

## In the Making of Paniya Tribals...- “Literates”

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### Abstract

Since inception of this universe and creation of Adam and Eve, whom God gifted the garden, “Paradise”, it was not expected the raise of religion, caste, creed, poor, rich and so on and also their divisions based on residential comforts and conveniences even on occupational imbalances such as rural or urban, forest areas or hill/valley-side areas, fertile or barren land and so on. Due to vast increase of population and fast development in a short span of time, the mobility progressed among people with improvised transport and communication supports, people chose places to reside which facilitated the scattered residential locations from forest boundaries to well-worth lands to construct shelters to palatial accommodative civil constructional structures. Some people preferred wandering from a place to the other for survival due to improper decisions they executed. A part of population settled in forest or valley side who were experienced in hunting and few people went around searching of convenient places and easy reachable. In due course the people who preferred the forest areas and wandering were termed as tribal people; the group came named after under a banner of a ‘tribe’ which is till now in force and effective. One among those tribes is ‘Paniya’ tribe about whom this paper deals on, with a supplication to consider them as human beings, under humanitarian aspect and bring them to the vicinity of this modern world with proud and status.

### Introduction

The Paniya tribe is an ethnic group primarily inhabited in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, categorized as Scheduled Tribe (ST) having a total population of around 94,000 as per the 2003 Census data, of those around 67,948 (72.28%) lives in the Kerala hills. They also known as ‘Paniyar’ and “Paniyan”, derived from the Malayalam word “Pani” (literarily means, work.).The Paniya tribals speak *Paniya language* as a mother tongue, which is most closely related to Malayalam, Kadar, Ravula and other few Dravidian languages of the Dravidian Linguistic family. Paniya language, as their mother tongue is spoken both at home and also during religious ceremonies even though some Paniya tribals use other Dravidian languages. Malayalam, Tamil or Kannada., Paniya use different writing systems depending on which state they reside. Paniya primarily inhabit Kerala, (Travancore-Kochi-inclusive of Malabar -Previously Thiruvithamcoor) specifically and in particular the Wynadu (Wayanadu) District, 280 km-174 miles NE from Kochi(Cochin) to Kalpetta, and the nearby

Kozhikode( Calicut),Kannur,and Malappuram districts. Regarding costume custom of Paniya tribals, Paniya males wear a long cloth, mundu; wrapped around their waist, which the Paniya females (panichi) too prefer occasionally. In addition, the Panichis wear a red or black *arati* scarf around their waist. Monogamy appears to be the general rule among the Paniyas, even though widow re-marriage is allowed and also they do not practice pre-puberty or child marriage. Their favorite deity is “Kaali”,but sinec several years back their ancestors are in deep belief and faith in Kadubhagavathi (Deity Bhagavathy of Forest) as their superior deity. They trust that the Banyan tree is so divine .hence they worship it and offer some poojas around the Banyan tree in team clan and sprinkle Holy ashes, tamarind powder-mix water including installing small sanctum chest and Oil filled earthen-pot lamps and incense bathie sticks. It is said that the Paniya tribals are brought by the King of the sect as slaves and bonded labourers, later to change the unity due to many reasons including induction of various tribal programmes by the

Government; a change has set in their lives. This shows that they cared of their survival purely to their assumption and theory depend on food and shelter. Since they are purely vagrants they did not bother about a static residence except the materials required to erect a collapsible, temporary hut with cloths and sticks easily available at par. Because of zero motivation on the future needs and familial development, they never cared of education in the beginning. While roaming around they felt to peep into the education window too for their children, hopelessly wandering without any aim of their future life. The elders started to experience the need of knowing the world through radio, Television and the most common and easily accessible resource, the newspaper, which freely available in the tea shops where they often spend leisure purposefully in group and alone. Thus the Paniyans understood the need of readings which is the most common fact on education. Government as well as few voluntary organizations came forward to motivate the Paniya tribals on the pace of educating to make at least the next generation of Paniyas (Paniyans) 'literate' to stand steadily among other forward community human beings without fear and shame to show the steadfast status and proud of value and knowledge of literate stability..

### Conclusion

The above facts are the living history of the people who are born in tribal sector thriving now to live as the other

forward community people live. It cannot be a scourge of God to be born as tribe, it is what God expects to show the other side of life of human being as the classification and clarification are prepared and formed by the same people who are also His own creation. What they need now is not the freebies during election, thousand or more that that being given in the PDS shops and free dress materials and so on, but proper timely education at free of fees with humanity and magnanimity for which our Government and other Voluntary organization should come forward as they too have the fundamental Rights to avail education as per our "Constitution of India". We need people like Fr.Stan Swamy who demanded to consider the downtrodden, sat on the road to draw the attention of the Government, who was imprisoned under UAPA-Unlawful Activities - (Prevention)Act with a backdrop support of National Security Act.. Let us hope to see the Paniya tribals become literates in the near future with loyal supports of our good politicians in our government having excellent policies to uplift the tribals left to marginality now.

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