

A Sociological Investigation of 'Kovalankooththu', Tamil Folk Drama in Contemporary Tamil society

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Folk performances are the most valuable and specific property for every culture. They give a special and unique identity to all. It reflects food culture, dress code, rituals, behaviors, cultural values, morals and tradition. Further, it expresses cultural identity by conveying shared community values and aesthetics. The Naaddukooththu of the Tamils of Sri Lanka has preserved the fundamental conception of drama as a dance, namely the representation a series of actions "through rhythmic motion". Kovalankooththu is a type of kooththu it is kind of folk drama. This study is based on Mullaitivu district's Kovalankooththu. The main objective of this study was to find out the problems faced by the kovalankooththu group and sub objective is to examine the socio-economic background of these artists. 10 case studies were conducted for this research. With the individuals who are practicing Kovalankooththu face social, economic, psychological and cultural problems. It has less important in the contemporary society now. People have moved from folk drama to electronic media. Kovalankooththu acts only in Vattappalai kannanki amman temple in its annual festival. Folk drama viewers suddenly decreased because of social media. Folk drama artist lost their opportunities. Most of them are elders that follow their folk drama tradition. Their younger generation doesn't like to involve the Kovalankooththu. They have individually, separate future plan for their occupation. They maintain kovalankooththu scripts and ready to teach the young generation but young are not interested. Kovalankooththu artists feel sad to see their identity slowly fading from the society. They earn money twice a year not every day. They spend more money for their costumes, makeup and instruments but earn less amount. It is not enough for their everyday life. They face migration, poverty, war conflict, stigmatization, discrimination, lack of human resources problems. It can be concluded that the Kovalankooththu is the traditional identity of the Tamil society. Senior citizens play the key role to practice this folk drama and try to transmit the tradition to next generation. Artists face many problems to act this kooththu. Society should give respect and socio-economic and cultural security to the Kovalankooththu artists. Organizing awareness programme in street, school and national level can be done for the protection of this folk drama for the future can be combined kooththu with media to give the priority to naaddukooththu to reintroduce to the society will strongly support their existence.

Key words: *Kovalankooththu, folk drama, Tamil society, problems, awareness*