



Godly practices of the kani clique

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ABSTRACT

The religion of Kanikkar is largely grounded on animism, naturalism, Totemistic beliefs and taboos, magic polytheism. The supernatural powers largely guided their life. The Kanikkar believe that it is the spirit of their ancestors who protect them from the diseases, wild animals and furious of nature. In recent times, Hindu mythology also has found some places on their belief. They observe various rituals and ceremonies and offer worship and prayers to propitiate them. They gave more importance to religion in their life. They still believe in their forest deities and make offering to please the Gods and Goddesses. Thus, despite the spread of modernization, most of the Kanikkars adhere themselves to the age-old traditional customs and practices.

INTRODUCTION

The tribal religions in India were basically grounded on naturalism, animism, totemistic beliefs and taboos and magical polytheism. Most of the primitive tribes had their medicine-man whose function it is to involve these spirits “to intervene” for good or affairs of the visible world.¹ Therefore, cultural factors like religion, social status, relationship with the fellow members of the society, nature of relationship with the supernatural world etc. play a decisive role in the evolution of the concept of etymology in a tribal society.² The forests serve as the blanket of the earth and abodes of Gods and Goddesses with their totemistic beliefs and practices. The very term forest can be interpreted as “F” for future of the mankind; “O” oxygen for life; “R” for recreation to the millions;

“E”energy for development; “S” social security and “T” for the timber wealth of the nation. It shows the very vital and decisive role played by the forests.³ In the forest where some of the more isolated communities live, a few trees are never touched or cut, for they represent the primal grove. Pipal tree is regarded as secret and abode of Basudeo, a Hindu deity.⁴

It is implied that exceedingly crude forms of religions in which magic was the pre-dominant element. It conceives of man as passing through a life surrendered by the ghostly impact of powers and elements, mostly impersonal in their character. Some of these are regarded as presiding ‘forces’ over various departments of life, each force having its sphere of influence. Thus, there might be a spirit presiding over various diseases, spirits dwelling in rocks, rivers and waterfalls and so on. These

one diligently propitiated to ward off the dangers associated with their influence.⁵

One of the oldest definitions of religion is given by Edward B. Tylor, 'religion is the belief in supernatural beings.'⁶ Oral religions tend to be non-converse.⁷ They appear to be attached to the social practices of the society. Thus, the primitive tribal groups invariably have oral religions. The original religion of the oral population in India is commonly characterised as 'animistic', Animism is that exceedingly crude form of religion in which magic is the predominant element.⁸ The religion of the hill tribes of Travancore was a topic discussed by a number of anthropologists like Thurston (1909); Grambal (1949); Krishna Iyer (1941); Thomas (1958) and Luiz (1962). They found that the religion of the tribes was animism, totemism and crude polytheism

Most of the tribal's in Kerala have their tribal hierarchy with *Mooppan* as the head. Each and every member of the community has the duty and liability to practice the unwritten laws from generation to generation.⁹ The Gods of the Kanikkars are legion of spirits of diverse kinds who lurk in houses and villages.¹⁰

Many significant changes are occurring in the life cycle rituals and ceremonies. Strict observance of the life cycle ceremonies related with puberty, pregnancy, birth and death and annual festivals like *daivom kotuti*, *adiyanthiram* are some of the characteristics of tribalism. Now these ceremonies are not strictly followed by the tribal's. The first reason is their poverty. Report of the committee on Tribal Economy in forest areas, 1967, states that the huge expense required for the observance

of life cycle ceremonies is one of the major reasons of tribal independents.¹¹

The Agasthya peak is worshipped by Kanikkars in *Kumbam* before full-moon day. They climb it and offer raw rice and tender coconuts facing east. *Madan* and *Mariamamma* are also worshipped in the month of *Kumbam* at night. The *plathi* officiates at the worship of *Madan* and women officiate for *Mariamamma*. A cock is sacrificed by the *plathi* who drinks the blood as Gods representative. The shrines of Sastha are found scattered throughout the forest. It is believed that he protects humans from wild animals and poisonous serpents.¹² In an annual festival at Aryanad by the Parayas and Kuravas, the *plathi* officiates as the chief priest. The intervention of these powers is part and parcel of life the *plathi*, the musical instrument *kokkara* and chants are inseparable to these rites and rituals.¹³ Religions tolerance, hospitality, cleanliness, simple life and broad outlook of the people have attracted many foreigners to the state from the time immortal, besides her scenic beauty climate and rich natural resources.¹⁴ Ancient Goddesses, childhood worship, worship of mother Goddesses are still present among them. The ancestors and mountain Gods are considered as their Gods and Goddesses. Names of dead ancestors there add the name of *Muthan*, *Thampuran* and *Muthi*. The name of God changes in every area.¹⁵

The Kanikkars have belief in witch – craft. They believe that the Solar and Lunar eclipse are nothing but the snake swallowing the sun or moon as the case may be. Most of the beliefs are handed over from generation

1T.K.Velu Pillai, op.cit.,p.629.

2P. Murdock George, World Distribution Theories of Illness Ethnology,1978, p.4.

3The Hindu, 5 June, 2000, p.11.

4Ramesh Tappa, Tribes,Caste and Religion in India, Madras,1995,p.36.

5D.N. Majumdar and T. N. Madan, An Introduction to Social Anthropology, Bombay,1967,p.138.

6W.M.J Goode, Religion among the Primitives, Lendon,1951, p.12.

7Paul Bohannan, Social Anthropology, New York,1963, p.15.

8Ruth Benedict, Pattern of Culture, Boston, 1934, p.3.

9S.C. Doshi, Tribal Ethnicity,Class and Integration, Jaipur,1990,p.144.

10Padmashri Dr S.Shashi, op.cit.

11Government of India, Department of Social Welfare, Report of the Committee on Tribal Enomy on Forest Areas ,New Delhi,1967,p.9.

12Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes, Vol.,1996,pp.103-104.

13T.Madhava Menon, op.cit., p.708.

14Tours and Festivals of Kerala,Department of Public Relations,Government of Kerala,Kakkana,p.3.

15Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tibes,Vol.I,p.37.

to generation.¹⁶ From beginning to end all work is done by keeping *Agnisakshi*.¹⁷ There is a slight difference in death ceremonies from hamlet to hamlet. The hymns are sung until the end of the funeral functions. Instead crying, they chanted mantras for the salvation of the soul. They obtain permission from their Gods before taking medicinal herbs.¹⁸ Now many of them have belief in *ayus* (life expectancy) and *vidhi* (fate) and in *swarga* (heaven) and *naraga* (hell) which would be rewarded as per the deeds of the persons. Faith in re-birth and re-incarnation of soul in to the tribal pantheon is the most important instance of Hinduism among the tribals in the area.¹⁹ All life experiences and fortunes in life are decided by invisible force.²⁰

The important shrines are Arukola, Kali, Chamundi, Raktheswari, Mantra Murthi, Yakshi, Yogiswaran, Padippumoorthi, Thuruvattippara, Ayyan Brahma Rakshan, Vadakkappe, Nanjippe etc. The latest shrines are Kurippu Swami, Ekkallu Swami and Sasthavu etc.²¹ The worship of their traditional Gods and Goddesses are now held with less gaiety and fervour. There is an increase in their visits to Hindu temples and pilgrimage to secret centers.²² The medicine-man and the priest are one and the same individual who by his *chattu* and *pattu or mantrams* and songs, works himself up on to the state of inspiration and excitement and by his passes and touches as well as incantations and oracular pronouncement is supposed to cure the patient. Faith cure is according to their account doing wonders amongst them.²³ The parental property among the Kanikkars is divided in to two, half property is given to nephew and half of the property is given to sons. In the absence of son-in-law their property was given to the sons. Though traditional conventions, rituals and beliefs have undergone a lot of changes, the stages of birth from each of the births to death have its own concepts.²⁴

Puberty customs of Kanikkars:

The Kanikkars' customs are extremely interesting because they are so varied in its application. Within their limits they gave greater attention to the pregnant ladies and infants.²⁵ When girl reaches puberty, she remains in the same hut with her parents in the hamlets but in certain areas a separate transitory shed is constructed about 50 to 100 feet from the hut. No man should go near it. Pollution lasted for six days. Girls of the same age are permitted to give company. Usually food is given by her mother or sisters. On the seventh day she bathes and returns home followed by her sisters and *nathune*. Before bathing she uses turmeric. The medicine man chants *mantras* by putting the holy ash mark on the forehead. It is calculated to keep them far away from the evil spirits would not cause any damage to her. They conducted *pujas* and celebrations. The ceremony is called *therandu kalyanam*.

The *thirndukauli kalyanam* is still a big celebration in many Adivasi huts. In bathing related ceremonies are called *meenkorol*.²⁶ After the bath girls are sited on the corner of the house. Then the relatives coming from different parts will bring cash items to the front of the girl. Most of them go back to the meals. The assembled women sing and dance. On the fifth day, sweets are prepared of rice powder and jaggery.

The *nathune* gives seven balls of this sweet to the girl and distributes the rest among the women present. There is a special ceremony called *anjukuli*. In this celebration woman only participated. On the days of 16 and 21 special *pujas* were conducted for mountains God. Sprinkle the holy water from the *pujari* and purify the body of the relatives and other people.²⁷ *Theendaripura* otherwise known as *pallippura* are used for pollution time. In the modern times, the method for staying seven day in the *pallippura* has changed.²⁸

16 Dravidian Encyclopedia, Vol. I, The International school of Dravidian Linguistics, 1990, p.380.

17 Santha Thulaseedharan, Keralathile Adivasi Samskaram Sampoorana Padanam, Kerala Bhasha Institute Thiruvananthapuram, 2016, p.99.

18 Personal Interview with Ratnakaran Kani, Telephone Exchang, Chithara on 14th March 2015.

19 Manjula Poyil, 'Death, Funeral and Ancistors cult of the dead and the Malabar Tribes, Ph.D thesis, Un Published University of Calicut, 2006, p.410.

20 Kumaran Vayaleri, Gotra Samskara Padanangal (Mal.)

21 K.R Ajayan, op.cit., p.42.

22 K.S Singh, op.cit., p.561.

23 V. Nagan Aiya, op.cit., pp.411-412.

24 A. Muhammed Maheen, 'Socio Religious conditions of Kankkar', Vinjana Kairali, 2005, p.38.

25 C.K. Karunakaran, op.cit., p.76.

26 Personal interview with Ambili, Kani a woman settled in Peringmala, 12-04-2018.

27 Santha Thulaseedharan, Keralathinte Adivasi (Mal.), 2016, p.101.

28 Ajayan, op.cit., p.35.

Rituals after death:

When a person of the *Kani* huts dies, they should first inform the *Muthukani* and *Plathi*. If the husband dies, his wife should remove her *thali*. Relatives sit around weeping until they take them to bury the dead. The *plathi* leads the posthumous ceremonies. The *plathi* is the main functionary at the rites. Sons and nephews have equal rights in the funerary rites. The nephews wash the body below the waist, the sons, above that level. *Ganja*, betel, tobacco, etc. are put in the mouth of the body, to appease his spirit on its last journey. The body is taken in a mat, care being taken to ensure that the feet point in the direction of the south. His personal belongings like bill-book, tobacco pouch etc., are buried along with the body.

In the Kottur area, the deceased's wife accompanies the funeral pray, carrying a vessel of rice gruel and a spoon, and a sieve, which she places at the foot of the grave.²⁹ When a man is dead, *Muthukani*, *Plathi* and others living in the settlement are informed of it. Upto the burial the relatives continued to weep by praising his good qualities. After washing the dead body with warm water, it would be dressed with white clothes.³⁰ The dead body is pasted with sandal wood and powder. After that the dead body is taken to the grave in procession. The arms and utensils used by him are deposited in the grave.³¹ Usually the Kanikkars bury the dead body. *Mantraplathi* and other three people went to bury the body.

Sixteen days later, the *Pancha Bhootams* are separated by the burning of the body. The lamp is used to prevent the *Panchbhootas* from wandering away and to return to its places happily. It is believed that otherwise the soul would wander and harm the living on the 16th day. The bones are merged in the rivers to the temples like *Thiruvallam* and *Thirunelli*. If the natural death has not happened, the bone should not be swept away. Their belief is that if the mind and body are clean no harm comes to them.³²

Among the rituals conducted after the death *Moonnukuli*, *Pulakuli* and *Mattudukkal* deserve special mention. On the third day of the death conducted the *Moonnukuli*. After the funeral ceremony, everyone in the house took the rice soup called *pattinikanji*.³³ Then after clean the pit and put the flowers and spray the perfumes. It can be repeated in some places for forty day. When this is done, the soul becomes a slave of the temples. Such souls cannot go out without the permission of God. The soul is liberated only in the year of *Karkkidakavavu*. If the deceased are less than three years old the body is buried in the bed with the parents sleep. It is believed that the body of the baby is very powerful. This oil is used for magical techniques.³⁴

They usually conducted all posthumous ceremonies during Thursday, Tuesday and Friday on 7, 9, 11 of the death day. The old people advised them to conduct *pulakuli*. Until recently, the traditional rituals and beliefs stood firm. Their relationship with the local community has changed in their faith and tradition. Young people among the Kanikkars prefer to join the main stream of the civil society. They show their respect towards others. Still there is no substantial change in their behaviours. But there are some young people who are especially conscious about the fact that their fair rights of livelihood are no implemented.³⁵

Worship of Gods:

Among the deities of the Kanikkars Sun, Moon, Trees and *Kavu* worship assumed greater importance. They adored the Sun as creator of all living things. They called the rising Sun as *Bhagavan*. They believed that 'Sun' as female. In every Friday their worship sun Goddesses. In the early morning, they pray to the Sun. In the earlier times, the Kanikkars look at the Sun and said the exact time. The sun is creator of all. "She is occasionally worshipped on Fridays in the morning with fruits, beaten rice, fried rice, etc. before a lamp after

29T.Madhavan, op.cit.,p.708.

30The Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes, op.cit.,p.281.

31S.Achutha Warriar, Kerala Samskaram,(Mal.)Kerala Bhasha Institute,Thiruvananthapuram,2016,pp.2-6

32Personal Interview with Iswaran Kani on 11-05-2018.

33Personal Interview with Maniamma, settled in Kollayil, worked in B.S.N.L, Kadakkal

34Information collected through field study.

35B.Kala, Chattupattum Samskaravum, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 2009,p.24.

seven days of abstinence.³⁶

The Moon is worshipped as Goddess mostly by men. On the full moon day, they gave offerings to the moon. On that day half glass rice and lamp are placed in front of the hut. They organize the divine presence in this way on the moon. The earth rests on one horn of the great ox and is shaken when the ox shifts it from one hone to the other. A serpent is the parent of the moon and eclipses are when it spreads its hood to hide the moon. Thunder is the bellow of a *Rakshassa* (demon) and the rainbow is his bow.³⁷

Throughout history, different societies have perceived trees as symbol of growth, decay resurrection. Scientist and conservation experts admit that, not with standing the religious aspect, the worship of trees has contributed much to the protection of the environment. Over the decades, the culture of tree worship went in to decline and secret trees and groves even within temple premises lost their significance. Scattered efforts to revive the culture have failed to make an impact.³⁸

The tree worship is in different ways. An accumulation of trees in a particular place form a *Kavu*. The Kanikkars worshiped the trees placed the deities under its roots. They placed many deities at the bottom of trees. The temple of the Kanikkars would have all the important trees like papal tree, mango tree, jackfruit tree etc. They believe that the Goddesses make the trees their habitations. The trees are shaken and believe to show their presence. It is also believed that the spirits would get in to the events.³⁹

It is believed that Naga worship is a result of Animal form of worship which had existed in the past.⁴⁰ Naga worship is most important among the Kanikkars. The worship among trees is associated with Naga worship. They were given milk and fruits to Nagaraja and Naga

Rani. Turmeric powder and milk are mainly given for Nagaraja. Naga Worshipers in Kerala are Brahmin, Nair, Ezhavas, Pulluvan, Vannan, Paanan, Munnotanmar, Parayar, Kuravar, Kanikkar, Kaniyanmar, Munnuttavar, Anjuttan, Kallattukuruppanmar, Mavilan, Coppalan, Cheravan, Paravan, Tiyyamalayar, Karimpalar, Nayadi, Malapulayan, Malappandar and Malayarayan.⁴¹

Living in harmony with nature has been an integral part of Indian culture. This has been abundantly reflected in a variety of traditional practices, religious beliefs, rituals, folklore, arts and crafts and in the daily lives of Indian people from time immortal. This has been abundantly reflected in a variety of traditional practices.⁴² Stones are placed in the corner of the *Kavu*. Stones are the seat of the *Maladaivam*. There is no building in *Kavu*. The mountain God do not like the buildings used in stone and bricks. God is like the child of the *Adivasis* who live with rain and sun. The Kanikkars worship other deities like Padacha Thampuran, Ellakally Swami, Thampuran Kutty Amma, Thiruvathupara Ayyan, Ayyanar, Valiya chavukal, Cheriya Chavukal, Vadasserikotta Aduvallil Thampuran, Ammuttukavil Aduvalli Thampuran and Kottar Thampuran.⁴³

The forest and hill tribes, however, are well known to be undergoing a slow process of Aryanisation or rather Brahmanization as a result of their contact with the Brahmin customs of their neighbours in the plains and to often pay a sort of reverence to the Hindu Gods while they simultaneously worship their original spirit deities.⁴⁴

Majority of Kanikkars profess Hinduism and worship Gods such as Durga, Murugan, Kali, Sivan, Vishnu, Bhagavthy, Sastha etc. Worship of the spirits of ancestor and *bhoothams* (demon) is also common among them.⁴⁵ The advent of Aryans brought them to the processes of Sanskritisation.⁴⁶ It made them to claim as the members of

36Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes, Vol-II, 1990, p.104.

37L.A Krishna Iyer, op.cit., p.28.

38T.Nandakumar, 'Star Tree' worship promotes Green Cause', The Hindu News Paper, 2016, p.6.

39Personal Interview with Maniyamma, worked in telephone exchange Kadakka on 19-08-2016.

40Shodh Ganga.inflibnet.ac.in, p.74.

41Shodganganga.Inflibnet.ac.in.

42www.indiantribalheritage.org

43John Jacob Kattakayam, op.cit., p.88.

44Census of India, Madras, 1901, p.39.

45A Sreedhara Menon, Kerala District Gazatteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1975, p.56.

46H.K. Bhat, "Hinduisation of Tribes- Critique and Prospective", in Baidyanath Saraswathi (ed.) Tribal Thought and Culture, New Delhi, 1991, p.219.

the Hindu caste and Hindu religion.⁴⁷ Now more than ninety per cent of the Kanikkars are followed Hindus by faith.

Ancestor worship:

The essence of the true Negrigo religion is ancestor worship.⁴⁸ The Kanikkars believed in the ancestor worship related to *chavukal*. The dead are not going to leave the family and they stand for the family. Since all dead people cannot be worshipped, they are chosen to worship important persons only. *Chavu* means ghost or dead bodies. In the form of ghosts are called *chavukal*. When an individual dies in an elephant's attack, he is called *anachavu*. When an individual dies in a tiger injury, he is called *pulichavu* or *kaduvachavu*. They believed that if they blessed the *chavu*, there would be some benefits.⁴⁹

Snake bite: Beliefs and practices:

The Kanikkars believe that after a snake bite the patient has to be taken to the *Vaithyar*, who remained a specialist in the treatment of the people affected with snake bite. The patient is supposed to send a forerunner to inform the *Vaithyar*. The *Vaithyar* should not be informed about the snakebite while he is sleeping, taking oil bath, brooding etc. There were certain superstitious practices that at times led to the tragic end of the patients. But the Kanikkars are still familiar with certain herbs that are having miraculous ability of healing.⁵⁰

If there is no bleeding at the bitten spot, it is suspected that there might be broken tooth in the wound. Hence, it is searched with a long stretched hair by moving it up and down over the skin. When there is hindrance for the smooth movement the spot is searched for the broken tooth by widening the mouth of the wound with *Namukkikay* (dry fruit of a flowering plant). So the blood from the bitten part oozes out.⁵¹ Until the recent times the Kanikkars of Thiruvananthapuram district strictly follow their traditional rituals and customs. Snake worship or naga worship existed among Kanikkar. They mostly worshipped a snake called *Sarppam*. *Sarpa Kavu* (*abode of snakes*) is maintained in some Kani settlement

areas. In every day Kanikkar hook the lamp. Milk and banana were given in specific ways for snakes. They conducted special prayers for snakes.⁵²

The Kanikkars have no concept of temple for adoration. But still they are basically the followers of Saivism supplemented by a host of *Gramadevathas*. They worship God under the foot of trees and in the *Kalams*. *Thekkath* is constructed in square type using stones. They usually plant a *Champak* tree near the *Kalam*. Those who had premature death were considered as ghosts and were adored. The males who had accidental death were called *Muthi*. There are so many temples and *Kalams* and rock in their name as centres of worship. Their most important mother Goddess is Thampurankutty Amma. Besides they have Goddess like Venkamala Thampuratty, Aruvimooopathy Amma and Ponmudi Thampuratty. For each clan and each family they have separate *Moorthies*. They later worshipped Hindu Gods like Agasthyan, Subramanyan, Sivan and Ganapathy.

The original qualities and abilities of the Kanikkars are in a stage of decline. Although the position of power remains, the authorities have no right to execute their power. Now the power is exercised by *Gramapanchayath*. They are electing their representatives in the same way as all common people elect their leaders. Leaders are emerging from themselves. Even though law and order is controlled by the Police, crimes are very rare among the Kanikkars. They are generally against violence. Observing the characteristics of their political structure, the constitution of a country can be moulded.

Tradition and custom were the basis of their existence. With the advent of culture, more and more youth are being cultured. If the Kanikkars became not enthusiastic of tribal traditions and customs, their very existence of would be collapsed. Educational development among them is yet another reason for the collapse of tribal political structure. The Kanikkars accord a high position to their women in society. They were not forced to do hard work. They were given high concern

47P.R.G.Mathur, Tribal Situation in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1977, p.181.

48H.H.Johnston, Liberia, Vol.II, Hutchinson, London, 1906, p.374.

49M.V. Vishnu Namboothiri, Folklore Nikandu, p.27.

50See the Chapter IV on Hereditary medicines of the Kaikkars.

51N.Viswanathan Nair, op.cit., p.60.

52Personal interviews with Nithya,a Kani woman worked in TBGRI on 22-5-2017.

53Data collected through field study.

during pregnancy period. Special protective houses were built for women and children since modern society ignore the old aged and the weak send them out of their houses. The great concern the Kanikkars give to their old aged people should be a model to the modern society.

Present day Kanikkars are very particular to use modern dress.⁵³ Boys wear shorts at home. They wear pants, shorts and shirts when they go to school and other places. Girls usually wear skirts and blouse. Sometimes they wear *churidars* when they go out. Men usually wear *lungies* and shirts at home and wear clothes and outer covering clothes when they go out. For public functions men and women wear linen or satin cloths. Women wear *lungies*, *nightees*, blouse etc. at home and *churidars* and *sarees* when they go out for public functions. Men do not wear studs on their ear in recent times. Wealthy man nowadays financial background men now wear golden chains, bracelet, ring and watch. Women wear golden chain, bangles, stud, ring, angle chain and watch. They use soap, shampoo, etc. as the modern people.

In olden times they were depending on agriculture for their livelihood. Modern education made many of them Government employees. Thus, their standard of life has risen. The ancient method of cultivation has given way for modern method of cultivation. As the land was divided giving boundaries, they began to cultivate crops according to their wish. Kanikkars who live in settlements in the interior of the forest travel to kilometres to reach the countryside to buy rice, fish and other commodities necessary for their food. Mere agricultural activities may not give them a decent livelihood. Hence, they seek new job opportunities. *Marumakkathayam* has now given way to *makkathayam*. Children became heir to their father's property after his death. Kanikkars who live in the country have land of their own. They get property by document and deed.

When tribal education was replaced by universal education, Government has started some schools specially meant for tribals. The tribals have not got its benefits as the Kani settlements were situated far away from these schools. During festival times, in dreams of a *plathi*, the successor *plathi* comes and he tells it to others and the next *plathi* is selected afterwards accordingly in their ethnic tradition.

Conclusion:

In the course of transformation the Kanikkars are

losing their tribal identity and unity. It is essential to preserve their contributions for the posterity. A closer observation of their life and culture would gather valuable things which would enable to mould the modern life. They have their own customs and traditions which have a long past. A student who is interested in folklore gets a deep sense of knowledge about their culture and life. From a close observation of the tribal life of the Kanikkar one can come to the following conclusion. The *Kani* tribes are very special people with their own culture, tradition, rituals, ceremonies, taboos, individuality and ethnicity. This group follows certain peculiar customs and practices and it make them distinct and unique from other groups. When the rigid caste system prevailed in Kerala, the Kanikkars also observed the practices among them and many times claimed their origin from the noble families and considered themselves as superior. When they conducted rituals and ceremonies, they kept the other tribal's having inferior position at a certain distance or did not invite to the functions.

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