

THE KERALA PERSPECTIVE OF OCCULT TREATMENT

*Prahash T.P.
Thayavalliyil
Arippalam P.O.
Irinjalakuda,
Thrissur 680 688
Kerala*

Folklore, which explores the life and culture of the masses, is closely linked to the essential features of human culture. This is a traditional science that grew as wisdom. The study of folklore is done through a detailed analysis of traditional culture. Folklore studies scientifically categorize, learn and define items of knowledge and wisdom that have been transmitted from generation to generation, in a hereditary manner. Through the studies of folklore one can travel through the practical aspects of human existence.

In the tribal societies there was a strong belief that beyond the realm of human knowledge and understanding there are some secret and hidden powers that are capable of interfering in the affairs of man. Freud (1993:120) observes that many tribal communities believed that by acquiring some supernatural powers they could control the world around them. The ancient tribal communities used these occult powers for their own welfare, for annihilating their adversaries, for controlling the natural phenomena, for obtaining bumper harvests from their fields and also for curing their diseases. Even when man progressed from being a jungle dweller to be an urbanite, he continued to maintain and practise some of his old habits. One of such habit is witchcraft and the other occult activities connected with it.

In the treatment of various diseases there are many occult practices that are still very much in vogue in Kerala. Especially in the rural areas there are very many occult practices which people still resort to on occasions. Thus there is 'UzhinjuKalayal' for remove the ill effects of evil eye; there is 'KudamPidikkal' and 'Upputhal' in case of greed on somebody' part and 'thirambupidikkal' if there is a vertebral disc dislocation. These occult treatments are performed by trained experts, whose basis and forte is their faith. If occult services are done for the good of the individual, society or the world in general, they will be considered beneficial witchcraft but if their objectives are negative and destructive they will be known as evil witchcraft.

OCCULT TREATMENTS

UPPUTHAL (Salt Treatment): This is treatment done to remove the effect of someone else's greed, especially for food. Here the patient takes some powdered salt on a leaf, and thinking of the elderly ancestors blows into it. If he yawns when he blows, the belief is that he has the ill effect of greed on him. Then the salt into which he had blown is divided into two parts. One part is then thrown into the fire and the other part is eaten along with rice gruel. The belief is that with these actions the evil effects of greed on somebody' part go away. If the affected person is a child, then the salt is place on a leaf and some incantations are said 21 times as the child is massaged with a wick. This wick is then thrown into the fire. The incantation used during the massage with the wick is:

First Sea

Second Sea

Third Sea

Fourth Sea

Fifth Sea

Sixth Sea

Seventh Sea

Beyond the Seventh Sea there is a Nagavallikarimpana

Sitting on it there is a cock

Before it comes down and desires

The pebbles and the flowing water

Let this man's greed be burned!

Satyam Guru!

If the person who blows into the salt yawns, be sure he is afflicted with the greed of another man.

HOLDING THE PITCHER (KudamPidikkal):

When a child develops some stomach ailment because of somebody else's greed for food, this 'Holding the pitcher'; treatment is given. In An open container water is filled and some breast milk is added to it. Some turmeric powder, lime, and small pebbles are also added. A dress used by the child is burned and then dropped into a pitcher. When the pitcher is hot, with that the child is massaged thrice. After that the pitcher is placed upside down in the container with water and other ingredients, the water is quickly absorbed into the pitcher. The belief is that when this happens the swelling of the stomach of the child will vamoose.

There are also some sorcery techniques by which the effects of an evil eye are eliminated. One of them is reciting a particular incantation over some water, and then the water is sprinkled on the body of the child. If any wound is caused by an evil eye, a 'mukul mantra' is recited and some oil is applied to the wound, and air is blown into it by the mouth.

The mukul mantra is like this: In the Indira world, Virgin Indira's finger is cut, getting into two pieces; then it is joined into one; all swelling gone; flesh joining flesh. Some coconut oil is taken in a container, place the container on a board, without touching the ground, then recite some mantra into it and apply this oil three times. It is believed that the wound will then be healed.

There are also some sorcery acts to prevent an evil eye from affecting children. Instead of putting any mark on the forehead of the child, put a big mark on the cheek of the child. Make it wear a black bangle and anklet on its hands and legs. After the 28th day, after christening, it can be given golden ornaments. The cloth placed around the waist is dried in the sun, get it into the house before midnight and then fold it into four, and keep it under the pillow of the baby.

To release people, animals and newly constructed houses from the ill-effects of the evil eye, there is the 'evil-eye' mantra. This mantra is supposed to be a remedy for all adverse effects.

VENOMOUS CONCOCTIONS: Evil people prepare these toxic concoctions for achieving their nefarious objectives. To make this concoction they use the flesh and blood of some poisonous creatures, or some other toxic material and add it secretively to the food of the person that is to be affected by such concoctions. This is called 'kaivisham' or 'kattivisham'.

If somebody eat this poisonous stuff, he will feel numbness of the teeth, mild itching in the mouth and salivating. After a few days, he will feel some kind of distaste for food, overall tiredness and some kind of inexplicable uneasiness.

If somebody is poisoned this way, make a paste with flat bean leaves and milk and apply it on the stomach of the patient. If this paste does not become dry above the navel of the patient, it means the poison is in his bowels. This can be cured by making him vomit. If the paste does not get dry below his navel it means the poison is lodged in his intestines. Then it can be cured by making him have loose motions. For this, boil milk with things that will induce loose motions. Then let the milk become curds. If the sick man eats this ghee got from the curd, he will have loose motions and the poison will get emitted.

A small measure of (1 Kazhanch) seashells, steel, a herb called acorascalamus (vayambu), caustic soda, the root of red kizharnelli etc. should be kept immersed in lime juice for quite some time. After that add ½ kazhanch 'chailyam' mixed in lime juice and make the whole thing into small balls. Dry them and everyday take on ball each along with dry ginger water. This will cure people of all ill-effects of the toxic stuff administered to them.

UZHINJUPIDIKKAL (MESSAGE CATCHING): This is a technique adopted by the sorcerer to vanquish the evil spirits that impede a peaceful life of a person. Using the outer pods of the coconut bunch, he makes a torch and gets then evil spirits enter it. The sorcerer who is alleged to have supernatural power makes a religious dance with the blazing torch and attracts the evil spirits one by one into it.

EZHIYAN VILAKKU (FORBIDDING INSECTS): This is a technique used by the sorcerer to prevent insect attack on the crops. The sorcerer walks on the small ridges made in the fields and throws ashes and flowers as he walks along. He also places palm leaves on which mantras are written here and there in the field. This way he prevents pests from attacking crops.

THOLAKETTU: This is the technique a sorcerer adopts to safeguard the crops from thieves. Tholakettu is also Thonnurukettu. The main thing in this mantra is a half basket made from tender coconut leaves. He takes this basket to the boundaries of the field and then place it on 3 or 4 poles somewhere in the field. It is called kudamadam (Umbrella hut). If somebody steals from the field protected by this umbrella hut, the belief is that he will become mad or get some other diseases and die within 90 days of stealing.

THARARAKSHA(Home Safety): This is a technique to prevent evil spirits from entering one's home and to bring prosperity to the women and children of the place. The main celebrant in the ritual is known as 'Plathi'. In this technique, small pitchers filled with rice, sesame seeds and flowers are buried between steps to the house.

Even as different traditional treatments are available, when the disease is not diagnosed, our ancestors tried to remedy them using certain secret sources. The occult treatment is the consequence of such efforts. In its real sense it was for material prosperity. Even as we categorise them into spiritual and material, the fulfilling of the material needs and the physical community were very much involved in them. They were also formulated in the social and environmental circumstances in which they lived. Even as they are ignored as they can't get reconciled with the modern reasoning and logic, they tell us that even these traditional aspects of knowledge, like occult treatment, should be made matter for further studies and looking at them from a different perspective.

+++++++

Bibliography:

Malayalam books

1. Freud, Sigmund, *Vilakkukalumkulachihnamgalum,(Totem and taboo)* Indian Atheist Publishers, New Delhi 1993.
2. -----Swapnangaludeapagrathanam,(*The Interpretation of Dreams*) Indian Atheist Publishers, New Delhi, 2002.
3. Kerala Varma C.R., *Mathavummanthravadam, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1986*
4. Narayanan Kattumadam, *ManthravadamKeralathil, Mathrubhoomi Books, Kozhikode, 2006.*
5. Vishnu Namboodiri, M.V., (Dr.), *Manthrikavijnanam, Mathrubhoomi Books, Kozhikode, 2007.*
6. Vishnu Namboodiri, M.V., (Dr.), *Gen Ed., Folklore Prabandagal, Kerala Folklore Academy, Kannur, 2002.*

English

7. Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of magic, Routledge Publishers New York, 1972.*
8. Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man, A study in Terror and Healing, The University of Chicago Press, USA, 1991*
9. Prichard Evan, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azenbe, Oxford University Press, New York, 1976.*

+++++++