Kani Tribe

Prelims – *Current events of National and International importance| Indian Society.*

Why in News?

Recently, Kuttimathan Kani, the forest elder who belongs to the Kani tribe and revealed Arogyapacha, died in poverty.

- Kanikaran or Kani are traditionally a nomadic community, now settled cultivators in small hamlets (*Kanikudiyiruppu*).
- They have several names, such as Kaniyan, Kanikkar, Kanikarans, Velanmars and Malainrasans.
- **Habitat –** Agasthyamalai hills of the Western Ghats in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts of Tamil Nadu.
- **Leaders –** The community leadership comprises the **Mootukani** (headman), the **Vilikani** (convenor), and the **Pilathi** (physician–priest), with all these positions passed down hereditarily.
- **Pilathi site** for **cultural-religious functions**, and is renowned for its **ethno-medical knowledge.**
- **Language –** The Kani tribe speaks a dialect of the Dravidian family, closely related to Malayalam.
- There is no independent script; they use Tamil & Malayalam scripts when needed.
- **Religious Belief –** They divided spirits into benevolent and malevolent categories, each with distinct characteristics and roles in the spiritual realm.
- Pilathi performs the important ritual of kanis called **Chattu.** The songs sung during Chattu are known as **Chattupattu,** accompanied by the help of an instrument called **Kokkara.**
- **Musical Instruments** - Kokkara is the only musical instrument used by them.
- **Occupation –** They traditionally engage in handicraft making, seasonal

collection of minor forest produce like honey and beeswax, and cultivation of food crops such as tapioca, banana, millets, along with various cash crops.

- **Traditional knowledge –** The ***Arogyapacha (Trichopus zeylanicus)*** plant led to the development of the herbal drug Jeevani.

References

1. Down to Earth| Remembering Kuttimathan Kani
2. Research Gate | Kani Tribe

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