

Tracing the Historical and Cultural Roots of the Kuruma Community: Lineage, Pastoral Traditions, and the Rise of Beerappa

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Abstract— *Telangana state has formed on the grounds of culture, heritage and exclusive festivals. It is one of those states that has multi-communities and diverse cultures. One of the many communities is the Kuruma community. Not much research has been done on this community in mainstream literature. Indeed, their culture and heritage are noteworthy to study. This research article delves into the history of the Kuruma community, and how Beerappa has become the patron deity of the community. It also examines whether the characters involved in the story of Beerappa are fictional or real. In addition, this research article focuses on why the Kuruma religion is called the Religion of Milk, and the different types within the Kuruma community. The inscriptions laid by the great kings which are related to this community are also examined. All in all, this article studies the objects that are relevant to this community through a historical approach rather than a cultural approach. While the Rajputs had Col. Tod, the Marathas had Grant-Duff, the Sikhs had Cunningham, and even the Jats had K. R. Kanungo, the Kurumas and Golla had none. The All India Yadava Mahasabha approached Rajbali Pandey to write the history of these two communities, but he miserably failed them. This research paper will try to find out the historical evidences of the Kuruma community.*

Keywords— *Kuruma community, culture and heritage, Beerappa, Veeragallu tradition, cultural studies, Indigenous traditions of Telangana.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Kuruma community is one of the oldest rural communities in the states of Telangana and nearby regions like Karnataka. For generations, they have lived by rearing sheep and goats (as they are often called the Shepherd community), which has shaped not only their economy (sheep-economy) but also their way of life, beliefs, and traditions. This community's history is mostly carried forward through oral stories, ballads, folk songs, and rituals, because very little is written about them in mainstream history. Because of this, many aspects of their culture and heritage remain less studied.

There are many traditions associated with this community. Among them, the worship of Beerappa holds a special place. Beerappa is seen as the lord protector of their flocks and the guide of their community. Over time, he has grown from being a local folk god into the Patron Deity of the Kurumas. His story is closely tied to their occupation and daily struggles, and through him the Kurumas express their identity, unity, and cultural pride. Rituals like Oggu Katha performances, community festivals, and ceremonies such as Beerappa-Kamarathi Kalyanam show how strongly his worship is woven into their lives. All these are told in the form of ballads, stories and oral folk songs.

Though Beerappa's worship is widespread and continues to thrive, serious academic attention to his role and the cultural evolution of the Kurumas has been very limited. Most of what we know today comes from folk performances and oral traditions, not from historically proven facts. This research article will try to fill that gap by tracing how Beerappa came to be recognized as the Kuruma community's Patron Deity. It also tries to look into the cultural practices, rituals, and oral histories of the Kuruma Community to understand the roots and evolution of this tradition. By focusing on all these concerns, this research paper also highlights the larger folk culture of Telangana state.

II. WHO ARE KURUMAS?

2.1 Etymology and Origins:

'Kuru' means 'a person who lives in caves or hills'. 'Kuri' means a person who looks at the animals in the forest and hills, with the intention not to kill them, but to adopt them like pets and live with them harmoniously. In other words, a person who is skilled at surviving in the hills and forests by taking care of the animals instead of killing them. The Kurumas have this consciousness and wisdom (Nagasheshu, p. 32). Kuruba/Kuruma means 'a wise man' or 'an intellectual'. Siddayya, the religious leader of Gonds from Karnataka, stated that Kuruma/Kuruba is not a word that indicates a community or an occupation, but rather a word that talks about spirituality (Nagasheshu, p. 32). Kurubas/Kurumas believe that their knowledge and wisdom is unmatched by anyone.

The Kurubas/Kurumas are also called Pal or Khagel in the Northern region of India. Khagel means 'strength like lion' (Nagasheshu, p. 33). Dr. Maadhe Gowda, a renowned historian from Karnataka, stated that the Kurumas/Kurubas opposed the Mughal rule with ferocious aggression and controlled vast forest areas. They stopped the Mughals from occupying the invaluable forest areas.

Research scholars have found the term "Dhangar", another name for Kurubas/Kurumas, in the first century of the Common Era. 'Dhang' means hill. Researchers conclude that Kurubas were known for their strong connection and intimacy to hill or mountainous regions. A few scholars believe that the word 'Kurupa' has evolved as Kuruba over a period of time. Here, Kurupa means mountain (Nagasheshu, p. 33).

2.2 Historical References:

Renowned research scholar Pingalam calls Kurumas/Kurubas as 'Kurunila Mannar', which means 'small kings'. During the Pallava dynasty period, the Kurumas/Kurubas were regarded as the Kurumbajans, which indicates 'very powerful'. In the year 1961, Thurston, one of the census officers, reported that Kurumas/Kurubas were the most dominant community in Southern India. Lakkappagouda, a famous historian from Karnataka, stated that the Vijayanagara dynasty kings also belonged to the Kuruba community. Shambhajoshi, another research scholar, claimed that Kurubas were also called 'Kandamilas'. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, in his famous book 'The Sources of Vijayanagara', describing the members of the Sangama clan (there were four clans in Vijayanagara dynasty namely Sangama, Saluva, Thuluva and Araviti), especially the founding members of the Sangama, Harihararaya and Bukkaraya, as 'Kurumbalayara', which firmly connects to Kuruma/Kuruba community (Odayar Hegde, p. 7). The word 'Bukka' means 'shepherds'. The first ever woman who took land from the Muslim community and built Ramalayam (Temple of Lord Rama) was Ahalyabhai Holkar, and she belonged to the Kuruba/Kuruma community (Nagasheshu, p. 107).

Kurubas/Kurumas were described in ancient Tamil poetry as 'Maleyar', meaning 'the people who live in the high places like hills and mountains'. Kurubas are called 'Kurumba Idaiyar' in Tamil, Kuruma or Kuruba in Telugu and Thangar in Maharashtra (Nagasheshu, pp. 34, 83). Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), an orientalist who pioneered the study of the Dravidian languages with his influential work 'Comparative Grammar of Dravidian Language', stated that Kurumba is a word derived from Kannada language, but not from Tamil language. Dr. Hyudon, a well-known genealogist, stated that Kuruma people are Dravidian people who migrated to Chota Nagpur from Kurg. He firmly stated that the Kurumas/Kurubas were full-blooded Dravidians (Nagasheshu, p. 36).

2.3 Connection to Harappan Culture

Dr. Sunitha Kumar Chatterjee, who studied extensively about the Dravidians, proposed that the culture of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro was more or less Dravidian in nature. She stated that the discovery of idols like Lord Shiva, Pashupathi and some Linga mudras suggests that the Kuruma/Kuruba community people were a part of the Harappan culture. Geographically,

Kurumas/Kurubas are nomadic people. They migrate to every place where they can find water and grass for the better living conditions of sheep and goats. Anthony and Dr. Grierson claimed that they found one of those groups nearby Nasik, Rajmahal hills and Chota Nagpur. These two scholars have identified them as 'Karuka' or 'Dhanagara'.

2.4 Types of Kurumas

Kurumas/Kurubas are four types:

1. Kaadu Kurubas
2. Jenu Kurubas
3. Andhe Kurubas
4. Mulla Kurubas

Even though there are four types of Kurubas, they are all one. Many of the people of this community, particularly in Telangana, still believe that there are only two types of Kurumas/Kurubas namely Patthi Kuruma (cotton) and Unni Kuruma (wool). Actually, these two mentioned Kurumas are part of Kaadu Kuruma. For generations, all the people in this community taught that there were only two types of Kurumas. But the fact is, there are four types in this community (Nagashesu, p. 37). Sir W. Elliot stated that the Kurubas/Kurumas are one of the most important elements of South India. He further added that Kurumas/Kurubas were the dominant section in the city of Indore of Madhya Pradesh (Indore was previously known as Indrapura) (Nagashesu, p. 37).

2.5 The Religion of Milk

Kurumas/Kurubas belong to a religion called 'Religion of Milk', stated Maddayya, a well-known historian from Karnataka. He further stated that for everything, evidence is what matters the most. Without proper evidences, people just make baseless or even false claims, and unfortunately, people easily believe these false statements because it is easier to accept myths rather than questioning them. Modern society may have advanced but superstitions and false beliefs still dominate historical facts (Subhash, p. 42). Everyone should focus on their caste's roots and study it with historical proofs, because every caste has its own glory. But one should remember that, in order to study history, evidences are most important; without them we can go nowhere.

Maddayya also stated that there is a strong intimacy between the Kurumas/Kurubas and the Sumerian civilization. This civilization dates back from 6000 BCE to 2000 BCE. During 3000 BCE, the Sumerians developed the writing system. Cuneiform is a system of writing which was first developed by the ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia around 3000 BCE. It is considered as the most significant among the many cultural contributions of the Sumerians and the greatest among those of the Sumerian city of Uruk, that advanced the writing of cuneiform. There is a valid reason why we mention Sumerian civilization. Historical evidences proved that shepherds were living during the Sumerian period. We can trace the Sumerian civilization in the North-East region of present-day South Iraq (Nagashesu, p. 76).

On the other hand, the Aryans might have invaded many places, brought their culture and successfully indulged their culture into native people's culture without much difficulty. But at the same time, Kurubas/Kurumas did really well to protect and preserve their culture and identity through figures like Beerappa. Beerappa, as a god of Kurumas/Kurubas, reflects this ancient heritage. His significance goes beyond religion. He is the embodiment of the Kuruma/Kuruba community people's history and their struggle (Subhash, p. 44).

2.6 Connection to Sumerian Civilization

Will Durant, a famous American historian, in his work 'The Story of Civilization', stated that the Sumerian people were the first shepherds in history. He claimed that each family had nearly six thousand flock. These shepherds did have a huge problem with a tribe called 'Saragana'. This Saragana tribe thugs regularly tormented the shepherds. During that time, a man called Dumuzi acted as the saviour and protector of the shepherds. He used to protect the flock and shepherds with courage so much so that the thugs from Saragana tribes ran away after seeing him near the shepherds (Nagashesu, p. 78).

Friedrich Hrozny, a Czech orientalist and linguist who is very famous for the innovation of Hittite language, stated that the Arya is not civilization, rather it is just a culture. There was an inscription laid by the Chalukya king Rajaraja Narendra in the year 1061 A.D. in which Beerappa name has been mentioned. In the inscription, Beerappa name has been drafted as Beeralinga.

III. VEERAGALLU TRADITION (HERO-STONE)

Veera means Hero and Gallu means Stones. Shesha Shastri, a renowned historian in Karnataka, in his famous work 'Karnatakadha Veeragallugalu', stated that in Kannada, the word "Veera" means a person who sacrifices himself to save the animal or human race.



Image-1 (5-tier inscription)



Image-2 (3-tier inscription)

The Veeragallu tradition is represented in 3-tier, 5-tier and 7-tier inscriptions. The above inscriptions were laid by the famous Chalukya kings of the late 11th century Common Era, that explain the Veeragallu tradition. History suggests that this fabulous Veeragallu tradition has evolved from the Kuruba/Kuruma community, further added by Shesha Shastri (Nagasheshu, pp. 82-83). He further stated that the words like 'Beeragaallu', 'Beerashriyampadedhan', 'Beeraswargampadedhan', and 'Beeragaavunda', which found in the inscriptions laid by the great Chalukya kings in Karnataka, tell us the history of Kurumas/Kurubas. 'Veera' also means 'a person who donates a lot'. It is also a kind of heroism. A generous man named 'Adigonda' is depicted in the Belur inscription, laid by the Hoyasala King Narasimha-I, in the year 1182 Common Era, which depicts him as a generous person. In addition to the above, Veeragallu used to protect women and animals from thugs. An inscription laid in the year 1150 AD in Hadagali region explores this fact as it showed a man named 'Beeragavunda' as a hero who was protecting women from a group of dangerous thugs.

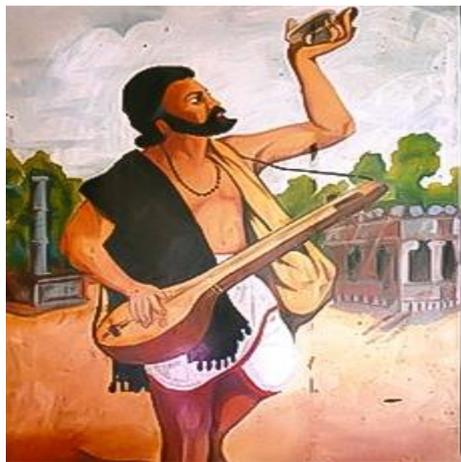


Image-3: Kanakadasa

Most of the community people assume that the Kuruma/Kuruba history has started with Kanakadasa (who was also known as Timmappa). But this community's history started way back before Kanakadasa's era. A Kuruba (shepherd) family was the birthplace of Kanakadasa. Prior to becoming a saint, he was a combatant. After suffering severe injuries in combat but miraculously surviving, it is thought that he gave that up and became a Haridasa, or servant of God.

Maddayya, from Karnataka, stated that Kanakadasa was indeed a great saint from Kuruba community but this community had even greater history than what we anticipate (Nagasheshu, p. 86). There was a man called Dumuji, who was famously known for his bravery and courage, and died while protecting the shepherds from thugs. After the death of Dumuji, the ancient

Sumerians decided to treat him as their God. In Greek countries, Lord Sri Krishna and Beerappa were two of the ancient Gods. Based on this fact, there was a speculation that the worshippers of Beerappa might have spread across Central and East Asia as well (Nagasheshu, p. 87).

3.1 Archaeological Evidence

The famous Shaiva Guru Ranasiddeshwara, from 12th century Common Era, took the responsibility of taking Beerappa's teachings to the masses. He also added that two of the prominent places in the Neolithic age were Gufkral and Mehrghar. The remnants of goats and sheep were found during the 700 AD excavations. This could probably be the first step of civilization. In addition to that, the origin of shepherds was traced back 52,000 years ago in Northern Persia. Edgar Thurston, the British Indologist, in his 1901 work 'Castes and Tribes of Southern India', stated that according to the Mysore Census Report of 1901, the Kuruba community did not show much interest in formal education. They are often described as very simple in nature, and in some places, the word Kuruba is even used to describe a person who is innocent or not very clever.

The Kurubas are also known as Halu Mata (the milk community). This name comes from their belief that the saint Revana Siddeswara created them out of milk. In Hindustani, they are referred to as Dhangars, which literally means wealthy people. Interestingly, although many Kurubas appear poor because of their plain dress and lifestyle, some of them are actually quite prosperous. During the Madras Census of 1901, some members of this community used names such as Kavadiga, Kumpani, and Rayarvamsam (meaning "the clan of kings").

In Mysore, the Kurubas are divided into two main groups: the Hande Kurubas and the others, and these two groups do not maintain social contact with each other. The latter group worships Bire Devaru and follow Shaivism (devotion to Lord Shiva). Another tradition says that the Halu Kurubas of Mysore are again divided based on the day they perform worship:

1. Aditya Varada: who worship on Sundays
2. Soma Varada: who worship on Mondays
3. Brihaspati Varada: who worship on Thursdays

3.2 Priesthood and Shaivism

The Kuruba/Kuruma people used to offer prayers to the stones (usually this community people find their deities in stones and rocks) by applying 'Pasupu Bandari' (turmeric powder) in order to request the God to protect their flock from all diseases. On that note, the original initiators of the priesthood were none other than the people of Halu Mata (milk caste's people). He boldly stated that the priesthood was born from the Kuruba/Kuruma people. Shambha Joshi, a research scholar from Karnataka, stated that the original Shaivites in India were the people of Halu Mata. Max Muller, in his famous work 'The Popular Educator', stated that the people of Halu Mata who resided in the regions of Punjab had transformed as Brahmins over the period of time (Muller, p. 256).

These people used to live in a hut which they built on their own called 'Hatti'. Over the course of time, these Hattis have become the shelters of their flock. They have different names:

1. Rappa – in Rayalaseema region
2. Doddi – in Telangana region (even in Coastal region of Andhra Pradesh)
3. Hatti – in Karnataka region

Gustav Soloman Oppert, a German Indologist and a famous Sanskrit scholar, in his 1893 work 'On the Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsha of India', stated that indeed the Kurubas/Kurumas must be regarded as the very old inhabitants of this land, who can contest with their Dravidian kinsmen the priority of occupation of the Indian soil. He further stated that the Halu Mata people have spread from Nilgiris hills to the Raajmahal mountainous regions.

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION

Kurubas/Kurumas indeed have rich history. But not many scholars have worked intensively in mainstream literature with historical proofs and facts about their history. If any history has more publicity and less research, it is very dangerous. Because the history may be extinguished if there is no real time research on it with facts and evidences. The Kuruba people call Lord Krishna by the name of 'Junjappa'. This caste's people also worship a box which they believe contains the wearing apparels of Lord Krishna by the name of Junjappa (Leweis Rice, Mysore Gazette, p. 333).

Maddayya stated that in-depth investigations and research have been done about Beerappa and Halu Mata people (Kuruba) in the state of Karnataka. Late Oggu Sattayya and his grandson Oggu Ravi (a gold medal winner research scholar from Suravaram Pratapa Reddy Telugu University Hyderabad) are the two prominent story-narrators of Beerappa Oggu Katha in Telangana. But, if one has to get historical proofs and evidences regarding the history of Kuruba/Kuruma community and Beerappa, that will be possible only in the state of Karnataka. Chandrakantha Bijjarige, a renowned research scholar from Karnataka, has studied extensively about the Kuruba people. In other words, he dedicated his whole life to studying the historical evidences essential for the evolution of Kuruba community.

4.1 Ancient Origins

The ancient Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian civilizations were indeed started by the cattle herders. This can be traced back to 52,000 years ago. The origins of shepherds can be found in the Northern region of Afghanistan (present day Tajikistan). The information about the origins of Kuruba people was written in the inscription laid by the Yadava Jaithugi of Devagiri, in the year 1196 Common Era. There was a sentence "Haragruhadhim suragruhadhim aarugruhadhe bouddhalayam GORAVARA savanara bouddhara neravihalindha indivede soyisi thorkum". Here, the word Goravara refers to Kuruba people (Nagashesu, p. 111). The first domesticated animal in animal husbandry was the goat. The goat is the most agile of all livestock. It is an intelligent animal. It climbs any rough hill or mountain. It crosses and grazes along winding streams. Studies have been conducted and are being conducted on the Kuruba community, that is, the Pala religion (Halu Mata), in more than two hundred universities around the world. No other religion has had so much research done on it. This distinction belongs only to the Pala religion (Nagashesu, p. 111).

4.2 Beerappa as Hero

What are the factors that make Beerappa a hero? The world's largest epic cycle of epic poetry was named after this hero Beerappa. The story consists of fifteen stories in total. This entire story would have taken more than seven hundred pages to be sung. It would take about 75 days to sing about his heroic deeds. That is why it can be said that Beerappa has heroism like no other. The Kuruba literature in Karnataka is up to 8000 pages. Up to 50 researches have been done about Beerappa and the Halu Mata. That is what heroism means. Beerappa existed even before the kingdoms came. Back then, there was no concern for kingdoms (Nagashesu, p. 118).

4.3 Neolithic Connections

When did spinning yarn, weaving rugs, linen sarees, and fire all begin? It was the Neolithic Age. In the excavations carried out in the Gupkral area of today's Kashmir region, in the excavations carried out in Mehrgarh dating back to 7000 BC, it was found that goats, sheep, deer, and donkeys were domesticated. That is, if traces were found for that period, it is estimated that there were herds of goats and sheep many years before that. In the Mahagarh and Koldihwa areas of Uttar Pradesh, traces of human sedentary life, cattle, goats, and sheep breeding were found. Neolithic people used cotton and woolen clothes. Shepherds have been around since the beginning of time. Anthropologists say that the Kuruba is not a caste, but a religion. That's why it is called Kurubakulavalla and Maddiholavalla in Kannada (Nagashesu, p. 123). The Kurubas have a unique tradition. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no other tribe with such a culture. They are found all over India.

V. BEERAPPA AS THE PATRON DEITY

The name Beeralingeswara comes from two Sanskrit words. "Bheera" means brave or strong, and "Lingeswara" is another name for Lord Shiva, the main god in Shaivism. So, Beeralingeswara means "Brave Lord Shiva" or "Courageous Protector." In different places and stories, Beeralingeswara is called by many names, such as Beerappa, Beereshwara, and Bheeralinga. These name changes happen because of local languages and ways of speaking. But all these names refer to the same god, who is respected for his bravery and protection.

5.1 Kanche Ilaiah Shepherd's Perspective

World intellectual and retired professor Kanche Ilaiah Shepherd stated that the word 'appa' in the name 'Beerappa' is a source of building civilization. Beerappa was the first person to domesticate sheep. Appa is a creative word. Kurumas/Kurubas migrated from the state of Karnataka and started worshipping Beerappa as their lord protector and ultimately started treating him as their patron deity. It was these Kuruma people who, for the first time in the southern states of India, introduced Dravidian culture against the Aryans. He doubted that Ramappa (a temple situated in the district of Hanmakonda) might be the grandson of Harappa. Ultimately, he stated that the word 'appa' in Harappa, Ramappa, Beerappa, Ayyappa, etc., is a creative word that genuinely symbolizes the start of new civilization.

In his speech at a book launch ceremony at Osmania University, Professor Kanche Ilaiah Shepherd stated that the sheep economy is the source of human civilization. The oldest civilizations in the world are Israel, Greece, and Egypt. The civilizations of these countries also began with sheep farming. The greatest king mentioned in the Bible, the holy book of Christians, is King David. He was also the son of a shepherd. Later the Egyptians made these shepherds from Israel as their slaves and started building their own kingdom, that ultimately became one of the best kingdoms of all time.

One fine day, this 18-year-old boy named David went to the king of Israel and said that he would go to the war against the giant Egyptian army and fight alone. The king initially hesitated and sent David to the war. After a series of events, David killed the giant Egyptian army leader and with that the rest of the Egyptian soldiers fled from the war. That's when the king realized that David was the perfect man to protect Israel and he made David the King of the country. So, shepherds do have the ability to work under extreme pressure and are also powerhouses that can prove too hot to handle for the opposition. For the first time in the history of the world, a shepherd became king in Israel. He further added that mathematics was indeed invented by the shepherds before Aryabhata (Aryabhata was credited as the inventor of mathematics only due to the evidence of printed books, but before him, the shepherds were the pure mathematicians whose drawback was they didn't have the opportunity to print their books).

Any business in this world faces ups and downs. But the animal economy is always profitable. Beerappa is the person who introduced this animal surplus economy to the world. That is how Beerappa has become the patron deity of Kurumas/Kurubas. He suggested future scholars delve deep into studying the relationship between Harappa and Beerappa as their names possess a lot of similarity. He strongly believed that there must be an intimacy between these two names and that should be investigated thoroughly by future research scholars.

5.2 The Story of Beerappa

The story of Beerappa helps us understand the early life of shepherd communities and their gods in the Deccan region. His story is told at a temple in Balapālapalle, Kurnool district. Beerappa was first a human but later became a god. He was the youngest of seven sons born to a couple named Ādireddi and Ādemma. At birth, he had special marks on his body that showed he was not an ordinary child. His real name was Elanāgireddi.

His brothers were jealous of him. They tricked him and sent him to clear land near Srisailam, thinking he would be killed by a demoness living there. But Beerappa killed the demoness's children with an axe. The demoness then complained to Lord Siva. When Siva asked, Beerappa said he was the son of Varaputra and that the land was his. While ploughing the land, Beerappa found a hidden lid. Inside it were sheep that Siva had kept, because they were troubling him in Kailash. Siva then told Beerappa to take care of all those sheep and go live in a place called Kalyanpatnam.

5.3 Anthropological Perspective

Bronisław Malinowski, a Polish-born British anthropologist known as the father of social anthropology, studied how law works in small, traditional societies where there are no police, judges, or written rules. He found that even without these formal systems, people still follow rules and maintain order in their communities. He noticed that myths play an important role in law. Myths are traditional stories passed down through generations. These stories often explain why a certain rule or custom exists. Malinowski stated that law is not only about written rules or punishments given by courts. Instead, law should be understood as a system of social control that grows out of culture, tradition, and everyday life.

The story of Beerappa clearly shows Bronisław Malinowski's idea that law exists in myths, rituals, and everyday life, not only in government or official institutions. People respect Beerappa greatly because he was born during a time of struggle against a cruel ruler and was believed to be guided by divine power. He became a spiritual leader and protector of the herding community. Beerappa's life was shaped by strict rules of the pastoral (shepherding) society. For example, he could not touch anything that had been washed, he could not cut his hair, he could not have sexual relations, and he could not rest in a shelter while herding. These were not just personal choices or superstitions. They were serious moral rules that protected the health and success of the herd, which was the main source of life for the community.

5.4 Law and Custom in the Beerappa Tradition

Everyone in society followed these customs. These customs acted like unwritten laws, supported by religious belief. They helped maintain order and guided the behavior of all herders. In this way, rituals and customs worked as a form of law in communities without formal governments. The story of Beerappa shows that breaking these rules brought not only social problems but also spiritual consequences. This makes it clear how closely myth, ritual, law, and society are connected. As

Beerappa said, "Law is like a living body... it has its culture, and it has its character." This fits perfectly with Malinowski's view of law.

In the story of Beerappa, things like infidelity, betrayal, and disrespect to elders are seen as serious taboos. They are not only personal mistakes but also offenses against the whole community. Beerappa's life as a shepherd showed his strong moral discipline, and for this reason, people respected him greatly. Even today, community elders and leaders use Beerappa's story to guide people toward the right path. When someone makes a mistake, they do not shout or get angry. Instead, they point to a white sheep and remind the person of what happens when a shepherd becomes careless and does not follow the group.

In societies without formal states, laws are usually connected to religion. Rules and codes of behavior are tied to religious beliefs and practices. This is why Beerappa's story is more than just a myth; it is a living example of community values and unity. When someone breaks these rules, they often face ritual punishments. One of the strongest punishments is social isolation. A person may be banned from joining religious ceremonies or group prayers. This exclusion is very powerful because it damages both the person's social reputation and their spiritual connection with the community. Through such practices, we can see how ceremonies and rituals help enforce the law in traditional societies. This shows again how closely religion, law, and society are linked in the Beerappa story.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Kuruma community has a long and rich history that has been preserved mainly through oral stories, folk songs, and rituals rather than written records. Their way of life, centered around shepherding and animal care, has shaped their culture, beliefs, and social practices over centuries. Beerappa, who was first a heroic human and later became a god, represents the courage, wisdom, and values of the Kuruma people. He protects their flocks, guides the community in moral and ethical living, and serves as a symbol of their unity and identity.

The story of Beerappa also reflects how law and social order exist in societies even without formal courts, police, or written rules. The Kurumas follow strict customs and taboos not just as religious practices, but because these rules are essential for the safety of their animals, the well-being of the community, and the continuity of their traditions. Rituals, moral teachings, and social punishments, like exclusion from ceremonies, help reinforce these unwritten rules. This shows how deeply religion, daily life, and social order are connected in non-state communities.

Historically, the Kurumas/Kurubas have played an important role in protecting their lands, resisting outside influences, and preserving their culture. Traditions like the Veeragallu hero-stones, the worship of Beerappa, and the Halu Mata religion highlight the bravery, generosity, and spiritual devotion of this community. Their close connection with pastoral life also links them to some of the earliest civilizations, showing that shepherding and animal care were central to human development.

Beerappa is more than just a deity; he is a living symbol of the Kuruma community's history, culture, and values. Studying his story helps us understand how the Kurumas maintain their identity, social order, and traditions through myths, rituals, and everyday practices. This research highlights the importance of historical evidence, oral traditions, and ethnological study in understanding the roots and heritage of the Kuruma people, ensuring that their rich culture is recognized and remembered for future generations.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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