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# Paliyan Tribe in Idukki District, Kerala: An Overview

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**Abstract:** Paliyan tribe is one of the tribal communities in Kerala. They were nomadic agriculturists and migrated from Tamil Nadu. They came to the Travancore forest area through the Kambum Pass and settled down in different parts of the Idukki District. Years back, the Kumily, Anakkara, and Vandanmedu villages were covered with thick forest, and hardly had the presence of any human habitations except, the nomadic tribes. These Paliyan settlements in Idukki district have followed its own geographical and cultural peculiarities. They have a specific historical background in Tamil Nadu as well as in Idukki district. They have their own linguistic as well as socio-cultural characteristics. They speak in Tamil with many Malayalam words and phrases. The Paliyan were shifted from their traditional occupations like cutting and collection of minor forest products to modern occupation including cultivation, labour work in cardamom plantation, government employment like forest guard, watchman, peon etc (Gardner, 1972). The study mainly analyzes the socio-cultural history of Paliyan tribes based on their traditional practices. And also explains the differences found between the three main Paliyan settlements with respect to their educational opportunities and livelihood activities.

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**Keywords:** Paliyan Tribe, Idukki, Cultural Practices, Nomadic, Social Condition, Settlement, Livelihood

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## Introduction

India has the largest concentration of tribals in the world, except in Africa, the majority of the tribal community live in and around India's forest areas of 63.3 million hectares, occupying 19.3% of the landmass of the country. The tribals constitute 8.6% of the total population; a large number of them are economically and socially backward and their life is beset with a number of problems. During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as depressed classes (census 2011). The tribes are scattered all over the country and they live mostly in the hilly and forest region. Their names were ruled by the name meaning of the forest as well as the people. The term such as Adivasi, Janajati, Vanvasi, Vanjati etc carries the meaning of being the original inhabitants of a given region. Over time, unlike the terms, aborigines or tribes have developed a connotation of past autonomy which was disrupted during the British colonial period in India and has not been restored (Meen, 2014). They did not have much connection with the people belonging to the mainstream society. The tribes differ

considerably from one another based on their origin and development. They belong to various ethnic stocks, have a distinct pattern of economy, technology, and religious behavior and speak specific languages and dialects (Singh, 2000).

Tribal from an integral part of Indian civilization, they contributed various elements to the ancient civilization of India. In the ancient literature of India, they are often referred to a Nishadas, Savaras, Bills and Kollas, Kiratas, Dasas, Dasyus, Sudras, Dramidas and Dravidas. In the early historical period of India, which coincides with the Hindu period, the tribals either compromised with the Hindu neighbor or went further in the deep forest. All through the long centuries of Hindu rule, the tribals find themselves assimilated into the adjoining Hindu culture. During this period the tribals enjoyed autonomy until the beginning of the medieval period. By the end of the sixteenth century the Mohammedan rules harassed them in different ways and gradually they lost their status. During the British Period, the tribals had to face many conflicting and exploiting situation. At the same, they faced another encroachment in the form of conversion to Christianity by the Missionaries who accompanied the British rules in the name of serving the tribals. This helped the tribals, but they were divided into two sections i.e traditional Hindu tribals and Christian tribals. In north-eastern India the major portion of the tribal population was converted to Christianity (Virginus, 1997).

Adivasi concentrations in Kerala are seen in the districts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Wayanad, Idukki, Palakkad and the northeastern parts of Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram district. According to the 2011 census, Kerala has a total population of 3, 34, 06,061 of which the population of adivasi communities constitutes 4, 84,839 that is 1.45 % of the total population of Kerala. Idukki is one of the districts in Kerala which have numerous hill stations, high ranges, deep valleys, and dense forest area. Idukki is the least populous districts of Kerala. The tribal population in Idukki is around 5.03% of the total population. Paliyan tribe is one of the tribes which constitute about 0.42% of the total tribal population of the district (Census 2011). This paper mainly focused on the history of the Paliyan tribal community in Idukki district.

### **Study Area: Idukki District**

Idukki district is one among the fourteen districts of Kerala which came into existence on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1972. Idukki is one of the largest districts of Kerala consisting of five taluks (Devikulam, Udumbanchola, Peerumedu, Thodupuzha, and Idukki), eight blocks, 51 Panchayats, and 64 Villages. This charming district is flanked by the Western Ghats and is bounded by Thrissur district of Kerala and Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu in the north, Madurai and Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu in the east, Pathanamthitta district of Kerala in the south and Kottayam and Ernakulam district of Kerala in the west. The district headquarters is located in Painavu, Idukki, the most mountainous district of Kerala gets its name from the Malayalam word "Idukku", which means a narrow gorge. The district consists of majestic mountains, green valleys, reserved forest areas with a charming wildlife sanctuary and unusual plants. Anaimudi,

the highest peak of southern India is found in Idukki. Idukki is one of the most nature-rich areas of Kerala (Report, Govt. of Kerala).

Three main rivers (Periyar, Thalayar, and Thodupuzhayar) and their tributaries gird high ranges and wooded valleys. The river Pamba also has its origin here. North Pamba valley area and the area around Sabarimala sannidhanam in Mlappara village of Peerumade Taluk were transferred to Pathanamthitta district. The pre-history of the district is in obscurity, we had no clear evidence about the Paleolithic period. The uruburiah, the vaults called pandukuzhies, menhirs, dolmens, and graves found in high ranges and hills date back of the Megalithic period. The excavation of the State Archaeology Department in Marayoor in the AnchunadVally of Devikulam Taluk, Thengakkl near Vandiperiyar, Bison Valley and Thondermali show the distinct characteristics of pre-historic civilization. The dolmens and menhirs discovered from these places show the cultural and well-developed civilization of inhabitants of the Megalithic period (Report, Tourism Dept of Kerala).

This district has an important role in the spice trade of the ancient period as spices such as pepper; cardamom, etc grow more in abundance in this district than elsewhere in the State. Tea productions are the main industry of the district. Besides that pepper, coffee, cardamom, and rubber are the most important commodities produced in and exported from Idukki. The area is also famous for hill resorts and the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. The natural sandalwood forest sanctuary of Kerala is in Idukki. Idukki is an industrially undeveloped district, and it has no air or rail connections. As per the 2011 census, the population of Idukki district is 11, 08,974 of which 5, 52,808 are males and 5, 56,166 are females. The population of children between ages 0-6 is 9.53% of total population. There are 13.12% schedule Casts and 5.03% Scheduled Tribes of the total population in Idukki district. The sex-ratio of Idukki is around 1006 compared to 1084 is average of Kerala State. The literacy rate of Idukki is 83.23% out of which 85.36% males are literate and 81.11% females are literate. The total area of Idukki is 4356 sq. Km with a population density of 255 per sq. km (source: 2011 Census).

The inhabitants of Idukki district have migrated there at different times. Several tribal groups, as well as people from the plains, are found in Idukki district of Kerala. It is believed that the tribal groups had migrated from Tamil Nadu and other parts of Kerala in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Europeans entered the area during the first decades of the nineteenth century and started tea plantations. A major migration of people from the plains to this area occurred between 1950 and 1970. Many of those migrants came and settled as cultivators and estate laborers. Idukki district holds the fourth rank in the tribal population of Kerala. There are 10 tribal communities in Idukki district viz. Malayarayan, Muthuvan, Mannan, Urali, Hill Pulaya, Ulladan, Paliyan, Malayan, Malavedan and Mala Pandaram. In the district, the highest percentage of ST population is reported in Devikulaum Taluk (9.1%) followed by Thodupuzha Taluk (6.5%) and Peerumade (3.3%) and the lowest percentage in Udumbanchola Taluk (1.7%) (Sources: Census, 2011). Paliyans are mainly concentrated in different settlements of

Idukki district viz., Kumily village in Peerumade taluk, Anakkara village in Chakkupallam Panchayat and Vandanmadu Panchayat in Udumbanchola taluk.

## **Review of Literature**

Shenbaham (2016) conducted a study on 'Culture and Lifestyle of Paliyan Tribes at Palani Hill, Dindigul District' and analyzed the culture and lifestyle of Paliyan tribes in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu. It reveals that the Paliyan tribes are Adivasi Dravidian people living in the forest and mountain areas. They are traditional nomadic hunting gatherers, economically are very poor and mostly illiterate people belong to the scheduled tribes.

Soundarapandian (2001) conducted a research study on 'Tribal Development in India' focused on the neglected Paliyan tribals in Tamil Nadu. This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the profiles of the Paliyan tribal community in the Western Ghats. It deals with the understanding of the socio-economic functioning of families, lifecycle stage, ethnic, religious backgrounds, present occupation and income status, major problems faced by the tribes for their survival and evaluated tribal development programmes, especially for the Paliyan tribe of Tamil Nadu.

Suseela Devi (1990) conducted a study on "The Paliyan of Kerala" focused on the historical accounts of Paliyan in Idukki district of Kerala. The researcher used the survey method for data collection. Kumily settlement was the intensive fieldwork area and also comprehensive assessment of other settlements are also been done through observation. This research study mainly analyzed the material culture, economic activities, family and kinship system, life cycle, the status of women, religious beliefs and practices of Paliyan tribes of Kerala.

Mohandas (1987) studied culture change and physical characteristics of Paliyans of Kerala. This study observed that the extent of influence of acculturative trends on tribal culture and the direction of changes that have occurred in their life pattern since independence in India. Among Paliyans major dimension of changes were found to be in relation to the nature of habitat including that of geographical conditions and the influence of other ecological factors.

Velayuthan (2003) attempt to bring out the folklore of Paliyan tribes in the Western Ghats was focused on understanding various aspects of their life from an interdisciplinary perspective. A major finding of this study was acculturation has taken place due to large-scale non-tribal interaction.

## **Background of the Study**

Based on the review of the literature, a few studies have been conducted among Paliyan tribe in Kerala. All the other studies are related to Paliyan in Tamil Nadu. The significance of Paliyan tribes is that they are the least studied tribal population compared to other tribal population. They have their own special socio-cultural and linguistic

characteristics when compared to other tribes in Kerala. They have their own peculiar linguistic character of bilingualism compared to the other tribes present in the area. Their specific socio-cultural practices similar to the Tamil culture distinguish them from other tribes in Idukki.

Suseela Devi's study focused only on the historical accounts of Paliyan in Kumily village of Idukki district of Kerala. This study focused on Paliyans in Vandanmedu, Chakkupallom, and Anakkara along with Kumily, in which the Paliyans are settled. Since each of these settlements is far away from one another, it shows their own specific geographical characteristics as well as the peculiar socio-economic conditions.

## **Methodology**

This study was based on primary and secondary data. Primary data were included in the study based on the field observation done by the researcher in the different settlements of Paliyans in Idukki district. Secondary sources of information were collected from textbooks, encyclopedias, newspapers, and periodicals. Reviews of literature were critically reviewed and analyzed. The major objectives of this study are:

- To understand the historical background of Paliyan tribal community in the Idukki district.
- To understand the cultural practices among the Paliyans in Idukki district.
- To identify the major differences among the various Paliyan settlements in the Idukki District.

The first two objectives were discussed on the basis of the secondary data available. And the final objective was satisfied based on the field observation done by the researcher.

## **Origin and History of Paliyans**

The term Paliyan has been derived from the word Palaniyan, which in the Tamil language means a man from Palani. The Paliyan originally belonged to the Palani Hills. They are also known as Palliyar, Palleyan, Palani Makkal, and Malai Paliyar. The term Malai Paliyar means that they live on hills. They are distributed in Madurai, Thanjavur, Pudukkottai, Tirunelveli and Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. They are a primitive tribe and belong to the pre-Dravidian era. They live at an altitude ranging from 2500 to 4000 at the forest of the hills. They speak a highly Tamil in a particular account of their own. According to a story, the word "Paliyan" originated from Valli, a Paliya, one of the several wives of Subramanian, son of Lord Siva. The word is attributed to Palichiammal, a Paliya Goddess (Soundarapandian, 2001). They are traditional nomadic hunter-gatherers and foragers (Thurston, 1909). In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Paliyans dressed scantily and lived in rock crevices and caves. They speak a Dravidian language. Paliyan as moderately dark in complexion, short in stature and their physical characteristics fall within the range of South and South East Asian. They subsisted mainly on the roots, leaves, wild fruits and honey. They lived in grass huts, sometimes

on platforms up trees, in caves under rocks. The wedding was conducted without ceremonies.

## **Historical Background of Paliyans in Idukki**

The Paliyans are Adivasi Dravidian people migrated from Tamil Nadu and living in the Western Ghats Mountains rainforest, especially in Kerala. Their main concentrations in Kerala are in the Peerumedu and Udumbanchola Taluks of Idukki district. It is believed that their original home was in Gudallur, Madurai district of Tamil Nadu. They had been migrated until half a century back and shifted their area of cultivation annually. As shifting cultivation and other economic activities within the forest have faced with so many intricacies, they have turned to settled agriculture. Traditionally they are nomadic hunter-gathers, honey hunters and foragers. In the early part of the 1960s the Paliyans lived in rock crevices and caves. Gradually, most have transformed to traders of forest products, food cultivators and beekeepers. Here also they are forced to confront the victimization of the exploitation as most of the fertile land under their possession has already been passed into the hands of landlords and encroachers (Shenbaham, 2016).

The population of the Paliyan tribal community in Idukki district is very less than the other tribes in Kerala. According to the 1991 census their population in Kerala was 1442. As per the ITDP report in 1999, there are 383 Paliyan families in Idukki district. According to the 2001 census, the total population of Paliyan in Idukki is 1709 ie 0.47 % of the ST population of the State. Meanwhile, the 2011 census, the total population of Paliyans can be estimated to be 1464, forming about 0.43% of the total scheduled Tribes population of the State. This shows that there is changing trends in the demographic structure of Paliyans in Idukki. Palleyan, Paliyan, and Palliyar are listed as separate communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala, but according to A.A.D Luiz's "Tribes of Kerala" state that all these three names are used for the same tribal community (Luiz, 1960).

## **Social Conditions of Paliyans**

Madurai Districts Gazetteer (1951) reported that the Paliyans are much less civilized. They build themselves grass huts, but often they live on platforms up trees, in caves, or under a rock. Gradually they used to live in temporary sheds of bamboo reeds, thatched with straw or leaves called '*kudi/hut*', appropriate to their nomadic life. Doors are formed by plaiting split bamboo and an additional fireplace is located in the middle of the floor. The roofing is formed by leaves of the reeds abundant in the locality. They are self-sufficient in the skills required for the construction of their huts, both men and women participated in the construction work.

Due to the introduction of welfare measures and programme for the upliftment of tribes, the condition of Paliyans were also improved. Recently, under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana (PGAY-2015), the State Government has constructed some tiled houses with stone walls for them, typically with a room, a kitchen and a veranda. Now they live in permanent huts to reduce the dependency on the forest.

Traditionally their utensils generally consist of aluminum vessels obtained from the nearby markets. Brass vessels (*Venkalapana*) are owned by some better off families. Most of them have a grinding stone (*Ammikallu*) used for powdering ragi, the mortar and pestle (*Ural and Ulakka*) serve to pound pulses and grains. A winnowing fan (*Kidiyam*) is used for further clearing of food materials and several types of baskets (*Kutta*) for storage. They use a bamboo or a reed mat (*Payi or Parambu*) for sleeping on. Some households keep furniture items like wooden cots, tables and chairs, transistor radios, television, and tape recorder are the proud possessions of a few. For cutting and collecting minor forest produce, and generally for all work in field and forest, the axe (*Kodali*) and the bill hook (*Vakkathi*) are used. They have a spade (*Manvetti*) for preparing the soil for cultivation, and a sickle (*Panneruval*) for cutting reeds.

The census of India (1971) reveals that this tribe does not have any establishing mode of dress, but freely wear whatever clothes are available to them. Luiz (1962) found a few primitive coverings among the Paliyan, made of tree bark and leaves. Their women's taste for ornaments is satisfied with few glass bead studs, nose ornaments and ear studs made of brass with cheap stones. Later the pattern of wearing dressing and ornaments among Paliyans were changed. The men wear only a loin cloth (*Mundu or Lungi*) at home and at work but put on a shirt or vest when they go out for the occasions. Females wear a sari (*Chela*) in the same fashion as it is used in the Tamil Nadu plains. The young Paliyan women put on a blouse (*chatta*) and a half-saris over their skirts and young men wear sports shirts and pants. The women are very fond of decking themselves with ornaments made of aluminum, steel, glass, plastic, silver and gold, the purse and fancy determining the choice. The earring (*Kammal*), the nose ring (*mookuthi*), the neck chains (*Changala*), finger rings (*Mothiram*), anklets (*kolusu*) and glass bangles (*kuppivala*) are standard, married women wear a toe ring (*minchi*). The tali are the marital badge, usually worn on a string (*Manchakayar*).

These people are non-vegetarians but do not take beef and port. Their staple food grains are rice and ragi. Roots and tubers like vallikizhangu, vettilavallikizhangu and mullavallikizhangu are also eaten. They use the flesh of animals like sambar, black monkey, wild boar etc. They consume all kinds of pulses and use groundnut oil and palm oil for cooking. Gradually their food habits were changed due to outside intervention. They consume all kinds of modern style of food like eat vegetables, fruits, milk, and milk products and drink black tea and coffee. The men and women of this community consume alcoholic drinks regularly. They smoke beedis and cigarettes, chew tobacco.

Historically the Paliyans in Tamil Nadu, they speak Tamil and use the Tamil script for both inter-group and intra-group communication. After migration into Kerala, they became a bilingual tribe and use the regional language Malayalam apart from their mother tongue Tamil. Both the Malayalam and Tamil scripts are used by them (Singh, 1994). Bilingualism among Paliyans in Idukki is a very peculiar social character. The community will become as bilingual as it deems in order to satisfy its self-interest and

self-preservation. The Paliyan in Kerala speaks a corrupted dialect of Tamil with many Malayalam words and usages. However, the Paliyans in Kerala speak a 'corrupted' dialect of Tamil with many Malayalam words and usages. The language variety of Paliyan in Idukki is also called Paliya Bhasha by outsiders, especially Malayalis and Mannan people (Menon, 1996).

The nuclear family is the basic unit of the Paliyans' social organization. Father is the head of the family, interpersonal relations are very cordial among the household members. The Paliyan follows endogamy at the community level. Both husband and wife are free to separate at their will. Inheritance is in the male line. If a deceased person has no sons, the property goes to the brother's son (Iyer, 1936).

Paliyans do not observe Kulam or Gothram in contracting a marriage because they have none. Adultery within the tribe viewed leniently relationship with unmarried young girls is not unusual. Adultery with a man outside the tribe usually ends in excommunication. No tali are tied, but a string of bead is tied by the groom. Women in the tribes enjoy a great freedom of sex life even after marriage. If the girl is dissatisfied with her husband, she can leave him and live with some other man. Sometimes the husband is far junior to the wife in age (Soundarapandian, 2001).

Monogamy is generally practiced. Age at marriage for a Paliyan girl is 18 years and that of a Paliyan boy is 22 years. Marriage between blood relations is not permitted, however, cross-cousin marriage is not encouraged. Parallel cousins are considered as own brothers or sisters. The negotiations are carried out between the parents of the boy and girl. The initiative has to come from the bridegroom's side. If the boy and girl like each other, marriage are fixed by the parents. Traditionally, marriages were performed mostly in the bridegroom's residence, at present; it is in the bride's residence. No dowry was given at the time of marriage, but those who are economically well-off give their girls some ornaments, and vessels. They followed patrilocal residence. Widow and widower remarriage is permitted. Gradually the intermarriage between Paliyan women with Christian, Gounder and Muslim men was also tolerated. Marriages between Paliyan and Mannan (a neighboring tribal community) are also reported.

Traditionally, the Paliyans are more dependent on indigenous medicine. Paliyan tribes have unique knowledge about the use of much wild flora and fauna in traditional medicine which has developed over generations. In the past, they used several plants or animal's products for medical preparations these medicines are called ethno-medicine. Due to deforestation and degradation of forest, the ethno-medicinal plants are disappearing. Hence the health conditions of Paliyans are very poor due to the inaccessibility of ethno-medicines as well as the modern medicine and health facilities (Silja et al. 2008).

The head of the settlement is called '*Kanikkaran or VituKani*' assisted by the '*ValiaElandiri and Thandakkaram*'. The forest officials used to appoint another headman to look after specific duties pertaining to forest protection; this officer was known as the NattuKani.



The office of the *Vitukani* is hereditary, the eldest son succeeding to the post. Whenever a dispute came before the *Kanikkaran*, he would settle it after consulting his assistants. It was the *vina mariyan's* responsibility to investigate, identify the offenders, and bring them before the *Kanikkaran*. The *Thandakkaran* has to enforce the punishment awarded at the end of proceedings.

## Cultural Practices among Paliyans

The Paliyans belong to Hindu religion. They believed in the worship of tribal deities like Vanadevata, Mariamma, Karuppaswami, and Kaliyamma. Mariamma is the popular deities among the Paliyans. Most of the Paliyans visit the Mariamma temple at Veerpandi in Cumbamtaluk of Madurai district of Tamil Nadu. Karuppaswami and Mariamma festivals are celebrated for three days with different traditional cultural programmes in the month of April- May. Due to the influence and intervention of Christian Missionaries, the Paliyans in Anakkara settlement were converted from Hinduism to Christianity.

Traditionally, the Paliyans used to make a separate hut called "*vennapura*" for delivery. But now they are dependent on the health center in their locality. They observed birth pollution for seven days. *Thottilsastram* is performed on the eighth day of the birth of the child. On that day, the child is put in the cradle (*thottil*) for the first time. The naming ceremony is not celebrated but the name is given when the child is one of two months old and sometimes after a year. Cutting hair of the child for the first time is known as '*mudiyeduppu*' and is generally done when the child completes one year.

The puberty ceremony of the Paliyan is known as '*chadangu*' when a girl attains puberty she is secluded in a separate hut called '*vennapura*' and relatives are informed. Pollution lasts for 15 days during this period; male members are not allowed to go near *vennapura*. Generally, a purificatory bath is given on the 16<sup>th</sup> day. She is dressed in new clothes and returns to the hut carrying a pot (*kudam*) of brass/aluminum filled with water on her head. She prepares rice (*pongal*) in that pot which is distributed to everybody at that time. The ceremony is followed by a feast.

The Paliyan's burial ceremony is named as '*ilavu*' among them. When a death occurs, the information is sent to all relatives; the body is placed on a mat and is anointed with the ash of cow dung. It is covered with a white cloth. A coin is kept in the center of the forehead of the body which is given to the person who digs the pit for burying the body. When all the relatives arrive, the body is taken to the burial ground and bathed with seven pots of water carried by seven females. All the relatives put new cloths called '*koddi*' over the body. The elder son carries a pot filled with water on his head and makes three rounds of the pit and on the third round, the pot is thrown on the ground towards the direction of the feet of the body. Food is not cooked in the house when the death occurs. On the third day, the eldest son goes to the burial ground with milk and cow dung and smears cow dung over the graveyard and milk is sprinkled over it, which is named as '*munamkushimezhukal*' the death ceremony ends with this practice.

## **Livelihood, Occupation and Education: Settlement wise Analysis**

**Kumily:** In Kumily most of the livelihood activities of the Paliyans were carried out depending on the forest. Collection of minor forest produce and selling of firewood in Kumily market is the traditional means of livelihood of Paliyans in the Kumily. The Paliyan households in Kumily have acquired land in the reserve forest area, but pattayam (right to ownership) has not yet been given to them, they enjoy only the right to cultivation. Due to the introduction of forest policies, they were restricted to go into the deeper forest and were forced to choose alternative livelihood practices. They opted for working in the tea plantation present in the settlement for daily wages. Some went for construction works in the nearby sites. As a part of government intervention, young generations were offered jobs in the forest and tourism departments. Due to the intervention of Eco-development committee in the forest area, various types of alternative means of livelihood were introduced in the area. It includes vermin-composting, mushroom cultivation, training for forest guard, tailoring etc. Kumily is the major tourist spot and one of the major township area in the Idukki district. The Paliyans in the area have got more exposure to the mainstream population. This helped them to become the major beneficiaries of various development programs. Due to the presence of one upper primary school in the middle of the settlement, access to the education is easier for the residents in Kumily. There is a government hostel for boys who are studying in the school. Most of the children here had completed their upper primary education but they are found to be dropouts in the high school level.

**Anakkara:** Anakkara is a fast-growing tourist destination for its unique spice gardens and many picnic spots in and around. It is one of the remote areas of Udumbanchola Taluk. Major occupation among Paliyans in this particular area is daily wage labourers in cardamom plantations. The Paliyan households in Anakkara have 'their own' land in the cardamom plantation area, but the right to ownership has not yet been given to them, they enjoy only the right to cultivation. But at present, these rights are enjoyed by the Janmies who is from Tamil Nadu. They took the land for lease from the Paliyans and cultivate seasonal crops like cardamom, pepper etc. and earn maximum profit. Very few amounts have been given to the Paliyans as their share. The land was taken from the Paliyans for lesser amounts and they were asked to work as laborers in their own land as outsiders. Due to the introduction of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP), the vast majority of the Paliyans settled here were engaged into it. Compared to the other Paliyan settlements, the Paliyans in the Anakkara were found to be the major beneficiaries of MGNREGP. In Anakkara Village, the Paliyans are following Christian belief system due to a large number of Christian churches present in the area such as the Pentecostal groups, Malankara Syrian Church etc. The churches have separate prayer halls in the settlement. The Christian missionaries influenced the life of Paliyans in the particular area to a greater extent. Conversion to Christianity highly prevailed in the area, and it enabled them to receive certain benefits. The educational status of Paliyans in Anakkara is very low. The absence of appropriate education services within the settlement was found to be the reason behind this. The

distance of the educational institutions from the settlements have a great role in the educational attainment level of the residents of the settlement. Though the older generation was illiterate they possess a positive attitude towards the formal education system. Then also their unfamiliarity with the present educational system seems to be a barrier, and this signifies the necessity of the presence of institutions within the locality.

**Vandanmadu:** Vandanmadu is the wonderland of spices and the place which hosts the world's largest auction of cardamom. The Paliyan settlement in Vandanmadu is an isolated area. This settlement is facing many problems when compared to the other settlements of Paliyans. Lack of facilities like infrastructure, educational institutions, health services, communication, road and drinking water are the major problems faced by the particular community due to their geographical situation. The Paliyans living in Vandanmadu area of Idukki district are mostly employed in cardamom plantation as manual labourers. Some of them cultivated in their land themselves. They grow cardamom, pepper, tapioca, paddy, beans, ginger, and turmeric on their land. The Paliyans are proficient in making baskets and mats with bamboo reeds which is locally available. This is an insufficient means of their livelihood for maintaining their family, hence they move to an alternative earning process such as manual labourers in the cardamom plantation. In addition to these, the community has ensured the active participation in the MGNREGP. Level of education is very less among these people due to the peculiar nature of their habitations. The social and economic conditions prevailing in the tribal settlement are not conducive for their studies. Moreover, the parents of the tribal children are generally illiterate. These are the reasons for the low level of literacy among Paliyans and that is one of the hindering factors for their development.

## **Conclusion**

Paliyans are a migrated tribal community from various regions of Tamil Nadu and settled in Kumily, Vandanmadu and Anakkara Villages in Idukki district of Kerala. Majority of their socio-cultural practices are similar to the Tamil culture. They are self-sufficient group living in the specific geographical areas of Idukki district. They are more depended on the forest for their livelihood and also engaged as laborers in the cardamom and tea plantations. The nuclear family is the basic unit of the Paliyan's social organization. Monogamy is generally practiced and dowry system was not practiced among them. The vast majority of the Paliyan tribes belong to Hindu religion. Literacy rate among Paliyan is very low. The Paliyan tribes followed ethnic medicines but gradually they adapted to modern medicine also. They have practiced different kind of rituals and customs. Therefore, the Paliyan tribe in Idukki district is living with their own specific characteristics. The absence of educational services or institutions in their own locality is one of the major hindering factors for the school dropouts among Paliyans. The settlement wise analysis showed that there is a difference in the livelihood practices and level of educational attainment of the residents in the different settlements. But the socio-cultural practices among Paliyans are almost similar in all the settlements. Even though there is a change in the socio-economic and cultural status of the Paliyan tribe due to the influence of tribal development measures of the government and non-

government organizations, they are not getting any adequate basic facilities and provisions for their steady growth in the Western Ghats of Kerala. This study also signifies the importance of a unique tribe specific development plans in the state.

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