CHAPTER III

KURUBA THROUGH THE AGES

The Indian sub-continent is a bountiful and enigmatic land to study various communities. Therefore many scholars have studied a number of ethnic groups in different parts of the land. The studies by colonial administrators were to acquaint themselves with the land and people. The later studies were more of analytical type and to solve the problems of the people, especially the tribals.

In this chapter, the different aspects of Kuruba life, their history of origin, occupation, social life, etc. are studied in detail. Many scholars have already written about shepherds which include their socio-cultural and politico-religious aspects. These studies help us to understand the community as a whole in the name of shepherds of India. But so far no study has been made in detail about Kuruba of Karnataka. Therefore, an attempt is made to study this community in detail.

The history of shepherds may be said to have been started from the beginning of the sheep-rearing profession.
itself. When early man had difficulty in collecting his food he took to rearing of animals. In the course of this he domesticated many animals like sheep, goat, cow and so on, which, as Gordon has (Childe, 1956) said, served as 'meat on hoof'. The domesticated animals also provided man with milk, wool and hydes. Keeping or rearing different types of animals like sheep, cows, camels, horses, etc., as an occupation resulted in different occupational groups in India. Later they became different castes and sub-castes like Dangers, Gollas, Kuruba and so on.

In the opinion of a few scholars, Kuruba of Karnataka are the original inhabitants of South India. In the historic past they lived as both nomadic and settled tribal groups. In their early period a few lived mainly in forest and hilly areas and became forest dwellers. Others who came down to plains gradually changed their life style and occupations and became agriculturists. Others followed both these occupations of cultivation of land and sheep keeping. This resulted in variation in them and resulted in different sub-castes of Kuruba community.

A few scholars are also of the opinion that the
Kuruba are of Aryan stock. A few others have claimed them as one of the Dravidian groups. The third group of scholars have opined that the Kuruba are one of the pre-Dravidian groups.

Rieley (1915) and Hutton (1946) who have classified the Indian population under Nordic or Indo-Aryan and Proto-Austroloid types, include the shepherds found in different parts of India under both the groups. According to them the first category of shepherds settled in North India and the second in South India. But they have identical occupations, vital activities and economic conditions. Their structure of physique and features are also closely similar to Indo-Aryans. Those who came to South have been absorbed by the Dravidian culture. They are also known by different names such as Kandamilaru, Ayagneyaru and Areemattinavaru. In pre-historic times they lived mainly in jungles, hills, etc. to facilitate them in grazing sheep and goats.

There is no doubt that sheep rearing is an oldest occupation. In India also the shepherds are one of the oldest settlers. As Gustov Oppert (1892:125) says the Kuruba must be regarded as very old inhabitants of this land and who came in contact with their Dravidian kinsmen.
in the priority of occupation of the Indian soil. Elliot (1869) has also opined that the Kuruba form one of the most important elements in the early population of India (Loc. cit. Enthoven, 1922:317).

From the review of literature about Kuruba we will find that these shepherds first selected high lands, hilly areas and forest regions for their dwelling because these gave them greatest protection not only against floods but also against the attack of enemies. They also lived in clusters and moved freely in a particular area with a base settlement. This helped them to form federal communities to rule and administer (Ibid:217). However, they do not appear to have advanced beyond the stage of a pastoral nation, and therefore the Jend-Avasta speaks of Yima, the reputed ancestor of the undivided Aryans as the fair skinned shepherd who made the earth thrive with flocks, herds and men (Dalal 1918:17). According to him they later got divided into two major sections, known in antiquity as Kurupâñchâlas or Kauravas and Pândavas. Afterwards they became known as Caudians and Dravidians and as Kuruvas or Kuruba, Mâlles, Maleyas and so on (Gustov Oppert: 1892:217). One striking thing about this is that all the above names of Kuruba are derived from words which denote mountain.
Bhūmakavi, a Kannada poet of sixteenth century, in his work Kalumatothekaka Purāṇa, says that 'Kauraba' is the name of a great sage. Once the sage conducted a probity (tapa) and with the merit he got from this the Kuruba were born. The Āgneya Purāṇa written in Sanskrit, also supports the same. According to which (Loc.cit. Hanumanthappa: 1942:14), the term 'Kuruba' has been used in the following lyrics:

Kurare Mrigavastrāṇi Krutvavai
Kaurabharishi,
Tannama Sārthakum Chakra Devanām
Hitakāvya.

In Dravidian languages like Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada — 'Ko' means mountain. Therefore, those who inhabited the forest and hilly areas became known as Kuruba. Further their pet animal is sheep which is known in local languages as 'Kuri'. So those who had sheep-rearing as their main occupation, got their name from it as Kuruba. Similarly, in the Sanskrit literature, we come across the name Kurudesha, which was ruled by the Kaurava dynasty. Later Kaurava became known as Kuruva or Turuva. It is possible that the term Turuva later transformed itself into Kuruba.
'Kuru', in some parts of Kurudesa, is known along with the term 'Pa' which in all the Dravidian languages means master, ruler, rustic lover, sheep master or cowherd. So 'Kurup' means those who inhabited the hilly area and reared sheep. This later became known by the name 'Kurupa'. According to this view, the term 'Kuruba' is derived from the term Kurupa - the hill dwellers.

**Distribution of Shepherds in India and Karnataka:**

During the pre-Aryan period the Shepherds were known by such names as Ayagneyaru, Aresattinavaru, Kandamelaru, Neraru and so on. They got these names because they lived in Ayagneyora Bhumi and Kan-nad, as original inhabitants. The various castes and sub-castes of shepherds have common history all over India. In the pre-Aryan period, Kuruba are one of the Sudra communities belong to Dravidian stock. They belong to Negrito race or Proto-Auströloid group by their cultural affiliation (Elmore 1925:207).

During the early twentieth century a few foreign and Indian scholars have written about the Kurubas. Among them Buchhona (1807), Sherring (1909), Thurston (1909), Hayavadana Rao (1927), Anantha Krishna Iyyer (1931) and others. Later Joshi (1967) studied the Kurubas in detail.
for his book *Karnataka Sanskriti Purva Petike*. Here the author has mentioned the history of the distribution of shepherds and this can be understood through the place names and names of inhabited groups. According to Joshi, the Kuruba were known by such names as Hattikāraru, Danagūraru and Kurubaru. Joshi also says that during the early period the Kuruba were chieftains (Pāšeksara) and ruled different regions of today's Karnataka and Maharashtra. They were also known by such names as Vērekshatriyaru, Malavaru, and Kanda Nalaru (Joshi, 1960:192).

According to Gustov Oppert (1892) and Joshi (1960) the shepherds are actually the original inhabitants of Karnataka which in the literature is mentioned as 'Ko-nād', Konād—Kanād—Kanade—Kannadanādu. The shepherds were popular in this land with the name 'Ko'. The 'Ko' group later got divided into a number of sub-groups like Govalas, Ander, Podāvar, Edair, Kurumbar, Kalavar, Gollavodu, Dhanagaars, Zurp, Kuruba, Yadavelu, Kurma, Kurumavaru, Kūrkha, Grayons, Gādri, Gadairiya, Pālaru, Bharwadaru, Rajapali, Pālakesatriyas, Correlu, Gorlu, Gollu, Kurumba, Gollalu, Neragararu, etc., and migrated to different parts of India.
During their early life the Kuruba suffered from acute drought and therefore migrated to different regions in search of food to keep their domesticated animals alive. Among them 'Kuru' is a group. 'Kuru' in Kannada language means the 'top of mountain'. So 'Ko' or 'Ku' people later became known as Kuruba, Maleya and Kurava. According to Joshi (1960), Kuruba are also known as Turukāraru. Later the term Turukāra got transformed into Kurukāra, Kurikāra, Kuruvaru and Kurikāyyuvavaru. They got this name because of their occupation, i.e., sheep-rearing. Joshi also gives a list of other names with which the Kuruba are known such as Kurup, Kuruba, Dhanagar, Halebar, Ande Kurubar, Hatti-kāraru and so on.

According to the Hindu holy scripts the original places of the Turukāraru were Kandhar (Gandhar), Vindyaranya and Dandakaranya. Later they migrated to different regions of India and got the names Hathāraru and Kanda Melaru. The former group migrated to Vārabatta (Maharashtra) region from Gandhar region. There they built huts (Kutis) to live in and to protect their animals from theft and 'evil beings'. Another sub-group of shepherds, the Maravāraru, left the Vindyaranya and Dandakāranya to different places. Among them a few sub-groups followed agriculture besides their
traditional occupation of sheep keeping. These groups considered the land (Dharti) as the Mother Earth (Bhumī Mātha). They also followed Shaivism. They were known as Shaiva Veeraru, Adishakti Marovararu and Kalavaru. Now they are known by the name 'Vēragararu'.

Earlier to their distribution to different places, the Kuruba first settled on the northern parts of Narmada and Godavari regions. Among the Kalavaru group a few sub-groups are known by names such as Marabatta of Vidharbha, Jhadimandala, Ayajaker, Hatkar and so on. Now Marshattaru are found in Maharashtra and North Karnataka by the name Dhanagararu. The Jhadimandala Kuruba are known by the name Jādikuruba and Jade Kuruba in some Southern parts of Karnataka. They believed to have been migrated from Godavari region. They were socially an advanced group and occupied the whole Godavari region for pastoral purposes and agriculture.

Kannād Gouligas are a sub-group of the shepherds. Later they settled in Nasik region and Kurukshetra, the northern part of Narmada. A sub-group of Kannād also migrated to Nagpur region and followed agriculture as their main occupation. They went to the extreme southern parts of India and became known as Kurumbas of Malbar and Kurubas of Goa.
The Malabar sub-groups established a number of chiefdoms under the name Kadu Kuruba, Mullu Kurumba and Jehu Kuruba and later remained as the modern representatives of the ancient Kurumbas or Pallavas. They were once very popular rulers in South India. But very little trace of their former greatness is left now. During the seventh century, the Pallava Kings were at the zenith of their power. Gradually it declined owing to the rise of the Kongu, Chola and Chalukya chiefs. The final overthrow of the Kurumba sovereignty was affected by the Chola Kings - Adendai, Kottavala, Adongaytlu and other, by about the seventh or the eighth century A.D. This led to the dispersion of the Kurumbas far and wide. Many fled to the hills of Malabar, Nilgiris, Coorg, Wynad and Mysore. Thus during the long lapse of time they become wild and uncivilized. Their comparative isolation also made them to lose their ancient culture. Both the Uru or the civilized Kurubas and the hill groups must have been identical, but the present difference, as in the case of Beda and other tribes, is the result of geographic distribution and environment. The name Kurumbanād, one of the taluks of North Malabar, attests their former greatness even till today (Madras Census Report, 1891; Iyyer, 1929:223).
A few Kuruba groups have also built a number of forts in different places like Tondamandalam, Kurumbabhūmi or Kurumbanad, Payumad, Kolphot, Payumall, Trikumpuram, Varakkapuram, Porai, Cōlutanād, Cotayputti, Naravanur, Solāpātām, Pulalkottai, Amur Kottai, Kolathur Kottai, Puliyar Kottai, Champur Kottai, Ūru Kottai, Venkuna Kottai, Manaur Kottai, Chena Kuttai, Putuvar Kottai, Payur Kottai, Eiyur Kottai, Tamar Kottai, Palkumra Kottai, Illankattu Kottai, Kaliyur Kottai, Cirukaraī Kottai, Katikai, Kaliyur Kantirikai Kottai, Velur Kottai, Sutapakam, Nirampur Kottai and so on (Manual of the Administration of Madras Presidency, 1893:222; Gustov Oppert, 1892:239–244).

Kuruba became popular as headmen or rulers of a number of chiefdoms in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Ganga, Shona and Bhadra regions. They were known as Harhatta, Varehatta, Batayara, Dhanagora, Vattanapatil and Deshmukh. The Holkar family of Madhya Pradesh, belong to Dhanagar group. Indur was a wellknown kingdom ruled by the Kuruba chiefs and during early times it was known as Indrapura.

Other sub-groups of Kuruba like Chanda, Bhandara, Varata, etc., migrated from Nagpur. They were wellknown by names Korabu, Halsabar, Kolkararu, Aremathinavaru and
Arekurubaru, etc., and built a number of 'Kudi' in these regions. Kudi means a hut (Kuteera or dudi), and the shepherds are also known by this as the Kudimakkalu. Afterwards they branched-off into a number of groups like Raita Ñlu, Badava, etc. (Joshi: 1960:151; 1967:134).

In Maharashtra the descendant groups of Kanda Melaru became popular as Kurigararu, Dhanagararu, Veeraru Vantikaru, Purepatigalu, Aregeuligaru, Are Kurubaru, Chatneru and so on. In Andhra Pradesh - Collavadu, Kurupu, Yadaulu, Kuruma, Kurumavaru, Gopalaru, Colladu, Collaru, Idaiyar, Kurupavaru and so on, But now they became popular as Gorrelu, Gorlu or Garlu because of cattle grazing occupation. In Tamilnad, Kurumber were popular by the name ARAU. Later the ARAU group became popular by names such as Kuruba, Kurumba, Idaiyer, Kurumbaru, etc. In Kerala the Kuruba are known as Kurumber and it is considered to be one of the primitive tribal groups of the state. In Karnataka also they are known by different names as Kurub, Kuruba, Hattikararu, Dhanagararu, Malabar and so on.

Origin of the Kuruba Community:

The Kuruba community of Karnataka has its own history of origin. This is available in the form of myths about the origin which are popular among the Kuruba.
The Śālumātothejaka Purāṇa, a holy book of the Kuruba by Bheema Kavi, also mentions about the origin myths of the community. The writer claims a Sanskrit source from the Agneya Purāṇa, for his support. According to the Sanskritic source, the origin myth of the Kuruba community is as follows: There was a great saint by name Kauraba. Once he conducted a deep probity (tapa) and out of the powers he got from it he progenited the Kuruba community.

Siddarama Sangatya, edited by Narasimhachar (1929) is another holy book of the Kuruba. This was first written during the seventeenth or eighteenth century. According to it, a person by name Sāngatya Mankayya, was the progenitor of the modern Kuruba community. Mankayya was a devotee of Lord Shiva and he belonged to Veerashaiva caste. One day when he was in meditation, Lord Shiva appeared before him and advised him to bring improvement in the Hālumatha community. Accordingly he brought many reforms and improvements among the Kuruba and thus became a popular person. Now, his holy book Sāngatya, is known by his name as the Mankayya Charita.

According to another source, Tagarapavāda or Shanta Vijaya Purāṇa, one day Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati,
came down to the earth to see the conditions of their devotees. During the course of their tour, when they were taking rest in a beautiful place, there appeared a great saint by name Jamarishi. By his handsome appearances, Parvati became very happy, and her breasts pulpitated and milk came out of them. Parvati collected this milk in her hands and created two idols out of it. Shiva filled them with life and named them as Muddugonda and Muddamma. Later he also asked them to live like husband and wife. The couple later had a son named Adigonda and his progeny became known as Hālumath community, because they were born out of milk (Hālu).

The origin myths told in the other holy books of the Kuruba like the Kuruba Charitre, Hālumatha Purāṇa, Renuka Kavya, Rudra Bhārata and so on, is as follows:

Once the angles in attendance on Shiva in heaven (Kailasa), had the impudence to laugh at the bad performance of three legged dance by Bhrungi, the court dancer. This brought down the curse of the dancer upon them, that they should be born on earth as sheep. Accordingly they came to the earth as sheep and moved themselves into a cave which was then sealed off. The cave was very close to
the temple of Kuruvereshwara and Syamanta Panchaka stream, which are found near Kurukshetra of Mahabharata. In the past, this region was well named by the name Kurupatipura.

There lived a chief by name Adigonda belong to the cultivator (Okkaliga) caste. He had a good-for-nothing son by name Padma (or Padmakya) who was nick named as Undlabatta (a gourmand). One day the father turned him out of his house asking him to make a living by cultivating their follow land. When the son left the house to cultivate the land the father specially warned him not to cut down the bastard teak tree (Palasa) and disturb the ant-hill, which were there in the field. But the perversity of disposition made Padma to do these very things.

On his digging the ant-hill, from which the tree was standing, six types of sheep came out and surrounded Padma demanding for food and protection. He did not know what to feed and how to protect them. So he prayed to Lord Shiva for help. Shiva on appearing, taught him the art and advised him to have the rearing of sheep as his occupation. Since Padmanna was inexperienced in the new occupation Shiva left behind on earth his aid Beerasadvaru
or Viresha to advise him properly. Like this rearing sheep became the occupation of the progeny of Padmanna and Viresha their tutelary deity and later worshipped by the shepherds as Beralingappa, Beradevaru and so on.

There is another myth about the birth of the sub-group about Kadu Kuruba. According to this, the Kadu Kuruba are the descendants of Padmanna by his demon wife, who was the daughter of Hidambi of Mahabharata. Padmanna had another wife by name Sumalini, the daughter of Sunanda, from her the other section of the Kuruba - the Úru-Kuruba, is said to have come. It is said that the second group later branched off into three divisions, viz., Hálu Kuruba, Hande Kuruba and Kambli Kuruba.

Another origin myth of the Kuruba given by Thurston (1979:35), from popular tradition, is as follows: Originally the Kuruba were Kapu group. Their ancestors were Masi Reddy and Nelamma, who lived on the eastern ghats by selling firewood. They had six sons and were very poor and religious. Having pitied them Lord Shiva intended to help them. So he appeared at their doors as a beggar in the disguise of a Jangama priest. Pleased by the good treatment given to Him, Shiva gave sacred ash (Vibhūti)
to Kelamunia, promising prosperity through the birth of another son. The seventh son born was named Undala Padmanna and the family prospered through agriculture.

But unlike his six brothers, Undala Padmanna never went out for work in the field though he was married and had a son. The older brothers plotted to get rid of him. So they asked him to set fire to a bush, which concealed an ant-hill with a hope that the snake residing come out and kill him. But instead of a snake, a host of strange black beasts came out from the ant-hill. Suddenly these beasts surrounded him, asking for protection. Padmanna took to his heels and prayed Lord Shiva for advise. Shiva advised him to own the beasts and take up sheep-rearing as his occupation.

Padmanna, when expressed his lack of knowledge in the new occupation, Lord Shiva stayed back on earth to help him. One day Lord Shiva sent Padmanna to a distant place to fetch the fire. This place and fire were controlled by a demon. The cruel demon had also kept in bondage a girl. On seeing Padmanna this girl fell in love with him. When the demon came she transformed Padmanna into a lizard. Later the lovers managed to escape from the bond of the
demon. (On returning, the fire was used for cooking the milk and food). Later, he took the girl as his second wife, and it is believed that children from her became shepherds.

The first wife of Padmanna came from his own caste. In his first marriage the cotton thread was used as their sacred wrist-band (Hatti Kankanana). During his second marriage the wool yarn was used as wrist-band (Unne Kankanana). The offsprings from the two unions later became two separate endogamous groups among the Kuruba by name - Hatti Kanakadavaru and Unne Kanakadavaru. The later group are considered inferior to the former because they belong to a mixed origin.

A third sub-division among the Kuruba are the Hande Kuruba, named after the small vessel (Hande) used in milking the sheep.

The Kuruba are found in all districts of Karnataka State excepting coastal area. Numerically they form a dominant group among the backward castes in the State. According to the 1971 census they form 6.77 per cent of the total population of the State. They are
densely distributed in Bijapur, Dharwad, Mysore, Raichur, Belgaum, Gulbarga, Bangalore and Bellary districts and sparsely in other districts of the State.

The Kuruba are called by different names in Karnataka. According to a memorandum of the Mysore Pradesha Kuruba Sangha (1973), submitted to the State Government, the Kuruba community is called by different names in the State, such as Hälumatha, Vokkaliga Kuruba, Kurikayuva Kuruba, Gondaru, Gonda Kurubaru, Unne Kankanadavaru, Hatti Kankanadavaru, Kādu Kurubar, Voggaru, Kadusiddayyaru, Kilaric, Dhangers, Bharwar, Kurubaru, Karādi and Makadivalos, Hande Kuruba, Jogayyagalu, Kurigararu, Hanabar, Hanka, Peddu, Sudugadwehiddaru, Gevaligalu, Sandaru, Odeyar, Kambel Kurubaru, Kanakkayana Jatiyavaru, Prathamasudraru, Indrasudraru, Vareda Kurubaru, Dasayyagalu, Golla, Goreva, Jenukurubaru, Úrukurubaru, Hosakurubaru, Hale Kurubaru, Sada Kurubaru, Kanchi Kurubaru, Mullu-Kurubaru, Betta Kurubaru and so on.

There is a regional variation, as well. In Mysore area they are known as Kuruba, Kuruoba and Hälumatha. In Coorga area they are known as Golla and Kuruoba. In Mangalore and Kollegala areas they are known as Kurab,
Dhanagar, Bharwad, Helumatha and Gorava. In Gulbarga area they are known as Dhanagars (Havanur: 1975:60).

The Kuruba also have a number of occupations in addition to their traditional occupation of sheep rearing and making of wool blankets (Kambali).

Over the years the Kuruba community came under the immediate influence of the Hindu society. Later from twelfth century onwards they got influenced by the Veerashaivism and such other devotional cults and movements. The Kuruba who were one caste and followed one occupation of sheep rearing, later got divided into a number of sub-castes. This division of high and low sub-castes among the Kuruba was due to the type of occupation and the socio-ritual importance attached to these occupations. For example, the Kuruba who reared sheep were considered inferior to those who were settled to tilling the soil as pastoral stage of life was considered inferior to settled ones. Later those who made blankets also began to think themselves superior to the pastoral group.

Thus, the notion of high and low, superior and inferior, developed among the different castes of Kuruba
and they extended this further to commensal aspects and exchange of brides; naturally this was due to the influence of Hinduism on the Kuruba, who after coming and settling as part of Hindu villages, got very much influenced by the ways and manners of the Hindus. They also accepted the Hindu festivals, and their rites and rituals. Needless to say that the guiding values and philosophy of life were also taken from the Hindus. As a result, they were sanskritized in their belief system, way of life, pantheon of gods and so on.

Later, when Veerashaivism came up as a revolt against the rigid Hinduism and its costly and elaborate rites and rituals during the twelfth century, naturally it became popular in Karnataka area. Veerashaivism, propagated by a band of saints and Vachana Karas, followed the devotional path (Bhakti Marga) advocated in Hinduism. According to which to achieve salvation, nothing more than simple devotion to God is necessary. It also condemned the notion of high and low feeling among the castes and also the importance given to ritual purity and pollution. With this the Veerashaiva devotees become equal in socio-ritual status. They placed importance on the devotion with which one works or performs his duty or job than the work itself.
Because according to them there was no high and low occupations. This naturally attracted a number of Hindu low castes to Veerashaiva faith. The Veerashaiva religious leader Lord Basava also attempted to break the caste division and instead he wanted the people to be divided on the moral order as high and low, good and bad and so on (c.f. Ramanujam, 1973; Sakhare, 1978; Ishwarani, 1981). He also advocated simple living, vegetarianism and chaste and honest life. As a part of his teaching he also practiced these ideals and started novelties like interdinning, inter-marriages and so on.

The Veerashaiva religion became very popular in Karnataka region during twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and especially among the so-called low caste Hindus. Owing to the influence of the Veerashaivas they stopped eating meat, offering blood of the animals and birds to deities and also consuming alcoholic beverages. They also stopped celebrating a few customs like keeping women away in the name of ritual purity and pollution. With the simplification of rituals the costly rites and rituals having gone naturally the importance attached to the priests was also minimised. Instead the Veerashaivas
initiated their own priests - Jangama, to supervise the rituals and it is the householders who conducted the rituals. Instead of the temple or Muth, the family became the centre of ritual activity. This brought a tremendous change in the religious life of the low castes. The Kuruba being one of the low castes, also came heavily under the influence of Veerashaivism.

Owing to the influence of Veerashaivism a few Kuruba became Veerashaiva saints and among them Sri Shantaiah is one of them. He not only accepted the Veerashaiva ideals and practices for himself, but also served as a model and guide to his caste members. As a result of this the Kuruba began to accept the Veerashaiva gods, priests, rituals and festivals. In addition to their original gods like Beerappa, Ellamma, Hanuman and so on, they also began to worship Shiva in several forms like Malēra Lingappa, Kalleshwara and so on. Along with this acceptance of Veerashaiva gods who were all vegetarians and the inviting of Veerashaiva priests, the Jengamas, to preside over their rites and rituals, compelled them not only to do away with a few old customs but also to accept new ones in this way from the fold of Brahmanic ritual complex the Kuruba came under the Veerashaiva ritual complex.
But however over the years when Veerashaivism also fell a victim to Brahminism, the Veerashaiva rites and rituals also got the old Sanskrit color. Once again the old order of high and low castes prevailed and the low caste Veerashaivas were treated as an inferior group. As a result the Veerashaivas got divided into Lingayat Veerashaivas or high caste Veerashaivas, who wear the Lingam, the phallic symbol of Shiva and the non-Lingayat Veerashaivas, who did not get the right to wear the Lingam. The Jangama priests who by now became conscious of ritual purity and pollution, began to abstain from participating in such rites and rituals and instead started sending the Pedoda, the holy water, to consanulate the rites and rituals conducted by their low caste devotees. This lack of direct contact and communication resulted in the degeneration of the low caste Veerashaivas and they once again went back to their original ritual order and life of worshipping of lower deities and spirits, who demanded sacrifice, blood, etc. Lack of spiritual guidance also led to demoralisation of these groups and they once again started eating meat and drinking alcoholic beverages. They also revived their old customs and practices like dedicating of men and women to the service of God, physical punishments on body such as whipping, cutting, burning and so on.
With the coming of the backward caste movement as a reformistic movement, the low castes once again begin to come out of their evil practices and ways of life. In this, the remnants from the Sanskrit and Veerashaiva religion helped them a lot. A few more low caste religious institutions and priests came up. Their pride made them to invite their own priests and visit their own institutions for spiritual and religious needs. As a result of this, the Kuruba got their own priests to help them in their ritual life. Among them, the Odeyaru are on the top and act as their spiritual and ritual heads. They are assisted by other religious functionaries such as Dāsayya, Gārappa, Gāravva, Yallamma or Jōgatties and Jōgappa. Eversince the Dēvādēsi or Basavi are also dedicated to the service of God and they were also requested to play a few ritual roles at the time of need and urgency.

Lately, the situation among the Kuruba is changing. They have a number of religious institutions like the temples, mathas and so on. They also have a few monastaries where ascetics learn religious texts and preach the same for the masses. Each temple erected to Mailara Lingappa, Beeraswara, etc., serve as spiritual as well as welfare
centres. Here they hold a number of socio-cultural and religious activities throughout the year. The Kuruba devotees also make it a point to visit these institutions on special and festival occasions in the manner the higher and other castes go to their own.

Owing to the influences of the backward caste movement the Kuruba use all gatherings of their caste members during the time of marriage and funeral celebrations to educate their members for a better change and development. Like Veerashaivas they invite their caste and religious leaders to address the gathering. As a result the ritual aspect of the celebration has given way to welfare and rational activities. No need to say that these served the political purposes as well.

Politically the Kuruba are a force today. Any political activity at State level like to winning the elections and support, has to take note of the Kuruba community and its leaders. There are a number of political leaders belong to both ruling and opposition parties today among the Kuruba. Naturally they draw their strength and authority from their caste group which is now organised and aware of its strength. This has made them to bargain
for political gains also. As a result, today there are a number of Kuruba leaders in both government and legislative bodies. But Kuruba are not organised mechanically or emotionally on caste or class feeling. Their organising into a powerful political group is based on their political awareness also. This can be seen in their day-to-day political activities and also not all Kuruba leaders are in one political party. According to their liking and gain they have alligned with different political parties. Sometimes they have even contested against each other from different parties. They have also organised ritual, socio-cultural organisations among themselves. All these show that they are not only an organised group but also an enlightened one, both politically and socially. This achievement of the Kuruba can be owed to the influences of the Backward Caste Movement in Karnataka.
Illama: The Favorite Goddess of Kiruba.

Designated Son and Devotees of God Besrenahara in Processions.