of this society, he plays an important role in religious functions that is called as *shanthimarital*.

Maniyakkaran

The *Maniyakkaran* occupies an important place in the Tribal society. In all important ceremonies conducted by the *Nattan*, *Maniyakkaran* is solely in-charge and supervised all activities (whether the functions will be performed successfully or not). It is the duty of the *Maniyakkaran* to perform such ceremonies in a grand manner.¹⁸

Pattakkaran

In some village functions the duty of Maniyakkaran and Pattakkaran are more or less same. He is called *Pattakkaran* because people of the village give respect and put *thilakkam* on his forehead and requests him to perform his duties sincerely. At the end of this function, he is garlanded and wished by the elders of the village. His main duty is to supervise the ceremonies and also to watch whether all the works are done successfully or not.

The hereditary officials perform their duties honourably. Among them the lowest officer is Variayans. He settles the internal problems of the village. For his duties he gets some amount of money, moreover he collects grains from each house of the village.¹⁹

Religious Activities

The religious beliefs, ceremonies, customs and manner are important in the life of tribes of Pachaimalai hills. The women of tribal society actively participated in all religious function with their husband. Elderly women of the family advices and involves in the religious matters. Each village has a temple and worshiped by them. Though the tribal community of the hill are followed Vaishnavism, and Saivism, the majority of the tribal are worshiped lord Siva and his consort, Kali. Almost all the villages particularly the first son or daughter of the family bears the names of their own gods and goddesses. For instances, in Pudur Nadu, one of the village having a Sivalinga, the god is known as Annamalai, Baraswaran and goddesses of 'Unnamalai' the first born of the family is usually called Annamalai, if it is a boy and Unnamalayai, if it is a girl. Similarly, the names like 'Kali' and Kaliappan, 'Durgai' and Durgiappan, 'Vedi' and Vediappan are common names among the villagers.²⁰

Pongal is most important festival of Tamils and it is celebrated every year for nearly ten days in the Tamil month of *Thai* (January). Early morning of the *makarasankranti* day the women from the houses assemble in front of village temple and prepare the Pongal to offer son god. Accordingly Pongal is offered to the son god and to the domestic animals like cows and goats. The animal rearing plays an important role in their livelihood. Another festival is *Sivaratiri*, particularly for the Saivaites among the tribes. On this day, twelve prayers are offered. The next important festival is the '*Vaikunda Ekadasi*' for Vaishnavaites, and they offer prayers seven times a day. In the month of November, *Karthikai Deepam*, is celebrated every year followed by "Ponneru Kattudi", a festival is celebrated by the villagers in the month of May which they choose on the advice of the *Uran*. They choose an auspicious day for selecting seeds, sowing seedlings and for starting the first plough in the field. On this day fruits and grains offered to gods. Every family celebrate this ceremony on a day fixed by the '*Uran*'. In each village, there is a separate house which is in-charged by *Uran* for conducting *Puja* and festivals. Animal sacrifice is traditionally offered to god, it was common and the practice continues even today. In addition to that, there are daily *Pujas* is contacting in the village temple and special *Pujas* are performed on full moon and new moon days. It is the convention of the tribes that the lamp in the temple could always burn. The priest or *Pujari* may be either too young between six and ten years or too old. This post is held by the person for three years and if he is liked by the villagers he may continue in this job for more than three years. Otherwise, another person may occupy this post with the help of villagers.²¹

The nature of their worship is somewhat peculiar, and some of them mysteries. The chief object of

worship is Kali, in whose honour they celebrate a feast once a year, lasting for fifteen days. During this celebration no person from the plains ventures near them, believing that no intruder will ever leave the spot alive. Even the Malaiyali women are studiously debarred from witnessing the rites, and those who take part in them are not permitted to speak to a woman, even if she be his wife. The ceremonies take place in the open air, at a particular spot on the hills, where the goddess is to be adored in the shape of a stone called *vellandiswami*.²² It is difficult to learn the nature of the rites. In some villages, they also worship (excluding women) small images of Venkateswara of Tirupati, which are carefully concealed in caskets, and not allowed to be seen by people of other castes.

Death Ceremonies

As far as the funeral ceremonies is concerned the death is due to natural causes, the body is buried at *idukadu*, (burial ground) whereas death is due to accident or murder or affected by diseases the body is cremated at *sudukadu*. The women are allowed to precede the dead body up to *idukadu*. As soon as a person died, betel leaves are put in the mouth of dead body. A few bundles of tobacco are buried with the dead. On the way to the burial ground, the women of the village place rice at a point which is called *Nadukadu* that is in between their village and burial ground. When the husband dies, his mother gives the widowed girl a red colour saree, flowers and garland. These are removed along with *Mangala suthra (thali)* from the girl by the mother, after bathing the dead body. Next the family members have their bath and go to the temple for purification. The final death ceremonies are conducted either on the third day or on the sixth day. In some cases, due to poverty the ceremonies are completed after many months. After the death of a person, the elders of the village offer cooked rice to birds for ten to fifteen days from the day following the death. This is called "*pinda prasada*". Widowhood is no bar to attending to one's own work or attending to functions and ceremonies in the family.²³

Health

When they become ill, the Malaiyalis do not consult allopathic doctor, but send the ill persons to village *Pujari*, and asked him by which god or goddess the patient has offended. They collect jungle product, particularly the glandular hairs of the fruits of a certain flower (*Mallotus Philipinensis*) which is used for such thing and the roots of a plant called *shenalisedi*, supposed to possess useful medicinal values, it is better for the medicine of snack bits. Generally, the people of Pachaimalai hills suffered from fever and cough which are due to the climatic condition. More than ninety percent of the people suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, because of their way of life and unhygienic living condition. Polygamous marriages and promiscuous relationship are also causes for disease. But the hilly people do not express their sufferings nor do they take any proper medical treatment, often tell the doctors that they suffer from "*choodu*" which means their body gets heat.²⁴ Women feel shy and hide the fact and they get leprosy. For bilious insect bite people go for only their traditional medicines instead of going to the hospitals, provided by the government. Malnutrition, particularly among children is a great problem. In several inaccessible areas it sometimes takes a day or two for a person to be taken to the nearest medical centres. The people of this area suffer from nutritional and vitamin deficiencies, worm infestations and anaemia. They consume bee dies and country liquors. They suffer from syphilitic ulcer which is mistaken to be caused by heat in the body and which can be treated by taking 'cold food (i.e.) old rice (*Palaiya choru*) with butter milk. The symptom begins with a painful ulcer then it disappears. The tribal people think that they are cured and if there is relax; consider it as 'the curse of god'.²⁵

Social Status of Women

The concept of womanhood is considered and analysed into four phases viz, childhood, adulthood and Widowhood and old age. Unlike the Hindus, the tribe does not have any marked preference for boys over the girls. As a matter of fact girls are as much welcome as the boys. In some tribal societies a girl is an economic asset and potential heir to the family property. This is because of the important economic role the women play in these societies. In this respect, Malaiyali tribal girl's status is not equal to other tribal girls as stated above. In this society, a female child is not corned as happy as a male child. A female child is considered as a commodity instead of a human being among Malaiyalis.²⁶

Childhood

From early childhood to adulthood, girl is trained in various domestic chores. The girl children are engaged in much work, such as bringing fuel wood from the forest, water from the well and attending to small babies. The young girls are not encouraged by the mother to go to school. Instead they are compelled to attend in all kinds of domestic works. The first crisis in a girl's life comes with the onset of menstruation. A girl becomes impure and unclean at this point of time. She is debarred from continuing her normal activities. In Malaiyali tribal society a separate hut is built in each village, where menstruating girls are separated from the rest of the family. The girls are permitted to move out of the hut either in the early morning or in the evening after lamps are lighted.

Menstruation signified that a girl is ready to enter into full womanhood.

The Adulthood

In the adulthood of a girl marriage is compulsory among the Malaiyali families. As soon as a girl attains puberty, she can marry either her uncle or uncle's son. The parents are very particular about the girl's marriage. Marriages are of different types, for instance, there are arranged marriages, love marriage, living as man and wife without marriage, child marriage and widow's re-marriages. Though there is now the practice of dowry system and obligation to pay money, Jewells or household things are prevalent. The bridegroom's should pay money and grains to the bride's party. If a boy wants to marry a girl, the parents of the boy along with the few elders of the villages, visit the girls' house and enquire about their willingness. If the girl's parents are agreeable, the boy's party is asked to pay three and half *varagan* (one *varagan* is equal to three and half rupees) and seven and half *kandagam* of grains (one *kandagam* is equal to 40 *marakal* and one *marakal* is equal to 2-1/2 *padis*). The commonly used expression by way of consent is "take her away" (*kondupo*) is popular among the Malaiyali tribes. The use of this expression suggests that the girl is considered as a commodity and sold for money and grains. This practice is indeed very common among other tribes also.

Another type of marriage is love marriage which seems to be more common among the tribes. If a girl attains puberty, she is separated from the house and she is allowed to live in a different hut with her uncle's son. If the girl likes the boy she can live with him as a wife on the understanding that their marriages will be arranged by the elders of the village. On the other hand if the girl does not like the boy, she is permitted to make her own choice. In certain situations the girl may be already a mother or she is in the family way, yet she is free to marry another person.²⁷

The child marriages existed in the tribal society, where a small girl of six or seven can marry a boy of older age. Sometimes, it can be the other way as well (i.e.) a woman can marry a boy who is much younger than herself. This system leads to the causes of rise of certain social evils in the society. For instance, if a man marrying too small a girl can move with other women or have illegal relationship with any other girl. Similarly, the woman who marries too young boy is free to move with any other man. This type of marriage is called 'Pet Marriage' or *chella kalyanam*.²⁸ No doubt, to some extent, the elders of the village intervene to unite the couple. As there is no system of divorce, these types of marriages lead to sexual promiscuity. This is borne out by the fact that almost ninety per cent of the tribal population suffer from venereal diseases. Though the divorce is unheard of the boy and girl or husband and wife are not on good terms the elders of the villages argue for their separation and both the husband and wife or boy or girl is allowed to marry again. There is no obligation to pay any compensation to the wife or the girl. The tribal women of this social group are indeed proud to say that they lived with so many men.

Originally, the marriages of Malaiyali tribe are celebrated for three days. On the first day of the marriage the bride-groom party should feed the people of the entire village. For this function the entire expenditure is borne by the family, by paying a lump sum amount to the *Uran* of the village. The role played by the uncle during the marriage is important, as he carries the girl nearby the bride-groom. The bride-groom puts the *thali* (yellow thread with a piece of turmeric). The *thali* made of precious metals or jewels are not compulsory but in modern days, economically rich tribal families purchase the *thalis* made of precious metals and jewels. After the marriage the wedding feast is arranged; the main food items being mutton, beef and *samai* rice. During the Turban, about three or four decades ago the bride did not wear a blouse. The elderly women of the village used to apply sandal paste on the upper part of the body of the girl. Of course, this system has now changed, though this tradition seems to continue in the interior parts of the Pachaimalai Hills.

In the selection of a life partner the tribal girl enjoy more freedom than their Hindu counterparts. After a girl is married she embarks upon a new life. As soon as a child is born the marriage between them is considered successful. A sterile woman is not looked upon with favour and in such a case the man is free to marry again even without divorcing the barren wife. But motherhood also places additional burden of work responsibility on the mother. As a woman, she has to do all domestic works and she has to go out to fetch water, to collect fruits, roots, nuts, etc. The tribal society of Pachaimalai Hills is patriarchal oriented in which the male member or the head of the family dominates. Correspondingly, the role of the Tribal woman either in the family or outside of the family is reduced to subordinate position which denies them not only the minimum privileges but also in decision making of the family matters.²⁹ They enjoy no property rights.

Widowhood

Widowhood is not severely looked upon in the Malaiyali Tribal society. A widow is free to remarry. If she has children by her first husband, the woman has no power to take the children to her new husband's house. The children are protected by the first husband's family. A widow is not debarred from any activity. She works in the field, looks after her own family and exercises all the authority of a woman of her age. There is no social stigma attached.

Old age

The place of aged women in the Malaiyali tribal society is not altogether enviable. They continue to work for their family as best as their physical abilities allow. They look after small babies, cook and do such odd jobs as may be possible. A few old women may become witch-doctors or nurses. In most of the villages in the hills a few old women act as local doctor during delivery time. They prepare traditional medicines for the new born child and mother.³⁰

Considering all the above factors the status of woman in Malaiyali Tribal society may be said to be a subordinate position. Women are considered as a commodity. But as a girl and as a woman she enjoys more freedom of movement than her selection of her life partner. There is a clear division of work between a man and a woman. She has to spend her whole life in working in the field, be getting children and attending to all domestic works. She is also working as a labourer in the interior forest to earn additional income for his family. But the important economic role does not give her a very high position in the society, on par with man. Even she has no property rights. She has little religious duties. She cannot hold any public offices. She is not permitted to take part in cultural activities. In short, in all social activities and responsibility, men occupy the prime place and we consider women as second day important in the social ladder. The relative backwardness of the Malaiyali tribal women is due to their illiteracy, unawareness, and the attitude (and conception) of the men folk towards their women.³¹

Economic Status of Women

Like all other tribal women, the Malaiyali tribal women are very hard workers. They always work in the house and fields. During the off-season, they collect nuts from the forest and give to the *lamp* society who is paying a meagre amount which is not sufficient to run their family. No tribal women have property right. They have no liberty to spend any amount of money according to their own or choice. When the women were asked whether they had got any idea about property right, all women, of all ages, replied that they did not want anything because their men gives everything to them. A married girl has no right to keep her things separately.

The Malaiyali women are not permitted to cutting sandal wood. The reason is that men folk says that women do not know anything about tree cutting. Further they should go far interior which is dangerous to them. Similarly, handy-craft training has given to the tribal in this region. The tribal people as well as the villager are respondent to their programme and also sericulture and poultry or animal husbandry schemes of the government or NGOs.³²

By nature, the Malaiyali women are good in archery. Very few girls are pursuing their for high school education. If archery is included in the curriculum, it will help the tribal girls to participate in competitions both at the National and at the International level. *Codello* training has giving to young girls in lace making; they learn very quickly but the marketing of their products is very difficult.³³ The Malaiyali women have good talents in basket making, hunting and farm jobs. The lack of training spoils their labour. Food gathering is another important work of the tribal women. They collect both edible and non-edible foods from the forest as; they do not know how to protect the non-edible thing for long.³⁴

Dress

Dress of the Malaiyalis of these hills followed similar way of dressing like the plain people. Men tuck a piece of cloth namely *thaaseele* to their waist covering the loins. They simply cover their upper portion by a blanket or dhoti. When they visit to plains wear dhoti around their waist. If a person who often visit to town then he wears shirt too. Sometime the young men were nicker and shirts. In the interior settlements all elderly man were seen with loin-cloth only.³⁵

The dress of women consists of *seelai* (saree). While worn the saree, one of the folds is tucked to one of the sides of the waist and the other fold is drawn front side so as to cover the breast and hung over the back on the left shoulder. Elderly women and women of the interior settlements wear the saree around waist only leaving their breasts uncovered. Young women are wearing saree, blouse and undergarments too.³⁶

The Malaiyalis of Pachaimalai area followed similar way of dressing due to frequent contacts with the plains people. The Malaiyalis of the Kalrayans and Shervarayans hills have been changed their way of dressing and ornaments but they all stick on their traditional way. The women folk of the Kollimalais do wearing themselves in single pieces of white cloth. They do not wear *kosavam* but carefully covered their breast. The Pachamalai women wear the *kosavam* on the right side and they do not take care to cover their breast. They are interested to using the cloths in various colours like Black, Red, Yellow, Green and Orange's clothes. Even men used to prefer colourful cloths like *kosavam*. The Kollimalai men wear a piece of cloth around their waists. In *Periya Kalrayans* men wear upper and lower garments and women wear sarees and blouses.³⁷

Now a day the traditional way of dressing is almost disappeared. Only some of the age old women are following the tradition way of dressing habit. The young women girls are wearing modern dresses. This is the development due to their relationship with non-tribal society.

Hair Style

Majority of men follow the western style of cropping hair while they visit the barber shop at nearest town. Some elderly persons allowed their hairs to grow on the head without cropping them at all. Men folk occasionally removed their beard. Young men and also some elderly persons take pain to have moustache.³⁸

Women adopted the hairs style of either keeping a hair bin at the back of the head or leaving the hairs unplanted. To have braid, the hair was smoothly combed and tightly tied high at the back. Then, the hair hanging from the knot are folded three or four times over the knot itself and tied tightly with a piece of cloth or ribbon taking care to preserve the folded hair in a flat spread manner. Adult women tie their hair at the back in a single knot.³⁹

Both men and women occasionally tonsure their head as their offering to the deities. Men and women use margosa oil for their hairs. However, the youngsters now-a-days prefer coconut oil. Whether owe bathes regularly or not they apply oil to the head and make the hair smoothly by comb at least once in two or three days, whenever they are leaving their house, they used to apply oil.⁴⁰

Ornaments

The tribal women were used to wear bangles, rings on the finger and foes and in the nose and ears. The Kollimalai tribal women bore the left nostril and those of Pachamalai women bore the right nostril. But the Malaiyali women in Shervarayans and the Kalrayans do not bore the nostril. They wear the gold ornaments *koppu* (ear ring), *mukkuthy* (nostril ring) *Pathakkam* (neck chain) *mothiram* (finger ring), *valayal* (bangle) *kolusu* (anklets) and *metti* (toe ring).⁴¹ Among the Malaiyalis only a few were found to wear rings in their fingers. Likewise, it was noticed that among men, a few elderly persons were found to wear an ear ornament called *kadukkan*.⁴²

On the contrary women wear a number of ornaments, such as *alandhamudichi*, *moodi oale*, *uruthu*, *koppu*, *talukku*, *maatlu* and *loalakku*, all made of gold are worn by elderly women as the different ear ornaments. They are worn at the base of the ear lobe. In addition, a small ornament called *pottu* is also worn by the elderly women. This ornament is worn by them at the different region of their ear lobes. However, it is noticed that young women wear only *thodu*, an ear ornament usually worn by the, women in plain regions. Young girls have either *maatlu* or *loalakkallu* as their ear ornament.⁴³

Beside these ornaments they were found to wear a few other ornaments such as *kaappu* (anklet) *valeyal* (bangle) *ceynu* (chain) *neklic* (necklace), worn around the neck by young women and girls have *mookkuthi* as their nose rings. Married men wear two plain silver rings known as *vinchi* in the toe of each leg at marriage ceremony. In the olden days it has been reported men continued to wear it even after marriage but now-a days they wear it only for the occasion. Married women in addition to *vinchi*, have *thaali* (marriage badge) around their neck. It may be of mere yellow string with turmeric piece with it or golden chain with single or double gold plates, women of *Goundan* (tribal head man) sect have gold chain provided, she should be given in marriage to a man of *Goundan* sect. On the contrary, the women of *kudiyaanaven* (citizen under tribal head man) sect have only yellow strings. The noteworthy point in this juncture is that even a woman at *kudiyaanaven* sect is permitted to have gold chain as marriage badge. It she is given in marriage to a man at *goundan* sect.⁴⁴

Food Habits

The tribal of Pachaimalai hills consumer non-vegetarian food i.e., the meat of pigs, chicken, goats, sheep, eggs and fish, etc., but abstain from beef. The staple food is *samai*, *jowar* and *ragi* and occasionally rice and wheat. They are habitually taking alcoholic drinks; males are having the habit of smoking bad, tobacco and snuff. The females are having the habit of chew betel, all of them taken food three times a day. Now days they prepared modern paid items like Idli, Dosa, Poori, Sappati, etc.⁴⁵

The Malaiyali women are sincerely participated in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry. They are involved in all these activities equally with men folk, in addition to that the domestic work and responsibility. But they have no right to hold anything in their name. Even if they get any loan or grants or subsidy from any way, they get it either in the name of family head or in her son's name. Economically women are very backward and they have no economic independence. It is a cent per cent patriarchal society which considers the women as the subordinator to the male counterpart.

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