

# **The Voice of the Unheard: A Study on the Tribal Struggle in the Novel**

***Kocharethi***

Project submitted to the Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam in partial

recognition of the requirements for the award of the Degree of

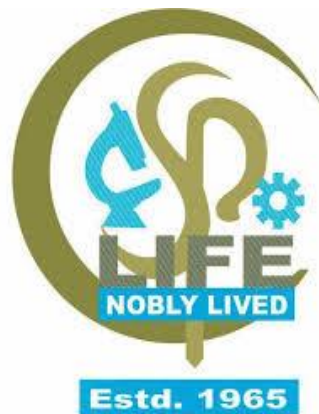
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## **Declaration**

I do hereby declare that the project “The Voice of the unheard: A Study on the Tribal Struggle in the Novel *Kocharethi*” is the record of genuine research work done by me under the guidance of Ms. Rosy Milna, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Paul’s College, Kalamassery.

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## **Certificate**

This is to certify that the project work “The Voice of the Tribal Struggle n the novel *Kocharethi*” is a record of the original work carried out by Benal Benny under the supervision and guidance of Ms. Rosy Milna, Assistant Professor, Department of English, St. Paul’s College, Kalamassery.

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## **Introduction**

The definition of tribal is relating to a group or community with similar ancestors, customs and traditions. An example of tribal used as an adjective is the phrase 'tribal traditions' which means the traditions of a group of people who have a common ancestor. Adivasi is the collective term for tribes of the Indian Subcontinent, who are considered indigenous to places within India wherein they live, either as foragers or as tribalistic sedentary communities. The term, 'tribe' originated around the time of the Greek city-states and the early formation of the Roman Empire. The Latin term, 'tribus' has since been transformed to mean, a group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor.

A tribe is a social group, which occupies a definite area. It is characterized by cultural homogeneity and a unifying social organization. The identity and culture of tribes are closely linked to the natural resources and the environment in which they live. Tribals in Kerala (Adivasis of Kerala) are the indigenous population found in the southern Indian state of Kerala. Most of the tribal people of Kerala live in the forests and mountains of Western Ghats, bordering Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Tribal people groups who are food-gatherers, with diminishing population and very low or little literacy rates can be called as Primitive Tribes. Cholanaikkans, Kurumbas, Kattunaikkans, Kadars and Koragas are the five primitive tribal groups in Kerala.

During the last two decades Adivasi from Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Jharkhand have converted to Protestant groups. Adivasi beliefs vary by tribe, and are usually different from the historical Vedic religion, with its monistic

underpinnings, Indo-European deities lack of idol worship and lack of a concept of reincarnation. Tribal communities in India are the least educationally developed. First generation learners have to face social, psychological and cultural barriers to get education. This has been one of the reason for poor performance of tribal students in schools. Poor literacy rate since independence has resulted in absence of tribals in academia and higher education.

Extending the system of primary education into tribal areas and reserving places for needing them, they say, to work in the fields. On the other hand, in those parts of the northeast where tribes have generally been spared the wholesale onslaught of outsiders, schooling has helped tribal people to secure political and economic benefits. The education system there has provided a corps of highly trained tribal members in the professions and high-ranking administrative posts. Tribal children in middle and high schools and higher education institutions are central to government policy, but efforts to improve a tribe's educational status have had mixed results. Recruitment of qualified teachers and determination of the appropriate language of instruction also remain troublesome. Children attend for the first three to four years of primary school and gain a smattering of knowledge, only to lapse into illiteracy later. Few who enter continue up to the tenth grade; of those who do, few manage to finish high school. Therefore, very few are eligible to attend institutions of higher education, where the high rate of attrition continues. Members of agrarian tribes like the Gonds often are reluctant to send their children to school.

In the early twentieth century, however, large areas fell into the hands of non-tribals, on account of improved transportation and communications. Around 1900, many regions were opened by the British government to settlement through a scheme by which inward migrants received ownership of land free in return for cultivating it. For tribal people, however, land was often viewed as a common resource, free to whoever needed it. By the time tribals accepted the necessity of obtaining formal land titles, they had lost the opportunity to lay claim to lands that might rightfully have been considered theirs. Although an important loophole in the form of land leases was left open, tribes made some gains in the mid-twentieth century, and some land was returned to tribal peoples despite obstruction by local police and land officials.

In the 1970s, tribal peoples came again under intense land pressure, especially in central India. Migration into tribal lands increased dramatically, as tribal people lost the titles to their lands in many ways – lease, forfeiture from debts, or bribery of land registry officials. Other non-tribals simply squatted or even lobbied governments to classify them as tribal to allow them to compete with the formerly established tribes. In any case, many tribal members became landless labourers in the 1960s and 1970s, and regions that a few years earlier had been the exclusive domain of tribes had an increasingly mixed population of tribals and non-tribals. Government efforts to evict nontribal members from illegal occupation have proceeded slowly; when evictions occur at all, those ejected are usually members of poor, lower castes.

*Kocharethi* is a Malayalam novel by Narayan, often described as Kerala's first tribal novelist that was published in 1998. The novel was critically acclaimed and went on to win the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award.



*Kocharethi* is recognized as a landmark piece in Malayalam literature. The novel depicts the history, traditions and sufferings of the tribal community that lived in the mountain folds of the Western Ghats in the early twentieth century. Narayan wanted to portray the lives of his community as it is which was often misrepresented in the works of non-tribal writers. The book is about the rich culture of tribals and their challenge to preserve their culture. It is the story about a culture on the verge of change. While reading *Kocharethi* readers are taken to a world totally different from our long acquaintance with Indian literature or regional literatures. Here, readers introduced to an alien world which had been in darkness until then. Through tribal literature, a history which remained buried in history for long years become documented. All these writings try to, set right the deliberately distorted native life.

The novel moves from an ethnohistorian's point of view to the one with palpable emotions and standard structure in the second half of the novel. The National movement, rise of Gandhi and the Congress party become only secondary matters to Arayars since their primary concern has always been existence. The character development of Kunjipennu and Kochuraman from daring and hardworking couple into withdrawing and anxious parents who seek advises on day-to-day matters from their aashan is remarkable. The character of Parvati is much complex in comparison with her mother. Parvati can be seen as a self centered and thankless modern young woman who disobeys her parents for her love. But at the same time she represents the younger generation of the tribal community who enjoys the advantage of education, reservation provided by the new government and finally a steady income that is not changeable according to the climate. *Kocharethi* narrates the

tale of the Mala Araya adivasi community in the early half of the twentieth century through the lives of Kunjipennu and her husband Kochuraman. It is set against the backdrop of the Western Ghats in the pepper belt along the Kerala – Tamil Nadu border.

The poverty of the community is ruthlessly exploited by moneylenders, landlords, the businessmen and the police and gradually this unholy nexus of the upper classes and upper castes results in the alienation of the Arayans' lands and those resisting are beaten into submission. Kunjipennu and Kochuraman meanwhile have a daughter, Parvati and the establishment of a school in the village marks the beginning of another social transformation in the community. Parvati later gets through college and finds a job in Kochi where she marries against her parents' wishes and slowly begins to distance herself from the community. Kochuraman's alcoholism finally results in his taking ill and is forced to seek treatment in Kochi where Kunjipennu accompanies him. His hospitalisation is supported by Parvati's husband and friends but when Kochuraman and Kunjipennu are told that he will require surgery they, mortally scared of modern medicine, escape from the hospital. This novel is a popular literary creation portrays the life, customs, and traditions of tribal people. As it is a work from minority community, it has a root and can speak lots of things to the modern society. When analysing the novel on different perspectives, one of the most suitable way of reading is in the aspect of tribal study. And a deep analysis on how the novel can be considered as the core text of tribal studies is also discussed in the coming chapters.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Tribal Culture; An Overview**

The Indian tribal society is a unique society with diversity of nature and people. In our country known for the extreme poverty of the masses, the tribal constitute the core of the poor. Poverty, poor health and sanitation, illiteracy and other social problems among the tribal exerting a dragging effect on the Indian economy .The five year plans formulated the implementation of a serious of investment; backed schemes and project for the betterment of the conditions of the tribal living in the rural and the urban areas. Many of the tribes with their forest; dwelling culture do not have the motivation or the skill of settled cultivation. As a result, their land has been alienated to their better endowed tribal neighbours or non-tribal. There have been many tribal studies in India based on tribal economy land alienation, socio-economic development tribal.

Due to long association with the tribal people, the minority non-tribal communities also adopted many social customs and traditions of tribal culture which clearly had distinct advantage over their own tradition and social customs for example, cross cousins marriage of tribal tradition has been adopted by the non-tribal castes to win over the dowry problems. Tribalism of larger society is the function of upper hand of tribal culture.

According to Singh K.S a known principally for his oversight and editorship of the people of India survey and for his studies of tribal history wrote that:

The Tribal in India is the most adversely affected ethnic group due to development in post-Independence India. The new

economic policy is likely to worsen their conditions. The efforts can be made to salvage and improve their socio-economic conditions within the possibilities and constraints of their existential realities which inter alia, include rural, illiteracy, poverty, ill-health and unproductive agriculture (43)

In general, there has been a situation, where the government's efforts of tribal welfare with protective and developmental measures do not make any remarkable impact on tribal development. The tribal development has been a challenge for government in the area of Economic, Education, Social, Political and human backwardness and exploitation of tribal. Hence, the present study intends to find impact of welfare measures on tribal backwardness, exploitations and underdevelopment.

Indian English writers generally come from the elite section of the society and deal with general themes confronting the nation and society. Tribal India is the 'other world' for them. It hardly finds Indian English novels based on this theme. Nevertheless, a few Indian English writers have dealt with the theme of Tribal India in their writings. Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), Kamala Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams* (1969) Manohar Malgonkar's *The Princes* (1963) Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* (1993) and Ruskin Bond's short stories are a few examples of work that deals with different aspects of Tribal India.

Films have always been a racist weapon and continue to be brazenly used to belittle, demean and demonize tribal culture. All over the world, films have been portraying Tribal as barbaric, violent and uncivilized brutes. Objectification of tribal women has also been very common.

The tribes are the group of people, often related families, who lives together, sharing the same language, culture, and history especially those who do not live in towns or cities. The term tribalism is refers to the loyalties that people feel towards particular social group and to the way these loyalties affect, their behaviour and their attitudes towards others. The cultural development means that culture is an indispensable concept like society but it is also vague and contested. The culture is defined as exploring causes connecting tribal culture and economic development. Many tribes describe themselves as nations and their government mobilizes the symbols of nationhood.

The impact of economic development on socio- economic condition of tribes delineating not only the influence of economic planning on their life style but also dealing important measures for improvement in their socio economic condition .Due to contact with other cultures, the tribal culture is undergoing a revolutionary change. Due to influence of Christian missionaries the problem of bilingualism has developed which led to indifference towards tribal language. The tribal people are imitating western culture in different aspects of their social life and leaving their own culture. It has led to degeneration of tribal life and tribal arts such as dance, music and different types of craft.

The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes asserts that unless exploitation among the tribal is combatted and eliminated through education, no improvement in tribal welfare will occur. Within tribal areas, education can be the basis for integrated development. Government reports indicate that there is no scarcity of schools, other facilities or scholarships for the implementation of tribal education schemes. Most tribal youth find these

incentives unattractive, however. Consequently, the government's dream to assimilate the tribes remains unfulfilled and raises basic questions about the implementation of such policies and strategies. The society should realize that the tribal culture has to be preserved, which has been buried in giving more attention of industrialization and modernisation.

First step is to love the tribal culture in India to understand the uniqueness of their culture. Warm hospitality, simple ways of living and sincere judgment of the opinions is some of the traits that mark the tribal cultures of India. Their custom depicts their belief in simplicity. Most of the tribes in India have their own Gods and Goddesses that reflect the dependence of tribal people on nature. Except for the few most of the tribes in India is sociable, hospitable, and fun loving along with strong community bonds. Some of the tribes shares patriarchal cultural ties and some of the tribal societies are women oriented. They have their own festivals and celebrations. The tribal people are clinging to their identity despite of the external influences that threatened the tribal culture especially after their post-independence turbulent period. The importance of literature in their life is the most different thing because of their illiteracy. If a writer comes from the background of minority culture, it seems to be different in the phase of literature. *Kocharethi* by Narayan is a novel under this category. This project aims to focus how the novel reflects the ethnic culture of tribal people and their difficulties and struggles that they overcome in the present era.

## Chapter 2

### The Voice of Malayarayans

*Kocharethi* is the debut novel of Narayan. He belongs to the Malayarayar tribe and is considered Kerala's first tribal novelist. The novel is later on translated into English by Catherine Thankamma. The novel depicts the history, traditions and the true lives of the tribal community. The book was about a protagonist and her family, their struggle for land and challenges to preserve their myths and customs. This novel explains about the Malayarayar community and its experiences that inhabit the Western Ghats of central Kerala. The work depicts the oppression faced by the tribes to various socio-economic and political realities.

The innocence of the people was clearly depicted in the novel. The land was not separable as they are the first inhabitants of their own land. They were strong hardworking and self-reliant as an individual and as a community. One part of the novel was filled with particulars of beliefs, rituals, rites and customs of their community. Modernism was unknown to them but man and God were integral to each other. Apart from the life style of the Malayarayar, the picturization of the landscapes and the sources of herbs, natural products, their method of medication were specially explained in various occasions.

The central plot or the idea of the novel stresses on the suppression, survival struggle and self-identity of the people in the Malayarayar community. They did not know even simple calculations like adding and subtracting. The community depended heavily on food and crops. Pepper was the most sought after commodity. The main problem they faced was the lack

of irrigation. They had to depend completely on seasonal rain. The traders often cheat them as they did not give a fair price for the forest products obtained from the Malayarayers. They were subjected to other modes of exploitation too. Taxes levied on them were too heavy. They were required to pay tax for the right to live and cultivate on the land owned by the king as well as the British colonial administration. They were living in their own land as a tenant. Even after the hard work, they lost their family, land and identity. Some of these consequences and failure of traditional sources forced them to conversion of their religion.

The novel *Kocharethi* especially explains about the life of the young Araya woman Kunjipennu and Kochuraman and their family as well as the community. The author clearly portrays the entire above said struggle, identity, suppression, colonization through the characters. In between the struggles in the life of the Arayas Kochuraman and Kunjipennu were in search of better education and employment opportunities for their community children for creating a better generation. But this also marks an important point in the documentation of a unique life style and the close communion with nature slowly faded and distanced from the older tradition.

Indian English Literature gradually develops from the ancient traditional form to the modern form of writing. Now Indian writing in English has gained a worldwide acceptance and recognition. The Indian English writers write with an Indian flavour which suits the Indian mode of feeling and expression. Gradually all major literary genre, prose, poetry, drama and novels developed. Though novels had its origin in the recent past Indian writers in English by their genius, they changed the old form of writing through



successful narrations, newer themes and techniques. Theories like post colonialism, structuralism, orientalism, post modernism and psychological theories emerged and are used in practice. Indian English Literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under the colonial rule.

In India, English has created new experimentation in the field of Indian writing. The ranges of English have expanded, as the varieties within a variety have been formed. The rise of the novel in India was not purely a literary phenomenon. The tribal writers from various parts are coming to light. However, the scenario was quite different in the ancient periods, with Indian tribals delivering literature sticking just to word of mouth. The number of languages in which Indian tribal communities have been expressing themselves is breathtakingly huge. Tribals in India have indeed taken to writing now-a-days. Many tribal languages now possess their own scripts or have taken recourse to the state scripts. Approximately four decades ago, when Dalit literature started pulling the nation's attention, tribal writers also came into the limelight. During the last twenty years the various tribal voice and literary works have started making their presence felt. Narayan started his literary career by writing a few short stories, which were published in periodicals. The writing did not attract the attention of readers but it did attract attention of the negative sort: of his immediate superior.

The present novel *Kocharethi* depicts the history, traditions and the true lives of the tribal community. The book was about their customs. This novel explains about the malayarayar community and its experiences that inhabit the economic and political realities. The presence of colonial

domination, bureaucratic greed, freedom struggle, survival struggle, and struggle for native identity can be seen throughout the novel. The innocence of the people is clearly depicted in the novel. The land is not separable as they are the first inhabitants of their own land. They are strong, hardworking and self-reliant as an individual and as a community. One part of the novel is filled with particulars of beliefs, rituals, rites and customs of their community. Modernism is unknown to them but they relate themselves with nature. Apart from the life style of the Malayarayar, the picturization of the landscapes and the sources of herbs, natural products, their method of medication are specially explained in various occasion.

The central plot or the idea of the novel stresses on the suppression of Malayarayar community. The community depends heavily on food and crops. Pepper is the most sought after commodity. The main problem they faced is the lack of irrigation. They depend completely on seasonal rain. The traders often cheat them as they do not give a fair price for the forest products obtained from the Malayarayars. They are subject to other modes of exploitation too. The main themes such as alienation, betrayal, difficulties, joys and sorrows are faced by the tribal community of Malayarayar. In between the struggles in the life of arayers, Kochuraman and Kunjipennu are in search of better education and employment opportunities for their community children for creating a better generation. But this is also marks an important point in the documentation of a unique life style and the close communion with nature slowly faded and distanced from the older tradition. The story gives the clear picture of the central characters and the other characters that face problems of psychological exploitation. Narayan portrays

how these characters analyse their self and try to escape the suppression in the novel.

The conception of exploitation is the treatment of human beings as mere objects. It also refers to the use of people as a resource with no consideration and using the other for their own personal benefit. Exploitation can also be said as taking something off a person or a group that rightfully belong to them in an unjust or cruel manner. In the novel most of the tribal characters are haunted with dreadful memories, mental oppression through natural hazards as well as from the higher authorities. Kunjumundan one of the characters sells his pepper, straight from the vine after his hard work. The payment is delayed by the traders and finally the date is fixed. Kunjumundan and his son meet Mothalali, a trader on the fixed date. His is given money by the trader and asked to count it. Soon after they get the money, the father and the son tries to leave. Just then a group of stranger entered the room and asks for the money. Kunjumadan says, "This is the payment for the pepper I sold to Pareethu mothalali. We're not thieves"(104). But the intruders try to wrestle the money from them. Kunjumundan and his son are in a desperate condition to save the money. But they start to attack. No one is there to support them, even the policemen. The tribal people in the hills face several problems in various ways. They are given the false importance by the traders when they see the cashew nuts and peppers on the hills. The traders haunt the houses of Malayarayar to get the valuable food products which they get from their hard work.

The arayars are God-fearing people. According to them man and God are integral to each other. They are willing to do any work for the temple

without demanding the payment. The person who gets the support from the authorities enjoys the rights conferred upon them by some maharajas and demands the work from the arayers. Pattathil Kunjunni Pilla is a big man in that area demands the share of tax from the arayers and has the license to seize those who do not pay the tax. The arayers owes to give a sack of pepper as tenant dues to Kunjunni Pilla. Even the forest authorities come with their implements to destroy the coconut palms and plaintains and their dwellings with the help of the contractor. According to them it is government business. Taxes levied on them are too heavy. They are required to pay tax for the right to live and cultivate on the land owned by the king as well as the British colonial administration. They are living in their own land as a tenant. Even after the hard work, they lose their family, land and identity. Some of these consequences and failure of traditional sources force them to convert their religion. Survival struggle and identity crisis are the another problems faced by arayers. It gives an idea of battle, fight or to move about, so as to escape from something confining or to go or progress with difficulty. Their main duty is to safe guard their identity as well as their land. The arayar works and struggle hard to survive in their land. The arayers need to protect themselves not only from the higher authorities but also from the animals which destroys their crops. The animals like elephants; wild boars enter the field and destroy the crops. "Well, if the elephant and wild boar come and go, there won't be anything left of the paddy"(17).The elephant can appear at any time and destroy the crop. Kochuraman struggles and tries to protect the crops from the wild animals. There is a huge maruthu in the middle of the cultivated land. He builds an erumaadom in the hard tree as a look out to watch the animals. Once

an elephant has sighted grain it will not leave without eating it. Kochuraman is able to save the crop through his struggle and hard work. It is like a headache for the arayers to protect their crops from animals and birds. During the night Kochuraman needs to protect the fields from elephants and in day time the birds and wild fowl come to eat the ripened grain. This show, how the arayers struggles hard for their survival.

They understand knowledge about calculation and outside world is necessary and important for their living. With the help of Krishna Pilla who acts as a protector of the arayers has given advice to Kochuraman and others to give education to their children. He sends an Aashan Kochupilla who is a teacher. Kochupilla stays there and starts teaching the children to read and write. With the help of the teacher the children in the hill learns to read, write and to do calculations. Parvati, daughter of Kochuraman and Kunjipennu goes to school with other children. The people in the hill doesn't want their grown up daughters to continue their studies. But Parvati says, "I want to study. To study and study and become a magistrate" (155).

With great struggle Parvati continues her studies against her father's advice. After she gets a job she uses to send some amount of money to her parents. Then she gets married to Padmanabhan whom she is in love against their parent's wish. Kochuraman and Kunjipennu are upset thinking about her daughter. They think that, they are cheated even by their daughter. Kochuraman frequently visits toddy shop and Kochuraman experiences bouts of tiredness and stabbing pain in the stomach. He never tells anyone about it. Medicines bring no relief to him, so he increases his intake of arrack. Another day he experiences a terrible stabbing pain when he drinks

arrack. It is so severe that he could not take a single step. He is admitted in the hospital. Padmanabhan and Parvati visit the hospital and offers help to them. Kunjipennu takes care of him in the hospital and when she leaves for home she is horrified to see the yard. Banana trees, sweet potato, yam everything is eaten by the cattle. She borrows money from Pathrosu Nanaaru twice, each time making an imprint with her left thumb on a piece of paper.

Then Kochuraman is admitted in the Medical College Hospital. But both of them are unaware of the treatment, operation, doctors and hospitals. These people are unaware of the fact in the outer world. They plan to leave the hospital before the operation date is fixed for Kochuraman. At last they climb down the stairs and runs away from the hospital. Throughout the novel it is clearly seen that Kochuraman and Kunjipennu look forward to improve the life of their children through education. Therefore they work hard to earn. Pepper becomes their identity, through which they earn and get respect from the traders. They learnt simple calculations for selling pepper. It plays an important role in the life of arayars. Giving better education to their children the arayars become happy. But they realize the generation gap between them and their children. Even though they try to make changes in life, they are not able to move forward to modernity by leaving their real identity, their land, culture, tradition, nature etc. It is an attempt to read the analysis of oppression, sufferings and frustration of Kochuraman, Kunjipennu and other characters in the novel, their constant thinking of escape from the horrors of life. In order to escape from the hoarse reality of life, which tortures them, the characters try to escape into different activities, especially Kochuraman. The theme of survival, struggle, self-identity, and exploitation runs from the beginning to end.

## Chapter 3

### Malayarayan; The Monarch of Hills

Colonialism draws boundaries between us and them and looks down upon those who are different. However, the hallmark of post-colonial studies is inclusiveness; respecting the viewpoints of others. When the neo-colonial forces continue with the demonization of the other conflicts are bound to occur. The tribals are represented in the mainstream media and literature as a monochromatic figure like the Rakshasan or Nishacharan of mythological stories. In this instance *Kocharethi* (1998) a Malayalam novel by Narayan, often described as India's first novel by an Adivasi writer about his community, can be taken as an insider's take on the misrepresentation of a marginalized community. This paper attempts to analyze the tribal culture, the theme and characterization in the novel where protagonist Kunjupennu and her childhood love and later husband, Kochuraman, become the representatives of the Malayarayan tribal community who inhabit the Western Ghats bordering the districts of central Kerala.

The representation of tribals who are supposed to be loitering somewhere in the backyards of society has always been problematic in the main stream media and literature. They were drawn in paternalistic or discriminatory hues bracketed with other sections in the fringes of society. Justifiable anger was felt against such false representation of themselves by the educated adivasis of Kerala. But the resources available to a community, who were trying to find a place for themselves in a highly antagonistic environment, to fight back are minimal and they were forced to swallow their

wounded pride. Narayan's *Kocharethi* (The Araya Woman), was in fact a response against such portrayals. The novel thus becomes a history of the Malayarayan community from the point of view of one of its members. The second half of the novel depicts the disillusionment and agony of the principal protagonists Kunjipennu and Kochuraman. The work received accolades internationally and is even part of the academic canon now. The story of the Malayaraya adivasi community is told through the lives of Kunjipennu and her husband Kochuraman, set in the first half of the twentieth century in the Western Ghats. Narayan narrates a unique set of rituals life , cycle rituals- marking birth ceremonies, marriage customs and funeral services assimilating the individual to the social fabric of that community observed by the malayarayars. Social taboos related to the days of menstruation were highly conspicuous among them. Each house had an eettappera into which a woman retreated during menstruation for seven days as well as during childbirth.

It is clear from the novel that until recently, endogamy was the norm among the Malayarayar community. Marriage was regulated through clan exogamy or illam. Girls were married only after attaining puberty. Marriages were arranged by negotiations between the elders of the clan. There was no system of dowry among them. A Malayarayan woman was brought to her natal home for the first delivery. Pollution related to childbirth had to be observed by close relatives. For seven days, oil baths, drinking toddy and eating meat were prohibited. Appearing before the deities and performing religious rites was also a taboo. Narayan also gives detail description regarding the rituals and practices associated with death. Cooking fires would not be lit in the house where a death had occurred. First, the house would be swept in a northerly



direction after which the dead person's children and relatives together bathed the corpse and placed it on a plantain leaf in the front yard near the door, with the head facing east. A wick would be lit and placed near the head. According to custom, the eldest son had to perform the funeral rites. All those who partook in the burial ceremony would bathe in the stream, before leaving. Close relatives would share a meal of rice gruel the following day. Pula was to be observed for fifteen days, during which period it was taboo to touch weapons. They would not enter cultivated land, perform any rites, or appear before idols. Liquor and contact with women were also strictly forbidden. On the fifteenth day, a ritual bath and on the sixteenth day, a festive meal for relatives and friends was served.

Each Araya household had certain family deities. It was the duty of the eldest son of the family to offer pooja to the deities. The offerings were provided to the lowest deity, marutha, followed by the higher deities. Each deity was supposed to have a special liking for a particular object and that was offered to him or her. The deities also had their preferences for food. The most significant feature of the Malayarayar form of worship was that their day to day lives were one with it. They had a unified vision of life. Man and God were integral to one another. Malayarayars believed that the gods kept close watch over them. They considered natural calamities as the sign of the anger of ancestral spirits for wrongs done. The Gods were invested with human qualities like anger or sadness. They even had changing fortunes with increase or decrease in their power over the lives of men. The Arayars had their own system of treatment which was centered on religion and nature. The treatment given by Ittyadi the Velichapad shows the enduring link between religion and

medicine. People had firm faith in the abilities of the Velichapad to cure afflictions, though very often he had to face failures. Kochuraman, his son-in-law used various herbs and other natural products like animal fat to cure diseases. Their lifestyle indicated a self-sufficient economy, a major part of the income coming from exchanging a part of what they cultivated in the farm. Even the family names of the malayarayars were obtained from some tree or rock near which the house stood. It is a novel about a community's transition to modernity that requires them to abandon older ways of living and the transition is imposed on them through poverty, dubious and discriminatory modes of development that benefit the upper-caste landlords and the corrupt state machinery. Drought and torrential rain torment the entire community as every single Araya slides deeper into debt and drink. Moneylenders, landlords, the businessmen and the police exploit them adding to their misery. The Arayas who make attempts at resistance against authoritarian forces are crushed. The community as a whole is forced out of their traditional skill-sets and labor practices by poverty.

By mid- nineteenth century changes began to trickle down. The arrival of Christianity resulted in losing faith in their forms of worship and gods. Proselytism led to the erosion of the distinct tribal identity and culture. Christianity offered access to education which equipped them to handle trade and commerce better. The converted members began to distance themselves from community rituals and celebrations. They also adopted a patronizing approach towards their former brethren. Hindu orthodoxy tried to civilize them through Aashan Kochupilla, who teaches the Araya children, by appropriating them into a brahminical system of belief and placing their deities in the

pantheon of Hindu gods. The arrival of the teacher in the village marks the start of another transformation as the Araya children begin to go to school. Parvati daughter of Kochuraman and Kunjipennu, passes the school final exam and finds a job in Ernakulam. She marries against her parents' wishes and slowly breaks her connections with the community. Narayan presents a Malayarayan as one who lives in close proximity with nature. His life cycle rituals, medicines, and gods everything derived from nature. He cultivates the soil relying on seasonal rains for irrigation. If the rains fail or some natural calamities occur he blames it on the anger of ancestral spirits. Even when he has a good harvest he gets cheated by the Muslim and Christian traders. It was easy for them, as the uneducated Arayans could not do even simple calculations. For cultivating the land too he needs to pay a heavy rent since the land is owned by the king. Independence erodes the power of the local king, substituting one exploitative mechanism for another.

Changing lifestyle brings in new diseases that cannot be cured by their medicines. Kochuraman who is a practitioner of tribal medicine now has to be treated in the city hospital when he falls sick. Kunjipennu accompanies him supported by Parvati's husband and friends. But when they discover that he requires surgery, mortally scared of modern medicine, Kunjipennu and Kochuraman escape from the hospital. The system fails to come to their succor and instill confidence in them. Their educated and employed daughter in the city too was unable to do anything. May be modern education severed her ties with her people. She can no longer understand their language or anguish. In this regard it is necessary to examine the five fundamental principles; (Nehruvian Panchsheel) of tribal development followed in the country: People

(tribals) should develop along the lines of their own genius and everyone should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture .The second one is tribal rights in land and forests should be respected. The third one is everyone should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory. Next one is everyone should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions. The last one is to judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

The implementation of such principles exist only in paper even after several decades, 'Mala' is the Malayalam word for hill and arayar may be semantically related to 'Arachar' meaning ruler. Malayarayars were in fact controlling the western slopes of the Ghats for time immemorial. But now they are forced to move out of their place in search of livelihood elsewhere. The money that is pumped by various government schemes are swindled by corrupt officials and middlemen. A generation grows up without roots and ignorant of their customs and traditions looking down upon their own brethren still residing in the forest. Narayan documents all these changes and the gradual loss of identity of his people. His novel reflects the ethos of a people in transition in a manner that is simple yet empowering and utterly unique. Through the work he registers his community's pent up anger against the attempts made by external agencies, religious and governmental, to civilize

them and their misrepresentation in the main stream media. Rather he presents them as a self-reliant, hardworking community who live in close communion with nature, with their own set of values.

Narayan's *Kocharethi* , with all its literary limitations of a first generation learner who is forced to write in the language of the majoritarian culture seems to be a right attempt in this direction. The main characters like Kochuraman and Kunjipennu are the mirrors of Malayaraya community. Even though they are in a pathetic condition, they never tried to kneel down in the front of upper class or the urban culture. They always like to follow their culture and traditions. At a time, when tribals all over India are fighting for their land and cultural identity, this novel is the correct literary creation of how some people are reinvented their cultural identity. Because, many of the incidents in the novel are based on real events. So, this novel can be regarded as a remarkable one in the history of literature as well as in the tribal studies. The quest for identity is one of the most themes of any aboriginal literature. Struggle to find an identity of their own is the most important concept that discussed throughout the journey of this novel by Narayan.

## Conclusion

The tribals have a rich oral literature in the forms of songs, tales, and riddles. Though these are older than the written literature of mainstream tradition, they have been given a lower status than the written word, something that many ponder about but they have influenced the written word to a great extent. Now-a-days, the tribal songs and tales come to the public in the form of translation. A number of writers and compilers have gathered these oral forms and translated them into Indian languages and into English. Apart from the theme of protest, other aspects of the life of the tribals too are reflected in these narratives. Their unwritten literature has songs about love, ritual, joy and sorrow. They are sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments and are a clear indication of their celebratory instinct. They also show that tribal life is vibrant.

The novel narrates story of an Araya family, it is about the entire community with its different aspects in a changing socio-economic and cultural contexts. From the story it is clear that the novelist is depicting a society that has been undergoing transition with the advent of modernity. Narayan has unique strategies to present to the world that the adivasi have a distinct way of life which may not be experienced by a non-tribal writer. Narayanan's writing has been deeply influenced by his lived experience and memories. As a person belonging to an identical culture, Narayan's descriptions give a sense of precision and focus when read the sequence, manner and means involved in the rituals. For example, appearing in wet clothes for the ritual, praying the goddess of the harvest, then to the sun and

the moon (sequence) are rituals known to a person who is part of the same culture. Apart from description of rituals, the use of local idioms particularly words typical to the people and proverbs help him to make his representation distinctly that of a local culture. Narayan's portrayal of his inner experience can also be seen as a strategy. The experience is unique as it is specific to the Arayars as they have lived experience of ill-treatment and oppression. The experience of ill-treatment can be one such example. They are ill-treated by the Christian and Muslim traders.

The experience and awareness of the writer also inspire him to give a solution to his people. In the novel the solution seems to be education. In the novel the character Parvathi gets education and gets a good position. In this sense the novelist not only wants the tribals to re-visit their past and link with the present, but also asks them to look into future. As a member of the community and as an elder who has the experience and vision for the people he is entitled to do this which may not be possible for a nontribal a writer. Coming back to the strategies of representation, one can notice a difference in representation of women in this particular novel. In this novel Kunjipennu resists Narayanan's advances. The novelist is also a responsible member of his community and presents his women with a lot of responsibility and understanding which other non-tribal writers lacked; they viewed tribal women from an unrealistic angle. The Indian tribal society is a unique society with diversity of nature and people. In India, known for the extreme poverty of the masses, the tribals constitute the core of the poor. Poverty, poor health and sanitation, illiteracy and other social problems among the tribals are exerting a dragging effect on the Indian economy. Many of the tribes with the forest-

dwelling culture do not have the motivation or the skill of settled cultivations. As a result, their land has been alienated to their better endowed tribal neighbours or non- tribals.

India is a country which is best known for its culture and tradition. Tribal groups are homogeneous, culturally firm and they wish to survive in their own style. Unlike the earlier tribal people, this current century tribes have normal dress code like other people. The major occupation of these tribal people is field work as farmers. When the girls attain their puberty, there will be seven days celebration at their houses. The marriage is not considered as an important custom of the villagers. Death is considered as an important ritual in this community. It can be concluded that the tribal people of India need still more improvement in all walks of their lives.

It is a novel about a community's transition to modernity that requires them abandons their older ways of living also whose transition is rarely voluntary. But, the transition is imposed on them through poverty, dubious and discriminatory modes of development that benefit the upper caste landlords and the corrupt state machinery. Narayan points his finger to the economic exploitation by the landlords and traders which proves to be the curse of the community in the modern India. In recent years, the government has shown more concern for the welfare and development of the tribals. Though necessary steps have been taken by the government, nothing reaches them properly. It is the duty of the officials to ensure that the packages for the tribals reach them and they get benefit from the packages. The novel showcases the tribal culture and gives an important message to every reader about how to protect the rich culture and announcing to travel back to the cultural roots too.



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