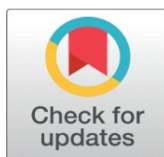


RITE-DE-PASSAGE OF THE DEAD: WORLDVIEW OF THE ADIYAN OF WAYANAD, KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Adiyan is one of the tribal communities in Wayanad district of Kerala. They practice elaborate rituals and ceremonies and the death rituals reflect their worldview. Rite of passage is observed as a transition rite to mark the passing of a person from one state to another especially during the life course. The death rituals practiced by the Adiyan shows the separation and transition of spirit of a deceased from earth and its incorporation into another world, i.e., passage from one status of life to another and the rituals and ceremonies enable to change from one status to another.

Keywords: Adiyan, Death Ceremonies, Rite-De-Passage, Separation, Transition

1. INTRODUCTION

Rituals and ceremonies are part of all societies but these may vary greatly across cultures. In tribal societies, the worldview of the people usually reflects in their religious practices and ceremonies. The Adiyan is a tribal community in Wayanad district of Kerala and their worldview mainly reflects in their death ceremonies. Death is an end of life. But among the Adiyan, death is not an end but it indicates the separation and transition of spirit of a deceased from earth and its incorporation into another world, i.e., passage from one status of life to another and the rituals and ceremonies enable to change from one status to another. In the funeral ceremonies of the Adiyan, one can observe the rite of passage of the dead.

The Adiyan is a tribal group mainly distributed in Wayanad district and the adjoining areas of Kannur District in Kerala state. In Wayanad district, they are located in Thirunelli and Trissileri Panchayats and mainly settled on the slopes

of small hills or terrains or high lands and have categorized the land based on these hilly terrains. The word Adiyar means slave or *adima* in Malayalam. The Adiyar have own dialect and is a mixture of Malayalam and Kannada language. Earlier, they were bonded labourers under the Janmis. The main Janmis of the area were Kaithavally Pattar and Venkitachala Aiyar. Rajasenani (2009) noticed a patron-client relationship within the tribal community: the patron position is with the Kurichiyar and Kuruman tribes where as client status is with the Adiyar and Paniyar tribes.

As per Genep (1960), rite of passage is observed as a transition rite to mark the passing of a person from one state to another especially during the life course. However, the Adiyar observes rite of passage rituals and ceremonies elaborately after death and is associated with their worldview. This paper mainly analyses the rite of passage of the dead among the Adiyar of Wayanad, their world view and social organization.

2. AREA OF STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

The study mainly conducted in Kaithavally, Varinilam and Chekkott settlements of Trissileri village in Wayanad district. The study is qualitative in nature. For this study, major anthropological techniques such as observation, interviews were mainly employed. Interview with older generation and social and religious leaders of the community helped to understand social organization and their ceremonies. Observation, especially during various life-cycle rituals helped to understand the world view of the people in the society.

3. SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The Adiyar is a matrilineal community and hence descent and inheritance are traced through matrilineal line. They mainly follow nuclear family organization and are strictly endogamous. The Adiyar refer their settlements in the hilly area as *kuntu*. They categorize the *desam* into different *kuntus*. *Kuntu* means *Kunnu* (hill) in Malayalam. The *kuntus* or *kunnus* (traditional settlement) of the Adiyar of Trissileri areas of Wayanad are *kaithavally kuntu*, *varinilam kuntu*, *Chembara kuntu*, *Gunduchekottu kuntu*, *Kolimoola kuntu*, *Poothabhara kuntu*, *Thoothagottu kuntu*, *Mundamkutti kuntu*, *Palamoola kuntu*, *Mannupali kuntu*, *Kotukula kuntu*, *Nuchikandi kuntu*, *Mullakolli kuntu*, *Kulumathu kuntu*, *Kappikolli kuntu*, *Palari kuntu*, *Kakkabayalu kuntu*, *Aanappara kuntu*, *Kuliyakkandi kuntu*, *Kurichiyamoola kuntu*, *Kuni kuntu*. Each of these *kuntus* is under a moopan, termed as *Kuntumoopan* or *Kunnumoopan*. *Kunnumoopan* is the chief of the *kuntus*. It is not a hereditary position. There are about 23 *Kuntus* in the Trissileri area of Wayanad district. Luiz (1962) also discusses about the *Kuntu* and its association with the clan organization of the Adiyar community.

The *Nattumoopan* is the main authority or territorial chief among them and is accompanied by two or three assistants. The authority of the *Nattumoopan* lies in more than one *kuntu*. The presence of *Nattumoopan* is essential for all social and religious functions. The position of the *Nattumoopan* can be hereditary or non-hereditary. The male members of the Adiyar select the *Nattumoopan* based on his capability to interfere in community matters. During all religious and social occasions, the *Nattumoopan* is accompanied by two or three assistants. In the absence of *Nattumoopan*, one of the assistants engages the function. The *Nattumoopan* is a respectable person in the community and during all the important life cycle rituals and occasions his presence is customarily mandatory. He enjoys both social and religious position in the community.

The clan organization among them is termed as *chenmam* and the clan leader is known as *Chenmakkarani*. The *Chenmakkarani* controls the affairs of the *chenmam*. The *chenmam* (clan) is traced through the female and the children belong to mother's line. The position of the *Chenmakkarani* is inheriting through matrilineal line and the pollution matters also affect the descendants of the maternal line.

There are about 23 *chenmams*. The *chenmams* are under a bigger unit called *mant*. The major *mants* are *badakk mant*, *tirunelli mant* and *puthur mant*. The *chenmams* are matrilineal and exogamous. In addition, some *chenmams* (clans) are sister clans and some are non-sister clans. The main *chenmams* of the Adiyar in Wayanad are, *Momatta*, *Muthira*, *Mantila*, *Kachala*, *Puthuru*, *Badakkmantu*, *Kalakottu*, *Kallila*, *Kottamantu* or *Kottala*, *Puthuru poothadi*, *Wayanattu*, *Eavilan*, *Cheruvalli*, *Nalappadi*, *Kathamala*, *Varakavu*, *Ulakuttu*, *Muthukuttu*, *Paavada*, *Vellachalu*, *Aavila* and *Edamala*. Among these, certain clans are sister clans and certain are non sisters. The sister clans conduct the rituals together, but they conduct the *valiyapula* or *koottam* (Annual death ceremony of the *chenmam*) independently. The members of sister clans do not marry each other. There are five sets of sister clans or *chenmams*. These sets are;

Momatta, kalakottu, muthira, kallila are sister clans. These clans do not marry each other. They conduct the rituals together but conduct *pula* separately. *Puthurukkaran, Badakmant, Puthuru poothadi* and *wayanattu* are another group of sister clans. Likewise, *Kachala, kathamala, nalappadi* and *varakavu* are sister clans. *Mantilan, Cheruvali, Kottalaor kattamantu, Ulakuttu, Muthukuttu* form another group of sister clans. *Eavilan, Vellachalu* and *Paavada* form another sister clan group.

Like the social functionaries, the religious functionaries among the Adiyar are *Kanaladi, Karimis* and *Thammadikkaran*. The *nattumoopan* can be a *Kanaladi*, if he is well versed with ritual spells of the community. The *Kanaladi* is also known as *Cheriyamooan* and he supervises the rituals. The members of the *Nalappadi* and *Edamala chenmam* enjoy the right to become the *Karimi*. *Karimi* performs the rituals under the guidance of *Nattumooan* and *Kanaladi*. *Thammadikkaran* is the oracle of the community. In the rite of passage, the roles of all religious functionaries are significant.

3.1. RITE OF PASSAGE

Norman Habel defines religious experience as the structured way in which a believer enters into a relationship with, or gains an awareness of, the sacred within the context of a particular religious tradition (Habel, O'Donoghue, and Maddox, 1993). Van Gennep (1960) states that rites of passage comprises of three ritual stages; separation, transition and incorporation or pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages. Accordingly, among the Adiyar, the rites of passage of the dead can be categorized into three phases such as pre burial, burial and post burial through which the dead incorporates into another world.

3.2. PRE BURIAL PHASE (SEPARATION)

Pre burial phase mainly involves the rites and rituals of separation. It comprises of symbolic actions to separate the dead from the worldly ties.

The death of a person is first informed to the *Chenmakkaran* and the *Chenmakkaran* informs this to the *Kuntumooan* and then to the *Nattumooan*. The *Karimis* (ritual specialist) inform this in all the settlements. The *Karimis* carry a ceremonial stick called *kunthvadi* or *bethavadi* with them when they move to inform death. The rituals related to death starts only in the presence of the *Nattumooan*. The *Karimi* enjoys the entire right associated with death, i.e., pre burial, burial and post burial.

The rituals related to death starts only in the presence of the *Nattumooan*. The pre-burial rituals include shaving, bathing etc., of the corpse. For this, they place the body on a chair facing eastern side and paste turmeric and oil throughout the body. Turmeric symbolizes purification. After ceremonial purification, bathing and shaving, the clothed corpse is placed in the verandah north-south direction. They bring the edge portions of the plantain leaf (*Toosila*) and place paddy and rice together. They also light a wick on it and the relatives put ten rupees on it. This amount will later on be paid to the religious functionaries and the *Nattumooan* along with 27 *thappubalas* (significant among them as a means of payment of fine). After that, the *Valiya Karimi* (belong to *Nalappadi chenmam*), sprinkles paddy and rice in all the directions. As per the instructions of the *Nattumooan*, two of the *Karimis* move towards the forest and make a bamboo stretcher or bier (*padi*) to carry the corpse into the burial area and rest of the *Karimis* dig out the graveyard.

They recite *sastra* (ritual songs) during the rite of separation and the relatives put white or red clothes on the body and put money in a *thaluva* (vessel). The *moopan* and *Valiya Karimi* recite their ritual hymns to bring the previous deceased in the family and *chenmam*. The *Valiya Karimi* performs the rituals and the *moopan* of the *chenmam*, *Nattumooan* and *Kanaladi* perform the naming of the dead or naming ceremony. The main aim of this is to join the dead person with the ancestors. They attribute three names to a dead person. Firstly, the name of a recently dead from the dead person's *chenmam*, then, one of the ancestor's name in the dead person's father's *chenmam*, lastly, an ancestor's name in the dead person's grandfather's *chenmam*. They believe that the ancestors identify the new soul only through this and help separation from them. This ritual ends with the ritualistic separation and handing over of the soul with that of ancestors saying that ancestors may accept the dead person. If a lady dies, they call the spirits of ancestress of the deceased's *chenmam*, her father's *chenmam* and mother's father's *chenmam*. The separation rites transit the deceased from the status of worldly ties. Hertz (1960) connects death rituals with social cohesion and collective representation.

The Adiyar make separation rites not only by ritualistic purificatory bathing, shaving and clothing but also by naming. As per Gennep, the rite of naming the child is rite of incorporation. Likewise, the naming of the deceased is a significant aspect of the Adiyar ceremonies. The dissolution of the name of the deceased is the act of separation and giving ancestral names to the soul is the act of introducing of the soul into another world. This rite binds the deceased with those already passed away in his *chemmam*. Thus the pre burial rituals form the separation rites of the dead and the burial forms the real state of transition of the dead.

3.3. BURIAL PHASE (TRANSITION)

This is the transitional phase in which the dead is not incorporated with the ancestors and this phase lies in between the two worlds. Turner (1969) denotes this stage as liminal stage and the *communitas* or social cohesion during this stage.

They practice burial system and this indicates their belief in life after death. In the graveyard pit, they bury by scooping out the earth on the side at the bottom and make a side wall and ensure that soil will not fall on the body. Using stalks and leaves they cover the side walls. A *thappubala* (customary bangle) will also be placed along with the body. While burying, they put three *mundus* (loin cloth) and the deceased's old clothes in the graveyard and the rest they offer to the *Karimi* and the *Nattumoopan*. The items used by the deceased will also be deposited in the burial ground, such as spectacles. They first dip their fingers in water before filling the dig with soil.

In the graveyard, thorny sticks will be placed over it to avoid disturbances by animals. The bamboo stretcher will be dismantled and the *Karimi* fixes one pole of it at the centre of the graveyard and the rest around it and a *thappubala* (fines among them is paid as *thappubala*) will also be placed and then moves around it by holding some paddy on the right hand and an axe on the left hand. This symbolizes both their customary law and mainstay during life and its continuity. They also carry food items in the graveyard till *cheriyapula* ceremony.

After burial, one of the *Karimis* stands at the head region of the graveyard holding a knife and using a bundle of grass sprinkles water on the *Kunnukaran*, the *Chemmakkar* of three *mantas*, the *Chemmakkar* of the deceased et al, except the *Nattumoopan*. Another *Karimi* locate at the other side with an axe and hand it over to the other crossing the grave and all of them take bath in the nearby river and return. The *Karimi* has the right to take *kanji* (rice gruel) at first and then he serves food to others assembled there. The *Nattumoopan* asks the *Kunnukaran* to carry out *cheriyapula* ceremony within thirteen days of the demise and the close relatives observe *pula* (death pollution) for thirteen days. Next day, the *Karimi* shave the hair of the *nattumoopan* and close male relatives of the deceased such as father, son etc. It is believed that for these people the *pula* (death pollution) is on the head and this is a ritualistic shaving to end the *pula* of these people. But a widower or widow should have to observe *pula* for one year. He/she is forbidden to take bath, shave or cut hair, consume delicious food and banned to enter in public places and to take part in the religious ceremonies for one year. Violations of these were punishable offence. Byju (2026)

All the *chemmam* has its own distinct area for burial in the burial ground. Since the children belong to mother's line, they will be buried near to their mother's burial area. It is a serious offence, if they bury in other *chemmam's* burial area. Parkin (1992) also explains such clan based burial grounds and the lineage rules associated with the burial practices. They use the same burial place after six years and if they get the bony parts, they can deposit it there itself. In case of exceptional death, they bury at a distance from their common burial ground. But they follow their ritual practices. The death pollution lasts for thirteen days and in urgent cases in order to get rid of pollution matters, they lay arrow together, and the *Nattumoopan* hit the arrow together as per the instructions of the *Karimi*. The burial of the dead in the burial area of the mother's *chemmam* indicates that the soul in the other world also lives and is incorporated in that *chemmam* and family. During the span of transition also they bring rice, puffed rice, vegetarian and non vegetarian items, to the burial ground.

3.4. POST BURIAL PHASE (INCORPORATION)

This is an elongated and elaborate phase which lasts for one year. Post burial phase starts with *kunnupula* ceremony on the seventh day and ends with annual *kakkapula* or *valiyapula* (annual death ceremony). This is actually the incorporation and assimilation phase of the dead into the other world. The *kakkapula* ceremony publicly embarks the incorporation of the deceased with their ancestors into another world. Bloch (1982) theorizes death rituals with regeneration and social rebirth.

Kunnupula: In the post burial phase, firstly, they observe *Kunnupula* or *kuntupula* on the seventh day. *Karimi* and *Kanaladi* recite magical or ritual spells (*sastra*) on this occasion and after that a feast will be served to the people assembled. This is the extreme pollution period.

The *pula* or death pollution of one *chenmam* would not affect the other *chenmam*, except sister *chenmams* and the rest of the *chenmam* can conduct the *koottam* and other functions. For instance, if a person belongs to *cheruvalli chenmam* dies, the other *chenmam* people can conduct their *koottam*. In case of sister clans, they have to postpone the *koottam*. If a man dies, the *pula* of death will not affect his wife and children. But generally the wife observes *pula*.

Cheriyapula: *Cheriyapula* or *pathimoontu* is another post burial ceremony observed on the thirteenth day of demise. The *Kanaladi* has the right to fix the date and has a major role in this ceremony. On this occasion the females ceremonially wails loudly followed by magical chanting and ritual performance by the *Kanaladi*. Food will be served and the relatives, religious specialists and *Nattumoopan* carry the food items along with turmeric and cow dung in to the graveyard. The religious specialists and the *Nattumoopan* spells magical rites and serve food to their ancestors, spirit of their graveyard i.e., *chudala badrakali* or *chudalapeyi* and also to the dead. As part of pollution removal, the *Karimi* sprinkles cow dung water around the burial area.

The spirit of the dead is termed as *peyi* (ghost). To purge the *peyi* from there, the *Nattumoopan* recites magical spells and the *Karimi* blows his ceremonial stick in all the directions to make the *peyi* away and asks to depart. The *Nattumoopan* bestows a bronze bangle, if the deceased is a male and hair, in case of female to the *Karimi* from the graveyard imaging it as the soul of the deceased (*peyi*) and to continue their post burial rituals. The rituals at graveyard come to an end by this. In order to get rid of *pula* at the earliest, they put arrow together and the *moopan* hits it together as per the instructions of the *Karimi*.

The rituals at the house start in the evening with the erecting of a *pandal* (*chappara*) by the *Karimi*. The *Nattumoopan* is assisted in death rituals by the *Kanaladi* and the *Karimi*, the religious and ritual functionaries of the community. The entire burial rites are bestowed upon the *Karimi*.

The *chenmam* members bring their *peyi* (spirits of the dead of the year) on this day and keep inside the house. On this day all the *chenmam* people bring their *peyi*. The *Kanaladi* circumambulates it with a chicken offered by the *Kunnukaran*. The *Karimi* kills it ceremonially in the name of *chudala badrakali*. Before starting dispute resolution, the *kunnukaran* distributes betel leaves, arecanuts and coconut oil. Dispute resolution is part of their customary law mechanism which they conduct prior to their rituals and ceremonies.

The ceremonies start with the entry of the *chemmakkarans* of three major *mants* of the *Adiyan*. The major *mants* are *Badakk*, *Thirunelli*, and *Pothur*. The *chemmakaran* of the concerned *chenmam* and the *mants* bring raw rice in a winnowing pan and place it in the *chappara* and taking rice from it, the *Nattumoopan* make a symbolic drawing of the deceased on the ground. This is termed as *pindamidal*. The married women then start funeral wailing and continue till the *Nattumoopan* asks them to end. In between they erase the drawing on the ground with foot. After that elders start reciting spells till get possessed and the possessed man reveals the cause of death. Then the *Karimi* put the bronze bangle and money in a *thaluva*, if deceased was a male and hairs of the deceased and money, in case of female, which was handed over by the *Nattumoopan* from the graveyard, which symbolizes the soul of the dead. Then the *Nattumoopan* cover the *thaluva* with a white cloth and the *chemmakkan* keep it in the house of the deceased till *Valiyapula* (Annual death ceremony). This is termed as *peyinadakkal*, means symbolic tying of deceased's spirit or soul. Saraswati (1993) also discussed about the worldviews of various tribes and the associated rituals.

Chemmapula/Kakkapula/valiyapula/koottam (Annual Death Ceremony): *Chemmapula* or *Kakkapula* or *Valiyapula* is the last stage of the death ceremony. It is a ceremony conducted at clan (*chemmam*) level annually. It usually conducts at *chemmakaran's* house or in any of the house under the *chenmam*. It is a joint venture and the expenditure will be met by the matrilineal *chenmam* members. It lasts for 3 days and consists of a series of rituals. First day is termed as *entukoottakundaye*, second day as *nalme* and third day as *pirinte*. They usually conduct *koottam* or *valiyapula* prior to *Vallioorkavu* temple festival (a famous temple in Wayanad) in March. At times of shortage of money and if the other *chenmam* people seek the support, they conduct the *koottam* of two to four *chenmam* together.

While *valiyapula*, if a person dies in a sister clan, then they have to postpone the ceremonies. The death pollution affects the entire *chenmam* people. After deciding *valiya pula*, they can chew only tobacco and banned to use betel leaves and lime. The close kins strictly observe certain food taboos such as they avoid plantain, fish and meat, *chena* (amorphophallus), *kumbalam* (Ash gourd), *chembu* (Taro) etc. Women predominantly observe the food taboo. Earlier,

the violation of food taboo was a punishable offence. In the past, the widower is not supposed to talk, bath, and change clothes, shave and cut hair. But now such restrictions have changed and the period of observance reduced from one year to the day of *cheriyapula*. After the death of the husband, the widow would not wear new dress and ornaments till *koottam*, and are not permitted to enter into the public area.

Naalukettu (Date fixing ceremony): It is the first ceremony associated with *Kakkapula*. Followed by this, they conduct *nelledukka*.

Nelledukka: This ceremony they conduct prior to *koottam* (Annual death ceremony of a *chenmam*). This is a ceremony in which all the families under a *chenmam*, offers one *para* (approximately 8 kilograms) of paddy, 500 rupees, betel leaves and arecanut to the concerned *chemmakkaran* to conduct *koottam*. As the Adiyars are matrilineal, every female member of the *thavazhi* should have to give this even after marriage. Therefore, it is the duty of the husband to offer it to the wife's house and is keen to observe it. Schneider (1961) also discussed in detail about matrilineal system and roles of women in matrilineal societies.

The *chemmakkaran* or his assistants visit all the houses under the *chenmam* and invite the people, including the married women of the *chenmam*. The members of the *thavazhi* can give this amount and paddy when they come for inviting. While conducting *koottam* or *valiyapula* (Annual death ceremony) in wife's *chenmam*, the husband should have to give a fixed amount termed as *vala*. This is a mandatory norm among them. This shows the due recognition given to the females after marriage both in her family and husband's family.

On the first day of *kakkapula* (*Entukoottakundaye*), they erect a *pandal* and prepare food for people. The families under the *chenmam* bring their *peyi* (soul) on this day and keep inside the house and find out the auspicious time for their ritual.

After that they conduct dispute settling. The dispute settling is otherwise termed as *koottam*. The women raise their problems on the first day of the annual death ceremony or *valiyapula*. They raise their problems first to their *Chenmakkaran*. On this day, their problems would be settled. The *Nattumoopan* controls all the rituals and all the *chenmam* under him and makes the judgement, i.e., *thookka* and announces the fine. After this settlement, the women bring the wrapped *thaluva* which denotes the *peyi*. Then they start ceremonial wailing and continue till the *Nattumoopan* ask them to stop. Then they offer turmeric mixed food to *chudalabhadrakali* and conduct the rituals that they followed in the *cheriyapula* ceremony.

In case of demise of males, they conduct *vellattarante* (same as *vellattam*) in the afternoon. The *moopan* or assistants adorn and some beat drum. In the case of females, they do not conduct *vellattarante*. On this occasion they place rice and lighted wick in the courtyard as an offering to the goddess. On the second day (*nalme*) all the *moopans* of the *chenmam*, his assistants, *chemmakkaran*, *Nattumoopan* and people assemble together and erect a *chappara* (*pandal* made of *njaval* leaves (*Syzygium cumini* or black plum) and conduct rituals in the evening. They conduct the rituals in this *pandal*.

Olakettu or Vettlakettu: It conducts on the second day evening of *Valiyapula*. This is a kind of offering to the ancestors. They mainly place bundles of betel leaves and arecanut as offerings and all the elders recite their magical spells.

Muramkettu: Followed by *olakettu*, they conduct *muramkettu* at night. For this, they bring a *muram* (winnowing pan) and the *Kanaladi* ties bells on the two sides of this and take rice in it and cover the body with cloth and perform the rituals. Then he makes a ceremonial conversation with the soul on the reasons of his demise and it ends with the promise that the soul will not make any disturbances to the people of his *chenmam* and live with the ancestors happily and before departure the possessed (soul) sit down for a while in the lap of elders. If the dead is a female, then they ceremonially hand over the deceased to a deceased male of the same *chenmam*. In case of deceased male, then hand over to deceased female of the same *chenmam*. This shows that they believe in life after death.

On the third day (*pirinte*) morning the *chenmam* people bring their *peyi* into the *pandal*. That means, all the deceased of that year are invoked. Then the *moopan* open the wrapped *thaluva* or *peyi* of the particular *chenmam* only and the all the *moopans* sit together and conduct the rituals. After the ritual, they will not wrap again the *peyi* of the respective *chenmam* that conducts the *valiyapula*. This means that the entire funeral and post burial rituals (incorporation) over and the departed soul get incorporated in the world of ancestors. They do not open the *peyi* of other *chenmam* and the concerned families take back it to their house and keep it in their house till the *valiyapula* of their *chenmam*. That means the all the *peyi* (ghost) are invoked to the rituals till its incorporation stage as ancestors. After the incorporation ceremonies, the elder males cut their hair and shave to ward off the *pula* of the year.

Sanction for widow re-marriage is very unique among them that at the end of the *valiyapula* ceremony, the deceased husband's relatives (in-laws) of the widow adorns her like a bride with new cloths and ornaments. This implies social sanction for remarriage. Age of the widow is not at all a matter for such social sanction. The only ban is that they cannot marry from her deceased husband's *chenmam*. Likewise, the widower also can remarry after *valiyapula*, in which the deceased wife's relatives (in-laws of the widower) offer him new dress as sanction for remarriage. This social sanction at the end of the *valiyapula* indicates that the deceased became the ancestor and there would not be any worldly ties. They conduct *thira* or *vellat* usually after harvest which lasts for two days. If no death happens in a *chemmam* in the particular year, then they conduct only *vellat* in that year.

4. CONCLUSION

Every society observes certain rituals to mark the transitions or phase of life from one stage to another. The societies celebrate these transitions through ritualistic observations. The rite of passage marks the ritual events through which a person enters another phase of life. It attributes new social roles to a person and through this a person enters into another state of life. Rites of passage are prominent occasions during life cycles like birth, puberty, marriage etc. Among the Adiyans, the dead pass through rites of passage in which they observe transitional moments of life which include separation, transition and incorporation. Death marks the separation from worldly ties and transition stage marks the transformation as *peyi* (ghost) and then enters in the incorporation stage as ancestor. During this passage, elaborate rites and rituals are performed as a binding force of the society. Through the rite of passage of the dead, it is serving a psychological function of uniting the relatives together and there by social cohesiveness. Ancestral worship among the Adiyans is thus viewed as a bow to the spirit of the dead.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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