

**Chapter - Three**  
**Village: Land Culture and Ecology**

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### VILLAGE: LAND, CULTURE AND ECOLOGY

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#### Introduction

Dakshina Kannada situated in the coastal belt of Karnataka is a thin strip of land stretching down to the Arabian Sea. Historically, it was known as South Kanara (presently called as Dakshina Kannada).<sup>1</sup> It abounds in vegetation such as evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, mangroves, beach vegetation, planted groves of trees, horticultural gardens, agricultural fields, grasslands, household gardens. The population in the district is a heterogeneous mix of different religions, castes and classes. Socio-economic and ecological diversity adds to its '*cultural heterogeneity*' quotient as compared with the rest of Karnataka. Within the district, heterogeneity exists between regions, as villages are different from each other in their geographical patterns, caste and religious dominance, political affinity and development indicators, etc.

The chapter begins with a historical and general description of Moodanahalli village, followed by an exposition on different dimensions of village life as well as the nature of social institutions such as family, kinship, and caste in the village. The cultural beliefs and religious practices in the village intimately relate to traditional agriculture in the village. While traditional agriculture has now given way to conventional farming, many of the art forms, rituals associated with traditional agriculture are still popular. In the chapter, I describe some of the important cultural events to highlight how culture, ecology and land form an integral cultural complex in the village. With colonial rule and subsequently after independence, the village has undergone tremendous changes particularly in the context of land holding patterns, which have in turn altered social relations in the village. Dakshina Kannada had two kinds of cultivation in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century- shifting cultivation known as '*Kumeri*' in the region and the other, paddy cultivation. Kumeri cultivation was practiced on the hilly regions of Moodanahalli and adjoining areas by the labouring class, while paddy cultivation was practiced by the upper caste landlords in the plains. Over time, Kumeri cultivation disappeared, and the reasons for it are unclear according to villagers. As far as I can comprehend from available records, the British ended the practice that significantly displaced the Kumeri cultivators

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<sup>1</sup> I used word 'South Kanara' while referring to historical, colonial accounts of Dakshina Kannada. Historically, region was referred as 'Kanara' by the Portuguese as they didn't have the word 'D' pronunciation. So region of Kannada became 'Kanara'.

from agriculture to being full time labourers on paddy land in the plains. In this context, I present a historical overview of land-labour relations in the village, even as many of the labour from the village now seek employment opportunities in sectors other than agriculture.

Dakshina Kannada villages are complex in their character as they are modern in comparison to other Indian villages and often give the image of a small town. Here, villagers are socially and economically progressive and are quite aware of the different development activities in the village. Historically, the Alupas kings ruled South Kanara, who referred to regions as '*Nadu*' for administrative purpose.<sup>2</sup> Vijayanagara rulers took over power in 1345 AD and they introduced terminologies like '*nadu*', '*maganes or simes*' *chavadi*, *grama* and *uru* into administration; later, they became the basic socio-political organisation of the society (Bhat;1998). Historically, in Dakshina Kannada, people used terms like '*maganes*', to refer to land. '*Simes*', which approximately translates in English as boundaries, and refers to group of *urus* or village. Village is also known as *halli* in Kannada, and the term halli is particularly used while referring to religious and cultural aspects. The terms '*Grama*' and '*uru*' are commonly used in the course of day-to-day conversations.<sup>3</sup>

Dakshina Kannada village names are based on and, I suppose, represent nature.<sup>4</sup> In Dakshina Kannada, villages are called *urus* or *jagas* (places) rather than *halli* (village).<sup>5</sup> In Dakshina Kannada, the term village never existed as a physical, social and economic boundary in the society. For instance, Moodanahalli is of recent origin. It was carved out of Vittala Sime, which also included the present villages of Adkasthla, Poonacha and Kepu. The concept 'village' (*Halli* in Kannada) then is a colonial construct introduced later for administrative purposes during colonialism. This division of Simes into numerous smaller villages or *urus*, also eventually dissolved the significance of Simes as a functional entity in the lives of the locals.

<sup>2</sup> For nearly 7 centuries, (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D to 14<sup>th</sup> century) South and North Kanara region was under Alupas Kingdom, it was called *Alvakheda* or *Tuluva* the local ruling family of the region. (Bhat;1998)

<sup>3</sup> *Chavadi* is a village meeting place for political discussion or village office or court were situated, *Maganes* is used in land records for measuring the agricultural land and *sime*, is used by temples, religious associations.

<sup>4</sup> Dakshina Kannada village names represents, river, temple, geography, cultural practises, religion, jati, village deities or daivas, occupations and persons. Puttur got its name from pearls (literal *Mutthu* in Kannada). The Place of pearl is *Mutthur* slowly changed into Puttur. Uppinangadi, historically was a centre for the transportation and distribution of cargo through bullock carts. It has received the name from the carts (*gadi* in Kannada) carrying salt (*uppu*) and came to be known as Uppinangadi.

<sup>5</sup> Socio-politically in the contemporary world, *uru* or *jaga* is a smaller unit than a village.

At present, there are two types of villages that are recognised by the people- the revenue village which has an official status in terms of its revenue and administrative role; and the uppa grama, literally translated as 'sub-village' or probably a hamlet. The uppa grama may resemble a hamlet, populated by a few households within the purview of the local panchayat, or under forest cover, falling under the jurisdiction of the forest department. In this sense, the uppa grama is a functional unit of the revenue village or the forest department.

### **General and Geographical Description on Moodanahalli**

The origin and historical past of Moodanahalli is unknown; however, it was according to some of the villagers settled about 5 to 6 generation ago. In the mid 1930s, the region was covered with forest, paddy and plantation land; and agriculture was main source of living. Historically, the village has become was a gateway between the present day Karnataka and Kerala, and rich farmers use to travel to Kerala in bullock carts as it was easily accessible than Mangalore. The road that connected Karnataka and Kerala state in earlier times is still in use. Many in Moodanahalli have family, kinship ties, socio-economic relationships in the adjoining villages of Kerala.

Moodanahalli is predominantly a dispersed village. The village centre is almost like a small town, with good roads and basic facilities such schools, hospitals and a market. It is the centre for education, health care, transport, bank, post office and agriculture market in the region, as many neighbouring villagers come here for their day-to-day businesses activities. Rich villagers have four wheelers; many have their own motorcycles for easy commuting between home and village. At the border, Kerala state government has a check post to monitor the interstate transport of goods. Dakshina Kannada has many such small 'developed villages' within its geography.

Moodanahalli village has private and public religious, spiritual sacred spaces that assign meanings and cultural significance to the village landscape. The village lies in the coastal interior belt of Dakshina Kannada; 15-20 kms away from the seacoast; 40-50 kms away from district headquarters and 4-5 kms away from the local panchayat. The Moodanahalli is in the rain-shadow region where land receives less annual rainfall as compared to rest of the district. To quote the Canara District Manual - 1894,

The only bare spots are some of the hard laterite plateaus, which seem, now a days, to produce nothing but thatching grass and a certain portion of the waste which has been recklessly denuded for the supply of fuel and manure. Notable instances of the latter are

the hill slopes adjoining the areca nut plantation in vittal magane of the Kasaragod taluk. Complete denudation of the slopes of valleys in other parts is comparatively rare, but over large tracts mere bushes or low coppice now grow where fine timber once abounded as can be seen from the patches of carefully conserved 'kumki' lands.

The Canara District Manual describes the ecological features of my field region. I cannot specifically ascertain that description is on Moodanahalli, but the regional ecological features such as bare land spots, laterite soil, thatching grass regions, lack of hilly mountains and plain plateaus correspond to features found in Moodanahalli village. In the next section, I further discuss the social profile of the village.

### **Social Profile of Moodanahalli:**

This section describes the people, religion, caste and class categories of Moodanahalli. Moodanahalli is a stratified village, based on class, caste, gender and religion. Table-3.1 shows the total population of the region during my fieldwork.

**Table: 3.1 Men-women ratio in the Moodanahalli**

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	852	49.85
Female	857	50.15
Total	1709	100

Source: Field Notes 2008-09

In 2008, the village had 321 households (See table 3.2) with a population of 1709 of which 26 (8.10%) belong to the Schedule Caste, 80 (24.90%) people belong to Schedule Tribe, and rest 215 (67%) belong to different castes.

**Table: 3.2 Moodanahalli Caste Compositions**

Details	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	Others	Total
Number	26	80	215	321
Percentage	8.10	24.90	67.00	100

The village hamlets are distributed along caste and religion. Hindus reside in one part of the village, while Muslims have their residences near the mosque. Caste as a system of social stratification is very prominent in the agrarian economy, where the social relations of production reproduce the caste hierarchy at the local level. The traditional landholding caste communities are Bunts and Brahmin in the society. The Schedule caste communities are as follows: Nayaka, Poojari (Billava), Achari (Gudigara), Patali and Schedule Tribes are Maniyani, Holeyer Koragaru, Kaduholeyaru, Ajalaru, Purusharu, Belchapadaru (Bhoota, nema), Nalike, Jogi or Purusha, Madivala, Mugeru, Kshawrika etc. There are two main castes among the Muslims in the district: Ashrafs and Sayyads.

This caste configuration of Dakshina Kannada is also evident in Moodanahalli. Beteille (1971) in his description of the caste, class and power stratification in a Tamil Nadu village, discusses how the social stratification in the village reflects the power dynamics in the region. In Moodanahalli, there are three sub-castes of Brahmins: Shivalli, Havyaka, Gowda saraswatha. The Havyaka are the dominant land-owning community and speak a language specific to their caste called *Havyaka* or *Hale* (old) Kannada. Their traditional occupations are '*vaidika*' (one who performs puja or provides priestly services) and agriculture. Today, there are only a few who practice *Vaidika*. Havyakas are known to be experts in arecanut cultivation. In the village, there are two sub-castes among the Saraswat Brahmins- the Gowda Saraswat Brahmins, also known as GSBs, and the Rajapur Saraswat Brahmins or the RSBs.<sup>6</sup> The popular surnames among them include Nayak and Prabhu. They are engaged in trading (grocery, vegetable and sweet shops) and agriculture. Their mother tongue is Konkani. Shivali Brahmins in the village are priests in the temple or mostly into agriculture. They speak a variant of Tulu, specific to their community.

Brahmins practice the gothra system, i.e. same gothra marriages are prohibited. They are patrilineal and patriarchal, with males privileged over women in relation to property, kinship and family rights and responsibilities.<sup>7</sup> In pre and post-independence, the Brahmin community enjoyed the social power and dominance in village politics and were actively involved in local administration. A few of them became panchayat presidents and contributed to the development of the village economy. Many of them have enjoyed the status of landlords. The effective implementation of land reform reduced their economic dominance and introduction of Panchayat Raj Act has decentralized the village politics, reduced the power of the Brahmins in the village panchayat. However, even now, within Moodanahalli, Brahmins are financially secure. Many among the younger generation of Brahmins have migrated to the city for higher studies and gradually moved away from the agricultural farming.

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<sup>6</sup> They trace their origin to the bank of the Saraswati River, in Punjab region. A group migrated to South, took the name of Gowda Saraswat Brahmins with them. Another group migrated and settled in a village namely Rajapur in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. When Portuguese invaded, they migrated to South with the fear of religious conversion from Portuguese, Muslim rulers and settled in different parts of the coastal Karnataka who are known today as Rajapur Saraswat Brahmins.

<sup>7</sup> The male is the family head, *family name* is traced through the male line and members of the family were identified with this name when they migrate to different region.

Bunts are another dominating landowning and cultivating caste in the village. According to Buchanan, there exists a contradictory view that Bunts were Shudras (Francis Buchanan; 1809; 16) but Bunts claim Kshatriya status in the society. Among bunts, there are four subgroups: Masadika, Nadava, Parivara and Jain Bunts. In Moodanahalli, the Bunts were from Masadika and Parivara sub-group. The Bunts, except for the Parivara Bunts, follow the practice of the *Aliya Santana* method of inheritance.<sup>8</sup> The bunts practice of '*Badi*' (dowry) during marriage, in which the bride's father has to pay money, gifts to the groom's family.<sup>9</sup> The Bunts burn their dead, and the obsequies take place on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or the 13<sup>th</sup> day. A social feast is organised on the 13<sup>th</sup> day in which most of the kins and affines of the deceased are invited to mark the end of the mourning period. Once a year in October, deceased ancestors are propitiated in a ceremony called 'Agelu.'

In the village, there are many service castes such as Gudigara, Madivala, Billavas, Nalikes, Panans etc. Acharis (Gudigara) are wood carvers and they consider themselves sacred as they wear the sacred thread. They follow both the *Aliya Santana* method and *Makkala Santana* method of inheritance. Madivalas are washer men by caste. They have their own caste priest, but for purification, they employ the services of Brahmins. Billavas are the toddy drawers or tappers; today majority of them have moved away from their profession and only a few people extract toddy in the village. The common surname among them is '*Pujari*' (one who performs puja), as they were the worshippers in *bhootasthnas*. They worship two deified members of their own caste named *Koti* and *Chennaiya* (there are a number of *Paddanas* or oral narratives and *Bhootasthanas* associated to these two-warrior brothers). In olden times, these caste members were restricted from entering temples. Today many of them are farmers, labourers and into other occupations. Nalikes are basket, mat makers and spirit dancers who enact different spirits during religious festivals. Aati Kalenja is the traditional dance rituals practiced by

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<sup>8</sup> Aliya Santana means sister's son lineage. The story here is embodied with the local tradition; attribute the origin to a king named Bhutal Pandya. His wife refuses to give her son for scarifies to a bhuta. His sister offers her son to king for sacrificing. Pleased with the act of his sister, king announces that his future generation should give the property inheritance right to Aliya, (sister's son and his family).

<sup>9</sup> Badi is paid in cash and kind and amount of badi varies from family to family depending on their social status and capacity. It varies from 15 to 60 or 70 lakhs depending on the qualification, family, status of the groom in society.

this community during the monsoon months of July and August.<sup>10</sup> Their language is Tulu, but many of them in the village also speak Malayalam.

The different service castes have lineage systems that are locally known as '*Bali or Bari*'. Locals believe that the traditional Tulu society did not have castes like Bunt, Billawa, Mogaveera etc, instead, they were *Bari*, or matrilineal and patrilineal lineages.<sup>11</sup> In society, each *Bari* has its own occupation; marriage is prohibited between same *Bari* as they were the members of the same family.<sup>12</sup> A majority of the Tulu *Bari* derive their names from deceased ancestors and follow the female line. The *Baris* that are closely connected to each other are often regarded as a single exogamous groups and marriage is prohibited between them. Residence is both *Patrilocal* and *Matrilocal*.<sup>13</sup> In the district, the introduction of new policies and programmes by the colonial and postcolonial era has brought changes in the organisation of caste, class and village society. Caste rigidity, in-human religious practice in the village has reduced. The introduction of land reform policy has altered the traditional agricultural economy as many service caste people who were working as tenants received the land and they have moved away from their original caste occupation. On the other hand, the shift from traditional paddy farming to plantation farming and introduction of mechanisation in farming has reduced the demand for caste-based occupations such as for *Acharis* (carpenter). They have now shifted from carpentry to daily wage labour in the village. Today only small percentage of service castes are still engaged in their respective caste occupations.

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<sup>10</sup> In this, the person dresses up in the form of a Bhuta, which is known as Kalenja. The Bhuta and his assistant (drummer) go around the village and dance in front of homes. The villagers reward them with rice, coconuts and clothes. The people who play the role of Kalenja are from a community called *Nalike*. The costume of Kalenja consists of coconut leaves, colourful dresses and a cap made of areca spate (literally means areca leaf).

<sup>11</sup> Patrilineal is a system in which descent is traced through father's (male) lineage as it involves the family surname, titles through male line. Matrilineal is in which the family decent is traced through mother and maternal ancestors, belongs to mothers lineage, household or *Tharavad*. Tharavad is a matrilineal family system, which exists among Yadavas, or Maniyani, Poojari, Billava and Nairs as these castes have an affinity with Kerala. The senior male member (elder maternal uncle) manages the family affairs; however, he has to take the consent of the elder women (in the family) for any decision in the family.

<sup>12</sup> The different professions such as *Bunt* (warrior and defence assistant), *Billawa* (archer), *Salian*(weaver), *Baidya* (tribal doctor), *Nadava* (cultivator; one who plants crops), *Okkeleme*(farm worker; farm settler), *Poojari*(tribal priest), *Maddela* (washer man), *Mogera* (fish catcher), *Kottari* (Store-keeper), *Kulala* (potter) *Sapalya*(musician).

<sup>13</sup> Patrilocal residence is a social system in which a married couple resides with or near the husband's parents.

In Matrilocal couple resides with or near to the wife's parents. This practice can observe in the families where husband is far away, expired or maternal family is not having a male member in the family.

The Muslim world can be divided into two main sects: *Shia* and *Sunni*. Muslims in India are sharply divided into two categories, Ashrafs and non-Ashrafs.<sup>14</sup> In the village can find Ashrafs such as Sayyads (Syed), Shiekhs and Byari communities. Muslim families still live in a joint family system. The economic and livelihood demands of the family were the binding force for the continuing joint family practises. In a Muslim household, one or more family members are working in Middle Eastern countries and they visit their family once in a year. After tenth or twelfth standard, majority of the youth from Muslim families go to the Middle East for and it has improved their economic status in the society. Muslims are more engaged in trading than agriculture; they consider themselves as business class people in the village. In Moodanahalli, only a few families are engaged in agriculture and majority of them are engaged in different kinds of business, from petty shops, meat shops to areca purchasing.

The migration of the Muslim youth to Middle Eastern countries has contributed towards the emergence of what is known as 'female headed households' where women have taken the responsibility of looking after the family while her husband, son, or family members are away. Sara Abubakar, a prominent Kannada writer, has written and discussed the dismal condition of Muslim women, particularly in the context of male migration. She expresses that the absence of husbands puts lot of pressure on Muslim women, as there is a constant threat to women and they become easy victim in the society. The condition of 'single young mother ' becomes even worse as she becomes dependent on her brother-in-law and father-in-law and could be subjected to exploitation by them. In the village, Hindus and Muslims have a long history of living in harmony, however in recent times; cultural tensions and external agencies are influencing towards the rise of communal tensions in the society.

The cultural diversity of the region evident in the number of languages spoken in the district; most of the people are bilingual or trilingual in that they use more than 2-3 languages to communicate in their day-to-day life. Tulu is the regional and main language spoken by all caste and classes.<sup>15</sup> The district recognises itself as '*Tulu Nadu*' and Tulu

<sup>14</sup> The Ashrafs, or those who claim a foreign descent, are further divided into four castes, Sayyads (Syed), Shiekhs, Mughals and Pathans, in that order of rank. The non-Ashrafs are alleged to be converts from Hinduism, and are therefore drawn from the indigenous population. Ashrafs constitute 2% of Muslim Population whereas Ajlafs 98%. Ajlafs - Mapilla, Pinjara, Chapparband, Laddaf, Kasab (Kasai), Katharga, Dudekula, Labbe, Pindare, Momin, Nadaf, Madari, Phoolmali, Bagwan, Jathagera, Byari, Kalal, Darvesu (darveshi), Nalband etc.

<sup>15</sup> Non-native speakers like Konkani-speaking Mangalorean Catholics, Gowda Saraswath Brahmins and Daivajnas, as well as the Malayalam, Urdu speaking Byari community are well-versed in Tulu language.

speaking castes and communities are referred to as ‘*Tuluva*’ or Tulu people. Tulu has the status of a Dravidian language and is spoken by three to five million native speakers in the world.<sup>16</sup> Tulu is diverse with regional difference in the use of words to convey the same meaning (as regional, socio-linguistic society) has its influence over other languages. The cultural diversity can be observed in all spoken languages; as this region has roughly twelve different types of languages spoken by different caste and sub-caste people in the region.<sup>17</sup>

### **Ecology of Moodanahalli**

Culture is integral to the discussion on agricultural ecology. Moodanahalli has diverse ecological features, which I have discussed in four sub-categories as soil, land and land classifications, water and weather. The discussion of ecology in this chapter provides a clear understanding on the existing agro-climatic conditions of the Moodanahalli and contributes in analysing the perspectives of farmers and farming within the village.

**Soil:** In agriculture, soil is an important component for the production of agriculture materials. In this region, the soil has hard laterite content, it is red soil produced by rock decay; contains insoluble deposits of ferric and aluminium oxides. The hard laterite is not favourable for agricultural production, as it does not have the capacity to control the water and retain moisture and nutrients. In hard laterite soil, the capacity of production is less. These types of land are more favourable for perennial crops than paddy cultivation. Soft laterite soil has the capacity to retain moisture or water, nutrients and it is the best soil for agriculture.

**Land and Land classification:** Land plays a dual role in Indian rural context where it is valued as a productive factor and ownership of land is a ready security in the credit market. It also acts as a buffer in the event of natural hazards, life contingencies and crisis. Land is the main determinants of social status in the village. Those who own large land areas try to apply an unequal influence over the rural agrarian institutions of labour. In the village, many of the households own a small patch of land but these holdings are so small or unproductive that the people derive the greater share of their livelihood from

<sup>16</sup> Victorian linguist Robert Caldwell (1856) has commended Tulu as the most highly developed language, with lots of written literature, and a rich oral literature such as the *Siri* Epic. The language was written originally using the Tulu script, which is an adaptation of Grantha script. From the beginning of the 20th century, the original script was abandoned in favour of the Kannada script.

<sup>17</sup> Different Languages spoken in Dakshina Kannada are: Kannada, Tulu, Havyaka Kannada, Byaari, Malayalam, Konkani, Kota Kannada, Shivali Tulu, Marathi, Sathanika tulu, GSB Konkani and Kadu Konkani. ‘Koraga Bashe’ is a language spoken by the Korgans and it today in the state of extinct.

agriculture labour than from their own land. Economically, it is land or raw materials, which are naturally forming substances and are valuable in their relatively unmodified form. The value of it depends on this as well as on the existing demand for it in the community. Moodanahalli village topography is diverse and is rich in natural resources. The natural resources include forests, sacred groves, grazing land, water sources, which can renew themselves if used in sustainable manner. The existing natural resource of the village provides direct and indirect benefits to the community. The village has a total of 351 acres of agricultural land and 484 acres of *kumki* land.<sup>18</sup> Land is divided into paddy and plantation, based on the crops that are produced in that area. Along with this, there are seven different classification of land based on ownership and usage of land, and that gives revenue to the village.

The local panchayat receives the revenue on **government lands**. In the village, local panchayat is in-charge of managing and monitoring these lands. The areas with rivers, streams or public tanks or wells are called as **Poranboke**. People have access to these resources and the village panchayat is in-charge of managing these lands. The forest department is in-charge of managing the forestlands. In recent times, a significant effort has been made to develop the village forestry through farmers; this is mainly because the region comes under the rain shadow area as compared to the rest of the taluk. Roughly, 75 acres of land has forest and they come under private farmers and the forest department.<sup>19</sup>

Strurrock (1894) in his book *Madras District Manuals: South Canara (Vol 1)* has referred to Dakshina Kannada, (then South Canara) as the '*Forest District*'. Referring to the forests in the district and my field area, the document states:

“South Canara is essentially a forest district. The slopes of the Western Ghats from north and south are clothed with dense forest of magnificent timber and forest growth stimulated by the heavy rainfall, approaches within a few miles of the coast to the north of Coondapoor taluk and again in the southern maganes of Kasargod taluk. ... This clearness is not modern...” (Page 15)

Currently forests are on the verge of vanishing and the main reason for this is the excess use of forest and forest products. In the past ten years, many farmers, people have taken a conscious effort to improve the forest area in the locality as many awareness

<sup>18</sup> Kumki land is the government land which is situated within the boundary of patta land which the landowner has rights to stay, use the resources. As per the Karnataka land reform act person can stay in this land, however he does not have the freedom to change the existing structure of the land.

<sup>19</sup> The different forest trees which exist here are: Mango, *Tectona grandis*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Ficus bengalensis*, *Terminelia alata*, *Artocarpus hirsutus*, *Acacia melanoxylon*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Swietenia mahoganii*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Vateria indica*, *Hopea parviflora*, *Terminelia paniculata*, *Tamrindus indicus* are useful for different purposes.

programmes were organised in collaboration with the forest department to improve the forestland in the region. **Gomala** (Grazing) land was common in the region, found in each village, used for grazing domestic animals. Gomala existed until land reform however, since then they have slowly disappeared. Today only five acres of land exists as grazing land. Even this is steadily disappearing. The decline of Gomala can be associated with the decline in paddy cultivation, and reduction in the use of domestic animals in agriculture sector. Each household has 2-3 cows, and fodder for animals is produced or purchased from market.

The **nedutopu** is a forest plantation area where different varieties of trees are grown for public and commercial purpose within the community. The nedutopu are under the control of the local panchayats. The local panchayats have the right to generate revenue by calling for tenders or directly selling the forest products. In the village, the local panchayat does not have a big nedutopu, so is unable to make much revenue from it.

The sacred groves are referred by different names like **devarakadu** (literally - Gods forest), **Nagabanas** (serpent groves) and **Bhuuthabanas** or **bhuuthasthanas**. Sacred groves are the traditionally preserved forestland and they are associated with ancestral worship. They are usually dedicated to the worship of deities, snakes and village gods and goddess. Sacred groves are rich biodiversity spots with minimal human interference; although majority of these lands are in private agricultural areas. It served to preserve rich flora and fauna, reduce soil erosion, and maintain ecological fertility of the area. These sacred groves are near agricultural areas, paddy fields and plantations. In short, devarakaadu help in maintaining the equilibrium of the nature in the region. Devarakaadu vary in sizes and range from a small patch of forest trees to half an acre of forest area. There are different beliefs, traditions, folklores and taboos attached to devarakaadu, which have in the end helped preserve the rich diversity of devarakaadu. In Dakshina Kannada, sacred groves are a combination of forests, agriculture lands, rivers, streams and ponds (Achar and Nayak, 2008). The village panchayat owns non-agricultural lands, commercial land, coconut and areca groves, pastoral lands, religious lands, common use lands such as crematorium, common ground for festivals. The revenue earned from the auction is used for infrastructural work of the village.

**Water Source:** The village has access to a river or *holey* (stream) which is the main reason for the expansion of agriculture in the region. The river that the village depends on heavily for agricultural purposes is *sere*. In rainy season, *sere* flows with all its tributaries

and in summer, she takes the shape of a narrow stream and at the end of the summer, she is reduced to a dry bed of fertile land. This is primarily because of the overuse of water for irrigation purposes in arecanut plantations. In 2002, the VRF (Varanashi Research Foundation) conducted an experimental project within their agriculture land, which was successful in that they were able to irrigate the land and also maintain the underground water table and the water levels in the traditional well situated in the locality. They constructed a barrage across the river that improved the underground water table well. Later different farmer groups experimented similarly. This has over time helped in increasing the underground water table and today the *sere river* does not run dry anymore. Other irrigation resources are small freshwater ponds, bore wells and open wells; other modern methods of the irrigation also exist in the village.

### **Agriculture in Moodanahalli**

Agriculture consists of relationships between those who control land and those who work on the land (Thorner; 1976; Joshi 1982 as in Damle 1993). Those who control the land will have the property and capital ownership over the land, but the extent of this ownership varies. This variation in the ownership of land alienates some from work and products of their own labour power, resulting in alienation from the land (Bottomore, ed., 1983). The introduction of land reform in Dakshina Kannada district has rearranged the social order, as a majority of the agricultural labourers now constitute the category of 'small farmers' in the agrarian system.

June or *Besha* month signifies the arrival of the monsoon season to the district; farming activities slowly starts to pick up as the farming community prepares for the next agricultural season in the district. Traditionally, early monsoon showers are considered as the prime time for paddy cultivation and farmers start ploughing the land for transplantation of the seedlings. During this time, plantation farmers are busy in finishing all their pending work in the land. After the first few heavy showers, they spray copper sulphate mixture to areca plantation to protect the tree from *Koleroga* or rot disease.<sup>20</sup> However, in 2008, the circumstances were different, the farming community could not

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<sup>20</sup> *Koleroga* occurs as an epidemic in the heavy rainfall areas of Karnataka and Kerala. The disease first makes its appearance after monsoon period. The first symptom is the appearance of water-soaked lesions on the nut surface near the calyx. The patches enlarge, nuts darken and they shed in large number. The fallen nuts soon develop whitish mycelial mass all over. Nuts of all ages are attacked and if unchecked, invade crown causing the leaves and bunches. This is controlled by spraying Bordeaux mixture (1%) twice a year, one just before the onset of South-West monsoon and another 40 days later. If monsoon is prolonged then farmers give third spray.

engage in agriculture across the district as a majority of them suffered from Chikungunya. When I started my fieldwork in August 2008, the village was recovering from the impact of Chikungunya disease. On my way to Dakshina Kannada, I met Rajeev, a farmer and during the course of my conversation with him and he pointed out that –

“Now all farmers are worried about spraying the bordo-mixture to the arecanut plantation. Despite the spray, we still get kole roga (rot disease) almost every year. This year we have not yet started spraying, as the workers who are experts at this job are not in a position to climb trees. This will affect my agriculture production this year and I am worried. Workers who are able to climb trees are demanding a high wage, and I being a small farmer cannot afford it. I am not able to work in my land because of this Chikungunya pain and I don't know as to what I will do in this situation” (field work, 2008).

In Dakshina Kannada, the outbreak of Chikungunya fever started in January 2008.<sup>21</sup> Chikungunya fever created economic imbalance in the seasonal cycles of the agricultural production.<sup>22</sup> The diseases made the farmers and agricultural workers immobile and they were unable to engage in farming activities for over 6-7 months. In that agricultural season, several farmers were not able to sow the seeds for paddy cultivation; landless labourers were not able to earn their daily bread. Understanding the impact of disease on the society, after a long delay, the state government released relief in the form of free rice distribution and medicine for the poor section of the society. The delay in agricultural activities had its impact on village agriculture economy.

Seasonal nature of the agricultural occupation, production links with the agro-climatic conditions and delay in the crop production has its influence on quality and quantity of crops. Shortage of workers, work intensity, weather, low output returns over the years has shifted the land use patterns; farmers shifted from paddy to horticulture crops. Scholars, practitioners, agriculture officials have shown concern and presently we have 32,437 (2010) hectares of paddy land compared with the 2009 (32,583) and 2008 (32,845) statistics showing declining trends in paddy cultivation (The Hindu, September 2010). In Moodanahalli, less than 10 % of the farmers are practising paddy cultivation and they have preserved the paddy fields as food security for the family. The existing condition of agriculture has pushed farmers to cultivate a single crop in a season; however, it is not sufficient to meet the annual demand of food consumption in a family. Significantly, from the last decade, changes have been observed in the land use patterns

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<sup>21</sup> The surveillance case definition stipulated that any patient reporting with fever and arthritis be considered as a suspected case of Chickenguniya fever.

<sup>22</sup> Seasonal cycle means, different activities that have been conducted by the farmers in a season.

as agricultural areas have been converted into non-agricultural, commercial areas, centres in village town and city for peripheral expansion in the district.

**Table: 3.3 Land holding details of the Households**

Marginal farmers (less than one acres)	Small farmer (1.2 acres )	Middle farmer (2-4 acres)	Big farmer (4 acres and more)	Landless labours
60	65	36	14	146
18.6%	20.2 %	11.2%	4.3 %	45.4%

Source: Land Classification is based on Damle (1993)

While looking at the landholding pattern of the village, more than 45% of them are landless labourers either working as wage labourers in agriculture or in other related activities in the village and outside. The maximum number are small farmers having less than 2.5 acres of agriculture land; many work as wage labourers, engage in business in nearby villages to support their agriculture and livelihood. Small and medium farmers were originally landless labourers or from service castes, who received the agricultural land during land reform. The big farmers mostly belong to upper caste and class categories such as Brahmins and Bunts communities in the village. Mostly small and medium farmers are engaged in paddy cultivation with few exceptional big farmers in the region.

**Paddy Cultivation:** Rice is the main food of the people. The agriculture season begins with the coming of copious dark clouds gathering in the sky during early June when the monsoon enters the district. With the coming of the rains, the agriculture season begins in full swing. Paddy is a monsoon field crop and a delay in the monsoon affects paddy production. Paddy cultivation includes ploughing, sowing, harvesting and post harvesting. Paddy cultivation functions like a circle or a chain as a delay in work will affect other activities. Farming is a task that is harmonious with nature.

In farming, each paddy field is unique for its soil fertility, availability of water, vegetation, natural ecosystem, manures, and different techniques of cultivation influence the productivity of the land. In paddy cultivation, lands are classified on the basis of access to water availability, the low fields with a generous supply of water during rainy season brings in fertile mud for paddy through channels from the streams and these lands are referred to as *bail*. Traditionally, in the village, farmers' cultivated three kinds of rice crops namely, *yenelu*, *suggi* and *kolake*.

Bail land, which produces three crops a year, was referred to as 'Kolake Gadde' (field) after the name of the third crop. The land, which gives two crops annually, is either

referred to as bail gade or suggi gade, named after the second crop. Bail land situated at a level lower than the nearby stream, and is submerged in water during the initial monsoon months is referred to as '*potla gadde*'. These fields are harvested after the rains and yield one crop through the year. The *majal* or second-class paddy land consists of those fields, which were in the higher geographical area in the villager and these are not entirely dependent on the annual rainfall. In this *majal* land, two crops of rice were grown, or one crop was combined with the dry grain or pulses were grown in the land. In the *bett* land, which is the third class of land, fields are entirely dependent on annual rainfall and supply of water is only enough to last until the end short break in the monsoon. Only one crop is grown in this land. Garden or plantation lands were those lands in which the arecanut and coconut crops were cultivated; it is '*bagayet*' land. This *bagayet* assessment applied only when the land was specially adapted by nature for that kind of cultivation. Land revenue is collected based on the type of land. Land revenue is highest from *bagayet* since colonial times.

Paddy needs sufficient water in the coastal belt; through an interesting classification has been traditionally practiced in the region. The name of the paddy fields itself denoted the availability of water resources for the cultivation of paddy. I personally felt that this is the finest way in which our ancestors have classified the agricultural lands. Farmers irrigate the land whenever it is necessary by making small check dams in the streams with a combination of bamboos, twigs and mud. In early times, two crops were cultivated yearly, but presently one crop is cultivated yearly mainly because of shortage of water supply for agriculture in the rabi and summer season.

The region is known for areca cultivation and majority of the farmers in the village have areca plantation. Sturrock narrates the historical agricultural situation of the region. He pointed out that from 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Havyaka Brahmins were engaged in arecanut cultivation and they excelled in its cultivation;

“Havig or Havyaka Bharamins were mainly cultivating the arecanut plantation and they excell in this cultivation in the district. In colonial period, 40 acres was considered as a large holding and five acres a small land. Tenures and natural circumstance being favourable, and agriculture classes generally being industrious, a large number of ryots are in easy and prosperous circumstances and comfort is probably more common here than in most other part of the southern India” (Sturrock 1894:192).

Even the villagers make this observation, more than a century later. According to farmers in the village,

*'Havyaka Brahmins are the master in the arecanut production, we really do not know as what makes them different from us in the cultivation of areca. We are in the same locality, village, still we do not produce good quality and quantity of areca nuts in our land.'* (Field Notes, 2009).

Why Havyakas excel in areca nut farming would be an interesting question to study, that is, to look at the social, cultural, economic context that provided the conditions for developing an organised, and modern farming practice. I did not venture into finding answers, as my own identity as Havyaka could have influenced my perspective and views. However, my personal observation is that the Havyakas have a long history of engaging in arecanut farming and they have knowledge of different agricultural practices. They have been open to innovation and new ideas in farming. On the other hand, small, marginal and landless labourers have expertise in paddy cultivation. However, it is interesting and yet surprising to note that farmers do not talk about their own expertise involved in paddy cultivation. In the last 20 years, paddy farming has reduced drastically over years. Many farmers have worked as agricultural labourers in the paddy fields prior to land reform.

***Kumeri Cultivation-*** Moodanahalli had a historically significant farming namely, '*Kumeri cultivation*' during the pre-colonial rule in the region. The Dakshina Kannada historical account has changed so fast within a century that the younger generation is not aware that earlier shifting cultivation was practiced in the region. While doing my fieldwork, by accident, I came across the reference to *Kumeri cultivation* that existed in my field area during the mid-1850s and lost forever in the history. Today only colonial administrators' documents throw some light on this practice (Gadgil and Guha 1992) as there are no written records in the native literature, which mentions on this form of farm practice. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Dakshina Kannada had two kinds of cultivation, first was the 'kumeri' or shifting cultivation, by clearing the forest in the upland hills and cultivating the land with dry crops for some time and allowing the forest to develop in the region. Second was the rice cultivation in the permanent paddy land areas in the valleys. People in some parts of the district practiced this method of farming. The landholders of the village regarded themselves as the owners of the resource or waste (which Kumeri cutters burn) and of their holdings and demanded fees, regular rent from anyone who cut kumeri in the village forest. During colonial administration, the district had '*Sarkar Kumeri*' and '*warg Kumeri*' according to which the Kumeri cutters had to pay their dues directly to government or landholders who paid it back to government. Over time, the

colonial government restricted Kumeri cultivation and even restricted the exactions of the landholders in dealing with the forest cultivators. Eventually in 1860, orders were issued to decrease warga Kumeri assessment and '*sarkar Kumeri*' cultivation was prohibited, except in areas where the collector considered it necessary to allow it to prevent suffering among the forest tribes who were unaccustomed to any other form of cultivation. An exception was made for *warga Kumeri* in the Bekal region of Kasaragod taluk where it had become an established practice and Kumeri was bought, sold and mortgaged freely like any other holdings.

In the South Kanara District Manual, Kumeri cultivation practice appears in the proceedings of the Board of revenue dated 16<sup>th</sup> April 1859:

'It is the name given to cultivation which takes place on the forest clearings, a hillside is always selected on the slopes of which a space is cleared at the end of the year. The wood is left to dry until the following March or April and then burned; in moist localities, the seed is sown in the ashes on the fall of the first rain without soil being touched by implement of any kind, but in the taluk of Bekal the land is ploughed. The only further operations are weeding and fencing. A small crop is taken off the ground in the second year and sometimes in the third after which the spot is deserted until the jungle is sufficiently high to tempt the kumara cutter to renew the process'

The Brahmin lawyer Shankar Bhat from a neighbouring village who is in his early 90s, and active for his age has narrated the social, economic conditions of the region during the pre and post independence time. He was able to give me an insight into land reform, Kumeri cultivation, practice of challi, mulagani tenancy system in the area. He told me that,

'Vittla, Kasargodu region has practiced Kumeri cultivation it is a form of shifting cultivation practiced by the hill people in the region. The hilly region people are Schedule castes and tribes who used to be daily labourers in the Bhramins and Bunts agricultural land. In Kumeri cultivating regions Finger millet or Ragi was the main crop. Traditionally Ragi was consumed as a daily diet in the food system. These people used to exchange ragi for the rice. Therefore, there existed a pattern of the barter system. This is the story of Kumeri cultivation practiced in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (Field Notes; 2009)

It was a surprise for me, as I never came across the cultivation of Ragi in Dakshina Kannada. My strong assumption was that Ragi is a semi-arid and dry zone agricultural crop of Tumkur, Kolar, where it is considered as the staple food of the people. I never saw people eating Ragi in my district; I even questioned many people if they knew that Ragi was the staple food and an important crop of the Dalit community and many declined the story. In the *warg kumer* of the Bekal region of Kasaragod the crop raised is usually rice, mixed with dal and cotton. Elsewhere ragi and gram are the

principal crops with small portion of land used for the cultivation of dal, castor-oil, ginger, chillies and vegetables of different varieties. After the restrictive orders of 1860 sarkar Kumeri was observed only in Coondapoor taluk. However, sarkar kumeri also got sanctioned later under the regulation of the forest department in portions of Uppinagagdi and Kasaragod taluks. Subsequently, Kumeri was completely prohibited, as a result there was depopulation of the tract to such an extent that labourers could not be found to collect minor forest produce and carry on other operations of forestry.

### **Agriculture Cycle**

Land preparation starts in May, after summer showers. Farmer starts levelling the land by removing weeds from the land, providing a mixture of green leaves, cow dung and ash as manure to the land and by the second ploughing they manure into soil and the land is ready for cultivation. Here the soil lies bare to the rays of sun until it becomes exceedingly dry and parched whereby the insects and weeds are destroyed. After this, the seed sown on those fields are kept as the nursery for the whole farm. The seed remains in the ground, almost unchanged awaiting the rains when it germinates. This is called *hudui neji* (dry nursery). In those lands where there are tanks or other sources of water the seeds are sown in mid of May and watered. This is called '*nir neji*' (Water nursery). *Nir neji* method is considered the best method by farmers.

The nursery preparation starts in June, after the onset of monsoon. By mid-June farmers are engaged in paddy cultivation. With the coming of heavy rains, farmers begin the ploughing of the land for farming. Farmers decide on the method of ploughing (wooden or tractor) sowing (transplanting or direct sowing paddy seeds), choice of variety of rice (traditional or HYV (High Yielding Variety)) and need of extra labour power to carry out the farming in paddy fields.

In the village, tillers have replaced wooden ploughs.<sup>23</sup> With the coming of power tillers there is less tilling than earlier wooden ploughs.<sup>24</sup> Traditional wooden ploughs and bulls are almost extinct from the field and only a few families still preserve wooden ploughing equipment. Basavappa, a farmer with 3 acres of land for paddy cultivation and arecanut plantation, explained about ploughing and the shift in technology:

<sup>23</sup> Plough is the device, which helps the farmer to ploughing the land.

<sup>24</sup> In wooden plough farmer had to till the land 6-12 times which was time-consuming for them. In tiller, 2-3 times they had to plough the land.

“Batha (paddy) is Kramabbadha (discipline) crop; once the rain starts we start the farming. Gadde ulume (paddy land ploughing) is tough work; a trained person can do the ploughing. During 1960-70’s we were using bullocks for ploughing the land. It is difficult to manage the bull and goad them to plough in a straight direction. Plenty of water should exist in the paddy field then only the bulls will feel comfortable to pull the plough hard and deep in the soil. The bulls’ feel tired soon when there is less water in the paddy land and this will make them toil hard putting extra effort. In our time, there was a co-operation between farmer and bull and there was a unique bond between each other.... Now nature is missing from farming as many of them went in for power tiller farming.” (Field notes 2008)

Basavappa expressed that tiller farming helps in reducing the number of labourers employed but these iron tillers do not go deep into the soil. He also said that this resulted in lack of bonding with nature and animals. To quote him, (in tulu) “*Kondodu Bendunaygu bukka ethugu ongi apparoopada patherayana sambanda ithund*” which means, “*bulls and farmers had a silent bonding (maunada bandhana) in the paddy field. I used to share all our worries with the bull and I felt that it understood what I was saying while ploughing the land. Farmer, bull, plough and nature all were involved in this farming. In this traditional process, land would become hada or medu (soft) and fertile which is very significant for paddy cultivation*”. Local varieties like kayame, rajakayame, kajejaya and high yielding varieties like mukti, exist in the village. With the coming of HYV seeds, farmers quickly shifted from local variety of seeds. The shift happened due to many factors, the reasons I can point out is that the state agricultural department pushed HYV seeds by distributing them at the village level. Observing the high yield capacity of the seeds many farmers in the village shifted to HYV seeds. However, soon they realised the impact of the HYV seeds in the region as the plants became easy targets to pests and use of pesticide became a part of the cropping pattern in the region. Over the years, farmers have observed different *guna* (features) in HYV and local variety of seeds. They found that, local varieties were tastier, big in size, heavy in weight and farmers used to get more fodder from crops. Fodder provides food for the animals and again farmers do not have to spend on purchasing the fodder from the market. While, HYV seeds are smaller in shape and less in weight and yield more crops, would give less fodder for the animals.

Seedling are transplanted in the field during the last week of June or early July as it depends on the rain and this work is mainly done by women workers in the village. Traditionally the district has observed five different crops depending on the time of

sowing and harvesting of the crops.<sup>25</sup> Crop is called ‘*Yenelu*’ if it harvested before October; harvesting depends on the duration of the crop. Sometimes delay in rain, lack of labour availability, lack of tiller access and other reasons lead to delay in the farming cycle. In August, if farmer has sown the seeds then it is referred to as *Pattala*. Similarly, *Suggi*, *Yedakolake* and *Kolake* crops are referred to by the month of its sowing in the region. Today in the village only few farmers are practising *Suggi* cultivation; quality of land fertility has slowly decreased, and many farmers do not get sufficient yield from the paddy cultivation. During the Focus Group Discussion among the farmers, a paddy farmer Krishna expressed as follows,

“Paddy cultivation is decreasing over time and paddy lands are shrinking, before independence, paddy was the main crop of the region. More than 90% of the agriculture land was under paddy cultivation. With the coming of Bhoo hakku Kaide (Land reforms act) in 1960’s the big land- owners had to give away the land to the labourers who were working in these lands. This led to small land area and majority of the farmers are having less than 2.5 acres in the region. In 1970’s and early 80’s price for rice crop was low and farmers were able to get only small amounts for their livelihood from their crops. Meanwhile, there was demand for cash crops and steadily the price increased; over a time many farmers transformed their agriculture land to cash crops. Over time, lush paddy land cover transformed into perennial crops like arecanut, coconut, cocoa, banana, black pepper and cashew nuts came in. The long stretch of paddy fields from the village slowly disappeared. This change did not happen overnight but was a steady and continuous process. Today rice cultivation is not productive here as in Shimoga regions. We do not have fertile land for paddy cultivation and it is less profitable. Paddy is not free from diseases, lack of labourers for ploughing, transplanting, and for harvesting the crop made farmers opt out of this cultivation. However, we want to preserve the paddy culture in the region. Therefore, we are trying to protect it by growing crops only in a small portion of our land and we do not want to take risks, as we are small farmers so we go for only one crop in an agriculture season.” (Field Notes 2008)

After World War II, there was rise in prices of all agricultural commodities, and changes began in the agriculture situation of the district.<sup>26</sup> With independence, many reforms took place in the country, which has taken away the existing social and economic

<sup>25</sup> *Yenelu* crop is between April 1<sup>st</sup> to October, *Pattala* crop is between August 1<sup>st</sup> to January, *Sugi* crop is between October 15 to March 15, *Yedakolake* crop is between December to April and lastly *Kolake* crop is between February to May. However today with modernisation, ecological and climatic changes in the district we do not find the cultivation of *Kolake* crops.

<sup>26</sup> The commercial crops gave profit for the farmers, it was observed as an easier cultivation than paddy, and arecanut cultivators gave maximum interest for the development of arecanut production in the district. In three ways this transformation took place over the decades; the plantation lands were given maximum attention, old and new plants and formation of new plots of areca nut plantation in the land replaced unhealthy plantations. Slowly the vast paddy lands were converted to arecanut plantations. Along with this, modern mechanism and farm practices, chemical fertilizers, pesticides HYV seeds came to the region.

institutions of the agrarian society.<sup>27</sup> Land for tiller, Land reforms, farmer's loan exemptions, cooperative farming, and controlled land holding etc came into existence as these policies took lands from the landlords and gave it to the tenants. The land reform policy had an adverse effect on the landowners, first as their land were taken away and given to tenants, tenants did not pay the loans taken from the landowners, and controlled land holding put a ceiling on the amount of land a landowner could control. Many of these policies and laws were applicable to paddy lands (land for tiller, land reform acts) and not for plantation lands. Understanding the loopholes in the system, farmers prior to the implementation of the land reform in the region converted their paddy land into plantation agricultural land in the region.

Experts point out that the transformation took place because of increased cost of production for rice and low productivity of the land. Environment, geography and variation in market price for rice during late 1960s and early 1970s are responsible for decline in paddy cultivation. By mid-1960s, there was a major change in the agrarian pattern of the village viz. the coming of technological innovations in the form of Green Revolution.

'For the first time we saw gram sevaka (agriculture extension worker) entering the village with a bag full of seeds and manure. He used to visit each farmer's house and explain the different manures, seeds and provided these to farmer at subsidised rates. Suddenly, there was high demand for these manures and without realizing the future affect of this; we started using it in large quantities. Today people talk on mulching technique, which farmers practiced in the olden times.<sup>28</sup> The green leaves we used to bring from our agriculture land and soppinna gudde' (Field Notes 2008).

In the past decade, agriculture has undergone wide-ranging change in productivity. Growth patterns are influenced by market variations, and change in climate condition. However, there has been a steady increase in the demand for cash crops, especially with the New Economic Policy of the 1990s that initiated trade liberalisation for export oriented agriculture commodities. This has raised the demand for cash crops and large tracts of land have been brought under plantation crops in the region.

Paddy land can be of different shapes and sizes depending on the agriculture area under cultivation. It is easy to convert paddy land into plantation land and difficult for

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<sup>27</sup> The traditional values were questions and the country went through different movements, transformations and Jamin dhari, bonded labour systems were abolished.

<sup>28</sup> It is a method where field is covered with green waste and if it is not raining then spray water. After sometime, the green waste will 'mulch' with the soil and sink into the ground.

converting plantation land into paddy cultivation land. For the latter to changeover, there is a need of more time, money, energy, labour, and due to this; farmers are not willing to go back to paddy cultivation. Only a few farmers (6%) have paddy cultivation land to ensure self-sustainability in food, these farmers cultivate paddy. Today paddy land ownership and cultivation has a personal social status in the village. Farmers say with pride that they get their staple food grain from their own land instead of buying it in the market. Farmers said that the younger generation is not aware of paddy cultivation and different festivals associated with paddy cultivation. Commercial farmers are surprised and curious to know how these farmers still sustain themselves on paddy cultivation when there is a labour crisis in the village. Water is essential for paddy cultivation and so to ensure regular water flow farmers dig a small water channel from the water source to the paddy field that provides moisture and softness to the paddy field. Here farmers use the natural water flow that is available near the paddy field and some farmers even took the benefit of bore wells for irrigation. A majority of the farmers use traditional manures like green manure, farmyard manure, compost and a mixture of ash and soil in the paddy field. However, a few farmers have used chemical manure available in the market along with traditional manure. Farmers have highlighted different reasons for the decline in paddy farming: The existence of laterite components in the soil has led to the poor performance of paddy cultivation in the district. The existing condition of the valley and hilly area make it more favourable for perennial crops. Land fertility was not favourable for paddy, depletion in the land productivity has been observed in paddy cultivation over the years, and heavy rainfall has made it difficult for the farmers to control pests in paddy cultivation. A majority of the farmers have small patches of agricultural land and many of them face water shortage. The traditional, local, disease resistant paddy varieties that undergone genetic modifications naturally over the years and are no longer the preferred variety for cultivation. Moreover, these seeds are no longer available with the farmers. These seeds have been replaced with the high yield variety of seeds, also encouraged by the government and which is easily available in the local market. Today, farmers feel that it is less expensive to buy rice from the market than cultivate paddy. The farmers are of opinion that,

*'Paddy cultivation is best in their agriculture land for food security. Due to lack of labour accessibility and work pressure, they are not prepared to take the risk of cultivating the paddy in their land'. (Field Notes 2008)*

Traditionally, farming was a family pursuit, using local technology and largely meant for personal/family subsistence. With Green revolution technology, the nation moved from national food deficit to surplus farming. As farming increased, it became necessary for farmers to move towards alternative market farming. Developing agriculture is important for food security of the people, country as well as to develop allied sectors like horticulture, animal husbandry, dairy and fishery. These allied activities have played a role in improving the nutritious food, health and economic status of the rural poor. The village is dependent on monsoon for agriculture, which is witnessing changes overtime. The influence of global, national and regional changes resulted in change in land use/land cover patterns with special reference to farming in the region.

**Plantation agriculture:** The agriculture plantation is one of the important features of the region. Most of the farmers have plantation crops in their land, like arecanut, coconut, cashew, banana, Cocoa, rubber, Black pepper and vanilla. In plantations, people grow perennial crops, which are of commercial use/value.

**Table: 3.4 Main crops and their production in Moodanahalli**

Crops	Production area (acres)	Production (quintal)	Production (Q) For every acres
Arecanut	170.55	1020.38	5.98
Coconut	120.82	1179.03	9.76
Paddy	18.9	150.30	7.95
Cashew nut	58.08	44.07	0.76
Black pepper	Mixed cropping	37.50	-
Banana	Mixed cropping	430.80	-
Vanilla	Mixed cropping	2.4	-
Coco	Mixed cropping	38	-

Source: Service Providers data 2005

As per the estimation, 600 arecanut trees, 70 coconuts and 70 cashew trees grow on one acre of land in the village. The table 3.4 gives an overview on the existing crops and majority of the land under the areca cultivation and the region produces an estimated 1020 quintals. For every acre of land, the region has good production of coconut cultivation (9.79 Q). Village has less than 19 acres of land under paddy cultivation and with that, farmers are able to produce only 150 quintals of paddy per annum, that is less than seven quintals per acre and that is not sufficient for the farmers to sustain their food consumption in the region. Significantly, a majority of the small, marginal farmers and landless labourers depend on the Public distribution system (PDS) for their basic consumption of rice in the region. Black pepper, banana, vanilla, cocoa are grown in the

plantation as mixed crops. Mixed cropping in agriculture is considered as one of the best techniques to control diseases and retain the soil fertility in the plantation lands.

**Table: 3.5 Different Types of Agriculture Equipment Used in the Moodanahalli**

Name of the equipments	Total	S. No	Name of the equipment	Total
Plough	78	10	Pesticide Sprayer	101
Guddali	472	11	Pickax	462
Gbbar gas unit	6	12	Solar light facility	1
Two wheeler vehicle	60	13	Three wheeler vehicle	7
Four wheeler vehicle	21	14	Television	84
Radio	257	15	Tape record	105
Phone	94	16	Grinder	33
Mixer	35	17	Drip irrigation	2
Tiller	2	18	Krishi Mithra Trolley	11

Source: Service provider data 2005

Agricultural equipment and machineries (Table: 3.5) are very essential for the effective management of the agricultural land. The above table provides information on the existing equipments, which are used in the agricultural activity of the area. Out of 321 houses, majority of the families have Guddali and Pickax which are the basic needs of any household in the region. The data show that more than 78 families have a plough, however today in majority of the houses; it is just of historical significance. The plough symbolises paddy cultivation and so many farmers have it but rarely use it for cultivation.

Changes in land relations and cropping patterns have led to significant changes in the village economy and society. Many in the village do not practice traditional forms of farming, which many farmers in the village associate with organic farming. One of the main reasons for this according to the farmers is the near complete disregard for traditional farming by the state, in favour of chemical farming, wherein the government has introduced policies, subsidies and facilities to encouraged chemical farming in the village. Since chemical farming has proved to be more productive, giving more output per unit, it has been adopted by farmers despite its adverse effects on soil fertility. Increasingly, farmers are aware that this system of farming is not sustainable in the long run. However, they also find it difficult to revert to traditional farming, as with chemical farming many institutions and practices that supported traditional farming have also undergone change if not totally abandoned.

Traditional farming has been labour intensive, engaging all the family members during the peak seasons. Paddy cultivation was predisposed towards the joint family system The introduction of government policies in 1970s brought changes in the village,

as many families in order to circumvent land reform legislation moved out of the joint households. This led to the individualisation of landholdings and the breakup of the joint family. In the past thirty years, sizes of landholdings have further fragmented with each generation and smaller holdings have become less economical in paddy cultivation. Mechanisation of paddy land has become impossible in many areas as they were inaccessible due to their geographical locations and many small farmers technically and economically could not engage in paddy cultivation due to the decrease in the availability of family labour. Reduced size of the landholding created less employment opportunities for the service class. Modernisation of farming through green revolution, introduction of modern irrigation system has reduced farmers' dependency on agricultural labour for many of the farm related work. This shift in the nature of farming has created a feeling of insecurity among the service class over their source of livelihood and many service class families slowly moved out of agriculture. On the other hand, mechanisation and modernisation of farming has improved farmers economic status and many shifted their paddy lands to market-oriented crops. From 1990s onwards, a trend was observed wherein many service class women who worked as wage labourers slowly moved away from agriculture, especially from paddy cultivation and started working in small-scale industries and factories.<sup>29</sup> All these changes in agriculture forced the farmers either to sell their land, or alternatively, in the case of educated farmers, move to alternative occupations. Agriculture for many farmers has become secondary source of livelihood. Many have introduced mechanisation in their farm land to overcome labour problems and in this process apply high dosage of fertilizers to get more yields from small agricultural plots. This constant pressure to seek higher yields from small land holdings has led to the depletion of soil fertility and has ironically reduced yields over time.

Infact, one of the major concerns within Moodanahalli village is the lack of availability of daily wage labourers to do the day- to-day activities of the farm. Many farmers are now in search of alternative uses of land like converting it into rubber plantations, giving it on rent for commercial purposes etc. For instance, many farmers during my field study had converted their coconut plantations into rubber plantations, as it involves less labour in the initial seven years after which it is ready for harvest. The *soppina gudda or soppina bettas* (foliage hillocks), which traditionally had been the

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<sup>29</sup> When Mangalore Beedi industry was established, thousand of service class women left their daily wage agriculture job and became beedi rollers. This shift was mainly because working as beedi roller was confined to their home and they could engage in other activities of the household along with beedi rolling.

major source of organic manures for the paddy and plantation farming have been converted into rubber plantations.<sup>30</sup> This shift also took place due to the rising market for rubber when I began my fieldwork in the village. Although villagers were discussing about this change, but became visible to me only after spending 6-8 months in my field area. Commercialisation of the agriculture sector is clearly visible and more than a thousand hectares of land have been converted into rubber plantation approximately in 20-25 kms radius. This shift is more visible in the border of Karnataka and Kerala and in the villages of Kerala.

***Agriculture as a Nature-Cultural Process:*** The 'cultural' festivals of Dakshina Kannada district symbolically represent traditional knowledge and religious worship, which have preserved the ecological landscape of the society. Agriculture has developed in harmony with nature, where it blended with social and cultural life of society. Bhuta Kola, Nagaradhane are the two unique forms of worship, which has been well documented by anthropologists; however, I am curious about their association to farming and ecology in the district. It is difficult to trace the genesis of *Bhuta Kola* (English translation is spirit worship) in the district.<sup>31</sup> The interesting part of worship is the complex mixture of belief, rituals, music, literature and theatrical elements.<sup>32</sup> The dichotomy exists in the word and world of Bhuta Kola. The ritual is often misunderstood as '*devil worship*'. It is extremely central to the belief system of the locals.<sup>33</sup> In the ritual, *Paddanas* is a central segment of the worship.<sup>34</sup> A majority of the songs are in Tulu or in Malayalam. *Paddanas* narrate the pain, suffering, agony and social conflict of the suppressed class in society. In the village,

<sup>30</sup> The foliage and leaf litter collected by the farmers from the *soppina gudda* was used as organic compost.

<sup>31</sup> There are different Tulu words, like '*Bhuta Pattundu*' (the spirit caught) and *Mayitu battundu* (came into the body). In a ceremonial context, possession of the spirit is referred to as *darsana* or appearance/revelation. Kola is a unique form of nigh long ceremony of worshipping the *Bhuta* .

<sup>32</sup> In embodiment, the spirits or Bhutas is considered as the guardian of the village. Main aspects of the Bhuta Kola are possession, trance and dialogue of the possessed impersonator with the devotees. The bhuta impersonator behaves like an incarnation of a concerned spirit, listening, solving problems, warning, comforting the devotees. In the ritual of the Bhuta Kola we get the impression that, bhuta impersonator act as a healer and legal advisor for the village.

<sup>33</sup> In South India, spirit worship is an ancient religious beliefs and found in all societies and this complex system of worship and belief has similarity with the worships of the tribal people. These kinds of worships are the amalgamation of different art, socio-economic condition, socio-cultural values, thought patters that are enshrined in different societies. According to devotees, bhuta is believed to be residing in a place called *Sthana* (place). There are different categories among them and they include the spirits of animals, ghosts, cultural heroes and anthropomorphic divinities. These spirits have only vague identities but a few have a character which is elaborately described in the oral narratives, which narrate the birth, descent into the land and heroic deeds of these characters .

<sup>34</sup> The impersonator's wife, sister or daughter sings the *ballad* or *Paddanas*, which narrates the birth, descent into the land, heroic deeds of the Bhuta.

it has a significant relationship with the people, their social, political, cultural, judicial and medical life in society. *Paddanas* are slowly vanishing from the Tulunadu.

Raghav, aged 34, is a bank employee from Mayila community (a community largely settled in Kerala) whose caste occupation is performing Bhuta Kola. He still performs Bhuta Kola, as this is a dying art form. Traditionally, the Maliya community was associated with impurity and treated as untouchables. However, during the performance of Bhuta Kola, the performer is considered as an incarnation of 'God'; respected and worship by all castes. Comparing the practice of Bhuta Kola with Deva worship, he states,

“In Devaradane (worship of god) and Bhutaradhane (worship of spirit) there is a difference; when we go to temple we worship the god and silently pray there. But with Bhutaradhane the person can talk and express his inner feelings with the Bhuta.” (Field notes 2009)

According to him, Bhuta Kola allows for a direct communication with God unlike Deva worship. The simplified practise in the worship allows people to move beyond the material means of the rituals and express the inner feelings with the Bhuta.<sup>35</sup> Bhuta worship excludes women as they are considered as impure.<sup>36</sup> They are mere spectators in the religious ceremony of the village. *Nagaradhane* or *Nagarapanchami* is the worship of snakes comes in the month of August. It is difficult to trace its genesis; but snakes are associated with fertility. In Dakshina Kannada, snakes have their own shrine, usually under the neem tree and it is called Nagabana. The Nagabana is a stretch of forest or trees, which is worshipped as a sacred grove of the village. The Nagabanas have largely remained untouched and have contributed greatly to the preservation of valuable trees and medicinal plants. The *nagaradhane* festival in Dakshina Kannada is celebrated during the course of paddy cultivation. Wet paddy fields are breeding grounds for snake and rodents. The festival seeks to propitiate the snake God to protect the crops as well humans from destruction and harm. The festival falls during Shravana, i.e. in the month of July or August, which is also the season for harvesting.

These cultural and religious practises have close connections with the nature and they greatly contribute in the protection of the ecology in the region. The beliefs and

<sup>35</sup> Bhutaradhane breaks the traditional social hierarchy of caste based hierarchy and allows 'other caste' to worship rather than through a archaka (literal translation in Kannada is poojari) in the temple. During Bhutaradhane, the caste hierarchy is diluted as the performers of Bhuta and Balichappada (can refer as Bhuta's followers) becomes prominent.

<sup>36</sup> The women are considered polluted as they give birth; they are restricted from entering the *guidi* or *pandala* (inner room of the temple where the god or deity is situated) in the Bhuta Kola function.

practices of the people have preserved the forests, natural resources and traditional knowledge for centuries. Until recent time, the agricultural practices of the district had strong linkages with the nature and culture of the region. However, the abolition of shifting (Kumeri) cultivation and subsequent agricultural policies such as green revolution and land reforms have brought significant changes in Dakshina Kannada rural agricultural society. With changes in the traditional agricultural system, and cropping patterns (as there are hardly any paddy fields in the village), cultural practices are no longer embedded in agricultural work. Skills and traditional know-how which were once associated with paddy cultivation, including traditional system of irrigation, livestock management and allied activities have also been lost. The festivals are only of symbolic relevance.

### **Infrastructure and Economy in the Village**

Economy defines the economic condition of the community, its people, commerce, agricultural and non-agricultural revenues of the society. In this section, I explain the commerce, agriculture and labour in Moodanahalli village.

**Commerce of Moodanahalli:** The village has shops like small grocery stores with local chocolates, sweets stored in glass containers, beedi, cigarettes, stationary, electronic and fancy stores to fabric and medical shops. The table below (Table-3.6) gives an overview on the different shops within the village. A majority of these shops have come up recently in the last ten years and particularly due to the presence of Muslim community in the village.

**Table: 3.6 Number of shops in the Moodanahalli**

Activities	Number
Vegetable shops	4
Carpenters	3
Petty small shops	12
Dairy Farming (Home based )	48
Poultry Centre	1
Bangle (Jewellery) Shop	1
Hotels	7
Toddy shop	2
Agriculture Traders	6
Organic manure production unit	1
Blacksmith	3
Organic village shop	1

The village centre has developed very fast in the past ten years and many facilities have been recently introduced. The availability of the basic needs is a credible factor for the partial progress of the village centre while other areas within the village are deprived of basic facilities.

**Table: 3.7 Available Infrastructure Facilities**

Roads	Tar Road 5 K.M / Mud road 9.5K.M.
Transportation	Government and Private buses, Can hire jeep, car, auto lorry for marketing of agricultural commodity.
Anganwadi	2
Primary Health centre	1
Primary School	2
Milk producers Sangha	4
Post Office	2
Fair	Not in the village; there is one 13 Kms away
Cooperative Society	1
Cold storages (milk)	Its in Puttur (20 Km away)
Veterinary centre	1
Gram Panchayat Office	Does not exist, 4 Km away
Bank facility	1
Public Distribution Centre	1

The transformation from traditional to modern village economy is linked to the commercialisation and commodification of rural agrarian society. As compared to the neighbouring villages, the region has many basic infrastructural facilities (see box- 3.7) within the village. The primary health centre has created awareness on health and hygiene among women though many of them still neglect their health. The village emphasises the education of the younger generation and many girls and boys are getting access to higher education outside the village. People who have financial resources are sending their children to different professional courses. Different schemes of the state and central governments for female education have provided more avenues for backward families.<sup>37</sup>

**Table: 3.8 Education level in the village**

Education Level	Number	Percentage
Children	124	7.3
Illiterate	257	15.0
Literate	1328	77.7
Degree holders	129	7.6

<sup>37</sup> Karnataka state launched 'Bhagyalakshmi scheme' during 2006-07 with an objective of promoting the birth of girl children in below poverty line families and raise their status in the family and society.

The village has two primary schools, a high school and a pre-university (unaided) college, that provides education facility to the students from inside and outside the village. Over the years, the percentage of school dropouts has reduced as the state government has introduced different schemes like mid-day meal, and bicycles for high school-children in rural areas. Over the years, these schools have observed a steady decline in students. The reason for this is that many parents are sending their children to English medium schools in the neighbouring towns. There is then a temporary migration of children to nearby towns. Many people now also migrate from the district after the completion of basic education in search of higher education or work. Literacy level is high in the region. Educated youth give more importance to other livelihood opportunities than agriculture, as this is a serious concern for the villagers.

The introduction of land reform and modernisation in agriculture have improved standard of living of farmers in the village. Karnataka state government has introduced Ashraya Yojana and Dr. Ambedkar Housing Schemes for marginalized communities through local panchayat, and made it mandatory record the house in the name of the wife. Pakka housing facility has given to small farmers and landless labourers in the village. Moodanahalli village has traditional architectural houses which portraits and narrates the story of socio-economic, caste and religious exclusion of marginal communities in the society. Presently, modern housing structures have changed this, yet social distance is still maintained in the village. In general, housing reflects the socio-economic organisation of the village.<sup>38</sup> Houses are segregated along caste, class and religious lines. However, with land reforms, the stark divisions on caste and class lines have helped in reducing social distances within villages in the district.

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<sup>38</sup>In house, *Chawadi* is male dominate place where he received guests and interacts with them. *Chawadi* in Kannada is a place where people come together and interact, debate, discuss. The traditional Brahmin houses have architecture of *mukamantap*- for receiving the guest. It is an open space with raised platform facing each other namely *chitte*; it doesn't have any door and passage between *chitte* which leads to *Chawadi*. In traditional Brahmin houses caste hierarchy and discrimination exists while accessing the *chawadi* and other parts of the house. In village life can find many symbolic connotations for power, caste hierarchy etc. It is believed that sitting in front of the Brahmin head symbolises giving disrespect to him and his caste. In some occasions, 'chair' becomes the symbol of respect, especially when I was visiting households I observed that farmers/household members never used to allow me to sit down in *chitte* they always used to offer a chair for me in their household.

## Labour and Types of Labour

In 1950s and 60s, farm labour was cheap; payment for work was mostly in kind, that is, through rice and vegetables. Prior to land reform and green revolution, agriculture was a labour intensive occupation. Many workers were employed in the farm for various activities associated with farming such as collecting farm inputs, preparation, and distribution of manures. Labour was never considered expensive. In agrarian society, the tenants had a share in the agriculture production; whereas landless workers received food, clothing as the wages, and family labour (*okkalu*) received the basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter within the farmland. There was inter-dependency between farmers and labourers to meet their respective needs. However, exploitation of labour was also common and formed one of the important rationales for land reforms in the area. Land reform ended existed patterns of labour, diversifying the conditions of labour in the village.

*Dinacooli*, *Raitta* and *Mestri* are different types of labour in the region. Coolie is a generic term and refers to agricultural labourers. Coolie status means that people are involved in physical labour, have an in-depth knowledge of agriculture and a lower status in the society. *Raitta* is a traditional word, which was used before the land reforms, wherein which he had the status of landless labour but was working as a tenant on agricultural land. *Raitta* worked on agricultural land. *Mestri* is a relatively new category of labour. *Mestri* is an intermediary or mediator between the farmers and labourers, who has a group of labourers, from six to about fifteen, who work under him. *Mestri* works on contract basis, wherein he is paid for a piece of work that is to be completed within a set time. *Mestri* then hire labour on daily wage to complete the contract. As a contractor, the *Mestri* is a powerful figure in the local economy, both for the landed and the landless in the region. Many labourers prefer to associate themselves with a *Mestri* as they receive more money for their loyalty as well as ensure stability of work through the year.

In Karnataka, the daily labour is entitled to receive a minimum wage of Rs. 133 for their day's work; however, labourers have been paid low wages. With regard to wages, we can see gender discrimination, and a huge difference exists between male and female workers. Presently, a male labourer earns Rs. 80 – 110, and a female labourer earns Rs. 60-90 as a daily wage in agriculture. In contrast, a skilled labourer (a person who can climb arecanut, coconut tree for harvesting and pest controlling) earns Rs. 250-300 in a day for his work and can lead a better life than an unskilled labourer. However,

there is a risk involved in skilled labour, as many people do not have skill of climbing trees, and so there is a huge demand for these workers during the agriculture season in the village. The scarcity of skilled workers in plantation farming has created difficulties for farmers to carry on-time plantation works. There are regional variations in wages, depending on labour availability, landholding pattern and urban- rural proximity. The shift in farming practices and crop patterns have brought changes in the farmer- labour relations, and labour- nature relationship. Land reform released the labourers from bonded labour and especially from labour exploitation within agriculture. The introduction of land reform and emergence of plantation farming in the village also contributed towards the emergence of 'daily wage labourers', until then they were remunerated in kind. The shift in the land use pattern in agriculture diverted many service classes from agricultural related activities. Introduction of government policies for the promotion of backward classes, and education, provided alternative opportunities to agricultural labour. This is greatly responsible for the current labour crisis in the region, wherein there is an acute shortage of farm workers in agriculture. Today, big and medium farmers during the each agricultural cycle, have to '*go in search of labourers*'. It is common to see many farmers standing at the Mangalore Bus stand during April- May looking for labour, particularly those who migrate from the Northern part of Karnataka along with their families in search of livelihood.

The centrality of labour to the lives of peasant community and participation of women in it is opposite to the brahmanical notion of the labour. Traditionally, physical labour is considered as defiling and degrading ones status. Physical labour performed outside the house, confers on women in whatever limited form, a certain degree of freedom, economic independence and physical mobility. This may facilitate unwanted sexual encounters thus deliberating the control of men over the labour, sexuality and mobility of women. This is detrimental to the purity and superiority of the upper caste. Traditionally, the upper caste men and women are prohibited from labouring in the fields. In society, similar notion is not applicable to other castes and their worldview about the labour. The working caste that aspires for better social status takes them up as ideas worth emulating. My interaction with Kamala relived that-

"I am a daily wage-earner and this helps me to keep the fires burning in my kitchen. My husband is an alcoholic and every day he drinks and beats me. I fight with him and argue with him but I cannot go out of my home where shall I go? It is my karma and I need to work to make ends meet. I am sending my children to school because I do not want my daughter to suffer like me and I do not want to send her to work in some one's

house. It is so sad on my part that I am not able to give them what they require. I do beedi rolling when I get time from my work. Now that my daughter is older she is helping me in rolling the beedi. In this summer holiday I am sending her to tailoring class and I have already spoken with the concerned person” (Field Notes 2008).

There is a lack of women labour power in the paddy cultivation and there is less active involvement of women in transplanting and other daily wage activity. In paddy cultivation, during the transplanting process women workers used to sing *Padhana* songs, which helped them to forget the tiredness and enjoy the work with singing. Here, one lead singer will sing a song in praise on some socio-cultural event; folk culture etc and all other workers follow singing with her. This way they sing and actively work in the paddy fields. Today with the decline in paddy cultivation, *Padhana* too is vanishing from the society.

The labour in a village is a complex mix of economic activities, which are interlinked and complimentary to society. In this part, traditionally livelihood earning has always been more than one occupation and even today, people are engaged in diversified occupations. Due to the dependency of the farmers on the monsoon many farmers go for only one crop per year and few farmers who have land near a river go in for a second crop. The farmer is engaged in different kinds of SRI (System of Rice Intensification) or the Madagascar method of paddy cultivation. This is being promoted as alternative paddy cultivation. Today different varieties of paddy help in yielding more in one crop. Farmers with the second crop go for different pulses after the paddy harvest.

There is an increasing shortage of agriculture labour every year. During fieldwork, farmers reported that skilled agriculture labour was not easily available. I was aware of the labour crisis in the Dakshina Kannada but was taken aback when I saw the gravity of the problem. It is observed that small farmers usually engaged their entire family in the agriculture and big landholders employ wage labourers to carry out farming in the field. Agrarian societal changes have been manifested through the shift of labourers from farm to non-farm occupation. Over the years, the percentage of farm labourers in agriculture has declined alarmingly since they are moving from primary occupation to construction industries in the urban centre. The Karnataka state budget (2008-2009) gave scope for the construction industry by reducing the prices of the raw materials and created a demand for the construction workforce in the market. In the district, construction work flourished and thus, many youngsters from labour families (primary occupation) shifted to the construction industry. After nearly 20 years of struggle, now train connects the

Mangalore-Bangalore and this has provided an opportunity for the people to move to Bangalore in search of jobs. College dropouts are moving out of Dakshina Kannada for work in the construction industries of Bangalore. This is a weekly migration, wherein they migrate to Bangalore on Sunday night in the train and reach Monday morning. In Bangalore, they work until Friday evening in the construction sites, then in the night catch the train, come back to their native village and enjoy the weekend with their families. There is a huge employment opportunity in construction industry where they get paid more and there is always the attraction of city life. Farm labourers have expressed that low-paid wages, intensive labour work in agriculture, health-related issues, lack of societal recognition, and shame associated with farm labour pushed them to change their occupation.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

The chapter tried to present the social composition, economic, and cultural conditions of Moodanahalli village. The chapter sought to present the impact of macro level changes initiated by the government and those introduced within agriculture on village life, social and economic relationships. In the village, the dominant caste, political power, access to land and resources are the major factors that influenced the caste hierarchy. During the pre- Independent phase, the Brahmins and Bunts were the dominant landowning communities. Brahmins were at the top of the social hierarchy and were able to retain their caste hierarchy position until the introduction of land reform.

Land reform legislation brought a sudden change in the existing social order and was responsible for altering the traditional social composition of the society. Traditional agrarian relationships between landlords- tenants- labour underwent a significant change. The category of landlords was abolished and many of the tenants gained control over the land they cultivated. The parcelling of land into smallholdings brought changes in cropping pattern as many moved from paddy to commercial, plantation crops because of its commercial value. This change in land use pattern had its impact on social institutions such as the joint family. Smaller landholdings led to the breakup of the joint family. In anticipation of the land reform legislation, many of the landlords evicted their tenants and converted their paddy land into plantations. This pushed some tenants into agriculture labour for survival. However, after land reforms, castes such as Naikas, Patalis, Billavas, Mogerars, poojari, who were traditionally agricultural tenants of Brahmins and Bunts, became owner cultivators in the village. Many service class communities who belong to

the Schedule tribe communities remained as landless labours. The complete shift of land use pattern from food to cash crops in the region had its direct impact on traditional food production and regional biodiversity. The traditional knowledge associated with paddy cultivation such as pest management, manure, and irrigation was given up in favour of chemical farming. During this time, many introduced new crops such as cocoa and cashew along with arecanut and coconut in their land.

By the 1980s, the village saw many youth migrating to nearby cities for education. Also many Bunts and Muslims migrated to Mumbai and Middle East (or Gulf as the region is known locally) respectively in search of job opportunities. The Gulf boom has enabled the Muslim community to enter the new economy and markets through petty businesses (textiles and grocery), middle-level businesses (spices economy) in the village. Significantly, in majority of the Muslim houses in the village, one or more member is working in the Gulf. Locally, the Muslim community is engaged in marketing of arecanut, small businesses such as selling fish in the local market etc. The Post 1990s has seen the consolidation of identity politics on the region. Increasingly, communal tensions between the different caste and religious groups in Dakshina Kannada has polarised the village along these lines. I also sensed class based tensions in Moodanahalli during my fieldwork. Since the labour class did not gain much from the government policies and programmes, there is a strong sense of alienation among them. Most of them belong to the Schedule tribe category. Frustrated with the situation, many among them are now affiliated to right wing political and cultural groups.

Today, the local political parties are interested in utilising the existing caste- class dynamics of the region for their political benefits. Brahmins are mostly supporters of right wing parties in the village. Bunts eversince Devaraja Urs (Congress) regime, in which they lost much of their land due to land reforms, have switched their support from the Congress to the BJP. Over the years, Sangh Parivar has managed to consolidate its presence in the village through a systematic strategy of organising religious festivals such as Ganesh Chowthi, Navarathri, Deepavali festivals in villages and thus successfully infiltrated into village activities. The emergence of SKDRDP has provided further opportunity for the emergence of class- caste differences among the villagers. Unfortunately, in the midst of this politics, the issues of farmers and agricultural labourers is sidelined and ignored. There is then a need to relocate farming and the concerns of communities associated with farming such as farmers and agricultural labourers at the

forefront of village life. Karnataka organic farming policy, which I discuss in my next chapter, is an attempt to that effect.

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