CHAPTER-3

Ethnographic Profile of Selected Tribes

Hakkipikki tribes are semi-nomadic; Jenukuruba and Yerava tribes are one of the vulnerable and honey gathering tribes in South Karnataka. Considering the stage of the development, Government of India has declared ‘Jenukuruba’ as one of the vulnerable tribes in India. All the tribes declared as primitive require special development effort over and above the development programs earmarked for the tribes. Virtually, no historical written material is available on the selected tribes. May be selected tribes are such a small tribes it did not attract the attention of any historian. However, it did get the attention of the British Officers of India and also of a famous British Anthropologist, Prof. Christophe Von Furor Aimendorf during the English period. After India’s Independence a few anthropologists did write on selected tribes, but most of them wrote both on ethnography and culture change. Even those who wrote during the British Period mainly dealt with ethnographic aspects of the tribe. Two important studies in 1968s, one on a Hakkipikki village and another a small ethnographic study were undertaken by Directorate of Census. However, it would be appropriate to state that large part of data collected in the field work is used in writing this report on selected tribes. Wherever necessary it has been presented in historical perspective, quoting sources, pre-British and post-British.

Topography

South Karnataka is a region inhabited predominantly by Kannada speaking people, which are situated in the West-Central part of Peninsular India. It consists of narrow elongated belt between the Arabian Sea and enchanting coastline of about 400Km. The hilly track of Western Ghats is with the magnificent ranges of scenic beauty and the Evergreen Forests. A broad but less undulating Country in the North, covering with a landscape of monotonous, seemingly endless Crystalline Plateau with black and rich cotton soil and large open tree less fields. The contrast between the Coastal Plain and
the Central Plateau is striking. The Eastern part of Karnataka, a rolling Plateau which traversed by several isolated ridges and a series of quaint, awe-inspiring rocky out-crops and gigantic boulders giving rise to an airy atmosphere. Several chains of hills running chiefly North and South subdivide the whole country into numerous valleys with differing shapes and sizes. Karnataka has made unique contribution to the wealth of Indian Culture and heritage with its amazing variety of Topographic Expressions, unique drainage patterns, colorful Heritage Wild Life, eventful history rich Cultural Traditions, and unending vista of scenic Excellence. The achievements in Literature, Fine Arts, religious and Spiritual realms are of equal significance. It developed a school of music called the ‘Carnatic’ music, which has spread all over the country and worldwide.

Karnataka had been the melting spot and helping the achievement of synthesis of the teachings of many Kings Philosophers Reformers like the Nalwadi Krishna Raja Odeyar and the Veerashaiva Philosophies flowered and bear fruits on the soil of Karnataka, and teachings of the exponents of these faiths has been explored, studied by many scholars of the world. These teachings have collectively influenced the life of the people, irrespective of their own religions. Karnataka has outstanding pilgrimage centers for the followers of all faiths like the followers of the Vedic religion, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. In spite of several political vicissitudes, Karnataka has successfully maintained continuity of Cultural Heritage. Basaveshwara is one of the greatest Social thinkers that Karnataka has produced. He stressed the idea of Equality of Men in a world filled with Caste hierarchies and the Dignity of Labor by holding no job as low and proclaimed “Kayakave Kailasa”.

In Karnataka, Ai hole was one of the cradles of temple architecture and had influenced the temple architecture of the Deccan including that of Gujarat and Orissa. The tallest monolithic statue in India, Gomateshwara at Shravanbelagola more than 57 feet in height, and the biggest dome in India adoring the Gol Gumbuz at Bijapur being more than 120 feet in diameter at
the bottom are in Karnataka. Karnataka has many notable achievements to enrich the heritage of the Country.

**Fauna and flora of South Karnataka**

South Karnataka has a rich and most colorful heritage in respect of wild life. It is a favorable location for species of large and small animals including large vertebrates. The natural distribution of animals especially mammals, is governed by vegetation. Animals are heterotrophic depending upon primary production, which should be able to maintain a biotic diversity in the ecosystem. A study of the feed-potential in the various vegetation types reveals that ever-green forests are eminently suited to many species of arboreal animals like the monkeys, while the deciduous forests offer a more congenial habitat for the larger herbivores, such as the gaur, the elephant and the deer. Bats are flying mammals, easily identified. The Indian fruit bat or flying fox is destructive to garden fruits. The insectivorous bats are rapid fliers and play a useful role in insect control. A species like the antelope, which can withstand drought considerably, situated for open-dry scrub forests. There is a good habitat to the larger grazing animals like the gaur and the deer.

The wild life bearing forest areas of Karnataka is divided into six regions, namely, Karavali or Coastal Region, Crestline of the Western Ghats, Malenad, and Mysore-plateau, Hills and Maidan. A perusal of the occurrence rating shows that wild life is relatively abundant only on the old Mysore plateau with Malnadu, Kodagu-Kollegal Hills, Uttara Kannada, and Dakshina Kannada, Crestline of Western Ghats and Maidana showing sequentially a gradual reduction in number. The natural distribution of animals is largely determined by vegetation. It is worthwhile to compare the three major natural vegetation types of Karnataka with reference not only to plant products but also to the availability of certain important food links.

The forest has a good floor covered with leaf litter and has very little grass. As a result, the habitat is not suitable for grazing ungulates or elephants but can support arboreal forms like monkeys, squirrels, and smaller vertebrates. The evergreen forests can support the wild pig and sloth bear.
which are omnivorous and which can survive on a meager diet. Due to the absence of bamboo and low-lying foliage, the habitat is unsuitable for herbivores, but it is rich in amphibians and reptiles due to high humidity and ample refuge. The scrub forest of Karnataka is much less productive than the deciduous. The species of acacia is dominating in this forest area because of paucity of water. The cheetah and the wild dog or Dhole (Cuondukhunensis) and wolf (Canisnaria) are equally abundant.

South Karnataka has rich and varied vegetation resulting from several lines of plants migration conditioned by climate, soil, and topography. Biotic factors have modified the original climate evolved through the centuries in many areas.

The vegetation can be grouped into four main categories each containing smaller communities. These four categories are the Dry vegetation, Wet vegetation, Montana vegetation and Littoral vegetation.

Dry vegetation types are characteristic of the eastern districts of the state on the Deccan Plateau. Except in the river valleys, the plants have to cope with a relatively dry climate relieved mostly by the light cold-season showers of the Northeast monsoon. Here the xerophytes like Cyanotic tuberose (Roxby) Scum, Anisochiluscarnosus, and Coleus canines and with the ferns Acitinipeteris radiate Swartz) Link and Hermon enitisartiquorm, Caralluma umbellate, Asparagus racemes Capris decidua’s, Euphorbia caulis, Curculio igoorchi oidesetc, are seen.

When compared to the dry deciduous formations the trees in the wet deciduous forest form a more compact canopy and the interval between leaf fall and leaf flush is relatively short. The stratum of shrubs is well developing as also the herbaceous ground flora. Twines are common while orchidaceous epiphytes abound in undisturbed regions. Many useful trees are native or naturalized in the forests like Gmelina arborea Roxby, Tectonagrandis and Vitexaltissima that are important timber trees of the Verbenaceae. The Fabaceae has the well-known trees like Xylem carpal and as well as several species of Erythrina commonly grown as shade trees in coffee estates.
a. **Origin of selected tribes** are small tribe population wise now numbering around 12,000 inhabiting the Western Ghats of nearby Nagarahole or of Part of H.D.Kote, Hunsur, Pereyapatna, Nanjanguru, and some of Mysore city. A small number of these tribe’s families is also found in Bengaluru rural and Shimogga Regions of Shikaripura and Chamarajanagara district also.

b. **Languages** The Hakkipikki tribes speak indigenous form of ‘Waagri-Bhooli’ dialect and Jenukuruba speaks ‘Jenunudi’ as well as Yerava tribes speaks ‘Yeravabhasa’, but commonly they all speak and read and write Kannada language. However, Haimendor (A famous Linguist) believes that the language spoken (Kannada) by the Jenukuruba is not their original dialect because some of the words they use do not belong to Kannada language but to their original language, which they have forgotten.

**Material Culture**

a. Dresses more than a century back, the Mysore District had the following to say about the dress of selected tribes. “The men are nearly in a state of nudity, having only a piece of cloth round their loins. The women dress more decently than men, in the style of the wandering basket makers and resemble in features more than the neighbors, the Kannada people of the plains. But nowadays they are very perfect of wearing dress pattern such as a modern style.

b. **Ornaments** Traditional ornaments among selected tribes are very few. While the men use rings made of brass on their fingers the women use a few chains made of colored beads round their necks. Today, these tribes does not mind using gold and silver ornaments being used by the caste neighbors, these consists of a variety of them like, bangles, doobo, toe rings and marriage locket, hair chain, finger rings etc. but they cannot afford.

c. **Family** is the basic and most important socio-economic unit among these tribes. Nuclear families are predominant with husband, wife and their unmarried children. It is not only true in the past but also at present. Either vertical or horizontal joint families are almost nil but sometimes these tribes family (household may have) one or two relatives. During my field work, I did not come across even one joint family.
d. Life Cycle Ceremonies: these tribes welcome both boys and girls and birth of a child they believe is a blessing from God. For them nausea and stoppage of monthly menstruation are indications of pregnancy. There is no hard and fast rule, where the delivery should take place, at the husband's house or at the wife’s parents’ place, it all goes according to the convenience of the families. Yerava has an interesting notion that male child is delivered after 9 months while a female child is delivered after 10 months. Jenukuruba and Yerava families do avail the services of hospitals located at a number of places in their area. For a long time they ignored these facilities. An old Jenukuruba woman of in Nagapura told that they traditionally practiced abortion and contraception by making use of various herbs and green leaves available in the forest. But she refused to give the names of the herbs green leaves being used by them; the same resistance was encountered in the other guides also. The women said that it was a secret and if they revealed it, they would be punished by the God.

e. Naming Ceremony: Name Giving Sometimes a child is named even before the delivery. This happens with a childless couple after making a vow to the God (seeking the conception). Even a decade age a child is given name only five years after its birth. Till then the girl is called ‘Papu’ and the boy is called ‘magu’. Even if the child is named they have no ceremony, parents start addressing the child with the name they have decided. Today these families do name the child on 6th or 7th day following the tradition of non-tribal people. Tonsure Ceremony When the child attains the age of 3 or 4 years it is taken to the shrine of one of their deities like Maakalamma, Maratiswamy, Chamundeswari, Kappaleswara etc. Theirs uncle of the child performs the tonsure. For boys and girls all the hair is removed on the head while it is only a few locks for the girls. The maternal uncle is presented with new cloths by the parents of the child he in turn presents cloth to his sister.

f. Puberty: A girl during her first menarche is made to sit in a corner, cleared and smeared with cow dung. An arrow with a lime stuck on the arrow head is given to the girl and the arrow is smeared with turmeric. Though no pollution is observed, the girl cannot go out because the girl under menstruation is
vulnerable to be attacked by evil spirits. In the same evening itself she is given bath and made to wear a new dress.

**g. Marriage** Two types of acquiring mates are practiced, one is called ‘Kalyana’ (marriage) and the other is called ‘Koodavali’. Kalyana isais marriage by negotiation while ‘Koodavali’ means marriage by elopement. The rule of exogamy of ‘Kula’ is followed in both the types of marriages. Though there is no prohibition of marrying a girl from the same village, the Hakkipikki young men of today as well as in the past married the girls from other villages. Though sorority and levirate marriages do occur now and then the Hakkipikki do resent these type of marriages. Even in marriage by negotiation boy’s and girl’s opinion is taken into consideration. The negotiations start from the side of the boy. The father accompanied by his friends and relatives visits the girl's parents. If the negotiations are successful, the boy's father offers liquor to all the people present. The Hakkipikki say that invariably it is the boy who selects the girl and requests his parents to negotiate. During the negotiations, bride price is fixed and the date and day of the marriage is discussed and fixed. Marriage ceremony is more or less like that performed among non-tribal but on a small scale and no priest is involved, if the elderly of ‘Kula’ of the boy and the girl officiate at the marriage. In front of them and all the others the boy inverts marriage locket around the neck of the girl and feast follows in which lot of liquor is consumed. ‘Kudavali’ (elopement) is resorted to by those boys who think that they cannot afford to incur the expenditure on formal marriage. The boy and the girl elope to the forest and stay in the forest. When the parents of the boy and the girl come to know about this they go to the forest and bring back the couple to the boy’s house. Elders of both the ‘Kula’ assemble and fix a nominal bride price to be paid to the parents of the girl by the parents of the boy and with drinking of liquor provided by the father of the boy. The boy and the girl are declared as married. A widow marrying need not go through the marriage ceremony while widower marrying goes through the marriage ceremony.

**h. Divorce:** Divorce is permitted and both men and women can initiate divorce. Usually, the causes of divorce are adultery and maladjustment
between husband and wife. If the fault lies with the woman, she or her parents or if she marries again her new husband has to repay the bride price to her old husband. The council deciding the cases of divorce consists of the elders belonging to both ‘Kulas’ i.e., husbands and wives. When, divorce occurs small children go with their mother but they have to return back to their father when they attain the age of 12 or 13 years.

i. Death: According to these tribes, when ‘Prana’ leaves person he or she dies. The ‘Prana’ after death goes to ‘Sami’ (God). The moment, a person dies his/her body is given bath by the agnatic kin (sons, brothers, maternal uncle). The feet are smeared with saffron and the legs with ashes, the hair is loosened and washed by soap. Finally, the corpse is wrapped in the deceased own cloth. All ornaments are removed and while glass bangles and other trinkets of small value are buried with the body, the most precious ornaments of a woman are kept by her heir. Today these tribes are practices both burial and cremation, but some tribes believes that once these tribes practiced only cremation. The practice of burial is acquired from the caste communities. In the past, the dead were taken to burial/cremation spot within an hour or two after death and disposal was completed. Today, these families, if a death occurs, wait till the relatives arrive. At the burial ground, each ‘Kula’ has a separate area where their dead are buried or cremated. Before the corpse is taken to the burial all the assembled consume liquor. In the past they took Jasmin flower liquor, today they drink country liquor provided them by the family of the deceased. After reaching the burial ground, the deceased ‘Kula’ people either dig the grave or prepare the funeral pray as per the decision of the family of the deceased. After the burial or cremation is over all the people return to the settlement and only those who carried the corpse take bath while others wash their feet and all the people once again drink liquor. Pollution lasts for 3 days or fifteen days, some tribes do observe obsequies on both the occasions, on 11th day, it is called ‘Thiti’ (obsequies) and 30th day is called “thingalathiti” (large obsequies). On both days, some rice is cooked, taken to the grave yard and left on the grave/place of cremation. On the ‘Thingalathiti’ day the family prepares non-vegetarian food and serves to the people along with liquor. Religion Innumerable deities, spirits both benevolent and
malevolent play an important role in the lives of tribes. Though Hakkipikkies are said to have acquired Hindu religious elements only recently, still for centuries the Hakkipikki of Pakshirajapura have been claiming their close relationship with Chamundeswari Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.