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SOCIAL CUSTOMS OF MALAYALI TRIBAL WOMEN IN KOLLI HILLS

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The Malayalis constitute an endogamous group. The decent is recognized through the male line. The life style of the Malayalis is mostly based on traditional values. As per the legends, the Malayalis migrated to the hills from Kanchipuram. To be brief three brothers namely, *Periyannan*, *Naduannan* and *Chinnannan*, having become outcasts accidentally left their homes, married respectively a *Kaikola*, a *Vedan* and a *Palla* girl and founded the settlements at Kalrayans, Pachamalai and Kolli hills.¹ The Malayali settlements are known by the term *Ooru* and the Government of India has given them the status of Scheduled Tribes.²

Malayali Tribes

The word *Malai* denotes inhabitant of the hills. The Malayali are a Tamil speaking people. According to Thurston, the term *Malayali* has been derived from the words *Malai* meaning *hill* and *al*-meaning *person* and is used to denote people who lived on the hills.³ The Government of India accorded the status of scheduled tribes to the *Malayali*.⁴ The social life of the Malayalis center around the family set up to which members in the family are attached. The Malayalis follow the joint and nuclear family pattern. Father is head of the family. The entire households work done by women. Though the Malayalis have a number of children. The children engage in various works. As soon as a boy is married he set up a separate family in a newly erected house.

Tribal Women

The Malayali's Tribal women of Kollihills followed old own traditional customs and habits. They were belief in old legends and myths. The men position was dominated in the tribal society. The women position was second level. Women as well as men may work as agricultural day labourers. The women go to forest as a group to collect forest products.

Houses

All Malayali houses are detached built with bamboo and retuned with palm leaves and orrass. The wall of the hut is made of *bamboo thatti* plastered with mud on both sides. It has a single central room which is used both for cooking and living. There is no proper ventilation for the out let or the smoke.⁵

Food

They are non-vegetarian eating the meat of pigs, chicken, goats, sheep, eggs and fish etc., but abstain from beef because they worship to the cow. The staple food is *samai*, *jowar* and *ragi* and occasionally rice and wheat.⁶ They habitually take alcoholic drinks, they males smoke *bidi*, use tobacco and snuff. The female chew betel. Like all the people they eat food three times a day. Now a day they prepared modern food items Idli, Dosa, Poori, Sappati etc.