

Traditional Practices (healer, conservator and activist)



Name :

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Innovation Brief : Mr. Vellan (66) belongs to a tribal community of Wayanad district in Kerala. His contribution in keeping the lifestyle, food habits, herbal medicine, bio-diversity conservation, traditional art, dance, archery of the tribal communities is commendable. He has worked for conservation of common land in Karapula dam site. He has also worked for conserving animal species of Wayanad chicken and dwarf cattle. He has also revived traditional tribal dance form. He has revived many traditional recipes such as Kalluputtu, Karakundappam, Mulaiyeri Payasam, Thenkai Soru (coconut rice), Irulaila, Ilaiyotti, Pottala, Kaiyotti, Mansatti kuthan etc.

Detail : Being one of the chieftains of the Mulla Kuruma tribal community of Wayanad district, Mr Vellan is working towards conserving the traditions of his community so it is available for future generations to understand their roots. The total population of this community is around 40,000. His contribution in keeping the lifestyle, food habits, herbal medicine, bio-diversity conservation, traditional art, dance, archery of the tribal communities are well known. He has also contributed towards conserving dwarf cattle and Wayanad chicken and uses traditional paddy varieties such as Kandhagasalai, Seeraga sala.

For the benefit of the tribal community, after several efforts made by Mr Vellan and his community members, the government has built around 63 houses for communities like Paniyan, Kuruma, Ooral, Kattunaicken.

Mr Vellan maintains a herd of 60 cattle (30 cows, 16 heifers, 6 bulls, 8 calves) of Wayanad dwarf variety. Mr Vellan's son Gomaladoss helps him in taking care of this herd. As the name suggests, this cattle is short and survives through extensive grazing in common lands. They are brown and dark black in colour and produce 3 litres of milk with no concentrate feed. This is non descriptive local type and survive well in the hilly terrain at 2000 feet MSL. There are only about 10 herds of this variety of cattle left in Wayanad district and the population is about only 500.

Wayanad chicken is a medium sized poultry bird with attractive colours suitable for backyard poultry. It does not require any special feed. This variety lays 12 eggs at a time once in 3 months or 50 eggs in a year. Gowri uses herbal medication for these the



Kalluputtu



Karakundappam

birds for Raniket disease (diarrhoea). She obtains extract of Kurinja plant leaves and mixes it with turmeric powder. This is then added to rice that is fed to birds to treat Raniket disease.

Apart from farming, Mr Vellan is also working to conserve and revive the traditional dance forms of his community. He is a keen and enthusiastic participant of tribal dances like *Vattakkali* and *Kolkali* where the tribal members assemble in a circle and tap sticks to produce rhythmic sounds. At every chance, he participates in the dance at various functions so as to motivate the younger generation to conserve the traditional dance forms. He is also providing skill training in traditional archery to the tribal youth especially to train them so that they can participate in sporting events. This is a continuous training program organised by him during month of Thulam (October). They have trained 60 youths in archery.

Mr Vellan's involvement and dedication in conservation of lifestyle and livelihood securities of tribal communities of Wayanad (Kuruma, Paniya, Nayaka, Oorali, Mooppan) have been recognised by different organizations in Kerala. He has been honoured by Kerala Institute of Training and Development studies of SC, ST, Kozhikode for his contribution.

Mr Vellan also shares herbal practices and recipes that are specific to his community such as:

1. For headache due to migraine:

Leaves of Vadhavalli (as shown in the picture above), Kattumalli, Nilanaringa are to be added in coconut oil and boiled to make a special thailam (oil). This has to be applied over the head. While using the medicine one has to strictly avoid intake of salt, pungent foods, curd, acidic food and non-vegetarian food.

2. Traditional herbal tea recipe :

Mr Vellan makes special tea that provides relief from digestive problems, body pain and sleeplessness. For the tea, he mixes thippili, pepper, dried ginger, eretti madhuram, kattu jeeragam (cumin), roots of nannari, nilapana, nila thengai, karuvapattai, cardamom, imoolaver, karungalipattai, fenugreek, coriander seeds and palm jaggery. Sufficient quantity of this mixture should be mixed in water, boiled and filtered. This is served as tea. He has prepared this tea at several exhibitions organized throughout Kerala.

3. Preparing traditional food items :

Mr Vellan is making sincere efforts to sustain the traditional food preparation specific to the tribals of Wayanad area. These include traditional delicacies such as Kalluputtu, Karakundappam, Mulaiyeri Payasam, Thenkai Soru (coconut rice), Irulaila, Ilaiyotti, Pottala, Kaiyotti, Mansatti kuthan etc., He uses traditional paddy varieties such as Kandhagasalai, Seeraga sala to prepare some of these delicacies.

a) Kalluputtu : Traditional rice variety kandhagasala and fenugreek are soaked in water over

night. They are ground together in the morning to prepare a batter. This batter is used for preparing dish that is similar to dosa.

a) Karakundappam :

For this recipe Mr Vellan uses a specific traditional stone utensil called Vennakkal. Traditional rice variety is powdered. To this powder, banana (Nalipoovan variety), jaggery and hot water are added to prepare a batter. This batter is used for making Appam (Paniyaram) by using Vennakkal. The Vennakkal is heated using wood as fuel.

a) Thenkai soru (coconut rice) :

Traditional rice variety of Kandhagasala or Seeraga sala or Mullanchanna or Kayama are used for this recipe. The rice is added to coconut milk and heated together. The process is similar to making vegetable biriyani.

b) Niral Ila adai : Rice flour and jaggery are mixed together to prepare small roundels (laddus). These are placed in the leaves of leaves *niral* tree (shown in the picture) and steamed.

Awardee's background : Mr Vellan owns 1.5 acre of land where he grows paddy and vegetables. Apart from this he maintains cattle and poultry.

Name / Intuition: P.Vivekanandan, SEVA



Mr Vellan's wife Gowri working