

'Gaddika' – Male Ritual in a Patrilineal Society as a Cultural Paradigm

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ABSTRACT Gaddika is a male ritual in the patrilineal society of Adiyar in which females have any role to perform. Now a days this ritual is found to be disappearing due to the non-availability of male functionaries and negative attitude of the youngsters. Shortage of male gender results in the replacement of new roles and functionaries adopted by the expansion of functional field and diffusion of that cultural trait into the mainstream culture as an adaptation.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking developments in social sciences in the last ten years has been the rise of gender as an important category of analysis (Showalter, 1989: 1). When we analyze separately, the different roles that the males and females in a society play, we can understand a clear structure of the society and its functioning. More over it is also a measuring unit of status (both men and women) when discussed in relation to one another. As Showalter (1989:4) says, "gender is not only a question of difference which assures that sexes are separate and equal, but of power, since in looking at the history of gender relationships, we find sexual asymmetry, inequality and male dominance in every known society".

It is a fact that these kinds of inequalities and dominance may vary from one community to other and in some instances it may inherit from generation after generation. In all the cases some of the factors such as hereditary pattern, residential pattern, ownership rights....etc. play a significant role in deciding the degree of discrimination. For example, among the Irula of Tamilnadu, the eldest male member is the head of the family and represents all other members of his household. As the Irula society is patrilineal, discrimination between males and females starts right from birth (Parthasarathy, 1986). In

another case, as a case of marginal modification, though the economic status of Narikorva women is almost at par with that of men in political and religious spheres the men dominate and thus their economic status is overshadowed by their men's political and religious status (Deepkumar and Ramachandraiah, 1986). Same is the case in all most all the tribal societies of India. Economic contribution is not the only factor in deciding the status. Indeed for a deep understanding, we need many micro level studies touching all the relevant areas require special attention to decide the status and gender inequalities in the tribal societies. The present paper is a description of one of the rituals of Adiyar, in which only male persons participate.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ADIYAR

Adiyar is a Scheduled Tribe of Kerala mainly distributed in the Wayanad district. They were an ex-bonded labourer community subjected to a worst form of bonded labour till 1970's. Now they are engaged as agricultural labourers under the non-tribal landlords. Luiz (1962) has observed that their name has originated from an old rule that they should maintain a distance of 'ar' (six), 'adi' (feet) to avoid pollution. They speak a language of their own which is a mixture of Cannada and Malayalam.

Nuclear family is the minimum social and economic unit among Adiyar and both males and females work together to eke-out the family needs. It is also interesting to note that a clear division of labour is prevalent according to sex. Men plough the land, prepare head loads, guard crops....etc. and women are engaged in transplanting, weeding, manuring, harvesting....etc. in addition to their household activities. Women labourers are getting more labour opportunities than the males. Adiyar men are comparatively lazy in economic pursuits and they are least

interested in agricultural activities connected with wetland cultivation.

Society is endogamous and divided into patrilineal clans and moieties. Clans are known as 'chemmam' and it is headed by a clan leader called 'chemmakkaran'. A group of hamlets in a specified territory constitute a 'naadu' headed by 'nattumoopan' who should be a male invariably belong to the clan which is having higher social status. He functions as judge, mediator and also officiates rituals and ceremonies.

There will be a 'kunnumoopan' (chief of the hamlet) under 'naattumoopan' for administering the 'kunnu' or hamlet. He is the decision maker in the affairs of a hamlet who also should be a male person. Two other male functionaries called 'kanaladi' and 'karimi' are also there for assisting the religious rituals and ceremonies performed by the 'naattumoopan'. A medicine man called 'thammadikkaran' is also included in the male centered politico-religious system of Adiyar.

Gaddika

When a person becomes ill, the relatives inform this to the 'thammadikkaran' (oracle). He examines the patient and gives a date for the performance of 'gaddika'. On this day all important people of their community are informed including the religious and political functionaries. The performance is done by the 'thammadikkaran' alone or jointly with other 'thammadikkar' of other settlements, under the supervision of 'nattumoopan'. Usually gaddika is performed at the patient's house or sometimes in the house of the 'thammadikkaran'. It can be conducted on any day but cannot be conducted by any other religious specialists except 'thammadikkaran'.

The 'thammadikkaran' makes the patient sit on the varandha facing north. Articles such as rice, basil flowers, two coconuts and a 'thali' (sacred chain) are kept in a small winnowing fan and placed in front of the patient. A magic stick is placed perpendicular to the ground keeping one end in the winnowing fan and the other end touching the wall. A small lamp with two wicks are lit and kept in front of it. An anklet is also placed near the lamp.

The functionaries sit in a semicircle around

the offerings kept. At the beginning the 'thammadikkaran' sings with 'thudi' (a drum like musical instrument) and others follow. After some time he gets possessed by their ancestral spirits and starts dancing. At this time one of the relatives of the patient ties an anklet on the leg of the 'thammadikkaran' and gives him the magic stick. He takes the coconut from the winnowing fan, circumbulates the patient and spines it on the ground. He picks up a few grains and circumbulates the patient again and gives it to the 'chemmakkaran' (clan leader). He counts it by two's and repeats the same procedure twice in the name of different gods. Then he removes the anklet, bows at the floor, touches the feet of the 'nattumoopan' (chief), and retires.

Then another 'thammadikkaran' starts performing 'gaddika' in order to get possessed. If he fails to be possessed, another person is asked to perform the same by the 'nattumoopan'. He takes the coconut and circumbulates it around the front door, and spins it on the floor. He repeats the same procedure with another coconut, until the eyes of both coconuts face the same direction. Then he takes one of the coconuts, looks eastward and beats the magic stick in the air and proposes 'thappu' (fine). At this time, 'thudi' is stopped, they enter into discussions on the nature of 'tappu'. Finally they try to reach a conclusion. 'Tappu' is paid to 'nattumoopan' in the form of cash and is given to the 'thammadikkaran'. If the 'tappu' imposed is not fully paid, the spirit refuses to release the patient and in that case 'gaddika' will have to be continued.

The patient is seated on the front door step, stretching the legs. A sacred chain is circumbulated thrice around the patient. A thread and a nail are brought to stick the spirit. At this stage another 'thammadikkaran' begins to dance with him. Raw turmeric, coconut, lime, dosha (a kind of dish), puffed rice and a potful of water are brought in a tray. The 'thammadikkaran' pounds the raw turmeric with a coconut, mixes it with lime and dissolves it in the water kept there. Then he puts some puffed rice into it. Then the patient's great toes of both legs are held together by one of the 'thammadikkars'. At the same time the other 'thammadikkaran' touches the head of the patient and beats the magic stick on the floor.

In order to remove the spirit, turmeric lime water is sprinkled on the body of the patient. A piece of dosha is taken and circumbulates around the patient and put into the turmeric lime water solution.

Two strings are tied on the great toes of the patient, stretching them straight on the ground in the centre of the courtyard and, fix them with nail. A circle is made around the nail. One 'thammadikkarān' pulls a tuft of hair of the patient. The patient begins to shiver. He then washes the string with turmeric lime water and circumbulates the patient with the sacred chain.

The 'thammadikkarān' removes one of the strings, circumbulates the patient with two wicks and keeps it near the nail. He tries to expel the spirit by blowing from head to foot. He keeps the tray near the nail, puts a coconut on it and spins. In spite of all these efforts, if the spirit does not release the patient, the 'thammadikkarān' takes a decision to offer a fowl's blood to the spirit. 'Nattumoopan' agrees to offer whatever the spirit needs. The 'thammadikkarān' holds the leg of the fowl and circumbulates the patient with it. Then a piece of turmeric, puffed rice, and 25ps are tied in a piece of cloth, and touched it on the head of the patient. The oracle blows vigorously and a knot is made again.

At this time the 'nattumoopan' sings religious songs followed by others. The 'thammadikkarān' circumbulates the patient with the fowl thrice and mildly thrashes the patient within. Taking the fowl near the nail, the 'thammadikkarān' then, prays holding it in his hands. After sprinkling turmeric-lime water on the nail, he strikes it down with a coconut. Then the coconut is broken with a knife and the string is cut. The fowl is circumbulated at first with the magic stick and then with the broken coconut pieces held together.

Then the 'thammadikkarān' places the dead fowl in such a way that the head is placed on the tray and the rest outside. Another coconut is taken from the winnowing fan and broken near the feet of the patient. 'Nattumoopan' recites the 'sastras' (religious songs) looking at the broken coconut. All the coconut pieces are kept in a tray besides a burning wick. Then every thing in the tray is poured under a plantain and the coconut pieces are taken back in the same tray. With this

ends 'gaddika'. Rs.15 is paid to the 'nattumoopan' as a reward by the members of the family. He shares this money, the coconut pieces and the fowl with 'chemmakkar', 'kunnumoopan', 'thammadikkarān'... etc. This religious experts and other relatives assembled are given feasts.

In olden days the 'gaddika' ritual had extended throughout the day, where as now it is reduced to a few hours.

CONCLUSION

From the description of this ritual it is found that there is no female participation in 'gaddika'. Even though Adiya female is contributing a major share to the family income, she has no role in religious and political affairs. Here in the case of Adiyān, the principal source of gender inequality resides in the 'functional field', the set of social functions, religious functions, politico functions and ideo functions that a gender have to perform. The functional field in turn responds to changes in the basic responsibilities and roles that a gender can play in a particular social structure. For example, shortage of a particular gender for a particular function may lead to change in that function with the replacement of new roles and functionaries based on gender differences. The customary laws and traditions involved in the creation of such a 'function' establishes new gender functions there by expanding the functional field. Here in the case of Adiyān, the weakening of the social and political functionaries lead to the gradual disappearance of rituals which are based on gender differences.

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