

# THE PECULIAR POSITION AND PEOPLE OF EDAMALAKKUDY IN IDUKKI DISTRICT

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## (ABSTRACT)

Several new trends in historical thinking have emerged with the passage of time. The entire spectrum of recent writing in history throws up a challenge to the conventional methods were readymade carpus of source is available. Retelling history in a mere descriptive way has already been rendered an anachronism and has been replaced with an analytical approach. History is anthropocentric and charm has been added by 'Subaltern study' which gives much important to the everyday life of the working masses. The term Subaltern as a theoretical concepts describes the identity of an oppressed and exploited group. This in an attempt to light the dark pages of the history of a tribal panchayat which contain only the hard working tribal people are live. The panchayat is situated one of the four taluks of Idukki district known as Devikulam taluk. The main objective of the publications is to unravel the characteristic features of a typical tribal society, their living conditions and facilities of Edamalakkudy.

**Keywords:** Edamalakkudy- The First Tribal Panchayat in Idukki, Kerala- A Typical Tribal Society- Muthuvans and their customs- A tiger trail project- Natural beauty and important tourism spot.

Edamalakkudy a muthuvan settlement in Idukki is a remote tribal village situated 44 km far from Munnar in the Devikulam taluk of Idukki. The village is located between pettimudi in kerala and Nallamudi near Valparai in Tamilnadu. It is surrounded by Adimali taluk towards west, Nedumkandom taluk towards south, Idukki taluk towards north and Bodinayakkanur taluk towards east. It is also 80 km far from the district head quarter painavu. It is way in altitude from 2500 to 5000 feet mean sea level. The region has comparatively a chill climate. The temperature is below  $-2^{\circ}$  C. The area receives plenty of rains from the south-west monsoon during June to August and the North –East monsoon during October to November. The normal rainfall through Edavapathy and Thulavarsham is 250 mm. The soil is vary from place to place. Granite hills as it touching the skies and skirted round with thick rain fed and sylvan forest render a rare charm to the place. It lies in the highland and is covered with dense forest and steep valleys and there are various narrow gaps in the village is famous for its adventure tourism destination. A tiger trail project is being launched in the village. This place is also important in trekking program. Edamalakkudy is a important tourism spot. The tourist enjoy the wild animals and the beauty of water falls on the way. The tourist are allowed to stay at Edamalakkudy forest camp the forest department will purchase two jeeps for conducting the service

Edamalakkudy, a separate village council was created in 2010. It is the first tribal panchayat in kerala. Nearly 700 families lived in Edamalakkudy. The is no sufficient basic amenities in this area. Now the government took steps to issues like food security, Education, Medical facility, and Drinking water supply. A special camp was set up at Societykudy, the nearby village of Edamalakkudy to given the Aadhar card to the people of this village in 2015.

There is no Transport and communication facility to this village. From Eravikulam, you have to walk through the forest passing many other tribal villages. The work on the 22 km stretch to Edamalakkudy was not an easy thing. The Government allotted Rs.20 million for the road and Rs.80 million was for the development of the village. The only means of communication is Ham Radio. This place consists of no internet connection. No telephone communications.

The Education facility is one tribal primary school and 10 nursery schools are here. The Government took steps to a teacher training program for the tribals and distributed free study materials to the students. There is no Higher Education facility in this village.

An extension office of the village council is situated at Devikulam town. Because of the inaccessibility, only tribal councilors attend the village council meeting at Societykudy. The bureaucratic assistants commissioners are not able to make it. Edamalakkudy is not a single village but a cluster of about 26 small villages scattered in 35000, acres of deep forest. Each hamlet is about 3 to 10 km away from the next one.

In spite of its remoteness 180 Government officials are applied in the legislative Election of 2016. Among them 12 were selected to conduct the Election. They travel 44 km by road and then walk 3 km deep inside the forest to reach the polling station. Along with the polling team 40 other officials like the police, forest and medical team are assisted. In this panchayat consist of 1800 voters are there.

## Muthuvan

The tribes who lived in this area is Muthuvans. Muthuvan means one who carried weight on his back the dialect used by the people are closely related to Tamil. Muthuvan, one among the prominent tribals, are mainly inhabiting at Munnar and Devikulam taluks. There is a myth that connects their ancestral roots with Madurai. According to their belief, when Kannaki, the legendary heroine of *Chilappathikaram* left Madurai after cursing the city into ashes, her loyal followers and servants carried her on their back till they stopped their journey somewhere in the jungle of Idukki. Those ancestors who carried Kannaki on their 'Muthuku' were came to be called Muthuvans.

Another myth states that the Muthuvans of Marayoor, Kanthalloor and Vattavada panchayats speak Tamil dialects. Their tribal legends show that they were the loyal servants of a section of the royal dynasty of Madurai and that they carried the idols of Madurai Meenakshi on their back, known in Tamil as 'muthuku' and hence the name Mthuvans'. Thrown out from power at Madurai, the surviving members of the Madurai royal family established at Poonjar in Kerala and the servants who came with them carrying the idols on their backs, settled in the forests near Tamil Nadu.

The Muthuvan are very independent and reluctant to interact with the outside world. The Muthuva tribe grows ragi, cardamom and lemon grass. Now they are also cultivating banana and tapioca for their daily usage most of their women are illiterate and strongly bonded with their customs.

Usually, they live in the deep and dense forests of Devikulam, Adimali and Nedumkandam block Panchayats. They drink water from the forest streams, eat wild roots and lead a simple life. They are different from other tribes in many aspects. Almost 90% of them live in bamboo huts. Muthuvan women are strictly prohibited to keep relationship with the outside world. They live in their huts without being allowed even to talk to other men. Their literacy rate is very low. They consume tobacco at an early age and their men are addicted to liquor and other intoxicants. Their huts are cluttered and are close to one another, exposing them to infectious diseases. By nature they are truthful and affectionate. Agriculture, hunting and fishing are their occupations. In an attempt to find new settlements they move from place to place in the forests in small groups to collect ivory, cardamom, bee-wax and honey for their livelihood. They are Sun worshippers, ignorant and illiterate. They are also worshipped other Gods and Goddess like Muruga, Lakshmi, Madurai Meenakshi, Ganesh etc.

### **Social Life and customs of the Tribals**

The tribals have a different lifestyle. For each tribe there is a Headman. They follow the advices of the headman. The family consists of father, mother and children. Women live a secluded life. Their mode of dress and ornaments are different from that of the inlanders. They domesticated animals like cow, goat, buffalo, dog, hen, and cock. Bamboo vessels and pottery vessels are used for cooking and eating.

The tribal men and women have their own lifestyle. The tribal men follow the Kerala style of dressing, usually, they wear dhoty and shirt. But the tribal women follow their traditional lifestyle. The ornaments that the tribals wear are different. The tribal men wear bangles and rings made up of brass or iron whereas the women wear ornaments made up of coins, seeds and leaves of some plants. They make bangles and rings with iron and brass.

Necklaces are made of coins and seeds. Their ear robes are of white metal rings or leaves or strings of beads. Thus the tribal ornaments are made up of their own style.

The tribal houses in Idukki are generally known as 'Chalasi', 'Mittam', 'Pathies', 'Kudies'. The Muthuvas call their house as 'Kudi'. The huts of the tribals are made up of bamboo and thatched with leaves, straw and grass. The huts generally face east and are rectangular in shape. A special characteristics feature of the society is Thinnaveedu. Girls attain puberty and pregnant ladies are stay here.

Most of the tribal families are monogamous. This is the rule that a tribal man does not marry again when the first wife is alive. The tribals played or sang a variety of songs for amusement. There are a variety of songs among the tribal communities and the style of presentation of a particular dance differs from one community to another. Dances like kummiyattam, Kooth, Tharattuppattu are their entertainments. The musical instruments used by Muthuvans of Idukki beat the drum so much similar to *chenda*. 'Adichil', which is a very famous artifact for catching wild animals, is popular among the Muthuvans. It is made of some pieces of wood with strings. They used the musical instruments like Kuzhal, and Vadyam. There is no special training for the use of musical instruments.

Tribal folklore is the mere reflection of cultural ethos of the tribal folks. The songs, dances, folktales and the like provide eloquent testimonies to the tribals cultural antiquity. Probing into the world of tribal folklore one can see that tribal songs and dances, constituting an integral part of tribal life do possess the following peculiar features.

Tribal dances are acted with the active participation of both the men and women dancers. Men beat the drum and play the flute. The leg movement of the dancers are in accordance to the

beating of the drum. Tribal songs are the replicas of tribal beliefs, customs and their social contacts with the outside world. In dances, songs and tales of tribals, close rapport between the tribals and their Mother Earth is conspicuously found. Most of the tribal songs highlight the miserable plight of tribals as traditional slaves to landlords or as the worst afflictors of starvation. Tribals sing and dance on the occasion of marriage, birth and worshipping deities.

The tribals are against deforestation and destruction of the green vegetation. They express the importance of preserving plant life on the earth through Kummiyadiattu. Kummiyadiattu, sung by men and women and accompanied with the dances of both, highlights the inextricable interrelationship between soil (earth) and trees. Both men and women take part in it. This song is sung during leisure time.

The tribals used to sing in the evenings after their daily chores. Now-a-days, they sing and dance especially on the occasions of marriage, puberty, child birth, death, worship of tribal deities and ancestors. Like non-tribal societies, tribals celebrate the birth of a child with much happiness. They love and indulge their kids and the mothers sing lullabies for their kids. In this way the place got its peculiarity.

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