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## **Animism, Magic practices of Urali Tribes in Idukki District**

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### **Abstract**

A Tribe is a group of People who share common culture and ancestry. Major tribes in India are spread across the country and form an important part of our national heritage and possess certain qualities and characteristics that make them a unique cultural, social, and political entity. Urali Tribal community they found in the District of Idukki in Kerala. They are following animism and ancestor worship in their culture. Also they are following Magic rites and spells mantras etc. But in the coming days all these beliefs everything will vanish, because of the younger generation not following some traditional beliefs etc. This article mainly focussed to document these type of beliefs and Mimetic act and rituals etc., for the knowledge of Future generation.

**Key Words:** Urali Tribe, Animism, Plathy, Magic Practice, Mantras

### **Introduction**

There are different group of People, dwelling the hills and jungles in India. In the same Kerala also more than 36 Tribal groups are there in the Districts of Waynad, Idukki, Pathanamthitta, Palakkad, Thiruvananthapuram etc. they followed the different Belief, rituals with their own tradition. Also they following some magical rites from the past, but in the part of globalisation and some of the reason it will goes to vanish. So, the documentation and revitalization are the main thing for transform to the future generation.

## Research Methodology

The present study was qualitative in nature and has used the purposive sampling technique. Wherein, the researcher initially has approached the participants for the participation with the consent form, The data was collected through in-depth interviews. There are various races of people dwelling in the hills and jungles in India. Now we study the animism and magic practices of Urali Tribes in this article. There are several Dravidian tribal communities designated as “Urali”. The Urali of Kerala inhabits the hilly regions on the western slopes in the high ranges of the Idukki district, Kerala. They are separated by considerable geographical distance from the Urali Kuruma of the Wayanad district, Kerala, and also of the Urali of the Nilgiri district.

The Urali (used as a plural) when the Urali were illiterate by their masters, they migrated to highlands for freeing themselves from this bondage. They frequently changed their settlements adopting slash and burn cultivation, and food gathering for their subsistence. Mateer (1991:80)

L.A.Krishna Iyer holds that the Urali were the original inhabitants of Western Ghats. Their habitat is strewn with dolmens and alignments which are monuments of their remote past. The dolmens were considered to be treasure trove. Alignments known as Ambukallu (or) Idakallu are said to have been left as a mark to indicate the existence of dolmens (1930:224). The Urali themselves believe that they were brought to and settled in Kerala by the king of Madura. They say that many parts of Thodupuzha taluk originally belonged to the Madura king, whose subjects they were. Their duty was to hold umbrellas to shade the king during state processions.

According to a legend, when the king once visited Neriampalam in Devikulam taluk, the Urali who accompanied him were asked to stay back in that land (ur) and were given the right to rule over it ‘aali’ hence the name signifies the rulers over the land (Kattakkayam- 1983:79). Luiz (1962:244) had proposed that the term ‘aali’ means ‘people’ and hypothesised that they were aborigines of Aryan origin. Shifting cultivation has been severely put down after independence. A two fold pressure has been brought to bear on the Urali rights to land in the forests.

According to the 1971 census, the Urali population was around 2613. In the 1981 census, the population has been returned in 8874 and the census of 2001 total population of the Urali is 11,796(6077 male and 5719 female) in Kerala. The Urali settlements were mainly enumerated in Kannampadi, Kizhukanam, Maattukata, Vellilaamkandam, Kodalippara, Cheruthoni, Thallakkanam, (Kanjikuzhy), Venmani, methotty, Naliyani, Poomala, Poochappura, Cheradi(moolamattom), Karippilangad, Nadukani, Uppukunnu, Mullarinkadu, Kozhippalli,

Kurukkanadu, Koovakkandam, Kozhumpan colony, Vellallu, Pattayakkudi, Kanchiyar, Ayyappan koil, Vanchivayal, Poovathikudi. Now the available illam is Kanakootam, Vetilakkootam, Enniyerukootam, Nooriyerukootam, perukilakootam.

## **Animism**

The term “Animism” is derived from the Latin word “Anima” means breath or soul . The belief of animism probably one of man’s oldest beliefs, with its origin most likely dating to the Palaeolithic age. Sir Edward Burnett Taylor in his primitive culture (1871) defined “animism as general belief in spiritual beings and consider it a minimum definition of religion”, by names souls, ghosts, goblins, poltergeists, genii, trolls-spirits, elves, pixies, laprecharms, fairies withches, demons, devils, angels and gods. The ethnical quality is etherical embodiment; they are beginnings without real flesh and blood non-material but real enough, those who believe in them. Its not subjects to the laws of nature. They are uninhibited; by the limitations of physical matters, time and space they are supernatural. It is this that makes wonderful and mysterious the term ‘animism’ originally meant “belief in spiritual beings”. Animism in the phenomena of dreams of life and death. Dreams are a form of a hallucination and illusionary experience. Primitive man reflected and concluded that these are two parts to man the bodily self-mortal and spiritual alter ego, the soul. The soul concept is roots of animism. It is a universal concept. The animist assumes that the seen world is related to the unseen world. An interaction exists between the divine and the human, sacred and holly and the secular.

What we call natural worship from this came totemic and creation of species deities ie. The deification not of persons (ancestors worship) but of animal creators and plants. It derived from higher polytheism of the later Barbarians with its sky, rain, thunder, lightning, fire, wood, wind, water, sun, moon, gods as well as gods of agriculture, hunting, birth, war and death. Beings and forces are thought to exist side-by side. Beings are personal spirits that include god, gods, ancestors, ghosts, totemic spirits, nature spirits, angles, demons and Satan. Forces are impersonal powers they include the power behind the use of magic, astrology, witchcraft, evil eye and other related phenomena. Animism is the belief that everything on earth has a spirit. The rocks, the trees, the animals and even the air itself everything has a spirit.

Their spirit worship had classified into four categories ‘protective spirits’ who safeguard the Urali during hunting, fishing etc. Expeditions, bhuta, pisachu which cause small pox, abortion etc. Omnipresent spirits responsible for success or failure or pestilence in every local area; and ancestral spirits which appear in dreams to the plathy to communicate their desires through him.

The ancestral worshiped as the family deities, believed to reside in the kitchen. The others prefer a sacred earthen altar. The Uralis describe the system of animism and spiritism and his attitude to the supernatural is one of the reverential fear in the presence of super natural power and being. Uralis worship, the spirits of his ancestors.

## **Magic**

Bouisson defined animist concept is the root of magic. In the words of Thomson old magic tries to establish an imaginative thing which controls the reality. It is an imaginative industrial technology which attempts to correct the defects of the real industrial technology. The anthropologist says that religion is based on the human beings pray to satisfy their needs and also their thankful prays and offering, while magic is based on mimetic acts and orders. During the earlier stages of religion priests of begin to use the already existing magical hymns at the time of the rituals. In the early periods magic is a mimetic act. The base of religion is to activate the desires and worship. Magic is the base of order and mimetic acts. “The science and magic are in their earliest stages indistinguishable” (Chattopadhyaya). As a productive tool, the magic fully influenced the economic activities of ancient society and life of man. The mimetic acts and mimetic dance acts as a important member of the economic activities of man., some of these;

1. To get the animal at the time of hunting
2. To success in war
3. To gain in agriculture
4. To gain fishing
5. To increases the cattle’s
6. To control the rain and wind

Everyone as use the separate magic. The magic is not only evolved from a mere imagination but from the knowledge gain from the continual observation of the incidents and phenomenon of nature. This magic is divided into more three types. Magic rites, magic and spells formulae. Frazer tells in the evidence of data about the magic again divided into two.

1. Like produces like
2. Once is contacts always in contact. Basics of through this formula make two law of similarity.

a) Homeopathic magic or imitative or mimetic magic.

b) Law of contact or contagion connects with contagious magic, again divided into two by Frazer. White magic and black magic. White magic used for one community or a group. It is use in the field of agriculture, hunting, war, medicine. The black magic is an act of sending bird or evil souls into a person to affect his body and physique. Productive in an yet another type of magic which is used to get earning from hunting, fishing and agriculture. The magical ceremony is performed to increase cultivation, fertility and raining comes under this category of magic. While used for protective from nature and enemies. We beliefs in transfer from one to another, example man to animals, birds, trees, toys etc., it is known as transference evils. The transferable incidents used the method of scapegoat.

They have firm faith in the supernatural powers of the Plathy- he can even save the life of a person on the verge of death, keep wild animals away by spells, diagnose the cause of ailments and communicate with all the deities by going into a trance. It is a bad omen forgoing if a man or women is seen woman smiling etc., a medicine man or Plathy or Kani coming with an ox or bill-hook is reckoned bad omen, and a man suffering from the disease in all hamlet's there is a medicine man whose duty it is to cure sickness. The medicine man is taken to the house at night. Medicine man asks his service. Those time they were used rice, betel leaves, arecanuts, coins in a green leaves under a tree. The Plathy or Kani spells the Manthra at the time of sacrificial ceremony and cut the neck of the fowl and sprinkled the blood at sacrificial altar. After that the head portion the fowl in been hooked in a tree by a piercing nail through its eyes. Though this evil spirits in the human body is transferred to the tree. The Urali also use the magical acts to cure the disease like fever accurse due fear. For this they ties five small white stone is white cloths and attached to the diseased one and also put the ash over his forehead. If the diseased person is in distant place, then some paddy grain also uses with the stones. The belief is that the paddy grains carries life in it. Black thread is also uses in the magical treatment. To cure chickenpox, the ash uses to rub over the body of an affected one. They are worship the god Mala, Madan, Mariamma and Lord Ayyappa, kali etc.

## **Conclusion**

In this study find out the believes of Urali tribes in animism and magic practices. These beliefs vanish in the coming days, the reason is younger generations could not accept these kinds of beliefs and not transform the next generation. So we need to record and preserve these kind of beliefs for future.

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