CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study of political awareness gives us important clue to the understanding of the nature, function and organization of Lamanis. India is a country of villages. The success of democracy depends on the decentralisation of political power to the village communities. Therefore the study of political awareness among Lamanis is very much essential.

This study deals with a comparative study of political awareness among two Lamani settlements of Bellary district in the Karnataka State. These two Lamani settlements are Appenahalli tanda and Bandebassapur tanda, which comes in the Kudlige taluka. Appenahalli tanda is about 38 kilometres from Kudlige taluka and 40 kilometres away from Bellary district. Appenahalli tanda is situated beside the Bellary and Bangalore highway and is having adequate transportation facilities; whereas Bandebassapur tanda is only 3 to 4 kilometres away from Kudlige taluka and 60 kilometres away
from Bellary district. This Bandebassapur tanda does not have any transportation facilities. If one has to go for marketing or for any other purpose, one will have to walk 3 to 4 kilometres to reach the Kudlige taluka from where one can get many buses going to different places.

My focus of investigation was on the political organization among Lamanis, political awareness in Appenahalli tanda and Bandebassapur tanda and a comparative analysis of political awareness in both these settlements. Before going into the details of comparative political awareness, a brief description of the general background of the Lamani tribe, techniques and methods employed during my stay in the field and physical features of Bellary district and objectives of the study will be discussed in this chapter.

General Background Of The Tribe:

Lamanis who call themselves migrants from Rajasthan are unique settlements in the Karnataka State. They live scattered over the State, but they are distinctly identified by their dresses and their language. Lamanis are called by several names like Lamani, Lambada, Banjara, Banahara, Sukali
(in Andhra Pradesh), Sagali etc. Perhaps the names Banjara or Lamani speak of their community occupation.\footnote{1}

Lamanis live in settlements called tandas a little away from towns or villages. "In Kannada language a tanda is also identified by such names as bedara, or palya, or Gumpu, or Samooha. In the past, the Lamanis were nomadic. They moved in groups with their belongings and cattle. Perhaps tanda is a Dravadian word, which means a group. Sometimes a thanda is called Lamani Hatti. Hatti means a small cattleshed or a hamlet or a house or a shelter or the front verandah of the house."\footnote{2}

Nomenclature And Identification Of Lamanis:

The history of mankind reveals innumerable facts and fancies about man's cultural heritage. It varies from one generation to another generation. Due to social, economic and political background of the groups, the process of cultural contact had led to changes in the socio-economic, political and psycho-religious way of life of tribal societies. Many social scientists and intellectuals have focussed their attention on the study of tribal societies.
Scholars like G.A. Griesson, writing about Banjara caste for the first time has stated that "the Banjaras are the well-known tribes of carriers who are found all over Western and Southern India. One of their principal sub-castes is known under the name of Lamani and this name is often applied to the whole tribe. The two names appear each under many variations such as Banjari, Wanjari, Brinjari, Labhani, Labani, Labanki, Labana, Labani, Lamani, Lambadi".³

According to Ibbeston "The Banjaras of the Eastern India are a well-marked class, of whom a long and very complete description will be found in Elliott's Races Of The North-West Provinces. He says that they are the great travelling traders and carriers of Central India, the Deccan and Rajputhan and under the Afghan and Mughal Empires were the commissariat of the imperial forces. There is a simile applied to a dying person; they seem to be a very composite class, including sections of various origin. But Banjara, derived from "banji" "a trader" or perhaps from "banji" "pedlar's pack" is used in the West of Punjab as a generic term for "pedlar".⁴ Further, the Encyclopaedia Of Religion And Ethics, says that "Vanij" means a merchant, "The tribe of wandering grain-carriers in India. As a result of their
wandering habits, which have now much decreased since the carrying trade has fallen into the hands of the railway authorities, they are a very miyed race". Grierson says "The name Banjara through the Prakrit "Vanijjoarao", a trader, the derivation of Labhani or Labani etc, is abscur. It has been suggested that it means salt carriers from the Sanskrit "Lavanah"-salt, because the tribe carrying salt has been known in India for centuries. It appears to be a mixed race and owes its origin and organization to the wars of the Delhi emperor in South India where they carried the Commissariat of the armier". In the way these people are very brave in their characters. Many of the rulers made use of their series at the time of wars in war fields.

Enthoven supports the point of view of Grierson. Apart from that they were trading salt, "which means that they were engaged in bargrain or trade. "Vanaj" or "Ranaj" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Vanijya" i.e, trade. The evidence of history establishes the fact that the tribal occupation has been for centuries carrying of grain and supplies for armies in war fields. Hence, the designation "Vanja" or "trader" is an obvious occupational description. Grain dealers are ordinarily known as "Vanis" or "Banjiga",
which are etymologically identical with "Vanijya", "Vanaj" or "banj". The term Lamani is derived from "Lavan-Salt", the tribe being the chief carriers of salt before the opening of ports, roads and railways\textsuperscript{6}.

According to Nanjundayya and Iyer "the Banjaras are a caste of carriers and drivers of pack-bullocks. They are also called Lamanis and Charans. They say that the term Lamani applied to them by others, is a mistake and that it denotes an allied division of their tribe. They are also called as "Sukalis". It is held that "Sukalis" is the allied name of "Supari" meaning betel nut\textsuperscript{7}. It is true that they traded in supari-betel nut.

The terms "Baniya" and "Banajiga" (meaning trader), may with equal possibility be referred to "Vanachara" (sanskrit meaning a wanderer in the jungle), an account of the nomadic character of the tribe. The word "Labhan", is said by some is the alternative form of"Lavan", meaning salt, the Labhans being salt-carriers.

According to Kennedy, "The few Banjaras to be found in Gujarat are made up of 'Gowariar' or 'Gowaliar' and Labhans. Further he says about the criminal activities of Lamanis as
follows: "Sheep stealing, both by stealth and open attacks on shepherds, here and there kidnapping of children, ransacking grain pits, pilfering at night from Ox carts both moving and stationary at bathing places" were found among them. Kennedy's statement was taken into consideration, because in the past these groups had no definite settlements. They were wandering from place to place as nomadics and sometimes these tribes also indulged in such criminal activities". But Thurston and Rangachari, dispute Kennedy's statements and they describes these people as follows: "The Lamanis are also called Lambani, Brinjori, or Banjor, Bapari, Sagali, or Sukali by some. Sugali is said to be a allied name of Supari (betelnut), because they formerly traded largely therein. In the Census Report of 1901, Tanda (the name of the Lamani settlements or campus), and Valisugriva are given as synonyms for the tribal name. Vali and Sugriva were two monkey chiefs mentioned in the Ramayana from them the Lamanis claim to be descended". Further, Thurston and Rangachari have mentioned that "in the Madras Census Report the Lamanis are described as a class of traders, herdsmen, cattle breeders and cattle lifters, found largely in the Deccan districts".
According to Cumberlege, as quoted in Russell: "It may be suggested that the Banjaras are derived from the "Charan" or "Bhat" caste of Rajaputana. Cumberlege whose monograph on the caste in Berar is one of the best authorities, states that of the four divisions existing there the "Charanas", are the most numerous and by far the most interesting class. In the article on "Bhat", it has been explained how the "Charans" or "Bhats", owing to their readiness to kill themselves rather than to give up the property entrusted to their care, became the best safe-conduct for the passage of goods in Rajupatan. The name "Charan" is generally held to mean "Wanderer", and in their capacity of bhats the Charans were accustomed to travel from court to court of the different chiefs in quest of patronage.¹⁰

According to some, the Lamanis may be classed as a class of gypsies of India. They have good physical features, oval face with black or brown eyes and straight nose. They speak a peculiar dialect and live in tandas near a village. Their traditional occupation is to transport grains. Socially speaking, post-puberty marriage is in vogue and widow remarriages are quite common.
Sherring says; The Lamani or Banjara are sellers of firewood, carriers and transact in food grains, salt and cattle. They lead a hardy life. They do not indulge in burglary and kidnap children and are also not coiners of false money. Driving mansoons they retire to the forest. They do commit theft or robberies, because of the difficult life they lead. Hence, they are regarded as having a criminal bent of mind.¹¹

Risely describes this tribe as "a collection of families or a group of families, bearing a common name which as a rule, does not denote any specific occupation generally, claiming common descent from a mythical or historical ancestry. Members usually speak the same language and occupy a definite tract of the country and their language or dialect in Gujarathi and Canarese".¹² Further, Pabitra Gupta and Arabinda Basu say that "the Lamani are a semi-nomadic tribe residing in various states all over India, particularly in Southern and Western India. They are called by different names such as Banjara, Sugali, Lambar, Lambadi, Lamani and so on".¹³

Kamala Manohar Rao refers to "the mythological origin of the Banjaras and the organization of their clans. It
would be interesting to speculate on the origin of the word "Banjara". Banjaras are a nomadic people and accustomed to live in jungles. Those who live in jungles and wander from place to place were called "Vanchara" in Sanskrit. As years passed on, it seems probable that the word "Vanchara" or "Banchara" changed into "Banjaras". Mythological stories and history only tell us that their homeland was somewhere in Northern India".14

From the opinions expressed by the different scholars, we come to the conclusion that the Banjara or Lamani were nomadic in nature and they differ from others with their style of living and scholars agree that the Lamanis they are very brave in character and different rulers have made use of their services at the time of war, because in those days transportation and communication services were not properly operated.

**Origin And History:**

According to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* "Their origin is probably Dravidian, but they now all trace their descent from the Brahman or Rajput tribes of North India".15 According to Pabitra Gupta and Arabinda Basu the
name and origin of Lambadi is that "the Lambadi are a semi-
omadic tribe residing in various states all over India,
particularly in Southern and Western India. They trace their
origin from North India especially from Rajputana and
Gujarat, which is also supported by historical as well as
linguistic evidences.... They speak a corrupt form of
Hindustani and Marwari with a mixture of local language".\textsuperscript{16}

The Lamani dialect may be referred to as the language of
Western India. According to some others the Lamanis have
the features of a nomadic tribe and they hail from the
southern part of the country, while they originally belonged
to Rajasthan in the north.

According to Elliotts the races of North West Province,
the Banjara goes into the jungle with 'his stick in his
hand'. He is ready for the journey, and there is nobody
'with him'. Elliot's description indicates that they seem to
be a very composite class, including sections of various
origin. "But the original Banjara caste is \textit{sadi} to have its
habitat in the sub-mountain track from Gorakhapur to
Haridwar".\textsuperscript{17} Some scholars State that the origin of the
name Banjara has been variously explained but the most
probable derivation is from the Sanskrit "banijaya-kara", a
merchant. Thus, the name Banjara has a great historical antiquity. The banjaras are the people mentioned by Aryans in the fourth century B.C. who were leading a wandering life, dwelling in tents and letting out for hire their beasts of burden.

But this kind of passage merely proves the existence of Banjaras as 'carriers' as quoted in Russell. Najundayya and Iyer, state: "But it is difficult to say the exact place or region in India to which the Banjaras originally belonged. Mythologically and historically documents reveal that their home-land was somewhere in North-Central India and more likely in the Marwar region of Rajasthan from where they strayed, in the historical past, in all directions of Kashmir in the north, deccan and beyond in the south and in the east to eastern Uttar pradesh".

According to Briggs, "The earliest dated reference to the Lamani is in the 'Tarikh-e-Khan Jahan Lodi-e-Niamatulla', written in Persian about 1612 A.D. by Mohd. Kashim Firishta of the Bijapur court and the reference is to the events of 1417 A.D. and of 1504 A.D. relating to the Mohamedan monarchs of the Deccan. The former account turns like this
.... In the year 1417 a large convey of Banjara bullocks was seized by the brothers of Ferozeshan Bahamanani, when the former rebelled and made an attempt on the throne of Gulbarga and Deccan Capital". 18 Crooke states that the first mention of Banjara in Mohammadan history is in Sikandara's attack on Dholpur in 1504 A.D. It seems improbable. This statement clearly indicates that the Banjaras accompanied the difficult Mohammadan invaders of India as might have been inferred from the fact that they came into the Deccan in the train of the force of Aurangjeb.... as scarcity was felt in his (the Sulthan's) camp in consequence of the non-arrival of the Banjaras, they despatched Azam Humayun for the purpose of bringing in supplies..... The time when Moghal army reached the south, the banjaras, with their magnificent system of speedy transportation through the difficult and trackless terrain, earned the goodwill and esteem of the Moghal emperors and generals, and were granted many immunities and privileges for the services.... "The two leaders of Lamani Naiks namely Bhangi and Jhangi of the Rather and Bhagwan Das of the Jodon clan. Bhangi and Jangi had 1,80,000 place-bullocks, and Bhagwan Das had 52,000. It was naturally an object with Asfkhan to keep his commissariat well up with his
force and as Bhangi and Jhangi made difficulties about supply of grass and water to their cattle”. It is clear that Lamanis provided bullocks for transportation to the Moghul rulers. From the point of view of security the Moghul emperors found the Lamanis very useful and helpful.

With the coming of British rulers in India as scholars, travellers, officials, traders and so on, they became aware of the honesty and praiseworthy character of the Lamanis as transporters of goods at the time of both peace and war. During peace-time Lamanis traded with general population in grain, salt, coconut, spices and so on. Thus their day to day needs became useful means of transportation between north and south and between coastal regions and the upghat regions in the south itself. Kamal Manohar Rao, says, that "When these Bajaras migrated in such large numbers into southern India, when the Moghul Army invaded Southern India, it had to face severe difficulties due to bad communications and lack of transport. In this respect Banjaras were of great help to them. With their pack of bullocks they could move fast and could quickly supply rations and other necessaries to the army".
"With the advent of the British rule, the Banjaras gradually lost much of their trade because of introduction of the railways. The introduction of railways had destructive repercussions on their trade and livelihood. They were forced to abandon their profession and seek fresh means of livelihood. Mostly they adopted agriculture as their occupation. The southern environment had a conspicuous effect on their manners, customs and practices. They began consciously or unconsciously to copy the local people. Gradually they lost the nomadic character". The Lamanis were a nomadic people who were always on the move till the seventies of the last century. This historical account encompasses the pan-India canvass, which provides a perspective to the past of the Lamanis of this region.

All the above statements clearly indicate that Lamanis changed their historic occupation and consequently migrated from Rajasthan. At presently they are settled in their settlements called tandas, in different parts of India.

**Dress Pattern And Ornaments Of Lamanis:**

A Lamani lady is usually decked with her rings, armlets, anklets and other trippery. Heavy pendants and chains of
silver are plaited in her hair and long over her brows and cheeks. She wears several ear rings and ear drops. A nose ring called Bhooiriya, the size of which comes over her lips. Apart from innumerable necklaces, she wears a massive silver loop called hansalee. Her appearance is also equally colourful and picturesque. Dress of Lamani women may look singular but each part of it and its design has a cultural background with some traditional belief. The traditional belief on dress is as follows: "A heroic person of the war like ancestors of the Lamanis of yore fought in a battle and died on untimely death. When his wife was making artistic designs and embroidery of her beautiful dress, she heard the news of the tragic death of her husband. She stopped her needle work, prepared her own pyre and committed Sati. Her dress was preserved. The heroic woman's apparel was adored. The half finished clothes were taken for finished things. They were worn by women in posterity. The langas (phetia) and the jacket (kanchali) worn by the Lamani women today must have been designed after the unfinished design of the dress of that woman-martyr". When I had been to the field, nobody including eldest men and women, including Nayakas of both settlements agreed with the above view of Khandoba.
regarding traditional belief of Lamani women's dress. But when I asked their view regarding thus pattern of Lamani women they had their own explanation for this phenomenon.

It is well-known that Lamanis were nomads and salt merchants. They had to pass through forest and deserted lands for the purpose of their work. Women of this tribe work usually exposed to the fearful nature of forest like fear of wild tigers, lions, bears etc. In order to protect themselves from other wild animals they started making use of mirror disc rather than using only transparent glass discs. red pieces of cloth resembling fire, so that animals could get reflected in the mirror and get confused, thus getting protection from them.

Women wear a voluminous skirt of Ghagra phetya of brightly coloured cotton, richly embroidered and fixed with mirror discs. The covering cloth or veil or chatya is also curiously embroidered. A short sleeved bodice is embroidered in the front and over the shoulders and tied at the back. This is called as Kachali. However, Lamani men do not have any characteristic dress. They resemble any other men of the region with dhoti and shirt.
**Method And Techniques:**

For collection of data I have used both primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary data collection involved such methods as personal interviews, questionnaire and also through participant observation. Secondary methods of data collection involved references of books, journals, reports, encyclopedia, dictionaries, etc. I also attended the relevant Lamani conferences related to my research work. This experience of mine during field work was indeed fruitful and rewarding as I was able to collect a plethora of literature pertaining to my research problem. Apart from this, I could get a first hand knowledge and understanding of the problems, perspectives of the Lamanis in the tandas of Bellary District regarding men and matters.

The field work was carried out from 20th March 1995 to 20th May 1995. The researcher being a local man and the fact of my education in the district, helped me considerably in having personal contacts and visiting the field for collecting and checking the data. I interviewed community members as a participating observer and got acquainted with their ideas related to my research themes. As I belong to the
same community, I did not have any language difficulty. This advantage helped me considerably in establishing proper and sufficient report with the Lamani community. I stayed with them without any difficulty for two months.

**Physical Features Of The Bellary District:**

I will first specify the physical features of Bellary district as that will provide a proper understanding of the political awareness among two tandas of Appenahalli and Bandebassapur of this region.

**Location:**

Bellary district is enlarged from South West to north east and is situated on the eastern side, almost in the centre (North to South) of Karnataka State. Its greatest length as the crow flies from Harivi in Harapanahalli taluk in the south west to Isallakudkura in Siraguappa taluk in the north is about 186.7 kilometers or 116 miles, but from Hirebannamatti in Hadagali taluk in the west to Karekallu-Virapuram in Bellary taluk in the east, it is only about 161 kilometers or 100 miles. The greatest distance from the Tungabhadra near Hampi in Hospet taluk in the North to Aluru in Kudligi taluk in the South is about 83.7 kilometers or 52
LOCATION MAP OF BELLARY DISTRICT IN KARNATAKA STATE.
miles. The district is situated between 14° 30' and 15° 50' north latitude and 75° 40' and 77° 11' east longitude.

**General Boundaries:**

The district is bounded on the north by the Raichur District, on the west by Dharwad district, on the south by Chitradurga district (all these being parts of the Karnataka State) and on the east by the Anantapur and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh. When the district formed part of the composite Madras State, it was the western-most district of that State and was roughly triangular in shape. The three taluks of Adoni, Alur and Rajadurga were separated from the district and attached to the Andhra State, when it was formed in October 1953. The new district of Bellary (i.e., without those three taluks) which was joined to the Karnataka State, roughly resembles the lower half of a vine leaf cut into two along its central vein and i.e. irregular in shape. It is clear that Bellary district is located in a strategic manner and that explains its importance.
Flora:

Rainfall plays an important part in the formation of various types of forests. Bellary district is in an arid zone with scanty rainfall, which is also not evenly distributed. As is to be expected in such a tract, the growth is nowhere luxuriant except in the hill areas of Sandur taluk. Green vegetation as is seen in the Malanad areas is unknown and there is no evergreen zone in the district. Because of the arid climate Bellary district is very hot in summer and rather cool in the nights in winter. This explains the scanty vegetation in most of this region. The heat of the region is enervating and at times it makes very difficult for the people of this area to perform their duties in an effective manner.

Fauna:

The larger kinds of game are scarce in the district. Formerly tigers used to be occasionally found in the Sandur area and it is stated that in 1838, they even rendered the road from Hospet to Ramandurga dangerous to the solitary travellers. They probably came from the adjoining district of Chitradurga, but they are not to be found anywhere in the
district now. Spotted deers, sambhars, wild bars, cheetas, and jackals are found in the maidan parts of the district and wild sheep in the Sandur forests. There are bears in the granite hills of Kudligi taluka, especially round about Jaramali and Gudekota and in the Kampli hills, but on account of the Boyar hunting them by turning them out of their caves with spears and torches and later shooting them, their number is considerably reduced now. Black bulls are found roaming in the grass in the plantation areas. Hyaenas and wolves are also seen occasionally in some of the western taluks. There are also said to be leopards in the granite hills in Kudligi taluk. Crocodiles are found in the Tungabhadra river. The flora and fauna of this area has depleted considerably during recent years because of excessive depletion of the forest wealth, exploitation from human encroachment and reckless felling of trees.

**Birds and Reptiles:**

Among birds, peacock, wild pigeons, cranes and green parrots are found in large numbers in the district. Pecfowl and the Indian bustrad are common in the western taluks, especially along the banks of the Tungabhadra. Among
Reptiles, cobras, Pythons and kraits are very common in the district.

**Climate and Rainfall:**

The climate of the district is characterised by the dryness in this part of the year and a hot summer. The district has a network of rainfall measuring stations with records ranging from 42 to 91 years. The details of the rainfall at these stations and from the district as a whole are given in tables 1 and 2, while the taluka wise actual annual rainfall from 1951 to 1970 is given in table 3. The average annual rainfall in the district is 574.9 mm (22.63). The rainfall is mostly confined to the period from May to November. Sixty percent of the annual rainfall is received during the period from June to September and about 24 percent during October and November. September is the month with the highest rainfall. The average annual rainfall is very scanty and this affected the type pattern of the people of this area. In fact, agriculture is a gamble in monsoons, since it mostly depends on the vagaries of the monsoon.
TABLE 1
Normals and Extremes of Rainfall in Bellary District.

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</table>

Source: Mysore State Gazette (Bellary District).
TABLE-2

Frequency of Annual Rainfall in Bellary District
Data 1901-50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range in mm</th>
<th>No. of years</th>
<th>Range in mm</th>
<th>No. of years</th>
<th>Range in mm</th>
<th>No. of years</th>
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<td>600-700</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>900-1000</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>800-900</td>
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<td>800-900</td>
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Source: Mysore State Gazetteer, (Bellary District).
**TABLE-3**

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</table>

(a) Normal rainfall in mm. (b) Average number of rainy days (days with rain of 2.5 mm. or more). *Based on all available data up to 1966. **Years given in brackets.

Source: Mysore State Gazetteer, (Bellary District).

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The variation in the annual rainfall in the district is quiet evident from the tables, such variations has its impact on the lives and occupations of the people of Bellary district. The average of 39 raining days in the district is an eloquent testimony of this arid region.

**Temperature:**

The district has a meteorological observatory at Bellary. The records of temperature and other meteorological conditions of this station generally may be represent the over-all climatic conditions of the district except the Sandur hills and the hilly region in the western parts of the district. The daily temperature ranges from 16 degrees (F) to 39 to 40 degrees (F) during the year.

**Soils:**

The soil pattern of this area is mostly reddish, brown or black cotton aluvial in nature. Given the nature of the soil, crops suitable to this type of soil are cultivated during the year.
Objectives Of The Study:

The idea is to study the political awareness of the two Lamani tandas of Bellary district, in an indepth manner. This academic study is the first of its kind in the sense that political awareness of a backward tribe in a less economically developed region of Karnataka is the focus of research and investigation. In this study hopefully we will break new ground since it is a pioneering attempt in a less researched area. This academic study may provide a focus and frame of reference for other studies of other tribes and backward areas. This is an empirical study and conclusions are drawn on the basis of the data collected by the researcher during field study. The objectives of the study are as indicated below.

1) To study the political awareness among Lamanis of Appenahalli and Bandebassapur of Bellary district.

2) Impact of literacy and educational background on political awareness.

3) Influence of mass media on political awareness.
4) To study the political participation of Lamanis in national politics at various levels such as Panchayat Raj, Nyayapanchyat in elections etc.

5) Impact of economic background on political awareness.

6) To study the political awareness among Lamanis in relation to both national and international issues.

7) To study political awareness and its relations and impact on rural problems.

8) To identify sources of political awareness.

9) To find out present trends in political system of the nature and role of political awareness.

10) To study how political awareness has influenced the individuals of settlements in producing political leaders and their participation in rural as well as national politics.

11) To study how political awareness has helped the individuals in their day to day life.

The study is systematically divided into six well-conceived chapters with bibliography and an appendix. A number of statistical tables have been constructed and interpreted to give depth and substance to the discussion in this research work. Hopefully this frame of reference and
objective will make this study a very useful contribution to the extant literature on tribal political culture with particular reference to the Lamanis of Bellary District of Karnataka State.

References:


