

“*Katthavarayan*” Worship in Jaffna Villages

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Out of the village folk deities adored by Sri Lankan Hindus, considerable importance is attributed to “*Katthavarayan*”. This deity, who is also known by the names *Katthan*, *Katthamutthu*, *Katthalingasamy* and so on, is identified as a village folk deity belonging specially to Jaffna district. In Jaffna District more than 75 *Katthavarayan* temples are sparsely identified and these are not Sanskritised. The main objective of this research was to bring out the significance of *Katthavarayan* worship on the basis of Hindu Folk worship tradition. It becomes necessary to view the worship of “*Katthavarayan*” as to have appeared from amidst social structural forces, as a mark of protest similar to that of “*Mathuraiveeran*” in South India. Basically, this article is a descriptive research. Collected data were subject to content analysis in appropriate instances. The worship of *Katthavarayan* has been constructed on the social complications that developed over a young man called “*Panchavarnam*” from a “*Parayar*” (low caste) family falling in love with a Brahmin (High caste) girl called “*Ariyapoomalai*”. “*Katthavarayan*” has also been identified among some marginal communities in the South Indian Tamil society. However, there he is known as an incarnation of Lord *Murugan*. But in Sri Lanka and particularly in the *Katthavarayan* among the Jaffna Tamil society, he is depicted as an adopted child of Mari. In the Jaffna Tamil society immersed in its caste structure, a young man from a marginal community trying to gain social upward mobility through a marital relationship is sent to gallows after being punished by the center of social authorities. At this juncture the grace of *Mariamman* brings out the truth behind his previous birth, whereby he is elevated to a godly status. Generally, a vertical social mobility is impossibility under a closed social structure. As a solution, tracing out the identities and trails of the past generations of the person who seeks to attain such vertical social mobility; and considering the feasibility of promoting him to a higher social status is a practice going on to date, within the caste structure of Jaffna. This is the untold reality revealed in the “*Katthavarayan*” scenario also.

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