

is playing a major role in establishing quality blood banks and preventing AIDS through blood transfusion. There is no substitute for blood. It cannot be manufactured outside the body. Therefore all of us must ensure the blood safety in rendering quality treatment to our people.

### **Blood Storage Centres**

Setting up a full fledged blood bank is a costly affair especially in the Government Sector. Therefore Government of India have in January 2002 amended the provisions of Drugs & Cosmetics Rules and introduced the concept of blood storage centres. This is a diluted version of blood bank without compromising on quality of blood. The proposed blood storage centre shall have a full time medical officer, experienced in blood banking and an experienced blood bank technicians. Not more than 2000 units shall be consumed annually. The blood storage centre shall have area of 10 sq. m. and provide a blood bank refrigerator with alarm system and a temperature indicator,. The source of blood shall be from licensed blood banks run by government hospitals.

The blood banks who intend to supply the blood units/components shall test the following mandatory tests before supplying to blood storage centres.

- a. Blood grouping
- b. Anti body testing
- c. Haemoglobin content
- d. HIV & II Anti bodies
- e. Hepatitis B surface antigen
- f. Hepatitis C anti body
- g. Malarial parasite
- h. Syphilis or VDRL

So far 5 blood storage centres have been given approval in the State.

1. Taluk Head Quarters, Neyyattinkara
2. Taluk Head Quarters, Kanjirappally
3. Taluk Head Quarters, Thodupuzha
4. Taluk Head Quarters, Irinjalakuda
5. Community Health Centre, Adoor

The State Drugs Controller is the authority to issue approval for blood storage Centres after a detailed inspection.

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# The ancient myths of the aborigines

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**F**ormation of myths is the inherent feature of ancient society. They evolved as the manifestation of the society's existentialism. The wild and variegated imagination of the ancient people wove these myths. The product of their imagination flowed through the ages and even now they remain almost the same and the process is still going on.

The scholars defined myths differently. E.B. Taylor in his study of Ancient Culture (1871) recognized survival as the crux of myths. 'Myth is a part kept in the mind of child-race. When he said so there is the clue of the survival. Taylor says that myths or mythical creation haven't disappeared from the world. They remain in the contemporary ancient races without any

change.

Andrew Lang is the anthropologist who got inspiration from the interpretation of Taylor. According to Lang, myths developed during the crude stage of civilization. Human history can be considered as the flow of development from barbarism to civilization and urbanization. The remnants of aboriginal beliefs, rituals, concepts, myths can be seen even today in the lives of the tribals and also the village agriculturists. Andrew Lang enunciated the concept of the "survival of barbarism." His book 'Myth – ritual and religion' (Vol. I & II – published in 1887) was a study of the myths and stories of the uncultured inhabitants of forest. His explanation that myths are the remnants of the ancient culture influenced the modern folklorists a lot. Herbert Spenser tried to attribute the origin of



myths to the worship of ancestors by the barbarians (inhabitants of forests).

The theory of the survival is introduced here in the definition seeking ahead the myths and other concepts of the ancient people. We cannot say or claim that the ancient mind succeeded in distinguishing forms and symbols or that they were logical in all these. The anthropologists called the ancient man's imaginative mind as 'mythological mind'. Their myths are always the manifestation of the intellect and beauty aspects of their culture.

In features and content myths retain variety. It can be noticed as higher myths, nature myths, hero myths etc.

### Origin Myths

The origin of cosmos, origin of human beings etc. are dealt alike in these two types – higher and lower myths. Some people said that myths are stories which describe the creation of the world and the existence of nature. The description of the origin of the objects of nature and events are always called a myth. Let us examine some of the myths of the ancient people – myths of the origin of the world and the origin of the race.

*Mavilar* has their own myths as to the creation of the earth and the sky by God and the beginning of agriculture in this world. After the creation of the animals, God created the King and the Queen. They lived consuming the available fruit and root of plants. When time passed and the naturally available food became scarce the king requested the Goddess *Mayi devi* who appeared before the King as 'Kattumotantha'. She created a man and a woman to till the land and do the necessary cultivation work.

Among the slave and servant communities too there are such similar myths as to the creation. At first God created the Earth and the Sky; then he created human beings. At that time the sky was not as distant as it is now. When one woman was husking paddy, the pestle touched the sky and it withdrew to the present position. Just like this they have similar myths as to the origin of river, sea, rock and such other natural phenomena.

When the world was infested with evil

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spirits, hearing the moaning of the people, the daughters of God – the elder sister and younger sister set out to inquire after it. They changed themselves into brother and sister and floated in water in a bottle-guard and lay at night in a somewhat comfortable place. They remained there for three days and thereupon became husband and wife. It is believed that human beings are the descendants of those two. After that they were not given admission to their father. The reason for losing their godliness was that they saw face to face the miseries of human beings. The slaves believe that those two goddesses who were denied admission to heaven. Consequent on their bitter experience in the world are *Valliyookavu Bhagavathi* and *Cherukattoor Bhagavathi*.

Regarding the origin of the world, there is another myth among the *Paniyar* community. They believe that there was only a man and a woman at first who had brotherly affinity and wandered in the woods naked. But that brotherly connection was only in the upper half of the body. Hence naturally they had sexual relations and the children and their descendants are the *Paniyars*. They also believe that they were made *Paniyars* (workers) by the *Shetty* and *Kavundan* of

'*Ippimala*', as they were submissive and afraid of the two powerful people.

The *Pulayars* of North Kerala has some myths as to the origin of the world and human beings. Myths of this type are seen in '*Irulum Veliyum*' (Darkness and Light) and '*Maravum Parayum Thottam*.' The ritualistic song '*Atithalippattu*' exacts special mention. According to it God drew (wrote down) morning and evening and created human beings.

In the songs sung for '*Koolikettu*' in *Quilandy Taluk* by the *Pulayars* too have references of the origin of man. God directed squirrel to go and bring the snake's egg which was on a *Palmyra palm* beyond the seven seas. The squirrel went there and stole the egg when the serpent went to drink some water. The ant brought sand from the golden mountain. God mixed the egg with the mud and put it in a gold plate and covered the same with another plate. From that came out human beings. People did not die in those days. They began to appear themselves as old shrivelled frogs. People began to put them in big vessels and bury under earth. That was not at all liked by God. At that '*Kalan*' and '*Kooli*' were created.

Among the *Kusavas* of *Wyanad* a myth of their origin was prevalent. *Brahma* failed to notice a person who could make '*Kalasappani*'. He informed *Siva* of it, who in turn told the condition to *Parvathi*. She told her husband *Siva* to create a man with ear-wax, which he did soon. Then *Siva* directed him to make a *Kalasappani*. *Parvathi* presented him a woman.

Some of the myths of origin of *Pulluvas* too are to be remembered in this context. Among the *Pulluvas* of North Kerala, there was a song called '*Karmasastram pattu*' from which we get their mythical beliefs as to their origin. When the renowned *Rishi Mandapalan* died and his soul reached heaven, he was denied admission there because he had not adhered to the duty of a man – causing the birth of a child. So the *rishi* returned to the earth in the forest called *Ghandara* and requested the bird *Jaritha* to become his wife. *Mandapalan* blessed her and transformed her into a beautiful damsel and in their union was born the four son

– Dronar, Jarithari, Sarisrikkan and Sthambamithran. They succeeded in eliminating some of the evils that affected Indra and he in turn gave them the boon to eradicate ‘Pakshipeeda’, ‘Yakshipeeda’ and ‘anger of ancestors’. Thus Pulluvas are the descendants of Jaritha bird – says Karmasastra.

As to the origin of certain objects too there are myths among certain aborigines. There is a myth regarding seeds among the Mavilars. After creating the Earth, Sky and the vegetation, God created the owner of the land. To till and cultivate the land, God created the leader of the tribe. He prayed to *Kattumodantha* three days placing a winnow in front of him. Modantha appeared before him and sent five birds in the sky with seeds. The birds sowed the seeds. Three seeds fell in the winnow and the remaining ones in the land. Thus the seeds in the winnow was used for cultivation.

In Pulluvas ‘Kattappatt’ too we get the origin of seeds. There it is described as



sowed with the hands of Sri Bhagavathi. Similarly in *Pallupattu* sung at the time of the scene called ‘Pallu’ in *Poorakkali*, there is a reference to the incarnation of Siva and Parvathi as ‘Pallan’ and ‘Pallichi’ and they tilled the land and sowed the grains.

When we examine the myths of some aborigines, we find the belief that labour is god-given. The old myths as to the origin

of musical instruments too support this idea. There is a belief as to the right of the ‘Panas’ to sing with the accompaniment of ‘Thuti’ – a musical instrument. Just like that in another myth prevalent among Pulluvars, it is explained how they got *Veena*, *Kutam* and *Thala*. In *Thutipattu*, there is reference as to how the Pulayars got the blessing of singing with Thuti.

### Heroic Legends

In the cultural history of every country, we can see myths related to the dead Karanavars and heroes. Myths are formed of those who have spiritual or supernatural powers and semi-divinity. There was an aboriginal belief that the dead ‘vaidyas’, heroes, brave men and ‘mantravadis’ become instruments of God. In some ancient society the hero is in the form of an animal. The animal can transform itself in any shape. A good example is the myth of ‘Pulimaranja Thondachan’ found among Pulayars.

The myths dealing with the life of the

complementary to each other. Some of them say that myths are just imitations of rituals.

It is incontrovertible to say that the aborigines have legends connected with their ancestors either ritualistic or not. Almost all the tribes believe that there was a dignified (great) ancestor in their tribe. The myths of Veerappan Arayan among the tribe called Kanikkar or Malayaraya is an example. This myth is revealed in the Kanipattu, which is sung at the time of mantras reiterated for the extinction of enemies. Veerappan Arayan was the head or leader of the of the group called Kani-Araya.

Here is the heroic escapades of Veerappan Arayan. Once the tribals failed to present forest goods to Attingal Thampuram and he sent Mathukutty Valiya Pillai to Veerappan Arayan. Thus Veerappan and his seventy two flocks (Kanipatts) waited at a place to show his face to the Thampuram. Five days passed; but the Thampuram did not turn up. At last Veerappan, with the help of some obscure medicines showed a lot of wonderful feats and consequently he was given the title ‘Veera Marthandanarayan’ and a lot of presents.

Once Veerappanarayan invited the lords of Pandinad. They did not turn up and on revenge, he made a dam and tried to stop the flow of water to Pandi. Still water flowed Kalamatan, the deity, through an oracular speech informed him that the bund would be reinforced if his sister is sacrificed. At last he did that and the flow of water stopped. When the people suffered from drought they complained to the Thampuram who in turn sent Mathukutty Pillai to open the dam. But Veerappanarayan attacked Pillai and by some magical/obscure ways killed him.

‘Sankhupalamukkuvan’ of Mukkuvas and ‘Pulimaranja Gurunatha’ of Pulayars of North Kerala also come under this category. The myths of Itanathan Pulayan, and Athiyarupillai Pulayan are also worth notice. ‘Vayanattu Kulavan’ is Thiyya’s ‘Thondachan’. This myth gives the origin of Thiyyas. All these are given here as a passing reference.

## Ideals of Deity

Among the origins, a lot of strange ideas are there about God. It is believed that deities have human shape and feelings.

*Malakkari* is a god worshipped by 'Kurichiyar' and 'Atiyar'. 'Munnoottanmar' used to make theyyam of this deity. They believe that this deity is the daughter of Parameswara and parvathi while they were living in the woods. Kurichiyars believe that it was the deity who defeated and drowned the evil forces prevalent in the forest. There is a song depicting the origin of *Malakkari*, among the Kurichiyars by name *Maramayapattu*. The deity originated to save the earth. According to Atiyars *Malakkari* is an adept bows-woman.

In the myth regarding the origin of 'Suvani' of Atiyans, there is reference to the origin of the world. The deity originated after the creation of the sky and the earth. Subsequently two deities called Siddhappan and Mallappan were created. Then came man and vegetation.

In one song of Atiyans, there is the description of 'Karinchathan'. Karinchathan was born as the son of Kaliyamma. In another song, there is reference to the origin of Chikkamma. The Atiyans sing the song for propitiating this deity.

*Poothati Daivam* is the deity of Vayanatan purity. Pappthati is the son of Pullikkali. The myth of the deity can be found in the Thottam of *Kalanatis*. They perform another theyyam by name 'Pakkan Daivam'. his deity was born under the blessing of Vishnu. There are myths behind theyyam performed by the tribals of Wayanad: deities like *Elavilli*, *Poovilli*, *Murikkanmar*, *Malayakkarinkali* and so on.

*Vanatha*, a theyyam performed in the premises of Kurumar hut is also a tribal deity.

Among Karimpalars there are myths about 'Krinchamundi' and 'Payyathombathal'. Karimchamundi is related to *Yakshi* legend. 'Karimpalar' and other villagers believe that a Muslim by name *Narambil Maithan* broke the back of the deity. *Payyathombathal* are the friends of Karinchamundi. One among them is *Pulli Bhaganathi*. Karimpalar believes that the eyes of Pulli Bhaganathi were pierced and broken by *Vellattu Dainathar*.

## Cheerumba and Melur Fort

Karimpalar believes that Melakasam and Melur Fort are the first creation of Sri Mahadeva. They created Melur Fort, the courtyard and the milk pond. For purification, cow dung was required. So Godavari was created. Mahadeva and Parvathi lived and enjoy themselves there.

*Cheerumbapattu* of Karimpalars can be considered as a beautiful description of a myth. The two Cherumbals born from the Third eye of Siva are disease-goddesses.

There is elaborate description of a fort made by Mahadeva for his two beloved daughters.

"When you close, close nine doors together –

When you open, open nine doors

together." Such a clever construction is the fort.

## Pakshi Pathalam

There is a belief among the Atiyans regarding 'Pakshi Patalam'. They believe that the deity Thirunelli Yogiachan lives there. The place is one where big rocks are scattered here and there. Yogiachan has only one leg and people believe that he is

powerful enough to defeat even Thirunelli Perumal. Among the Pulayars of North Kerala, there is a belief as Pulipathalam. They believe that Kari Gurikkal assumed a tiger's form and disappeared into the forest. That place is 'Pulipathalam'. The aborigine's mind is full of such concepts.

## Some other beliefs

Adivasis at times associate themselves with other temples, besides their own deities. The Atiyans of Wyand are Atiyans of Thirunelli temple. Similarly, Kurichiyars are vassals of Kottiyoor Perumal temple. A lot of stories and legends are there about the temples. The 'Ooralars' of the temple believe that their ancestors constructed the temple in a single night as ordered by Vallooramma. As it was not complete by morning, the roof was not constructed.

Once a Kurichyan went into the forest to collect logs. His weapon struck a rock and it began to bleed and he informed it to the lords and thus the place for Sivas of Kottiyoor was located. This is a myth prevalent among Kurichiyars. Similar stories are there among the Pulayars of Meppayoor and Vatasserri.

Karimpalars are also associated with Kottiyoor temple. Kannothe Kunhikannan of Chala went there to measure and assess the land of Perumal. There he saw Karimpalars cutting cane for Elaneerkav. Kunhikannan demanded some cane; but they refused to give them. Kunhikannan forcefully took cane and beat the tribals. They went in front of the temple, cried and informed the God. Two snakes went away from there and entered the field of Kunhikannan in the form of two leeches. His younger sister was the Kettilamma of Chirakkal Thampuram and she was pregnant. On her way home, she got down from the Palanquin in the field and the leeches bit her to death. Although the usual post-death performances were done, the crows did not touch the 'bali' rice. On astrological inquiry, it is understood that there was the anger of Kottiyoor Perumal and he had to present a gold cane as an atonement.

This is just a glimpse of the myths of the aborigines. When we think of the 'Soundarya Sastra' of Adivasis, it will be unnecessary to speak of its connection with their myths. ■