

Tribes of Puducherry, List, Communities, Culture & Occupations

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Puducherry does not currently have any **officially notified Scheduled Tribes (ST)** under the applicable Presidential Orders for the Union Territory as a whole. However, several indigenous, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities live across Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam and other rural areas.

The **Tribes of Puducherry** include **Irular, Kattunayakan, Malaikuravan, Kuruman and Yerukula**. Many of these communities are locally identified as **Backward Tribes, Most Backward Classes (MBCs)** or other socially disadvantaged groups, while demands for their inclusion in the national ST list have been raised from time to time.

Major Tribes of Puducherry

The major **Tribes of Puducherry** include the **Irular, Kattunayakan, Malaikuravan, Kuruman and Yerukula** communities, which have distinct traditional occupations, cultural practices and settlement patterns.

1. Irular

- The **Irular** are an indigenous community traditionally associated with **rural and forest-based livelihoods**.
- Traditionally, sections of the community were known for **snake catching and rat catching**, activities that provided an important source of livelihood.
- Irular settlements are found in **rural parts of Puducherry**, particularly in village and commune areas.
- The community has traditionally possessed considerable knowledge of **local wildlife, forests and natural resources**.
- With changing economic conditions, many Irular families have moved towards **agricultural labour, construction work and other wage-based occupations**.
- The community has also been associated with demands for **greater government recognition, welfare support and social development**.

2. Kattunayakan

- The **Kattunayakan** are traditionally a **forest-dependent indigenous community**.
- Their traditional livelihood has included **honey collection and gathering forest produce**.
- Their knowledge of **forests, plants and natural resources** has historically played an important role in their livelihood.
- Members of the community are reported in parts of **Puducherry and Karaikal**.
- Changes in access to forest resources and the expansion of modern economic activities have affected their **traditional occupations**.
- Many community members have increasingly become dependent on **wage labour and other livelihood opportunities**.
- The Kattunayakan are among the communities whose **recognition and inclusion in the ST category** has been raised in public demands.

3. Malaikuravan

- The **Malaikuravan**, also known as **Malaikuruvan**, is an indigenous community found in different rural parts of Puducherry.
- The community has been reported particularly in areas such as **Villianur and Bahour**.
- Traditionally, members were associated with **rural, forest-linked and traditional occupations**.
- Their livelihood patterns have changed over time due to **urbanisation, economic transformation and reduced dependence on traditional occupations**.
- Many families today rely on **agricultural labour, daily-wage employment and other informal occupations**.
- The community forms part of the wider discussion on **indigenous communities and demands for Scheduled Tribe recognition in Puducherry**.

4. Kuruman

- The **Kuruman** community is found in selected rural pockets of **Puducherry**.
- Their presence has been reported particularly around **Mannadipet commune and Oulgaret**.

- Traditionally, the community has been associated with **rural livelihood practices and traditional occupations**.
- Like other indigenous communities, their occupational pattern has gradually changed with **modernisation and changing employment opportunities**.
- Community members may now depend on **wage labour and other rural and informal-sector activities**.
- The Kuruman community is part of the broader population of **indigenous and socially disadvantaged groups** in the Union Territory.

5. Yerukula

- The **Yerukula**, also spelled **Yerkula**, are traditionally a **nomadic and semi-nomadic community**.
- The community has historically been associated with occupations such as **fortune-telling and basket-making**.
- Members of the community are reported in parts of **Puducherry and Yanam**.
- Their traditional lifestyle is characterised by **mobility and dependence on traditional occupations**.
- Changing economic and social conditions have led many families to adopt **more settled lifestyles and alternative occupations**.
- The community has distinctive **traditional knowledge, customs and occupational practices** that contribute to Puducherry's cultural diversity.
- The Yerukula are also among the communities for which **demands for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list** have been raised.

Traditional Occupations and Culture of Tribes of Puducherry

The **Tribes of Puducherry** have traditionally followed diverse occupations linked to forests, rural environments and nomadic lifestyles, while their **traditional knowledge, customs and livelihood practices** contribute to the cultural diversity of the region.

- **Snake and Rat Catching:** The **Irular** have traditionally been associated with **snake catching and rat catching**, along with other rural and forest-based activities.
- **Honey Collection:** The **Kattunayakan** have traditionally depended on **honey collection and gathering forest produce**.
- **Forest-Based Livelihoods:** Several indigenous communities have traditionally relied on **forest resources, plants and natural products** for their livelihoods.
- **Basket Making:** The **Yerukula** have traditionally practised **basket-making**, reflecting their traditional craft skills.
- **Fortune-Telling:** **Fortune-telling** has historically been one of the traditional occupations associated with the Yerukula community.
- **Agricultural Labour:** With changing economic conditions, many community members have shifted towards **agricultural labour and other rural occupations**.
- **Daily-Wage Employment:** **Construction work and other informal-sector jobs** have become increasingly important sources of income for families moving away from traditional occupations.

- **Traditional Knowledge:** Indigenous communities retain valuable knowledge related to **local ecosystems, plants, animals and natural resources**.
 - **Oral Traditions and Customs:** Their **community customs, oral traditions and social practices** form an important part of Puducherry's cultural diversity.
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Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/tribes-of-puducherry/>

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