

Occupational Transition Sociological Study of Beda Community in Davangere District

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study how **occupational transition** is imparting sociological changes on the **Beda** community within **Davangere District**. The south Indian State of Karnataka, once part of several kingdoms and princely states of repute in the Deccan peninsula, is rich in its historic, cultural and anthropological heritage. The State is the home to 42,48,987 Beda people, of whom 50,870 belong to the primitive group. Although these people represent only 6.95 per cent of the population of the State, there are as many as 50 different tribes notified by the Government of India, living in Karnataka, of which 14 tribes including two primitive ones, are primarily natives of this State.

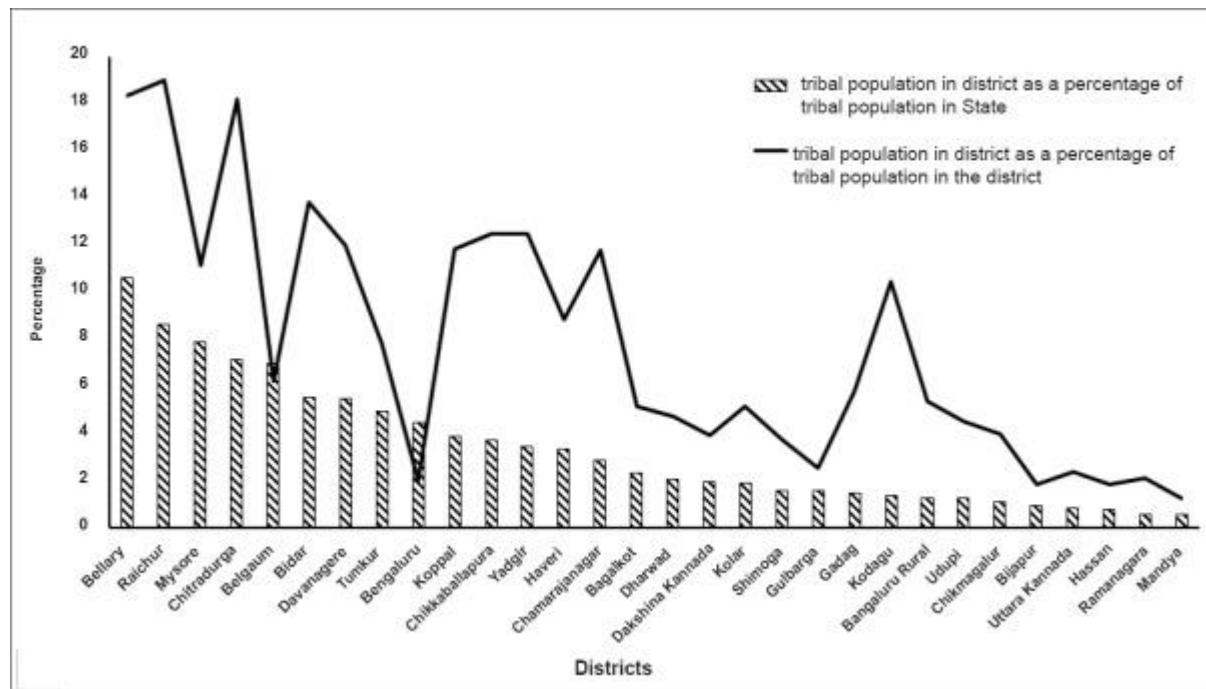
For Beda community extreme poverty and neglect over generations have left them in poor state of health and nutrition. Unfortunately, despite efforts from the Government and non-Governmental organizations alike, literature that is available to assess the state of health of these tribes of the region remains scanty. It is however, interesting to note that most of these tribes who had been original natives of the forests of the Western Ghats have been privy to an enormous amount of knowledge about various medicinal plants and their use in traditional/folklore medicine and these practices have been the subject matter of various scientific studies. After the forests having depleted the chief source of livelihood of the paliyans is agriculture. A person's relationship to the land can be of two types; either he is a owner or a non-owner. The non-owner can be divided into two groups. Among the non-owners are found those who have taken land on lease and those who are purely landless. Among the paliyans cultivable land is very little. The occupational pattern is shown in shown in table. the occupational pattern of the sample village shows a high degree of predominance of agriculture. A component of high caste culture that the tribals internalize as a mode of upward mobility, is the practice of the woman eating last, after feeding the elders, her husband, his brothers, boy children and girl children in that order. In case of food shortages, she may have to starve. Another symbol of the woman's status loss is changeover from bride price to dowry. Studies (e.g. Luthra 1983) have shown this trend. Bride price symbolizes the woman as an economic assent. Nearly 192 households reveal that they depend on agriculture. Since agriculture is seasonal in nature, they depend on secondary occupation and minor forest products (MFP) also. Only 43 households engage in hunting.

Key words: *Ethnic people, Davangere, Karnataka, scheduled tribe, bedar, tribe.*

Introduction

The State of Karnataka was created on November 1, 1956, with the passage of the States Reorganisation Act. Originally known as the State of Mysore, it was renamed as Karnataka in 19731 with Bangalore (now Bengaluru), the largest city in the State as its capital. Karnataka is bordered by the Arabian Sea and the Lakshadweep Sea to the West, Goa to the North-West, Maharashtra to the North, Telangana to the North-East, Andhra Pradesh to the East, Tamil Nadu to the South-East, and Kerala to the South-West. With an area of 1,91,976 square kilometres (74,122 sq miles), or 5.83 per cent of the total geographical area of India, it is the seventh largest State by size. It ranks eighth in terms of the number of inhabitants which stands at 61,130,704 according to the 2011 census2. The State comprises 30 districts. Members of the Adiyan tribe live

mostly in Mysore and districts bordering Kerala and speak Kannada. They are only 758 in number and are mostly agricultural labourers. They remain poor and have a low literacy rate. Marriages among cousins are common. There are a few members (266) of the Barda tribe of Gujarat and Maharashtra found in the State, mostly in the northern districts. They speak Barda language which is similar to Marathi and Gujarati. They are agricultural labourers, and are mostly endogamous. The Bavacha/Bamcha are Hindu tribes who speak the Bavchi dialect³. They are 960 in number and are mostly inhabitants of Ramanagar district.



Bhils are adivasis of Central Indian origin. The Bhil tribes are divided into a number of endogamous territorial divisions, which in turn have a number of clans and lineages. Most Bhils now speak the language of the region they reside in. Originally hunters and soldiers, they are mostly agricultural workers with hunting and gathering remaining a significant subsidiary occupation^{3,4}. The Bhil population in Karnataka is 6,204 and are scattered in most districts of the State, more so in Uttara Kannada and Belgaum districts⁴.

The Chenchus are an aboriginal tribe who speak the Chenchu or Chenchwar language, a branch of Telugu, and live mostly in the forests of Andhra Pradesh. About 954 of them inhabit bordering districts of Karnataka like Yadgir and Kolar. The Chenchus are one of the original primitive Beda groups that are still dependent on forests and do not cultivate land but hunt for a living. Some however, live symbiotically with non-Beda communities and many collect forest products for sale to non-Beda people. The Chodharas are a group of about 117 people living in Karnataka among the 20,000 odd members most of whom inhabit Gujarat and Maharashtra. They are related to the Rajputs and speak Chodri. Most of the Chodhari people work as small farmers growing cotton, vegetables, and rice.

The Dublas, some of whom are also called Talavia or Halpati, are Hindu tribes originating from the Rajputs in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Dubla society consists of several endogamous sub-divisions with agriculture as primary occupation⁴. They are also very few in number (264) and are mostly scattered in distribution over the State. The Gamit tribe (also known as Gamit, Gavit, Mavchi and Pandvi) people speak in Gamit. They are about 516 of them who are now inhabitants of Karnataka, mostly found in Koppal and scattered over several other districts. The Gond tribe is the largest of Dravidian people of central India, spread over various States including the North-Western districts of Karnataka (Fig. 2). They are the second largest Beda group found in the State. Gondi language is related to Telugu and other Dravidian languages. Gowdal are 8,617 in number according to the 2011 Census data², and speak Gowdal language. They are mostly found in Chikmangalur and Bengaluru Urban districts in the State. The Hakki-Pikki clan is a semi-nomadic group and they live near Bidadi in Karnataka. Their population in the State is 11,892 as per 2011 Census². The tribe has taken up hunting as their occupation but many are now showing more interest in agriculture and floral decoration. The Hasalaru are Hindu tribes of Karnataka. They are 24,466 in number and speak Tulu and concentrated in several districts including Chikkamangaluru, Shimoga, Udupi, and Davangere.

Objective:

This paper intends to explore and analyze **sociological parameters of occupation transition of Beda community** viz, tribal social behaviour, patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and aspects of culture associated with everyday life. The study is centered on the beda community in **Davangere** district

OCCUPATIONAL TRANSIATION : TRIBAL ECONOMY

In Karnataka, people belonging to Beda tribe are about 700 in number. They are Hindus and speak Irula which is related to the Dravidian languages Tamil and Kannada. These people are descendants of gypsies living in caves with hunting and gathering as their ancestral occupation. They subsequently learnt the art of cultivation. People from the same clan within the Irular tribe do not intermarry. Their literacy rate is very low at 36.27 per cent⁵. The Iruliga are also primarily tribes of Karnataka with a total population of about 10,259, mostly living in Ramanagar and Bengaluru Urban districts. They are Hindus and while Kannada is their principal language, a few other languages are also spoken. The population of Jenu Kurubas is 36,076 in Karnataka² mostly living in the districts of Mysore, Kodagu, and Chamarajanagar. A few are also found outside the State mostly in the border forests of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Also known by the names 'Then Kurumba' or 'Kattu Naikar', they are members of the primitive Beda group and are now mostly occupied as daily labourers for landlords in plantations in the region. They have a close-knit community and rarely mingle with other neighbouring Beda communities. The literacy rate is 47.66 per cent⁵. The Kadu Kurubas are the original inhabitants of the forests of Nagarhole and Kakanakote in the Western Ghats of Karnataka. Kadu Kurubas are about 11,953 in number, mostly living in Mysore, Kodagu, Chamarajanagar, and other districts of Karanataka and the remaining in the forests of Tamil Nadu. They are primarily Hindus, speaking Kannada language. The Kammara live in Dakshina Kannada district and Kollegal taluk of Chamarajnagar district of Karnataka. They speak local language and are 949 in number and the majority of these tribe are scattered in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chattisgarh. They are blacksmiths, carpenters and also involved in cultivation. The Kaniyan is a tribe from Kerala found mostly in Kollegal taluk of Chamarajanagar district of the State. Only 413 in number reside in the district. These people speak local language although the majority of these tribes speak Malayalam. The members of this tribe are mostly Hindus. Among the approximate 3,00,000 members of the Katkari and Marathi-Konkani speaking Kathodi or Katkari

tribe, only a few (275) live scattered in the State of Karnataka. The Kathodi are recognized as the primitive Beda group by the Government of India in the State of Gujarat.

The Department of Beda Welfare was formed specifically to address the needs of STs in Karnataka. The concept of the Beda Sub-Plan (TSP) and its counterpart the Special Component Plan (SCP) emerged in the National Fifth Five-Year Plan¹¹. The objectives of the TSP are poverty alleviation, protection of Beda culture, education, health care and providing basic minimum infrastructure. Poverty alleviation includes programmes in agriculture, animal husbandry, sericulture, horticulture, village and small industries as well as all employment-generating schemes such as *Swarna Jayanthi Swarozgar Yojana* (SJSY). Beda education is given importance by the State Government. Social Welfare Department of the State is looking after the educational needs of these communities. Various programmes are implemented to provide educational facilities to students belonging to the scheduled tribes. The State Government is opening nursery and women welfare centres, *Asharm* schools (free residential schools) pre-metric hostels, for boys and girls, etc. From 1995-1996 onwards Karnataka Government has started scholarship scheme for the ST children. The students from 1st to 10th standard can avail this privilege. Financial assistance is provided by the Social Welfare Department⁷⁵.

Apart from the efforts made by the State Government some of the non-governmental agencies and associations, trusts and individuals have taken interest in Beda educational welfare programmes in Karnataka. Institutions such as Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra (VGKK) in Mysore district is a well-known centre working for the upliftment of the *Soliga* tribes. The centre has residential Beda school, vocational training and market facilities for Beda products⁷⁵.

The role of NGOs in Beda welfare activities, though small, has been significant for introducing qualitative changes in the lives of the people. Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra, Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement, Development Through Education (DEED), Foundation for Educational Innovations in Asia (FEDINA), Coorg Organisation of Rural Development (CORD), Samagra Grameena Ashrama, Janashikshana Trust, Chintana Foundation, Samvriddi/Krupa, Vanavasi Kalyana Ashrama are some of the well-known NGOs involved in the Beda development in Karnataka. It is possible to make development work more effective and sustainable through engagement with the local community, which has a better understanding of its own socio-economic needs, traditions and culture than non-Bedas. Their participation in programmes, funded by the Government and voluntary organizations helped build confidence in the people to utilize the services thus offered and has provided feedback for modification and re-orientation of programmes¹¹. Under the India Population Project (IPP-9) project, the Health Department and NGOs trained Beda girls as ANMs and they were posted to sub-centres in remote Beda areas. These ANMs are now providing good healthcare services to Beda women and children¹¹. Government-owned PHCs at Gumballi and Thithimathi were handed over to Karuna Trust and Vivekananda Foundation respectively and are being run as model PHCs¹¹.

In B.R. Hills, Mysore, Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra (VGKK), an NGO, is promoting the traditional knowledge systems of Bedas and has integrated traditional healthcare system with modern medicine. Beda knowledge of herbal medicines is also being promoted by them¹¹. However, the degree of effectiveness of various schemes in terms of programme implementation in these sectors is not evident in the three critical areas of health, education and poverty reduction. The magnitude of the problem is so great that a large percentage of Beda families are poor and lack access to resources that would improve their education and health status. The human development status of the tribes of Karnataka is more than a decade behind the rest of the population of the State and thus they remain poorest and most deprived of all sub-populations in the State¹¹.

Sociological analysis:

The present review attempts to highlight the limited research carried out on the ethnic tribes of Karnataka. It identifies the gaps that need to be filled up to understand the health issues for better health care management of these tribes. It also underscores the potential of integration of the rich traditional practices of the ethnic tribes with present day knowledge and healthcare. Concerted inter-sectorial efforts are needed from policy makers, researchers, care providers, non-profit and social organization to improve the health status of the tribes of Karnataka.

About 168 members of Kattunayakan tribe which total around 70,000 mostly inhabiting Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry, are scattered in various districts of Karnataka. This tribe is regarded as a primitive tribe in Kerala. An extremely small number (32) of the Kokna tribe are scattered over several districts of Karnataka. They are mostly Hindu by religion. Their primary language is Kukna perhaps derived from Konkani. Karnataka State has the third largest share (1,12,190) of the Koli Dhor tribe. They are scattered in the North and North-West parts of the State including Bidar, Yadgir, Gulbarga and Bijapur. About 7,438 members of the Konda Kapu tribe live in the districts of Karnataka, mostly adjoining Andhra Pradesh. The Koraga tribe is among the two primitive and most backward tribes declared by the Government of India⁵. This is not only one of the most notable tribes of Karnataka, but also one of the primitive Beda group. This tribe is scattered over many districts of the State, particularly in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada. They are also found in Haveri and in small numbers in Shimoga, Uttara Kannada and Kodagu districts. Their number is 14,794 as per the 2011 Census².

Koragas spend most of their income on alcohol, which is consumed by all ages, and also indulge in smoking beedi and chewing betel. They subsist mainly on rice and meats such as pork and beef, although they are increasingly also using produce such as pulses and vegetables. Diet is poor and malnutrition is common in children⁶. Education level is low. The Kota tribe is a small group of ethnic people indigenous to the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu and are recognized as primitive Beda group. They are about 1500 in number⁷, of which about 121 are in Karnataka State². They have been subject to good amount of anthropological, linguistic and genetic analysis. In Karnataka State, particularly in the Bidar district, there are only about 365 members of the Koya tribe which is a very large tribe in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. The Kudiya tribe mainly belonging to the State of Karnataka, and 2,169 of individuals of this tribe live in the State, mostly in Kodagu district. The Kuruba inhabit the thickly forested slopes and foothills of the Nilgiri plateau in Kodagu district of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu States. Their population in Katnataka is 3,1112. The Kuruman tribe of Karnataka is represented by only 347 individuals of this ethnic group who are mostly located in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. They speak southern Kannada language. Maha Malasar is a very small group of ethnic tribe living in Annamalai Hills in south India. Karnataka has about 36 of these people while Tamil Nadu and Kerala house most of them. Malaikudi is also a Karnataka ethnic group with about 9,236 people belonging to this tribe inhabiting the Sahyadri hill ranges of Dakshin Kannada, Udupi and Chikmagalur districts of Karnataka. The Malaikudi tribe speak a dialect of the Dravidian language, Tulu. Tulu and Kannada are spoken by them for inter-group communication. The Malasar tribe has about 9100 ethnic people in the States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, of whom about 84 inhabit Chikmagalur district of Karnataka. They speak a mixture of the Malayam and Tamil languages. The Malayekandi tribe has

also been listed separately as Malaikudi and Maleru. There are 116 of the approximate 2,000 people⁷ of these tribes in Karnataka.

Beda community in Davangere District and other localities

Apart from **Davangere** district, these tribes are scattered over Koppal, Raichur and Gulbarga districts. The Maleru tribe is about 440 in number and is almost exclusive to Karnataka State. They mostly inhabit Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Davangere, Dakshin Kanada, Udupi, Hassan, and Kodagu districts. The Maratha of Kodagu and Marati of Dakshina Kannada are groups that have received Beda status only in these districts of Karnataka. According to the 2011 census², there are 3,396 Maratha people in Kodagu district while there are 82,447 Marati people in Dakshin Kannada. These communities speak Marathi among themselves and in Tulu and Kannada with others. They are normally vegetarians.

In Karnataka, there are two communities with the name beda; one of these is restricted to the district of Kodagu. They speak Kodagu, a Dravidian language. In other parts of Karnataka, there is another community of basket-makers known as Meadar of Meda. The Meda community is almost exclusively present in Karnataka with a population of about 44,160 scattered throughout all the districts. Nayaka, tribe as the name implies ‘a leader’ is mostly non-vegetarian. Nayaka, popularly known by Palegar, Beda, Valmiki, and Roshni Parivara are found all over the State but they are concentrated in the Chitradurga, Shimoga, Bellary and Tumkur districts. Their population is 32,96,354. The Paliyan, or Palaiyar or Pazhaiyarakar are a group of more than 10,000 Adivasi Dravidian people living in the south Western Ghats mountainous rain forests in south India, especially in Tamil Nadu and Kerala⁷. They belong to the primitive Beda group. About 226 of them inhabit the southern tip of the State of Karnataka especially in Kodagu district. Most people of this tribe are traders of forest products, food cultivators and beekeepers. About 495 people of the Paniyan tribe reside in Karnataka mainly in the southern districts Kodagu, Dakshin Kannada and Mysore. The Pardhis are migrant people, scattered over a wide area of central India in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. In Karnataka, their population is about 10,746 and are mostly found in the districts of Dharwad, Bagalkot, Gadag, Bijapur and Gulbarga. Their language, Pardhi, is one of the Bhil languages. Among the western Indian Patel tribe, only 57 inhabit Karnataka, most of them in Bidar district alone. The Rathwas derived their name from the word ‘rathbistar’, which means inhabitant of a forest or hilly region. They are a moderately large tribe but very few (45 individuals) inhabit Karnataka State. Only a few are located in Bengaluru Urban and Bidar districts. They are endogamous, and consist of a number of exogamous clans. They are at present mostly small and medium sized farmers. The Soliga/Sholiga and Sholigaru/Soligaru tribes inhabit the Biligirirangan (BR) Hills and associated ranges in southern Karnataka, mostly in the Chamarajanagar and Erode districts of Tamil Nadu. Many are also concentrated in and around the BR Hills in Yelandur and Kollegal taluks of Chamarajanagar District. They use the title Gowda, which means a headman. In Karnataka, they are mainly distributed in the hilly parts of Mysore district, Ramanagar, and Mandya. This area is covered with forests, and experiences low humidity and heavy rainfall. They are normally vegetarians, and eat mainly tubers. Toda tribe is one of the most ancient and peculiar tribes of Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu. There are only a few (157) of them in Karnataka in the district of Udupi. The Todas have their own language and own secretive customs and regulations. The Varlis/Warlis are Adivasis, living in mountainous as well as coastal areas of Maharashtra-Gujarat border and surrounding areas.

Vitolia is included the primitive Beda group by the Government of Gujarat where they are found most. A few might have migrated to Karnataka from south Gujarat and Maharashtra earlier. Their literacy rate is 43.8 per cent. A few centuries ago the Yerava/Ravula was a thriving, agriculture and forest-based tribe, in Wayanad and Kodagu districts of Kerala and Karnataka, respectively. The population as per 2011 census2 is 30,359 in Karnataka and found mostly in Kodagu and Mysore districts. The Siddis tribe of Karnataka is an ethnic group. There is a 50,000 strong Siddi population across India, of which about 10,477 are located around Davangere district.

Conclusion

Though more than two thirds of the Bedas depend on forests for an important part of their livelihood, forest management in India is state centered. Till independence, its basis was conservation and revenue for the state. With planned development, they became sources of raw material for industry. With the formation of forest development corporations, profit became an important motivator. Conservation, while retaining its importance at the policy level, began to be relegated in practice, to the background. In this framework, the process of development has come to be equated with the channelizing of an ever more intense volume of resources through the intervention of the state apparatus at the cost of the state exchequer, to subserve the interest of the urban and rural elite, as a result, state subsidies have become a central element of the development process in independent India these subsidies have served to lower the prices of many goods and services primarily for the privileged segment of Indians society. Occupational transition with important lessons for the construction of a stable occupational trajectory after a transition. The central place of an anchoring occupation and champion has been emphasised as a way of disrupting limiting patterns of participation following such a transition. Anchoring occupations have been shown to hold particular characteristics that allow for the positive situation of the occupational trajectory for school dropouts in challenging contexts. Particularly concerning is that anchoring occupations emerge largely as a result of chance, a facet that has not been considered in depth in occupational therapy practice. Although occupational therapists have not traditionally worked with school dropouts as a group, this is an area of practice that should be considered given the complexity of this occupational transition.

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