CHAPTER - 3
THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MOY - VIRUNDHU

It is customary with the Tamil People to present something either in cash or in kind during festive occasions. This is called as Moy (Mozhi). Moy has in course of time, become one of the inevitable cultural ingredients in the state of Tamil Nadu. The origin of this custom may be traced back a certain exigency in which an individual or a family was pitted against economic crisis and, as a means of rescuing them from the above predicament people who were near and dear would have resorted to this practice. The diction ‘Moy’ is associated with varied connotations. Some of them are: Pain, intimacy, enmity, glory, beauty, strength, war, entanglement, mass, reinforcement etc., Instances regarding the usage of this word in Tamil Literature are numerous.

Urupakai Tharu, um
Moy Moosu Pandam (Ahanaanu : ru 152:9)\(^1\)

Aippa:tthiram onru kondan:gu
Mosikka U:n suranthanal. (Mani, 19:136)²

Moy Sithaikkum
Orrumai yinmai (Nanm : 21)³

Moykondu Ezhuntha
Amarakatthu Maarra:r Vaiyp
Poykon.du (Pazhamozhi Naanru)

Muthudai Ven.maruppu i : rndhu
Moykolap pathiyin Kuyirriya (Sivaka cint 1:54)⁴
Moy tha:ngi mazhu valitthor (Madurai Ka:nchi : 417)
Mai Ukkanna moy irunku:ntal⁵

Moy va.lam pootha muyakkam
ya:m kayakap padutthom(Pari; 13:18)⁶

Moy cerukkalam poyaanai
moosal vandotu thiral.pe:r (Cu:da:mani, 11:15)⁷

Moykanai kodi kodi
Moykkavam Nanru illa:n (Kamba, Yuthaka:ndam 28:31)⁸

Karkiyum vandinam moykka
Matham pozhi kariyum
Therum Ka:l:lum. (villi 44:4)

Cura inatthu Anna
Va:lor moyppa (ibid 13:T)

As bees swarm flowers for the collection of honey, so people swarm at a particular place during an occasion meant for
monetary affairs after the finishing of dinner therein. Resultantly we come to have the nomenclature Moy-Virundhu.

**Moy Vizha**

It was the Peravourani Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyars who were found with their exclusive custom of Moy Virundhu. With the passage of time other community people also started following this custom for the reasons best known to them.

The custom of Moy Virundhu has almost become an identifying factor of Pathinonru Nattu Ahamudaiyar. A socio-cultural symbol as it is for the above community people, it has incorporated into its fabric diverse elements and etiquette as to the methods and manners and objectives of conducting the same.

It is said that the Emperor Raja Raja Chola during the consecration of the Big Temple, performed a Thiruk Kalyanam between the Lord and Ambal and during which collection of Moy was made. This practice is still in vogue in the Temples of Tamil Nadu. The Moy so collected belongs to the Archagar or Gurukkal (godman) of the Temple. This Moy is not returnable to
the incumbent at any time. But the Moy collected at the festive occasion of the Pathinonru Naattu Agamudaiyar is compulsorily returnable with added sum.⁹

The procedures involved in the Moy Virundhu occasion are somewhat rigorous and which are handed down from generation to generation. Consequently a sangam has been established by the above community members which acts as a guiding force behind the performance of Moy Virundhu. The rules and regulations connected with this practice are followed scrupulously so as to maintain the very rigidity of the customary festival. The association so formed is called “Pathinonru Naattaarkal Uravin Murai Ahamudaiyar koottamaippu”. It was established at Peravourani with the Register No. 1/86.¹⁰

The steps involved in the constitution of the association are noted as below:

A representative out of hundred families will be nominated per each village. All the representative of the aforesaid eleven villages would jointly select the
Election Membership

The annual meeting of the Sangam will be held during the month of April possibly in the latter half of the month. All the representatives of the Pathinonru Naattu Gramams are invited. There are around five thousand families in the above localities. Each family as to pay Rs. 100/- for membership. Representatives are chosen unopposed, namely, the village President, Secretary and the Treasurer of the Ahamudaiyar Sangam. Nomination is hereditary. Only when there is dearth of suitable candidates in a particular family then, the immediately related person to that family will be selected so as to keep up the traditional norms. Women are not allowed to get access to the above posts.

Origin

It is inferred that the origin of the custom of Moy Virundhu has taken place around two hundred years ago. The Moy contribution at the inception happened to be only a sum of eight annas (half a rupee). With the passing of time the Moy
amount parted with, has bulged into thousands. There are occurrences in which lakhs of rupees have been transacted. The amount of Moy is commensurate with the affluence of the volunteer and based on the monetary exigency of the recipient. It comes to be known that a particular individual was bestowed upon around seven crores of rupees as Moy on a particular day in the study area during 2007, an unprecedented record in this regard.11

Occasions

Even the young boys and girls belonging to the Ahamudaiyar Community are well aware of the Semantics of Moy Virundhu. The amount of Moy at times has become the yard stick of staking ones social prestige. Moy is collected during festival occasions such as ear boring ceremony, marriage, puberty ritual (manjal Ne:ra:ttu viza) and house Swarming functions and so on.

Moy Vizha

It has been stated that the family bereft of off spring, used to perform Moyvizha so as to recollect the amount alread
contributed to others during Moy occasions. It is to be stressed that the very custom of Moy virundhu did originate for monetary gains as evident in the invitations themselves. The version **virunthundu moy peythu** (i.e Moy has to be generously contributed after finishing the dinner) is self explanatory at this juncture. This is to be followed by bless ion either the couple, or the children or the family members in accordance with the particular occasion for which Moy virundhu has been arranged. The diction ‘Peythu’ connotes that the moy amount should be like the copious rain.

**Invitation**

A note would generally be appended at the invitation either meant for end of marriage or for ear boring ceremonty. Something like the following details would find place therein i.e.

“My previous Moy vizha happened on 19.08.1980. From that date till now what has been contributed by myself, by my son or his brother has to be made good by” the parties concerned. This is a kind of reminder made in a polite manner to the concerned individuals regarding the number of occasions on which Moy amount has been parted with.
Generally the auspicious months for conducting of the Moy Virundhu function are vaikasi, aani, aadi and aavani (From February IIInd week upto May of every year). Persons who opt for holding the Moy Virundhu have to register well in advance the appropriate date fixed by them. The sangam considers these dates and if it finds any things preposterous, it would summon the all the applicants and settle the date samicably. The procedure involved in applying for the concurrence is as follows. The incumbent has to send the application ahead of a month through the village president, who submits the same to the sangam. The members of the sangam assemble all the applicants and fix the preferred dates according to their options. If more than an applicant opts for the same date then they would be convinced to hold all the functions at a particular place uniformly decided. This arrangement averts unnecessary bitter feelings among the Moy virundhu contenders.

The Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyar Uravu Murai Sangam was established in I January 1935. Various reasons are
attributed to the formation of the above association. Prior to this, people began to conduct the Moy virundhu function transgressing the stipulated period of five years. This resulted in untoward consequences. Therefore, the necessity of regulating the aforesaid practice resulted in the formation of Ahamudaiyar Uravin Murai Sangam though the precursors of it happened to be well off. It is customary to list out the names of the persons and dates regarding the occurrence of the Moy virundhu in the month of January during each year. The interior period between two Moy virundhus should not be less than five years. Therefore, it is a routine affair to point out the date of previous occurrence of the function in the invitation itself without fail.

**Intense intentions**

During the celebration of functions concerned with car boring, puberty, or nuptial, concentration of the celebrants would hover around the auspicious time to start the Moy collection. All of the eleven villages would have separate pages in the register meant for making entries regarding the name, native place, community, and the amount of Moy contributed by
the individual Collection will mostly start by nine ‘O clock and will go upto completion of the affair. Eleven persons would look after the job. One will dictate the dates for making entries by another person and a third one would count the cash. The Transaction would take place in the pandal itself.

Moy-by other Communities

It is note worthy to state that people belonging to communities other than Akamudaiyar do participate in the Moy virundhu and part with an amount voluntarily. For an instance, Ambalakkarars, Kallar, Muslims, and Dalits in addition to other mercenary people who have settled in the area. The Moy amount contributed by them would be recorded in the register as “Pira Manushaal Vakaiyaraa” meaning moy by people of other communities.

Presentations

Persons holding the Moy virundhu would entertain presentations only in the form of cash and not in kind. Material gifts are not accepted. Knowing this, people who are desirous of presentation would do it in cash only. The amount presented
after the ceremonial day would be accounted for as mudhal naal pinvaravu, Irantaam Naal pinvaravu, (collection according to the belated days). It has therefore been given importance to contribute Moy on the very day of function itself. If the indebted individual is not able to attend the function either due to illness or other reasons, he would make alternate arrangements to see that the amount of moy reaches the celebrant in time duly. The individuals who offered Moy are in the habit of maintaining a note book wherein to make entries of Moy provided, for future purposes.

Aal anupputhal

The seekers of Moy would sort out the persons who have not duly attended and responded, and in turn they would be called for returning the due amount. The Vettiyaan (attendant in the graveyard) would be sent for the purpose. This is an indicator of disgrace. Even after this, the defaulter would be instructed through the sangam to pay back the Moy amount. People would altogether stop Moy virundhu after having duly repaid the obliged amount in order to avert further untoward consequences.
Non Vegetarian Dish

The dish served during Moy virundhu occasion would be that of non-vegetarian. It is customary to kill at least ten he goats for mutton. Dinner would be served in the Pandal itself which is set up in a large level for the purpose. Vegetarian food is also available.

Ma:man Vakaiyaraa Moy

During earboring ceremonies the Moy collected from the paternal uncle and his kin is named as Ma:aman moy. After having closed the job of Moy collection the persons concerted would vacate the place. Sometimes it takes undue span of time for the Moy contributors to finish their work.

Methods and Manners

Certain traditional procedures are followed while accounting for the Moy. Some of them are as given below:

Na, Ka. Vairathevar Rs. 5000/-

His son, Vairavathevar Pudhu Nadai Rs.2000/-
i.e, the first entry refers to the return of the Moy already received and the second entry makes it clear that it is the Moy amount contributed afresh by the son of Vairavath thevar. This system is followed as a means of averting unnecessary confusion and confrontation.

**Kumbidu Panam**

Yet another nomenclatures for this custom is Kumbidu Panam which is accounted the under the name of the female head of the family.

**Uses and Expectations**

It is obvious that the Moy collection made by the Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyars during the life circle ceremonies serve as a concrete source of economic progress involving land purchase, commencement of business, offering dowries and other important expenditures. The underpaying expectation is that the amount of Moy already received should be paid back doubly. For an instance if a person had already contributed Rupees Fifty the returnable Moy amount should not be less than rupees hundred.
Wealth for the wealthy

If can not be denied that the persons benefited by the Moy virundhu happen to be prosperous ones. They lose smaller amount in order to reap huge sums after five years. The amount so obtained would be utilized for acquiring lands or starting business. At the same time economically weaker people resort to gifting away huge sums obtained on loan by paying exorbitant interest and they would meet with hazardous ends. Either by selling their lands or coconut groves they somehow manage the derelict pecuniary conditions. An individual who amassed three crores of rupees was driven to the extent of paying around two crores of rupees as interest. With the result he became subject to abject poverty. Learning the bitter lesson from his experiences, other people try to keep away themselves from conducting Moy collection festivals, mostly.

Moy and Poy

Inevitably the practice of Moy collection has led to some sort of commerce oriented happenings. Consequently the months of Vaikasi, Aani, Aadi and Aavani all these have taken
demoniac dimensions involving the unbearable burden of paying back the Moy amount with many times additionally. From the point of view of the informants, it can be said that, what seems to be a boon to the haves has turned out to be a threat to the have notes often times. The ledger used for accounting the Moy collection is called Peredu. No one is admitted either to refer to it or take copy, for the concealed reason that the monetary details should not be exposed to the income tax authorities.

**Efficacious time**

It has already been pointed out that the period of conducting Moy Vizhas generally falls during the months of May to August every year. The underlying factor for this deserves to be understood. It is crystal clear that all the agricultural operations are almost over during the said period and hence the folks of the region would feel rather free and attend to festive occasions. Further, averting rainy days is the other cause.
A festive nuance is that people may hold functions of any kind at any time without the motive of collection of Moy. This does not come under any regulatory rule. The question of five years gap between two Moy functions does not arise herein. An individual should not fail for any causes to repay the Moy on the particular day of the function. Otherwise it would become a question of prestige on the part of the defaulter.

**Bank Aids**

It is noteworthy that the nationalized banks extend a lifting hand to the needy during the Moy Virundhu occasions. The banks have the gain of interest thereby, and also attract huge sums of money as deposit, both fixed and other kinds. The beneficiary repays the amount of loan obtained for the celebration, with due interest, as soon as the function is over.

A nominal amount of Rs. one hundred is collected for registering in the Ahamudaiyar Sangam. Permission will be granted to persons on first come, first served basis. This naturally averts any impending of problems in the regard.
Around three hundred to five hundred to five hundred occasions take place during a year.

The following eleven villages where the Ahamudaiyar community has a strong hold are in the habit of performing Moy Virundhu.

1. Avanam
2. Neduvasal
3. Vembakkaudi
4. Kalathur
5. Thennangudi
6. Veeraiyan kottai
7. Kuruvi karambai
8. Nadiyam
9. Thuraiyur
10. Mudappulik kadu
11. Aandakkottai

The Ahamudaiyar Sangam at Peravourani acts as the pivotal force with regard to streamlining of the Moy function besides scrutinizing the whole affair. It issues guidelines to its members as and when necessary so as to set things right. The sangam is invested with the power of selecting the proper period for Moy collection. While the month of Aadi is considered to be a penurious and inauspicious time for holding religious sfunctions in other parts of Tamil Nadu, Peravourani region proves to be an exception to this belief. Here
Aadi is preferred to be beneficial for Moy collection, and therefore the occurrences of the above function invariably. Of course, here it rains in currencies during this month.

Norms

During Moy Virundhu no interviews by the outsiders are entertained. Photographing is mostly banned, particularly that of the Moy collection. It is an open secret that manipulating the occasion, so much of black money is turned white by certain business men.