

TRIBES OF NILGIRI VALLEY

TODAS



The Toda are known by several names like Tudas, Tudavans, and Todar. They are found only in Nilgiri district. The Government of India has identified the Toda as one of the six Primitive Tribal groups of Tamil Nadu. The name Toda is supposed to be derived from the word 'tud', the sacred tud tree of Todas. The Linguist Emeneau (1958 : 47 - 50) said that, "Toda dialect is an independent language of the Dravidian family affiliated with Tamil - Malayalam. The uniqueness of the half - barrel shaped houses given speculations regarding their origin ranged from Rome to Sumeria. The Toda village is called a mund, means a herd or cattle - pen. It is usually a collection of three or five half barrel shaped huts each 18 feet by 9 feet by 10 feet high with a small doorway measuring only 32 inches by 18 inches. Besides the huts, the mund has another hut with a smaller doorway, called '**Tirierl**' or dairy temple. In the vicinity of the mund is the cattle - pen. Toda people are white (fair) in colour, being tall, strong built and well-shaped. The striking feature of the women is the arrangement of their hair which is dressed in ringlets and flows waving down to the shoulders. The traditional garment of a Toda is known as **put - kuli**, is of thick white cotton cloth with red and blue stripes which is embellished further embroidery by the Toda women, is thrown around the body by the men and women like 'Roman toga'. Jewellery is worn by both men and women.

KOTHAS



The Kothas, live in Seven settlements, generally known as Kotagiri or Kokkal. They are village artisans, who are good in carpentry, black smithy and pottery. But only a few families are engaged in these skills as a means of living. Most others are engaged in cultivation. Happily, most of the Kota families in all the settlement have their own patta land. Unlike Todas, they do not shy away from personal cultivation and are generally hard working people. In the field of education also they have stolen a march over other tribal communities. Today, many of them are working in the Government and non-Governmental departments.

KURUMBAS AND IRULAS



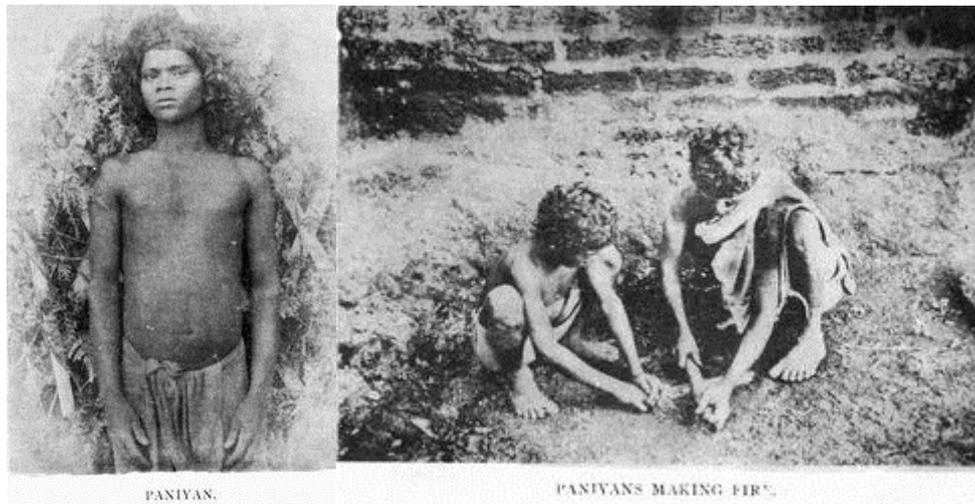
The Kurumba houses known as "GUDLU" are temporary constructions in the forests. The traditional occupation of the Kurumbas is food gathering, like collection of honey and forests produce. They are also cultivating millets like ragi and samai on a small scale of mainly on hill slopes and

mountain ridges. Honey fetches considerable remuneration for the Kurumbas. It is released much by public. Honey is collected mostly in the summer months from the cliffs, rocky crevices and the branches of giant trees. The supplement their usual diet with ample quantity of honey. Kurumbas are known to possess keen eyesight, gained possibly from constant watching of the honey bee to the hives. Now, they are mainly engaged in agriculture and those who do not own lands work as casual agricultural laborers. The Kurumbas are hard working people, but the economic condition of the Kurumbas is very poor.

Irulas with a few subsects among them are living in Masinagudi area, and in parts of Kotagiri and Coonoor Taluks. They are generally engaged in Collection of minor forest products. This is a seasonal operation and they work as casual agricultural laborers on local estates. Some of them are also engaged in looking after the herds of cattle belonging to others. Some are engaged in agriculture in the patta lands, conditionally assigned to them, where they have raised tea, coffee, jack trees, guava etc. However, due to their poor maintenance of their land due to lack of finance, the return from these lands is meager. The general economic condition of these tribes is poor.

The Mullukurumbas of Gudalur are a District group and are believed to belong to a pre agricultural tribe, since they still use bow and arrow for occasional hunting. They live in nine settlements in Erumad area and Cherangodu village. They are mainly agricultural laborers. They are hardworking people but their economic condition is poor.

PANIYAS



Paniyas (which literally means "workers" in local usage) are found Gudalur taluk and many more in Kerala. Paniyas were found to be coming under a subtle form of bonded labour. They were released from bondage and a few have been since rehabilitated in various schemes. They are scattered throughout Gudalur Taluk and are one of the most backward tribal communities. Under an age old system, most of the Paniyas were working under local land owners for low wages with little and no liberty to work for others for competitive wages. After Independence, however, the majority of the Paniyas broke away from their masters and started working as casual agricultural laborers, bamboo cutters and estate laborers. The Paniyas, by and large, live in poverty irrespective of whether they are bonded or not. During 1976, 481 Paniyas in 252 families were freed from bonded labour and they have been rehabilitated in the Paniya Welfare Land colonisation Co-operative society and other schemes.

KATTUNAIKANS:-

This tribal community is also found only in Gudalur Taluk, they are like Paniyas, farm labourers and their condition is no better than, of Paniyas.

S.No.	Name of the Tribes	Name of the Block	Population as on
1	Kurumbas.	Udhagamandalam	295
		Coonoor	860
		Kothagiri	740
		Gudalur	3180
2	Irulas	Udhagamandalam	1809
		Coonoor	1180
		Kothagiri	6120
		Gudalur	610
3	Paniyas	Udhagamandalam	Nil
		Coonoor	Nil
		Kothagiri	Nil
		Gudalur	7460
4	Todas	Udhagamandalam	850
		Coonoor	46
		Kothagiri	105
		Gudalur	Nil
5	Kothar	Udhagamandalam	1158
		Coonoor	300
		Kothagiri	580
		Gudalur	34
6	Kattunaikkar.	Udhagamandalam	Nil
		Coonoor	Nil
		Kothagiri	Nil
		Gudalur	410

Excerpts from <http://www.nilgiris.tn.gov.in>