Chapter 2

Methodology
Chapter -2- Methodology

Introduction

The Kodavas are an ethnic group, who originally lived only in Kodagu. Today, the Kodava Diaspora has spread this small community numbering over a lakh (but less than two lakhs), all over Karnataka, into Mysore, Bangalore, outside Karnataka all over India into places like Delhi, Mumbai, and into the US, the UK, the Gulf states, and more. This study is aimed at assessing the winds of change impacting centuries-old tradition in the area of clothing styles and patterns of the Kodavas who still reside in Kodagu. The study will cover equally Madikeri and Virajpete areas of Kodagu, be equally divided between adult men and women, and also cover the different age groups. It will try to pinpoint if the reason for the changes could be due to higher education, or increased affluence, resulting in more money and better jobs, Sanskritization, regionalization, Anglicization, modernization or something else all together, or a combination of different influences.

2.1. Primary and secondary research

The body of research builds on all past research in that field. This thesis will use primary and secondary research, to explain if, and how much, there is of the long-term effect of Westernization or Indianization on the Kodavas of Coorg, or something totally different. Or, if there is continuity and staying power in traditional clothing of and by the Kodavas. The people chosen for the interviews were all residents of Virajpet and Madikeri of Kodagu, real people with real viewpoints. Some of the men were estate owners, some of the women were housewives, there were a few students, and a miniscule representation (3%) from the Amma Kodavas of Virajpet and Madikeri. From a rice growing, martial people of the past, to the coffee-estate owning (and continuing to be
rice growers) people of today, the Kodavas have moved with the times, showing various types of influence.

Primary data in the social sciences, according to Pelto and Pelto, is derived from three sources – a) direct observation of human behavior, b) listening and noting down human speech (note-taking), and c) examining past products of human behavior like archives, museums, records and libraries. (This last also goes into secondary data.)

2.2. Objectives of the study

This study has the following objectives:

a. To analyze the cultural aspects of Kodava clothing in myth, history, folklore, and dress styles in historic and twenty-first century records

b. To check whether education levels, marital status, and diverse occupations have impacted their sartorial habits

c. To note in what domains Kodava traditional clothing is worn, and where it is excluded

d. To observe whether the processes of Indianization and Westernization (or Anglicization) have impacted the sartorial culture and clothing of the Kodavas, to see how much the pull is between modernity and tradition

e. To examine changes in their economic (or other) activities that might affect their clothing styles

f. To assess the levels of tradition and modernity as evident in the above sections, to make a record in videos and photos, for a complete time bound audiovisual record of a community whose clothing style may be in transit or homeostasis
2.3. Aim and scope of the study

The present study has attempted to understand the impact of the different variables, on the clothing style of the Kodavas in Kodagu. The study is confined only to two parts of Kodagu – Madikeri and Virajpet, and analyses the incidence of Kodava traditional clothing, used by Kodava men and women in these two parts of Kodagu. Myth, audiovisual evidence, primary and secondary research, and field work all will make up the research quad to assess the degree of cultural behavior, stasis and change.

2.4. Importance of the study

The study on the Kodavas is a small study in Kodagu, equally distributed between Madikeri and Virajpet, one with social relevance because it contributes towards better understanding of a community wrestling through Westernization (or Anglicization) and Indianization and going from classic Kodava culture to pan-national Indian, and the reflection of this in their traditional clothing. After Independence, in 1947, no in-depth, comprehensive audio-visual study has been done on the changing face of traditional Kodava clothing, or its homeostasis. This work will be a thorough audio-visual record of the clothing traditions of an ethnic community sixty eight years after Independence. The Kodavas have indigenous knowledge which includes skills, experience, insight, rituals, and info that makes them who they are. As a study by an outsider, bais will be (hopefully) kept to a minimum, and info will be deciphered objectively.

2.5. Limitations of the study

One limitation is that the sample of Kodavas studied did not cover entire Kodagu. Also, the sample did not cover Kodavas outside Kodagu within
Karnataka, outside Karnataka but within India, and outside India in US, UK, the Gulf, Australia, Africa, etc.

Besides this, funerals, which are an important part of cultural activity, with its own unique clothing tradition, was touched upon with great sensitivity or not at all, depending on the response. In some cases, there were no answers, for whatever personal reasons.

Only adults were interviewed, as adults are tasked with safeguarding traditional culture, and they become the custodians defending tradition. If children were interviewed, the conclusive results could have been confusing or inconclusive and would have widened the scope too much.

Many influences showed up in the interviews on Kodava behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, customs, etc. Influences like higher education, travel, more affluence via jobs and the coffee boom, and thereby exposure to more regional and global influences, seems to keep this community with a differing level of cultural homeostasis as exhibited in their clothing styles. An analysis of data might bring out details not anticipated in the original research question.

Another important limitation is that a social scientist both participates and is also an observer of the human society he studies. Research on topics of human society and human behavior can never be all covering, as humans are too complex, too varied, too changing, too impulsive, to be completely researched. The questionnaire used for this subject was administered to Kodavas in Madikeri and Virajpet, and sometimes, there were refusals to answer, incomplete answers, non-awareness of subjects questioned covered, loss of memory, and hesitation to answer certain questions. (Krishnaswami, 2013)
2.6. Data Collection

Ethnography is the ‘systematic study of people and cultures’ as explained by Wikipedia. Ethnography as empirical data on human societies and culture was pioneered in the socio-cultural branches of anthropology.

Primary data was collected through questionnaires, and interviews with photographs, videos, and extensive note taking, and participant observation, all with the aid of a good translator. Secondary data will be gleaned from newspaper reports, books, anthropological journals, the Internet, Gazeteers, translated documents, religious texts, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other sources.

2.7. Method

Anthropology is a social science. Science includes method, and method includes a set of scientific techniques for gathering and handling data. Anthropologists find through methodology how people use their time and make decisions. An anthropologist will try to understand people’s beliefs, or try to explain what causes those beliefs and actions, and what those beliefs and actions cause. There is an attempt to always be ethical in doing anthropological research.

The first study premise is that ‘reality’ is out there for us to find. The second premise is that (participant) observation is the method to find it. The third premise is that observation about phenomena with the naked eye, by a trained person, can give us good explanations about the people and culture studied – in this case, the Kodavas. Info will be gleaned through participant observation, the questionnaire, induction, deduction, interview techniques and schedules, data collection and audiovisual records through photography and videos, and, all this will be part of methodology.
2.8. Schedule

A two part schedule (two lists of questions) was used in this study, one part general, and the second part separated into a woman only or man only part. The schedules used in Kodagu include pre-coded and open-ended questions.

The schedules’ answers will make use of variables. A variable is something that can take on more than one value. For instance, the question, ‘how old were you when you got married’ can take on any answer from a few days old to the age of ninety, but the question on what your mother’s religion is, can produce an answer like, ‘muslim’, ‘hindu’, ‘christian’, etc. Common variables include age, sex, ethnicity, education, occupation, income bracket, marital status, residence, etc. And these variables also figure in the first part of the schedules on Kodava clothing.

2.9. Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a tentative answer to a research question. The research question here is about the staying power of traditional clothing of the Kodavas of Kodagu. Traditional clothing was worn uniformly in Coorg by Coorgs living there and continues to this day (2015). However, it is proposed that traditional clothing of the Coorgs is worn much less with increasing exposure to Indianization (or Kannada or neighboring Mysore acculturation) and Westernization or Anglicization, increased levels of education, better and more varied economic activity, travel and exposure outside Coorg, and a need to not attract attention. As the Coorgs get better educated, have more jobs in offices, their exposure to Westernization (or Anglicization, or Kannada acculturation) increases, and may result in a decreasing use of traditional clothing.

This thesis will attempt to cover the staying power of traditional Kodava style and clothing in the face of different influences whether Indianization (as in Kannada and Sanskrit acculturation) or Westernization (Anglicization), and
trace changes, if any through nineteenth, twentieth and twentyfirst century accounts.

2.10. Induction and deduction

Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626) was noted for his stand on induction, which is making direct observation to confirm the concept that observed facts can form theories of how things work. Isaac Newton (1643 – 1727) devised the hypothetical-deductive model of science that enfolds induction (empirical observation) and deduction (reason) into one method. Research should be done through the scientific method, which is systematic, rational and objective, and uses both induction and deduction.

2.11. Qualitative and quantitative data

In anthropological fieldwork, all resultant data must be analysed twice – once for qualitative, and once more for quantitative features, according to Russell. Unlike the physical world, reality is constructed uniquely for each person (the constructionist view) or external reality awaits our discovery through a series of increasingly good approximations to the truth (the positivist view). Getting as close as possible to the truth needs both qualitative and quantitative data. Data collection – via fieldwork – is done by field workers who go to the field, administer questionnaires, do interviews, and bring the data back from the field – this is the empirical way to handle data.

2.12. Humanism

Humanism is an intellectual tradition that traces its roots to Protagoras (485 – 410 BCE), who said, ‘Man is the measure of all things,’ which can
translate simply as truth being a relative concept subject to individual human judgement. **Humanism** uses human feelings, values, and beliefs to derive understanding of being human. **Humanism** is what ethnographers use when making records of the human experience.

2.13. **Phenomenology**

Phenomenon, according to *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, is a fact or occurrence that appears or is perceived. **Phenomenology** is a philosophy of knowledge that has as its focus, phenomena. **Phenomenology** attempts to sense reality and note it down in language, not numbers – the qualitative (not quantitative) approach. **Phenomenology** is a non-physical science that seeks the commonality of all human experience, and the *homo sapien* ability to be humane and relate to other humans. For instance, all the molecules within a pebble do not need to ‘understand’ each other to co-exist. That is reality for the pebble, within the pebble. However, for human beings, reality is ‘out there’. Reality differs from person to person, because reality is perceived differently by each person. Accurate ethnography – a text or a narrative that explains a culture of an ethnic community – is good phenomenology. This study on Kodava traditional clothing covers the sartorial culture of the ethnic community called Kodavas within Coorg.

2.14. **Hermeneutics**

**Hermeneutics** is derived from the Greek God Hermes, who was the messenger, explaining and interpreting messages from the other gods to the humans. **Hermeneutics** is the continual interpretation of texts. For instance, when interpreting myths or folktales of the River Goddess Kaveri, and how she shaped the thinking and the clothing of the Kodavas, we must grasp the underlying meaning the myths have for the Kodavas in Puranic texts, like the
sub section of the *Skanda Purana*, a four chapter episode called the *Kaveri Purana (KP)* or *Kaveri Mahatmya*. The KP covers the intimate connection between the River Kaveri, her place of origin - Kodagu, and her children cum inhabitants, Kodavas. India’s *Puranas* are sacred books of the Hindus, with a ‘cosmological and historical-legendary character’ (according to Taddei). Culture, according to the interpretative anthropology of Clifford Geertz (1973), is an assemblage of texts. Therefore, Kodava clothing traditions can be understood through myth and practice as a series of texts.

### 2.15. Evidence

Russell (2006) says that when assessing qualitative and quantitative data, **artifacts** (clothing, houses, etc.) represent info about human thought and behavior in complex societies; **behavior** like dressing the dead for funerals, and **events** like weddings, the ‘Ur kudva’ and ‘Dampathi muhurta’ ceremonies of Coorg weddings are all texts. We can analyse them to derive insight and understanding. All three are part of the study that counts for evidence. A lot of audiovisual material will be collected on site, and this will back up the verbal and written evidence as well as the researcher’s observations.

### 2.16. Sampling technique

A proper sampling technique covering Kodava respondents of both sexes who are above the age of eighteen, from Madikeri and Virajpet in Kodagu, will be part of the research schedule. Kodava clothing will be studied also through participation in social and ritual activities, like weddings, festivals, ancestor worship (*meedi*), other rituals, and if possible, funerals.
2.17. The interview

The technique to do an interview varies from one person to the next – person to person, face to face, on telephone, or via e-mail. For face to face interviews in Kodagu, for the entire interview schedule, in English, but administered through the help of an interpreter, in Kodava-thak – the language of the Kodavas or English.

Establishing rapport with the respondents will be part of the process of collecting data. Ahead of administering the questionnaire, it was decided that either the oldest living person or heads of households or young persons below thirty five will be interviewed. They will be questioned for cognitive states, physical attributes and cultural attitudes and behavior, towards Kodava clothing traditions.

2.18. Emic and Etic

The words Emic and Etic originated in linguistics and anthropology in the 1950s and 1960s. Emic and Etic refer to different approaches to researching human beings. ‘An Emic approach (‘insider’, ‘inductive’ and ‘bottoms up’) takes as its starting point the perspectives and words of research participants.’ Lett (1990), giving us the anthropological perspective, says ‘Emic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied.’ The Emic approach lets the participants and data ‘speak’ to them thereby allowing themes, patterns, and concepts to emerge – this approach is particularly useful in fields which are very less theorized.

‘An etic approach (‘outsider’, ‘deductive’ or ‘top down’) uses as its starting point theories, hypotheses, perspectives and concepts from outside the setting being studied.’ Lett (1990) says, ‘the Etic constructs are accounts,
descriptions and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers.

The Emic is what people think; Etic is an objective, external measurement that may encompass and is also beyond what people think. If you get etically correct data, you can carefully test Emic data, and find how true and close to reality the Emic is. For instance, the Kodava chele is woven only by silk weavers in Benaras… throughout the recent history of present day Kodava clothing, this has always been the case. If one person in an interview said this – the Etic, the smaller picture, it will be true for the rest of the population - the Emic, or bigger picture.

2.19. Data analysis

Data analysis is done via the interpretativist manner. In the quantification approach, for instance, 70% Kodavas might say they wear traditional Kodava clothing for functions. In the qualitative approach, the data might say a majority of Kodavas prefer to wear Kodava clothing for functions. Both the quantification and the qualitative data back each other. The quantification explanation is a form of measurement and part of research. But anthropologists deal with humanistic and phenomenological works, and too much quantification makes the research flat, and colorless; numbers do not always translate to better social science research. Therefore, qualitative research must always complement quantitative data to be complete and lead to a better understanding of the topic.
2.20. Descriptive Research

‘Descriptive study is a fact-finding investigation with adequate interpretation.’ (Krishnaswami, et al. 2013)

Data is collected via methods that include observation, interviews, and questionnaires. A descriptive study attempts to understand the various features of a topic or problem – in this case, the changing styles of Kodava clothing – but doesn’t handle the testing of a hypothesis. The one basic limitation of the descriptive method is that ‘the researcher may make description an end in itself. Research (however) must lead to the discovery of facts.’ This problem in this particular exercise in discovery (aspects of change in Kodava clothing traditions) will be controlled through analyses of field data, to lead to better understanding. And, in addition, the past - from various written records - will help to give long term perspective, making this research more thorough. The research topic has both novelty and originality; it also is a continuum from past (nineteenth century) to present (twentyfirst century) via texts and field data.

2.21. Chapters covered

Introduction covers a brief history of the Kodavas in Kodagu and clothing traditions in India of Kodagu.

Chapter 1 covers a review of literature used as background material to understand the topic in general and Kodagu and the Kodavas in particular.

Chapter 2 covers methodology. Questionnaires, induction and deduction, primary data, qualitative and quantitative data, data analysis, evidence, sampling and interview techniques, emics and etics, and audiovisual material are all touched upon for a holistic point of view.

Chapter 3 analyses the socio-cultural aspects of the Kodavas: the origins of Kodagu in myth, origins of the Kodavas in written documents in the
nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, brief history of Kodavas and their political rulers in Kodagu, Kodavas as descendents of outsiders, Kodava religion and festivals, Kodava rural communities, and marriage among the Kodavas.

Chapter 4 covers clothing among Kodavas, item by item, wedding and funeral, men and women’s attire, and has a brief description of the lexis of clothing from the nineteenth century, twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the form of tables.

Chapter 5 covers the Kodava language - Kodava-thak, its Dravidian language family that is part of the linguistic diversity of the sub-continent, and the unique bridal and bridegroom clothing lexicon of the Kodavas of Coorg.

Chapter 6 covers tables, data analysis and statistics of general topics like occupation, education, marital status in Virajpet and Madikeri. Clothing specific topics include protective and decorative clothing, and, festive support with other caste participation. Wedding-specific support includes the bangle wearing ceremony of the bride-to-be, and laying out the white cloth for groom and bride to walk on. Wedding, festival and funeral clothing, and accessories like face, hand, foot and podiya decorations for the bride, and neck and hand jewelry, and, weapons for the groom.

The findings and conclusions section encapsulates findings on Kodava traditional clothing culture. Conclusions are drawn from every nuance of Kodava clothing.

The four Appendices cover many topics. Kodava case studies are covered in Appendix 1, and the interview schedule is covered in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 is a section that covers the importance of audiovisual material especially related to Kodava clothing and record-keeping anthropology through the visual media. Appendix 4 is a photographic record. Photographic records celebrate, witness, document a culture in a specific time-space continuum.
Record keeping photography captures human culture for posterity – in this case the Kodavas of Coorg.