List of Documentaries

Since initiating our collaboration with the Paliyar tribal community of Idukki, we have produced a compelling series of documentaries on the cultural heritage of these two communities. These films are a key component of our ongoing Earthlore Documentation Project, supported by the Samāgata Foundation.

Here are the documentaries we have published to date:

1. Among Kerala's Few : The Paliyar Tribe

Discover the story of the Paliyar community, an indigenous tribe with deep forest roots living in the Western Ghats. Once leading a nomadic life within the forest, practising shifting agriculture, the Paliyar community in Kerala has now adapted to the changing times and settled in various villages in and around Kumali. In the upcoming series of episodes, hear firsthand stories from community members about their history and culture, offering a rare glimpse into the journey of resilience, unity and cultural identity of Paliyars in Kerala.

2. Paliya Ulsavam at Chakkupallam

The Annual Paliyaulsavam at Sree Badrakaliyamman Devi Temple in Chakupallam is an expression of the Paliya community's resilience and devotion. Thirteen years ago, the Paliya community came together to build a temple for themselves, as they faced discrimination from the public while visiting nearby temples. From a simple trident and anthill as a place of worship, now the temple stands as a symbol of pride and togetherness, drawing not only the Paliyars but also devotees from far and wide. The festival brings alive rituals such as Theechatti, Maavilakku, Amman Vilakku, and Mulapayaru. Many customs reflect the community's strong ties to Tamil culture, with rituals inspired by temples in Tamil Nadu. All prayers and offerings made by devotees throughout the year are brought together in this grand annual celebration. Join us as we capture the colours, sounds, and spirit of Paliyaulsavam – a festival where faith meets tradition, and where the story of a community is told through devotion.

3. Paliya Ulsavam at Kumali

Step into the world of the Paliyar tribe and witness their annual celebration – Paliya Ulsavam! Every April, the Paliyar community from Kumaly sets out on a sacred journey to their ancestral forest, carrying back divine water, performing trance rituals, sprouting seeds, dancing in devotion, and offering fiery votive prayers. From the forest pilgrimage to the vibrant temple festival, discover how the Paliyars keep their heritage alive.

Paliya Nritham : Episodes

Paliya Nritham, a dance form practised by the Paliya community in Kerala, particularly in their settlement at Kumily, is an example of how the community builds its livelihood by upholding its cultural practices and identity. It was documented under **ARPO Earthlore**.

Tucked away from the hectic tourist spots of Thekkady, *Vellayankaani Paliya Parambaragatha Nritham,* a team of 20+ artists from Paliyakudi, Kumily performs their dance form of Paliya Nritham to their set of songs with traditional instruments.

Here are the episodes we have published to date:

1. **Nellukuthu Nritham | Paliya Nritham**

The Nellukuthu Nritham is rooted in the traditional agrarian practices of Paliyar. This song and dance sequence visually and audibly narrates the entire cycle of paddy cultivation, from the crucial phase of seed sowing to the culminating period of harvesting. As an ethnographic record, it provides invaluable insights into traditional agricultural methods, the communal labor involved, and the inherent gratitude towards the land's bounty. The rhythmic movements and lyrical narratives are not merely entertainment but serve as a living archive of their sustenance strategies and their profound connection to the natural environment. This performance exemplifies the intersection of cultural expression and daily subsistence within the community.

2. **Kalyana Paattu | Paliya Nritham**

The Kalyana Paattu in Paliyar tradition represents a distinct genre of ceremonial music and performance integral to their marriage rituals. This song and dance form is characterized by reciprocal, playful banter between the families of the bride and groom. Structurally, it involves the groom's kin engaging in lighthearted teasing of the bride's family, and vice versa.

Ethnomusicologically, it highlights the social dynamics, kinship structures, and the culturally sanctioned mechanisms for communal interaction and humor within Paliyar matrimonial ceremonies. It serves as a significant record of their social customs, demonstrating the community's approach to celebration, inter-familial relations, and the use of performance as a medium for social commentary and cohesion.

3. **Aaradhana Nritham | Paliya Nritham**

The Aradhana Nritham is the foremost ritualistic dance of the Paliyar community, embodying profound spiritual and cultural significance. This performance is a direct act of veneration dedicated to their clan deity, Elaath Pallichiyamma. Ethnographically, it is presented following the annual harvest, serving as a formal offering of the year's agricultural yield, often accompanied by the preparation and presentation of Pongala. This dance is a powerful expression of their animistic beliefs, their deep reverence for their ancestral deity, and their spiritual connection to the land and its productivity. It provides crucial insights into their religious practices, ceremonial cycles, and the role of collective worship in reinforcing community identity and seeking divine blessings for prosperity.

4. **Mullaperiyar Song | Songs of Paliyar**

This specific song from the Paliyar community stands as a critical piece of oral history, offering a unique indigenous perspective on the construction of the Mullaperiyar Dam. It serves as an archival record, articulating the experiences of Paliyar ancestors who participated in, or were impacted by, this monumental engineering project. The narrative, meticulously passed down through generations, often details the challenges faced, the labor contributed, and the socio-economic transformations witnessed by the community during the dam's construction. This song is a vital resource for understanding the human dimension of large-scale infrastructure development from the viewpoint of local communities, preserving narratives that may not be present in official historical documents.

5. **Nellukuthu Song | Songs of Paliyar**

The Nellukuthu Nritham is a performative art form of the Paliyar community, meticulously documenting their deep-rooted agrarian practices. This song and dance sequence visually and audibly narrates the entire cycle of paddy cultivation, from the crucial phase of seed sowing to the

culminating period of harvesting. As an ethnographic record, it provides invaluable insights into traditional agricultural methods, the communal labor involved, and the inherent gratitude towards the land's bounty. The rhythmic movements and lyrical narratives are not merely entertainment but serve as a living archive of their sustenance strategies and their profound connection to the natural environment. This performance exemplifies the intersection of cultural expression and daily subsistence within the community.

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