

# The Precaution Science of Traditional Folk Worship to Pandemic Disease

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## Abstract

India is primarily in the village culture. The majority of the population lives in a village. There have unique deities for every village. Most of the traditional folk worship directly or indirectly related to human health, especially for precaution measures of pandemic disease. During the ritual ceremonies, use lots of medicinal plants like Karakam, Kappu, and Thoranamto prevent the disease. Many village ritual protocols have represented the self-discipline, self-cleaning, and protect the society, particularly epidemics disease, in the name God worship. Like the corona virus is a pandemic disease to keep in this view also useful to prevent based our cultural knowledge for further generations. The ancients were taught by the rituals of science in an age of illiteracy, so we have to realize the science behind the rituals of tradition, we must move on to the next generation.

**Keywords:** Folk worship, Village deity, Culture, Kappu, Thoranam, Disease.

## Introduction

India is a village oriented nation, 80 percent of the total population still live in villages. Most of the village deities are the patron deities or grama devata of the village. They are found in almost all villages throughout India, Especially in Tamil Nadu. They are known as Kavaldeivam or guardian spirits in Tamil local village gods. They are associated with the main deity who is generally ascribed as Kuladeivam by various sects and aspect of community and clan groups as part of the tracing their generation through centuries. Hinduism, with its customs, rituals, and habits formed and practised from time immemorial, can be said to have a great tradition. Village Gods and deities are worshipped to protect the respective villages from epidemics and natural calamities. As Whitehead said, the sole object of the worship of the village deities is not to express gratitude for any moral or spiritual blessings but to get rid of scourges like Cholera and small-pox in olden days (Dumont, 1970).

During the Tamil Months of Karthikai (Sokka Panai during Karthigai Dheepam); Thai (Thai Pooam, Makara Jyothi of Ayyappan); Masi (Masi Kalari - Shivarathiri); Panguni (Panguni Uthiram is considered as the auspicious birthday of Aiyandar); Aadi (Aadi Perukku) and Vaigasi (Vaigasi Visakam), festivals will be conducted in these temples.

Generally, a mass convention assembly of a large number of related family members gathering is organized during the spring season for a period of two to three days. For the annual mass convention festival, the tradition is that the commencement of the festival will be with that of hoisting of the flag and tying 'Kappu.' After this, villagers can neither go out of the village to another village nor come into the village.

### Flag Hoisting, Tying of Kankanam or Kappu

The flag hoisting ceremony marks the beginning of a festival. The flag is first fastened to the top of a bamboo pole and then curled around the length of the pole. The flag itself is white and has a symbol of such as tiger, the bull, or the goddess drawn on it. Often it is soaked in turmeric water that is dyed yellow. The flag will be tied to the permanent flag post if there is one. Some temples mark the flag hoisting by raising a bundle of *darbhagrass* tied together with mango leaves.

On the same day, the *Kankanamor Kappu* (a piece of string soaked in turmeric) will be tied on the wrist of the *pujari* and other people who participate in the festival and who have to observe certain restrictions during that period. Those who take part only at particular rituals, e.g., the *Kuntamirankutal*, have their *kapputied* later. The goddess and the other gods in the temple receive a *kappu* as well. The *Kappu* is not only a safeguard against pollution (*tittu*) but also: when one puts on the *kankanam*, "they call the gods and ask them to be present during the festival, to protect them and to watch over them that they do not have fights among themselves. After the festival, when they take off the *kankanam*, they send the gods back.

### Ritual Ceremonies

Fire walking, familiarly known as 'Pookkulithal,' is an important ceremony widely observed all over Tamil Nadu. This means walking on the bed of flowers, in which the devotee remains unaffected though walking on the hot embers, due to overwhelming devotion and inherent faith by forgetting himself (Lakshmanan Chettiyar, 1980). Carrying fire pot on heads and palms is another ceremonious ritual as arduous as the above-mentioned one. For twenty-one

days before the observation of the ritual, the devotee eats just a single meal a day, sleeps on the ground, and avoids sexual pleasure. Among the offerings during the ritual, the most important one is the flour lamp. It is a small pan like a container for oil and wick, equal to the breadth of the palm of a grown-up man. This is made of raw rice flour mixed with jaggery fluid with the small wick. The women light it in front of the deity, and ultimately, it is eaten as a gift of the goddess.

### The Pot (Karakam)

The topic of the *Karakam* is vast and complex. Different names are given by respondents to the *Karakam*, e.g., *punkarakam*, *Sakthikarakam*, instead of *karakam*, the term *kumpamor kalasam* is used; furthermore, *karakam* can also be a fire pot and then called *akkiniikkarakam*, which in turn is called *ticcatti*. The significance of the fire pot is much adorable among the devotees as gleaned from the ballad. Folk people normally call this as Amman and revered the same. The pot is generally considered to represent the womb, i.e. the goddess; however, although this may be true in most cases, it is not always so, since the pot can also stand for a male deity. During the festival for *Ankallamman*, the pot is used for a variety of rituals (Henry Whitehead, 1976).

For the walking-over-hot coals ritual, the priest, who is the first to walk over the coals, will carry on his head a *karakam*. This *Kalasam* contains a *maavilakku* (a lamp made of rice flour) and a coin, and it is topped with a coconut; whereas the pot with the flame inside which is deposited at the figure's head in Valajapet (during the opening-of the eyes ritual) is not covered with coconut. A pot sometimes represents the faces of the Kapparai - usually, this pot is simply called Paanai.

Apart from the instances in which the pot represents the goddess, the exact function of the pot cannot be determined, nor do respondents have an adequate explanation about it. In its widest application, the pot is a carrier of life, be it that of a deity or a human (Stephen Inglis, 1980). Here again, however, interpretations may differ. Finally, the pot is simply a convenient vessel for carrying things to and from the temple, especially the water for the

*abhisekam*. Such pots as containing the *Tirttam* are also decorated with coconuts and usually covered with a yellow cloth, and they are carried on the heads of devotees or *poosari*.

## Discussion

### The Science Behind Folk Worship

The flag hoisting ceremony marks the beginning of a festival around the village is called Thoranam. Thoranam are hanging decorations in Tamil Nadu. Rooted in Tamil culture, and it got a history way back to the Sangam period. This, too, indicated the lockdown of the village or section 144 act in the village. The hosting flag to connect the mango and Neem tree leaves as Thoranam. Apart from that, *Kappu* (a piece of string soaked in turmeric) will be tied on the wrist to indicate restrictions from others. Also, each home to use Tanner's Cassia (*Cassia auriculata*), Mountain knot grass (*Avervalanata*), Thumbai (*Leucas aspera*), Veldt grape (*Cissus quadrangularis*), mango leaves and Neemleaves as garments insert the front and four sides of the home. This is all to reported have on many human diseases remedy medicinal plants and also have on antifungal, prostaglandin inhibitory, antioxidant, antimicrobial, antinociceptive, and cytotoxic activities.

Yellow water sports (Manjal Neeradal) is a ceremony celebrated in the countryside during the last day of their ritual ceremonies. Turmeric water pouring to men and women in the village street. This event is also known as Yellow Water Spraying. This is one of the ancient festivals of the Tamil people. In Tamil Nadu, adolescent girls and men play yellow water to show their rights. Turmeric water one of best renowned for its anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties.

- Thoranam village lockdown as nationwide lockdown for 21 days to prevent Coronavirus spread.
- *Kappu* (a piece of turmeric) will be tied on the wrist to indicate social isolation distance.
- Yellow Water Spraying as Large-scale disinfection efforts is becoming commonplace.
- *Kappu* in home for medicinal properties of plants to precautions of fever, cough and breathing problems, etc.,

- During the festival, cleaning is the most important thing (Human and home).

### COVID-19

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a new virus. The disease causes respiratory illness (like the flu) with symptoms such as a cough, fever, and in more severe cases, difficulty breathing. You can protect yourself by washing your hands frequently, avoiding touching your face, and avoiding close contact (1 meter or 3 feet) with unwell people. Coronavirus disease spreads primarily through contact with an infected person when they cough or sneeze. It also spreads when a person touches a surface or objects that have the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.

### Precautionary Measures

- A nationwide lockdown for 21 days.
- Large-scale disinfection efforts are becoming commonplace.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Maintain at least three feet distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wearing a mask is not necessary unless you are taking care of an infected person.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water when hands are visibly dirty.
- If you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention immediately.

### Conclusion

Finally, prevention is better than cure as a ritual backup of India, especially in Tamilnadu. The village deities are often directly associated with the disease, sudden death, and catastrophe. When the village is threatened by disaster, particularly epidemics,

the local goddess is usually said to be manifesting herself. These are all precaution medical knowledge of the traditional folk worship of Tamilians. It is the duty of all of us to transcend this knowledge for the next generations.

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