



## A REVIEW ON THE SOCIAL CUSTOMS OF MUSLIMS IN KADAYANALLUR: PAST AND PRESENT

**A.H. Mohamed Ali**

*M.Phil Scholar, Sadakathullah Appa College, Tirunelveli.*

### **Abstract**

*Kadayanallur is a Grade-II Municipal town falls under the administrative jurisdiction of Tirunelveli District and Tenkasi Taluk. It is the second largest urban center in the district and it is located near the foothills of the Western Ghats in the eastern side. Kadayanallur, is one of the many traditional Muslim weaving villages in Tirunelveli, a district in the state of Tamil Nadu. The main objective of the research study is to enlighten the various social customs and traditions of Muslim people of Kadayanallur from the ancient period to the present time.*

**Keywords:** *Kadayanallur, Social Customs, Tirunelveli.*

### **Introduction**

Weaving was the primary profession of people of Kadayanallur. Every household in Kadayanallur had handloom machine and the occupation was passed down from generation to generation. The people of Kadayanallur town were hard workers and they worked around the clock in their looms. Sarees and hand-kerchiefs were usually made by the weavers. In the 19th century, the weaving industry in South India was twice transformed because of the industrial revolution in Britain. In the early 19th century, India's hand-spinning industry was destroyed by the import of machine-spun yarn from Britain and the establishment of local spinning mills. With a plentiful supply of cheap yarn, however, the handloom sector flourished until about 1860, when the East India Company imposed a handloom tax to suppress competition to the British textile industry. Due to the introduction of machine-spun yarn, many of the traditional weavers found themselves without income and were forced to migrate to places like Penang, Singapore and Gulf countries for employment.

### **Social Customs of Kadayanallur**

#### **Agriculture**

Tharaganars (Master Weavers) had their wet and dry agricultural lands in Kadayanallur. They either cultivate themselves or appoint a tenant (lending the field to someone and collect rent for the period of limited duration) to do so. In the ancient period, rice was abundantly available in Kadayanallur Town. Rice from local agricultural fields, Burma and Thailand were also available in the market. But, the economic condition of the people was too poor to buy rice. Therefore, corn was consumed by many people because the price of the corn was lower. Many weavers had a habit of taking corn pulp (Chola kaadi) and rice for the dinner and supper.

#### **Food Habits**

The Muslims in Kadayanallur are expert in culinary art. Their food is rich, nutritious and variegated. Customary breakfast such as Idiappam, Parotta, Appam, Idly, Dosai, Puttu, etc., are the delicious special foods prepared in the rich people houses in Kadayanallur for the breakfast. These food items are similar to those prevalent among the Mappilas / Moplas of west coast. Lunch and dinner is mostly rice and Non-vegetarian foods are preferred by Muslim people of Kadayanallur. Mutton, chicken, egg are cooked, fried, roasted with masala of cashew, Pista, almond and a variety spices. Pulavu (ghee fried rice) or Biriyani (rice cooked with meat) are the special foods served in the festival times and marriage functions.

#### **Traditional Dress**

Muslims in Kadayanallur followed two Madhab (Islamic jurisprudence) namely Shafi and Hanafi. These groups of people are living in the different locations in Kadayanallur. But, their manners, customs, dress, foods and festivals have mostly influenced from the Muslim living the Kerala state. Because, Kadayanallur town situated nearer to Kerala – Tamil Nadu border - were forced by Portuguese brutal attacks on their villages in the 16th century to flee into the rural interior. There they began migrating to the villages near Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. Many of the present-day Tirunelveli Muslims claim to be descended from the Kerala Mapillais (“grooms”), follow Malabari religious teachers and social culture.

Physical laborers wear lungi as a working dress. It is also known as Kaili or Saaram/Chaaram in South Tamil Nadu. In general, it is considered a casual dress or working dress of physical employees. During the past half century, in Kadayanallur, attire older Muslims women wore long thunis (a variant of the mundu) coupled with a white, loose tunics (penkuppayam), usually made of fine muslin. Pavadai (a skirt which is tied around the waist using string,) and Dhavani (is a cloth usually 2 to 2.5 metres in length) was a tradition dress worn mainly in Kadayanallur by young girls. In the mid of 90's, the influence of western culture and the perception of the dress as inconvenient has led to the decline of the Paavadai and Davaani as daily



wear of girls, unmarried and even some married women in Kadayanallur, in favor of the Shalwar kameez or western clothes. It is often claimed that even fifteen years ago, Pardah was not in use amongst Muslims in South India. In the post 90's, the habit of wearing Pardah disseminated among the Muslim women by the gulf migrants.

### **Jewelry and Ornaments**

Muslim women belongs to rich family in Kadayanallur are madly fond of jewelry and ornaments. This is not only for decoration and ornamentation but to serve as a parameter of the financial status of the family. Various ornaments and Jewels made of gold, silver and other precious stones that are used in the jewels wore by Muslims women in this town. They usually wear this kind of ornaments in special occasions and festival times. They wear different kinds of gold and silver ornaments in their ear, nose, neck, arms, fingers, waist, feet, ankle and toe. Apart from the conventional ear ornaments, the Labbai and Rawthar women in this town bore their entire ear lobes and wear a gold ornament called vali arasilai or alarkothu which consists of rings made of thin wire with leaf design of peepal tree hanging from it.

### **Festivals**

In early days, Muslims in this town were eagerly looking forward to celebrate festivals. They were physically engaged in the various works throughout the year, so they were expected to take a leave for some days during festivals. Youths and Children were profoundly expected to celebrate festivals than the adults. In Kadayanallur, Eid al-Fitr(Ramzan), Eid al-Adha (Hajj Festival), Muharram, Milad-un-Nabi, Odukkathu Puthan (Last Wednesday of Safar), Periya Pallivasal Kanduri, shab-e-barat, and local Dargah kanduri festival celebrations are the list of festivals celebrated by people of Kadayanallur.

#### **Eid al-Fitr (Ramzan)**

This festival celebrated on the first day of the month of Shawwal (Arabic) month. Ramzan is celebrated in continuation of the fast for thirty days during the previous month. During the month of Ramadan, every member in a house woke up early in the morning before 4 am, performs a special prayer called "Tahajjud" and prepares a meal called "Sahar" before the call for early-morning prayer "Fajr". The whole day is spent with a lot of good things like prayers, reciting the Holy Quran, helping poor Muslims financially and etc., Every evening is very special and busy in all houses, mosques and business places with a lot of preparation for "Iftar" (breaking fast), and eagerly waiting for the call for the Evening (Maghrib) prayer to break the 14 hours long fasting. Special snacks and a special soup called "Kanji" are prepared throughout the month for Iftar in all the Mosques.

On this day of Eid-al-Fitr, the Muslims congregate for the special prayer in a mosque or big ground of the town. Before going to the prayer they distribute the fitra and alms to the poor. It is compulsory on the part of every Muslim to distribute the fitra - a fixed quantity of grain, or the cost of it - to the poor before the special prayer. It is intended the poor feel secure and happy. Almost all the Muslims distribute the zakath amount to the poor and needy prior to this festival, thus making the poor fellow beings to feel happy and hence it can be called as a social festival.

#### **Eid al-Adha (Bakrid)**

Bakrid is an important festival to Muslims. People visit a small livestock market (Periya Pallivasal Ground) to buy sacrificial animals for the Eid al-Adha, or "Feast of Sacrifice," in Kadayanallur. Kadayanallur Muslims traditionally sacrifice goats and cows to commemorate the Prophet Ibrahim's readiness to sacrifice his son on God's command. This festival considered as a second major celebrations of Muslims in Kadayanallur. On the day of Eid al-Adha, all the Muslims in Kadayanallur attend morning prayers at local mosques or open ground – often taking a different route back to their home, as this is following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Sal). They wear their best clothes – ideally a new outfit, but just something clean and tidy if they could not afford it. Children and youngsters would often actually receive new clothes from their parents. After the Eid-Al-Adha prayers at local mosques, all the people rushes to their house to give Qurbani (Sacrifice). The Qurbani (sacrificial) meat would be divided into three equal parts – one for the household, one for relatives and friends, and one for the poor. Once after distributing the Qurbani meats to all, they start preparing for lunch. The traditional foods such as Briyani, Ghee rice and etc. would be prepared for the lunch. Relatives, friends, friends of family and others in close relation would be invited for the lunch.

#### **Muharram**

Muharram is another festival celebrated on the 10th day of Muharram the forbidden month, which marks the beginning of the Hijra (Arabic) year. The public meetings are arranged in the Darghas. The Muslim communities are invited to address the gatherings. Kadayanallur, Tenkasi, Melappalayam and Taniyur are some of the places where the above festivals are celebrated in a grand manner. Special fathiha recited in all the houses of the Kadayanallur Muslims on this day. In the recent days, celebrating Muharram festival have been gradually diminished.



### **Milad-un-Nabi**

Muslims in Kadayanallur grandly celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (sal) on the 12th day of Rabi-ul-Awwal (Arabic) month. Kadayanallur Muslims referred Milad-un-Nabi as “Panirendarai Kanthuri”. The day before the Milad-un-Nabi, small boys and girls, friends and relatives from various families gather in the street and start decorating the street with the color flags. On the day of Milad, special Maulut recited by the hasraths and lebbai in each houses. One representative from each segment of the street collects a small amount as a contribution towards the preparation of rice meals for the lunch. These rice meals would be distributed to all the houses after reciting a special mauluth and fathiha by the Hasrath. In the recent days, celebrating Milad-un-Babi has been gradually diminished. The habit of making rice meals and distributing to all the houses in the street has decreased gradually.

### **Makdoom Ganiyar Dargah Kanduri (Periya Pallivasal Kanduri)**

This is an exclusive festival for Muslim people of Kadayanallur. Every year, on this day, Makhdoom Gnaniyar Dargah in Kadayanallur town celebrates kanduri in 11th day of Arabic month of Rajab and ends in the tenth day. On the day of Kanduri, people used to wear new cloths and visit Dargah with their family. This Dargah festival ends with Sandana Koodu. This is one of the special functions in the entire festival. The flag carried over from Pettai and taken around all the streets of Kadayanallur. Finally, the flag would be placed in the shrine. Lot of people gathers in the place where sandana koodu and flag place in the shrine. At present, this festival has not been celebrated like past decades. Because, the impact of ideologies of new generations and controversies between supporters and adversaries of Dharga and other reasons.

### **Conclusion**

The above said all the social customs were traditionally followed generation by generation among the Muslim people of Kadayanallur. Among those, some of the social customs were blindly followed by people due to the lack of knowledge about Quran, Hadish, education and last but not least ignorance and innocence. Now a days, many changes has been came among the people due to the influence of various Islamic organizations and Islamic leaders of Kadayanallur.

### **Reference**

1. A. Mohamed Ibarahim, “Kadayanallur Muslimgal Varalaru”, Sirajul Muneer Pathippagam, Kadayanallur, 2009
2. Dr. J. Raja Mohamad, “Maritime History of Muslims of Coromandel Coast – a Socio Historical study on the Tamil Muslims 1740-1900”, Director of Museums, Government Museum, 2004.
3. Noor Mohammad, “Indian Muslims : Precepts and Practices”, Rawat Publication, 1999
4. Osella, C, Osella, F, ‘Muslim Style in south India’. Journal Fashion Theory, vol 11, issue 2/3:1–20, 2007.
5. Robinson, F, ‘Islam and Muslim Society in South Asia’, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2001.
6. Dale S.F, “Trade, conversion and the growth of the Islamic community of Kerala, South India”, Journal of Studia Islamica, 1990
7. Punathil S, “Kerala Muslims and shifting notions of religion in the public sphere”, South Asia Research Journal, 2013.
8. Basheer, M. P. "The business of promoting the purdah." The Tribune, 2002.