

## JENU KURUBA TRIBE AND THEIR BELIEF SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

Tribals usually live socially and homogeneous unit with their own culture, traditions, pattern and customs. The Jenu Kuruba tribe greatly depend on nature for their life style. They know and for ages have observed the movement of forests and know inch of it. They know how to protect themselves from wild animals too. As the name it says that they are honey collectors and are well-known for their honey collecting skills. Jenu Kuruba and their way of living are deep rooted with their beliefs. Their women have many set of rules to be followed even today during puberty and pregnancy period. Due to which their mental health decreases not only that, some of which can be said as superstitious beliefs are practiced by them. Such type of practices can keep them away from reality and it suggests that the literacy rate is low among them. So this study focuses on the belief system of Jenu Kuruba tribe and superstitious beliefs practiced by them which they call as pollution. Complete absorption of their taboos is challenging. The indigenous people are unwilling to abandon all of their customary behaviours, beliefs, and ideologies. Social workers approach needs to motivate the tribes through experts, NGO's and Governmental leaders to get awareness on superstition beliefs and bring them to the main stream of society.

**Keywords:** Jenu Kuruba Tribe, Life Forces, Mental Health, Belief System.

### I. INTRODUCTION

A tribe possesses certain qualities and characteristics that make it a unique cultural, social and political entity. The Jenu Kuruba is a tribal Group mainly found in Kodagu and Mysore districts of Karnataka. Honey is said as 'Jenu' in Kannada from which the tribe got their name as Jenu Kuruba as they traditionally collect honey, gathered food, and managed forest produce. The Jenu Kuruba community's primary sources of income have been land and the forest. Jenu Kuruba men dress in lungis and shirts, women dress in sarees they use oil to comb their hair, decorate with jasmine flowers, wear glass, bracelet and Kumkum. The elders do not wear chappals. Jenu Kuruba's eat both veg and non-vegetarian food. In vegetables usually they eat pulses, Ragi, Bamboo, Rice, Leafy vegetables, Water spinach and so on. Which they usually boil and eat.

#### **Belief system in Jenu Kuruba:**

Tribes have their own set of beliefs. Even today tribes swear in the name of the holy trees because they think that God resides in tree. They worship Shivalinga and believe that God would treat people fairly based on the merits of their deeds. Jenu Kuruba religion is one of the oldest religions. They believe that religion controls the society. And also they worship animals, birds, plants, forest and river. Religion is considered as one of the important aspects in life. Not only beliefs they also practice superstitious belief. This can unknowingly affect them individually or to the entire tribe. Jenu Kuruba tribe community do not like to be governed by any religious monasteries. They have their own pattern which consists of levels with a head-man (Yajamana) and a ritual head/ (Gudda). Except for the religious decisions they take care of the all the functions of the people. In the study done by Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages of India (SPPEL) it is mentioned that the entire life pattern is designed by the ancestral spirit of the settlement through shamans. Jenu Kuruba belief system refers to as religious behaviour relating to the supernatural beings. They have their own identities, names and Jenu Kuruba people have deep surrenderence towards them. They pray to them to get a source is energy, power and to fulfil their needs

#### **Need of study:**

- This study helped in understanding the various aspects, tradition, and belief of Jenu Kuruba Tribes.
- This study is mainly required to change and bring back the various patterns of Jenu Kuruba beliefs.
- To understand the role and importance of these tribal people in network of the belief system.

- To classify and describe the ancestral practice of various forms methods implementing by the Jenu Kuruba tribal community.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Caitlyn D. placek and Purnima Madhivanan (2017) in this study it is reported that a woman states that her miscarriage which is a pregnancy loss was due to superstition.
- R. Mekala (2002) in the study mentions that Ancestral spirits are the spirits of deceased ancestor, where the belief in such supernatural Beings is important in a societies region; the ancestral spirits are considered active participants in the affairs of the Tribal living. Non-human spirits are supernatural beings that, though often possessing human characteristics, are not human in origin. Such spirits may be identified with natural features of the physical environment, such as those beings that dwell in rocks, trees, or rivers and may even reside in animals, or they may be unattached spirits that wander freely over the landscape. They may be benevolent and assist human beings in their activities or they may be malevolent. If they are helpful to humans, they are actively sought-out. The kurumbas belief systems clearly refer to as religious behaviour relating to the supernatural beings. Their Supernatural beings have names have a separate identity and all the kurumbas groups pray customarily to get a source of power and to fulfil their needs.
- Survivalinternational.org. (2022) the Jenu Kuruba's belief system centers on their connection to the forest, its wildlife, and their gods who live there. They are experts in their environment, having 25 names for different parts of the forest.
- T.T. Basavanagoud and Rajani. (2022) in their research paper titled as Marriage Practice Among Jenu Kuruba, A Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group In Karnataka, India explained that The women in the Jenu Kuruba group are required to take on family responsibilities due to early marriage. Men typically just use their income for booze, cigarettes, and chewing tobacco. It is common knowledge that women in almost all families must pay their own way when purchasing items for daily requirements. Women's health issues are exacerbated by early marriage, teen pregnancy, and repeated delivery.
- Vijayalakshmi (2003) mentioned that Jenu Kuruba's are one of India's tribal communities that is thought to be the most socially and economically impoverished.
- Prahakar, Gangadhar (2011) state that in terms of their social structure, marital patterns, gender equality, and cultural norms around maternal health, they differ from other castes in these areas.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The paper used is Secondary in sources which draws conclusion about the Jenu Kuruba's belief system. The secondary information is gathered from books, Internet, Articles, Literature review and different websites. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the Jenu Kuruba Tribes Belief System and how it is affecting them.

### Objectives:

- To learn about the lifestyle of Jenu Kuruba tribe.
- To know about the practices of Jenu Kuruba tribe.
- To learn about their deep rooted belief system.
- To find out the superstitious beliefs practiced by them and its consequences.
- To educate the public about the significance of the Jenu Kuruba tribe's religious system.

### Problems and Causes of Jenu Kuruba tribes:

Jenu Kuruba's traditionally maintain forest produce, gather food, and collect honey. They greatly depend on forest for their livelihood. For the Jenu Kuruba tribe land and forests have been the main sources of income. But now because of governmental laws and rules for forest preservation they have given up their traditional jobs. And also present forest law prohibiting entry and hunting into the forest has affected their food patterns. Because of that they have to really struggle for their existence.

In this tribe child marriage practice is seen. During the time of marriage both bride's and groom's Shastra is done in which both of them have to match only then the marriage is possible otherwise the idea of that particular marriage is completely dropped. Also the age gap must be of about five years.

Pradeep MD and Kalicharan ML(2016) says that any age male of 18 to 20 years and female between 13 to 15

years after liking each other without informing anyone should run away from the village. The boy should take the girl for a movie to near by theatre, should present her clothes and ornaments, then enter the forest and have sexual relationship and stay there for 2-3 days, when they return to the village they are accepted by the people as married couples. If anyone breaks the law of marriage they will be sending them out from the village. The women have to take on family responsibilities due to early marriage. Women's health issues are exacerbated by teenage pregnancy and numerous deliveries.

So there is a lot of pressure on Jenu Kuruba women as they have to take care of the entire family and also focus on continuation of their generation. This may lead to disruption of their mental health. Also the modern food doesn't have enough strength for numerous deliveries of women due to which physical health may also go down. There are different limitations for women of Jenu Kuruba tribe. During puberty, pregnancy, and childbirth they have certain set of procedures to be followed. The girl is moved to a hut named palli for 4-6 weeks during her first period which is located behind the close by hut homes that make up the hamlet. She has to only receive food from a girl who has already had her period. In the case of pregnancy, she must remain in the palli starting in the third month after conception, and only an elderly woman from the hamlet is allowed to feed her. She can only go back to her hut after giving birth. Her mental status during this period will be weak and she'll be needing support especially from her husband as she will be craving for his touch and care but that is not possible in their case. Their mental status might become a problem to the child and the mother herself. During death of a person, it is believed that if the person breathes his last breath inside their hut, it is a bad omen and the entire hut is burned down. This kind of belief might affect them in long run as they have to rebuild their hut from the scratch. Jenu Kuruba's hold a belief in dark magic and malevolent spirits. One such form of black magic is called "Bunde Kareyuvudu," in which practitioners think they can communicate with the dead and the bad spirit always moves above the head.

All this kind of dark magic and such beliefs shows their low literacy rate. There is a need for this tribe to get educated and practically lead a disciplined life.

#### **Current status:**

Jenu Kuruba's are well known for their honey collecting skills. "Nanga Kadu Ajjayya...Nanga Kadina Jenu Ajjayya- which means our forests are scared...The honey from our forest is sacred." They live by this philosophy. But now they are illegally evicted from the Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka. Despite the illegal evictions for about 6,000 of them have managed to remain in the park. They are prevented from cultivating crops, collecting food from the forest also honey. They are even prevented from visiting their burial grounds. Those who stand up for their rights are arrested and are given trouble and arrested. According to 2018 study the literacy rate among the Jenu Kuruba's in Karnataka 56.1% there is slight increase in their literacy rate which will gradually keep them away from unwanted practices and superstitions.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

Different limitations for women throughout puberty, pregnancy, and childbirth have been imposed by tribes. The girl is moved to a hut called "Palli" for four to six weeks during the first menstruation, which is located behind the habitation houses near to the settlement. She is only fed by a female who has already had her period. She must remain in the "Palli" starting in the third month after conception, and only an elderly woman from the hamlet is allowed to feed her. She can only go back to her hut after giving birth. If somebody passes away inside the hut, it is a bad omen and the entire hut is burned down. The settlement's territorial border is protected, and any trespassers will be punished by the head man by court marshalling. A priest performs "pooja" to cleanse the contaminated area by conceptually enclosing the settlement. Every pandemic illness is viewed as a manifestation of evil spirits. All attempt to use rituals to expel the evil spirit from the boundary; if unsuccessful, they will destroy the entire community. (Chauhan 1984) Modes: In the settlement husband and wife cannot sit together in the presence of children, wife has to turn her face around while talking, While walking outside the settlement the wife has to walk 4 to 5 feet behind the husband. Mother and Daughter can sit close by putting her folded leg on the thigh of her mother. Grown up son and Mother not supposed to sit facing his father keeping eye contact. Son and Daughter cannot touch each other, hence has to sit parallel to each other but they cannot sit in a single row. Father in law and Daughter in law cannot stand face-to-face. She should stand and turn her face other side. The mother-in-law while speaking to son-in-law should turn aside. Within

the community In the presence of children, a husband and wife are not permitted to sit together. The wife must turn her face away when speaking, and when leaving the settlement, she must lag her husband by 4 to 5 feet. Mother Daughter can get close to her mother by resting her folded leg on her thigh. It is improper for a grown son to sit in front of his father and make eye contact. Son and Daughter must sit next to each other but not in a single row since they cannot touch. Daughter in law and father in law are unable to stand face to face. She needs to rise up and switch her face. When speaking to the son-in-law, the mother-in-law should turn away. Pradeep MD Kalicharan ML (2016) they hold a belief in dark magic and malevolent spirits. One such form of black magic is called "Bunde Kareyuvudu," in which practitioners believe they may communicate with the dead and that the bad spirit always soars above the head elevated. Usually, by involving the "holy spirit," certain rites are used to keep the bad spirit from entering the settlement. They hold that specific rites that invoke the "holy spirit" allow spirits to enter the body. They hold the view that ghosts enter a person's body through the sole to claim their just compensation. When they are outside the settlement's boundary, anybody who has correctly dealt with the spirit is subject to the bad spirit's vengeance. The "Shaman" who is seated beside the fire pit pours water to create a circle. People must gather outside the designated circle. This "inviting the spirit" practise is carried out to drive out any bad spirits that could lead to personal or societal issues. The Shaman will ask the evil spirit from the world of spirits why they are bothering the person, invite the Holy Spirit to drive the evil spirit from the body, and then dismisses the evil spirit from the person.

## V. SUGGESTIONS

- Awareness program on importance of education through Street play, role play and group activities.
- Organise Participatory learning and Action PRA in community to understand the pros and cons of beliefs.
- Organising meetings with key persons of the Jenu Kuruba community and discussion regarding consequences of superstitious beliefs among people.
- Compulsory education to the children of Jenu Kuruba of Group between 6 to 14 years.
- Usage of Mimes and dramas to represent the ill effect of superstitious beliefs.
- Conduct a survey on lifestyle and practices of Jenu Kuruba's which can be reported to Tribal welfare committee for their empowerment.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to know the belief systems and practices of Jan Kuruba tribe. Just like any other tribe Jenu Kuruba's have woven their life around believe systems. In order to know the tribe it is mandatory to know their practices and beliefs. This study helps in knowing the same. The Jenu Kuruba practices are completely belief oriented and some of them can be also said as superstitions. In the book titled "Jenu Kuruba" written by Dr C. N. Yashawanthakumar it is mentioned that Jenu Kuruba's hold a belief in dark magic and malevolent spirits. One such form of black magic is called "Bunde Kareyuvudu," in which practitioners think they can communicate with the dead and the bad. Literacy rate among Jenu Kuruba is very low and there is a need for their to get educated and bring about reforms. Education is a necessity in bringing about change for their betterment.

During pregnancy it is seen that the pregnant women is kept far away from her husband. The presence of their husbands gives them a sense of courage and support but in Jenu Kuruba's it is not possible as they believe in keeping the conceived far from their huts and fed only by an elderly woman. Mental status of the woman has to be considered. Black magic and witch crafting practices can be life-threatening and distances them from reality. Child marriage which is at practice may lead to early pregnancy and cause pregnancy issues. Development is needed among all the tribes as it will lead to the betterment of their community. Unless and until literacy rate is increased among them, they are likely to follow the same old superstitious practices which may affect them in long run. There is a need for the younger generations to get educated and bring about reforms in Jenu Kuruba's tribal practices and beliefs.

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