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ROOTS OF THE ADIYAR

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ROOTS OF THE
ADIYAR

THESIS

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Adiyars are culturally rich tribal people of *Wayanad*. This thesis tells about where the ancestors of *Adiyars* came to *Wayanad* from.



PREFACE

From my observations, I understood that the *Adiyars* were once economically and socially dominant people, not only culturally. *Adiyars* were a people who had their own land and rice cultivation, like the *Mullukkurumar* and *Kurichyas* of *Wayanad*. But the image of slaves is the epithet attributed to them in the past.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

In the book "Wayanad; it's people and traditions", C. Gopalan Nair, the Deputy Collector during the *British* rule, said that the ancestors of *Adiyars* came from *Coorg*. He came to such a conclusion from the name of their God *Kuttathu Karinkali*. He also says that they are truthful and trustworthy and do not run away from their employers like the *Paniyars*. He adds that so the *Adiyars* are better to use as agricultural labourers.

In the book "Castes and Tribes of Southern India", *Edgar Thurston* describes *Adiyars* as slaves. He also narrates the story of buying slaves by paying the slave money.

In the book about the tribes of *Wayanad*, Dr. *Asees Tharuvana* tells that the *Adiyar* got their name because of the touch pollution distance of six feet.

METHOD OF STUDY

I learned the facts by observing the people around me and their lives. The study about the *Adiyars'* jewelry and culture was very helpful.



FINDINGS

The ancestors of *Adiyars* of *Wayanad* are tribal people from *Odisha*.

They got their name *Adiyar* not in the meaning of slave. The name *Odiyar*, meaning those who spoke the *Odia* language, must have been later rewritten by some as *Adiyar*.

At one time *Adiyars* were the rich and owners of many paddy fields in *Wayanad*.

The ancestors of the *Adiyars* were from the *Konth* tribe of *Odisha*.

DISCUSSION

In the untold history, the *Adiyars* of *Wayanad* must have been the owners of the vast fields seen in *Thirunelli*, *Thrissileri* and *Chekadi*.

● ANCESTRAL HOME IN CHEKADI

Chekadi is the only place, where the traditional architecture of *Adiyar* home is still exists. It is a magnificent house standing next to a large paddy field. It is a fully sustainable house with a wide porch and large wooden doors and windows. That house also has the dedicated area to store the rice harvested from their farm. That thatched house in *Chekadi* is a remnant of their rich past. Despite being the owners of the fields, they did not register the land. Those who penetrated into *Wayanad* and destroyed the system of tribal administration here must have

gradually turned the owners into slaves. It is the same period that they were re-named as slaves. Through the books written during that dark time, *Adiyars* were depicted as slaves for centuries.

● TRIBES FROM ODISHA

Odisha's signature in the life and culture of the *Adiyars* can be identified through close observation.

PHYSICAL SIMILARITY

The physical nature of the *Adiyars* of *Wayanad* is similar to that of the people of *Odisha*. Prominent cheekbones are one of their facial features.

TRADITIONAL ORNAMENTS

Adiyars used to wear expensive silver ornaments like *Mullukkurumar* and *Kurichyas*. The women wore silver bracelets called 'Kada' and necklace of silver coins on their necks. Women used to wear three earrings on the top of their ears. Even today, two nose pins on either side of the nose can be seen on most people's faces. In the olden days, *Adiyar* women used to grow their hair long without cutting it and tie it up. They also had a custom of putting a flower on the front of that hair bun. Not only the flower, but also the comb, the palm, and the ornamentation that was stuck in their hair were the marks of the *Adiyar* women. Like other tribal communities, they also followed the practice of tattooing the body. In earlier times, men used to wear *Murav* on the top and brass earring on the bottom of the ear .

Even today, the practice of wearing a comb in the hair and tying the *godha*

is still practiced among the Kondh tribe of Odisha. Their style is to wear earrings across the ears and nose rings on both sides of the nose.

KUTIYA KONDH TRIBE

The culture and lifestyle of *Adiyar* is very similar to the Kutia Kondh tribe of Odisha. The Kutia Kondh, people who lives in the hills or valleys are a subdivision of the Kondh community, the largest tribe in Odisha, . They are very adept at making the forest suitable for cultivation.



Kondh tribal lady of Odisha

CONCLUSION

According to the information available from my studies, the ancestors of the *Adiyars*, may have come to *Wayanad* centuries ago from *Odisha*. Their tribe must have derived its name from the word *Odia*, not in the sense of slave. *Odiar* may have been maliciously corrected to *Adiyar* during their enslavement. In the early days, they were a wealthy people who had their own fields, houses and farms.

I hope that this study will help to make the *Adiyars* to be more proud about their past.

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Documentary film maker, photographer and graphic designer. A native of *Valavayal* in *Wayanad*. Studied at *Shoranur* Institute of Printing Technology in 2003-06. In 2007, started working as a customer coordinator at *Emirates Press, Dubai*. Ended the life in exile and returned to the country in 2015 when the vibe in photography got mixed up. *Poopoli* International Flower Festival held under the auspices of Kerala Agricultural University was covered on camera from 2016 to 2019. In 2018, designed the book on *Wayanad's* Unique Rice Crops, published by Agricultural University in collaboration with Department of Agriculture. From 2019 to 2022, worked as a photojournalist in *Kerala Kaumudi* newspaper. From 2022, documentaries related to the tribal culture and life of *Wayanad* are being shot.



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" The history of mankind is the history of migrations "

