

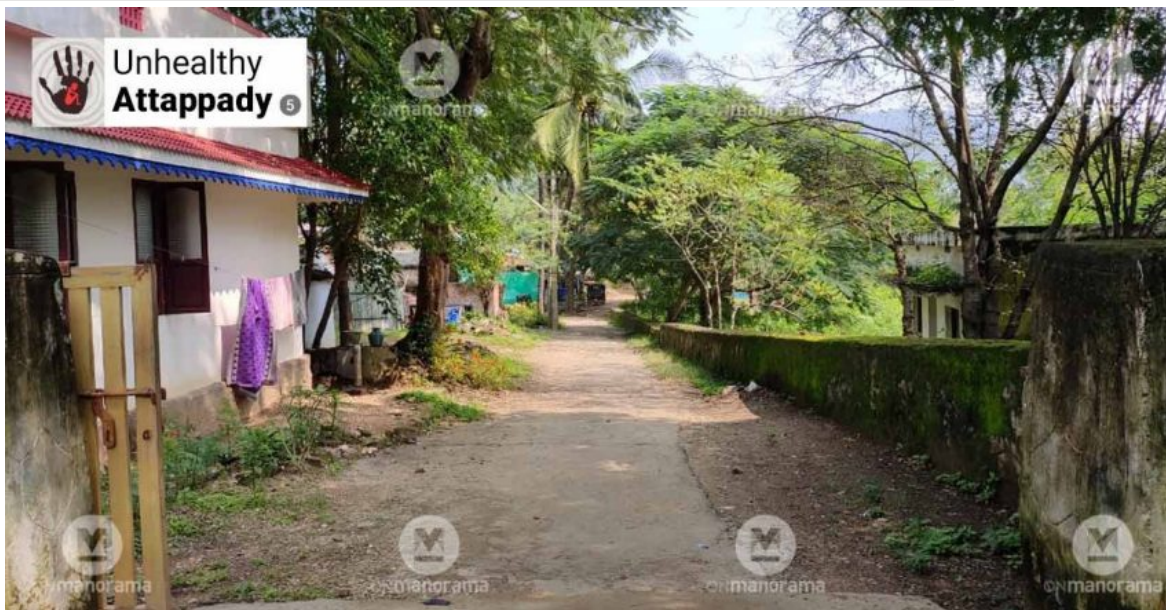
<https://www.onmanorama.com/news/kerala/2021/12/21/unhealthy-attappady-dasannoor-tribal-self-reliance.html>

## Rooted in tradition and riding on education: The Dasannoor model of tribal self-reliance in Attappady



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Dasannoor is one among the 192 tribal hamlets of Attappady. Photo: Onmanorama

Topic | Palakkad

Amid all the stories of gloom and despair coming out of Kerala's major tribal zone, Attappady, there are a few stories of hope and confidence. Dasannoor tribal hamlet in Sholayur Panchayat in Palakkad district has set a model worth emulating.

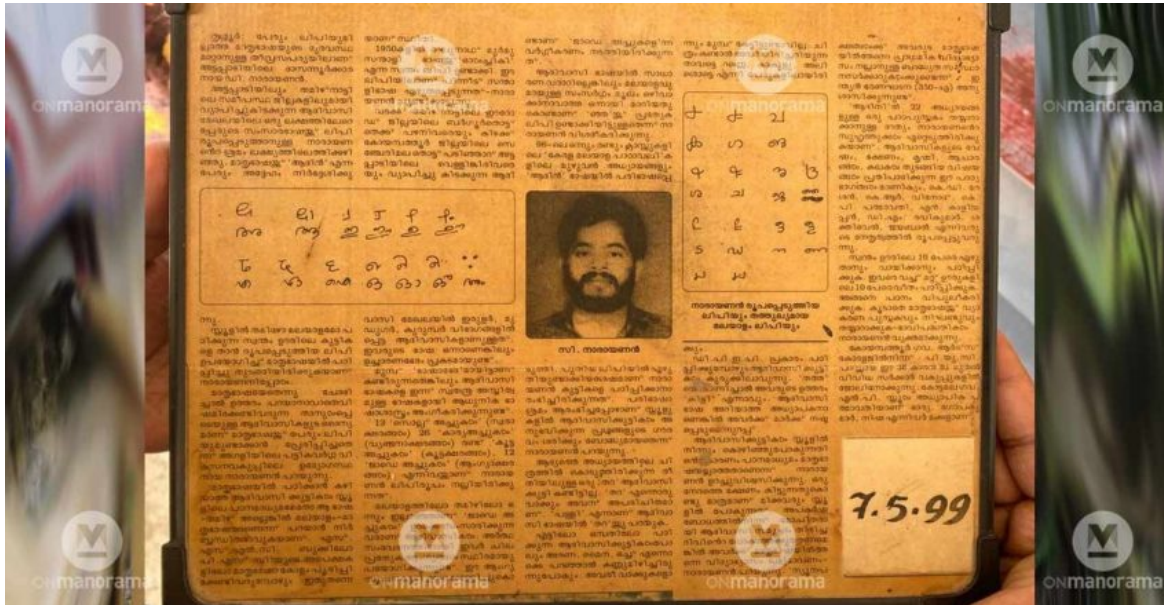
Dasannoor is one among the 192 Adivasi hamlets of Attappady. However, the people here is much different from those in most other tribal hamlets in their outlook as well as approach to life. The settlement stands out for overall progress, standard of living and political enlightenment. The reason for all the difference is the primacy given to education by the Dasannoor residents.

Compared to many other tribal hamlets of Attappady, Dasannoor has been historically fortunate. The hamlet's founder, Nariyan Mooppan, was an employee engaged in tax collection during the British Raj, according to his successors. He ensured that his sons got a good education. Mooppan's sons Raman Mooppan, Dasan, Kaliyappan and

Murugan had good education going by the standards of their time and they all made it to government jobs. While Dasan and Kaliyappan became teachers, Murugan retired as a deputy postmaster. He is also the first tribal member of the Malabar Devaswom Board.

“Dasannoor is an educated Adivasi ooru in Attappady. Our ancestors gave us education. In 1956, my brother and sister became teachers,” Murugan said.

Murugan believes that the problems of Attappady's tribal population started as they lost their farm lands.



A newspaper report about C Narayanan and the script he made for the language spoken by tribes of Attappady. Photo: Onmanorama

Dasan's son Narayanan is remembered for the invaluable services he had done for his people. He founded Kaanakam, an education institution for school dropouts. He also made a script for the oral language spoken by the tribes of Attappady.

Kaanakam inspired many tribal kids to pursue their higher education dream. Theatre and film artiste Kuppasami is one among them.

“I failed Class 10 in 2000 for the third time. After that I worked as the cleaner of a jeep and a labourer at a brick kiln. It was then that I was called to Kaanakam which was founded by Narayanan Master. There were seven students including me. Eminent people like Dr Ramachandran Mokerly, former Thrissur Mayor Radhakrishnan and Rajan Robert also played a prominent role in running the institution. From there I went on to study Direction at the School of Drama, Thrissur, and qualified with first rank. After that I did my Master's in Electronic Media from the Pondicherry University and joined for PhD there,” Kuppasami said.



Dasannoor is one tribal hamlet that values self-esteem more than anything. Photo: Onmanorama

### **Other notable aspects**

Dasannoor is one tribal hamlet that values self-esteem more than anything. Unlike many other similar hamlets, you will not find a wall poster or flag of any political party there. It is one of the few hamlets that opted out of the government's community kitchen programme. There are many youngsters, including women, who are at least a graduate in the hamlet.

“We send our children to schools and colleges. We also ensure that padana muris (study rooms) in our hamlet, which is meant to address the learning gap in kids, function well. We opted out of the community kitchen programme as we did not want our people to end up lazy,” Mohana, a resident of the hamlet who is also an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), said.



Dasannoor tribal hamlet in Sholayur Panchayat in Palakkad district has set a model worth emulating. Photo: Onmanorama

“The hamlet is free of alcohol addiction too. Alcohol menace has been causing serious health hazards to the tribal population of Attappady in many hamlets for a longtime, she added.

Even while treading the mainstream path of progress, people of

Dasannoor are adamant about following and preserving the customs of the community.

Its educated youngsters are also proud to adopt agriculture as a means of livelihood. “I worked with the Water Authority for sometime after I finished my Diploma in Civil Engineering. However, I quit and started working in my farm as I was more interested in agriculture,” said Aarukkutty, a resident of the ooru.

*(This is the fifth part of a series investigating the issues concerning the tribal population of Attappady.)*

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