

# Socio-Economic Status of Jenukuruba Tribal Community of Karnataka

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**Abstract:** This research article delves into the socioeconomic status of the Jenu Kuruba tribes residing in Karnataka, India. The Jenu Kurubas, also known as the Honey Collectors, have historically inhabited the forested regions of Karnataka, particularly in the Western Ghats and surrounding areas. Despite their rich cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of the forests, they have often faced marginalization, poverty, and lack of access to basic amenities such as education and healthcare. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, ethnographic studies, and field surveys, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the socioeconomic conditions of the Jenu Kuruba tribes. It examines various aspects, including income levels, employment patterns, access to education and healthcare, housing conditions, land rights, and participation in development programs. Furthermore, the research explores the impact of government policies, interventions by non-governmental organizations, and community initiatives aimed at improving the socioeconomic status of the Jenu Kuruba tribes. It assesses the effectiveness of these interventions and identifies key challenges and barriers hindering socioeconomic development within the community. The findings of this research contribute to a broader understanding of indigenous communities' socioeconomic dynamics in Karnataka and provide valuable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and researchers working towards inclusive and sustainable development initiatives. By highlighting the specific needs and challenges faced by the Jenu Kuruba tribes, this research aims to advocate for targeted interventions that respect their cultural identity, empower their communities, and promote equitable socioeconomic progress.

**Key Words:** Jenu Kuruba, PVTG's, Socioeconomic Status, Karnataka, Indigenous Communities, Development Interventions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

The Jenu Kuruba tribe, indigenous to the southern Indian state of Karnataka, occupies a distinct cultural niche within the rich tapestry of the region's tribal communities. Their presence is especially pronounced in the verdant landscapes of Kodagu, Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, and scattered enclaves amidst the rugged terrain of the Western Ghats. Central to the identity of the Jenu Kuruba people is their profound relationship with the forests that have cradled their existence for generations. Unlike many other communities whose interactions with nature have evolved over time, the Jenu Kurubas maintain a deeply rooted connection to the land that is both spiritual and practical. Their traditional knowledge of forest ecosystems is legendary, passed down through oral traditions and experiential learning, rendering them invaluable custodians of biodiversity in their ancestral territories.

## 2. TRIBES IN KARNATAKA :

Tribal communities form a significant component of India's societal fabric and cultural heritage. According to the 2011 Census, the Scheduled Tribe population in the state of Karnataka has seen a notable increase, rising from 34,63,986 in 2001 to 42,48,987, indicating a growth rate of 22.66 percent over the decade. This tribal population constitutes approximately 6.95 percent of the total population of the state.

Bellary stands out with the highest concentration of Scheduled Tribes (ST) population, accounting for 10.6 percent of the state's ST population. Following closely are Raichur (8.6%), Mysore (7.8%), Chitradurga (7.1%), and Belgaum (6.9%). These districts, along with Bellary, Raichur, Mysore, and Chitradurga, also host the largest absolute numbers of tribal residents, with Bellary having 4,51,406, Raichur 3,67,071, Mysore 3,34,547, and Chitradurga 3,02,554 tribal

inhabitants. In terms of proportion relative to the total district population, Raichur leads with 19.03 percent, followed by Bellary with 18.41 percent, and Chitradurga with 18.23 percent. It's noteworthy that the tribal population in Karnataka predominantly resides in rural areas, accounting for 84.7 percent of the total tribal demographic.

Across the state, tribal communities are spread across all 30 districts, yet a significant concentration is observed in districts such as Bellary, Raichur, Mysore, Chitradurga, Belgaum, Davanagere, and Tumkur. These seven districts collectively harbor more than half (52 percent) of the state's tribal population, while the remaining 48 percent is dispersed across the other 23 districts (Census of India, 2011).

The gender distribution among Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka demonstrates a notable trend, with a sex ratio of 990 females per 1000 males, surpassing both the national average of 964 for STs and the state's overall average of 973 females per 1000 males. This indicates a positive shift towards gender parity within the tribal communities.

Further analysis reveals that the sex ratios among ST populations residing in rural and urban areas of Karnataka are 990 and 993 females per 1000 males, respectively. This marks an improvement from the 2001 figures of 975 and 960, respectively. Notably, this upward trend in gender balance has been consistent since 1991, when the sex ratio among STs stood at a modest 961 females per 1000 males, indicating a progressive trend towards greater gender equity within these communities over the years.

The literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Karnataka remains a matter of concern, persistently trailing behind the literacy rate of the general population. Over the years, there has been a gradual improvement in literacy levels among tribal communities. In 1991, the literacy rate among STs stood at 36.0 percent, which rose to 48.3 percent by 2001. Subsequently, in 2011, there was a further increase to 62.1 percent, with male literacy at 71.1 percent and female literacy at 53.0 percent.

However, despite these advancements, disparities persist between rural and urban areas. The literacy rate among the tribal population in urban regions is notably higher, standing at 74.8 percent, compared to 59.0 percent in rural areas. Efforts to address these educational discrepancies and enhance literacy rates among tribal communities remain crucial for fostering inclusive development and empowering marginalized populations in Karnataka.

### **3. PVTG's IN KARNATAKA :**

In 2006, the Government of India introduced the term "particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups" (PVTGs) to replace the earlier designation of "Primitive Tribal Groups" (PTGs). PVTGs share several defining characteristics: they are typically homogeneous communities with small populations, often living in remote and isolated areas. Their social institutions are simple, with limited written language and relatively basic technology. These groups tend to experience change at a slower pace compared to other communities. Various government studies highlight the challenges faced by these vulnerable communities, including a decline in their traditional sustenance practices leading to food insecurity, malnutrition, and poor health. As a result, many PVTGs endure precarious living conditions, with some facing the imminent risk of extinction.

The Government of Karnataka has identified two tribal communities, namely the Jenu Kuruba and Koraga tribes, as belonging to the category of Primitive Tribal Groups (PVTGs). The Jenu Kuruba tribes originate from the districts of Mysore, Chamarajanagar, and Kodagu, while the Koraga tribes are primarily located in Udipi and Dakshina Kannada districts.

### **4. JENUKURUBA POPULATION :**

The Jenu Kuruba constitutes a significant tribal community within Karnataka, with a population of 36,076 primarily residing in districts such as Mysore, Kodagu, and Chamarajanagar. Additionally, a smaller contingent can be found beyond the state borders, particularly in the border forests of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. They communicate in their unique dialect called "Jenu nudi" and employ the Kannada script. While interacting with outsiders, they primarily use the Kannada language. The literacy rate among the Jenukurubas in Karnataka stands at 56.1%, with male literacy at 59.1% and female literacy at 53.1%. These figures underscore the educational and socio-economic challenges faced by the Jenu Kuruba tribal populace.

The dietary practices of the Jenu Kurubas predominantly include non-vegetarian fare, with ragi serving as their staple grain. They commonly prepare sambar, a soup enriched with vegetable leaves, and incorporate milk, milk products, tea, and coffee into their diet. Alcohol consumption is widespread within the community. Marriage customs often involve first cross-cousin unions, encompassing patrilineal, matrilineal, and maternal uncle-niece relationships. Monogamy is customary, although if the first wife fails to conceive, junior sororate may be practiced. Divorce is permissible. Inheritance customs dictate that Jenu Kuruba women do not typically inherit parental property, but instead engage in

agricultural activities, livestock rearing, and the collection of herbs, roots, and firewood to contribute to household income. They actively participate in social events and may work as laborers. The first childbirth typically occurs at the woman's parental home, followed by a 12-day period of postnatal pollution during which the woman refrains from contact with her husband. A naming ceremony is conducted on the 12th day, though in some instances, it may be delayed until three months post-birth. Pubescent girls undergo a month-long ritual involving alternating-day baths and dwelling in a leaf-made hut outside the house, concluding with a purification bath and celebratory feast. Marriage rituals predominantly take place at the bride's residence among the Jenu Kurubas.

Traditionally, the Jenu Kurubas have thrived as food gatherers and shifting cultivators. However, with the government's prohibition on shifting cultivation and the implementation of numerous forest usage restrictions, their traditional way of life faces significant challenges. Consequently, they have transitioned from their nomadic existence to settled living arrangements. Agriculture primarily occurs on lands allocated by the government, predominantly during the rainy season. During other periods, they engage in the collection of minor forest produce and participate in the forest department's nursery programs under social forestry initiatives.

The Jenu Kurubas revering family deities such as Chikkamma, Doddamma, Village deities, including Patalamma, Periyapattanamma, and Kammbadamma, are worshipped for rainfall and bountiful harvests. Ritualistic animal sacrifices of sheep, goats, and chickens are conducted to appease these deities. Festivals like Ugadi, Gouri, and Deepavali are celebrated with fervor.

Traditionally secluded from other communities, the Jenu Kurubas now reside in permanent settlements and have established varying degrees of interaction with neighboring groups. Despite this, they generally maintain a degree of separation from outside communities (Gupta, 2003).

## 5. OBJECTIVES

- Determine the current socioeconomic situation of the Jenu Kuruba tribes.
- Identify the main challenges they face in achieving better living standards.
- To give suggestion to improve the socio-economic development of Jenukuruba community.

## 6. METHODOLOGY :

The methodology employed in this study to assess the socioeconomic status of the Jenu Kuruba tribes in Karnataka involves a multi-faceted approach. Initially, a thorough literature review was conducted to gather insights from existing research on indigenous communities in Karnataka, with a specific focus on studies pertaining to the Jenu Kurubas. Subsequently, structured surveys were designed and administered to collect primary data on various socioeconomic indicators including family type, income levels, education level, employment patterns, and annual income among Jenu Kuruba households. Additionally, qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions were utilized to delve deeper into community perceptions and experiences. Statistical analysis techniques, including descriptive statistics and regression models, were applied to analyze the quantitative data gathered.

## SAMPLE SIZE

The current investigation relies on primary data gathered from a sample of 100 households in Mysore and Chamarajanagara districts, employing the purposive sampling technique.

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|------------|
| Male   | 76        | 76.0       |
| Female | 24        | 24.0       |
| Total  | 100       | 100.0      |

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of respondents by gender. The data shows that 76 respondents identified as male, constituting 76% of the total. Additionally, 24 respondents identified as female, making up 24% of the total. The table provides a clear breakdown of gender representation among respondents. It indicates a higher proportion of male respondents compared to female respondents. Overall, the table offers a concise summary of gender demographics within the surveyed population.



**Table 2: Age of Respondents**

| Age group (in years) | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Below 20 years       | 0         | 0          |
| 20-24                | 4         | 4          |
| 25-29                | 5         | 5          |
| 30-34                | 9         | 9          |
| 35-39                | 12        | 12         |
| 40-44                | 14        | 14         |
| 45-49                | 15        | 15         |
| 50-54                | 13        | 13         |
| 55-59                | 7         | 7          |
| 60-64                | 11        | 11         |
| 65-69                | 5         | 5          |
| 70-74                | 5         | 5          |
| 75-79                | 0         | 0          |
| 80+                  | 0         | 0          |
| Total                | 100       | 100        |

This table (table 2) presents the age distribution of respondents in various age groups. No respondents are below 20 years old or aged 75 years and above. The most represented age group is 45-49, with 15 respondents, comprising 15% of the total. Age groups between 30-64 years old show a relatively consistent distribution of respondents. The total sample size is 100, with each age group contributing to the full spectrum of respondents. The table provides insight into the age demographics of the surveyed population. It highlights the varying proportions of respondents across different age brackets, aiding in demographic analysis.

**Table 3: Type of family of Jenu Kuruba tribe**

| Family Type     | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Nuclear family  | 94        | 94         |
| Joint family    | 5         | 5          |
| Extended family | 1         | 1          |
| Total           | 100       | 100        |

This table illustrates the types of families within the Jenu Kuruba tribe. The majority of families belong to the nuclear family type, with 94 respondents, constituting 94% of the total. A smaller proportion, 5%, belongs to joint families, comprising 5 respondents. Only 1 respondent, representing 1% of the total, belongs to an extended family. The total sample size is 100, encompassing all family types within the Jenu Kuruba tribe. The table offers a clear breakdown of family structures within the surveyed population. It indicates a predominant presence of nuclear families, with fewer instances of joint and extended families.

**Table 4: Marital status of Respondent**

| Particulars | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Married     | 91        | 91         |
| Unmarried   | 6         | 6          |



|               |     |     |
|---------------|-----|-----|
| Widow/Widower | 3   | 3   |
| Divorced      | 0   | 0   |
| Total         | 100 | 100 |

This table outlines the marital status of respondents. The majority, 91%, are married, comprising 91 respondents. 6 respondents, or 6%, are unmarried. There are 3 respondents, making up 3% of the total, who are widow/widowers. No respondents are reported as divorced in the surveyed population. The total sample size is 100, encompassing all marital statuses. The table offers a clear breakdown of the marital status distribution within the surveyed population. It indicates a significant presence of married individuals, with smaller proportions of unmarried and widowed individuals. Overall, the table provides valuable insights into the marital dynamics of the respondents.

**Table 5: Educational status of Jenu Kuruba Tribe**

| Education Level    | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Illiterate         | 48        | 48         |
| Primary            | 31        | 31         |
| High school        | 12        | 12         |
| PUC                | 7         | 7          |
| Graduate and Above | 2         | 2          |
| Total              | 100       | 100        |

This table displays the educational status of individuals within the Jenu Kuruba Tribe. The highest frequency, 48 respondents (48%), are classified as illiterate. 31 respondents (31%) have attained education up to the primary level. 12 respondents (12%) have completed high school education. 7 respondents (7%) have pursued education up to the Pre-University Course (PUC) level. Only 2 respondents (2%) are graduates or hold higher educational qualifications. The total sample size is 100 individuals, representing the educational diversity within the tribe. The table offers a comprehensive overview of educational attainment among the Jenu Kuruba Tribe, highlighting the prevalence of lower educational levels. It underscores the need for educational initiatives and support within the community to enhance literacy and educational opportunities.

**Table 6: Main Occupation of Jenukuruba Tribe**

| Education Level                         | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Agriculture Labour                      | 64        | 64         |
| Agriculture                             | 21        | 21         |
| Collection of minor forest produce      | 11        | 11         |
| Government services (Forest Department) | 2         | 2          |
| Any others                              | 2         | 2          |
| Total                                   | 100       | 100        |

This table presents the main occupations of individuals within the Jenukuruba Tribe. The predominant occupation, constituting 64% of respondents, is agriculture labor. Agriculture itself is the primary occupation for 21% of respondents. 11% of respondents are engaged in the collection of minor forest produce. A smaller proportion, 2% each, are involved in government services within the Forest Department and other unspecified occupations. The total sample size is 100 individuals, representing the diverse occupational landscape within the tribe. The table offers insights into the primary sources of livelihood for the Jenukuruba Tribe, emphasizing their strong connection to agriculture and forest-related activities. It underscores the importance of understanding and supporting their traditional occupations for sustainable livelihoods within the community.

**Table 7: Annual income of Jenukuruba Tribal family**

| Family income (in rupees) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Below 20,000              | 73        | 73         |
| 20,000-40,000             | 21        | 21         |

|               |     |     |
|---------------|-----|-----|
| 40,000-60,000 | 4   | 4   |
| Above 60,000  | 2   | 2   |
| Total         | 100 | 100 |

This table outlines the annual income distribution among Jenukuruba tribal families. The majority, 73%, have an annual income below 20,000 rupees. 21% of families fall within the income range of 20,000 to 40,000 rupees annually. 4% of families earn between 40,000 to 60,000 rupees annually. Only 2% of families have an income above 60,000 rupees annually. The total sample size is 100, showcasing the income diversity within the Jenukuruba tribe. The table provides valuable insights into the economic status of the tribe, highlighting the prevalence of low-income households. It underscores the need for targeted interventions to improve livelihoods and alleviate poverty within the community.

## 7. SUMMARY :

The data from the various tables provide a comprehensive glimpse into the demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural facets of the Jenukuruba tribe. With a notable male majority comprising 76% of respondents, the gender distribution leans towards males. Analysis of age distribution reveals a concentration within the 35-49 age groups, indicating a mature population. Nuclear families emerge as the predominant family structure, encompassing 94% of respondents. The institution of marriage appears prevalent, with 91% of respondents reporting marital status. Educational attainment levels vary, with a significant portion, 48%, classified as illiterate. The primary occupation among tribe members is agriculture labor, with 64% engaged in this field, underlining their strong connection to agricultural and forest-related activities. Income distribution paints a picture of economic challenges, with 73% of Jenukuruba tribal families earning below 20,000 rupees annually. These insights underscore the need for targeted interventions to address educational disparities, enhance economic opportunities, and preserve cultural heritage within the community.

## 8. CONCLUSION :

In conclusion, the data presented vividly underscores the socioeconomic hurdles confronting the Jenukuruba tribe. With substantial portions of the population exhibiting low levels of education and a reliance on traditional occupations like agriculture labor, the tribe faces significant challenges in accessing opportunities for economic advancement. The limited economic opportunities exacerbate these challenges, contributing to the prevailing cycle of poverty within the community. To address these multifaceted issues effectively, targeted interventions are imperative. These interventions should focus on improving access to education, ensuring that members of the tribe have the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue diverse livelihood options beyond traditional occupations. Diversification of livelihoods can help reduce vulnerability to economic shocks and enhance overall resilience within the community. Additionally, sustainable development initiatives should be prioritized to ensure that economic progress is balanced with environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Efforts to preserve and promote the tribe's rich cultural heritage are equally crucial, as they not only strengthen community identity but also contribute to broader socio-economic empowerment. Empowering the Jenukuruba tribe to participate in a range of socio-economic activities fosters inclusivity and enables them to contribute meaningfully to regional development efforts. Therefore, a holistic approach that combines education, economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation is essential for fostering the well-being and prosperity of the Jenukuruba tribe.

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