

**CONFLICT, NEGOTIATION AND  
GOVERNANCE AMONG THREE TRIBAL  
COMMUNITIES IN TAMIL NADU**

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## **DRAFT**

# **CONFLICT, NEGOTIATION AND GOVERNANCE AMONG THREE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN TAMILNADU**

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According to different kinds of life situations various kinds of conflicts occur among the individuals. Each and every community has developed certain mechanisms to deal with the conflict situations among the individuals and groups. Negotiation, arbitration, punishment etc. are some of the mechanisms to deal with conflicts. To undertake and carryout these mechanisms, societies have also developed certain governing systems. Tribes are not exception to this rule. In this paper three tribal communities with three different modes of production have been taken up for the study. They are the Irulas, who are traditionally good gatherers the Mullukurumbas, who are the hunters and the Kotas, the artisans. Now a days a lot of changes have happened in their modes of production. Though many have taken up agricultural works and a few have taken up white collar and semi-skilled works, still they retain their traditional pursuits to a considerable extent. This paper tries to explain as to how in these three tribal communities conflicts arise, how are they negotiated and governed will be studied from a comparative perspective.

### **POLITICO-JURAL ORGANISATION OF THE IRULAS VILLAGE PANCHAYAT:**

Each Irula settlement has its own traditional panchayat or village council. This panchayat or council consists of a headman (Moopan) and the elders of the settlement. Women usually do not have membership in the village panchayat. At the beck and call of the Oor Panchayat, particularly of the Moopan, are the functionaries called Kuruthalai and Vandari. They are the official messengers of the panchayat and convey its messages to the fellow Irulas within and outside the settlement depending on the necessity. It is customary in each Irula village that the offices of Moopan, Vandari and Kururthalai are held by members of different clans. It is also interesting to note that the two clans the members of which hold the office of Kuruthalai and Vandari should be in a marriable relationship with the Moopan's clan. All the disputes related to the Irula settlement are brought to the notice of the Moopan who convenes the council meeting to discuss them. The

panchayat proceedings are called by the Irulas as “Nyayam pesarathu” which means “speaking out justice”.

Occasions for panchayat meetings:

1. Before the celebration of all festivals.
2. At the time of death ceremony.
3. To solve intra and interfamilial disputes and to discuss about expiation when some wrong has been committed by any person.

### **Moopan (Headman):**

His post is hereditary. His title Moopan is always prefixed to his name whenever a reference is made to him. His wife is referred to as Moopathi. He and his family members are highly respected by the Irulas. The Moopan is expected to sit on a raised platform/chair/bench during the panchayat proceedings while others sit on the ground. During that occasion, he wears ‘Urumalai’ (turban) and it is also said that no one other than Moopan should wear Urumalai on that occasion.

### **Role of Moopan in various occasions:**

Villagers should consult him on every important matter. Whenever there is a proposal for a marriage, it should be intimated to the headman. When the groom's party from another village reaches the bride's village with a marriage proposal, the party should visit the Moopan's home and consult him first, before proceeding to the bride's house. Moopan's presence is essential at the time of a marriage. Whenever a death occurs, it is the Moopan who should decide the time/date of the disposal of the dead body.

If there are any disputes in the village, the Moopan enquires into them, and takes decisions in consultation with other elders. He should convene the meeting of the council before the celebration of all the festivals to discuss about details such as raising of funds and particular features of their performance. Also when a matter of infraction of community norms comes up before the Moopan, he convenes the village panchayat. The matters that usually come before the panchayat are related to divorce, property inheritance, illegitimate relations, inter personal and inter familial disputes etc. Most of their problems are solved within their panchayat. If there is

any problem of wider implications, it is placed before some influential caste men of the surrounding villages with whom the Irulas have long connections. The local term for compromise is “Samadharanam”. For some of the crimes, the offenders are asked to arrange a feast for the villagers. Irulas offer gifts to the Moopan when he attends the life-cycle ceremonies. They refer this money as ‘Moopan panam’.

### **Vandari:**

The post of Vandari is hereditary. His wife is referred to as Vanderichi. He acts like a messenger to convey information about puberty, marriage, death etc. to the Irulas of his own village and of other villages. In addition, he has to perform some duties in various ceremonies. At the time of marriage, he should spread a mat on which the bride and the groom sit. He is paid 0.25 paise for this. After the marriage ceremony, the betel leaves, nuts etc. which are spread out on the mat will be given to him. If any offerings are made to God at the time of marriage, they also are taken by him. In addition, he gets the plain white cloth or dhoti which has been used for spreading the cooked rice in marriage feast. During the death ceremony, he should safeguard the staffs of all the visitors and hand them back to them when they leave the settlement. Whenever the Moopans from other villages visit the settlement, the Vandari should keep a general watch over the village. If there are any unwanted intruders, it is his duty to haul them up or report against them to the Moopan.

### **Kuruthalai:**

The post of Kuruthali is also hereditary. He works like a village servant. He should supply plantain leaves and fire wood to all the people during all the ceremonies. Even if he is not able to bring them by himself, he should arrange for some one who can discharge these duties. He receives some doles from all the households for his traditional services. In addition, during festivals, the mangoes and coconuts that are tied to the pandal are given to the Kuruthalai. During the ceremonies, he receives all the people and distributes betel leaves and nuts at the end of the ceremonies.

### **Collective duties of kuruthalai and vandari:**

When a boy and a girl elope from the settlement, it is the duty of the Vandari or Kuruthalai to search and bring them back to the settlement. This is particularly so if the parents of the eloped do not approve of their union and complain the matter to the Moopan. On the occasion of community feasts, the Kuruthalai and the Vandari take up the responsibility for cooking the food. Both the Vandari and the Kuruthalai must be present at the time of paying bride wealth. For the various services rendered on various occasions the Kuruthalai and the Vandari are paid some money. During death ceremony, they are paid Rs.2.25/- towards their services. In some cases, basing on the panchayat decisions, they are directed by the Moopan to administer physical punishment to the offender.

### **Illanthari:**

Whenever either Kuruthalai or Vandari is away from the village or not in a position to discharge the duties for some other reason, some clan member will deputise for the absentee functionary. Such a substitute is called Illanthari. Usually, young people are selected as Illantharis and they will be potential candidates for the posts of Kuruthalai and Vandari in the future.

The Moopan, Vandari and Kuruthalai have each a big bamboo stick which is considered sacred. Whenever they go out of their native village to attend some marriage or death ceremony in other Irula villages, they are expected to carry with them their staffs called 'Dhandam' or 'Dhadikuchi'. These insignia receive special respect on those occasions which is discussed elsewhere in this report. At the time of succession to these offices, the sticks used by the previous functionaries are handed over to the new incumbants. For the new Kuruthalai and Vandari, the Moopan will hand over the sticks. In the case of the Moopan, anyone of the elder men will hand over this insignia. If a person holding the office of Kuruthalai and Vandari is found to be irresponsible and negligent of his duties, he is removed from the office and is replaced by an eligible successor (either from his family or from his clan).

### **Succession to the Offices:**

All these three offices are hereditary and usually the eldest son inherits the office from his father, following the rule of primogeniture. If an incumbent dies without having any sons, then his brother or his brother's son succeeds him. In the selection of the headman, other aspects like age,

marital status, physique, ability, knowledge etc. are also taken into consideration. If the eldest son is found to be unfit for the post of headman, the council chooses the second son for the post.

In Seengupathy settlement, one by name Sadamooan was the village headman some time ago, and he had three wives. Through his first wife, he had four daughters and one son namely Sungani (40). His second wife had three daughters and two sons namely Marudhan (35) alias Pasn and Raman (32), while his third wife did not have any children. When Sadamooan died in 1971, there arose a question as to who should occupy the office of Moopan. Sungani, the eldest son was found to be physically unfit for the post. Marudhan alias Pasan (second wife's son) was chosen as Moopan.

If the lineal descendant of the deceased incumbent is unmarried, he cannot become a Moopan and hence the post goes to another member of the same lineage.

If anyone is negligent of his duties, he will be removed from the post. Sivan has been holding the post of Kuruthalai for the last three years. Prior to that, his elder brother Karuppan was holding that post. Due to Karuppan's negligence of his duties, he was removed from the office (Later he left the settlement and emigrated). Then the post was given to Sivan. Prior to Karuppan this post was held by Raman who is the elder brother of Karuppan's father.

If for certain reasons, the seniormost lineal descendant is not chosen for the post of Moopan, he tries to become a Pattali (priest). After becoming a Pattali he serves at a temple and practices native medicine, divination etc.

According to the Irula tradition, a person should hold only one post whether it be a religious or political one. Aiyyavu (45) of Perumalkoilpathy did work as Vandari from 1974 to 1983. During this time, he learnt the functions of Pattali from his father Ponnann (85) who was Pattali (Priest) in those days. For the past three years Ponnann has not been able to perform his priestly duties. Hence, his son, who was a Vandari took to priesthood, and was simultaneously working as priest and Vandari. The Irulas of the settlement brought this matter before the council, and the council appointed one youngman by name Marudhan as Vandari in 1984. Ponnann (father of Aiyyavu) himself worked as Vandari before he developed interest in priestly work. When he became a priest, his son Aiyyavu became Vandari in his place.

**Social Control:**

Social control by village panchayat is referred to as 'Oor kattu'. In the interior settlements the traditional panchayat still has a strong hold over the members of the village, whereas in the plains settlements the traditional panchayat is losing its hold over the people. One of the reasons may be that the headman of Perumalkoilpathy did not take proper action when his daughter fell in love with a non-Irula man. This case is elaborated below.

Mari (35) is the daughter of Sinnamoopan (60) who is the headman of Perumalkoilpathy. She fell in love with Ganesan and carried on an affair with him. Ganesan (29) belongs to the Pallan caste which is considered by the Irulas as untouchable and inferior to them. They wanted to marry but the Moopan did not give permission. Both of them took poison but they survived. Then the Moopan, moved by his daughter's desperation was ready to give his daughter to Ganesan in marriage, but the latter became suspicious of the character of Mari and declined to take her as his wife. At that stage, the Moopan performed the marriage of his daughter to an Irula from an outside settlement. According to their custom, he should have excommunicated his daughter. Instead, he performed her marriage with an Irula man. From that day onwards the Irulas of Perumalkoilpathy were sore with him.

In later years, cases similar to this came to him. In those cases he could not take strict decisions safeguarding the Irula customs. So during the last few years, cases involving sex, illegitimate relationships and extramarital relationships are not brought to the notice of the Moopan. Even when he is aware of such things, he does not call them in question before the meeting of the council. In this way the council is losing the confidence of the villagers.

**Offences and punishment:**

Whenever a person is found guilty he/she is given punishment by the Moopan in consultation with council members. The punishment depends on the type of offence. For certain type of offences the panchayat may just admonish them and warn them not to repeat them. In cases, where a person is responsible for Seevaiyadi Seruppadi pollution (details are given in a later portion), he is asked by the Moopan (panchayat) to bear the expenses for purification ceremony. Through the performance of the expiation ceremony the pollution caused to the entire lineage is cleansed.

In some cases the offender is fined. The fine for offences is known as 'Kutrapanam'. Kutrapanam varies according to the nature of the offence and the background and antecedents of the person involved. The minimum fine is Rs.10/- and till now the amount did not go beyond Rs.50/-. The kutrapanam can be paid in instalments. If people are involved repeatedly in the same kind of offence, the amount of kutrapanam will be increased from time to time.

If people approach the Moopan to solve their problems without paying previous fine (kutrapanam), they would be compelled to pay the kutrapanam first before their representation is taken up. Only after the payment of the pending fine, the present case is taken up by the Moopan in the panchayat. The amount collected as fine, is under the custody of the Moopan and is spent in the following ways:

- 1) To meet the expenses of village festivals.
- 2) To be spent for the maintenance and renovation of temple.
- 3) For the death ceremony of any destitute or orphan.
- 4) Or in any other ways as decided by the Moopan and the panchayat.

A person who commits a theft is forced to give back the stolen goods to the owner or pay equivalent compensation. Theft is rare and it is regarded as dishonourable. If an Irula steals something either from the farm or the house of a non-Irula, it is expected that the affected party should intimate it to the Moopan of the settlement who tries to settle the matter.

If there is any difficulty in divorce cases, especially in respect of property sharing, the care of children etc., the Moopan and the council would arbitrate.

If conflicts between husband and wife are brought to the notice of the council, it tries to reconcile the couple and may even fine them upto Rs.25/- for the unbecoming squabbles.

For certain types of crimes the panchayat awards physical punishment to the offender. The Vandari or Kuruthalai are asked by the Moopan to punish the offender physically either by thrashing him with the hand or lashing him with a stick. In the case of one elopement, the young boy and the girl were subjected to this type of punishment. The people remember that in the past, offences against clan exogamy invited very severe punishment. The offenders were made to stand among ants. A circle is drawn around an ant-infested site, and the person should not come out of the circle. Also on his head they placed a big sack full of hot sand. Punishment ended

only when the person became unconscious-due to the weight and by the continuous biting of the ants. Now-a-days fearing this severe punishment, the persons involved in such cases run away from the settlement permanently. While such severe physical punishments are not in vogue at present, any case of incest among clan members is visited by excommunication. The concerned person or even his entire family (sometimes) is outcaste. No one, including the person's close relatives should have any connections with him. Excommunicated persons are not allowed to take part in the community life of the village. He/she should not attend any marriage or funeral, of his/her close relatives even. Also persons marrying people of lower castes are excommunicated.

Only some serious cases like rape and murder wherein non-Irulas are involved are brought to the notice of the police and the courts.

### **GEO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF MULLU KURUMBAS**

The habitat of Mullu Kurumbas is spread over an area of about 300 square miles in the Nilgiris District and the adjoining region in Kerala. The population of this tribe is scattered among more than 100 hamlets, many of which are officially listed as satellites of a few large-sized villages. Within Nilgiris District, most of the Mullu Kurumba hamlets are clustered around Erumad and Cherangodu revenue villages in Gudalur Taluk. According to our information these two clusters comprise 10 hamlets. They are: Kappala, Nedungodu, Onimoola, Kappukkunnu, Narivalappu, Theyakkunni of Erumad Revenue, and Kalluchal, Padacheri, Konnattu, Madakkunnu of Cherangodu Revenue.

According to the traditional tribal organization, the entire territory of the Mullu Kurumbas is divided into thirteen geopolitical units called 'naadus'. The northern region comprises four 'naadus' - Kaara, Kallu, Naria and Pakka. While the southern region also comprises four divisions of which three are 'Kunnu' - Kottur, Madur, Edur, and the fourth one is the Therkungooru. The last one (Therkungooru) is further divided into six smaller sub units - Erumadu, Nediancheri, Polakkolli, Kozhiadi, Odavelu and Nellivayalu. The geo-political units and sub-units are diagrammatically presented in the next page.

Any Mullu Kurumba leader is respectfully addressed as 'moopan' or elderman. The hierarchy of leaders of the Mullu Kurumba tribe is as follows.

The Mullu Kurumba chief is the Appadu Thalaichal, the headman who lives at Appadu hamlet in Kaara naadu of the northern division. (it is located in Kerala). The chief who lives in the northern sub-division is assisted by the Kotturthalaichal, the headman living at Kottur hamlet in Kottukunnu of the southern sub-division (His village is also situated in Kerala).

Each of the above mentioned thirteen units is managed by a Karanan. The status of Karanan falls below that of the Kottur Thalaichal, the chief's deputy. Every Karanan has a group or of about five settlements or hamlets under his jurisdiction. The cluster of hamlets under one Karanan is known as amsam. Each hamlet, called veedu, has its own local leader known as the Perunnan. Thus the karanan of every amsam controls about five or more Porunnans. Every Porunnan has a deputy called Vaipparan, who is groomed to succeed the former. In addition to being the chief and the deputy chief of the whole tribe, the Appadu Thalaichal and the Kottur Thalaichal also act as the karanan and Porunnan of their respective amsams and veedus.

All the above listed offices of the leaders are inherited in the male line, the deciding factor being seniority by age. The eldest member within the village succeeds the deceased Porunnan. Every amsam has a specified hamlet from which the Karanan is appointed even as the chief and his deputy have to be chosen from Appadu and Kottur hamlets respectively. Regardless of an office falling vacant during any part of the year, the successor will officially take up his post only after the next 'Maharam' month. The leader designate takes the oath in the presence of the Velichapadi or shaman who performs a special worship on the day of the Urchal festival. The new leader then gives a feast to all the people of his hamlet.

Under rare circumstances, if any man in the right status is unwilling to take up office or wishes to relinquish his post, he is required to banish himself permanently from his natal village. He leaves the village carrying bow and three arrows symbolising his severance of all ties with the village. (Any deceased leader is buried on his death with a bow and three arrows and therefrom comes its symbolic significance).

In order to administer matters of larger interest affecting the whole region inhabited by the Mullukurumba tribe, there is an apex council called Moopanmar Koottam. It is also known as the Kunthani Kazhagam (Boad Association). The Kunthani Kazhagam consists of not only all the aforementioned leaders, but also two members of the local cultivator caste, a barber who supplies

‘ennai’ or oil and the washerman who supplies the ‘maatru’ or a piece of cloth dipped in ash and water, considered essential during the purificatory ceremonies.

Whenever the occasion arises, the Moopanmar Koottam sits at a place near Appadu veedu and is presided over by the Appadu Thalaichal. This tribal court adjudicates matters in accordance with the code of the Mullu Kurumba tribe known as the ‘Keelvarum chattam’ or ‘Nallukaaliappan’ engraved on copper plates.

Local or intra-village squabbles, or minor offences like petty theft are settled by the concerned Porunnan. If the accused does not accept the Porunnan's decision, the case is taken to the Kunthani Kazhagam. Matters of more serious nature like violent fights, breaches of taboos or customary injunctions are reported to the kunthani kazhagam. In the cases involving women, they are represented either by their fathers or brothers or husbands, as women are prohibited from attending the council.

Depending upon the nature of the case, the Appadu Thalaichal assisted by the council, brings about an agreement between the disputing parties or levies fines or orders an ex-communication of the person found guilty. If the accused confesses his guilt, and shows repentance, the punishment is comparatively mild. If he pleads not guilty, the Appadu Thalaichal employs the services of the velichapadi who acts as an oracle in order to bring out the truth. If he is indicated through such a process, the penalty is heavy. In the case of imposition of fines, the amounts collected from the accused are shared by all the members of the council.

The Porunnan of a hamlet is held responsible for any violation of customary law (e.g., contracting of a marriage by one of his village members with a non-tribal), because he is deemed to have failed in his duty to prevent it from happening. He is presented to the Kunthani Kazhagam by his immediate superior the Karanan under whose control his hamlet falls. Such a situation disturbs the whole amsam of which the impugned Porunnan's veedu is a part. All social ceremonies and activities come to a stop from the moment the offence is reported till the case is decided. The Porunnan is asked to pay the fine in the traditional form of a gold bead or Kunthani (hence the name ‘Kunthani Kazhagam’ for the Mullu Kurumba court) or currency of equivalent value; or else he has to suffer the cessation of all social and religious ceremonies in his village and the respective amsam, and also undergo expulsion from the council for a period of twelve years. Rather than confront this severe punishment, the fine is paid, the money for which is collected

through the assistance of the concerned amsam members. The residents of the impugned village especially the accusad's family contribute a greater share. Once the fine is paid, the wrong committed is considered condoned, and all normal ceremonies and activities are resumed.

Changes in the Traditional System:

The copper plates containing the Mullu Kurumba legal precepts are not now available for the use of the council since they were believed to have been lost long time back. The kunthani Kazhagam itself has now become almost obsolete and has not been functioning effectively for the past thirty to forty years. Although the Appadu Thalaichal, Kottur Thalaichal, the various Karanans and Porunnans are still recognized as leaders, their words do not carry the same weight as they used to several decades back. Instead, the tribal population has come to rely more on the Indian Penal and Civil Codes for solving their problems. Violent fights, theft, suicide, murder and other crime are reported to the Police. Some such cases taken to the Courts are mentioned in the relevant places.

Sometimes a single village under one Porunnan may split into two units, each coming under the jurisdiction of a separate Porunnan. The hamlet of Kappala within Erumad revenue village has two Porunnans - Raman and Chindan. In 1970 the kappala community split into two factions, each appointing its own head. The people of Kappala attribute the inception of the factions to the violation of customary practises in the marriage of the then Porunnan's eldest son. Veluthan who was the Porunnan at that time and a few other elders hold the opinion that people should change and adjust to modern times instead of sticking to all the old conventions, while another section asserted that their traditional way of life should be adhered to. This difference in opinion which had been latent for sometime surfaced during Veluthan's son's wedding the performance of which did not strictly conform to the traditional norms. Thenceforth, the people of Kappala have been divided into the liberal and conservative factions, each under a separate Porunnan.

### **POLITICO-JURAL ORGANIZATION OF THE KOTAS**

The politico-jural organization of the Kotas can be observed at two levels, the village level and the regional level. At the village level, there is a council consisting of all the elders from each keri, headed by a chief called Kokkal Gottukaran. The village council is known as "Koot" in the Kota dialect.

The “Koot” maintains, enforces and transmits the traditions and customs of the kota society and is an effective agency of social control. The power to excommunicate any individual or entire household is the most effective instrument of social control in the hands of the ‘koot’. Hence it is highly respected and feared by people and is able to check any deviant behaviour on the part of the members. Apart from arbitrating disputes among the people and punishing the delinquents, the koot also organises the community activities, festivals and functions as required by tradition. Besides, the koot as a whole or represented by the Gottukaran is the authorised agency to speak for the local community in its relations with other Kota villages or the outside world at large.

### **Kokkal Gottukaran or Village Headman:**

The post of the village headman is not hereditary. The headman is chosen by an expression of consensus among all the elders of the settlement including the priests. Among the desirable qualities of a headman are his knowledge of tribal traditions, his sense of discretion and his ability to communicate within and outside the tribal community. In some villages, the succession to headman's post has been confined to one particular keris, while in some other villages it has regularly alternated between two keris. In some villages, there is a deputy or assistant headman known as Kun Gottukaran. When there are two such functionaries in a village, usually the Kun Gottukaran will hail from a clan different from that of Kokkal Gottukaran.

Whatever may be the time of the year when a vacancy occurs, a new village headman is usually chosen and installed at the time of the first harvest (December). The headman usually serves for life unless he proves himself unfit in the eyes of the koot elders, either by his physical disability or by proven-incompetence in handling the community matters.

Generally, the Koot's deliberations and procedures are not recorded anywhere.

### **The functioning of the koot:**

The koot is convened by the headman and if the meeting is to settle any dispute, the party concerned is expected to inform the people and gather them for the meeting. If the meeting is to discuss any matter of general interest, the headman himself, or his son or any one from his keris goes round the settlement summoning the members for the meeting of the koot.

Usually the koot gathers at a place called the “kalaval” ground, behind the Aynor temple. Here three stone slabs are erected and they are called “Mandhukal”. Anyone who wants to depose before the koot is asked to touch the stone slabs and take an oath. If a person who has taken an oath and makes a false deposition is supposed to be struck by a calamity either in the form of his own death or death of a member of his family.

No matter the number of men gathered for a koot session, the decisions taken are binding on all the people of the settlement.

About a decade ago, in the settlement of Trichigadi, a general complaint arose against the women of the settlement, that they often violated the taboos regarding menstruation and did not confine themselves to the segregated huts. The koot discussed the issue and concluded that henceforth the menfolk of the families would be held responsible for such offences of the women and advised the elders of every household to be vigilant over the matter.

One who defies or disobeys the koot, is either completely excommunicated, or kept away from participating in common activities like festivals and other ceremonies.

The common fund is kept by the headman in a bag called “Sirugani bag”, which is ceremoniously handed over to him on his assuming the office by the village priest. This bag is held to be sacred and is passed on from one headman to the other.

### **The Regional Council: (Eyyikokkal Koot)**

The apex council of all the seven settlements is head by the regional chief called Eyyikokkal Gottukaran, who is generally from the clan, Amirkeri of Kundah Kotagiri settlement village and therefore enjoys some importance and prestige of the Kota settlements.

In the succession to the post of regional chief (Eyyikokkal Gottukaran) in the recent memory, there has been but one case of an incumbent who hailed from Nadukeri clan. But he too was from the same village of Kundah Kotagiri.

### **Kundah Kotagiri:**

This settlement from which the regional chief hails has some attributes of paramountcy. The music instruments in use in this village differ in shape from those found in the rest of the kota settlements. For instance, the musical pipe or trumpet in this village is “S” shaped, and those in other villages are “C” shaped.

All the kota settlements have three places for the disposal of the dead, one meant for each keri. In kundah kotagiri, there is a fourth one in which dead persons belonging to other villages are cremated.

The priests of other kota villages have to obtain a formal recognition from the priest of Kundah Kotagiri. This priest is thereby acknowledged to have a higher ritual status.

The choice of the Eyyikokkal Gottukkarani is decided upon by the elders of Kundah Kotagiri village and then it is intimated to the Gottukkarans of other settlements. Whenever a new Gottukkarani is chosen in any village, it is to be immediately notified to the Eyyikokkal Gottukkarani.

Issues not settled in a village by its own koot issues involving persons of two or more settlements, and certain common issues which have an impact on the entire kota population in all the settlements are referred to the regional council having its jurisdiction over the seven villages.

No issue of whatever nature is permitted to be referred to the police and the civil courts. People who go to the police and seek legal aid from the civil court are liable to face the wraths of the village and the regional councils.

## **CONCLUSION**

The afore-mentioned pages presented a vivid account of the geopolitical organization of the Irulas, the Mullukurumbas and the Kotas. It clearly indicated that the highly populated, diversely settled Irulas do not have any regional level authority to deal with their internal conflicts whereas the less populated and with a limited no. of settlements both the Mullukurumbas and the Kotas have strong regional level power structure to deal with the breach of norms of their members. Marrying with the non tribal was unimaginable and leads to severe punishment in the less populated tribes namely the Mullukurumbas and the Kotas. But comparatively, among the Irulas who are more in population it is not such a severe issue. Approaching outside agencies

namely police and court for the arbitration is negligible among the Kotas and the Mullukurumbas, but it is becoming common among the Irulas. In nutshell among the tribes more than the mode of production, it is the demographic factors which are more responsible to have particular types of governing mechanisms deal with their conflicts and breach of norms.