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PALGHAT TRAILS

Learn about the unique blend of culture, tradition, music and food from this part of South India

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Inside Page
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Thank the Divine in making my dreams come true.
Thank my parents (MNS Mani & Lakshmi Mani) for this life-time opportunity.

Photos courtesy:
Cover page:
streets of Palghat- Deccan Chronicle.
Pinterest and Google have lot of images in public domain on the South-Indian weddings. The images are converted into line drawings to protect privacy. Not two images are from the same group. Hence any similar looks of yourself or your friends/family are pure coincidence in the world!

Note: More focus on this book is about Palghat Iyers, also known as Palghat brahmins. I have attempted to explore and explain their unique traits. There are many differentiations within the brahmin community in the Indian sub-continent. Future books will focus on other types of Brahmins.

There are hundreds of variations to typical South-Indian marriage. Brahmins and others follow some unique and different traditions. Different regions within South-India and within the State of Tamil Nadu practice various forms of marriage rituals. This book is just a glimpse of the popular traditions and explains the significance behind them. Any corrections reported by readers will be incorporated in the future editions

Some of the traditions listed here could be very outdated in this century. It's not my job is to treat them as good or bad. But you will continue to see them in the weddings these days. The book gives you an opportunity to know about those rituals instead of just taking pictures & selfies.

Key words: Hindus, Brahmins, Kerala Iyers, Palghat Iyers, Sanskrit, Hindu marriage, Vedic traditions

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Foreword

There are many unique cultures and traditions in this world. That learning will make us feel that we are all same irrespective of the color of the skin. People all over the world are born, study, make a living, have a family, and finally leave the planet Earth. They follow certain set of family rules, religious practices and believe in God in their own perspectives. But what they learn and experience from other cultures gives much broader perspectives to their own lifetime. People who have traveled lot of countries for work or vacation have a different opinion and are open to more newer concepts. There is a saying in Malayalam language (one of the South Indian language) about 'not to drive horse within your own vessel'. More about that in 'Palghat proverbs' chapter!

Talking more about uniqueness, we all know about Jewish traditions and the Jews population spread all over the world. Native Americans have their unique lifestyles and traditions. Australian Aborigines have their own stories. Then there are Persians and Jains. There are specific groups called Chettiars or Nagarathars predominantly in Southern India known for their trading skills. They have done ship trade across the world even before the Internet invention. In the southern state of Kerala, the Malayalee (people who speak Malayalam language) are known for their hard work and willing to work anywhere in the world. They have strong networking skills and willingness to help others.

While the popular joke about Malayalee may be about their tea-selling skills but the truth is that their dedication to work is amazing. We can say there is no country in the world that there is not a group of Malayalee working or living.

From the generic Malayalee population, we are now diving into specific Palghat district. This district is known as 'granary of Kerala' for the rice cultivation and other food processing centers. From the district, we focus on the Palghat city. Besides the historical monuments, there is another specific area of Agraharams. Here the specific sect of people, called Palghat Iyers live in different lifestyle and dharmas (Hindu rules). This book is about their lifestyle and traditions. The book will highlight how they have adapted to different social situations and still maintain their uniqueness from language to culinary skills.

The content in this book is just to give the readers an idea of the Palghat Iyers lifestyles. I have focused more on their culture and their traditions.

What made me to write a book on this subject? I was born in that environment but moved to different parts of Southern India like any other Palghat' tan have done for their living. I still visit that place every two years and observe their living styles. It is very much interesting how they still hold some old traditions in the modern times of Facebook and Whatsapp.

About Palghat

PALGHAT TRAILS

Learn about the unique blend of culture, tradition, music, and food of Palghat Iyers from South India

Palghat City

Palghat (also known as Palakkad) is a city in the Kerala State of South India. The city may have just ten-mile square area but rich with ancient tradition and culture. There is a 18th century Fort that has a large moat and battlement area. There is a Kalpathy river that provide additional scenery. 15th century Shri Viswanath Swamy temple gives colorful and famous Ratholsavam Chariot festival. The Malampuzha dam gives the ideal picnic spot with visitors coming from all over India. The dam holds 226 million cubic meters of water. The construction started in 1949 and the dam was opened 9 Oct 1955. The population of the city stands at 130000 as of 2011. As per census the city has 95% literacy rate. This book has images of those places and events.

Palghat District

Palghat city is the district headquarters of Palghat district. It was known previously as Malabar district, one of the 14 districts of South Indian State of Kerala. The entire district is about 1730 square miles, about 12% of the State's area. About 530 Square miles are covered with dense forests. The name pala-kkad means the forest area of Pala (indigenous tree name). The district's population is about 2.8 million almost equal to the nation of Jamaica (or) the US State of Utah. Another interesting fact is the sex ratio. The district has 1067 females for every 1000 males. The majestic Western Ghats (hill range) with a stretch of 1000 km take a break at this district. The other sides of the district are covered with Nilgiris hills and Anamalai Hills. So, the weather is very pleasant throughout the year, but occasionally get warmed with hot winds from neighboring state of Tamil Nadu.

Palghat Iyers

As per 2011 census, Palghat district has 67% Hindus, 29% Muslims and 4% Christians. Among the Hindus, the significant portion of them are Kerala Iyers (also known as Bhattars). They are the residents in the Palghat and in Kerala region. They migrated from Tamil Nadu centuries back. Historically they form two groups, one Palghat Iyers and another Cochin Iyers. There is lot common about both the Iyers, but we will focus on Palghat Iyers in this book.

Community Living

Community living was the style and trademark of the Kerala Iyers. Their settlement consists of array of houses with built-in community amenities nearby. This came to be known as 'Agraharam' and this concept moved to other parts of south India too. Each Agraharam consist of two rows of houses facing each other. There are no front courtyards but only the common street. Several such Agraharams formed an organization called 'Samooham'. Kerala's Agrarian Bill of 1957 abolished the land tenancy system. After that period, lot of Kerala Iyers moved up north India and also migrated to other countries for studies and employment. Kerala Iyers follow Hinduism and speak Tamil language. Their language merged with the use of Malayalam words and hence also known as 'Talayalam', in the humorous context.

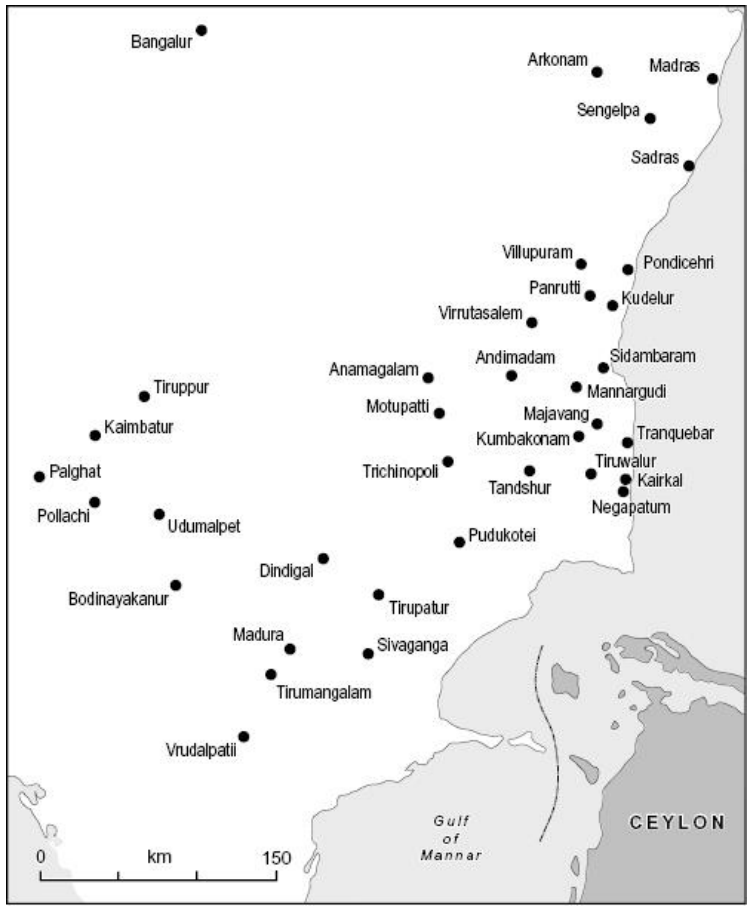
Palghat fort (photo Kerala Tourism)

Kalpathy river. (source Krish photography)

Malampuzha dam (photo source Goibibo)

Kalpathi Agraharam. (photo source Flickr)

(source: map of india)



(photo: Manchester hive.)

400 km distance that may take 8 hours by drive, between original starting point of Kumbakonam to Palghat

Palghat and Palghat Iyers have maintained their traditions and culture over many decades. They are adaptable to the society's needs and show no discrimination in any form. They blend with new technology or emerging social patterns. The openness to new ideas and creativity in their adaptation needs special reference. Kalpathy, one of the villages within Palghat has been declared 'national heritage' to preserve the originality and tradition. Such similarity can be seen in Lhasa city in Tibet. Lhasa city has eastern part still with old traditions and people wearing traditional dress. The western part has multi-level apartments, fashion malls and all the modern city looks.

What is so different?

I started this book as a compilation of various news articles and events. But soon I realized I have content worth 100+ pages.

People always ask me what is so different that can be mentioned in a book?

Besides their unique language and food habits, the Palghat ‘tan place huge respect to elders and value family. Yes, this is always common across many societies in the world. But here elders are respected as God, their wisdom and knowledge are followed with no questions. Then there is a belief that the elders leave the plant but visit often to their ancestral temples. There is a tutelary deity concept to continue the family legacy in temple worship.

We talked about Agraharams, self-contained township of families and relatives living in the same community. Such Agraharams will also have a temple with a pond. There will be a small or medium size community hall for group meetings and family celebrations. People share their cooked food and on special occasions meet at each other houses. A person visiting from another city need to visit multiple houses in the Agraharam since he may be related to many families. Families offer coffee or buttermilk even to strangers and often plead to spend more time next time!

Palghat Iyers wedding were four-day events in the last century. This has become a day or two events with all the rituals and traditions combined together for everyone's convenience and availability.

What is modern 'Intermittent Fasting' has been practiced many years back. It's called Ekadasi vrata, which comes twice a month. People stop eating by lunch time and will eat the next day breakfast only. Some fast the entire day too.

Compared to any other Indian family systems, Palghat Iyers have given women's role important role in the family. The women got into education and social system very centuries back. They have excelled in their own academic and professional fields.

Another interesting note is in the past they gave more importance to the employer and employment as salaried job. They started using the company name to introduce themselves and other people started using the company name as a prefix to differentiate between two same names of the individual.

(photo source: FB group)
Young men enjoying the evening outside the house

Women in their traditional sarees in madisar style

History

The original migration of Iyers into Palghat started in 18th century. They were mostly in a place called 'Kumbakonam' in Tamil Nadu State. The Chera kingdom in the State of Kerala attracted the migration for employment and better living conditions. The Iyers focused on better education and gainful employment. Their mathematical and scientific analysis mindset helped them to excel in administrative services and professional fields. Lot of people with administrative skills sets moved into Government jobs and even moved to New Delhi in later years to work in central Government jobs. People who excelled in education side became Professors and moved to various parts of India and also many countries abroad. Lot of young population moved into science field to become scientists and doctors. A couple in those days could easily have 8 to 12 children. And the extended family of uncles and aunties could end up in many dozens if not hundreds. There are also stories of experts in the astrology and astronomy. They pass the family traditions to the children if they are interested to make a living from Astrology.

There are many books on the legacy of the Palghat Iyers. 'Saga of Kalpathy- Story of Palghat Iyers' written by MK Das.

Palghat Iyers by L.K.Ramanathan

From Cauvery to Neela: A History of the Tamil Agraharams of Palakkad by K.N.Lakshimarayanan. This book is available in Amazon kindle

Astrology. Prasannam in Kerala.
(photo source Kerala Astrology)

Palghat Language and Slangs

The Palghat Iyers speak Tamil language mixed with various special words from Malayalam and Sanskrit.

Like every language it is remarkably interesting to listen to their narration and slangs.

People in India and specially in south India can easily recognize the individual on their native place. They just to listen to the person speaking few words!

Original source: written by P.S.Ganesh

A unique Palghati word is, Saramillai.

It essentially means, "let it be, it's of no consequence " or to put it in Hindi, " koi baat nahin"

It is a word firmly engraved in our psyche because all Palghati children have been consoled and comforted with this word by their parents right from infancy . Whether it was a stumble while learning to walk or a setback in life, "saramillai" would always manage to lift up your spirits and exhort you to bash on regardless.

On the other side of the Ghats the equivalent would be "paravaillai". But when paravaillai is elongated to paravaillaye it would become a word of appreciation and admiration to mean in Hindi," Wah kya baat hai.

So, from koi baat nahi to wah Kya baat hai , all we need to do is pull the tail end of paravaillai a bit.

Kudiya kedukkaraan means someone who is creating domestic strife and not some clumsy fellow who bumps against you in the bar and makes you spill your drink.

Another word unique to the palghati language is "buddhimuttadhe" The nearest equivalent for that, I think, is in Hindi; dimaag mat ladhaao. In short it means, don't break your head, when in reality you are being advised not to put in muscular work. Nearest meaning word is the Hindi, Mushkil or museebat or pareshaani. But if you want to say any one of these in Palghati , you say, buddhi muttadey.

Rombha buddhi muttal aayidithu train cancel aanappo = Bahut pareshaani hogayi jab train cancel hui

When a Palghati mother lovingly sees off her son to the exams with the words, "kondehey pareekshai paathu kettu ezhathu kettaya" , it might seem to a non Palghati that she is encouraging her son to cheat and copy at the exams.

While doing up his new house , he would tell the carpenters, plumbers etc. in his usual palghati style, " nee oru karyam pannu", only to be met by angry, shocked, or aghast reactions. It finally dawned upon him that in non palghati tamil, "karyam pannal" means conducting a funeral and its related rituals.

That's what makes us palghatis so unique, with Malayalam in our tamil and coconut in our cuisine

Palghat Iyers use Tamil predominantly but mixed with different Malayalam words. For example, water is called Vellam. The same Vellam in tamil is known for jaggary (sugar cane product). They call their house as Aaam or Aathu, while the tamil meaning could translate to river. 'Azhichu' is the word used to remove things, the tamil equivalent could mean destroy.

Palghat Paati Wisdom

'Paati' is the word used for grandmother in Tamil language.

Palghat Paati, is the famous words to mention the ancient wisdom and generational knowledge transferred into families

The advice could be towards worldly living, health matters and even on relationship advice.

We never used anything to cure adolescent pimples, simple sandalwood paste will cure it overnight. The Paati recipes have cures for digestion issues, simple cold, cough, fever ailments. The grandmothers in the family will ensure that the food on the plate is balanced with all six tastes (sweet, pungent, salt, sour, bitter, and astringent)

Some of the famous ones are listed below

Aaatril oru kaal and setril oru kaal vaikkathey.

Never keep one leg on the river and another one on the shore

(the hidden meaning may about the balance in life)

When the children get confused with multi-tasking, the grandmothers will yell from the kitchen about this

Not to be doing multitude of things, just focus on one action

Avasara kolam alli thelikkeren, periya kolam pinnadi poderen

An act done in haste is of no use, you may to repeat itself anyway in the future

If you do certain things just to finish the task, the quality will not be good.

Then you decide you will do the task again later with more perfection.

Why not do it at the first instance itself?

Ellu means Ennai yaga irukkanam

If a grain is asked to be ready with the oil from that grain.

This is about not procrastinating and always be ahead one step ahead.

Oru permaiyum ullu pulukkam

In the society he is the star, in the house he is hated

People put facade to be the nicest person in the community, but within the family they hold grudges and anger.

Veettukku Veedu vasappadi

Every house has footsteps

Everyone is different but everyone has similar problems too. Each household need to handle the pressures and expectations on the financial and social sides. This is to assuage that everyone has to go through tough life and you're not an exception

Arandavan kannukky irundathellam pei

For the person in fear, darkness is evil

The message dictates the role of fear in life. If you are afraid you will not enter the dark room thinking there must be ghost inside. Likewise, you cannot enjoy the life if you are afraid in your mind

Fear psychosis

Shisrushai irkkunam

Taking care of oneself is important

Like the proverbial, put your oxygen mask first before helping other in the airline messages - you need to take care of yourself before advising others

Tamil Language

Tamil is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India. It's spoken by people in the state of Tamil Nadu and people living in other parts of India that are originally from Tamil Nadu. It is also the official language of Singapore and Sri Lanka countries. Tamil is spoken by the Tamil Diaspora in USA, Canada, Malaysia, Fiji, and many other countries.

Tamil is one of the longest-surviving classical language in the world. Tamil inscriptions from 500 BC have been found in places. A recorded Tamil literature has been documented for over 2000 years. There are about 78 million speakers of this language (source: wikipedia)

The current Tamil script consists of 12 vowels, 18 consonants and one special character, the aytam (ahk). The vowels and consonants combine to form 216 compound characters, giving a total of 247 characters.

There are lot of ancient texts in Tamil Language. Thirukural is one of them, which has been translated in many languages. It's short verses with immense content has made many people explaining them into many books.

Tamil

தமிழ் எழுத்து

The earliest known inscriptions in Tamil date back to 2,200 BC. Tamil literature emerged in around 300 BC, and the language used from then until the 700 AD is known as Old Tamil. From 700-1600 AD the language is known as Middle Tamil, and since 1600 the language has been known as Modern Tamil.

Tamil was originally written with a version of the Brahmi script known as Tamil Brahmi, and by the 5th century AD this script had become more rounded and developed into thevattescript. The modern Tamil scriptarichuvadi however, was created during the 7th century based on the Grantha script, as descendent of Brahmi. Over time the script has changed somewhat, and it was simplified in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Notable features

- Type of writing system: syllabic alphabet
- Direction of writing: left to right in horizontal lines
- When they appear the beginning of a syllable, vowels are written as independent letters.
- Some of the non-standard consonant-vowel combinations are not used in official documents.
- The alphabet was originally written on palm leaves. As a result, the letters are made up mainly of curved strokes which didn't rip the leaves.

Used to write:

Tamil, a Dravidian language spoken by around 52 million people mainly in southern India and Sri Lanka, and also in Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Canada, the USA, UK, and Australia. It is the first language of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and is spoken by a significant minority of people (2 million) in north-eastern Sri Lanka.

Tamil alphabet

Vowels and vowel diacritics

அ	ஆ	இ	ஈ	உ	ஊ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū
[ʌ]	[a:]	[i]	[i:]	[u,ɯ]	[u:]
எ	ஏ	ஐ	ஒ	ஓ	ஔ
e	ē	ai	o	ō	au
[e]	[e:]	[ʌy]	[o]	[o:]	[ʌu]

ப	பா	பி	பீ	பு	பூ
pa	pā	pi	pī	pu	pū

பெ	பே	பை	பொ	போ	பௌ	ப்
pe	pē	pai	po	pō	pau	p

Non-standard consonant-vowel combinations

ணை	றை	னை	டி	டீ	கு	சூ	ஞு	டு
ṇā	ṟā	ṉā	ṭi	ṭī	ku	cu	ñu	ṭu
ணு	து	நு	மு	ரு	லு	ளு	று	ழு
ṇu	tu	nu	mu	ru	lu	ḷu	ṟu	ḻu
னு	ஜு	ஷு	ஸு	ஹு	க்ஷு	கூ	ஞா	ணூ
ṉu	ju	ṣu	su	hu	kṣu	kū	ñū	ṇū
தூ	நூ	மூ	ரூ	லூ	ழூ	ளூ	றூ	னூ
tū	nū	mū	rū	lū	ḻū	ḷū	ṟū	ṉū
ஜூ	ஷூ	ஸூ	ஹூ	க்ஷூ	ணை	லை	ளை	
jū	ṣū	sū	hū	kṣū	ṇai	lai	ḷai	

னை	ணொ	றொ	னொ	ணோ	றோ	னோ	ர்
ṉai	ṇo	ṟo	ṉo	ṇō	ṟō	ṉō	r

Consonants

க	k [k, g, x, ɣ, h]	த	t [t̪, d̪, ð]	ல	l [l]	ஜ	j [ʤ]
ங	ṅ [ŋ]	ந	n [n̪]	வ	v [ʋ]	ஷ	ṣ [ʂ]
ச	c [ʧ, ʤ, ʃ, s]	ப	p [p, b, β]	ழ	ẓ, ḷ, ṛ [ɻ]	ஸ	s [s]
ஞ	ñ [ɲ]	ம	m [m]	ள	ḷ [l]	ஹ	h [h]
ட	ṭ [ʈ, ɖ, ɽ]	ய	y [j]	ற	ṟ, R [r, t, d]	க்ஷ	kṣ [kʂ]
ண	ṇ [ɳ]	ர	r [ɾ]	ன	ṉ, N [n]		

ஃ = āytam - turns p into f and j into z, e.g. ஃபீ fī [fi:] ஃஜி zi [zi]

The final five consonants (the blue ones) are known as grantha letters and are used to write consonants borrowed from Sanskrit, and also some words of English origin.

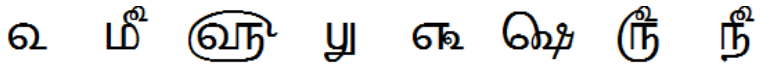
Numerals

０	க	உ	ங	ச	ரு	சூ
சுழியம்	ஒன்று	இரண்டு	மூன்று	நான்கு	ஐந்து	ஆறு
chuḻiyam	oṉṟu	iraṇṭu	mūṉṟu	nāṉku	aintu	āṟu
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

எ	அ	கூ	ய	ஈ	சூ
ஏழு	எட்டு	ஒன்பது	பத்து	நூறு	ஆயிரம்
ēḻu	ettu	onpatu	paththi	nūru	āyiram
7	8	9	10	100	1000

The numerals rarely appear in modern Tamil texts. Instead, 'Arabic' numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) are used.

Other symbols



day sign	month sign	year sign	debit sign	credit sign	as above sign	rupee sign	numeral sign

Sample text in Tamil

மனிதப் பிறவியினர் சகலரும் சுதந்திரமாகவே பிறக்கின்றனர்; அவர்கள் மதிப்பிலும் உரிமைகளிலும் சமமானவர்கள். அவர்கள் நியாயத்தையும் மனசாட்சியையும் இயற்பண்பாகப் பெற்றவர்கள். அவர்கள் ஒருவருடனொருவர் சகோதர உணர்வுப் பாங்கில் நடந்துகொள்ளல் வேண்டும்.

Transliteration

Maṉitap piṟaviyiṉar čakalarum čutantiramākavē piṟakkiṉṟaṉar; avarkaḷ matippilum urimaikaḷilum čamamāṉavarkaḷ. Avarkaḷ niyāyattaiyum maṉačāṭčiyaiyum iyaṟpaṉpākap peṟṟavarkaḷ. Avarkaḷ oruvaruṭaṉoruvar čakōtara uṇarvup pāṅkil naṭantukoḷḷal vēṇṭum.

Source: Omniglot site

Lifestyle

(photo source: FB group)

Women in their madisar type sarees going to a temple function or religious gathering

Men’s wear (semi-formal). Cotton dhoti in off-white or white. The dress with zari woven border. Matching cotton angavastram (shoulder towel). White shirt

Formal wear for men. Silk or cotton dhoti with kurta. The dhoti style is called panchakacham.

Traditional silk saree

Traditional white saree with zari borders

Bharatanatyam Dancer
(photo source: Lalitha Ravi, FaceBook)

Traditional furniture styles

This is called Easy Chair, the traditional recliner with extended armrests. I should say good for lumbar back curve support and maintenance

This is the lighter and foldable one. The cloth fabric is colorful and give the flexibility to back support

Religious Beliefs

Temple Rath

Kalpathi in Palghat is famous for its Shiva Temple. The temple has old artifacts indicating the movement of people from neighboring state to this place. The temple is famous for its annual Ratholsavam, where the temple car is taken around the neighborhood. It's very colorful and gets wide attention all over the world, thanks to Facebook groups

The temple cars, known as rathams, are pulled by ropes by the devotees and the public. It makes a slow progress through the streets of the Kalpathy agraharams. It's a three-day event that happens in November. Preceding the event, there is a weeklong music festival that brings people together. Carnatic music and instruments are used in the music festival.

Tulsi Worship

Holy Basil (Tulsi) plant in an Altar

A Plant much revered in the South Indian Continent. Every household will have it in the front or backyard. Women worship the plant with water and lighting a lamp near the place. This practice is done mostly in the early mornings after taking bath. Most of the times, it is placed in an altar (or) earthly pot where people can go around it. The plant requires exceptionally low maintenance and grow fast in warm weather

We used to pluck the leaves and eat them after washing them. We have seen the Tulsi in a water given as a 'prasad' (holy offering) in Temples. You just take the sip from the teaspoon offered to you in your palm and put the leftover on your head as a form of respect. Never thought this Tulsi water can keep the scalp clean and keep the dandruff at bay. Tulsi is waiting in line to get the western attention after the coconut oil and turmeric.

Tulsi or Tulasi (Ocimum Tenuiflorum) or known as Holy Basil is a sacred plant in Hinduism. The plant is cultivated for religious and medicinal purposes. It's is also available as essential oil.

Ayurveda says Tulsi has magical properties to alleviate 'khapa' effects, one of the three doshas in the body. It's known as an adaptogen, an herb that supports the body's stress response whether it's physical, metabolic, or psychological. The temples in India had them all over the yards without explicitly mentioning the benefits.

Another amazing factor is Tulsi effect on the environment. Most plants largely uptake Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) and release oxygen during the day (photosynthesis) and uptake oxygen to release CO_2 during the night (respiration). Tulsi, like other plants like Peepal plant, Orchid, Neem tree, Aloe Vera, etc release oxygen during night. Tulsi gives out oxygen for 20 hours and Ozone for four hours a day along with the formation of nascent oxygen which absorbs harmful gases like carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide from the environment. So, when you visit an Indian grocery shop next time, grab the plant normally sold in a small Styrofoam container. You can transfer the plant to a bigger pot (or) to your landscaped yard. Your guests will appreciate the aroma and they can pluck the leave to eat it too.

Evening diya

Lighting the lamp, mostly an oil lamp is the most popular evening tradition across India. But this is a mandatory action for every evening before the sunset. Unlike western countries, the sunrise and sunset are almost same time but varies little different due to seasons. And there is no day-light time saving system in India. This is a belief of welcoming Goddess Lakshmi (Wealth God) to the house by lighting the lamp and offering simple prayers. This is done mostly by women, but things have changed that anyone can do this these days. It is very symbolic to invoke the blessings of Gods and ancestors. All the religious events and ceremonies involve lighting the lamp. Sesame oil is popularly used besides the ghee lamp. The lamp thread is made from cotton and one can't use any cloth materials or other materials.

Last rites

Hindus believe in re-births. They cremate the body after life. The meaning of the true word- detachment, can be seen during a death of a family member.

While there is sadness prevails, there is always a sense that life is short, and death is inevitable. What follows after death is a series of events that include immediate and extended family members. This is a general belief system and nothing specific to Palghat Iyers.

The last sacred ceremony in Sanskrit is called Antyesti, meaning last sacrifice.

The last rites are typically completed within a day of death, for the body does not get decomposed. Generally, the body is washed, wrapped in white cloth. Some traditions use red cloth on woman if the husband is alive. The big toes are tied together with a string, to avoid bad souls to enter backwards, since all openings like nose and ears are closed with cotton balls. The body is carried to cremation ground by family and friends. The body is placed with feet facing south direction. The eldest son is the lead cremator, but others can jump in if the eldest is not able to make it to the ritual day. People circumambulates around the body and offer rice+sesame seed mix to the body. The lead mourner takes an earthern pot filled with water and break it open near the head. Ghee is poured to make the pyre ablaze. All the people who went to the cremation ground need to take bath immediately on their return. A priest is involved to reciting the mantras in the form of chants. No gifts or flowers should be brought to the funeral place.

There is a 10day mourning period for the family. They refrain from visiting family shrine (pooja place) and do not enter a temple or any other sacred place. On the 10th day, a formal Shradda ceremony is conducted. There is another Shradda exactly one year after the person's death. It's believed the soul is still wandering around till one year and after that it joins the ancestors' group. The same soul can come back to live in earth again, later. Also, on every new moon day, a shradda is conducted within the house to honor all past relationships who have left the world. People also visit holy places like Kashi (Varanashi) or Rameswaram (southern tip of India) to complete any leftover tasks in Shraddas. Similar pitr honoring is done on eclipse days.

A water-based ritual in these events is called Tarpana. Tarpana in sanskrit means to gratify. This act invoves pouring water through the hands with the use of sacred grass (darpan or kusa) with symbolic gesture of thanking Gods, Sages and Fathers (parents). Water mixed with black sesame seeds is poured through the hands as an offering to the piturs (elders left the world). It is remarkably interesting to note the details of the palms. The center of the palm is called brahma-tirtha, to hold the water. The area below the little finger is called the prajapati-tirtha, meant to honor the rishis (saints). The region at the tips of the fingers is called the daiva-tirtha, meant to honor Devas (Gods). The space between bottom of the thumb and the index finger is called pitr-tirtha, meant to honors the dead.

The order is devas are honored first, then the rishis and the divine pitrs in the last, mostly starting with the recent dealths, fathers belonging to the paternal side is worshipped fist then the materal side. Upto three generation's name, gothra are mentioned in this process. The sacred thread (see upanayanam chapter) changes the position during this process. If the sacred thread rests across the left shoulder, it is called upavitin. This is to worship the devas. If the sacred thread lies on the neck like a garland, it is called nivitin, worship time for the sages. If the sacred thread is changed to right shoulder, it is called pracinavitin. This position is for doing the worship for the pitrs.

Divine Secrets

Hindus believe in past life and the effect of Karma. They also believe all things happen in our life for good. The proverbial ‘blessing in disguise’ applies often. Besides the fact everyone has equal potential, but some people have put their effort and willpower to shine in their career and life. Others are yet to realize that the potential still exist within themselves. There is also another saying that ‘If God planted a tree then he will ensure it gets nutrition to make the survival’. The same applies to every human born on the planet earth.

There is an ancient story which signifies the importance of taking this life as a blessing.

A woman was pregnant in the Planet Earth. Her husband died just before one week, and she is under lot of stress. Lord Yama (who manages the deaths as per Hindu philosophy) sends his agent to take out the life of the mother as well. The agent visits the Earth and see the plight of the mother. She was supposed to die during the delivery, but the agent gets compassionate and decides to leave the task incomplete. He was wondering how to leave the child un-attended and worried about the child’s future. We(humans) are all in the similar nature. We have our own thoughts and measurements, that decides our life

When he went empty-handed, Lord Yama said you don’t know the divine secrets and how the God’s blessing is really executed in action. It’s better you spend few years in Plant Earth to realize this process. So, Lord Yama sends the agent as a full-grown man with dark skin and without any dress.

The agent lands in a park in a lonely winter night, shivering with cold. A passing-by person notes the sound and steps into action. He is a tailor, so he rushes home to get some clothes and give them to the agent. Assuming he has not taken food for long time, he invites the agent to his home for dinner. When they reach home, the tailor’s wife shouts and ask only the tailor to come into kitchen to

eat. She scolded her husband for bringing a stranger into the house. After 30 minutes, she changes her mind. She asked the agent to come inside and eat the dinner.

The tailor realized he can use the agent's help in expanding the business and make him as an assistant. Knowing the agent is alone, he asked him to stay over in a room and food will be provided. The agent agreed to work for no salary since accommodation and food are arranged.

After few years, a wealthy woman comes to the tailor shop with two children. One was healthy and another was disabled child. She wanted to ensure the disabled child gets the right fitting dress and spend all the energy on that child. The agent felt he knows that child already.

Another day, a rich businessman comes to the tailor asking to stitch a nice suit for him, which can last few years. He already bought the costly materials and want the tailor just to stitch the suit in three days. On the third day, the agent took the cost material and converted into pillow covers by mistake. He felt something inside that he is doing that right. Within few hours, the driver of the businessman rushes to the shop saying not to stitch the suit but the family needs some pillow covers to raise the head of the dead body. When the tailor insists on the agent's insights and premonitions, the agent shared the context of his life

The agent said, when your wife scolded you for bringing me into the house, the devil thoughts overpowered her. When he invited me back for dinner, Divine thoughts embraced her. The first secret is to know that it takes only few minutes to live in misery or live in gratitude and it's all in our thoughts.

The disabled child with the wealthy women was the child he left with the mother on his first trip. The birth mother died later but the child got adopted in the wealthy women's house. She is getting the best attention in life. God had made arrangement that the child gets the best loving and caring mother already. This is the second secret.

The rich man thought he is going to live many more years and wanted to have the costly suit. But his life was made short and the costly materials became pillow covers. There is no need to think that we are going to live forever. Life is short. This is the third secret. So, you need to take today as the last day in life. Enjoy the day and don't worry about your children's education, career, and marriage life. The peace is within you when you realize the death is possible at any moment in life.

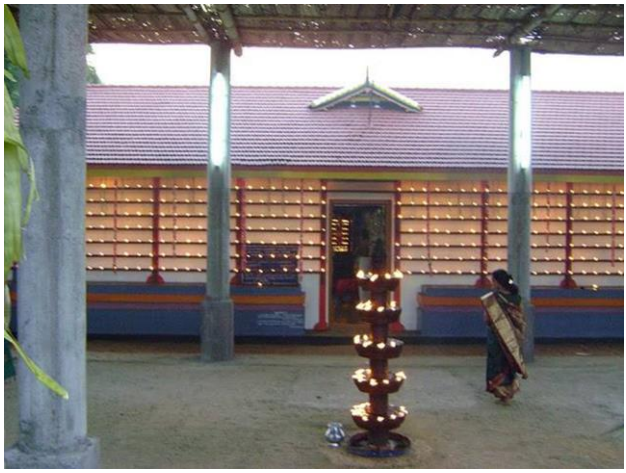
Prashnam

Astrology. Prasannam in Kerala.
(photo source Kerala Astrology)

There are many methods in astrology, from the traditional vedic systems to western system. Vedic system is based on lunar cycle and western system on solar cycle. The famous one in Kerala and specifically in Palghat is known as Chozhi Prashnam. It's like more than Tarot reading. You go to the astrologer with your questions. He rolls the dice and places the Chozhi (shell)at specific sections on the plate to provide the answers. This could be more than intuition on the part of the astrologer who can sense the vibe of the audience. The astrologer may require your natal chart and does detailed calcualtion of the hourly movement of the planets. The astrologer may do this only during specific days or times within a day

A specific type of prasnam called Ashtamangala prasnam which used eight auspicious objects in its practice. The objects are ghee lamp, white cloth, mirror, gold, milk, yogurt, fruits, and books

Kavu



(Picture: Facebook: Parur Kandathar Kavu, Palghat, Kerala)

A tutelary is a deity or spirit who is a guardian, patron, or protector of a particular place, geographic feature, person, lineage, nation, culture, or occupation. The etymology of 'tutelary' expresses the concept of safety, and thus of guardianship. (Source: Wikipedia)

Christians attend Sunday Mass services, Muslims do prayers on Fridays at Mosque, Hindus visit temples often or on special festival times. But each Hindu family in India has a temple location tied to their ancestry. I find this tradition unique and interesting. Paternal side tutelary Deity is passed on the next generations while maternal side is also kept as secondary Deity, in some practices.

South Indian tradition on 'Kula Theivam' (family deity) has the same temple worshiped by many generations. It's believed that forefathers prayed in those temples and left the good energy for

the next generations. Another belief is that souls of forefathers (Hindus believe in re-births) stay in these places till they take the next re-birth form. People visit their temple often (or) at least once a year during annual temple festivals. Probably you can connect with previous generations without the need for a 'medium'. There is also a subtle connection to Hindu philosophy on lineage, where paternal births are connected to the Vedic Rishis. Devotees of the temple take care of the ongoing maintenance and renovations. They send funds to the temple after any important family functions as a token of gratitude and respect. The Deity information is passed on to children from parents, there are also ways to predict them based on one's horoscope (by an expert in Vedic Astrology).

Similar concept exists in the form of 'Kaval Theivam' (Protector deity). These are Deities in the form of community protector, typically located on the outskirts of the villages/cities and in-between the cities/villages. In Tamil Nadu (A State in India), they are known as Ayyanar, Karuppu Sami, Angalamma, etc. It is believed that these Gods shoo away all evils and devils from entering the village. These places will have big statue of Gods with weapons like swords, knives, and other protective weapons. There will be statues of Goddesses, and animals in these temples. Animal sacrifice is practiced in some of these temples on important festival days. Social issues are discussed in these places when the entire village assembles, and decisions are taken based on the 'blessed words' coming from the priest.

Music

Not any music, Carnatic Music, is a system of music popular in Southern India. Palghat has a big lineage of Carnatic musicians, where the parents taught the music to their children. Some of them became immensely popular musicians as a profession and others went to regular jobs but still keep the music passion.

The main emphasis in Carnatic music is on vocal music; most compositions are written to

be sung, and even when played on instruments, they are meant to be performed ingāyaki(singing) style.

Although there are stylistic differences, the basic elements of Shruthi(the relative musical pitch), swara(the musical sound of a single note), raga(the mode or melodic formulæ), and tala(the rhythmic cycles) form the foundation of improvisation and composition in both Carnatic and Hindustani music. Although improvisation plays an important role, Carnatic music is mainly sung through compositions, especially the kriti(or kirtanam) – a form developed between the 14th and 20th centuries by composers such as Purandara Dasa and the Trinity of Carnatic music. Carnatic music is also usually taught and learned through compositions.

Carnatic music is usually performed by a small ensemble of musicians, consisting of a principal performer (usually a vocalist), a melodic accompaniment (usually a violin), a rhythm accompaniment (usually a mridangam), and a tambura, which acts as support throughout the performance. Other typical instruments used in performances may include the ghatam, kanjira, morsing, veena, flute, veena, and chitraveena. The greatest concentration of Carnatic musicians is to be found in the city of Chennai. Various Carnatic music festivals are held throughout India and abroad, including the Madras Music Season, which has been considered to be one of the world's largest cultural events. (source: wikipedia)

There are many types and forms of compositions. Geethams and Swarajatis (which have their own peculiar composition structures) are principally meant to serve as basic learning exercises, and while there are many other types

of compositions (including Padam, Javali, and Thillana); the most common forms are the Varnam, and the Kriti (or Keerthanam).

Varnam

The varnam highlights every important aspect of araga;not just the scale, but also which notes to stress, how to approach a certain note, and classical and characteristic phrases. Though there are a few different types of varnams, in essence, they all have a pallavi, ananupallavi, muktayi swaras, acharana, and chittaswaras. They are sung in multiple speeds, and are particularly good for practice. In concerts, varnams are often sung at the beginning as they are fast and grab the audience's attention.

Kriti

Carnatic songs (kritis) are varied in structure and style, but generally consist of three units:

1. Pallavi. This is the equivalent of a refrain in Western music. One or two lines.
2. Anupallavi. The second verse. Also, two lines.
3. Charana. The final (and longest) verse that wraps up the song. The Charanam usually borrows patterns from the Anupallavi. There can be multiple charanas.

This kind of song is called akeerthanamor aKriti. There are other possible structures for aKriti, which may in addition include swara passages named chittaswara. Achittaswara consists only of notes and has no words. Other compositions have a verse at the end of thecharana, called themadhyamakāla. It is sung immediately after the charana, but at double speed.

Prominent composers

Many composers have contributed to Carnatic music. Purandara Dasa (1480 - 1564), known as the pioneer or father(Pitamaha)of Carnatic music, formulated the basic lessons of Carnatic music. He structured graded exercises known as Swaravalis and Alankaras, and at the same time, introduced the Raga Mayamalavagowla as the first scale to be learned by beginners. He also composed Gitas(simple songs) for novice students. Although only a fraction of them still exist, he is said to have produced around 475,000 compositions.

The contemporaries Tyagaraja (1759-1847), Muthuswami Dikshitar, (1776 - 1827) and Syama Sastri, (1762-1827) are regarded as the Trinity of Carnatic music due to the quality of Syama Sastri's compositions, the variety of the compositions of Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Tyagaraja's prolific output in composing kritis.

Prominent composers prior to the Trinity of Carnatic music include Annamacharya, Narayana Theertha, Bhadrachala Ramadas, Sadasiva Brahmendra and Oottukkadu Venkata Kavi. Other prominent composers are Swathi Thirunal, Gopalakrishna Bharathi, Neelakanta Sivan, Patnam Subramania Iyer, Mysore Vasudevachar, Koteeswara Iyer, Muthiah Bhagavathar, Subramania Bharathiyar, and Papanasam Sivan. The compositions of these composers are rendered frequently by prominent artists of today.

Composers of Carnatic music were often inspired by religious devotion and were usually scholars proficient in one or more of the following languages: Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, and Telugu. They usually included a signature, called a mudra, in their compositions. For example, all songs by Thyagaraja (who

composed in Telugu) have the word Thyagaraja in them; all songs by Muthuswami Dikshitar (who composed in Sanskrit) have the words Gurugu hain them; songs by Shyama Sastri (who composed in Telugu) have the words Shyama Krishna in them; and Purandaradasa, who composed in Kannada, used the signature Purandara Vittala. Gopalakrishna Bharathi used the signature Gopalakrishnan and composed in Tamil. Papanasam Sivan, who has been hailed as the Tamil Thyagaraja of Carnatic music, also composed in Sanskrit.

South India's Ancient Wisdom – Music Therapy

Photo: Thiruvaiyaruthyagarajaaradhana.org

Every January hundreds of musicians (vocalist, violinist, drummers) gather at a place for giving performance. Thousands of people visit that place to witness this event. Senior and Junior artists in their respective professions render their skills without getting any monetary renumeration. These programs are televised for people in other places to watch them. There is a massive level of upbeat energy and enthusiasm. This event has been going on since 1940.

This is not about a specific music band (or) event organized by music company. There are no entry fees. There are no chairs to sit and you're required to sit on the floor.

This is the event, where current musicians pay their respect to Saint Thyagaraja. Thyagaraja was a great saint as well as great musician. His composition focused on emotional sympathy combined with mystical feelings. His songs on Lord Rama are still popular and the kritis (formats) are performed world over in Carnatic music programs. He is considered one of the three stalwarts of Carnatic Music. Carnatic Music is a system of music commonly associated with southern India. There are thousands of ragas under this system.

The five-day event happens on the banks of river Kaveri, at a small town called Thiruvaiyaru in Tamil Nadu State in India. Thiruvaiyaru means there are five rivers around the town. Saint Thyagaraja attained mukti (liberation) in 1847 at this place. An ashram with a temple is constructed at this place.

Similar event is also organized in Cleveland, Ohio and San Francisco, California, and other major cities across the world. Cleveland aradhana has been conducted for more 30 years without interruptions. You can visit their website (Thiruvaiyaruthyagarajaaradhana.org) or browse videos in YouTube under 'Thyagaraja aradhana'.

Oil bath

(photo: livechennai)

This is followed all over India but Palghat has some special way of doing this.

This is mandatory ritual every Friday for the women and Saturday for men.

This is not a simple oil massage like in western world. The oil preparation has its own rules and regulations. People use sesame oil or coconut oil as per family traditions. They add rice, pepper to warm up the oil to withstand the skin. For children, elders or parents does the oil massage from head to toe. Adult do it themselves with minimal clothes-wear. The oil in the body need to be soaked for 30min to one hour based on the person's dosha level. In Ayurveda, there is Vata, Pitta and Kapha doshas.

The bath is taken in warm water with Shikaigai powder (medical term Acacia Concinna). This is the super nurturing hair cleanser. These days people use regular shampoo with conditioner. You will feel the freshness on the body. You may also feel little tired, so people avoid strenuous work on that day. No heavy meals and preferably avoid afternoon naps.

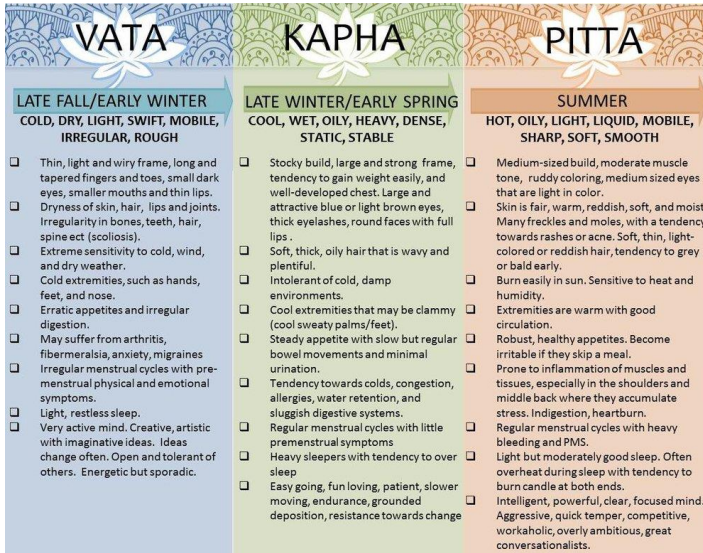
Food Habits

Kerala's world famous, Ayurveda has practical relevance in the food habits of Palghat Brahmins.

They don't eat meat or fish, which come as a generational practice. Older generation don't eat eggs, but younger generation have changed their lifestyles and eating patterns

Ayurveda differentiate our bodies into different doshas. Vata, pitta and Kapha doshas. Dosha means the type of energy believed to be circulating in the body and mostly controls or govern the psychological activity as well. This merges the five elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) into three doshas.

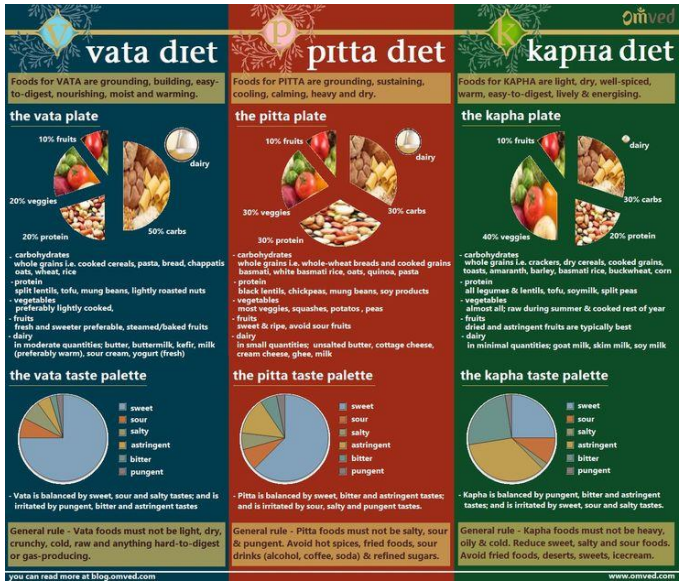
VATA
Qualities reflecting the elements of Space and Air.
PITTA
Qualities reflecting the elements of Fire and Water.
KAPHA
Qualities reflecting the elements of Water and Earth.



(source: natasha wellness)

(source: yogavedainstitute)

Any imbalance in dosha can be managed by eating the right foods. The following chart is the best indicator of the food composition



(source: omved.com)

Before we get into recipes, some of the interesting good old days of food preparation techniques

Orul (pronounced as oral)

Before the invent of mixies or grinders, people used stone to grind the food pastes.

Lot of physical activity but the food generated its original smell without the heat of the electric machines.

The food tasted differently since the hand is used to touch the food in preparation and checking the mixing levels.

Some families in the cities in India still use this device and you can order this in Amazon

Mortar and Pestle

Another device to make batter. The same decide with longer tool can be used to grind rice, nuts, etc.

Filter coffee means using the stainless-steel filters, not electric coffee maker with paper bags

Onam is an immensely popular festival celebrated in Kerala. This is a harvest festival and annual holiday time, happening around early September each year. People read stories about the King Mahabali, who ruled the Kerala. They believe the spirit will visit during the 10 days festival. Houses are decorated with flowers and lights. Food takes over the attention on the final day with different type of dishes made and served on a banana leaf. Family get together and eat as a small communicate lunch time.

Onasadya

Here is the short list of food service in the banana leaf

1.Beetroot kichadi
2.Mangai sweet pachadi
3.Vazhaikkai thoran
4.Aviyal
5.Chena kadala kootu kari
6.Olan
7.Nendrapazha Pulissery
8.puli inji
9.Mangai keru
10.Sarkaravaratti
11.Nendrakai chips
12.Nalumurichathu
13.Pazham nurukku
14.Pappadam
15.Red rice
16.Paruppu
17.Nei
18.Sambar
19.Rasam
20.Curd
21.Paal payasam

Flower decorations adore the door front of the houses

The 10-day food festival of Onam means not to have digestion issues.

Keralites use this lemon-like fruit in dry form in their food to aid good digestion. This also act as an immunity booster

Bitter orange, also known as Citron or Narthangai

The same fruit can also be made into a pickle

(see above)

Lotus root as the name implies is the root of the lotus plant. It has a wide range of health benefits owing to its rich nutritional composition. It improves digestion, reduces cholesterol, lowers blood pressure, boosts the immune system, increases the blood circulation, and maintain proper enzymatic activity in the body. The fresh root can be made into North Indian subji, pickles and South Indian vathal kuzhambu.

These days vathal kuzhambu and vendiya kuzhambu (recipe here) are used interchangeably. However, traditionally, vathal kuzhambu used to be made only with salted dried vegetables, particularly in seasons when fresh ones were not easily available.

Ingredients

Lotus root vathal – 1/2 cup
Tamarind – size of 1 large lemon
Turmeric powder – 1/2 tsp
Vathal kuzhambu powder – 1 tsp
Mustard seeds – 1/2 tsp
Tuvar dal – 1 tsp
Dried red chillies – 2-3
Fenugreek seeds – 1/2 tsp
Curry leaves – 10
Asafoetida – a pinch
Salt – to taste
Jaggery – 1/2 tsp
Sesame seed oil – 3 tbsp

Dried sunberry fruits

Botonical name: solanum nigrum. This is known as black night shade or sunberry. It's a type of spinach where the leaves and small black fruits could be cooked as a food. The black fruits when dried under sun, becomes 'manathakkali', nick named as 'heart's desire for tomato'. Its health benefits include to heal mouth and stomach ulcers. The other benefits include improved eyesight, reduced urinary infections, and helps to cure constipation.

Veppilakkatti / Nadan Veppilakatti/ Chammanthi podi

Veppilakkatti, also known as Chammanthi podi, is a classic dish in Kerala and is made with curry leaves and coconut roasted with spices. It is popular in Palakkad region and Central Kerala. In Palakkad region, veppilakkatti is prepared with Lemon leaves and other spices, wherein Kottayam and surrounding areas, curry leaves are the main ingredient in Veppilakkatti.

Method:

Grind the grated Coconut in the mixer for few seconds, to get even particles. Wash and clean the curry leaves and keep aside. Heat a wide Kadai, sprinkle 1 tsp Coconut oil and add the coconut, curry leaves, shallots, red chilies. Roast it together till it attains a deep brown color. You need to stir it most of the time, to ensure perfect even roasting.

Once it is brown keep aside for cooling. Take out the shallots from the mix and keep aside. Grind the coconut together with red chilies and curry leaves first, till you get fine powder. Now add the roasted shallots, Tamarind and salt and grind again.

Check the powder and adjust the tamarind and salt if required. Mix well and grind for a final time. Keep aside to cool. Store in airtight glass containers or bottles. It will remain fresh without refrigeration for about a month.

Some of the famous recipes of Palghat are given below

Mulakushyam a traditional recipe of Palghat. Cut yam or chenai, cut avrakkai or broad beans Cut raw banana. Cook all these with salt and haldi. Add green chillies. When done add coconut oil and curry leaves. There is another method also. Cook all these with little moong dhal add pepper powder. Then add coconut oil and curry leaves.

Special recipes. Source: Amma's recipe book August 2020

You can google 'Palghat Iyer food recipes' in google to get more choices.

MAAMBAZHA MORKUZHAMBU

INGREDIENTS:

- Ripe Mangoes 2
- Curd 1 cup
- Ground coconut- 1 cup
- Green chilli 2-3
- Menthayam
- Curry leaves
- Kadugu

METHOD :

- Grind coconut , curd, green chilli and whilst grinding the last time add some of the mangoes
- Cut mangos (with skin) into medium sized pieces
- In water, add cut mangoes, manjal podi and pepper podi
- When mango is soft, add the ground items and salt
- Add curry leaves

THALIPPU

Kadugu, Menthayam and Dry chilli (if necessary)

AVIAL

INGREDIENTS:

- Ground coconut - I handful
- Green chilli- 3 to 4
- Curd (If using raw mango as a vegetable, use less curd and add water if necessary)
- Vegetables
  - Chenai (Yam)
  - Carrot
  - Beans- long beans and/or French beans
  - Vazhakkai (Raw Banana)
  - Cucumber
  - Elavan (White pumpkin)
  - Pudalangai (Snakegourd)
  - Raw Mango
  - Matthan (Yellow pumpkin)
  - Potato
- Curry leaves
- Turmeric powder
- Coconut oil

METHOD :

- Grind coconut , Green chilli and Curd till nice
- Boil vegetables in water
- If using chenai-add in first and add a little sugar (which helps to cook chenai)
- Add carrot, potato, beans
- Add manjal podi
- Add vazhakkai, cucumber, elavan, pudalangai
- Lastly add raw mango and matthan
- Add salt to taste
- Add curry leaves
- Add fresh coconut oil

PAVAKKAI PITLAI

INGREDIENTS:

- Thuvaram Parruppu - 60 gms
- Kadalai paruppu - 1 tsp
- Ulutham Paruppu - 1 tsp
- Milagai vathal (Dry chilli) - 4 to 5
- Perungayam - a little
- Coconut - 3 tblsp
- Peanuts - 2 tblsp (optional)
- Bitter gourd - 4 to 5
- Puli - little more than lime size
- Curry leaves
- Kadugu and Ulutham paruppu for thalippu
- Ghee

METHOD :

- Cook the thuvaram paruppu and Peanuts and keep aside
- Cut the bitter gourd in round pieces.
- Fry in little ghee the kadalai paruppu, ulutham paruppu, dry chilli, until light brown
- Before taking it out from the fire, add the coconut and perungayam. Cool, then grind and keep
- In the Kadai add a little ghee and fry the cut bitter gourd until it turns slightly brown.
- "Karai Puli" and add to the bitter gourd add salt and turmeric powder and let it boil nicely.
- Once the raw smell goes, add the ground masala and let it boil and then add the paruppu.
- (If using, peanut add that and let everything boil nicely) Add curry leaves

THALIPPU

Kadugu and Ulutham paruppu.

Floor Sitting -For dining

These days, you enjoy your meals with your family, mostly in the dining room or in front of the television. But in earlier times, long before tables and chairs came into use, people used to comfortably sit down on the ground and eat their meals. In many parts of Asia, and especially India, it is more of a traditional practice than a common one. If you think that sitting relaxed on the couch or the dining table is a better place to have your meals, then you are under the wrong impression. Following are some significant reasons, as to why you should eat your meals sitting on the floor.

Aids indigestion

Sitting down on the floor, with crossed legs (Sukhasana) helps in improving our digestion process. Place your plate on the ground, and slightly move your body forward to eat and come back to your original position. This repeated action results in triggering of the abdominal muscles, which increases the secretion of stomach acids and allows food to digest faster.

Helps in losing weight

Getting up and sitting down elevates the body movement. It also helps you feel full sooner. Rather than sitting on the chair, place a mat, cross your legs, and keep your back straight. Follow this pattern regularly if you want to lose fat. This position is also effective in relaxing your mind and therefore, not letting you overeat. It also helps in reducing fatigue and body weakness.

Increases blood circulation

Cross-legged position enhances the blood circulation in our body as it calms the nerves and releases away from the tension in it. It keeps the heart healthy as when we are sitting down; there is less pressure on our body and the heart. In Sukhasana, blood flow is distributed evenly throughout the body.

Improves posture

Like all other yoga asanas, sitting in Sukhasana helps you in maintaining a good posture and relieves you from muscle and joint pains. It gives you flexibility, keeps your back straight and provides strength to your legs. Some studies also claim that people who practice this habit, have longer life expectancy than people who don't. It is so because, practicing the art of getting up without any support, requires core strength and agility.

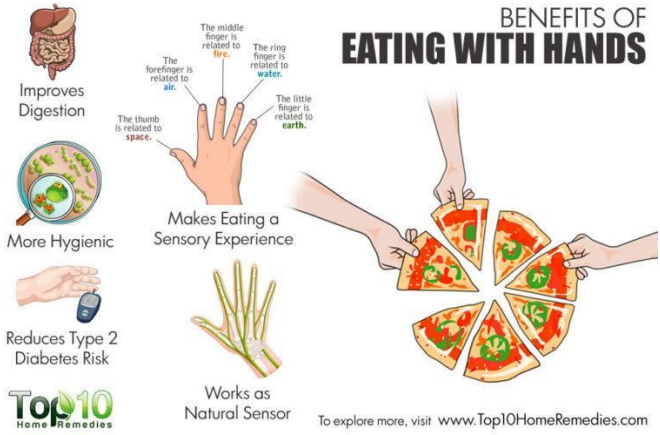
Relaxes the mind and body

Padmasana and Sukhasana are ideal positions for meditation and benefit a lot in relieving stress from the mind. It is also an excellent position for doing breathing exercises, which in turn increases the flow of oxygen in the body. It straightens the spine and relaxes the shoulder muscles.

Not only sitting down has a lot of immediate health benefits, it aids in many psychological and emotional factors too. Sitting down to eat our food makes us humbler and more grounded. It also connects the family together. So, make sure that you start eating your meals sitting on the floor, with your family and loved ones and avoid indulging in television or gossip during meals.

(source: asian hospital medical editors Sep 2019)

Eating with hands



Here are some of the benefits proving eating with hands is a healthy habit

1. Eating with Your Hands Helps Increase Blood Circulation

Eating with hands itself is an excellent muscle exercise, which in turn increases blood circulation. The excessive movement of the hands may help keep the blood flow smoother.

2. Stimulates Digestion

Our body is believed to have bacteria or flora, which resides in places like hands, mouth, throat, intestine and gut that protects us from harmful bacteria growing in the environment. When we eat with our hands, the friendly flora protects our digestive system from getting exposed to harmful bacteria, further stimulating the digestive system. This doesn't mean you forget to wash your hands before and after you eat!

3. Believed to Help Lose Weight

According to a study published in the journal Appetite, when people ate by hand while simultaneously reading a newspaper or watching television, they were less hungry during snack-time, and opted for a lighter snack. Researchers concluded that eating by hand promotes a sense of fullness and satiety as compared to eating with cutlery. This, in turn, could help lose some kilograms.

4. May Help Prevent Type-2 Diabetes

According to a study published in the journal Clinical Nutrition, people with type-2 diabetes were more likely to be fast eaters who used cutlery to eat, as compared to people without the condition. Eating with spoons and forks correlates with faster eating that has been linked with blood-sugar imbalances in the body, further contributing to the development of type-2 diabetes. So, ditch the utensils and instead eat with hands that will ensure slow down consciously.

5. Helps Manage Food Portions

Eating with hands makes you eat slower than eating with cutlery, which is a much mechanical process. You have to pay attention to what you eat when you eat with hands, which makes you aware of how much you have eaten. Mindless eating is one of the biggest factors of gaining weight; hence, managing food portions plays a key role. Moreover, using hands makes you experience the food better and enjoyable.

(source: NDTV Food)

Upanayanam

Upanayana, also known as Janai or poita or Yganopavita is one of the key Hindu tradition given to boys under 16. The sacred thread is received from the Guru after poojas and he is expected to wear it from the left shoulder. The Upanayana literally means the act of getting enlightenment on the third eye or Pineal gland. This supposed to mark the entry into intellectual birth with the teacher's care. The ancient system had three varnas (class system) of Brahmins, Kshtreyas and Vaishyas. The Upanayana was performed at the age of eight among Brahmins, at 11 years among Kshatriyas and typically at 12 among Vaishyas. These procedures have changed a lot these days. The original purpose was to initiate the boy into formal Hinduism and help him to focus his learning on Vedas. While the children have moved to learn technology and science subjects, this practice is still followed as a tradition.

(photo: panchangam.com)

This is the official function where the boy can start reciting 'gayatri mantra' on a daily basis.

There is also an annual event during July every year where there is a ceremony in each household to replace the thread. These days there are online events where you can replace the poonal thread over a zoom video call.

Marriage , circa 2020

What is the difference between a Western marriage and an Eastern marriage? In the Western system, a man and women get married. In the Eastern system, a man's family get connected to a woman's family. The involvement (sometimes, too much of it) of the family is especially important and all pervasive in the Eastern system. There are lot of changes that have happened over the years but still some uniqueness remains.

Combine the family with religious rituals, then comes the marriages - made in Madras. Madras is the capital city (now known as Chennai) of Tamil Nadu, a State on the Southern India. Deeply inherited with strong cultural values with ritualistic traits. The marriage ceremonies across different parts of India vary significantly. Some areas allow marriages late evenings and on Saturdays. Some marriage ceremonies involve pomp and dance performances on the streets. Certain families prefer small marriage functions, meaning with the invitees count like 50 plus. Others prefer large group that may go into thousands. These days, marriages are two days or less type of events. But still there are instances where the entire marriage ceremonies go for four days or into a week.

The entire world is always curious about 'arranged marriage'. While non-traditional marriages (like love marriage) are more prevalent in this technology age, there are still a lot of arranged marriage conducted world-wide. Yes, there were arranged marriage where

the boy & girl didn't meet or talk till the marriage date! But that was in mid 1900s. These days arrange marriage is like any other hybrid version. Parents are involved, horoscopes are checked, lot of pre-planning on the dates/times but the man & woman have met and interacted with each other.

I have taken a typical South-Indian wedding in Madras as an example to explain the traditions and beliefs. There could be variations among different caste(s) but that's is insignificant for the overall context. The focus is on Hindu traditions. I assume the Christian and Muslim weddings are somewhat common across the world. Next chapters will show some of the interesting uniqueness of the Hindu traditions. Get yourself invited to any Indian/Hindu weddings to observe the traditions. These days there are booklets or printouts shared in these type weddings conducted outside India. There is also running commentary in English to explain some of the Vedic traditions normally conducted in Sanskrit language.

Ancient Vedic tradition had four age-based stages in human life. They are known as four 'ashramas'. First one is Brahmacharya. While this Brahmacharya can be compared to the term 'celibacy', in a simpler way. Celibates mean non-indulgence in sexual activity. Brahmacharya is when a person can control his mind, through his words, thoughts, and deed from physical and sensual pleasures. The brahmacharya stage of life starts from childhood up to twenty-five years of age. The idea is to focus on education. In a Hindu monk's spiritual practice, brahmacharya means mandatory renunciation of sex and marriage. Next ashrama is the 'grihastha', meaning a householder. This may range from 25

years to 50 years where marriage, family life takes importance. This is the 'vanaprastha', literally translated as forest dweller. Here the detachment to family life starts. The last is the 'sannyasa', a complete renunciation.

Rig Veda (ancient Hindu texts) defines four purposes in a marriage. 1- progeny (praja in sanskrit), 2- Sexual pleasure (rati), 3- happiness (anandam), 4- Companionship in performing Dharma (sahatvam). Women is treated as one half of the man and there are visual images of God in the form of 'Artha-nareeshwara'.

They were about eight classical type of marriages mentioned in the Sastras (Hindu code of conduct) and three important ones are still practiced. Prajapatya rite- here the boy's parents approach the parents of a girl with similar ethical standards with an offer of marriage. This is one of the classical arranged marriage which is initiated by the boy's parents. Brahma rite- here the bride's parents approach the parents of the prospective groom. This is initiated by the girl's

parents. Gandharva rite- this is mutual arrangement between two consenting adults who are in love. There may not be formal religious rites, but the marriage is registered for legal purposes. Some do the Vedic marriage ceremony at later stage.

Besides the marriage at the end of brahmacharya stage of boy's life, there are also such similar events when the man attains 60 years and 80 years age. Vedic astrology is lunar based, and it is closely interpreted as having seen 500 full moons (for 60 years) and 1000 full moons for 80th year approximately. The formal terms are Shasthi Poorthi (also known as Shastiapthapoorthi) and sadhabishegam. In Sanskrit, Shasthi means sixty, abda-year, poorthi-completion. It marks completion of half the years of one's lifetime as Hinduism defined 120 years as the life span. There is also another milestone of 70 years known as Bheema Ratha Shanthi.

Arranged Marriage

My parents and my in-laws got married as arranged marriage in 1950s. They only know that such a person exists in that family before the marriage. No meetups or coffee dates! They met on the marriage date just few minutes before the ceremony. They believed love can happen after the marriage!

Lot of things has changed in the last thirty years. A man and woman may meet at work or at any other social gatherings, talk few times and fall in love. They decide to get married. Now their parents are involved to take the next steps. Horoscope matching is still done most of times but there are lot of changes happening in that area too. More focus is being given to personal compatibilities rather than planetary compatible positions.

Parents are still seen as a major role player to get into the details of marriage activities starting from location, marriage date and key logistical steps. In South Indian traditions, there is a month-long period where no auspicious function can take place. The original idea could be to avoid birth delivery during peak summer season. Yes, they were thinking far ahead even in those non-technology days

What happens if the boy or girl is just busy with studies or work? Here comes the social pressure. Now we know why we are surrounded by aunts and uncles. Their job is to remind that the children have grown-up and they are in their mid-20s. It's the parent duty to check with them on the readiness for marriage. If there is no formal no answer, that means they can go ahead searching for the partner. Incidentally, the word 'alliance' is most often used in South-Indian context. An effort is being made to form a new

partnership. There are situations where the girl or the boy may have other priorities like getting advanced degrees or want to travel/settle abroad. Certain families allow them to wait. Sometimes, the grand-parents or great-grand-parents may put up a drama that they want to see the marriage before they leave the plant Earth

Horoscope Matching

Horoscopes are universal. Here we are talking about horoscopes from Vedic Astrology. Western Zodiac signs mimic some of the features. Vedic Astrology is very advanced subjects and there are many books on Amazon. Every individual will have horoscope based on the date/time of birth. They will have their star (Nakshatra, in Tamil or Sanskrit) and there are four sub-section under each star as well. There are 27 stars in the lunar-based astrology. The Vedic astrology, whether it's North Indian style or South Indian style will have Lagna or Ascendant house and the seventh house signifies the marriage or relationship. There is also Hora charts, which are much more intricate segments of the main charts. D10 Charts, popularly known as Navamsha chart, is also reviewed for marriage compatibility

The two horoscopes (one from the man and another from the woman) are matched and analyzed by learned Astrologers. These days there are websites where you can plug-in your details and get the compatibility profile. This belief system has its own merits and pitfalls. It's the assumption that person from specific Lagna have unique personality traits which can go together with other type of Lagna charts. It's like Western astrology zodiacs where person's trait is somewhat defined from their Zodiac signs. There are people who don't believe in this. The main reason is that horoscope matching is highly subjective discussion. One Astrologer will defer from another Astrologer's decision, and no two persons will agree on the match. Each Astrologer will be having strong belief system on their approach. For example, some Astrologers will simply go with Star match. Some others, given

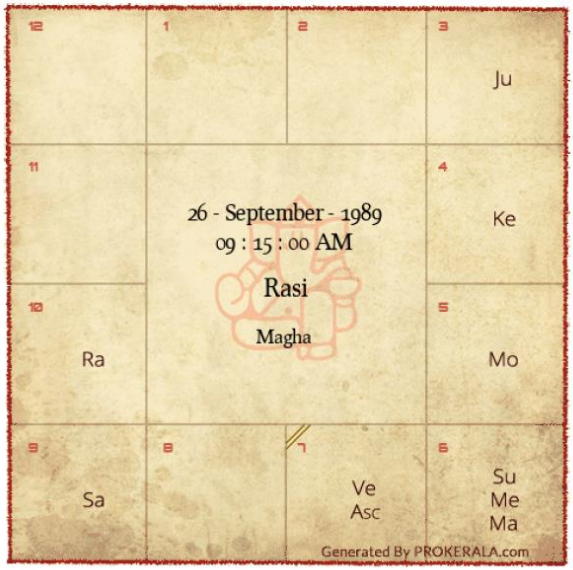
the time and compensation, go into details of hora charts.

For marriage, Astrologers will also look into the Gothra first. Hindus follow the Gothra system which is like a lineage (or clan) of the primordial Saints. The lineage from that Saint are treated as brothers and sisters. In short, the man and woman cannot marry if they are of same Gothra. This practice is also changing amazingly fast due to changing belief system

A woman takes on her husband's Gotra after marriage. Because a bride changes her gotra, she and her children are of a different gotra to her siblings and therefore according to South Indian tradition one may marry one's maternal cousin (because he or she belongs to a different gotra) but not a paternal cousin who would be of the same gotra. In North India marriage of cousins is strictly prohibited. The South-Indian practice of marrying your own uncle or maternal cousins has reduced after the scientific evidence on gene mutation.

Girl's Rasi Chart

Boy's Rasi Chart



Horoscope matching criteria. These days there are on-line tools available to do the matching

The matching (known as Porutham in Tamil Language) are

Dine Porutham - good health and prosperity

Gana Portutham - matching of temperaments

Rajju Porutham - husband's long life

Rasi Porutham - continuation of progeny

Yoni Porutham - sexual compatibility

Vedha Porutham - ward of evil and pitfalls

Vasya Porutham - compatibility between the Zodiac signs

Mahendra Porutham - progeny in a larger measure

Stree Deerga Porutham - accumulation of wealth and prosperity

Rasiyathipaty Porutham - compatibility between birth stars

10 Poruthams and Your Compatibility

Porutham	Result	Girl	Boy
Dina Porutham	✔ Good	Anuradha	Magha
Gana Porutham	✖ Not Satisfactory	Deva	Asura
Mahendra	✖ Not Satisfactory	Anuradha	Magha
Stree Dhrirgham	✔ Good	Anuradha	Magha
Yoni Porutham	✔ Good	Deer	Rat
Veda Porutham	✔ Good	Anuradha	Magha
Rajju Porutham	✔ Good	Kati	Pada
Vasya Porutham	✖ Not Satisfactory	Vrischika	Simha
Rasi Porutham	✔ Good	Vrischika	Simha
Rasyadhipa	✔ Good	Mars	Sun

More the matches, better is the compatibility between the couples

Engagement Ceremony

This particular event is common to Western and Eastern society. The engagement is help far ahead of the actual marriage event so that some sort of binding is set between the families. For convenience, this could be done just a day ahead of the marriage date if the schedules are not convenient for both the families.

An engagement in Hindu ceremony will consist of simple Vedic rituals (pujas, in Sanskrit) to offer gratitude to Gods like Ganesha, Vishnu, etc. In the presence of family elders, a formal agreement will be read giving the details of both family members, their ancestral lineage, etc. While there is no need of signatures, the plates are exchanged in the family's presence. The plates will have gifts with traditional coconut, betal leaves with sandal and kumkum (read forehead powder). These days, the man and woman may exchange rings too. This function makes the beginning of the long marriage process

Dress Codes and Jewelry

Marriage is a great family festival that brings relatives and friends together. Like in any cultures, this is a big-time event with pomp and show.

Jewelry plays a significant role, especially for the woman. While men get a simple ring, there are lot of various key jewelry pieces some of them with Vedic significance. They are made of Gold

South Indian Thali (manga-sutra) worn by married woman

Traditional diamond necklace set

Pearl full set

Gold/Stone jewelry necklace

Woman holding mangalya sutra

Traditional men’s wear

Woman madisar silk saree

Silk dhoti and towel

Nylon printed saree

Mehandi hand designs

Welcoming the bridegroom

In good old days (why we keep saying that!), the bridegroom and his family were stationed at a nearby place to the marriage hall. The girl's side of the family has to go there to make formal invitation to come forward to the marriage. The bridegroom will sit on the horse (still followed in certain North Indian traditions) or in an open car. The car will move slowly into the streets for other community members (not invited to the party) to see the group. There was a humorous content to this practice. This public exposure of the bridegroom ensured like background checks from other people. If anyone, knowing the bad character of the bridegroom can come forward to stop the marriage. It may be like asking for any objections from the audience in a Church Wedding.

These days this practice has been cut short since both the family is staying in the same place. For convenience sake, the bridegroom will go to a nearby temple and then make a short walk to the marriage hall. On the arrival, he will be garlanded by girl's side. The boy and girl may exchange garlands. There will be offering called 'Aarathi' or 'Swagatham', where a plate filled with the mix of water and turmeric/kumkum is rotated clockwise before the couple. It's like taking away bad effects from anyone's negative thoughts. The water is disposed near a tree or plant. This event is done by elder's in the family. There will be some sort of roaster for this since this activity will be repeated many times during the entire marriage process.

And then head over to their bachelor parties! Marriages are big-time family events. In order to accommodate their availability and convenience, marriage receptions are help a day before the marriage day. This will also help in cost reduction on renting the space and halls.

The same concept is following in North Indian marriages. It's called Baraat, fun filled tradition with music and dance. This is a procession from the house of the groom to the wedding venue. The procession is attended by all the friends and families from the groom's side. The groom gets all the attention with nice dress and seated in a decorated horse or fancy-car. The slow-moving horse(s) are still available for rent and that comes with the attendant to manage the horse.

Renouncing the family

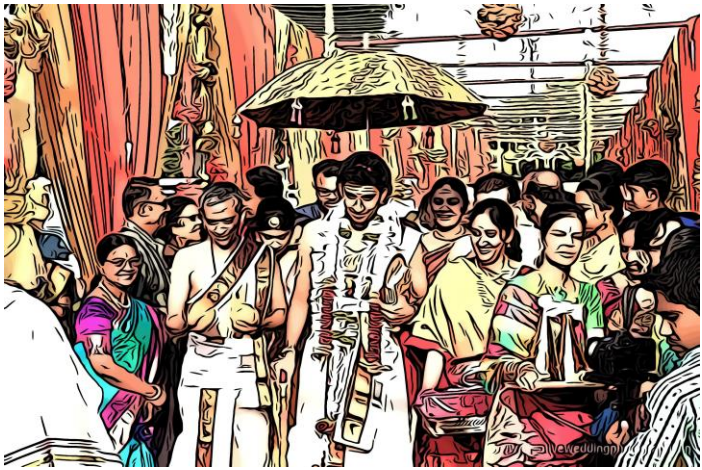
We are talking family relationships and bonding with another individual. Why renounce act in these ceremonies?

It's an event on the marriage event, where the bridegroom walks out of the event saying he is going on a pilgrimage as a single

Known as 'kashi yatra' (in Tamil), the place Kashi (Varanasi) is a pilgrimage town in North India where you can renounce worldly interests. It's also a place where elders visit to take a dip at the Holy River Ganga (Ganges). They are supposed to renounce their passionate food and not to touch them thereafter. I assume, that's the part of having a life with detachment to attachments.

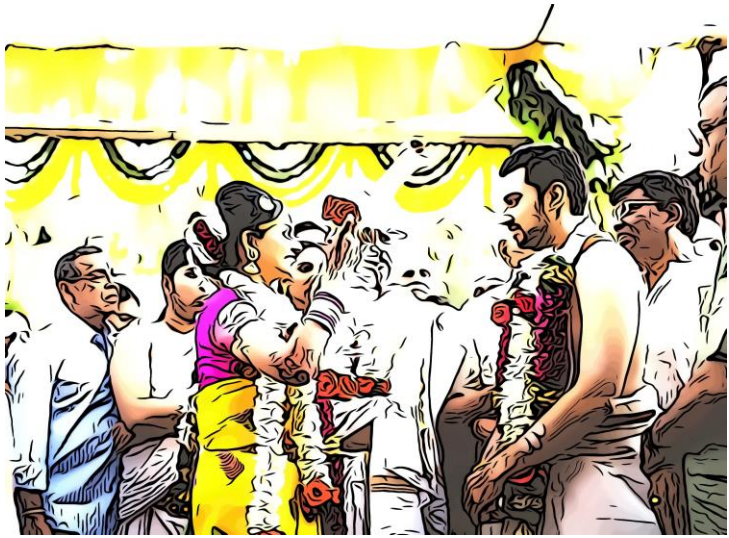
Coming back to Kashi Yatra, where the bridegroom pretends to walk away, and the bride's father explain the need for being Samsara in this lifetime. The concept behind this could be that men's mind keep wandering and try to stray away from marriage. Probably he can recollect this event later at his lifetime and resolve to make the marriage work better.

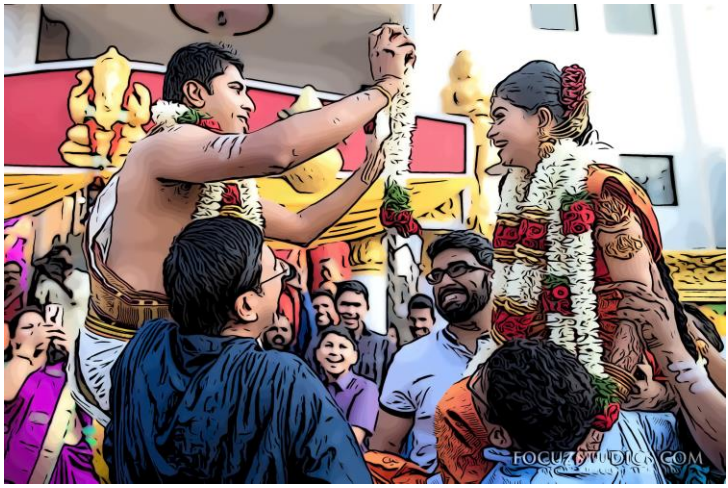
The bridegroom walks back smiling and the event continues further. There is a specific dress code with a walking stick and umbrella. Not sure of the details behind these attires but it's an interesting scene to watch in person.



Marriage Ceremony

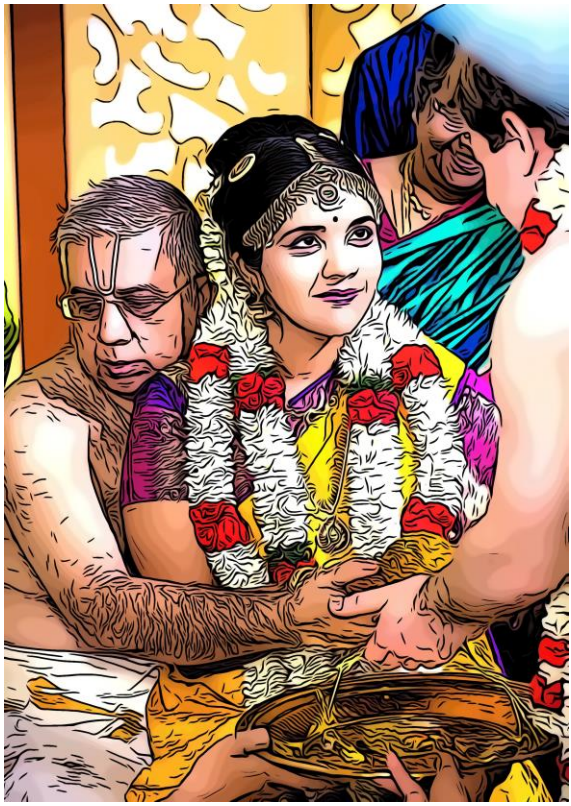
Garland Exchange





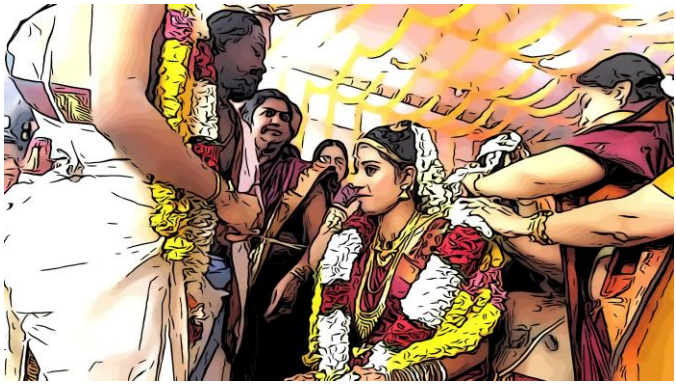
Bride and groom exchange garlands before the marriage function. But Hindu traditions does not make that quite simple. Uncle's from both side of the couple carry the boy or the girl on their shoulder. A garland is given to each one of the couples. They are supposed to move themselves to place the garland on the other. But the Uncle's use this opportunity to tease them. Both sides retract far so that this is not simply made easy. It's like a tolerance test for either a boy or girl to negotiate with his/her relatives to allow them to move closer. Smart bride or groom just simply throw the garland from a distance and claim their victory! This fun-filled event brings the warmth with both side of the families. After the garlands, the couple sit on a swing where another set of Aarathi(s) happen. Typically done by senior women folks in both the families. Again, the purpose may be to involve everyone in the marriage process.

There is an age-old tradition where the bride's father presents his daughter to the groom, entrusting him with here wellbeing and care. Known as Kanya-Dhan, kanya meaning the girl and Daan meaning offering. The symbolic meaning may be to indicate that the girl is moving from her parent's side to the groom's side. It could be like relinquishing the attachment of the daughter from the parent's side.



Knot tying event (Mangalya Dharanam)

In wedding following Vedic traditions, the girl will sit on her father's lap. The boy will tie the sacred thread (chain made from yellow sacred thread) around the girl's neck. There will be three knots. One by the bridegroom, second one done by the boy's sister and the third one done by the girl's side daughter-in law. The three knots represent the physical, mental and the spiritual bonding of the couple. Another social perspective is the involvement of the women from both sides and maintaining the family unity. There will be a music typically from a long flute instrument called 'Nadaswaram'. Family and friends will throw flowers and yellow-rice (called Akshaya- rice mixed with turmeric)on the couple. Throwing rice or flowers are observed in Christian and Jewish traditions too.



Above all, 'Māngalyam tantunānena...' is apledgeand ablessing. This has its source in the Vedic rituals as codified in the Yagnyavalkya Smrithi by Rishi Yagnyavalkya. This pledge-blessing is uttered by the groom, addressing the bride, at the time of tying the Māngalya sutram, the auspicious thread.

The full form of this pledge-blessing is:

"Māngalyam tantunānena mama jeevana hetunāh || Kanthe badhnāmi subhage twam jeeva saradā satam"

This is what it means:

Māngalyam tantunānena = (this) auspicious & sacred thread

mama jeevana hetunāh = (shall be) the foundation of my life

Kanthe badhnāmi = (am) tying around (your) neck

subhage = O, the source of all spiritual riches (addressing the bride)

twam jeeva = may you live...

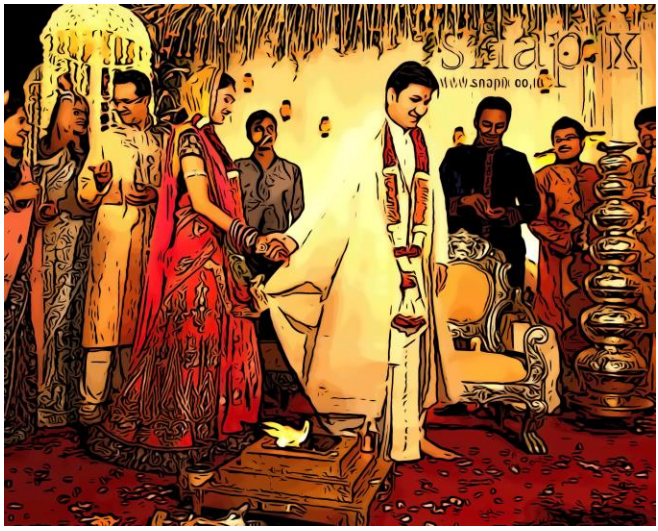
saradā satam = for hundred seasons (years)

"O my bride, the source of all my spiritual riches, I tie this auspicious thread around your neck, which shall be the foundation of my life (hence forth). I bless that you may live for hundred years. (And by this, I am blessed too as I pledge to be your partner in life)"

Fire ceremony

Per Vedic traditions, fire ceremony (known as Homa or Havan) is conducted in all major functions including marriage, during pregnancy and after childbirth. Some sections of the marriage ceremony will have on the groom and his parents doing the homa ceremony. Fire is created in a pot with the burning of fragrant herbs and plants. Ghee (Clarified butter) is poured to get that fire activated. This involves recitation of certain sanksrit mantras. As one of the five basic elements, fire is worshipped. After the knot tying event, this homa is done by the newly married couple.

Hindu's consider Lord Ganesha (Elephant God) as an obstacle remover. And they always seek the blessing of the energies from the nine planets in the Solar System. Fire ceremony always include reciting mantras invoking the blessing of the God and the planets. And to ensure the pooja performer has set his focus on mind and body, a formal vow (known as Sankalpa) is done before the ceremony. Sankalpa is like setting the intention formed by the heart and mind.



Saptapadi (Seven Step walk)

It's now time for affirmations and proclamations. The seven steps are symbolic marriage vows that the bride and groom announce to the world. The husbands hold the feet of his wife and make seven forward steps for her. The mantras recited for each of the steps signify these efforts

-Share in the responsibility of the home, house-hold front

- Fill our hearts with strength and courage

- Prosper and share our worldly goods and things

- Fill our hearts with love, peace, happiness, and spiritual values

- Be blessed with loving children

- Attain self-restraint and longevity

- Be best friends and eternal partners

There is also another ritual where the husband lifts the wife's right leg with the toes and place the leg on the millstone. Another symbolic event to highlight the strong mindset needed to face the ups and down in married life.

Toe-Ring ceremony

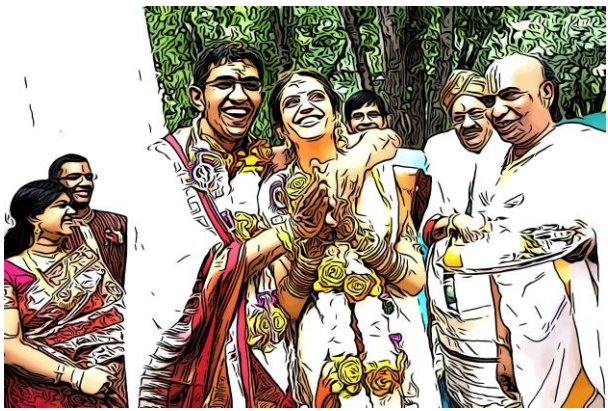
The husband places toe-rings (made of silver) to the ring fingers of the wife's feet. While this may be a visual clue for the others that she is married, there is also some scientific reasoning that toe-rings activates some nervous systems.

Offering dry rice (known as Poha) to the fire

We have seen the roles of the couple's parents, their uncles, and aunts. The groom's sister is heavily involved in tying the knot. The person is missing could be the bride's brother. In the function, the brother of the bride offers rice flakes to the newly married couple. This is in turn offered back to the homa fire.

Stargazing

Hindu tradition has seven Rishis (Sages).It's the belief that there are galaxies around these Rishis. The wife of the Rishi Vashista is called Arunthathi, and people believe she is visible as a star on the broad daylight. Both the rishi and his wife are visible together in the sky. This indicate togetherness for a long period of time. Newly married couple make symbolic prayers and pretend to have seen these stars in the sky.



Modern Marriages & FAQs

Lot of things have changed over last 30 years.

Here are some of the observations from the marriages these days.

- It was expected that the marriage invitations are given in person whom you want them to be available in the marriage. In social media world, these days the invite is sent via whatsapp followed by a whatsapp call

- If you can't attend the marriage in person, people used to visit the house at a later date to inquire the events and eat any left-over sweets. These days there are websites which can do web-streaming of the event and record them for future viewing. You sign-up, get alerts and watch the video anytime

- Gifts, cash, boxed-gifts. The marriage events these days have counters where you can walk-in and swipe the credit/debit card for the gift amount. The marriage registry concept is available in certain families, but people prefer quick transaction at that moment!

- After the marriage ceremony, the couple need to go out and watch the 'Arundathi' star in the sky. There is no time these days and the weather may not cooperate. Vadhyar (the priest who conducts the ceremony) open the ipad and shows the standard image of the star for the couple to seek blessings.

FAQs (Frequently asked questions)

What gift I should buy? Check whether any registries are opened on the boy or girl's account. Next, check whether any rules listed on the invite on the boxed gifts. Based on the location, you may give gift cards. These days there are gift box kept on the dias where you can drop it off

What's the dress code for invitees? Marriage ceremony is a Gala event in that family. You can wear very formal clothes. If you have Indian dresses (like Kurtas, Veshti, Salwar) you can wear them. You can wear the shoes into the mandap but not to the main fire-ceremony dias.

What to do when the 'Thali' or 'Mangal sutra' is taken around the audience? Girl's side relative will take the plate to seek blessings from the elder group. You can just fold the hold as in 'Namaste' (or) touch the plate-rim and do some prayers. You don't have to touch the actual gold chain (or) anything inside the plate

What to do the yellow rice? The yellow rice the mix of rice and turmeric. This is called 'Akshaya', to be thrown on the couple during the sutra-knot time. Do not throw on others (or) to any other person sitting next to you! Sometimes, you may have to walk closer to the stage to do this activity. Do not give the rice to others to represent you. Do not get from others to represent them. This is supposed to transfer your own energy and blessings to the newly married couple.

I am served with lot of food varieties for lunch/dinner, is there an order of eating? Yes, there is a formal order of eating and waiting for the supplies to reach the plate. The easy answer is to sit next to the person familiar with this process.

Is the food mostly vegetarian? Yes, it is Vegetarian. There could be exceptions and there will be separate place for serving non-vegetarian food.

Will there be (alcoholic) drinks? Formal Vedic ceremony and Muhurtams don't have drinks served. There will be coffee or tea served. Hot days may have some soft drinks. Formal reception functions may have bar in some marriages.

Key words:

Panigrahana - Holding hands

Kalyana - auspicious occasion of marriage

Udvaha - Taking a girl from her father's home

Vivaha - Taking the responsibilities and duties as householder

Parinayana - walking around sacred fire

Kalyanam - Marriage function

Muhurtam - Specific time alloted for the mangala sutra tying activity

Gurukkal - Priest conducting the functions

Mappillai - Bride groom

Manappen - Bride

Mamanar - Father-in-law

Mamiyar - Mother-in-law

Nathanaar - Sister-in-law

About the Author:

Mathur (matt) Ravikumar, an author, consultant, and cartoonist

Matt started his own consulting company in 2012 and provide functional consulting in enterprise resource planning business software applications.

He has self-published 20+ books over last three years. He also publishes weekly cartoon content on political and economic news and events in YouTube Channel. Two of his Udemy lessons have been released, one on entrepreneurship and another on self-publishing. Four of self-published books have been released into audio format, available in audible and iTunes.

Regular meditator and trekked partially to Himalayas (Mount Kailash) towards a spiritual journey in 2016.

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