

A STUDY OF THE KURAVARS IN TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

The caste system and its classifications exert a pivotal influence on the socio-cultural fabric of India. While caste identity is intrinsically given at birth, administrative classifications can be characterised as pertaining to politics, being adaptable, and being attained by effort. A caste, known by different names and existing in different regions, might be categorised into separate administrative classifications. Further, changes occur in these groupings as a result of members' religious affiliations. Thus, disagreements within the same caste can stem from concerns about social standing and individual identity. These are the questions that this research aims to answer, particularly as they pertain to the Kuravan people of Tamil Nadu. Its stated goal is to learn how Kuravans in various parts of the world are related to one another.

Introduction

The intricate social fabric of India is deeply impacted by caste, which has substantial sway over the cultural, political, and administrative domains. The many castes and sub-castes found in India are further divided into several groups according to their level of development: Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Backward, Most Backward, Nomad, De-notified, and general. The implementation of reservations in education, employment, empowerment, and other developmental measures in the Indian setting, particularly in the post-colonial century, relies heavily on these administrative categories. These administrative classifications are 'political,' 'fluid,' and 'achieved,' in contrast to the intrinsically 'ascribed' caste. Depending on the circumstances, a caste that is considered backward in one era could be classed as most backward or scheduled caste in another. Also, a caste that was de-notified or deemed the most backward at one point in time can be placed to the scheduled caste or scheduled tribe at another. As an example, the Narikuravar people of Tamil Nadu have just been upgraded from the category of Most Backward to Scheduled Tribe.

An important factor in establishing these administrative divisions is the categorization of castes. An officially sanctioned list of caste and tribal names is used to categorise castes into distinct administrative categories. So, a person could be wrongly classified into a different category if their caste name is misspelt or altered even slightly. There are a variety of terms used by members of a given caste to describe themselves. Clan names, spoken language (including pronunciation), honorific phrases, and gender designations all have an impact on the nomenclature. There are a variety of names used to describe the Pallan people of Tamil Nadu. Pallar is a respectful way to address someone. It goes by many names than just that: Mallar, Kudumban, Kaladi, and Devendra Kula Vellalar. Because they don't know any better, some people in rural areas apply for community certificates using the wrong clan name. But these clan names might not be on the administrative categories' list of recognised castes. Consequently, individuals have challenges when trying to obtain the community certificate. The fact that these administrative groups' decision varies among regions is another major cause for concern. Different administrative categories might be used to classify a caste that has settled in different places. These are the questions that this study intends to answer by looking at the Kuravan people of Tamil Nadu.

Objectives of the Study

Understanding the several names given to the Kuravan people—Kuravar, Kuravas, Vettuvan, Nanchi, Pandi, Veduvar, Veduvar Pillai, and Veduvar in Tamil Nadu—is the main goal of this article. Finding out if these phrases are specific to one culture is the goal. Additionally, it aims to investigate the constitutional status accorded to Kuravans across different eras and regions. Fieldwork inside these villages included interviewing residents and taking notes to use as primary data. In order to fully grasp the anthropological elements of these societies in their early phases, secondary literature was also obtained by accessing library resources.

Status of Constitution - Kuravas

According to the supervisor of census operations in Madras, the Kuravan Sidhanar community was recorded as a scheduled caste in the 1961 Census of India for the state of Madras. It is also said that Kuravan Sidhanar is the same as Kakkakan and Veduvar. In the districts of Kanyakumari and Shencottah in the district of Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu, there is a caste called the Vettuvan. Furthermore, Vettuvan and Veduvar are synonymous. The Kuravan Sidhanar people of Tamil Nadu were listed as a Scheduled Caste in the 1991 Indian Census, along with the Kakkalan people of Kanyakumari district and Shenkotai taluk in Tamil Nadu. The Veduvar and Vedar communities in Kanniyakumari District and Shencottah Taluk of Tirunelveli District are designated as Scheduled Castes, according to a government circular from the Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, in G.O.Ms.No. 28 BC&MBCW Department, dated 19.7.94 and G.O.Ms.No.100 BC & MBCW (BCC) Department, Dated 24.11.97. Registration as Kuravan or Kuravan Sidhanar is the standard practice for administrative purposes among individuals who identify as Nanchi Kuravan, Pandi Kuravan, Veduvar, Veduvar Pillai, or Vettuvan (pronounced Ve:ttuvan).

Conclusion

In our current era, there is a global emphasis on acknowledging and recognising every ethnic community. It is no longer optional, but rather mandatory for governments and other stakeholders to include these communities in the social mainstream. The Narikuravar Community is facing severe discrimination, leading to their impoverished social conditions. This is especially concerning when considering the importance of Human Rights and Human Development in the context of Social Development. What is required is the establishment of a dedicated and well-planned Social Welfare Administration structure that is committed to providing targeted interventions for the Narikuravar Community, with the aim of breaking their current cycle of poverty and deprivation. In order for the Narikuravar Community to have an equal opportunity to progress and live a socially fulfilling life, it is necessary for the Government and Civic Organisations to collaborate and actively support their advancement towards an empowered position in society.

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