CHAPTER - VI
CONCLUSION
CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the summary and conclusions of the research study. The present study deals with the sociological analysis of social structure, social change, and social mobility with reference to one of the significant castes of undivided Dakshina Kannada District, namely, Billawa. The focus of attention of this study has been on social, economic, and cultural life, on the basis of its education, occupation, and migration. The main aim of this research is to analyze continuity and change in the social structure of the community, its socio-political mobilization and, to derive the different factors responsible for it.

A detailed examination of social structure of the community under study exhibits that Billawa community presents a special pattern of kinship system and family organization. Traditionally the predominant form of family organization is the matrilineal, which is called as ‘Aliya kattu santana paddathi’. In it the relationship between maternal uncle and nephew (‘tammale-aruvade’) was given more importance and property-rights, descent etc. - all traced through mother. The possible kinship of woman to one another is that of a daughter, mother, sister, mother’s mother, mother’s sister and so on. Further males are related as brothers, sons, daughter’s sons and sister’s sons. But the present study observed that in the Billawa community at present ‘aliyakattu kattu’ is giving up its various special traditional features. It is continued to exist only to the level of tracing descent and for religious purpose. More number
of them is following "makkalakattu santana" system like the other communities of Dakshina Kannada. At present in most of the Billawa families, sons are the heads of the family as the authority structure changed in the modern joint family. Nowadays though they had a matrilineal system, no more either mother or maternal uncle had the power of heading the family. It is also exhibited in this study that at present among them there are more or less equal number of joint and nuclear families; but comparatively, out of the total sample of the study, 58:80% of the respondents had nuclear type of family. However most of them had favorable attitude towards joint family system and had liked it. This is because according to them mutual sharing of all joys and sorrows, the sharing of family responsibility, having common residence, protection of widows, sick, deserted, divorcee etc. are possible in joint family. Further about structural changes in family, the study comes to the conclusion that, even though the number of nuclear families is increasing in the Billawa community, Billawas continued to fulfill their traditional obligations towards their parental families, they continued their relationship with their blood-relatives, who are living in separate households. It is also noted in this study that the family decision – making authority is continued to vest with the head of the family and elder members of the family, especially regarding major decisions of the family such as performance of religious rituals, marriage, arranging function related to birth, death etc. But it also noted the changes in intra-family relations in ‘developed area’, that is, regarding education of children and purchase or disposal of property, wife is consulted in decision-making, and in ‘backward area’ decision about education of children, children are more consulted. However, the study portrayed that the family is not completely nuclearised in
Billawa community, joint structure of family continued to survive; only the nature of jointness, size of the family and intra-family relations has changed; kinship ties are still powerful enough to bind the people together and led to the continuity of joint family feelings. The study has also found out that even Billawas who desert their joint family and moved to the cities due to various reasons still continued their relation with their parental joint families. Even though living in separate households they fulfill their traditional obligations. They continued to have relationships with their relatives especially during rituals of family deity, in life cycle ceremonies of birth, marriage, death etc. As per traditional rules of its ‘aliya kattu’ all members of a ‘kutumba’ or family has to participate in the worship of their ‘kutumbada bhuta’ or spirits of the family.

The present research findings portrayed about institution of marriage that, even now Billawa community encourages arranged marriages. No such changes are observed about modes of mate selection. Among 250 respondents only two married outside of their caste. The study viewed that only one respondent of ‘developed area’ selected his mate through the modern modes like matrimonial columns. Rest of the respondents selected their spouse through relatives like parents, elder brother, elder members of the family etc. Thus they continued to have traditional modes of mate selection,

The attitudes of respondents of the study towards marrying outside of their caste, and instances of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages traced in the study reveals that there is also no such change took place in the endogamy character of caste. Billawas are not encouraging marriage outside of their own caste; only a few respondents of the study said that they are prepared to support the idea of inter-caste or inter-religious marriages of their children.
majority of the respondents gave more priority to caste-consideration in their children’s marriage. The dowry system is the common practice among Billawas. Since the ancient times, there was a practice of giving and taking of dowry. But now the amount of dowries varied enormously and they reached relatively high figures. The present study tried to discuss about the dowry system and also tried to trace its severity in the community.

The study had found out that there is a strict following of 'bali' system in the marriages of Billawa community. It also made it clear that Billawa community had favorable attitude towards widow re-marriages. Further the present study had traced in its respondents’ families only one case of divorce and two cases of deserted. Therefore on the basis of these data it had concluded that Billawa community had unfavorable attitude towards divorce and it retained the traditional sanctity of marital bond.

The study noted safely that a lot of changes had taken place in the customs and rituals of Billawa marriage, where the influence of Brahmins, modernity etc. is observed. In the traditional Billawa society there was no priest to perform wedding rites. With the guidance of ‘gurikars’ or caste headmen and ‘maddela’ or village barber marriage rites used to be performed. The role played by caste-headmen, maternal-uncle, and barber in marriage has been almost disappeared. Only some regions of the undivided Dakshina Kannada district gave importance to their presence in the marriage ceremony. Further, the performance of marriage ceremony at present, includes various ‘vaidik’ rites such as ‘homa, kanyadana, panigrahana, saptapadi’ etc. One recent noted change is that Billawa community had its own caste-priests to perform marriage rites.
Moreover the present study observed that nowadays the performance of marriage rites depends upon the priests.

The present study traced changed status of Billawa women. In spite of Billawa community having matrilineal family system, it is a male-dominated community. Majority respondents of ‘backward area’ (53.03%) and many number of them of ‘developed area’ (13.59%) opined that present status of Billawa Women is inferior to men, 71.6% of ‘developed area’ and only 39.30% of ‘backward area’ said it is equal to men. But the opinion that Billawa women’s status is equal to men, is expressed by those respondents, who are active in politics and associational activities. It was pointed out by the Women’s environment and Development Organisation that the extent of women’s participation in decision-making on various matters is an important indicator of the status of women in the household and in society. The data of the present study show that women are consulted on family decision making. But the fact is that Billawa women are still under-represented in decision-making at the household or social level; they were only consulted, but final decision has generally taken by the male members of the family. But about economic independence and education of women, there are favorable attitudes. Overwhelming majority of respondents of both ‘backward’ and ‘developed’ areas of the present study, found the necessity of women’s financial contribution to improve the economic status of the family, education of the children etc. However, the data of the study traced instances of working women only in 50% of the respondents’ households. It also shows that women had no such freedom to spend their salary as they wish. It also found that even though women spent their salary on education and dresses of their children, most of the male members of the
community are not ready to say it openly. Another important finding in this study is that, even at this time where many opportunities are available for Indian women, the participation of Billawa women in political and associational activities is much lower. However, the study concluded on general status of Billawa women in contemporary society that, community as a whole is not suppressing the freedom of their women; special encouragement is given to their education, to their active participation in politics and to establish women’s associations. Compared to the traditional Billawa society, the present status of Billawa women has improved a lot and many changes has taken place due to various factors such as influence of various higher castes and dominant castes of the region, their economic independence, spread of education, self-awareness among women, self-help scheme of Dharmastala etc.

This study observed some regional differences in rituals and practices related to birth, death, marriage etc. Some rituals vary from one place to another. Some rituals related to marriage and death followed by the Billawas of Sullia, Puttur, and Belthangady Taluks is not followed by the Billawas of Mangalore and Udupi region. But there are no variations in major customs and rituals. There are negligible differences only in the way of performing some rites.

Regarding social pattern of Billawa community, the study derived a conclusion that the mother-tongue of Billawas of undivided Dakshina Kannada district, except of Kundapur taluk, is ‘Tulu’ which is an important member of the ‘Dravidian’ group of languages. It is also observed here that Billawas had a unique social system called ‘Bali’ or ‘Bari’ system, which is traced through female, as they had a ‘matrilineal family’. The specialty of this system lies in its strict following in marriage custom, that is,
members of the same 'bali' should not inter-marry, which is continued to be observed even now. However some of its features are declining nowadays such as, using of their fathers' 'bali' as their surnames instead of mother's, not considering the members of the same 'bali' as blood relatives, non observance in love-marriages etc.

Regarding inter-caste relations the study arrived at the conclusion that some of the traditional principles of caste are still operative in the undivided Dakshina Kannada district. Social distance practices are still practiced both by lower as well as by upper castes of the region including Billawa. Majority of the respondents of the study supported inter-caste dining. But still orthodox Billawas may not inter-dine with or allow the castes lower to them to enter their house. Even generally Billawas are not allowed to enter the Brahmin’s house. Compared to urban areas, in rural areas these practices are very severe. But the study noted a special matter that nowadays Billawas do not practice untouchability with those Harijans, who are economically well-off and are in higher occupational positions. However at present the traditional interdependence of castes of Tulunadu has been replaced by competition with one another. The traditional rigidity of the principle of purity-pollution and discrimination on the basis of the castes has also reduced.

About intra-caste relations the study observed that caste-identity is becoming very prominent in the Billawa community. ‘Casteism’ created solidarity among its members. Billawas of high positions, Billawa educational institutions, and firms are giving preference to members of their own caste in appointments and admissions. Almost all respondents of the study wanted to help the people of their own community and each one of them felt the...
necessity of help of their community to them. But contrary to this, most of the informants of the study expressed the view that in some aspects especially regarding associational activities, unity is decreasing among them. The main leaders of the community had differences of opinions. Most of the informants of the study felt that to take associational activities as one of the means to upward social mobility, the maintenance of unity among Billawas is necessary, which is decreasing in the present day Billawa community and also there is a need of active participation of Billawas in associational activities.

The social status of the Billawa community as a whole has increased and it is improving. They are exposed more to new modern forces and, trying to attain a higher position and get a new social identity. Through education and taking up new occupations they have scope to improve their social status as well as conditions of their living. The study reveals some of the reasons, which are responsible for these changes in the social status of Billawas. They are -- education, improvement in the economic condition, the influence of Shri Narayana Guru Ideology, modern occupational opportunities, migration, imitation of higher castes, inculcation of social awareness, increased associational and political activities etc. The present research observed specially the role played by Sri Narayana Guru, great saint and social reformer of 19th century who preached a message of self-help, self-improvement, and self-esteem, in the improvement of the social status of the community. Shree Narayana Guru (1854-1928) has been credited with transforming the social fabric of Billawa community. Billawas are of the opinion that in the past many Billawa families involved in toddy tapping and brewing arrack, were declared impure; Many social restrictions were
imposed upon this community. As a result, until the social reforms in twentieth century the community faced many a hardships. It is in such a scenario that the community found a messiah in Shri Narayana Guru; After encouraging Billawas to construct Kudroli Gokarnanatheshwara Temple at Mangalore, he asked community leaders to work together for the progress of the community by starting schools and industrial establishments. He asked them to organize themselves and after guru's instruction many organizations have been formed by the community members. However at present under the leadership of many organizations and hard-work, Billawas are today fast improving and gaining strength economically, culturally, spiritually and politically. A large number of them have settled in Persian Gulf and cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore have been contributed enormously for the community development.

Billawa community like the other communities of the coastal region follows a dual religious mode of worship- in addition to local spirits or ‘Bhutas’, they worship the classical Gods of Hindus. The study exhibits that among their religious faiths, ‘Bhuta worship’ or worship of divine spirits appears to be the ancient one. ‘Bermeru’ is the supreme spirit and ‘Koti-Chennaya’, their twin cultural heroes who attained divinities after their heroic death, are worshipped as martial God. Being born in Billawa community, Koti and Chennaya fought against social injustice of all and brought about the social status of the community and were worshipped by all irrespective of caste and religion. It was the two Billawas, Koti Baidya and Chennaya Baidya who, after their heroic end, were deified and they have been enshrined throughout Tulu country in the ‘sthanas’ or ‘Garadies’ known as ‘Baidarkala Garadi’ (shrine where Baidyas are worshipped), in which Koti-Chennaya are worshipped in the form
of "Baidyer", along with their deity Brahma (Bermer). The present study notes that 'Bhuta' worship among Billawas is not only a religious observance, but also a social phenomenon. Each family or 'kutumba' has its own spirit or 'Bhuta', which transfers through mother. In 'Bhuta' worship, every member of the family has to participate. This belief on 'Bhuta' worship has increased at present. Even Billawas living in far away places come to their native family to perform 'Bhuta worship'. It is one of the instruments nowadays to unite kin relatives. Thus, Billawas of both rural and urban areas are staunch followers of religious beliefs, values and customs.

The analysis of income level, ownership and type of houses etc., shows that at present the economic level of Billawa families are more or less at the higher level, compared to the past. The study noted that the enactment of Karnataka Land Reforms Act 1961 (later amended in 1974) which made many number of Billawas land owners, their entry into the business-field, migration to Bombay in a large number and aspiration of most of the Billawa families for higher education of their children – all these factors helped to elevate economic status of the community in the society. But the study also noticed that the economic status Billawa community as a whole is still low. On an average it can be put in the middle class economic position. Billawas of some remote areas are still depending on occupations like toddy-tapping, beedi-rolling, agricultural labouring etc. which lead to low income. Almost all early studies on Billawa community opined that toddy-tapping is the hereditary occupation of the Billawas. In the present study, about 50% of the respondents agreed the same observation. But another about 50% of them opposed the same by saying that toddy- tapping is not the hereditary occupation and Billawas in the traditional
society were agriculturists. It is specially noted here that majority of the ‘developed area’ (51.63%) expressed this opinion and there are also some, who opined local-physician or giving ayurvedic medicine is their traditional occupation. Thus, at present Billawas, especially, who are active in public life, are not ready to accept toddy-tapping as their hereditary occupation. They had the opinion that in the past to suppress their community some higher and dominant castes assigned degrading occupation like toddy tapping to them. In the present study the table analysis of inter-generational occupational mobility in ‘3’ generations shows that in grand-father’s, father’s and ego’s generations comparatively there are more number of agriculturists and a few number of toddy –tapers. The present study concludes that in the traditional society of Billawa agriculture was their main occupation; besides it, they followed toddy-tapping as additional means of livelihood. However since 1950’s shifting from traditional occupation to modern occupation has been taken place among them. Nowadays its members are taking up modern occupations. The analysis of Inter-generational occupational mobility shows that in both grand parent’s and parent’s generation, more number of them are agriculturists and in Respondents’ generation more number of them are professionals and business-men and only 4.80% of the respondents’ family members are engaged in so-called hereditary occupation, that is, toddy- tapping. Thus the conclusion of this study is that Billawa community had upward occupational mobility. Further in this study Intra-generational mobility is observed on the basis of the ages, when the respondents began to earn and change of occupations in their life time. It is concluded on the basis of the data related to this that systematic earning for livelihood started among Billawas after 31 years and
many of them started it as agriculturists. A good number of them gradually either shifted to business or have become professionals and so on. At present, most of the Billawas more or less after their ‘46’ years of age are engaging themselves in social service especially in their associational activities. One of the major findings in this study is that the representation of the community in Government services and attitude towards availing of reservation facilities in securing jobs is very less.

Another finding of the study is that Billawas are showing a strong and positive attitude towards education. They considered it as main factor for their social and economic advancement, for bringing about changes in their social institutions, and for their social mobility. The main consideration of this study is that the extent of illiteracy has continued to decline from one generation to another and, the extent of literacy and level of educational attainment has continued to rise from one generation to another. Inter-generational educational mobility is most effective variable, which shows upward educational mobility among Billawas. This study also concludes that their educational ambitions are high and they have motivation for higher education for their children. But, among them, there is lack of wide awareness of educational provisions and reservations in educational institutions given by Government to them, as they belong to Other Backward Classes. Another conclusion is that Billawas have established their own educational institutions to promote and maintain their social identity and also to make progress of the community in educational and occupational fields.

The present study concluded that traditionally Billawa community had a very unique customs and practices related to birth, menstruation, pregnant women, marriage, and death. Some of the
customs related to these, are given up and incorporation of various new customs had taken place among Billawas. But Billawas under study, irrespective of their level of education, occupation, income, and age, adhered to some of the important traditional customs to maintain their identity in the society very strongly. Thus there is continuity of various traditional rituals, related to birth, marriage, and death along with incorporated rituals.

Regarding socio-political mobilization of Billawa community important finding of the study is that it had largely undergone a process, of socio-political mobilization. ‘Migration’ to big cities is one of the important factors responsible for it. Migration of its members to cities and towns had brought about changes in occupational structure. The highest percentage of migration occurred among Billawas of undivided Dakshina Kannada district. As early as in 1930’s Billawas began to migrate to Bombay, in search of employment. This is continued even now. Their representation in Karnataka Government services is very limited. Immediately after graduation or any technical education, they go to Bombay in search of better opportunities. This attitude of Billawas towards migration has led to their mobility in various fields such as economic, educational, social, and spatial mobility. It led to improvement in the economic condition of the family, advancement of the community status in the society, their mobilization through caste association etc. Billawa who migrated to Bombay and to foreign countries, are continued to give financial help to their native family and they are funding for the associational activities. They are mainly responsible for the establishment of many caste-associations, even in ‘backward areas’.
The study had explored that nowadays the Billawa associations are becoming stronger and its limit of activities has widened. They are engaged in various social works such as helping poor Billawas, giving financial help for education of economically backward students by supplying books, scholarships, and honoring meritorious Billawa students, running marriage bureaus, trying to organize Billawas by arranging caste-conferences, supporting political participation etc. As found out in present study, there is no doubt that the associations of Billawa community are strengthening and widening their fields of activities nowadays with the leadership of prestigious persons of the community, educated Billawas and Mumbai migrants; but most of the associational activities are more or less limited to 'developed areas' and it has to reach so called backward areas. There is a need of active participation of Billawas in associational activities and they have to unite to work for the welfare of the community as a whole.

Finally, the present study concluded that political participation of the Billawa community is in common way as it tried to analyze social mobility of Billawas on the basis of their political participation. It was analyzed on the basis of their contest in election, caste- consideration in voting, accessibility to political reservation policy etc. There is a close relation between Billawa caste and politics of the region. This is because as most of the respondents of the study opined, there is much caste consideration in voting and even all political parties active in the region of the study, gave importance to Billawa persons in the selection of the candidates to contest for different levels of politics- that is from Grama Panchayath to parliament. The reason for this kind of attitude, as Billawas under study opined, is their large population.
At present they realized the necessity of political participation to bring about improvement in their social status as it influences social life of the people. They are also trying to make it a ladder to upward mobility. Further the present study observed that an effort is going on to enlighten Billawa youths about political sense and leadership and thereby organizing Billawa Community to represent Local Administration, Assembly, and Parliament etc.

Considering all the findings, the present research study felt that for Billawa community there is necessity of creating awareness about Government services, maintaining unity, providing economic assistance for poor Billawas and giving proper guidance for its youths.

*****