

**FOLK - CUSTOMS  
IN  
TAMILNADU**

**Dr. G. SANTI**

**ICSSR - POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH WORK**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**

**ANNAMALAI**



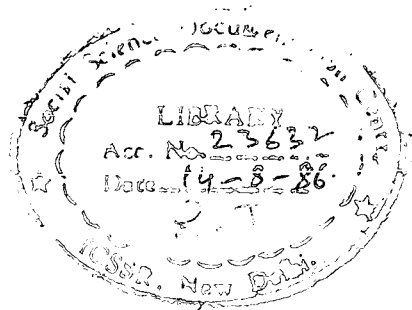
**UNIVERSITY**

**1984**

81

09.07.1987

; 2



284

PC 312 1/2

## C O N T E N T S

	<u>Pages</u>
Acknowledgement	
 <u>PART - I</u>  	
Introduction                   ...                   ...	1
Folk-custom - A Sociological point of view   ..	6
Folk-custom - An Anthropological point of view ..	30
Folk-custom - Caste Variation               ..               ..	50
Folk-custom - Regional Variation           ..               ..	180
Folk-custom - Rural and Urban area difference ..	369
Conclusion                   ..               ..               ..	379
 <u>PART - II</u>  	
Introduction                   ..               ..               ..	382
Customs connected with child birth & childhood days	412
Customs regarding "sacred thread" ceremony and "puberty Rituals"                               ..	445
Marriage Customs                               ..               ..	472
Customs during First Pregnancy             ..               ..	545
Sashtiyapthapuurtti & Sadhabhisheekam       ..	559
Death Customs                               ..               ..               ..	567
 <u>APPENDIX</u>  	
Sample of collected songs                   ..               ..	613
Sample of questionnaire                   ..               ..	628
Bibliography                               ..               ..               ..	645

\*\*\*

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am deeply thankful to my Professor Dr.S.Ageethalingom, Director, Centre of Advanced Study in Linguistics, Annamalai University for his constant help, valuable suggestions during my ICSSR Post-Doctoral work.

I wish to record my thanks to Dr.V.Gomethinayagam, Head of the Department of Sociology, Annamalai University & Dr.S.Sekhhivel, Lecturer, CAS in Linguistics, Annamalai University for their help during my ICSSR Post-Doctoral work.

I have to thank Dr.S.Suyambulingom, Department of Mathematics, Agricultural University, Coimbatore for his help while collecting data in Coimbatore. I convey my heartiest thanks to Mr.K.Somasunderam, TPTC, Chidambaram for his constant help during my data-collection in all the villages.

I am thankful to Mr.D.Palanisamy, P.G.Assistant in Botany & to Mr.Tamilmani, P.G.Assistant in Zoology of PRG Higher Secondary School, Udayarkudi for their help during my data-collection in Udayarkudi villege. I am also very much thankful to Mr.Mohanram, Kannan of Thiruvandipuram for their help during my data collection in Thiruvandipuram. I am thankful to Mr & Mrs. Pitchaimuttu & his family members, Headmaster, Valayamadevi for their constant help during my visit for data-collection in Valayamadevi.

70

My heartfelt thanks to The Director, Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi for awarding me this fellowship to enable me to do this project.

I am thankful to Mr. M. Muthukumaraswamy, Librarian, Department of Linguistics, for helping me by giving books and to Mr. P. Parathasi, Department of Linguistics for typing this project work.

I am thankful to all the informants for their co-operation during my data-collection. Once again I wish to convey my thanks to all, those who helped during this project work.

## FOLK-CUSTOMS

### Introduction

"Customs and traditions are group accepted techniques of control that have become well established, that are taken for granted and that are passed along from generation to generation" (Bogardus, E.S., "Sociology").

Custom can be considered as a broad term embracing all the folkways and mores. In day-to-day life custom is used as synonymous with habit, but there are vital differences between the two. Habit is a personal phenomenon while custom is a social phenomenon. "A custom is formed on the basis of habit gaining the sanction and the influence and therefore the social significance which is peculiar to it." (MacIver, society).

Customs are social habits which through repetition become the basis of an order of social behaviour. They are long established habits and usages of the people. A peculiar characteristic of custom is that it exists only as a social relationship and has for the individual an external sanction. The social character of custom is revealed by those customs which cannot be practised but collectively, for example, the various celebrations on the occasion of birth, marriage and

death etc. when people come together and by participating in a common occasion stimulate the social consciousness of one another. According to Davis, Kingsley in "Human Society", the term "custom" is "closer to folkways than to mores, but it tends to convey the traditional, automatic and mass character of both of them."

Customs create habits - though custom is the result of habit, however there are many customs which may give rise to habits and be supported by them. Thus customs create habits and habits create customs. Thus the two, though distinct, are intricately related in social life. The process of custom determining the habits and the habits in turn determining customs is a significant aspect of social organization.

When the customs and Habits are compared former is a social phenomenon, socially recognised, is normative, has got great social significance, maintains social order, is inherited, has an external sanction whereas the latter is an individual phenomenon, is not socially recognised, is not normative, is more personal importance, facilitates individual activity, is learnt & has no external sanction.

A custom is traditional practice - a mode of individual behaviour or a habit of social life - that is transmitted by word of mouth or imitation, then ingrained by social pressure, common usage and parental or other authority.

"A custom may be either peculiar to a single family or it may be common to a group of families, the common bond of union being residence in a particular locality or unity of tribe or caste or unity of creed". (Heramba Chatterjee Sastri "The social background of the Forms of Marriage in Ancient India" - Volume -II).

Folklife refers to the full traditional love, behaviour and material culture of any folk group, with emphasis on the customary and material categories. Hindu customs and ceremonies are the pillars upon which the entire edifice of Hindu civilization is established. "The Hindu customs and ceremonies are as ancient as the mighty Himalayas; yet it is equally as modern as atomic era. Its spirit of modernity extends from the inner man to his outer science, from his unsuspected self to the produce of his intellect and reason. In this sense, science is not the enemy of Hinduism but a preparation for it. (B.N. Banerjee, "Hindu Culture, Custom & Ceremony").

Alexander H. Krappe in his book 'The science of Folklore' divides the body of customs and rites into three classes viz., (1) rites connected with definite days and seasons of the solar year; (2) rites observed on definite occasions such as birth, marriage, death etc. & (3) special rites of aversion and avoidance.

First one is compared with the Hindu festivals, function, celebration within a year. Second one is compared with the customs, ceremonies, rituals etc. of the Hindu caste people, (This project work is the same as above). Third is compared to superstitions.

Social customs have a new dignity and value to those who regard them as the expressions of the communal will and the crystallizations of the communal experience. Folk-customs are the social customs. Customs and folk-customs are one and the same, since in every folk's life their culture tradition etc. are reflected through their customs, habits etc. Mostly custom includes celebrations, ceremonies and rituals connected with a human life cycle. In "Hindu" religion we can find customs for each and every moment of a life cycle.

P.V. Jagadise Ayyar in his book "South Indian Customs" points out that "Not even a single one of the Hindu customs, however unimportant and simple, is without a religious basis or principle behind it. Therefore the Hindus hold that their customs and usages are inviolable though they appear to be meaningless and unintelligible at the present moment. Essentially religious, the customs and usages prevalent in the land are, in the opinion of the "Hindus", "as sacred as religion itself."

### Caste system

India is a country containing innumerable caste people. The basic Hindu social institution is caste (B.N. Banerjee "Hindu Culture, custom & ceremony" - In Part-II viz., "Hindu Custom"). The division of labour in the socio-economic development came to be known as caste system. As a result, assigning tasks to different sections of the society necessitated the recording of rules and norms for functioning of the society as a harmonious group. These records also were codified and modified. The existing rituals and ceremonies prescribing new ones. This is the classical economic theory about the origin of Hindu caste system.

According to Hindu culture the "Caste system" was not to divide the Hindu society but bring about its organizational unity and human solidarity.

Moreover India was the home of many societies with different cultural and social traditions. To preserve their separate entity, barriers were set up. Foreign tribes invaded India and settled down in the country adapting Hindu customs. These people formed a new separate caste. The number of sub-castes was produced by the inter-mixture of various castes.

The present work is divided into two parts. I-part consists of Analysis of Folk-customs consisting of five Chapters viz.,

- 1) Folk customs - A sociological point of view,
- 2) Folk customs - An Anthropological point of view,
- 3) Folk customs - Caste variation,
- 4) Folk customs - Regional variation,
- and 5) Folk customs - Rural and Urban area differences.

II-Part consists of the collection of Folk-customs from various caste people. There are six chapters viz.,

- 1) Customs connected with child birth and childhood days;
- 2) Customs regarding "Sacred thread ceremony" and "Puberty Rituals;"
- 3) Marriage customs
- 4) Customs during first pregnancy
- 5) "Sashtiyapthapurthi" and "Sadhahishegam"
- and 6) Death customs.

A list of folk-songs collected during the data collection and also a sample of questionnaire is attached in the appendix part.

Conclusion is also given in the end of the Part-I viz., Analysis part. An Introduction is given in the beginning of the Part-II, in which the informations about the informants are given. Maps are also drawn to indicate the villages from which the data are collected.