

Mannadiyar

Mannadiyar (or **Mannadiar**) is a Malayalam speaking Hindu forward caste from Palakkad region of Kerala state. Majority of Mannadiars are land owners, agriculture being their traditional occupation, ranging from poor farmers to big feudal landlords (Janmis). The house (Tharavad) of Mannadiars are called "Mannattu" like illams for Namboothiris. Various sub castes of Manndiar are Guptan, Moothan, Pathukudi (also known as "Dashagotram" or "Pathu Madom") and Tharakan.

Etymology

Manadiar is a honorofic title possessed by ancient landlords. The word is rooted from *mannu* (soil) and *udayors* (lords or owners) clubbed to form Mannadiars.

Few Nair families also found to use the title Mannadiars and they are called "Mannadi Nairs".

Gothram

Mannadiars belong to Kailasa gothram.^[1] Most of them are Vaishnavites^[2], where as Godesses and Lord Murugan (or *Karthikeya*), Shiva and Ayyappa are also worshipped.

Male members are identified by their family (Tharavad) name and female members migrate to their husbands' family after marriage and keep the husband's family name. The practice of using title "Guptan and Tharakan" is normally seen after middle age. Married female members were earlier addressed as "Akathaal" (in short as "Thaal" - means the person leaves inside the house)and with the time, the suffix transformed to "Ammal" and later to Amma and Mannadiar. Also as a sign of respect Male members are addressed as "Mannattappan" and Female members as "Mannattamma".

Unlike Nairs, Mannadiar observe "Makkathayam" (Patriarchy / Patrilineal system of inheritance) where the property and title are inherited by the male lineage.

Legend

There are some details available about the origin of this community - in "Kottichezhunnallathu"^[3] (The first programme used to be conducted by Samoothiri (Zamorin) kings after swearing on ceremony of each Eralppad-second in command - to establish their control over the region.The last Kottichezhunnallathu was believed to be held in 1909. It points to the era way back to 13th- 14th century which says about the asylum of a minister and his men from a local kingdom in the bank of river Kaveri of then *Cholamandalam* - to the king of Calicut (Kozhikkode) - The dispute arose from the decision of local king to marry the clever daughter of the minister who had found out a solution for a burning issue which was haunting the minister for days together. The legend - The issue was to make a necklace within 41 days, by a bowl of special pearls which was gifted by some traders to the king. Being curved holes inside, many had tried and failed. The intelligent daughter of the minister in her teenage could succeed in it with the help of some ants by using a ghee applied thread. Impressed up on the intelligence of the girl, the king wanted to marry her, but the local king being inferior in caste, the minister and his fellows were not happy. The angry king gave ultimatum for accepting the marriage or all vaisyas to leave the kingdom. Due to this the entire vaisya population in the desom, around 7200 families, had to travel away from choladesom and were segregated in groups . Some of the groups travelled towards west to cheranaadu.

As they had a bitter experience of living in a kingdom where they could not get the justice from their king, they decided to settle in a Desom(place) where the ruling king has got vision and justice. To know that, they used to present a pot filled with golden powder inside but a layer of sugar on top. They were habitual to sit in front of the king and after giving the pot, they request the king to give them land for living. Normally the kings used to reject

their request by thinking it was foolish to give them land in lieu of sugar. Finally they have reached to Walluvanad area and approached Samoothiri (Zamorin) of Kozhikkode (Calicut) for land. They had the same test with Zamorin. But King Zamorin got annoyed of their sitting and asked his minister " Mangattachan" to check the pot. After finding the golden powder in the pot Zamorin appraised of their cleverness but to check their integrity, asked them to come again next day. To test them, Zamorin made the sitting place muddy but they again sat there after spreading a cloth, though it was muddy. After this, the king understood it was not that they did not want to respect the king but it was their habit . Impressed up on their intelligence and straight forwardness, Samoothiri gave permission to build 'nagarams' (at places they liked) and sent *pathinaayirathil nair* - The chieftain who can arrange that much warriors on demand by zamorin - along with them and asked them to meet the king after construction of their Kuladevatha temples.

They built four 'Nagarams' called *Puthanangadi*, *Thiruvazhiyode*, *Vayillyamkundu* and Mangode (current names Chethallur, *Thiruvazhiyode / sreekrishnapuram*, *Katampazhippuram* and Mangode respectively) for cultivation and trade. After construction of temples, they met samoothiri along with their acharya. Impressed by the acharya's sivapooja and devotion, Samoothiri gave more land and arranged *adiyantharakkar* for them (the temple constructed for those adiyanthirakkar - "Kammalasserykkaavu" is still there near Thiruvazhiyode)^[4] but as per the local tradition, samoothiri restricted the wearing of "Poonool" (*The Sacred Thread*) to Upanayana & marriage time only and later the tradition has been discontinued.

Mannadiars & Guptans agglomerated in the above said regions or Nagarams where as the other sections found their livelihood in northern part of Palakkad namely, Kollengode, Nemmara, Panangattiri, Moothanthara, Chittur, Koduvayur etc.

Demographics

Mannadiar population is spread within Palakkad district only.

Language

Mannadiars mother tongue is Malayalam but significant portion of population speak good Tamil or mix of Malayalam and Tamil as well.

Occupation and lifestyle

Agriculture and business were their traditional ways of earning livelihood in olden days. Families without even a small paddy field was very rare in those times. The cross section of the community was a blend, ranging from poor farmers to big Feudal land lords (or "Janmis"). Earlier, they have taken huge acres of lands on a lease basis from the Kings or Naduvazhis and used it for cultivation purpose. Most of them owns Farm houses, called "Kalam" (കളം) which means the place for after - harvesting activities of paddy. After the land reforms, the attraction of agriculture went in a downward trend and some have shifted to plantation field and later focused on education, business and service sectors. Teaching was the most popular profession in earlier days among the community and many prominent teachers with their proud disciples had positively contributed towards the improvement of their community as well as the society in general. Today's generations are more focused on professional education and many have excelled in the fields of Engineering, Medical Science, Banking, Robotics, Space Technology, Computer Software, Military Services etc. But there is almost a vacuum in the area of political and civil administration.

Food habits of Mannadiars are a mix of vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Though many women still prefer to be vegetarian but men are mostly non-vegetarians (mainly fish, mutton and chicken).

Other than the normal Hindu festivals like Onam, Vishu, Thiruvathira, Karthika Vilakku, Deepavali and Dussehra are also celebrated by the new generation. Another special festival related to Onam, "Potta Thiruvonam" (on the day of Thiruvonam star coming in the malayalam month of 'Thulam') used to be celebrated in olden days mainly for

showing the sister's affection to their brothers - similar to the concept of Rakhi of North India and also "Shoora Samhara Mahotsavam" (to commemorate the killing of four asuras by Lord Murugan and his marriage with Valli and Devyani thereafter). One major occasion of family get together of these groups are during the annual temple 'Pooram'(പൂരം) festival of their respective "Paradevatha" (Family Goddess) temples.

Traditions and Customs

Marriage customs

Mannadiars' marriage process is almost similar to typical South Indian Brahmin's marriage events and procedures. The process starts with *Nishchayatartham* (*Ashtamangalyam*), the engagement ceremony hosted at Bride's home. The Kaniyan (the traditional astrologer) or the head of family members writes the "Lagna Patrika" specifying the date, time and venue of marriage and this serves as a sort of commitment for both the families. *Thamboola Prasna* - astrological prediction based on Beetle leaves and Deepam (oil lamp) - will be conducted as a ritual and results of the "Prasna" will be interpreted to all relatives assembled there. (This is to take remedial measures and precautions for hurdles foreseen in the future married life, if any). Other customs connected to this function are *Jatakam Kootikettal* tying the horoscopes of bride & groom together symbolically for the fixation of marriage and *Pon veykkal* (presenting Gold ornament to bride) by Groom's relatives (normally sister of groom) followed by feast. The Groom's family also sends to the bride cosmetics, dresses, a mirror and a basket filled with sweetmeats and fruits on this occasion.

Marriage is normally called *Paanigrahanam* and it is a simple function nowadays (earlier marriage was eventful for four days and groom used to travel to bride's house on an elephant, today the function is reduced to a day). The marriage ceremony commences with the groom arriving at Brides residence (or Kalyana Mandapa). The groom's aid will hold umbrella till they reach bride's house irrespective of the weather (*Kudapidikkal*) and *Nadhaswaram*, treated as sacred music will be accompanied. The groom will be received by a group of girls with tray of flowers, fruits, sweets and oil lamps (*Thalappoli*). In readiness for the arrival of the groom and his family, the bride's family keeps 'Chandan' (sandalwood paste), 'Kumkum' (vermilion), rose water, sugar candy, garlands and a platter for the 'Aarthi' (traditional welcoming ritual). Bride's younger brother will clean the groom's feet while receiving him to the mandapam (*Kaalu kazhukal*) and in return he will be rewarded with 'Kacha' (Dress) and Money. *Kacha Samarppanam* (giving clothes) will also be performed by groom to the relatives (normally eldest members) of both bride and groom and takes blessings from them. Once the procession reaches the marriage venue 'Aarthi' is performed and a coconut is broken to ward off evil.

The marriage ceremony proceeds with priests chanting mantras and *Thalikettu* at the Muhurtham specified in lagna patrika - tying the Thali chain in the bride's neck and exchange of garland (*Maala Mattal*) each other thrice. In the shastras, the exchange of garlands symbolizes their unification, as one soul in two bodies. It is inward acceptance by each of the very fragrance in the other. This is followed by *Paanigrahanam* (accepting the bride by taking holy vows), *Kanya Dhanam* (by keeping the hand of the bride into grooms' hand by bride's Uncle or father) and *Agni Pradakshinam* (after holding the hands mutually by a knot of their small fingers, groom and bride together move around the "Vivaha-homa agni", the sacred fire). After the rituals and Sadhya (Feast) and before *Griha Pravesham*, there will be *Sakunam Kanikkal* (showing Good Omen - normally the sight of a lady holding a pot with full of water in it or a five wick lamp) to both bride and groom and *Mangala Aarthi* is taken. Aarthi is taken many times during the ceremony. Reception (Introducing couples for friends, relatives and neighbors) will also be conducted on the eve of Marriage.

"Kaikottikkali", an important art form used to be performed in bride's house (previous night of the marriage) and groom's residence (on the day of marriage after receiving bride & groom) in olden days. Elite class used to conduct Kathakali too. *Palum Pazhavum* (feeding sweet milk and cut banana after marriage) and *Kavukeral* (visiting their respective Paradevatha temples after 7 days of marriage) are other customs related to marriage. Normally on the day

of marriage thali will be beaded in an yellow thread (*ManjaCharadu*), the same will be changed to a golden chain on the next day (or within 3 days), which is also been celebrated inviting close friends and relatives.

Though there are slight differences in traditions and customs of Mannadiars from its other related ethnic groups, marriages are taking place between them nowadays and also with the Nair communities.

Birth customs

"Puli Unu Kalyanam" or Seemantham Kalyanam – a small function will be conducted at the seventh month of Pregnancy (only in the case of first pregnancy) for bringing the pregnant woman to her house. This is very similar to the Seemantham function of Brahmins.

On the birth of a child the main rituals are:

- *Irupathettu* - the first birthday (star) as per the lunar calendar, 28th day after the birth.
- *Choorunu (Anna Prasam)* - the day on which the first morsel of food is given to the child, normally takes place within first six months. This is an important ritual in other sections of Hindus as well.
- *Peridal (Namakaranam)* – this function is normally performed on Choorunu occasion in a temple, where the father calls the name of the child three times in the right ear
- *Jakatam Ezhuthu* – writing the horoscope of the child based on the star.
- *Ponnidal* – the function where maternal grandfather and grandmother will wore a small golden ring and a chain on the child.
- *Vidyarambham* – This is done when the child becomes 3 or 4 years old. "Hari Shri Ganapathaye Namah Avignamastu" and all the alphabets will be written on the tongue of the child with a piece of gold dipped in honey. The child is also made to write "Hari Shri" with the right finger on raw rice in a vessel (*Uruli*). Either father of the child or an eminent teacher officiates this event.

Other major functions are Sashtiaapdapoorthi or *Shashtipoorthi* (celebrating the 60th birthday), *Sathabhishekam* (celebrating the 84th birthday equivalent to seeing of 1000 full moon)

Death customs

When a Mannadiar is dying, he or she will be given the droplets of holy water (water from Kashi or Rameswaram) and mantras are chanted in the ear. This is performed for attaining Moksha (Nirvana) and to get entrance in Vaikuntam (the place where Lord Vishu lives / heaven). When it is confirmed the person is dead, the body is covered with white cloth and a line is drawn around with sacred ash and an oil lamp is lighted. In some cases the body is ceremoniously bathed. The forehead is marked with sacred ash and sandal paste. Relatives will read selected pages from Ramayana and other sacred hindu books. The body is taken to the cremation ground and placed with head towards the south. The bearers of the body wash their legs and wear the ritual ring (*Pavitrām* made of a particular grass). Holy water is sprinkled and ghee and other dravyams will be poured at the funeral pyre by chanting mantras. The chief man (the eldest son of the demised) lights the pyre at its north end.

Mannadiars observe ten days of *Defilement (Pula)* – after death pollution time). After cremation, the eldest son will follow Diksha for these days (or for a Mandalam, 41 days or an year). On 9th day is *Athazha Oottu* and on 10th day, *Sanchayanam* - collection of bones of the demised person, followed by *Baliitharppanam* by Seshakriyakkar. *Nimanjanam* (immersion) of the collected bones will be done at Thirunelli, Thirunavaya or in a near by holy river on 10th day or after an year

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External links

- Community Page in Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mannadiar/213814785394609/>)

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