

## **Summary of the Report**

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### **Title of the project: Belief System in Everyday life with Special Reference to Palakkad District**

There are several myths in the form of beliefs inextricably mixed up with different levels of everyday life of the people from time immemorial and some of them are still influencing the everyday life of the people. The study relating to myths and beliefs becomes part of the study of indigenous culture too. Religion and belief seems to be as old as the origin of human beings themselves. It has been argued that belief systems are those traditional traits that govern the daily life and culture of a man. The Anthropologists, Psychologists, Sociologists and even the Historians use the term 'belief' in different ways. The present study is focusing principally to those beliefs current in certain regions of Palakkad district. The same cult with some variations, obtain, however, all over Palakkad district, all over Kerala and the Southern and Northern part of India. The procedure, practices and functions are different according to caste, region and even to persons. It is significant to note that there is no caste or religious distinction existed in beliefs. The proposed study carried out with the objective of how a particular belief affects and controls the mentality, emotions, attitude, vision, social relationships and responsibility, approach and the overall aspects of everyday life of man. It also tried to analyze how certain myths are originated in connection with particular beliefs.

It was the British ethnographers who had left behind a detailed description of the tribal communities; their practices and worship systems that prevailed in Kerala society. They had left behind a detailed description of the bloody sacrifices, worship of trees, stone and snakes prevailed in Kerala society. Majority of them considered the people of the villages of India as aboriginal and criminal races, and hence the meat eating gods as 'criminals' and demons too. All these works were produced on the basis of colonial narratives and missionary works and hence are negative in character. It was Lt. B. S. Ward and Lt. P.E. Conner was the first to employ the term "superstition" for such belief systems. In reality, there is no "superstition" but simply belief exists. There after the word is used rigorously by British administrators and the term became a colonial language and later used enormously by the natives too.

The proposed project identified and selected certain sites in the Palakkad District for study. In dealing with the subject matter I have taken a multi - disciplinary approach, using

a variety of methods, including informal and unstructured conversations and interviews with relevant persons, local gatherings and areas, participant observation, textual analysis, as well as reference to travelogues and the contemporary writings on religion and Cultural studies. Although there are many such centers across Kerala, the proposed project deals with places in Palakkad District viz- Kalladikkode, Ottappalam, Pathirippala, Athippotta, Kadambazhippuram, Kotakurssi , Pallassana and many others. Extensive field work was conducted by the investigator for the present study.

The major findings of the study are : Every religion and caste has its own centers of belief. The rituals and practices vary according to caste. Even though certain rituals are same there exist differences in the offerings, prayers and practices. Both the educated and uneducated, rich and poor people from different strata of the society have such religious believes. There is no religion in belief. Everyone who reached the place is a believer. Mantras and *tantras* were practiced by people from each and every caste and not the Brahmins only. Education is not a barrier in such belief systems. Both educated and uneducated people came for remedies. Economic aspect is secondary.it is the mental happiness and stability that people needed. Anxiety is the reason behind such belief systems and not economy. A number of medicines were also distributed together with the pujas in the form of *prasada*. Thus the belief centers are both center of belief and of medicines. Certain level of acculturation and accommodation of traditions took place among the people of lower castes.

By integrating regional histories and traditions, the colonial narratives were successful in their attempt to construct a new stream of alternate Hinduism different from that of *Brahmanic* Hinduism. Apart from this the ideologies and belief systems, the peculiar process by which they were assimilated into the fold of "Hinduism", the internal differences, peculiar geo-ecological contexts by which these customs were evolved, what was the grass root tradition? All these queries need to be tackled and materialized in a wider context.