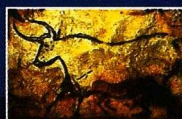


Kerala Tribal Series 5



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# TUNAICKEN

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Sreenivasavanam, Kuppam - 517 425

# THE KATTUNAICKEN

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***The Kattu Naicken***  
**by Dr. Bindu Ramachandran**

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## Preface

Dravidian University is an outcome of a dream, a great vision aiming to integrate people of sister languages though identified differently, but belonging to the same cultural roots. Though they sound different, their meaning and soul is one. The Dravidian family of languages now established to be around 27 is one of the oldest civilizations of the world, perhaps the only extant one with richness of its ancient character. It has been the endeavour of the university to strengthen the age old linguistic, cultural, emotional and geographical bonds among the Dravidians and promote a spirit of integration through research.

There are about 27 languages with different subgroups and sects, so far enumerated as belonging to Dravidian languages. Only four of them are well developed with scripts and historical legacies. Among the rest, Tulu has considerable socio-economic advancement. The rest of the languages do not have a written tradition, though they have a rich oral tradition. Socially and economically, theirs are highly backward societies. They are often categorized as 'Tribes', some of them as 'primitive tribes', far away from the modern developments in scientific, technological and socio-economic areas.

Therefore, there is a great historic need and responsibility for the entire nation to equip them with necessary educational tools at all levels and modern perspectives of life affecting their socio-economic advancement on par with the other citizens of the nation at the same time duly preserving their cultural identity, in other words-our cultural roots. The richness of their knowledge and wealth of wisdom, which stand above all scripts and tongues, forming part of the glittering glory of the nation, have to be revitalized.



As a part of encouraging Research in and outside the country in Dravidian Studies with an indigenous thrust Dravidian University has launched a project to publish a series of Monographs on Tribes. In its first phase, it is planned to publish monographs of tribes of Kerala and several scholars who are working on different tribes are invited to submit the monographs in a specified format. Dr. K.M Anil is entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating this as editor of the series. It is interesting to see that several scholars responded to our call and invitation. We requested scholars to submit the scripts on the basis of their research on a specific tribe of Kerala.

Dravidian University has chalked out a programme of publishing monographs on all the major and minor tribes of the Dravidian family of languages and the four Dravidian states highlighting their socio-cultural aspects. Establishing museums for each of them and preparing grammars and comprehensive descriptive lexicons is another ambitious project of the University. All this is going to materialise with the proposed Centre for Preservation of Endangered Dravidian Languages.

Dr. Bindu Ramachandran, the author has exhibited her vast experience of field research and prepared this monograph on The Kattunaicken. I thank the author for her efforts.

Kuppam  
14-07-2008

**Prof. G. Laskshminarayana**  
Vice-Chancellor

## Editor's Note

The designation Kuruba, Kurumba or Kuruma is common to many of the Dravidian Tribal Communities living around the trijunction of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Jenu Kuruba in Karnataka, Ten Kuruba in Tamil Nadu and Kattunaicken in Kerala are the same community represented by different names. Kamil V. Zvelebil explains the problem of identification and classification of some Nilagiri tribes including Kattunaicken. He observes that Malabar Gazetteer of 1909 wrongly equates Kattunaicken with shola Nayakkans. Zvelebil tries to solve this problem by directly collecting the impressions of Kattunaickens about their own identity. He says: "All my Kattu Nayaka informants were adamant in their assertion that they were Jenu Kurumbas. They considered as ridiculous the suggestion that Jenu Kurumbas and Kattu Nayakas were two different communities.... The identity of Jenu Kurumba and Kattu Nayaka was confirmed independently by Paniya and Soliga informants" (Zvelebil, 1998:201). Zvelebil also asserts that his field experience unveils the fact that Kattu Nayaka language is an independent South Dravidian tribal speech, possibly closely related to Alu and Palu Kurumba, rather Kannada-like however, less 'Kannadoid' than Solega.

For Zvelebil, data on Kattunaicken's language was inadequate to reach any conclusions regarding its independent status. But he could establish certain features of their language based on the data collected by himself "The phonological features of Jenu Kurumba manifest a few specific developments, but on the whole characterise the language rather as Kannada like, with some typical "Nilgiri" traits." These traits are (i) strong centralisation of vowels which Jenu Kurumba shares with Irula (ii) nasalized *a/a* always in the neighbourhood of -w. (iii) Kannada

– like is the development \*v->b – which Jenu Kurumba shares with Solega, Kannada, Kodagu and Tulu (iv) \*p->h (Kannada is alone among the longer South Dravidian languages in its development of \*p- to h-) Jenu Kurumba seems to be "on the middle of the road" in this feature. These are words with and without \*p->h feature. (v) the existence of a bilabial nasalized fricative, which is semi voiced and occurs with nasalized *a*, as a special feature of Jenu Kurumba language. (vi) in the sphere of derivational morphology, the most striking feature is the highly productive derivation – suffix – *an* (vii) the extension of the past stem to both past and non-past tenses in Jenu – Kurumba can not be doubted; it is a striking feature, but as shown by Toda and Kota, not an isolated phenomenon" (Zvelebil, 1998: 212-15). Zvelebil gives sufficient examples for all the above specific traits of Jenu Kurumba language. Finally he concludes: "even a simple sketch like the one outlined above shows that it is a tribal speech of its own and that its investigation may play an important role not only in Nilgiri areal linguistics, but also in the historical and comparative studies of Tamil and Kannada, and of South Dravidian in general" (Zvelebil, 1998: 215-16). He also says that a quick glance of Jenu Kurumba lexical items would show beyond any doubt that Jenu Kurumba can't be regarded as a Kannada dialect. Zvelebil's account on Jenukurumba language lays stress on the uniqueness of tribal societies and their languages.

The colonial way of submerging the voices of minorities is shadowed in most of the tribal studies of 20<sup>th</sup> century. They classified tribes as a primitive group for their isolated communication, money less economy/ non-literacy, over-powering sense of reality, small size, relationships based on kinship and simple technology (A.K. Singh, 1996: 3-4). But the history of tribes as per their 'traditional memory' is different. For example Kattunaickens are included in the Primitive tribal groups by official records, but the popular legend says "they are the progeny of Padmakhya (padma) alias Hundadabhatta, the gourmand son of a Heggada chief by his *rakshasi* wife, who was the daughter of Hidimba and sumalini, daughter of Sudanda. They are also believed to be the modern representatives of the ancient Kurumbas (Pallavas) who

dominated the South of India till they were defeated in the seventh century by the Chola, Konga and Chalukya kings and finally by the Chola king Adoni, and were found to live in the forests. The Taluk Kurumbranad is believed to have got the name from them" (Shashi, 1999: 137).

Kattunaicken like many other tribes place themselves in a Pan-Indian geneology. More over they associate themselves with the historical facts accepted by the mainstream society. Here lies the limitations of colonial historiography Redefining the concept of 'Source' in Historiography is inevitable to problematize the moral and epistemic status of an bourgeois-rational conception of universal history.

Kattunaicken's language, as in the case of all tribal languages, is marginalised as a 'dialect' for its failure in attaining the status of print language. Printing was crucial for the emergence of national consciousness, because print-language created unified fields of exchange and communications. Print-languages could dominate the spoken vernaculars and created new kinds of 'languages of power'.

Partha Chatterjee place this problem with in the paradigm of nationalism. He observes that 'community' is understood as an embodiment of good and bad nationalism by the narratives of capital. On one hand a community is a domesticated form that can become shared subjective feeling that protects and nurtures, on the other it is a threatening possibility of becoming violent, divisive, fearsome and irrational. (Chatterjee, 1999: 236). This ambiguous position of our nationalism marginalises languages and cultures that failed in entering into 'modernity'. This dubious point of view deserts nationalism an unfinished project.

Any attempt to present tribal communities in their true status is desirable for its political value. This monograph presents Kattunaicken as a distinct cultural group that complements our polyphonic civil society. We are thankful to the author for her kind cooperation in making our project a success.

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**Dr. K.M. Anil**

Editor

# THE KATTUNAICKEN

## INTRODUCTION

*Kattunaicken* are one of the food-gathering tribes of Kerala, listed under Primitive Tribal Groups. They are distributed mainly in Wayanad, Kozhikode and Malappuram Districts. *Kattunaicken* population is predominant in Wayanad especially in the villages of Sulthan Batheri Taluk. They are also known as '*thaenkuruman*', refers to '*thaen*' or honey collected by them. They are sturdy, tall, long armed and black skinned tribe with curly or wavy hair and many interesting features of primitive life (Luiz 1962:86).

There are many controversies regarding the origin of the name *Kattunaicken*. Writing on the *Kurumbas* of Wayanad, Calicut and Ernad Taluks of Nilambur, Thurston quoted the Gazetteer of Malabar as follows."They are subdivided into *Mulla (bamboo) kurumbas*, *Jen* or *Thaen* (honey) *kurumbas* also called *kadu* or *shoal nayakens* or *jenukoyyo sholanaickens*, (honey cutting lords of the wood) and *urali* or *Beta Kurumbas* which the first named class who consider themselves superior to others are cultivators and hunters and the third make baskets and implements of agriculture". Furer-Haimendorf pointed out that the name *Kurumbas* is one of those tribal name which have done so much obscure the ethnic picture of many Indian regions (1952:19). The earlier writings of the *Kurumbas* of Wayanad are found in the writings of Buchanan and Dubois at the out set of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Buchanan (1807) refers to the division of *Kurumbas* in two sections. The '*cadcurubaru*' and the '*betacurubaru*'. He describes the *cadcurubaru* as follows. "The *cadcurubaru* are a rude tribe, who are exceedingly poor and wretched.

In the fields near the villages, they build miserable low huts, have few rags only for clothing, and the hair of both sexes stands out matted like mop, and swarms with vermin.....they collect the roots of wild yarms,work as daily labourers.....part of which they eat and part exchange with the farmers for grains.....These *curubaru* have dogs with which they catch deer, antelope, hares and they have art of taking in snakes, peacocks and other esculent birds”(quoted by Thurston and Rangachari 1909.16-34).

Dubois refers only to the *KaduKurumbas*. The *KaduKurumbas* described by Dubois are of the wild tribes which inhabit jungles and mountains. Dubois wrote,“These savages live in the forests, but have no fixed abode. After staying a year or two in one place or two they move to another. There they sow small seeds and a great many pumpkins, cucumbers and other vegetables, and on these they live for two or three months in the year.....During the rains these savages take shelter in miserable huts. Some find refuge in caves, or holes in the rocks, or in the hollow trunks of old trees. In fine weather they camp out in the open.....roots and other natural products of the earth. Snakes and animals that they can snare or catch honey that they find on the ragged rocks or in the top of trees, which they climp with the agility of monkeys. All these furnish them with the means of satisfying the cravings of hunger. Less intelligent even than the natives of Africa, these savages of India do not possess bows and arrows, which they do not know to use (Dubois 1906:76).

Furer-Haimendorf describes three types of *Kurumbas* who are found in Wayanad. The food-gatherer *Jenukurumbar* (also named *naicker*), the shifting cultivator *Betakurumbar* (also called *Uralis*) and the plough cultivator *MullaKurumbas*. P.R.G Mathur opined that ‘the *kurumbas* of Wayanad are segmented into three endogamous groups such as *mullakuruman*, *uralikuruman* and *taenkuruman* or *kattunaickens*.The *cholanaicken* call the *kattunaicken* inhabiting the foot hills (*pathi*) as *pathikkar*.The *pathikkar* call themselves as *pathinaicken*. The



*cholanaicken* say that since the *kadunayakans* live in the *pathi* (foot hill) they are called *pathikkar* or *pathinaicken*....The *kadunayakans* of Nilambur are subdivided into two ethnic groups via *pathinaickens* and *cholanaicken*. Inter-marriage is however permitted between those two groups. It is therefore possible that both the *cholanaicken* and *pathinaicken* constituted into one and the same tribe *kadunayaken* or *kattunaicken*" (1977).



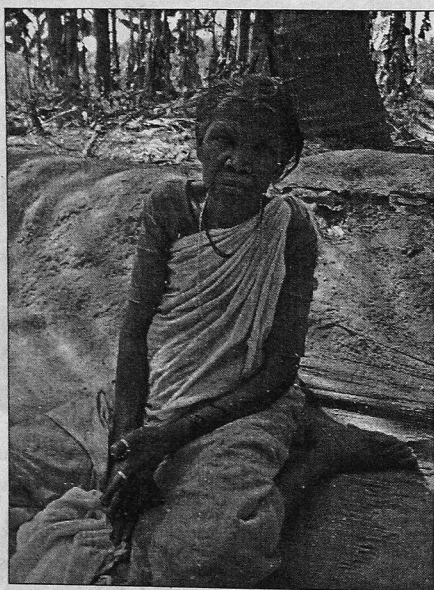
*Kattunaicken man*

Nurit Bird opined that '*naicken* is the name used by the people in question, but the terms '*jenuKurumbas*' and *kattunaickens*' are also used in this connection. It would appear that as the observer moves close to the people both in terms of spatial distance and social strata,

so does the name change from *jenukurumbas* to *kattunaicken* and most intimately to *naickens*. The commentators whose base of investigation was in the wayanad where the people themselves reside, are infact those who primarily or at least additionally use the term *naickens*.

A Malaya contractor who works closely with the people said that their name is *naickens*, and speculated that travelers passing by saw the people collecting honey and called them *jenukurumbas* from that activity (1987:254-255). Haimendorf also suggested that the name *naicken* was given to them by *Malayali* speaking neighbors (1952:20).

The name *Kattunaicken* was derived from the words '*kadu*' and '*naicken*'. '*Kadu*' means forest and '*nayakan*' means chief. Their name correctly connotes that they were the *nayakas* (chief) of the forest (Thurston, 1909).



*Kattunaicken woman*

The dress of a *Kattunaicken* male consists of a piece of cloth called 'mundu' in which he covers his body from waist down to the knees. He covers his chest and back with a dress called 'sart' bought from the local market. In the former generation they used to wear a loin cloth passed between the legs and tied to a string tied around the waist. A male *Kattunaicken* wears a half-ring shaped ear stud called 'kadukka' made of silver or bronze.

In the former generation women used cheap and rough saris called 'chela'. Women put on sari and one end of which is tied on the right shoulder or simply wear the sari just below the shoulder by covering the breasts. Females used ear studs called 'ola'. It is made of silver. They also wore nose studs called 'mookubettae', necklace called 'kallumalai' made of pearls and shining stones. Three types of bangles called 'bandhi', 'bala', and 'gadaka', are also worn by women. Bandhi is made of silver and *balai* with bronze. Silver anklets called 'kalppilli' and rings 'unkara' are also used by them. Tattooing is known as 'asile' and it is normally done by them.

#### Communitywise distribution of Scheduled Tribes in Wayanad

Community	No. of Habitats	Families	male	female	total
Adiyan	99(5.5)	1360(6.7)	2817(7.0)	2884(7.1)	5701(7.0)
Kattunayakan	201(11.3)	2631(13.0)	4685(11.6)	4510(11.1)	9195(11.4)
Kurichian	324(8.2)	3037(15.0)	6802(16.8)	6565(16.2)	13367(16.5)
Kuruman	310(17.4)	3884(19.2)	8100(20.0)	7986(19.7)	16086(19.9)
Paniyan	849(47.6)	9314(46.0)	17990(44.5)	18570(45.8)	36560(45.2)
Total	1783(100.00)	20226(100)	40394(100)	40515(100)	80909(100)

Source: ITDP Office, Kalpetta, Wayanad.

*Kattunaicken* and the *jenukurumba* appear to be the same people known by different names. The former name is prevalent in Tamil and Malayalam speaking areas and the latter in Kannada speaking (Misra & Misra 1982). However unless contrary evidences is provided the *Kattunaicken* and *jenukurumba* will be considered as being the same people and may be presumed to have migrated from the Karnataka area as their language is a kin to Kannada (Govt. of Kerala. 1979:163).

## HABITAT AND SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The habitat of *kattunaicken* settlements is the forests, especially the reserve forests. This vegetation is one of the principal natural resources of their economy. They dwell in the lap of nature, and hence they have ample source of forest products. Necessary articles like firewood, edible products, leaves, medicinal herbs and materials for constructing their huts are collecting from the forest. The *kattunaicken* living close to the forest areas subsist mainly on food gathering. This is mainly because of the ecosystem which plays an important role in their subsistence. They are also employed as wage labourers under non-tribes during agricultural seasons. Some of them are employed under forest department and as mahouts. A few of the families are engaged in basket making for which they collect the raw materials from the forest.

About 50% of the *Kattunaicken* families are distributed in the reserve forests. Agricultural wet lands are also found near their hamlets. This provides them wage labour during busy agricultural operations. The surrounding forest consists of trees like timber, tamarind, mangifera...etc. The forest is covered and evergreen with *messua ferrea*, *Calophyllum* spp...etc, interspersed with old and new plantations of teak and eucalyptus spp. The transition to the deciduous forest is marked by profuse gregarious stands of *Bambusa arundanacea*. The deciduous species include the fantastically valuable rose wood (*Dalbergis latifolia*) naturally grown teak, *Bombax malabaricum*...etc. Along the margins of the innumerable streams and rivulets, profuse growth of reeds

(*Ochlandra* spp) provides raw material for basket weaving and forage for wild life (Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes 1992:190). Bamboo trees are numerous found in their surroundings and they are experts in bamboo cutting and other related works. Bamboo grains called 'mulayari' are also collected from the forest. Their traditional huts are made of bamboo only. Thus *Kattunaicken* have developed a kind of 'bamboo culture' in the eco-system of Wayanad.

#### Statistics of the housing condition

Sl.no	House types	Number	%
1	Traditional huts	241	46.4
2	Govt.built houses	259	53.6
3	Modern huts	nil	-
	Total	500	100

Source:-According to the study conducted by the author

*Kattunaicken* settlements are found in village boundaries and reserve forest areas. The cluster of houses in a settlement is composed of a number of independent families which are tied to each other through bonds of kinship and affinity. The membership to a settlement is relatively fluid as there are frequent migrations of individuals or individual families from one settlement to the other. Whenever any migrant family comes to live in a settlement they tend to camp near such a cluster with whose member they have closer kinship ties. Nuclear family is the minimum social and economic unit.

Traditionally *Kattunaicken* huts are distributed far from each other. This may be because of the territorial concept of collecting minor forest produces from the forests. The hutments in a settlement are usually clustered in nature. Earlier they had the habit of deserting their huts when a death occurred. But now-days the land reforms Acts and forest

regulation Acts prohibited them from such traditions. Govt has given lands to the landless *kattunaicken* and some of them have owned their own traditional lands. The families having lands above 50 cents cultivate coffee, pepper, plantain...etc.

The products are sold usually to the near by co-operative society where they can get the maximum price. But now-a-days they sell out or mortgage their products including minor forest produces to the traders especially non-tribes before it is ripened. This is mainly because of the fact that the petty traders used to give them more money compared to the co-operative society and secondly some of them have the habit of taking loan in advance from the traders against their crops and thus they do not get the actual market price. In this way they are actually exploited.

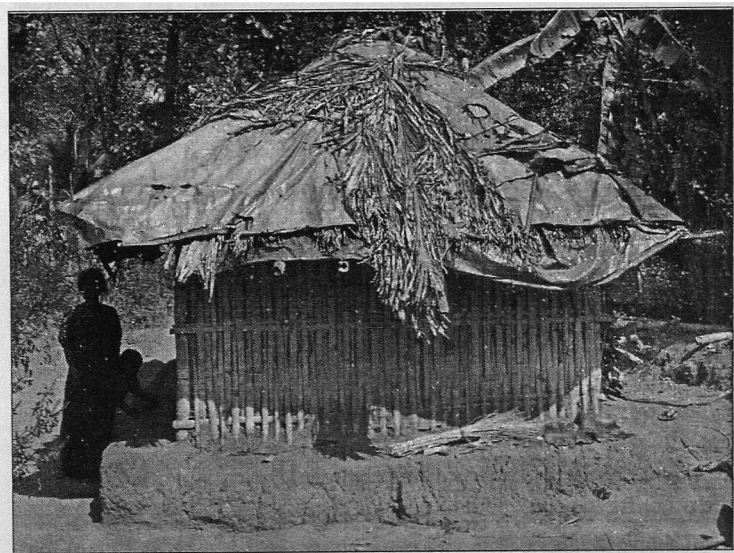
Land unit and nature of possession among the *Kattunaicken*

Nature of possession	No.of houses	%
Families having no land	96	19.20
Only house site	119	23.80
Between 0-20 cents"	117	23.40
" 20-50 cents"	83	16.60
" 50- 1 acres"	48	19.60
" 1-2 acres	25	15
above 2 acres	12	12.40
Total	500	100

Source:-According to the study conducted by the author

It can be seen that out of the 500 families under study, 96 (19.2%) have no land. One hundred and nineteen families have only house site and 117 have lands in between 0-20 cents which was received as land tenure.

Man's mode of habitat and spatial patterning are phases of his collective adjustment to ecological factors and forces with far reaching consequences for his behavior and social orientation (Mukherjee 1968).the traditional dwellings of the *Kattunaicken* are a true reflection of their adjustment to surrounding ecology. The huts are erected on slopping ground with the entrance at the lowest point. Settlement in their dialect is known as '*padi*' and a single hut in the settlement is called '*manai*'. Each '*manai*' is a small cottage, rectangular in plan and its roof is thatched.



Traditional hut of *Kattunaicken* in a forest environment

There is no raised basement for the traditional huts. The floor inside is mud plastered. Walls are about six feet but some of them are as low as four feet. Wooden poles are fixed on the ground and the gap between the poles are covered by walls made of split bamboo frame, criss-cross in structure, laid on the ridge pole which is supported by the



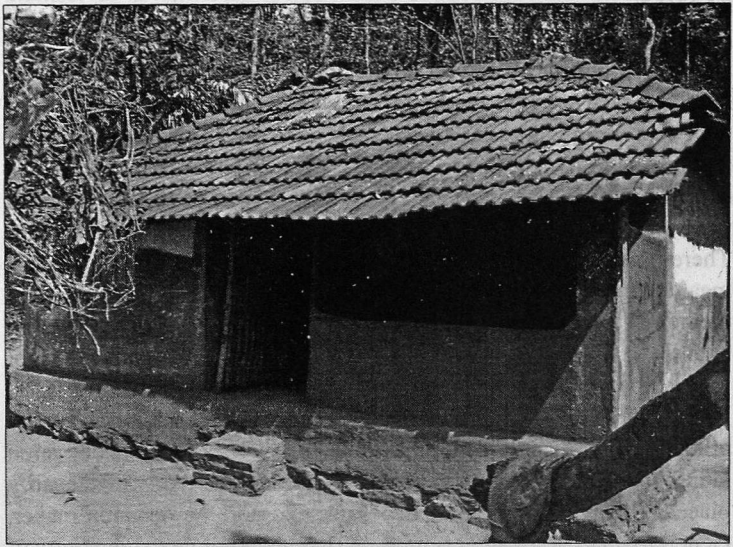
poles fixed in the middle of the hut. Doors are also made of split bamboo. The bamboo required for the huts are collected from the near by forest.

The space inside the hut is generally partitioned by erecting a screen made of split bamboo. Most of their huts are single roomed. But in the case of multi roomed huts, the outer room usually bigger is used for sleeping and inner room smaller in size is used for cooking, storing and sleeping in case of necessity. In the case of multiroomed houses, *varandha* is known as '*kolakkai*' and the entrance room is called '*nadukkalli*' and kitchen is known as '*kadichikkalli*'. The walls of the kitchen are rarely plastered. The plastering material is mud which is collected from the near by wet lands. Thatching is done with a kind of grass called '*thailappullu*' collected from the forest or with paddy straw. Doors of the huts are also made of bamboo splits and plastered with mud. Windows are generally lacking in their huts.

There is a separate hut called '*daivamana*' for religious purposes. It is usually situated in the middle of the settlement. *Daivamanai* looks like other huts in appearance. The cleaning and maintenance of '*daivamanai*' is done jointly by the members of the settlement. The hut of the headman is situated at the opposite side, the entrance facing the rest of the settlement. The major raw materials used for the construction of their huts are directly obtained from their habitat. Married sons or daughters who continue to live with their parents sleep out side the hut. In some settlements two portions of the hut are occupied by two conjugal families. One portion is occupied by a man and his wife and the other by his son and daughter-in law.

Usually husband and wife are involved in the construction of their hut. They can complete it within one or two weeks. Additional rooms are built either by the new couple or by those who live in it. In the centre of each living space there is fire, around which the family members eat, spent their leisure time and sleep. The importance of the fire is especially *apparent* where two or more families share the same hut or share cooking. When food is cooked jointly, each unit eats its

share separately near its own fire place. Even an aged widower who lives with his son's family has his own fire place.



Transitional hut of *Kattunaicken* (built by Govt)

The division of labour in a *Kattunaicken* family is based on age and sex. Men usually do the arduous and tough tasks themselves and leave the monotonous and comparatively light work to their women. Women are forbidden to take up those tasks which require climbing on the roof or trees for honey collection. Household duties such as preparing food, fetching water, taking care of children, washing clothes are performed by women. Customarily the women are not sent to watch the crops in the fields during night. Men take up ploughing, cutting of heavy logs, collection of minor forest produces, honey, indigenous medicines, herbs...etc. They go for fishing and rarely hunting. The women held the family by gathering fruits, leaves, tubers, and firewood.

## SOCIETY AND CULTURE

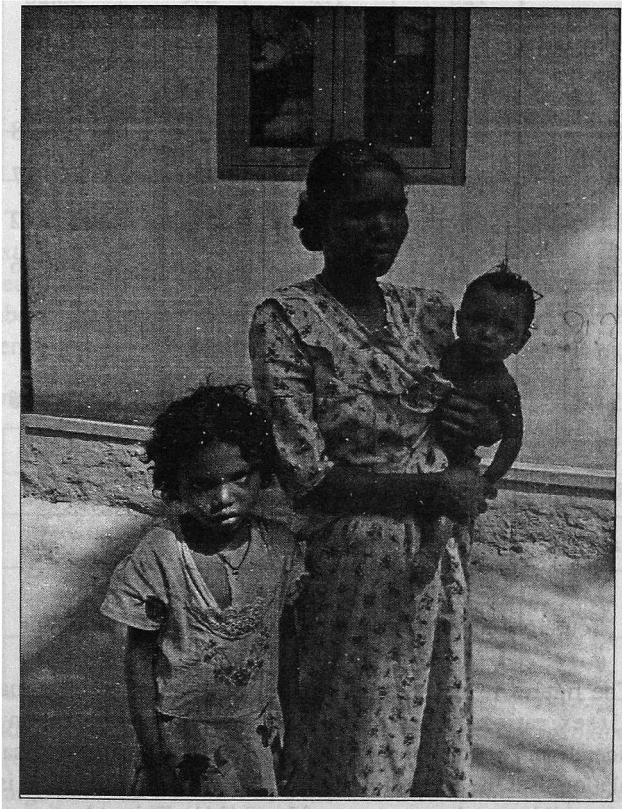
### FAMILY

The *Kattunaicken* households are nuclear in nature. Nuclear family is the minimum social and economic unit and is composed of husband, wife and their unmarried children. In some cases married sons with their family are also seen living with their parent in separate room. Age old parents are also seen living with their married children as dependents. Each son establishes his own family and gradually acquires the necessary implements of gathering and other household articles. Therefore the question of inheriting the father's implements becomes meaningless. Regarding the life activities, the couples are often sit near their fire places. The children sit with them or occasionally visit other huts to play with other children of their age groups. During the night the members of each nuclear family sleep together near their fire places. In the morning the couple independently leaves for gathering or any other work. Those who remain in the hamlet viz old people, delivered ladies and disabled persons spend their time in the huts move nearby places. Father is the head of the household and the decision maker. Generally married daughters have no right to continue in the family of orientation. Parents usually stay with their male children. If there are two or more sons, it is the duty of the youngest son to look after his parents.

*Kattunaicken* are matrilineal. They trace their descent through male line but the post marital residence is not necessarily patrilocal. Now-a-days the residence pattern is according to the convenience of the inhabitants. The *Kattunaicken* reckon their descent through the male line so long as the father is alive. At the demise of the father, the children trace their descent through the mother. They appears to follow a system of double descent. While nuclear family is the primary social unit, all groupings beyond it are referred to as '*sontha*', which means something like an aggregate of relatives as close as siblings. A person who lives

in one's own hamlet is called one's '*sontha*' and in another context all those reside in the same locality are known as '*sontha*'. They project themselves as members of a joint household

The demographic analysis has been compounded from the survey of 500 *Kattunaicken* families distributed in Wayanad district.



*Kattunaicken* mother with her children

# Age and sex composition

Age group	Male	Female	Total	Sex ratio
1-4	84	89	173	105.9
5-9	128	113	241	88.28
10-14	111	80	191	72.07
15-19	92	77	169	83.69
20-24	87	109	196	125.28
25-29	86	100	186	116.27
30-34	70	71	141	101.42
35-39	72	75	147	104.16
40-44	55	48	103	87.27
45-49	55	34	89	61.81
50-54	33	35	68	106.06
55-59	17	8	25	47.05
60& above	39	39	78	100
Total	929	878	1807	100

Source:-According to the study conducted by the author

The figures reveal that the number of females per 100 male is 94.51(sex ratio).if the total sample population is taken into consideration. The child population comprises 22.9% of the total sample population. But the number of children under five years (173) is less than the children at the age group of 5 to 9 (241). This reduction can be attributed to the adoption of family planning by a sizeable population.

**Average type of family**

Type of family	Number	%
Complete nuclear	313	62.6
Incomplete nuclear	70	14
Broken nuclear	35	7.0
Joint family	62	12.4
Extended family	20	4.0
Total	500	100

The arrangement of families by type ranges from complete nuclear to extended and joint families. Among the *Kattunaicken*, complete nuclear families are numerically dominant (62.3%). The decrease in number of broken families (7.0%) shows a more or less stable family system.

**Average size of family**

Size of family	number	%
Small(1-3)	207	41.4
Medium(4-6)	257	51.4
Large(7-10)	36	7.2
Very large(above 10)	nil	nil
Total	500	100

Regarding the size of the family 257 (51.4%) families are of medium type(4-6persons).207 (41.4%) are of small type (1-3) and 36 (7.2%) are large families. Families with more than 10 members are absent in the surveyed population. The average family size is low when compared to the family size of other tribal communities (4.2) of Wayanad.

## KINSHIP

Among *Kattunaicken* the kinship terms are found to be classificatory and a kinship term covers or is applied to persons of more than one kinship category defined by age, sex and genealogical relationships. The following are some of the more frequently used kinship terms among *Kattunaicken*.

Relation through father	Term of reference	Term of address
<i>Father</i>	<i>appa</i>	<i>appa</i>
<i>Grand father</i>	<i>anja</i>	<i>anja</i>
<i>Grand mother</i>	<i>amma</i>	<i>amma</i>
<i>Fathers elder brother</i>	<i>doddappa</i>	<i>doddappa</i>
<i>Fathers elder brothers wife</i>	<i>doddavvae</i>	<i>doddavvae</i>
<i>Fathers younger brother</i>	<i>sikkappa</i>	<i>sikkappa</i>
<i>Fathers youngers wife</i>	<i>sikkavvae</i>	<i>sikkavvae</i>
<i>Fathers elder sister</i>	<i>athae</i>	<i>athae</i>
<i>Fathers elder sisters husband</i>	<i>maama</i>	<i>maama</i>
<i>Fathers younger sister</i>	<i>atahe</i>	<i>atahe</i>
<i>Fathers younger sisters husband</i>	<i>maama</i>	<i>maama</i>
<i>Fathers elder brothers son</i>	<i>anna</i>	<i>anna/name</i>
<i>Fathers elder brothers daughter</i>	<i>akka</i>	<i>akka/name</i>
<i>Fathers elder sisters son</i>	<i>baava</i>	<i>baava/name</i>
<i>Fathers elder sisters daughter</i>	<i>athikae</i>	<i>athikae/name</i>
<u>Relations through mother</u>		
<i>Mother</i>	<i>avva</i>	<i>avva</i>
<i>Mothers mother</i>	<i>amma</i>	<i>amma</i>
<i>Mothers father</i>	<i>anja</i>	<i>anja</i>
<i>Mothers elder brother</i>	<i>doddamama</i>	<i>doddamama</i>
<i>Mothers elder brothers wife</i>	<i>doddathae</i>	<i>doddathae</i>
<i>Mothers younger brother</i>	<i>sannamama</i>	<i>sannamama</i>



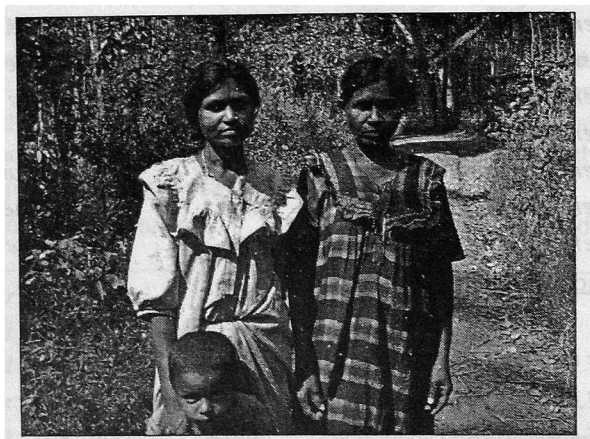
<i>Mothers younger brothers wife</i>	<i>sannatahe</i>	<i>sannathae</i>
<i>Mothers elder sister</i>	<i>doddavvae</i>	<i>doddavvae</i>
<i>Mothers younger sister</i>	<i>sabbavvae</i>	<i>sabbavvae</i>
<i>Mothers elder brothers son</i>	<i>baava</i>	<i>baava/name</i>
<i>Mothers elder brothers daughter</i>	<i>athikae</i>	<i>athikae/name</i>
<i>Mothers elder sisters son</i>	<i>anna</i>	<i>anna/name</i>
<i>Mothers elder sisters daughter</i>	<i>akka</i>	<i>akka/name</i>

### Relations through wife

<i>Wife</i>	<i>indere</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Wife's mother</i>	<i>athae</i>	<i>athae</i>
<i>Wife's father</i>	<i>maama</i>	<i>maama</i>
<i>Wife's elder brother</i>	<i>baava</i>	<i>baava</i>
<i>Wife's elder brother's wife</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>
<i>Wife's younger brother</i>	<i>maida</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Wife's younger brothers wife</i>	<i>thenkae</i>	<i>thenkae</i>
<i>Wife's elder sister</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>
<i>Wife's younger sister</i>	<i>sannathikae</i>	<i>name</i>

### Relations through husband

<i>Husband</i>	<i>ganda</i>	<i>ganda</i>
<i>Husband's father</i>	<i>maama</i>	<i>maama</i>
<i>Husband's mother</i>	<i>athae</i>	<i>athae</i>
<i>Husband's elder brother</i>	<i>baava</i>	<i>baava</i>
<i>Husband's younger brother</i>	<i>maida</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Hus. elder brother's wife</i>	<i>athikae</i>	<i>athikae</i>
<i>Hus. younger brothers wife</i>	<i>naadini</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Hus. elder sister</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>
<i>Hus. Younger sister</i>	<i>sannathikae</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Hus. Elder sister's husband</i>	<i>doddanna</i>	<i>doddanna</i>
<i>Hus. Younger sister's hus.</i>	<i>Sannanna</i>	<i>name</i>



mother, daughter and daughter's son in a Kattunaicken family

Relations through ego

<i>Elder brother</i>	<i>anna</i>	<i>anna</i>
<i>Elder sister</i>	<i>akka</i>	<i>akka</i>
<i>Elder brother's son</i>	<i>koosae</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Elder sister's daughter</i>	<i>koosae</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Elder sister's husband</i>	<i>baava</i>	<i>baava</i>
<i>Elder brother's wife</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>	<i>doddathikae</i>
<i>Younger brother's wife</i>	<i>sannathikae</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Daughter's son</i>	<i>mammanga</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Daughter's daughter</i>	<i>mammoka</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Daughter's husband</i>	<i>aliya</i>	<i>name</i>
<i>Daughter's husband's mother</i>	<i>thenkae</i>	<i>thenkae</i>
<i>Daughter's husband's father</i>	<i>bamaida</i>	<i>bamaida</i>
<i>Son's wife's father</i>	<i>bamaida</i>	<i>bamaida</i>
<i>Son's wife</i>	<i>sosae</i>	<i>kosae/name</i>
<i>Step mother</i>	<i>sikkavvae</i>	<i>sikkavvae</i>
<i>Step father</i>	<i>sikkappa</i>	<i>sikkappa</i>

The above terms show that the kinship terminology of the *Kattunaicken* is almost collateral and parallel. Father's father and mother's father are called by *anja* and their female counter parts as *amma*. They use the term *appa* for father and *avva* for mother. Father's elder brother is called *doddappa* and his wife as *doddavvae*. But relation through the mother is called as *doddamma* for mother's elder brother and *doddathae* for his wife. The term *athae* is used for husband's mother, wife's mother, father's elder sister and father's younger sister. Similarly the term *mama* is used for husband's father, wife's father and father's sister's husband. This classification shows the prevalence of cross-cousin marriage among the *kattunaicken*. In general *kattunaicken* attach equal weight to kinship ties on the mother's and father's side and can be treated as a bilateral society.

## ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

The economy of the *Kattunaicken* is centered on the forest. Forest provides them with food, drink, shelter and non-consumable articles for their livelihood. They depend on forest primarily for roots, tubers, fruits, leaves and small animals and birds for consumption and minor forest produce for both self consumption and trade. The plant materials and the animals' trapped do not provide them a continuous supply as these regions are characterized by climatic fluctuations.

*Kattunaicken* also engaged in a variety of activities such as foraging for self consumption and small scale hunting, fishing and honey collection. Many of them are working in plantations and in the fields of landlords as wage earners. A few of them work as watchmen in the plantations and fields. The forest department has appointed a few of them as mahouts. The *Kattunaicken* of Kerala may be classified under the following economic groups.

- a. Food gatherers and collectors of minor forest products.
- b. Landless labourers under the forest department and landlords.
- c. Cultivators with meagre income which is quite insufficient.
- d. Partly settled agriculturists.

Occupational status of the *Kattunaicken*

occupation	No. of persons			
	male	female	total	families
Without occupation	151	249	400	-
Agricultural/other wage labour	700	507	1207	-
Owner cultivator	-	-	-	16
Govt/private sector	-	-	-	-
Social worker	-	-	-	-
Food gathering	200	450	650	-
MFP collection	300	100	400	-
Total	1351	1306	2657	16

Above table shows that most of the *Kattunaicken* men and women are now engaged in wage labour (45.42%). 24.46% of the sample are engaged in food gathering (it is largely done by the women folk) and 15.05% of the sample is engaged in the collection of minor forest produce. Women are also engaged in the collection of MFP but their number is less when compared to men. Women collect forest products which are available in the near by forests.

During the agricultural seasons non-agricultural works are generally neglected, particularly during the harvest seasons. Collection of tubers, roots and fruits, bird catching bamboo work ...etc become regular during non-agricultural seasons. In spite of seasonal variations the collection of forest produces continues without interruption.

Food gathering is one of the oldest and important sources of their livelihood. They gather wild natural edibles such as fruits, tubers and roots in addition to leaves and mushrooms. The nuts and seeds are also consumed by them. '*Sappu*' is the local term used for leaves and '*gasu*' for tubers.

## Tubers and available seasons

Name of tuber	Botanical name	Collection period	Available depth
<b>Korunnae</b> (red&white)	-F.Discoreacea	January&March	2 feet
<b>Nooruvanni</b> (long slender with many branch and a single plant can yield 5-10 kg)	-	All seasons	10 feet
<b>Naarae</b> (fibrous and a single plant can yield 5-10 kg)	" "	All seasons	3-10 feet
<b>Cholahekku</b> (long tuber and a single plant can yield 5-10 kg)	" "	All seasons	3 feet
<b>NugappaeKavala</b> (thread like tuber)	" "	September July	3-4 feet 3-10 feet
<b>Noolan hekku</b>	" "	November	-

*Kattunaicken* collects different varieties of mushrooms from the surrounding ecosystem during the monsoon season. Mushrooms are called as 'enave' and usually women do this collection. They identify different kinds of mushrooms such as *kooman enave* (found in the forest), *kooli enave* (seen on the leafy waste), *vella enave* (available in the surroundings), *mookan enave* (found in the mud heaps of the forest in white colour), and *cheerkan enave* (seen on the cut end of the tree). These mushrooms are available in most the seasons but abundant in monsoon. They also use plenty of leafy vegetables obtained from the forest including *bridelia*, *ameranthus spinosa*, *muringa* leaf, cucurbita leaf, pea leaf and colocasia leaf. The tender stem of bamboo, available in plenty in their surroundings is boiled in water. Excess water is filtered off and the residual material is used for making curries.

Honey is a major item of collection for self-consumption. They have classified honey into many types according to its location. Women mainly do the preliminary works for honey collection. Honey is separated from wax in the forest itself. As preliminary step of honey collection, the *Kattunaicken* women collect and dry the leaves and branches of two types of plants. This is used for making a traditional type of torch called '*choottai*'. When honey is located in a tree, male people collect long bamboo stems and prepare ladders by placing one after another. With the help of '*choottai*' the bees are chased and the beehives are collected in the bamboo basket. In former days large bamboo vessels were used for storing honey. The honey obtained from a comb depends on its size, but generally they are able to obtain 5-6 liters of honey from a comb.

Fishing is a leisure time activity of *Kattunaicken* men and is seasonal also. Those who live on the banks of rivers and paddy fields spend considerable time in fishing. '*Nanjukalakkal*' a method of fishing by poisoning the water was a common practice. For this they use the bark of '*samba*' tree and seeds of a fruit called '*irattikkai*'. These two are poisonous and stirred in water after crushing and mixed with water. When the water gets poisoned, the fishes will move towards the top layer due to suffocation and can be easily caught. Fishing with rode and line is also practiced. The line is made of fibre of a tree which is tied to a long narrow bamboo stem and the hook is tied to other end of the line. Baits are placed at the hook and put in the water. When the fish eats the bait along with the hook it is automatically trapped.

In the method of bailing out, a particular portion of the river is selected and water flow is prevented by constructing bunds. The bund is locally called as '*seni*'. This method of fishing is known as '*seniketti meenpidippathu*'. When water flow is stopped people drain the water from the selected area and fish are easily caught. '*Meenkoodu*' the fishing basket, made up of different kinds of bamboo such as '*oli*' and reed is also used for catching fish. The structure of '*meenkoodu*' is skillfully designed with bamboo splits as one can do all the operation

alone. The basket is long and one end is pointed while the other end is funnel shaped. Another basket which is short and inserted in the bigger one. This is placed in the river just opposite to the flow of water. When a fish enters the basket by force of water it will automatically move to large basket. Due to the fixing of baskets in such a manner the fish cannot escape. They also use nets for fishing. '*Manalinaaru*' a type of plant fibre is used to make nets. For catching the crab, a small fish will be put in front of the hole where the crab is present. Seeing the bait crab will come out and there by caught. They use other eco-friendly techniques for fishing so that the bio-diversity in water will not be affected. Today the practice of fishing hardly exists as most of the people are depending market for such items.

Cereals form one of the staple foods of *Kattunaicken* and rice is the most important cereal item called '*akkimani*'. They cultivated a special type of rice called '*koyyala*' in addition to ragi and *muthari*. They also consume bamboo rice called '*mulayari*' when ever it is available.

Earlier they ate the flesh of some birds such as '*sorattan*' (horn bill), obtained in November and '*kollan*' (divine crow). They catch the bird during its egg lying season when the bird can be seen in its nest. *Marakkothan* (wood pecker) is hunted in March and Parrot in November, December. Usually they take meat only when they get it from the forest and they do not use mutton, beef...etc. Hunting was one of the methods of food gathering of the *Kattunaicken*. Dogs were used for hunting expedition. '*Karimanthi*' (black monkey), '*mullanpanni*' (porcupine), '*Kattadu*' (wild goat, '*Katai*' (deer), '*Kottan*' (white monkey), '*Kalai*' (spotted deer), '*mota*' (rabbit), '*Dodda hanthi*' (large pork), '*udumbu*' (varanus), '*eludu*' (squirrel) ...etc were the important animals trapped. Since gradual deforestation has resulted in the extinction of wild fauna, meat is now not a regular item of their food. During the rainy season, as the forest becomes dense and inaccessible, collection is minimized and continued in the forest areas nearest to the residential sites. Thus in winter and summer seasons major food collections are undertaken. This seasonal availability of



food resources led to the unpredictable collection coupled with official restrictions in entering the forest and competition among the neighboring communities.

*Kattunaicken* hunt both individually and sometimes collectively. In group hunting the members are selected on the basis of kinship. The hunting group must obtain prior permission from the chief. When the prey is brought to the settlement, it is the duty of the '*mooppan*' (chief) to cut the animal ritually by placing a knife over it. The game is distributed equally to all the members of the hamlet based on the size of the family. Children are also given an equal share. Mere presence in the hamlet entitles a person to a share, and this includes the old and the infirm who can never reciprocate. Though the importance of hunting has declined in recent times, certain rituals and ceremonies connected with it have persisted. It is reported that now-a-days trapping is widely practiced by the *Kattunaicken*.

In olden days when ever an animal was hunted, it was divided in to many portions. The important portions like heart, liver, hand and thigh were kept aside for gods. The rest of the portion was divided among the members. One portion was set apart for the chief. The portion set aside for the god was also taken by the chief later. One portion was also set aside for the unmarried men and women of the settlement. The portions of the god and the chief were cooked by the chief's wife separately and were kept on a plantain leaf together with rice in their sacred hut called '*daivamanai*'. This was kept there for an hour propitiating their deity and the ancestral spirits. After that the food was served to the members of the family. The gathered surplus roots and tubers were also distributed.

For hunting small animals *Kattunaicken* use stones, sticks, bow and arrow. They use two types of bows. The one is of four feet in length and other is of three feet. Bow is known as '*villu*'. The arrows with iron head are used for hunting in one bow and in the other one, stones are used. Creepers are used to tie the two ends of the bow. Arrows are made of bamboo. Arrows used by them are called '*mottambu*' and '*kathiambu*'. '*mottambu* has a blunt end made of wooden piece. It is

usually used for catching birds and squirrels, where as '*kathiambu*' is made of iron used to hunt wild animals. In addition to bow and arrow, traps such as '*elikkeni*' are used for trapping big rats. It is a device made of wood and iron nets. '*Adichil*' is used to trap wild boar. First they will make a fence with wooden branches having 2m length, 1.5m breadth and 0.5m height. Then stones are put above the branches. There is space provided for the prey to enter the trap. When the wild boar enters in this fence the stones will fall on the animal and there by causes its death.

'*Kavikoodu*' is a type of trap used to catch the birds. A type of gum called '*vilangum*' taken out by cutting the bark of a tree is placed on the tree with the help of a one side pointed stick. When the bird reaches here, they are trapped by this gum sticks. Jackfruit gum is also used for bird catching.

They used to catch '*malayannan*' (wild squirrel) by a net, which is made of '*kavalanaaru*' (a wild fibre). To make the net, the *kavalanaaru* is dried first and then twisted. The net is kept on the branches of the tree. The animal will jump accidentally in the net and the net will hang down so that it cannot escape.

### Technology of food collection

Name	Local term	Material used	Mode of application
Bow	<i>Villu</i>	Bamboo	Hunting
Arrow	<i>Ambu</i>	Bamboo	Hunting
Rat trap	<i>Elikkeni</i>	Wood	Trapping rats
Bird trap	<i>Kaavikoodu/adichil</i>	Wood+bamboo	Trapping birds
Fishing device	<i>Meen kori/kodavi</i>	Bamboo	Fishing
Knife	<i>Peesankathi</i>	Wood+metal	Cutting
Basket	<i>Suruda</i>	Bamboo	Storing
Basket(big)	<i>Komma</i>	Bamboo	storing
Digging stick	<i>Kothedi</i>	Bamboo	Digging
Sickle	<i>Kuduga</i>	Metal+wood	Clearing
spade	<i>guddali</i>	Metal+wood	tilling

Each family has a few bamboo baskets which are used for storing salt, chilly, and grains. These storing baskets are known in various names such as 'suruda', 'kommai', and 'batti'. All most all houses use earthen pots called 'madakka' which were bought from the artisan tribe *uralikuruman*. Bamboo stems called 'kukkai' are also used for storing honey, water and for taking gruel. Grinding stones called 'karathakallu' and 'gundekallu' are used. Measuring pots called 'mana' and winnowing fan called 'moram' are also used by them. Some *Kattunaickens* make nets with the help of grass and bamboo needles. Coats are made on four wooden poles and cross bars are tied in a rectangular manner.

The digging stick, basket, bow and arrow, fishing basket, traps...etc are locally made. They themselves make the bamboo artifacts. The drums and flute for annual celebration are made by the chief in a hamlet. Among the *Kattunaicken* those who subsist on food gathering have only very few utensils made of aluminium where as those who are practicing agriculture have an increased number of utensils.

## RELIGIOUS BELIEVES

The *Kattunaicken* are animist. Originally they had a totemic social organization. The most popular deities of the *Kattunaicken* are 'masthi' and 'maladeivam', 'thampuratty,' karimalathampuran', 'gulikan', 'mariamamma' and the spirit of the dead ancestors. The supreme god is 'maladeivam'. To obviate the spell of disaster caused by evil spirits they evoke 'maladeivam'. Mari (goddess of small pox) is propitiated by offerings like grains, puffed rice, plantain...etc in the Malayalam month of 'kumbham' (January/February). They believe that the wrath of 'gulikan' (male god responsible for mysterious diseases). When some body falls ill the oracle is invited to diagnose the disease. If the disease is caused by 'gulikan', the patient is generally instructed by the oracle to propitiate the 'gulikan' by offerings.

They have implicit faith in magic and sorcery. Monday and Tuesday are considered as auspicious days, and marriage and other ceremonies are conducted on these days. They are very vague about the existence

of soul after death and rebirth, although they worship the ancestral spirits. When a bachelor dies, his spirit is considered to be very mischievous. They celebrate some of the *hindu* festivals like *onam* and *vishu* due to their contact with other *hindus*. On the day of *vishu* a group of men visit all the houses of the village by playing '*kolkkali*' and receive paddy, rice or cash. They believe that illness is caused by the gods when a person failed to follow the ways of the previous generation. Sorcery can also cause illness.

Modale is considered as the religious specialist among the *Kattunaicken*. He also plays the role of medicine man and an oracle. The position of a medicine man is hereditary. After the death of a modale his son becomes the next modale. In case there are no sons the younger brother of modale is chosen as the next modale. It is his duty to see that the festivals are celebrated annually and he has to collect and supply the resources required.

*Kattunaicken* have a number of magical and supernatural beliefs. These have come down to them from the days of their forefathers and are persistent even today. These beliefs can be grouped in to a few categories namely beliefs related to dreams, journeys and evil eye.

They believe that dreams forecast future happenings. A common belief is that a good dream is likely to bring some kind of fortune and a bad dream brings misfortune. Belief in good and bad omens related to the commencement of a journey is widely prevalent among the *Kattunaicken*. The success or failure of the aim of a journey depends on the type of omen. If a man while going out for a good purpose sees a snake, he thinks that his journey would be a failure. If any forest animal jumps across the way it is considered as bad. On the other hand if a peacock on his way it is believed that it would be a successful journey. They practice a number of rituals to ward off evil spirits. '*Kenisaralum*' is a ritual of this kind. Here the modale declare the cause and causative of a particular disease by shuffling seeds of wild rubber in a winnowing fan. In another method a column is drawn in the floor with ash and black powder and the sick person is allowed to sit in the column. The modale when in trance call out the name of

the spirit possessed by the sick person. If the sick person is a male, a male statue is made and decorated with flowers. If the sick person is female, a female statue is prepared. Then the spirit is transferred to this statue by beating the sick person. The statue is then flown in the river.

The reason for an illness is believed to be due to the wrath of god. To ward off this, *modale* is approached and he gives them solution. '*Modale*' uses a dried fruit for his religious purpose. '*Gunjikkottae*' (dried seeds of a wild plant) are taken in a '*soraiburu*' (a dry forest fruit with conical shape) and the mouth of which is closed with wax. By shuffling this fruit they approach the gods and find out the reasons for the disease. The sick person is also indigenous herbal medicines along with magic rites. Now-a-days most of them go to hospitals for treatment and medicine. The belief in traditional curing by magic is found to be vogue. But herbal medicine has not lost its significance in their belief system.

### POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The *Kattunaicken* have a special political structure in which '*modale*' is the supreme authority. *Modale* is obeyed and respected by all the members of the society. Each hamlet has a *modale* who exercised civil and criminal jurisdiction over the members of the settlement. In matters relating to marriage and divorce, previous approval of the *modale* is essential. Nothing is permitted in a hamlet without the consent of the *modale*. He often plays the role of medicine man and when in trance that of an oracle.

The role of *modale* is hereditary from father to son. It is the eldest son who is regarded to be the next *modale* after the death of his father. In case there was no son or the son proved incompetent the role of *modale* is passed on to another man of the same settlement who is capable to handle the role. The *modale* usually carries a stick with him as the symbol of authority. Settlement is regarded as the unit of political and religious activities.

The *modale* participates in all important affairs in a hamlet. At ceremonial occasions like marriage, initiation, funeral rites...etc his formal presence is essential. *Modale* should attend in all formal

gatherings. He is regarded as the spokesman or mediator in all matters in which people other than his hamlet are involved. The date of festivals, worship, marriage, economic activities...etc is settled by modale after consulting with other members of the hamlet.

Due to the influence of modern politics and judiciary, the traditional social control mechanism is being weekend reducing the status and role of the chief. The *Kattunaicken* living in the exposed areas make use of the modern judiciary and approach local political leaders when problem arise. Now-a-days they are found actively participating in political meetings and party gatherings. They are aware of their rights and voices against exploitations. Regarding the political awareness they would like to vote for a person who thinks about the well being of the community (particularly tribal community). For them voting in the election is reduced to a 'new ritual'. About the election results, they have no interest in knowing the election results of the parliament or Assembly. But contrary to it a large number of respondents indicated that they were keen in the results of Panchayat elections. Panchayat is closer to them and they are very keen in its activities.

The Christian missionaries have influenced them to a great extend, and this forced many of them to accept Christianity and caused the break down of the traditional social control mechanism. All these factors together led to the development of parochial consciousness in the political field.

## **LIFE CYCLE RITES AND CEREMONIES**

### **BIRTH**

The first delivery of a woman usually takes place in their hut. Delivery is attended by the wife of modale. After child birth the mother is considered as impure for twelve days and is forbidden to cook food for the family. On the first day she is given gruel and curry with edible leaves. A feast is arranged on the sixteenth day. Naming ceremony is perfumed in the house of the modale. After three months a ritual called 'ollainirmaya' (bath) is performed. On that day the mother in her new clothes cleans the house with cowdung. The lady who has attended the delivery is gifted with soap and oil. After her bath she is given betel

leaves and arecanut with coins. If the newborn is a female, one rupee coin is given. The mother washes the hands and foot of the lady who nursed her with water mixed with cow dung and turmeric. She is also given plantain, coconut, rice vegetables and money according to the economic capacity of the family. After two days the mother with her new born child is transferred to her husband's house.

There are strict no rules regarding the naming of the new born. Naming ceremony is performed at the house of modale. On the second day of this ceremony both modale and his wife take the child to the *daivamana* and give food. Ear boring ceremony is performed at the age of eight. Now-a-days the *Kattunaickens* inhabiting the non-tribal areas and those who are living near the town ship visit hospitals for delivery.

## PUBERTY

Among the *kattunaicken* puberty ceremony is known as '*nerdrukalyanam*'. When a girl comes of age, the news is first informed to the 'modale' of that settlement. 'Modale' with the help of other male members erect a temporary shed called '*gummanpura*'. The materials required for the construction are supplied by other members of the settlement. This is made to seclude the girl from her natal hut. *Gummanpura* is conical in shape with a height of about six feet. It is constructed with the same materials used for the construction of their hut. Modale is given money as reward for the construction of *gummanpura*.

After getting direction from the modale, the the girl is shifted to the *gummanpura* in the night. Before shifting she has to take bath. Another girl of the same age or younger to her is also lives in the *gummanpura* for help and assistance. She has to sit without seeing others especially man. Food is prepared by the helper and is given in separate vessels. During night time two or three girls of the same age stay with the girl. She takes bath only during night. Before bath turmeric paste is applied on her body.

The date of celebration of puberty ceremony depends on the

economic condition of the parents. The girl can come out from the *gummanpura* only after puberty ceremony where the members of the settlement are feasted. A small amount is given to modale. If the parents can not afford this, the girl has to stay in the *gummanpura* until they are economically sound to celebrate the ceremony.

The secluded girl comes out in the night for a purificatory bath. After her bath she wears new clothes and ornaments. Ladies accompany her to the '*pandal*' (a temporary shed) and the girl is seated in front of lamp. Men can see her only at this time. Modale's wife takes one coconut, plantain and puffed rice in a piece of plantain leaf and placed in front of her. Elders put rice on her head as part of the ceremony. The secluded girl with her helper and one or two ladies go to the bank of a river with a mud pot on her head. Water is taken in that pot and she returns to the *pandal*. In the *pandal* she stands in front of a wooden plank kept in front of the *pandal* and other ladies also stand on the plank. The girl has to wash the foot of the ladies standing on the plank. Another woman stands near her with a tray in her hand. The ladies put coins in that tray. A non-vegetarian feast is arranged after this ceremony. They conduct dances and sing songs after the feast. The invitees returned to their houses in the next morning.

After seven days of this ceremony, modale removes the *gummanpura* with the help of others. In order to ward off the pollution modale takes bath and receives coconut, rice oil, turmeric, one *mundu*...etc and money for his customary role. Modale after bath takes one seer of rice to *daivamanai* and it is cooked by other women. During subsequent menstrual periods the girl remains in her hut and she has to observe seven days of pollution. During this time she is not allowed to enter the kitchen or prepare food. On the seventh day she takes bath early in the morning and cleans the house with cowdung before her daily routines. Even today the pollution periods are observed as usual in all traditional settlements. Seclusion hut is not constructed now instead the girl continues in their living huts. During these days some of them are well aware of the necessity of cleanliness during these periods and use comfortable methods also.



## MARRIAGE

Among the *Kattunaicken* the general regarding the age of marriage is after puberty. Of course, pre-puberty marriages are also taking place. Marriage is not only prohibited within the '*jamma*' (minimum lineage division) but is also prohibited within the '*padi*' (settlement). It is also important to note that a *Kattunaicken* can marry neither from his father's '*jammam*' nor from mother's. Tribal endogamy is the general rule among them. But now-a-days inter tribal and intra tribal marriages are also taking place among them.

A marriage among the *Kattunaicken* may be brought about by one of the following methods. The first method is by negotiation between the two families. The second is marriage by service in which the boy works at the prospective father-in-law's house. The third method is elopement in which the spouses simply run away. If a boy and a girl are in love they usually run away to a relative's house only to be discovered by the parents later. The marriage ceremony in this case is usually conducted in the same manner as in the case of marriage by negotiations through some of the important rites are ignored. If this elopement has not raised any serious opposition from the relatives of either side the couple come back to their settlement within days and established their own household. Gradually their union is socially accepted. But they have to pay a particular amount towards fine to the modale of that settlement.

The negotiations generally involve the amount of bride-price to be paid by the groom's family to the bride's parent. When a suitable girl is selected, on some previously appointed day a party from groom's side consisting of his father, modale of his settlement and others visit the girl's house. They carry with them betel leaves, arecanuts, and tobacco. If these articles are accepted by the girl's relatives, it is considered accepted. Bride price is agreed at the very outset, and it has to be paid before the actual marriage ceremony. But certain instances have been noticed in which the payment has been made by instalments. This amount was Rs.25/ before ten years and now it is changed up to 100 rupees according to the economic condition of the parents.

Marriage can be held at the hut of either of the contracting

parties. When it is at the boy's hut his parents, relatives and friends visit the bride's residence, pay the bride's price, give presents (including betel leaves, arecanut and new clothes) to the bride and her mother escort them to the boy's hut to participate in the marriage ceremony. After reaching there they decorate the bride with new clothes and ornaments which are brought by the bride groom. '*Tali*' (sacred thread) is tied by the bridegroom in front of all the relatives. *Tali* was a string of beads and shells earlier but now it a small locket tied on a black thread. Eating together and feeding one another are the important customs observed during the ceremony. The exchange of betel leaves and arecanut are also considered to be important.

On the marriage ceremony they perform a dance called '*vattakkali*' (dancing in a circular manner) accompanied by music of drum and pipe. The *kattunaicken* were strict in following the marriage obligations. But now-a-days the traditional rituals and ceremonies are found disappearing in their marriage customs. They are adopting the Hindu ways of rituals and celebrations.

Divorce and remarriage are regarded as unchaste behaviour, however divorces are frequently taking place. In case of divorce initiated by the wife, the bride price has to be returned to the husband. The bride-price must be returned if the wife dies before children are born to her. Occasionally the *Kattunaicken* can have more than one wife. In such cases the first wife enjoys no special status.

There is nothing special about the separation between a husband and wife. It may take place at any time. Separated persons can marry again. One of the most frequent cause of separation is the extra marital relations of husband or wife or both with others. Running away of a married woman with another person is not considered as a serious offence. In order to avoid punishment they have to pay a particular amount towards fine recommended by the modale. A deserter, widow and a widower soon find mate for themselves. There is no particular norm as regards with whom the children will go in case of separation or death of either of the spouse.

Among the *Kattunaicken*, matrilateral cross-cousin marriage is performed. But the marriage with father's sister's daughter is totally

prohibited. For marriage and divorce the consent of modale is essential. If a *Kattunaicken* woman happened to have sexual relationship with a non-tribe she is liable to excommunication.

## DEATH

When a death occurs in a settlement, the modale of that settlement is informed first. He informs the neighbours and relatives through his messengers. If the deceased is a male, a lamp is lit and kept near the body along with coconut and *beedi* (local cigarette). If the deceased is a female *beedi* is not there but offerings are kept near the head region. After reaching all the relatives modale asks to bathe the corpse. A stone is placed in one corner of the hut and the corpse is given bath in sitting posture. Ladies give bath to the female deceased and males wash the male deceased. Hot water with turmeric powder dissolved in it is used for washing the corpse. Oil is applied on the head and put on new clothes. The corpse is taken to the front yard.

The structure called '*sattaibadi*' is used for taking the corpse. It is made on bamboo stem and wild creepers. Bamboo pieces are tied vertically and horizontally with creepers to get the appearance of a structure. A mat is spread on the *sattaibadi* to place the corpse. The corpse is tied to the structure with wild creepers. Male children and nephews lift the four corners of the structure and go around the yard for three times before reaching the graveyard. They also carry with them a bundle of rice, three breads prepared with rice powder, a bunch of plantain, one coconut, and betel leaf to the graveyard. Abay walking in front of the group modale throws grains backwards..

A knee deep grave is dug first, and then a side cavity is taken at the bottom of the grave. The corpse is then lowered in to the grave and pushed into the cavity. The grave is then covered with earth. The cavity is known as *hoddamannu*. Before covering the grave the corpse is covered with new clothes. Coconut water is poured in the mouth of the corpse along with betel leaves, arecanut and food articles. Two pieces of bamboo taken from the structure are kept just over the corpse without touching it. Leaves are spread on the bamboo frame and earth is usually spread over it. His belongings such as vessels and occupational

implements are also placed in the grave. A walking stick is dug in earth on the head side.

If the deceased is a married male, or female, the ornaments and decorations used by the partner are placed over the mud heap. The widow or widower does not take bath till the end of the pollution. Period. Non-vegetarian food is prohibited. Pollution lasts for 13 days. The ceremonial bath on the 13<sup>th</sup> day frees all members from pollution. It is celebrated according to economic condition of the family. Food is offered in plate or plantain leaf for the deceased until the last celebrations. The food is kept in a corner of the house for some time and then it is mixed with the remaining food and served to others.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> day a non-vegetarian feast is arranged. One portion of the food is offered in a plantain leaf to the graveyard in memory of the deceased person. After cleaning the ground area it is kept on the heap with coconut, arecanut, betel leaves and plantain. All of them stand little away from the grave for some time. The head of three boys of the same age, approximately seven or eight years, is covered with a cloth and seated them in front of this food items. Three of them takes a small portion from it and consumed. The people return to the huts after these rituals. Modale remove the stick which was kept in the grave and pour cold water through that hole. Water is taken in a piece of bamboo and two drops of oil is poured. If the oil drops touch each other it implies a good omen and the relatives assembled there touch their heads with the mixture of oil and water. Modale goes in trance. He moves from the grave to the hut and shouts the reason for the death. On reaching the house all the relatives are served with a feast. Modale is given coconut, plantain, arecanut, betel leaves and cash. He also takes the clothes which are used to cover the head of the boys. Death ceremony ends with these rituals.

Various changes have been noticed in death ceremonies of the *Kattunaicken*. The method of burial in some areas has also undergone changes from burial to cremation. The number of days of pollution is also reduced. The habit of moving away from their huts after a death is also completely disappeared.

## IMPACT OF PLURAL SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

While focusing the attention on the social and cultural changes among the *Kattunaicken* a set of processes, traditional and modern has come to light. The changes are due to the dominant regional society with who they are in constant contact. This contact has resulted in cultural borrowing particularly in the areas of material traits leading to Hinduisation, detribalization...etc. The modern process on the other hand is characterized by factors like Christianity and modernization including education and implementation of development programmes. The rate of transformation has been slow and integrative. This has happened because of long and continuous contacts with the Hindu counter parts in and around their habitat. Transport and communications are other forces bringing about socio-cultural changes among the *Kattunaicken*. Communication takes place through various sources. Post office, Radio, newspapers, and verbal communications through agents of development and reforms affect a lot. The transport system has also been widened in their surroundings.

Distance of medical centres from the hamlets

settlement	families	Allopathy (distance in kms)	Ayurveda	Homeo
Kolloor	7	14	18	14
Kurichade	16	14	14	14
Manavayal	12	6	6	8
Variyat	6	3	6	3
Paleri	11	7	7	7
Pambramoola	18	7	7	7
Pukalamalam	11	10	10	1
Poovanchi	21	10	10	0.90
Vattarpalam	11	11	11	1
puthuvedu	13	6	6	3

Table shows the distance of medical centres from ten selected hamlets of the *Kattunaicken*. The distance of medical centres stand as a barrier in getting the medical aid whenever necessary. They are not interested in walking all this distance to consult a physician. About 50% of the population follow their traditional and indigenous medicines and consult their medicine man whenever situation arises.

*Kattunaickens* Settlements and the major facilities.

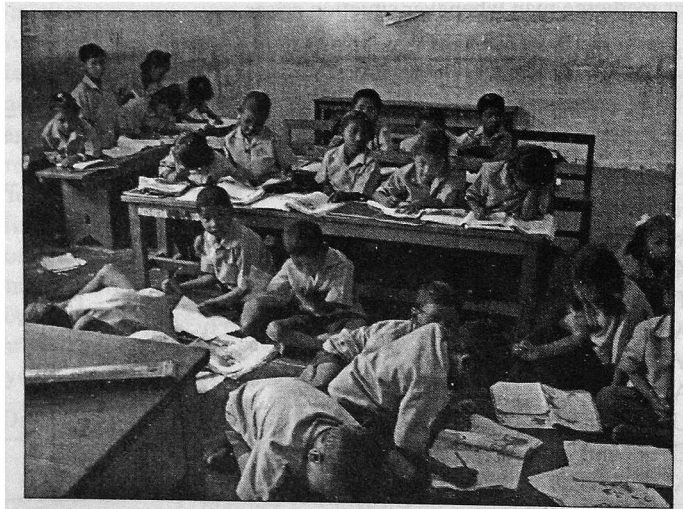
Name of the settlement	Distance in kilometres					
	road	postoffice	electricity	Ration shop	TD society	market
Jawaharcolony	0.20	0.20	0.50	0.20	1.0	0.20
Idinjakkolly	1.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	6.0
Kollivayal	1.0	2.0	2.0	0.50	0	8.0
Thazhemukkath	0.10	0.50	0.10	1.0	1.50	4.0
Anappara	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	0	2.0
Varyattu	2.50	3.0	4.0	1.50	0	1.50
Ambukutty	1.0	1.0	0.20	1.0	0	1.0
Uthiramchery	0.02	1.0	0.60	1.50	0	1.0
Chekkanni	0.60	0.60	0.10	2.50	0	0
Kirottukunnu	0.50	1.50	0.50	1.50	0	1.50

Analysis of the degree of development shows that the hamlets which are closer to the general facilities have a higher degree of development and change than the distant ones. The *Kattunaicken* living in the hamlets which are more close to the general facilities have more social contacts than others and they are more susceptible to changes.

A scrutiny on the educational status shows that the progress of education does not commensurate with the all round facilities available. They have late enrolment in schools. Detailed investigation on the school going children and their academic performances revealed that their standard is staggeringly poor and the drop out rate is very high. It is understood that economically well off families are interested in imparting education to their children by admitting them in tribal

## The Kattunaicken

residential schools. But in a poor family even a small boy has to contribute a little to supplement the family income. So he is retained at home for wage labour. *Kattunaicken* families live adjacent to reserve forests, and accessibility to school is an immediate problem in primary education.



*Kattunaicken* children in Rajiv Gandhi Residential school, Muthanga

As a part of development programme Govt have provided facilities on subsidy for the purchase of agricultural implements, seeds and management of poultry and animal husbandry. In the case of *Kattunaicken* they are not fully aware of their benefits and concessions. Govt's efforts to supply agricultural implements to the *Kattunaicken* were a waste. Most of them were not interested in agriculture and the non-tribes the area purchase their implements for a nominal cost.

The spread of Christianity among the *Kattunaicken* gave a new dimension to their social set up. The converts became more conscious, organized and defiant. They tried to retrieve their lost rights with the help of the law. *Kattunaicken* families residing near the non-tribes are

more exposed to the impact of modernization. As result of continuous efforts by the Govt and voluntary agencies, a lot of substantial changes have occurred. Some of them given up their traditional food habits, dress, and ornaments and adopted the life style of the neighbours. They have become conscious of their health problems and 10% of the population instead of depending on traditional herbal medicines has now started accepting modern medicines.

Development programmes aiming economic uplift have not shown significant results. First and foremost reason is that 60% of the *Kattunaickens* are not interested in agriculture. Govt have given them lands but it was not received by all. This has resulted a clear degree of demarcation within the members of the same settlement as owners and nonowners. Owner show rapid change towards modernity due to social contacts and contact with market economy. Actually they are utilizing the work force of the members of their own community who are landless labourers. As a result of this kind of development programmes an egalitarian society is slowly changing to different economic groups.

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## GLOSSARY

Ōla = ear stud.

mookkubettae = nose stud.

Kallumalai = necklace.

bandhi / baḷa / gadaka = bangles.

Kalppilli = anklets

unkara = ring.

asile = tatooing.

muḷayari = Bamboo grains.

Pādi = settlement

manai = single hut.

Kolakkai = Varandha.

nadukkalli = entrance room

Kadichikkalli = Kitchen

daivamana = hut for religious purposes.

enave = Mushroom.

sappu = leaf.

gasu = tuber.

chootai = a traditional type of torch.

Seni = water bund.

Meenkoodu = fishing basket

oli = fishing device.

mooppan = tribal chief.

villu = bow.

mottambu / kathiambu = different types of arrows.

Kavi koodu = a type of trap to catch the birds.

Suruda / komnial / batti = storing baskets.

madakka = earthen pot.

kukkai = bamboo stem used of storing honey.

Moram = winnowing fan.

modale = supreme authority in the tribal political structure

ollainirmaya = ritualistic bath.

gumman pura = temporary hut when a girl who attains puberty is asked to sit.

jamma = Minimum lineage division.

Sattaibali = structure used to take the corpse to the burial ground.

hoddamannu = the side cavity taken at the bottom of the grave.

Prasaaraanga



# KATTUNAICKEN

**Dr. Bindu Ramachandran**

Kattunaicken is a primitive tribal group in Kerala. They are also known as Thaenkurman. This monograph describes their habitat, society and culture.



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