

# Narayan's Kocharethi (The Araya Woman): The History, Preserving Myths, Rituals, Social Customs, Belief and Traditions of the Malay Arayan Tribal Community in Kerala in the Twentieth Century

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## **Abstract:**

This paper highlights the History, Preserving Myths, Rituals, Social Customs, Belief and Traditions of the Malay Arayan Tribal Community in Kerala in the twentieth Century in Narayan's Kocharethi. Kochuraman is a protagonist and he is a tribe. A key theme of cultural change begins when Kunjipennu refuses to marry her maternal uncle's son and instead weds Kochuraman, it follows the destruction of their house and the death of their son in a forest fire, and they are pushed into dire poverty. A cycle of drought and torrential rain pushes the entire Mala Arayan community into debt and alcoholism to which Kochuraman too falls prey. The poverty of the community is ruthlessly exploited by moneylenders, landlords, businessmen, and the government police and gradually this unholy nexus of the upper classes and upper castes results in the alienation of the Arayans' lands, and those resisting are beaten into submission. Kunjipennu and Kochuraman meanwhile have a daughter Parvati and the establishment of a school in the village marks the beginning of another social transformation in the community. Parvati later gets through college and finds a job in Kochi where she marries against her parents' wishes and slowly begins to distance herself from the community. Kochuraman's alcoholism finally results in his taking ill and is forced to seek treatment in Kochi where Kunjipennu accompanies him. His hospitalization is supported by Parvati's husband and friends but when Kochuraman and Kunjipennu are told that he will require surgery, he escaped from the hospital.

## **FULL PAPER**

Kocharethi is a Malayalam novel by Narayan, often described as Kerala's first tribal novelist and it was published in 1998. Catherine Thankamma has translated it into English; she is a translator, writer, and critic. She teaches the English language at the R.L.V. College of Music and Fine Arts, Cochin. Narayan is a recipient of the prestigious Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, has published five novels and two collections of short stories. The novel depicts the lives of its protagonist Kunjipennu and her childhood love and later husband Kochuraman. It depicts the history, traditions and travails of the Malay Arayan tribal community in Kerala in the twentieth century. Narayan is one of the first tribal novelists from India. It is set against the backdrop of the Western Ghats in the pepper belt along the Kerala-Tamil

Nadu border. A key theme of cultural change begins when Kunjipennu refuses to marry her maternal uncle's son and instead weds Kochuraman, it follows the destruction of their house and the death of their son in a forest fire, and they are pushed into dire poverty. A cycle of drought and torrential rain pushes the entire Mala Arayan community into debt and alcoholism to which Kochuraman too falls prey. The poverty of the community is ruthlessly exploited by moneylenders, landlords, businessmen, and the government police and gradually this unholy nexus of the upper classes and upper castes results in the alienation of the Arayans' lands, and those resisting are beaten into submission. Kunjipennu and Kochuraman meanwhile have a daughter Parvati and the establishment of a school in the village marks the beginning of another social transformation in the community. Parvati later gets through college and finds a job in Kochi where she marries against her parents' wishes and slowly begins to distance herself from the community. Kochuraman's alcoholism finally results in his taking ill and is forced to seek treatment in Kochi where Kunjipennu accompanies him. His hospitalization is supported by Parvati's husband and friends but when Kochuraman and Kunjipennu are told that he will require surgery, he escaped from the hospital. They mortally scared of modern medicine, escape from the hospital. The novel has however been criticized on the grounds of having neither style nor craft. It has also been pointed out that structural and stylistic technique of literary writing are largely absent in the novel.

The novel begins with a description of the Malaya Arayan tribe's family. Varikkamakal Ittyadi Arayan has two children Kunjadichan and Kunjipennu. Chirutha is their mother; she died when Kunjipennu was seven years old. Ittyadi's father was both a magician and Velichapad, he performs the necessary rituals to propitiate the divine spirit and ensure that and protect members of the clan. He consecrated a thread for her to wear but it would not work properly, her fever did not subside and she died. Kunjumundam is Chirutha's brother, he forced Ittyadi to get a wife but he rejects to marry. Ittyadi got some memories of his wife and lives happily. Kunjadichan is the son of Ittyadi, he marries Paapi, a daughter of Kunjumundan. Narayan was the brother of Paapi through blood ties. Narayan wants to marry Kunjipennu, he often came to her house and chats with Ittyadi but she did not like him. She rejects marrying Narayan but Pappi had not expected such a vehement rejection. There is a custom of Arayan tribe that a woman has no freedom to select her future husband, "Once father and brother decide to give you in marriage to someone, you'll simply have to go with him. If a girl disobeyed, her father or her brother would not hesitate to kick her to death: no one would challenge them or blame them for it" (Narayan 3). Ittyadi understand the mind of his daughter and sends message to Narayan's family. Kunjipennu is a mature, hardworking young woman.

The Arayan Woman depicts the tribes' life, they are very close to nature and they are experts in the practice of herbal medicine. Kochuraman is a protagonist, and he belonged to Puliyanmala tribe. His parents had died when he was still a child. Kochukochu's Chittapan is a vaidyan (Doctor), he taught him the art of healing. He learned to recognize medical herbs by sight or by chewing them. He also learned to grind the herbs in various combinations. Koochukachu's wife Ittipennu did not like Kochuraman, she never gave him enough food to eat and she made him do heavy work like cutting firewood and always found fault with whatever he did. He often wandered around, examined leaves and plants, and murmured the verse. He plucked leaves, squeezed them between his fingers, and smelt them. Kela was suffering from pain, several medicines were tried but the boil continues to swell. Kochuraman took chicken fat, grinded some roots, and mixed them with the fat. He put a blob on it on the boil by evening the boil burst and thick pus oozed and mixed with diseased blood. Kela felt tremendous relief. He could not reveal the secret of the medicine. Kochuraman has now effective remedies for various

illnesses like wounds, sprains diarrhea and migraine. Tribes, always lead an independent life after marriage, they may live separately. Kochuraman becomes a young man with smooth shining skin, a face, curly hair, and a tune of his lips. Kela said, "It is time to get Kochuraman married. He could build a house on the western side" (Narayan 6). Kela gets some information about Kochuraman, he belongs to Valayillam tribe and he is ready to marry any other tribe. Kochuraman was searching for a bridegroom, he heard about the beauty of Kunjipennu, one day he happened to overhear two women talking about Ittyadi Arayan's daughter Kunjipennus, "She had a mountain of hair. Her light skin glowed; she had a heavy breast. Her eyes were large like the Karinkoovalam flower. Her lips were red from chewing betel" (Naryan 7). Kochuraman tried to conjure images that matched the description. He wanted to marry her but the tradition of the tribe is very hard. His guardians should ask her father or brother and they should agree to give her.

The Arayan Woman portrays the love story of Kochuraman and Kunjipennu. Kochuraman had decided to meet her, when he heard about her beauty. He began to walk; he found the place when Ittiyadi and his daughter were clearing the land. Ittyadi saw him and asked:

'Who are you, boy?'

'Right now, I am at Elavungal but I'm Puli Yamala!'

'What is your name?'

'Kochuraman'

'Aah. . . the vijayan, is not it?'

'Not yet a vaidyan. I hope to become one'

'What brought you here?' (Narayan 7). He was silent, Ittyadi saw his daughter, her eyes were on the young man, and he liked her also. Kochuraman wanted to smile but her father was seated before him. Kochuraman meets her; she is a hard-working lady. Kunjipennu toiled under the scorching sun; her muscles and body were covered with sweat and dirt. She walked towards the house, carrying the scythe. Suddenly, she saw Kochuraman; he was leaning against a tree beside the footpath. Kochuraman said, "Kunjipenne, I came to ask you whether you like me?" (Narayan 10). She wanted to say, "She liked him but how could she? I would like to marry you, just say that you like me" (Narayan 10). Narayan is a relative of Kunjipennu, he was watching everything and he disturbed them; she took the sickle and put fear in to him. Kunjipennu was warring about his father and brothers. Narayan started hating her, and he wants to take an act of revenge on her. One day, when she was bathing in the stream, Narayan throws some herbal in the stream, and she came out of the water. Immediately her whole body began to itch, she cannot bear the pain and she ran towards her home. She collapsed on the floor, rolling and screaming. Paapi entered the yard; she found Kunjipennu rolling on the ground nakedly. Her body was covered with red boils and she was rolling on the floor in agony. Several women gathered and discussed her pain. Someone told to Ittyadi, "Brother, this is not the work of any spirit; it's something different. We have to call someone" (Nayayan13). Ittyadi could not bear to see his daughter; she was lying weak and exhausted. He prayed to the deities, "Oh Gods of my clan don't kill my child" (Narayan13). He took an oath to sacrifice a small fowl to Puliambullo on the tenth sunrise. Kunjadichan met Kochuraman and gave a rough description of the symptoms of the unwell. Kochuraman went to her bathing place and found, "The husk of Naikurunakka fruit" (Narayan 13). He saw Kunjipennu; he examined the swollen cheek with his finger. He collected certain roots and leaves from the forest, ground made them into a paste mixed with warm water and gave it to the women to smear on Kunjipennu's body, and they smeared the paste after some time she got relief.

The Arayan Woman depicts the family structure and culture of the tribe. The woman is the prime; the property belongs to a woman. Kochuraman wants to marry Kunjipennu but he is an orphan, when the discussion was going on after the night meal. Kunjadichan said, “Appa, is not it time to arrange Kunjipennu’s marriage?”

‘Why are you asking this now?’

‘Someone mentioned an alliance. The boy is an orphan. He doesn’t have any relatives to come asking for the bride. If that is the case....’

‘Who is it?’

Ittyadi said, “Kunjayicha, we have a custom. Should we be the ones to break it?”

‘Oh, who cares about customs these days? If you are against it say so..’ ‘Why do you talk that way?’

In the past, no one dared to arrange an alliance that went against clan links” (Narayan 15). The Arayans have four Clans and there are two clans in a house. The father’s clan is one; the children belong to their mother’s clan. There are Valayillam, Poothaniyillam, Modalakkattillam and Nellippullillam. Kunjadichan asked his father, he said, “The house always belongs to the woman, son. This house belongs to your woman” (Narayan 16). Days have gone, Kunjipennu marries Kochuraman.

The Christian community and Muslim community were great cheaters to the tribal community. The tribals were buying goods from the Christian and Muslim communities. When Kunjadichan and Kochuraman were working in the field, Kunjadichan was walking in the paddy field; he cleared a boulder and sat on it. Kochuraman is a brother-in-law of Kunjadichan; he gave tobacco and good betel leaf. He sat and chewed for a while then he spits out the juice, he cleared his throat and began his usual criticism, “That Nanaar’s a big cheat; brings along all kinds of discarded stuff from the market day useless tobacco and rotten fish from God -knows -where” Ummns. He knows he can charge any exorbitant price; we will pay. I have not seen Kanja Methan for some time now. Does not he come anymore? Maybe he dies” (Narayan 18). The Arayan tribes are basically hard workers, brave, and greater sufferers. Kochurama cleared the forest, they grew paddy. He used some tricks to protect his crop from wild animals. The tribal do not have cloth to protect themselves sometimes. There was a winter, there was a cold. Kunjipennu began to shiver, “The thin piece of cloth that covered her breasts failed to keep out the cold. Neither was it long enough to cover her limbs” (Narayan 20). She snuggled up against Kochuraman silently, her teeth chattering and the smelt of sour and dried and unwashed clothes. Kochuraman always saved his crop from elephants and other wild animals; it was challenging for him. During the daytime birds and wildfowl preyed on the ripening grain, Kunjipennu had spent the whole day chasing and shooting them away. Tribes dared not fear anybody, and an elephant retreated. He trapped the elephant; it was unable to treat itself and elephant roared again. Kochuraman shouted, “I do not care if you belong to our dear king; if you come again, I will kill you” (Narayan 25). Kunjipennu stood trembling and unable to speak. It escaped from his trap. The tribes’ culture is very rich; they respect the land and their crops. They celebrate the Peranirekkal harvesting festival. Kochuraman went with Kunjadichan to transmit to get the scythes sharpened. Kunjipennu and Paapi smeared the floor on veranda and inside of the house with a mixture of cow dung and powdered coal. They swept and mopped the house clean and prepare to fill the house with grain. Peranirekkal Ittyadi bathed and appeared in his wet clothes, his son, daughter, and son-in-law accompanied him to the field. The grain had matured and was ready to be harvested. Ittyadi prayed to the goddess of the harvest, to the sun and the moon, and turned to face the east. He gripped a bunch of shorts, and he murmured a prayer, “begging

forgiveness for the act of violence” (Narayan 27). He then cut it and tied it into a bundle, he prepared a few bundles and told the youngsters to carry on with the work and moved towards the house. He carried a bundle on his head; his daughter-in-law was waiting inside the house. The tapering tip of a banana leaf had been placed on the floor near a lighted lamp. Ittyadi placed on the floor near a lighted lamp. Ittyadi placed the bundle on the leaf and smeared sandal paste over it and hung it up. It signaled that the house was well stocked, and women would start threshing and separating grains and husk. They invite their relatives; they arrived along with their children to celebrate the festival. They cooked with new rice, pumpkin, and long beans. They were so happy, they exchanged beat rice.

The Arayan Woman depicts the equality, self-respect, and tradition of the Arayan tribes. There was equality in the tribe society; property was distributed equally among their children without discrimination. Paapi raised their voice against Kochuraman, he had not planned to stay at his wife’s house, Kunjipennu decided to speak, and she said, “Kochangale, we’ll divide the land equally between us” (Naryan 30). Her brother did not speak but Kochuraman is a highly self-respected person, he rejects to take land from his wife. He met Kunjadichan and told, “Brother-in-law seems to be annoyed with me. I will leave, move to some other place. It is shameful to accept land from one’s wife’s family” (Narayan 30). He decided to leave; he did not care about his wife. Ittyadi sat silently and thought, “Land and women always caused for conflict” (Narayan 30). Ittyadi called his son and son-in-law and divided the arable land equally between them. Kochuraman wanted more land; he cleared the forest that adjoined the land. He built a small house, the base with stones and rocks. Kunjadichan and the other two to three come to help for two days. He constructed the house scientifically. The tribes were leading their life very scientifically, with a room structure to which a woman withdrew when she was menstruating or absent to give birth. A menstruate woman wore a short length of cloth over a regular munda at that time. There was a big tradition of the tribe during menstruating; she would also carry a scythe. When she went out of the room, she took great care not to touch any of the men or boys even by accident. On the fourth day, her munda and the strips of cloth were put in boiling water and then washed. There was a special place on the river bank for this purpose. The tribes are always fond of toddy, Kochuraman likes toddy but he never goes shopping. He accompanied the toddy tapper Kunjukujju and learned a technique of collecting fruits and preparing toddy. Kunjupennu was seven months pregnant, they performed some ceremonies. Mundan’s wife Chikki, a sister of Ittyadi, she cooked par-boiled and wrapped it carefully in a blanched banana leaf. She also wrapped up a small piece of iron and stone of equal weight separately. Chikki and her daughter came to see Kunjipennu with pockets, and everyone gathered around, the pregnant woman unwrapped the rice, the next ceremony would indicate the sex of the child to be born. Kunjipennu was asked to touch one of the two identical packets, she did accordingly. They opened the wrapping; it contained a piece of iron. That means the child was a boy. If she had touched the stone the child would be a girl, which was the belief. At the time of delivery, Ittyadi washed his arms, legs, and face and meditated to God, he prayed to the clan deities, “Let no harm befall mother and child” (Narayan 37). He murmured some prayers, then wrapped up an inch of consecrated grain and rice in a piece of cloth and hung it from the beam. Kunjipennu gave birth to a healthy male child. Mundiymmamna was a midwife; she would not eat food on the day and helped deliver a child. But she welcomed a bowl of toddy. A midwife disposed of the afterbirth, then went to take a bath. During the period of seven days from the birth of the child, the oil bath, toddy, and meat appear before the deities. They performed rites. The tribes were more scientific than the modern people, regarding their beauty Kunjipennu in the water boiled along with the roots, dried her, and tied a folded piece of long cloth firmly around her stomach. It



was for the stomach muscles to contract and regain their earlier shape. It is also strengthened the backbone, after the fifty-sixth day the woman should be able to climb a tree or at least climb the bamboo pole to the erumaadam.

The Arayan Woman depicts the tradition of harvesting and sowing seeds. It also depicts the tricks of hunting and how tribes were suffering from smallpox and the elder of the tribe prayed to their clan deities. The tribes were friendly with nature. Kunjipennu's son Kunjikuttan was wounded on nearby unsteady feet, and a dog Kolumban followed him. Ittyadi sowed seeds on both sides; they began to work with zeal. The soil was turned; it was enough to cover the seeds. While they were working, they were singing. Mayam Gopalan and Velleli Kunjappan were the main singers. Kutty Kunjan, Chakki, Chirutha, Kotha, Kela and others followed their lead Kunjappan, Gopalan were youngsters, and they are more enthusiastic, they prepare food and serve every worker and they served toddy. The tribes were experts at hunting animals; they build shelters on the top of the tree and sat waiting to trap the animals. They created a lot of noise with help of the dogs to frighten the animals into coming out into the open. They had beaten it to death they chopped the meat, smeared it with salt and pepper, and stuffed it into bits of green bamboo. The tribes were great sufferers of smallpox. It had made its appearance in the village in the vallen, it was spreading fast and it would climb Aaryan huts. Every day they get fresh death in the village and burning the house, they strongly believed that "People living near the temple had committed some crime. This enraged Bhagavathi! She threw a handful of smallpox seeds around that too the very virulent variety called Karinjapatta" (Narayan 47). The boils swelled up and burst open the flesh split and pus oozed. People just fell down and died in hordes, it was terrible. Ittyadi stood meditating for a while, invoking the blessing of the clan deities. The Arayan stopped going to the village market, and several villagers abandoned their belongings and left the plan. There were many stories about evil spirits. The Namboothiri and his mother are dead; they set fire to the illam the day before yesterday. People say that there was a lot of gold but someone said, "That once it's dark Chudala Pishachukkal, the evil spirit that haunts cremation grounds, roams about freely. One hears a lot of such stories these days" (Narayan 48). Kochuraman and Kunjan Pilla were talked about the murder of Neelananda Pilla he knows about him, he was an evil man.

The Arayan Woman depicts the tradition of worshiping the god and the belief of a bird's cry as a bad omen. Kochuraman brought rooster Kakappi, he asks his wife to offer Puliambulli a roost. Kunjupennu heard but she was not happy about this trip. They started the journey, the sky was still light when they reached the banks of the Perumthoda, bordered the eastern side of Ittyadi's house. The tribes strongly believed in shrill cry, which is a symbol of a bad omen. She reached the place; whenever she came to that spot Kunjipennu felt a trill of excitement. It was here that she had first met Kochuraman, she was about to remind himself of it. Suddenly, she heard, "The shrill thirdi....thirdi..... ree reeree.. cry of the teenandari bird. It flows above her head in circles, then landed on one of the branches of the thanni tree beside the stream and let out another shrill cry" (Narayan 56). Kunjipennu was unhappy and disappointed after this incident. She was not willing to go to the temple; she went to Kochittappan's place. Kochuram get bath and reached Puliambulli. They performed some rituals; Puliambulli Thampuran required just the blood of the rooster that was offered to him but not its meat. The Karmi bathed, he had performed some rituals for the nobler deities. Mundan and Gopalan made a stove with the stones that lay around and put rice in a pot to cook, the chicken too would be cooked. There was a tragedy in Kochuramn's life. Kochuraman's hut catches the fire and his son meets with a tragic death. The Arayan tribes are very poor, and they are economically weaker. The Muslim and Christian traders

exploited the tribes; they take a loan from Muslim traders. They charged more interest, Kunjadichan asked for some goods to Kunja Motalalli, and he gave, "Five Idangazhi, rice, tobacco, and other essentials, he tides them all up in a towel. He asked, "Just tell me your name and family name" (Narayan 64). The tribes are so kind hearted and helpful.

The traders always cheat Arayans because they are illiterate and innocents. Kunjadichan had brought one load of pepper. It was weighted a stone was placed in one pan of the balance; a sack full of peper in the other. Hassan jotted down some numbers and he said, "Part of the debt still remains, Kunjadicha. You owned me three hundred and seventy-five. The pepper comes to around three hundred and fourteen. Now you have to pay me sixty-one rupee. When can you repay?" (Narayan 65). He was silent, he left the shop. He beats himself; Kunja Motali cheated him. Kunjadicha was economically weak; he took a loan but did not repay it. One day, Kunja Muthbali asked Kunjadichan, he asked about his family member's health. He is the owner of only two acres. Kunja asked him, "Give it to me. I want to grow some tapioca there. I'll settle your loan in Hassan's shop. Here, I'm giving you one hundred rupees as well. Buy ten Idangazhi of rice, some tobacco and dried fish now itself. Just put your thumb mark on this paper" (Narayan 69). Kunjudichan did not think that making a thumb imprint was the serious thing; Kochuraman and Kunjipennu were hard workers. Kochuraman wokeup early every morning, he would have a mug of black tea, immediately chew betel then set out to work with a spade or chopper. At noon he stopped and examined the work.

The Arayan Woman depicts the death rituals of the tribe. Ittyadi received the death message of Pulomakkale, Ittyadi shivered and recalled Kadutha. He was a brave man on the hill, Ittyadi was weeping and he reached the place, relatives and friends kept arriving. They did not cook anything; neighbor took the children to their house. Kadutha's eldest daughter Kochutti swept out of the house in a northern direction. The dead man's relatives and children together bathed the corpse and placed it on a plantain leaf in the front yard near the door with the head facing the east. A wick was lit and placed near the head. According to the customs, the eldest son should perform the funeral rites. Kochu performed all the rites. His relatives and children do some rituals. A trench of six feet long and six feet deep had been dug in a south-north direction; the corpse was placed in spit, the head pointing in a southern direction. Son had to perform the rites, chanted the mantras, put three fistfuls of mud, and said, "You who were born of the soil, dissolve into the soil and be one with the god of all things. Let your good and evil deeds aid you always" (Narayan 80-81). On the fifteenth day, they would have the ritual bath and on the sixteenth day, a festival meal would be served to relatives and friends.

The Arayan tribes were close to nature and the forest; they get their family names from nature like trees and rocks. Government officers like Forest Officer and DFO were in great troublemaker and the British Government had more impact on tribes. Kochuramanachan, Narayani and Kunjipennu have discussed life and society. Narayani asked, "What is Kochuramanchettan's family name? 'You fool, Aryan get their family names from some tree or rock Koombangalil, Varikamakal, Murikkashani then are the family names. Isn't it a Maruthu that stands near, Kunjipenu's that's why their name is Maruthunkal, "Who decides their names? When they arrive, the forest officers call each Arayan and ask details like isn't the house next to the thanni tree yours? That becomes Thanimoodal" (Narayan 84 85). Kaanikkaran brings the message that the Forest Officers will come to fix the boundary. He warned not to cut down many trees and not to kill animals. The guards came to the forest and investigate the things; the Range Officer gave semi-instructions to tribes. The DFO, Range Officer visited to the forest, they sat in the chairs. The Ranger announced, "The gracious Maharaja has decreed that prizes may be granted to

overseers who have made sincere efforts to protect the forest and collect the produce” (Narayan 90). The DFO made a fair long speech that somehow seemed like a threat. The Arayan and Urali felt that their lives were to his generosity. Thevarupara Kanikkaran, Aadichan Kunjumundan, Adoor Mala Kaanikkaran, Kochukochu Echharan, Puliammala Kaanikkaran Ittyadi Kunjadichen are rewarded and they accept respectfully. There was a colonial rule on tribes’ colonial (British) rupees has more value. Kunjipennu gave a detail about coin, “The copper coin had the conch symbol on one side and the king’s head on the other. Half rupee, one rupee, she had only seen those. The British rupee was paper. The Maharaja’s was copper and silver. Yet the paper had more value” (Narayan 91). Christian and Muslim traders exploit the innocent tribes, when the tribes have pepper and cashew nuts, their traders hunt the homes, and otherwise, no dog will go that way. Narayanankutty came to meet Kochuraman; Kochuraman spread the palm mat on the veranda and asked the strangers to sit. Kunjammal introduced himself and said, “Friend, we want to start a small business. Can you sell us this year’s pepper? We’ll fix a deal for the whole crop and give a token amount now” (Narayan 101). Kochuraman’s wife Kunujipennu said, “This is the first time that we’ve had a full crop. We’ll collect and dry and pepper, then sell” (Narayan 101). Kunjammal took out a crisp new ten rupee note from his belt pouch flicked it with a finger and held it out to Kochuraman, he said, “Accept this. Its ten rupees; British money, ‘Why’? ‘Ha, we have agreed on a deal, have not we? And we said we would give a token amount. In the name of God, please take it!’” (Narayan 102). Kochuraman accepted the money, but he was feeling uneasy. He felt that he was doing something wrong and a strange excitement filled him. Kochuraman overheard the conversation in the toddy shop, “The merchants of Kanjaar. The poor Arayar! They toil hard on the land, but they don’t know anything about weights; they can’t count or calculate. The merchants cheat them with their crooked weighing balance and weighing balance and weighing strict” (Narayan102). He began to tremble; he wiped the sweat on his neck and lifted his mug.

The Arayan Woman depicts the braveness, boldness and strangeness of the Arayan tribes. Christian and Muslim traders cheat innocent tribes and the police were cruel to tribes. Kunjumundan sold his pepper outrightly. Pareethu led Kunjumundan and his son to a scheduled room. Mothalali gave the amount but the innocent tribes could not count properly. Mothalali had not mentioned the amount, and the father and son argued with him. He put the coins back into the bag and secured them with a knot. The group of strangers attacked them and stole the amount. They put a heavy blow on his son but they were rescued from the blow. He got out with his son, he told Pareethu that he had robbed, Pareethu said, “My dear friend, Allah is my witness, I know nothing about this. I didn’t want anyone to see you counting all that money, which was why I took you to that room. What treachery, Oh God! What do we do now? Eleppa, we’ll take them to the police station’ ‘Mothahali, I lost my pepper and my money and got beaten up as well. I don’t want any more blows from these policemen” (Narayan 105). They went to the police station, Kunjumundan narrates his story with a bow and respectfully. But the police replied, “No, we’ll kick him till his bones crack. How did you, who live in the hills, get a waist pouch full of money? You stole it didn’t you, you lying dogs? The police chief will arrive soon. When his booted leg lands on your chest a few times you’ll tell the truth. Sit there” (Narayan 108). Police went inside, Kunjumundan and his son escaped from the police station. The novel depicts the activities of notorious people; they assault innocent tribes and collect money from them. The Muslim traders cheat the tribes, and the tribes have decided that they have no trade with Muslims. Kochuraman came to know that Ottathengan’s crony Chetty had been released from the jail. Ottathengas alias Devassy Chetty alias Pappan Pilla, they are notorious for assaulting people. They came to the hills; they went to a few houses and extorted money.



If Arayan dared to refuse, the men would twist their mustaches threateningly. The Arayan came along the forest path with him bundle. They would block their way; they would even rob him of the provisions he had bought. Everyone was afraid of notorious people, some people suggest Kochuraman ask help from Kunjerukkan. Kunjerukkan had trained under a tribal who had mastered several fighting techniques; he has learnt many tactics of self-defiance. He never did any work; he was willing to go along with anyone who offered him food and drink. Kunuerukkan said, "Why should we fear anyone chetta? One day we born we'll die. I'm willing to accompany you whenever you want to go" (Narayan 107). They made several trips, nothing happened. Kochuraman purchased blouse and bodice to his wife and they went to toddy shop. The old man and boy were sitting, they were eating cooked topicca but their toddy was untouched. Suddenly, Chetty entered the shop, there was silence. Chetty caught hold of the mug placed by the old man; the old man gripped his hand. Chetty said, "No one has dared to snatch my mug till now. If you want a drink, ask for it. Shut up, old man, yes young man, I am old enough to be your father" (Narayan 108-109). The old man challenged in the public, the old man took a long stick and blows him, and he hammered Pappan Pilla with both ends of the stick. There was no alternative, he turned and ran. The crowd clapped with joy, Kochuraman and Kunjerukkan joned them. Kochuraman tied everything remaining money in a piece of cloth folded and tied it around his waist. They began to walk up the hill and discuss various things. Devasia stood stripping off the bark of a stick with his knife. He went near and asked for ten rupees. Chetty slapped Kunjerukkan on his face, he turned around and faced Chetty, he said, "I will tell you something. An Arayan boy's palms are rough and hard. If, it falls on your face, great Lord, it'll hurt a lot; and also shame me" (Narayan 110). Ottathengan kicked him, Chetty and Kunjerukkan began to wrestle. Kunjerukkan hit him hard on the spine and he took hold of Chetty's right arm twisted it sharply, and shaped it back. At the same time, the edge of his palm fell like a sword on Chetty's arm. Chetty screamed with pain and ran. Kochuraman asked Kunjerukkan, "What did you do to his arm?" "Twisted a ligament that was why he howled. As for his arm, he won't be able to use it again" (Narayan 111). Chetty's right arm was paralyzed. The Vaidyan who examined it said, "It would not be healed" (Narayan 111). When they heard the news, many were relieved, they were free from fear. In the tragic end of Pappan Pilla, his right arm was paralyzed and his whole body becomes frail and bony. He had robbed so many people, beaten up so many people, and molested many young tribe girls. Finally, God settled accounts, he could not move on his own. People turned away in disgust when they saw him. Pappan Pilla wandered about hunger, growing at his inside. He said, "Munda, I have robbed many of you, Arayan. Finally, one of your Arayan lords avenges you by doing this to me. I will die of hunger. Give me something" (Narayan 112). Arayan tribes so kind-hearted, they cannot bear the cry of hunger. Their heart melts and gave food and pepper. Ottathengan was worst fellow and he molests young girls. He would threaten them.

The upper caste person exploits the Arayan community. They falsely collect taxes from Arayan by lying that the land they lived in belongs to the king. They collected one third of their yield of crops in every season. Pattathil Kunjunni Pilla was a big man in the area, he was also in charge of the Sastha Temple and the Devaswamy activities and he engaged rights conferred upon him by some Maharaja. He represents the upper caste Hindu; he exploited innocent Aryan tribes. He defended that, "The hills and forests were Lord Ayyappan's Garden. The Arayan and Uralies were destroying the forests so they must pay compensation for it one third of the cash crops was to be given to Kunjunni Pilla" (Narayan 115). They contributed during the temple festival, if they did not pay anything both God and King would be displaced. Some time he hired rowdies to collect from the tribes. The Arayan tribes believed in and

feared of God, and they were willing to do any work for the temple without demanding any payment, it is the reason Kunjunni's vast coconut grove and arcca nut plantation come into being. Kunjunni is cruel and unkind; he never came up to the hills. His steward came to collect the share of the tax. When the old steward Velu Pilla died his son Kochayyappan Pill collect the tax. The Arayan called him as Kocheepan, he was ruthless, "The kind of man who if ordered to seize someone, he wants to go one step and kill and bring the corpse" (Narayan 116). Kocheepan came to hill with his gang, they create fearful atmosphere. The Araya were panic, women and children hurried through the yards with baskets. They collected as much pepper as they could. Kocheepan and his gang halted in Kochuraman's yard, Narayana Kutty plucked tender coconuts from the young palms and served them. He put fear to Arayan, he said, "If the Arayan refuse to oblige, he will register the entire hillside east of Kokkambu and the forests this side Puliammala in your names. You will destroy yourselves paying tax" (Naryan 117). Arayans are not cheaters, they are hard workers but they lack knowledge and experience. They have their own history, "The king and the Arayar were on cordial terms. The Aryar had titles like "Koramba" and Kaanikkam". There were many Aaryar in the king's army. They are strong and study people by birth. The chief of the group was called by the name Thala Arayan. Then, during the reign of a weak king, they quarreled. To safeguard his kingdom and throne, the king brought Pillan from Nanjunadu in Venad. Pillan had cunning strategies. The Arayan lost the battle. In these days it was common practice to kill the enemies" (Naryan 118). Some Arayar survived and fled to the hills and forests, after a while they came to be called Mala Arayan. The Arayar are nature's children, they are strong and healthy. The Arayan Women depicts the cruelty of the police, government, and rich people. Police rudely behave with the tribe, because they are slaves of a rich person and tribes get a feeling of insecurity. The Forest Officer came and numbered all the hardwood trees like rosewood, and teak that belongs to the King. The government was widening the road; tribes protest the cutting of the trees, Kocheepan scolded, "Aren't you the one who rolled down the stone to kill the contractor? Should we seek your permission before cutting down government-owned trees? I will kick you till I break your bones? Dogs? (Narayan124). Policemen harassed tribes; they roared when the boundary had been marked. The Arayar of the roared, "They won't allow any of us to live in these hills. They think we are some cursed tribes that came from God know where and settled down in their forests and hills. We won't perish either. It would be nice of smallpox wiped us out!" (Narayan 126). They climbed the hills, their heart heavy with the awareness that the land they stood on was not theirs. There was a big corruption and bribe in the government, Kunjunni arranged various services for the police officers including the toddy and women. He was a big man in that land, the police could not refuse. The tribes heard that police were coming with a group of rowdies. The men and women hide in the forest, except children and the old men, the police and things bashed up everyone, they saw and robbed the dwellings. They destroyed coconut trees and other valuable trees Kochuraman unable to watch it. During the whole reign of terror by the police and the rowdies, many tribes were in presets, some persons were dead and women did not dare to weep aloud. The Arayan Woman depicts that the importance of education. Education is important for the tribe; they learned the importance of education. Kandthil Krishna Pillai is a noble and kind-hearted upper caste, who helps Araya to escape from the extortion of Muslim, Christian, and Hindu upper-caste men. Kochuraman met him and narrates everything detailed. He met superintendent and gave the detail; he orders the release of all Arayan, who had been unjustly into custody. He ordered the inspector to report, "How Pattathil Kanjunni Pilla had acquired the authority destroy and take away the Arayar's crops goods" (Narayan 135). Mr. Pill went and met the tahsildar, he said, "The hills and the forests do not

belong to any Devaswam. Arayan and Urali do not own the land they live on. But the royal decree permits them to live there and cultivate the land. And no one has been authorized to collect taxes from them” (Narayan 135). He gave a letter to Mr. Pilla to lodge the criminal case against Kunjanni. The police cruelly treated the tribe, some were half-dead, and one of them could stand up straight. There is a fate of the Araya tribe that somehow, they manage to survive, sometimes nature is destroyed, and they were confronted by the treachery of the so-called cultured and civilized upper classes. The Police received the complaint, that Krishna Pilla was protecting the wrongdoers. One day, Police Inspector met Pilla and said, “There are some local big wings here. They think the whole land is theirs’ ‘If six- or seven-men gang up to kill two what can they do? They wouldn’t escape even if they were to run away. They fought to survive; what’s wrong with that? Inspector, there is something you must do. Leave those poor men alone. File a case against Kunjunni and Kocheepan” (Naryan 137-138). Krishna Pilla said, “God won’t forgive you if you cheat an ignorant man” (Narayan 139). Kochuraman often went to see Krishna Pilla. The Tribes learned that oral learning was not enough but they know to read and write. Aashan came to the tribe’s settlement as a teacher, he enlightens the tribes, and many tribes were admitted to the village school. Aasham said to tribes, “It was important that they learned to read and write. Knowledge was the greatest wealth. Thieves could not take it away” (Narayan 147). The conversation is another threat to the tribes; some tribes have been baptized and become Christians. They washed the brains of the tribe, they said, “It was wrong to worship trees and stones” (Narayan 147). After the conversation, they changed names also when Kochuraman met Kunjaapa, he asked him, Umma... What’s the news, Kunjaapa?” “Didn’t you know? My name has been changed. We got baptized now my name is Daniel; the wife’s name is Chinna, the daughter Isacaac and Anna” (Narayan 154).

Education has changed a lot in Araya’s life, young boys and girls had joined the school, Madhavan, Kaljam, Raghavan, Parvati, Kunjikuttan Lakshmi had joined the school. Parvati studied English, teacher took care of them. Parvathi has menstruated, Kunjipeeni did some rituals. After the rituals, her mother would not permit her to get to school but she removed the black thread around her throat and bathed, and stood ready to go to school but her mother would not permit, she has attended school. The number of students joined the congress; the government treats them as traitors.

Narayan’s *The Araya Woman* depicts the post-Independence of India. Ashana speaks about the Independence of India; Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister. During the partition there was violence; Pakistan was declared an Islam nation. During the partition, women’s children died. Tribes generally knew their death invitation, Aashan becomes ill, he called Kochuraman and said, “There is no need for it. I don’t want any medicine. My time has come. I hoped I would not be a burden on you, I think God heard my prayer. I have one wish. You must bury me near our Kalari. We placed our feet on the ground together, didn’t we? The place has not been without children since then” (Narayan 169). He requests, everyone, don’t cry. Aashan died, and the tribes performed all the rites. Parvati was studying very well; she falls in love with Padmanabhan. He wrote a love letter to her; he expresses his feeling that he wanted to marry her. Padmanabhan got a job in Kochi; Parvathi got a job in Erankulam. Parvathi stayed in Erankulam, she sends postal orders to Kochuraman. Kochuraman went several times to enquire about the money order but there was no positive reply from them. There was a marriage proposal to Parvathi but Padmanabhan’s parent’s demanded dowry, Kochuram regret the marriage proposal. Parvathi went to Ernakulam. Kochuraman was suffering from stomach pain, he was suffering greatly. His daughter was born at a time, when he was prosperous. She grows up knowing nothing about what

her parents had been through. Now she had a good job, a good-looking man was in love with her. There was no rice at her home. Kanjipennur remind him several times. The coconuts were not ready for plucking he walked along the road without any ideas in his mind.

The Araya Woman depicts the tragic end of tribes. The tribes cannot adjust to modern life and cannot continue their value of life, tradition, and rituals. Kochuraman got terrible stabbing pain, but when he drank arrack, it subsided. He sat down he was completely drained he began to vomit blood. He was admitted to the hospital, the message reach Kunjipennu and she went to the hospital. Kunjipennu honoured money from Pathrosh Nanaaru twice, each time she put a thumb imprint on a piece of paper. The message reaches Parvathi; she gets married to Padmanabhan and gave a male child. Kochuraman was admitted in the Medical College Hospital, Tiruvananthapuram. The doctors suggest going for an operation on Wednesday morning his arms and legs were tied but he broke them and get free. Kochuraman clutched his wife trying to move as quickly as he could. They climbed down the stairs and watched the dozing watchman warily and they had escaped. Kochuraman so tired he was conscious of each one of the irregular heartbeats. Kunjipennu draws him closer they wonder where to go and what to do.

### **Works Cited**

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