CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE KURUBA

In this chapter, the economic organisation of Kuruba - their past and present occupations, occupational shifts, reasons for the shifts, production, distribution, inter-generational occupational mobility, system of new trade and commerce, etc, are taken up. Here in both primary and secondary occupations are taken into consideration. Further how far this change or shift is the result of the Backward Caste Movement in the State, is also discussed at length.

Karnataka is fairly a good state in terms of its natural resources like soils, minerals, water, forest, livestock and development of hydel power and irrigation projects, industries and so on. The total area of the State is 191.76 lakh hectares. According to the 1971 Census the land used data are available only for 55 per cent of land which is under agricultural use. The remaining 45 per cent is partly under forest and is being either used for non-agricultural purposes or it lies fallow.
The different castes in Karnataka can be classified into agricultural or cultivating castes like the lingayats, okkaliga, reddy and craft castes such as the carpenter, blacksmith, weavers, leather workers and service castes such as the barbers, washerman, drummers and scavengers. The Kuruba, who are a pastoral caste also follow a few crafts such as weaving of blankets of several types. Among Kuruba, in the past, there was a strict observance of occupations by different castes and sub-castes. Groups like Hālu Kurubaru, Ande Kurubaru, Vārada Kurubaru reared sheep. Other like the Kambli Kurubaru and Kanakayyanajātiyavaru had shearing of wool, yarn making, blanket weaving and selling them in market, as their traditional occupation. Similarly the other groups of Kuruba such as the Kādu Kuruba, Jēnu Kuruba, Mullu Kurumba and others lived by collecting forest products. Except these traditional occupations they never knew any other occupations.

The breed of sheep the Kuruba reared in the past, were of not good type. The wool yielded was less and was also of lower quality. The technique used in making the yarn and the loom used for weaving the blankets, were also rough and of traditional type.
The materials used for starching were also crude. They sold the ready blankets through middlemen and this fetched them a very low profit. Added to this was the exploitation by other groups like the money lenders, middlemen and others, who took away a major part of their income. Thus the Kuruba remained poor and backward inspite of their traditional occupation.

The traditional minded Kuruba considered the sheep an object of worship and wealth (*Mhangwa*). They reared them only for milk and wool and not for meat. They ate the meat of the sheep only as a sacrificial offering and not as food. Whenever a sheep was sacrificed to the local deity its skin was used for making musical drums and ritual dress. Since the animal was given to them by Lord Shiva, to make a living by rearing them, they believed that the sheep had no problem of any type - from diseases or wild animals. There were nothing like a schema of rites and rituals among the Kuruba performed to protect the sheep. But whenever there was break of an epidemic diseases to the sheep or lack of fodder and water, they thought that it was some type of warning given to them by God, for their bad deeds. It is only recently that during the break of
diseases and epidemics to sheep, they started observing a number of curative and preventive rites and rituals and this was the influence of village culture on them.

In the past, when Kuruba were traditional, they considered it their moral obligation to follow their traditional occupation of sheep keeping and blanket making. They also believed that their occupation was noble since it was given or obliged to them by Lord Shiva. They also believed that any violation of this rule amounted to disobedience to their favourite deity. Further, following any other occupation amounted to violation of their Dharma. Because according to Varna Dharma each caste was assigned with its own occupation, and changing one's occupation amounted to two types of violations - negligence of one's own Dharma and taking up of someone else's occupation and Dharma. Further, taking someone's else's occupation also meant accepting the way of life of that occupational group. This also amounted to a deviation from one's own Dharma. Thus these factors make it difficult for a group to change its occupation even though it is less profitable and difficult to follow. Later, when the values connected with occupation changed the notion of occupation concept
also changed. With this the occupation became a near source of living. This was different from that of having one's Dharma and the way of life.

As days passed by, like any other caste the Kuruba also changed their views towards their traditional occupation. We can attribute two factors for the changing of occupations by the Kuruba. First, the job of following the sheep-flock to hills and forest, became difficult with the dwindling of fallow and pastoral lands. Further, with the coming in contact with other communities the Kuruba came to know that there are other easy and profitable occupations like agriculture and so on. By now vast amount of fertile and plain land was available for cultivation. With the introduction of more and more commercial crops there came a big demand for agriculture also.

The traditional occupation of the Kuruba, apart from sheep-rearing, included related occupations like wool yarn making, blanket weaving, wool-cliping and sale of these products. Later, when grazing land became scarce and ready woolen material came to market, it posed problems. So they began to shift from their traditional occupation and supplement their income by working as agricultural
labourers. Hence several of Kuruba members turned towards agriculture. During the course of working as agricultural labourers for others, they learnt the art of cultivation. Later the enterprising among them, took to agriculture along with one of their traditional occupations. With this their grip on their traditional occupation became loose. When the British Raj was established in India, a number of commercial crops were introduced so that the required raw material was produced for the industries in England. Thus agriculture became more profitable, consequently facilitate to produce more, the colonial Government also released more and more fallow land for cultivation (Heredero, 1977:148; Desai, 1977:182). By this the Kuruba cultivations got benefitted.

As cultivators of land the Kuruba have also made their mark. Traditionally the Lingayats and Vokkaligas were the cultivating castes in Karnataka and naturally owned most of the good agricultural land in the State. The extra and fallow land was used for the pastoral purposes. With the increase in population and introduction of commercial crops like cotton, groundnut, paddy, etc., the fallow land was brought under cultivation. Government also encouraged the cultivation of fallow land so that
more commercial crops were produced to serve as raw material for newly established industries. Encouraged by this and also owing to the loss of their traditional occupations, a number of craft and service castes including the Kuruba, were taken to agriculture. The Kuruba, who were shepherds and blanket makers had problem with their traditional occupation and were naturally attracted to cultivation of land.

But the process of shifting from pastoral life to cultivation of land was not very smooth and happy. The occupation of cultivation of land is a way of life, interwoven with the ecological system, belief system and occupational systems of the area. In order to get into this system it is not enough if one has land and determination to become a cultivator, but should also go through the whole process. It was but natural for a pastoral caste like Kuruba to become a helping hand to start with, to a cultivator. By this they learnt the art of cultivation and also acquired the knowledge about the seasons, land quality, selection of seeds and preservation of seeds and so on. Normally this might have taken decades and generations, but the Kuruba of Karnataka was fully acquainting with this knowledge very
soon and ventured into cultivation of land as a primary source of family sustenance.

When shepherds, like any other pastoral and non-agricultural groups, began to take up cultivation of land, they did not even have the basic requisites like land and bullocks. They were also to acquire the aptitude and skill. Later, they reared bullocks and began to cultivate lands belonging to landless tenants and others. Over the decades they acquired some land either as gift from a generous landlord or brought it. They also got fallow land from the Government as land grant. But in many cases these lands were not only far away from the settlement but were also less fertile and not suitable for agricultural operation. As they were away from the settlement, the crop was stolen or eaten up by wild animals. All this made the cultivation of land by a landless or small cultivator difficult.

Added to this were harassment by the bigger landlords and fellow caste men. Drought, floods and failure of crops also caused a lot of problems to the new cultivators. Inspite of these problems the Kuruba
took to cultivation. This shows how the situation was difficult for them to make a living by following their own traditional occupation.

To understand the agricultural life of the Kuruba let us discuss about our reference village. Like any other Karnataka village, the village under study is also rich with black, alluvial and red soil. The average annual rainfall of the village is 35" to 40". The Kuruba here are both agriculturists and agricultural labourers. They are no more follow the traditional occupation of sheep keeping and blanket making as their primary occupation. Scarcity of pastoral land and a few new types of fast spreading diseases to sheep flocks, had made the Kuruba to lose a large number of sheep during the past one or two decades. Thus the Kuruba suffered a great loss in their traditional occupation and adopted agriculture and labour as their primary source of livelihood.

Out of 212 Kuruba families in the village 175 families follow agriculture and 40 have labour, as their primary source of family income. No family is following sheep rearing as its major or primary occupation.
today. Only 15 families have reared sheep as a secondary occupation. The other traditional crafts like the spinning of yarn and weaving of woollen blankets are not found. Only one family has hair shearing as its secondary occupation. Another family earned its extra income by selling blankets brought from outside. A few families are engaged in other non-traditional jobs like tailoring, petty business and so on, to earn extra income. A few persons are also employed in Government as teachers, peons, attenders both within as well as outside the village. These persons considered their employment as a secondary one since they derived most of their income from their land. Still others had fishing, rope-making, etc., as their secondary occupation.

It is interesting to record the agricultural operation among the Kuruba. The data from the reference village show that out of 3427 acres of land in this village the Kuruba caste members owned 1239 acres. This comes to an average of 3.84 acres per family (with 60 acres as highest and 1 acre lowest). The land which was traditionally owned by the high caste original settlers of the village, was not easily bought and sold. Because the peasants considered it a sin to
part with their land. We know from the literature on peasants that land is the last piece of property that a peasant would part (Ishwaran, 1966). At times of need he may lease it or mortgage it but never part with it. When it comes to parting with it, he may sell it to his agnates or fellow caste men and never to outsiders. It is also obligatory for a peasant to give preference to his own agnates while selling.

Further, when a piece of land is for sale there will be lot of competition to buy it. The rich and dominant caste people grab it, from the poor and new in the game. Above all land will never come to open market since a poor peasant will have been already mortgaged his land to a money lender and thus the latter have the preference and advantage over others to buy it. Above all there is acute scarcity of agricultural land and this brings lot of competition. This may lead to conflict and law suits and even physical violence like murders, etc. Therefore, it was not easy for the Kuruba to acquire land for cultivation to start with.

Crops grown in Karnataka State are divided into Kharif and Rabi (Mungaru and Hungaru) crops. In other
words crops grown during advancing monsoons and retreating monsoons. The *Mungāru* crops are Sargam, pulses, millets, groundnut, cotton and so on. The *Mungāru* crops are the summer variety of Sargam, cotton, pulses, horse and bengal grams and so on. A number of crops are also sown as mixed and intermittenet crops.

The crops grown can also be divided into commercial and food crops. The commercial crops are the groundnut, cotton, sugarcane, tobacco and so on. The tendency among the farmers is to sow more and more of commercial crops. As a result in case of failure of crops, they incur lot of loss. The food crops are the paddy, pulses, Sargam, millets and so on.

Cultivation of land is made according to the changing rhythm of seasons. In other words, the agricultural operation closely follows the ecological cycle and changes which occurred in the ecological cycle guided the agricultural work. The agricultural operation is divided into four major types (c.f. Gurumurthy, 1976; 24-25). They are: (a) preparing of land for sowing, (b) sowing, (c) weeding and watching the crop, and (d) harvesting.
The preparation of land for sowing starts immediately after the harvesting of the crop. The first operation is scraping the land surface to remove weeds and stubs of crops and also to break the uppermost layer of the soil. It is followed by transportation of manure from the farmshed manure pits in the settlement area to the fields. With the break of first heavy showers the ploughing of land starts. Depending upon the crop to be sown, a particular piece of land is prepared first. Generally the Sargam (Jölā), pulses and certain variety of millets are sown first. They are followed by groundnut, paddy, pulses, millets and so on. Depending upon the crop to be sown the ploughing is made either deep or light. After tilling, the cattleshed manure is also spread over the land and leveled. When the appropriate sowing time comes, the seeds are sown.

Sowing is a skillful and brisk activity and also needs lot of helping hands. Further, the sowing period for a particular crop is prescribed; two to three weeks. So the small farmers collect and undertake the activity together so that they can finish the job in time. Sowing of seeds is made with the help of a seed
drill, mounted on an implement and drawn by a pair of bullocks. As they sow the lines are covered with the help of a leveller which is again drawn by two bullocks.

Two to three weeks after sowing, the crops are weeded with the help of an implement called \textit{Ede Kunte}. Depending upon the weeds and nature of crops, the operation is repeated once or twice. If the weeds are still found along with the crop, they are removed by hand and hand weeder. Once the weeding and manuring are over the agricultural work on the farm is over till the harvesting of the crop. However, the crop has to be watched against theft and stray cattle and birds. Normally the crop is watched by youth or elderly people and during night adults take over from them. Often neighbours in the field join together and watch the crop together by turns.

Harvesting is an important activity and it is undertaken individually or collectively by neighbours in the fields. Harvesting is done with the help of a sharp tool and the harvest is collected into bundles and left in the field for drying. Later it is collected
into bigger ricks and stored in the fields till the rains are away. Depending upon the crop the corn heads are separated from the harvest or left with it. The harvest so collected is transported to threshing ground on carts. The grains are separated by stocking the farm animals or by rolling a stone roller on the harvest, spread on the floor. So the threshing ground is specially prepared for the purpose, by applying cow dung solution.

The grain mixed chaff is blown in the air to separate the grain from the husk. This is a laborious job since wind rarely blows during this time of the year. So the farmers have to wait for hours till the wind blows and clear the grain. The cleared grain are collected into heap and worshipped along with the tools used. After this a feast is also eaten at the threshing ground. Before the grain are removed home the craft castes, services castes, priests and temples are paid their share. This type of payment is made as per Jajmani rules and depends upon the good relations the family has with them (c.f. Ishwaran, 1963: 99-104).

Agriculture in India has its own problems. The farmer has to face the uncertainty of rain and weather.
Like this the gambling with the nature continues in the absence of knowledge to control nature. The new methods of cultivation, seeds, etc., which are introduced as part of Community Development Programmes in India do not bear fruit immediately. This is due to lack of proper education among the rural masses and also the insincerity on the part of the development officials. As a result the needy things such as money, seeds and technical knowledge did not reach the farmers in time. Here also the Kuruba faced a few new problems.

Labour Groups:

At all these stages of agricultural activity a family seeks help and assistance not only from different craft castes but also from labour groups and priests. As members of jajmani system they receive services from craft and service castes and make payments to them according to the customary rules. The Kuruba as cultivators, take services from all those who are connected with agriculture and make payments. Similarly the different types of labourers needed by the Kuruba cultivators are taken from among the Kuruba caste or from castes lower than them in ritual hierarchy.
The labour force used in agricultural activity can be classed into three or four groups (e.g., Andre Beteille, 1973: 47; and Gurumurthy, 1975). They are day labourers, weekly or monthly contractual labourers and annual servants. When the bigger cultivators need labour to work on farm, during peak seasons like sowing and harvesting, they employ as many labourers as they need and pay wages which prevail on that day. Usually the payment is made in advance, on the morning of the day of work. The labourers come to work by about 9:00 a.m. after taking their morning full meal. The required implements are provided by the landlord. A midday meal is also provided to them. The labourers work till Sunset with a number of breaks to chew pan, to have a smoke and to answer nature calls. Normally the linked labourers from jajmani client families are preferred while employing this type of labourers.

The contract labourers are employed for a week or more to do a certain type of work. Wages are paid either in advance or immediately after the work. Sometimes they undertake work on contract basis and paid as per the work done and not time spent on the work. Here the labourers can work fast and earn more money.
The annual servants are also a type of contractual labours but they are employed for full one year. Further, the servant eats, works and lives with other members of the family. He is also given a pair of dress, fort wear and also pan or tobacco, according to his habit. The salary for an annual servant is paid in advance and a note made to this effect mentioning the terms and conditions of the contract (c.f. Gurumurthy, 1977; 73-83). The Kuruba who are poor, work as labourers. But those who are rich and in need employ labourers both from their caste and also from outside.

Economy and Religion and religious rituals:

As already discussed agriculture remains a way of life. There is a close relation between agricultural operation and the folk religion of the people. The peasants worship Nature, Mother Earth, bullocks and tools, at each stage of agricultural operation. These rites are performed as both preventive and curative activities. So before starting any agricultural activity a worship is made and food offered. Similarly, when crops fail, during drought, and diseases take hold of cattle and crop, the Kuruba take a vow to their favourite deity
and later perform a ritual for cure. It is believed that some supernatural being or evil being cause this, and as such it can be averted only by worshipping and offerings of food.

Further, as listed in the Chapter on Religion and Religious Rituals, the Kuruba have a number of festivals, fairs and feasts. They also observe a number of rituals connected with life crisis which take away much of their time and income. Being a highly traditional minded community they not only celebrate these religious rites and rituals in larger number but also elaborately. On a few occasions such as fairs, marriage rites, etc., lot of money is spent on gifts and feasts. Most of these celebrations need the attendance of a large number of kith and kin.

Feeding lavishly for the sake of false prestige or on the basis of rivalry is also common among the peasant castes such as Kuruba. A saying in Kannada goes like this: "A Kuruba spent all his savings and borrowed money on celebrations". Owing to this unwise spending the financial condition of a Kuruba family usually get hampered. Sometimes they mortgage or sell their landed
property to meet such expenses. As a result most of them could not save enough and later have it as capital.

On the other hand a festival day was also a holiday for work. The preparatory and post celebration days were last in the name of celebrations. During a few festivals the family suspended its day-to-day work. A large member of invitees who came also left their work for the day. Like this a number of man hours and days were spent in the name of rites and rituals. The Kuruba also had a few rites and ritual celebrations where sacrificing of animals, feeding the community and payment of donations to temples, priests and so forth, were common. Later owing to the awareness brought by the Backward Caste Movement extravagant and unwise spending was minimised. The Kuruba caste association pleaded with its members to cut down expenses on rites like marriages and so on. Similarly owing to modernisation, etc., blind beliefs regarding Gods, spirits, priests, etc., were changed and so expenses on these were minimised. The extravagant payment of dowry and spending on marriage were later changed and the some money was spent on getting higher education or job to the groom, etc.
The Kuruba also cared more for caste and kin factors and underwent loss financially. As long as the Kuruba community was traditional the caste, kin and other factors moulded their financial matters. On the basis of kin and caste obligation, at times of need, the members lent and borrowed as an obligation. Those who could produce more could not save it since they shared their excess produce with those who lacked it. Any refusal to lend or come to the rescue of the needy, brought the negative approval of the community. The public opinion, in the context of this traditional community was such that it was a sin to become rich since others thought that one can become rich only by swindling or cheating others. The rich were not appreciated and taken as model and instead they were feared, disrespected and so on. As a result, to avoid the bad public opinion, those who had more gave it away to the poor, needy or to public institutions like temple and earned a good name in the society.

But when the wind of modernity started blowing with the getting of modern education and coming in contact with outside world, the values about the kin obligation got changed. Every one started looking for
one's own good and welfare and as a result everyone started earning for himself and saving it for himself or his immediate family. This attitude indirectly helped in the improvements of financial condition of the community.

Cottage Industries and the Upliftment of Rural masses

Owing to their traditional customs and practices the Kuruba could have never improved economically. So from time to time efforts were made to improve their economic conditions by the government and other welfare bodies. Among them the efforts made during the days of struggle for Independence of India, to improve the living conditions of the rural masses in general also benefitted the Kuruba. As a first step of improving their financial condition, among other programmes, the traditional arts and crafts (cottage industries) were revived. Under this plan blanket weaving was taken up. To facilitate in getting more wool and improve the products, a massive programme was taken up by the government. On the other hand a new programme to improve the breed of sheep was also taken up.
With the westernisation in process meat eating became common among the Indians. Those who worked with the British in the military, police, forestry and other services and started eating meat, and continued to eat later also. With the ban on slaughtering of cows the sheep meat which was comparatively cheap, got into a lot of demand.

In the traditional sense clipping of sheep wool and blanket weaving are subsidiary occupations of Kuruba. There found a type of division of labour in this. Spinning provided employment to women and youth. During their free time, they worked on the spindle and took out yarn and sold the same to weavers. The weavers in turn made blankets and gave them to merchants in towns or themselves took them to nearby weekly markets for sale. But each one faced lot of problems with regards to supply of the raw wool, prices and so on. In many cases the middlemen took away most of their profit. So over the years the traditional craftsmen became poor and gradually abandoned their crafts and arts.

Under traditional conditions the craft of blanket weaving was a very slow and hard job. For the
raw wool needed the sheep were shorn twice a year, after winter and again after the rainy season. A local variety of sheep gives 0.8 to 1.00 kg. of coarse wool per year. Traditionally speaking twelve sheep can give enough wool to make one blanket of six feet long and three feet wide and that was generally sold in market for rupees fifty to one hundred or even more, depending upon its quality. After shorning the wool was teased with fingers and then beaten with a bow like tool and tied into bundles. Then it was twisted into yarn on a locally made spindle. The yarn was treated with locally made starch of tamarind seeds. Like this the raw wool is prepared.

The blankets, as a matter of fact even today are woven on a loom designed on much the usual principle of woof and warp, but primitive and clumsy in practice. The shuttle is of the ordinary kind and also badly made. After each thread of the wool is added, a long piece of smooth wool is inserted behind it and pushed close to the last thread and is then removed only to be labouriously replaced after the next thread.

Later owing to efforts made by the Colonial government and also the Indian National leaders and
recently owing to the efforts of the Khadi and Gramodyoga Board, the condition of the blanket weaving and also the quality of the products are improved.

Further, now the co-operative societies supply raw wool and yarn in bulk and also on credit basis. A few societies also buy the ready blankets and thus help the weavers to concentrate on their production activity only. This also helps the producers in repaying the loans taken from the societies and banks in time. Now good quality wool brought from other areas and districts, is available abundantly with the co-operatives and also on credit basis. In this way the major problems faced by the local wool industry such as the quality of the wool and yarn, the finance and marketing are now totally taken-care-off by the co-operatives.

To improve the quality of the local wool products and to introduce a few items now the craftsmen who work at different stages of wool industry, are also trained in different wool craft training centres. As a result now the quality of the local wool products is improved. The trained persons are also venturing into making more saleable and modern products such as floor mats, blankets, scarfs, caps and so on. This has helped the Kuruba who
follow traditional crafts in making a living. So now more and more Kuruba families are switching back to their traditional occupation of sheep keeping and weaving, both as primary and secondary source of family income. The hide of sheep is bought by a few merchants and sent to leather factories where it is processed and made into a number of leather goods. In this way the sheep, which was once a little valued animal, got importance as a wool, hide and meat giving animal.

Today there are more than 175 wool producing and weaving Co-operative Societies in Karnataka to help the wool weavers. It is hoped that in the near future a few more societies will be established so that the poor weavers need not be perpetually in the clutches of money-lenders. These Co-operative societies are financed by the Karnataka State Woollen Handloom Weavers' Co-operative (Apex) Society Ltd., Bangalore, and also by the Karnataka State Khadi and Village Industries Board, Bangalore. During recent years a number of Rural Development agencies have been also established to improve the condition of village craftsmen, including the blanket makers.
India and Sheep Breeding Programmes:

Now sheep are universally figured in all aspects of life and have also formed the economic base of shepherds. To improve their economic conditions the Kuruba have started keeping more and more sheep. As a result now India ranks sixth among the countries of the world in the sheep population. The four South Indian states themselves have fifty-two per cent of the total sheep population of India. According to the recent statistics, Karnataka State has a sheep population of 46,62,420 (Shiva Ramu 1981:4).

According to the Report of the National Commission on Agriculture, Government of India, 1976, India has a sheep population of 40 million (1972 Livestock Census). Income from sheep is around rupees one hundred and forty crores per annum, estimated on the basis of annual production of about 34.5 million Kilograms of wool, 101 millions Kilograms of mutton, 14.6 million pieces of skin and the value of manure and by-products like asigs, affals, etc. (Loc. cit. Shiva Ramu, 1981:13).

According to the Project Report for the Development of sheep-breeders and wool weavers in
Karnataka, Project Formulation Division, Karnataka Government (September, 1977:28), the State has four types of sheep-breeds reared at present. Their districtwise distribution in Karnataka, is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Breed</th>
<th>Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Deccan</td>
<td>Belgaum, Bijapur, Parts of Dharwad, Bider, Gulbarga and parts of Raichur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Hassan</td>
<td>Hassan, Kadur, Taluk of Chikkamagalur Dist., border area of Mandya District and parts of Tumkur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Bandur</td>
<td>Mandya, Parts of Mysore and Hassan District.</td>
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Now both Central and State Governments have established a number of sheep-breeding and development centres, farms, marketing centres, research centres, training centres, veterinary dispensaries for livestock,
co-operative societies for purchasing and selling the
goods and livestock. Transportation of sheep to
different places on lower and fixed prices, facilities
to establish textile industries, etc., have been also
made in all parts of the country. In Karnataka, these
centres are located in different places. They are
sheep-breeding Research Centre, Bangalore. Sheep and
Woollen Development Centres at Ranebennur, Chitradurga,
Bijapur, Gulbarga; the Sheep-breeding Farms in Challakere,
Dharwad, Hubli, Chikkanayakanahalli; Corriedale Cross-
breeding Centre, Tumkur; the Karnataka State Woollen
Handloom Weavers’ Co-operative Society, Bangalore; All
India Handicraft Board Carpet Weaving and Training Centres
at Kolar and Ranebennur; Government Wool Utilisation
Centres at Kolar and Chennarayapattana; Sheep-breeding
and Woollen Producing Centre and Co-operative Society
Ltd., Belgaum; Large-scale Sheep-breed Farm, Challakere;
Sales Department of Karnataka State Woollen Handloom
Weavers’ Co-operative Society Ltd., Belgaum; Woollen
Marketing Centres at Challakere, Davangere, Chincholli,
Budihal; Dairy and Sheep Development Programme Centres
at Belgaum, Bangalore, Raichur, Dharwad, Koppal, Hassan,
Sagar, Hiriyur, Sira, Huliyar, Chikkanayakanahalli,
Monakalur, Hosadurga, Gadag, Kollegal, Bankapur,
Sangreshkoppa, Hunsur, Channapattana and so on. In
addition to these there are also agencies connected with sheep breeding, wool producing and sale, in different parts of Karnataka and established by the State Government.

The Government of Karnataka has determined to enrich the life of Kuruba by introducing long term welfare and economic programmes. Intensive and result oriented economic programmes are being launched by the Government so as to increase the income of the Kuruba. Intensive Rural Economic Programme (IREP) and National Banking For Rural Agricultural Development (NABARD) are two of the recent and most hopeful projects sponsored by the Government.

The Kuruba are being taught and trained to follow modern technical and innovative methods of cross breeding and weaving woollen clothes of better quality. The woollen garments manufactured by Kuruba with the help of sophisticated machines are now in great demand. Training centres in this regard to guide and encourage the Kuruba, are being established in the rural areas. Extension officers, Wool Development Officers, merchants, etc., are also taking part in finding better markets for the Kuruba. The technological knowhow has greatly helped Kuruba to
save their time and labour and to enhance the quality of the manufactured materials, viz., carpets, rugs and coats.

The Kuruba are now forced to abandon old methods of weaving, for, ready-made woollen garments have found themselves quick markets and acceptance by the public. Modern tools and scientific methods have also helped shepherds to improve the quality of sheep breeding and raising large quantities of wool. The Government agents are in close contact with the Kuruba to solve their multifaceted technical, veterinary and market problems. The Government officials tour often in the rural areas to discuss and solve all the problems connected to sheep breeding and the manufacture of woollen garments. Documentary films on modern methods of sheep breeding and weaving of woollen materials are also screened for the benefit of Kuruba.

The purpose of establishing such plans, programmes, schemes, institutions is to give fair encouragement to Kuruba to maintain their traditional occupation. It also helps them to improve their financial conditions. They are provided with cross-
breed sheep. The Government has been also giving support to maintain dispensaries to take preventive measures against diseases of sheep. Through modern scientific techniques of sheep breeding and wool processing and better care for sheep it is hoped to improve the breeding as well as income. These extension centres are mainly responsible for the development of good breed of sheep by rendering necessary help to the flock owners under this plan. Kuruba have been supplied with improved rams and sheep by the sheep development board in the State. Thus with these schemes and programmes to support and guide, the Kuruba have adopted a change in their traditional occupation.

Barriers to change:

The change in the values and occupations of the Kuruba did not come without problems and hard work. It also took sometime for the Kuruba community to bring changes in their values. The new breed of sheep with different colours and sizes such as Deccan, Bannur, Hassan, Bellary and so on were not acceptable to the local Kuruba since it called for a number of structural changes in their belief system. Moreover, they were asked to rear the new breed of sheep to make money, by
As pointed out earlier, selling the sheep for meat, etc., was against the traditional belief and they believed that the God gave them the sheep to make a living by only rearing them and not selling them for profit. Moreover, acceptance of new breed of sheep called for the acceptance of a few new scientific methods and techniques to control diseases of the sheep. This also clashed with their belief system. According to their traditional belief system the protection of the sheep is the job of Lord Bereshwars, who stayed on earth for this purpose. Further, they begin to suspect that these new breed of sheep of different colour and size and also needed a different type of protection methods, must be belonging to some other group and come under the protection of some other god. So they were worried that the acceptance of the new breed of sheep also amounts to the acceptance of new gods, the god of the original owners of the new sheep.

Owing to some of these factors and changes, a few who had accepted the change began to suffer mentally. In case of others their traditional belief system came in the way of accepting programmes for the economic development.
To change this type of attitude among the kuruba a thorough change was needed in their outlook on life. At this crucial time modern education and the Backward Caste Movement came to their rescue and helped them in making adjustments. During caste meetings and conferences the leaders of the Backward Caste Movement took pains to draw the attention of their people and also the government, to take steps to do something about these problems. They also submitted memoranda and appeals to government on one hand and the people on the other, in this connection. A few leaders themselves accepted the new breed of sheep and the changes thereby and led the matter. Other leaders organized co-operatives and guided the people in their development.

The advent of the Backward Caste and Class Movement brought a new awakening among the Kuruba. It helped them in opening schools, and colleges in many villages and towns. The Kuruba Caste Association and such other welfare bodies which came into existence as a result of Backward Caste and Class Movement, helped the community in opening free boarding homes to their caste students in almost all big towns and cities of
the State. All these factors helped the youth, especially those from the rural and poor background, to get higher education. This facilitated them in getting employment and thereby financial stability to the community. Today a number of Kuruba have become engineers, medical doctors and administrators. A few have opened business establishments in cities and towns. Others started industrial units, law firms and medical dispensaries. All these helped the community both directly and indirectly in terms of finance and status.

Employment in cities and towns also helped the Kuruba youth to set up their families in their places of work, which were mostly cities and towns. This in turn helped them to have contact with the outside world and avail the benefits of modern science and technology. Like this the economic advancement of the Kuruba did not restrict to sheep keeping and promotion of their traditional arts and crafts alone. The newly attained position also brought the community the status, authority and self respect which it wanted to achieve through its participation in the Backward Caste and Class Movement.