



CENSUS OF INDIA 1961

VOLUME XI

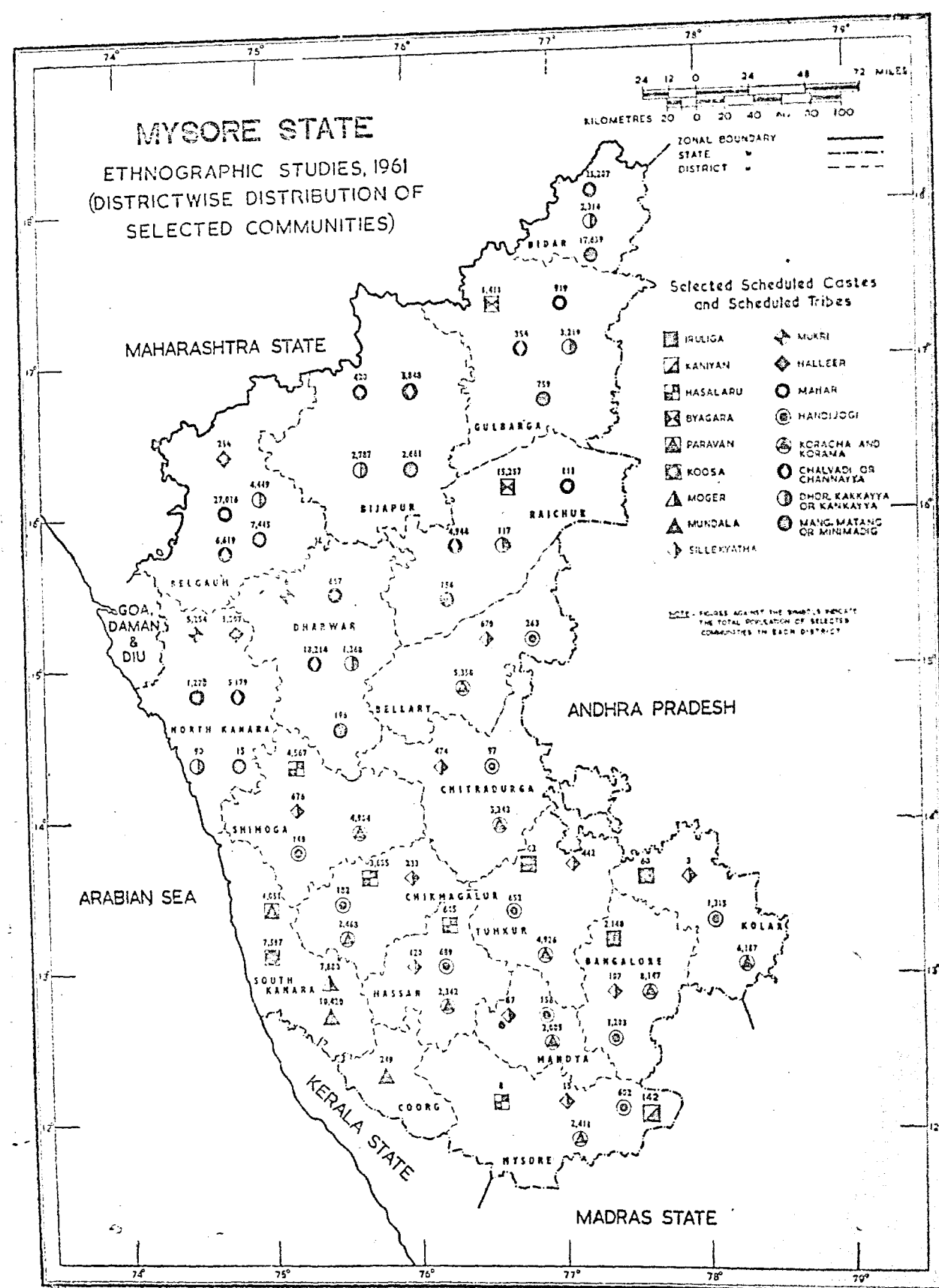
MYSORE

PART V-B

ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES ON SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

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PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS, COIMBATORE
AND PUBLISHED BY THE CONTROLLER OF PUBLICATIONS, DELHI-6.
1974





FOREWORD

The Constitution lays down that "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation".

To assist States in fulfilling their responsibility in this regard, the 1961 Census provided a series of special tabulations of the social and economic data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are notified by the President under the constitution and the Parliament is empowered to include in or exclude from the lists, any caste or tribe. During the Census operations, the enumerators frequently face the problem of identifying the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the President's notification, though in some cases, the names of the sub-castes and sub-tribes and synonyms are given, there are many cases where such names have not been provided in the list. The Census enumerators, therefore, require guidance about the acceptance or rejection of claims that they come across during the operations of some communities to be treated as sub-castes or sub-tribes of the notified Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes. For this purpose, the Census Organisation has thought it wise to undertake detailed ethnographic studies in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India. This is also in conformity with the past Census tradition of presenting authentic ethnographic account of Indian communities.

For conducting the ethnographic studies, a number of ancillary operations are undertaken by the Social Studies Unit of the office of the Registrar General, India, as well as the staff of Superintendents of Census Operations in the various States. These ancillary operations include: (i) compilation of available information on each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and preparation of bibliography in respect of them; (ii) preparation and interpretation of maps showing distribution of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes over time and space; and (iii) special studies on cultural, technological and economic changes taking place among the various tribal communities.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Officer on Special Duty, Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit, assisted by Shri A. M. Kurup and Shri N. G. Nag, Research Officers, is co-ordinating all these studies at the Central level. As the State level, the Superintendent of Census Operations and his staff are collaborating in conducting the field investigations and preparing the report. I avail of this opportunity to extend my warm thanks to all my colleagues who have undertaken various studies on different aspects of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India.

A. CHANDRA SEKHAR,
Registrar General India.

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(vi)

(c) The social dimensions corresponding to the diversification in economic life have to be examined. It is also to be examined whether in spite of diversification of occupation, the ethos of a particular occupation, for instance agriculture, continues to be dominant. In that case, diversification might have created problems of adjustment in values and attitudes.

Instances can be multiplied, but it is not necessary. What have been stated above, are enough to bring out the significance of ethno-demographic studies for planners.

The above dimensions of ethno-demographic studies have evolved through stages. In 1960, at the instance of Shri Mitra, Registrar General of India, a questionnaire for collection of ethnographic data was circulated among the Census Superintendents. In October, 1961, the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit was set up in the office of the Registrar General of India, to co-ordinate the ethnographic studies and a few other ancillary studies, like village surveys, handicrafts surveys, etc. In December, 1961, a Study Camp was organised in Delhi, where the personnel engaged in ethnographic studies, handicrafts studies and other social investigations in the offices of the Census Superintendents, participated. In the Study Camp, it was considered that the ethnographic notes would mainly aim at making an objective assessment of the state of development of the different scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the context of the changes taking place in technology, economic organisation and total cultural pattern of the country. It was further suggested that the primary focus of the study should not be on the exotic elements of the cultures of the different castes and tribes. It should be on the efforts of the communities concerned, to adjust to the modern conditions of life. In the light of the above decisions of the study Camp, rapid ethnographic studies have been carried on by the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations as well as by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the office of the Registrar General of India, in different parts of the country. These rapid surveys have brought out a number of methodological and operational problems. In May and June 1966, two Ethnographic Study Camps were held at Kurseong and Hyderabad, where personnel from the office of the Registrar General of India as well as from the offices of the Census Superintendents participated. In the Study Camp held at Kurseong, the Secretary, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, and Director, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal, also participated. In these Study Camps, an integrated frame for preparation of ethnographic notes was discussed and adopted. A copy of the same may be seen at 'Annexure' I. In addition to the studies in respect of each scheduled caste and scheduled tribe separately, a number of subsidiary studies were undertaken by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General India, for gaining insight into a number of problems of general nature which have bearing on the different aspects of the lives of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of the country. These subsidiary studies are as follows:—

1. Shifting cultivation in Santal Parganas of Bihar and Garo Hills of Assam.
2. Pattern of Rehabilitation of displaced tribals of Rourkela.
3. Socio-economic survey of the Scheduled areas of Rajasthan.
4. Socio-economic developments among the hillmen of North-East India.
5. Social structure and cultural orientation of Christians converted from scheduled castes.
6. Traditional rights of scavenging as claimed by scavengers in urban areas.
7. Grouping of castes and tribes with reference to occupation and inter-group and intra-group comparative study on the basis of the data available in earlier censuses.
8. Social mobility movements among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

On the basis of each of the subsidiary studies indicated above, a separate monograph is under preparation. It is also proposed to prepare separate monographs on a few scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and ethnic groups with special status in each state. Besides, ethnographic glossaries are proposed to be prepared in respect of all scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. For this purpose about one lakh references have been indexed.

Shri H. L. Harit, Investigator, who is looking after the compilation of information from published sources in respect of all scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other special ethnic groups of India deserves mention.

Shri A. Mitra, Registrar General of India for 1961 Census, whose farsighted initiative is responsible for social investigations in a large number of fields including ethnography, deserves thanks of all students of Indology. I have been benefitted not only by his inspiration, but also by his valuable suggestions in connection with the ethnographic studies as well as the other studies, conducted by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit.

The tradition built by Shri Mitra, has been continued by Shri A. Chandra Sekhar, the present Registrar General of India. Under his guidance, the scope of the Social Studies by the Census Organization has been further expanded. In spite of his other preoccupations, he has gone through the final drafts of the ethnographic notes and given a number of valuable suggestions. I avail of this opportunity to express my gratefulness to him.

B. K. ROY BURMAN

(vii)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Field Investigation and Drafting

Communities covered

- | | |
|---|---|
| (i) Sri M. S. Ramachandra, M.A., Investigator | Byagara, Hasalaru, Iruliga, Kaniyan, Koosa, Moger and Mundala |
| (ii) Sri G. Nanjunde Gowda, M.A., Investigator | Chalavadi, Dhor, Handijogi, Korama and Mang |
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Sri M. S. Ramachandra,
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The drafts were finalised with the assistance of Sri C. M. Chandavarkar, B. Sc., Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations and Sri M. A. Srinivasan, Assistant Superintendent of Census Operations whose contribution is also gladly acknowledged.

Photographs : Sri Amar Singh of the office of the Registrar General, Social Studies Unit, New Delhi.

Frontspiece map : Sri H. S. Ranganath, Draughtsman.

Printing : Sri V. Govindan, Printing Inspector.

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PREFACE

As an adjunct of 1961 Census, preparation of ethnographic monographs on a number of selected Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status and ethnographic glossaries on all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been taken up by the Census organisation.

In India the census organisation has a long tradition of undertaking ethnographic studies. Besides, there are certain reasons why, for its own operational purposes, it is necessary for the Census organisation to take up such studies. During census operation, the Census organisation is required to make a complete enumeration of all the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country. The ethnographic studies are required to establish the identity of the various communities including their segments. The social boundaries of various communities are not always rigid, they are in a state of flux. Ethnographic studies are required to keep track of these changes as well, otherwise comparison of consecutive census figures would give altogether wrong picture in respect of them. There is another aspect of study in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in which the census organisation, as well as the welfare and planning agencies are interested—it is ethno-demography. In 1961 Census, separate tables were prepared in respect of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the following items :—

- (i) industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex,
- (ii) age and marital status,
- (iii) education,
- (iv) religion,
- (v) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Castes,
- (vi) Persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Tribes,
- (vii) mother tongue and bilingualism for Scheduled Tribes.

The data available in these tables are to be analysed in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, so that the historical and cultural factors responsible for the demographic pattern can be identified and the impact of the emergent demographic pattern on the social structure can be determined.

The insight gained by the Census organisation, through ethnographic studies of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be useful for interpretation of the demographic pattern for the country as a whole. Recent studies show that in India, even now, it is difficult to correctly appreciate the various social and economic processes without reference to caste. On the other hand, in the interest of ultimate national goal, caste is not being recorded in census, except in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The insight gained through ethno-demographic studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is, therefore, of invaluable help for census.

At the same time, such study is very much useful for planning of development activities among the castes or tribes concerned. For instance, if the census shows that great deal of diversification of occupation has taken place among the Parayans of Kerala, it is important for the planners to know whether the community consists of a number of disconnected segments or whether it means that a great deal of individual mobility is taking place where the main focus of community is other than traditional occupation. Again, when among the Bauris of Orissa, it is found that a very high proportion of the population is engaged in agricultural labour and next to them a high proportion is found in cultivation and also that there is considerable diversification of occupation, the following questions of sociological and practical importance arise:—

(a) What is the historical relation between the agricultural labourers and the cultivators among the Bauris of Orissa? The census data suggests one of the two possible developments, namely, (1) bulk of Bauris were cultivators by a process of degeneration of their economy have become agricultural labourers, (2) on the other hand, it is also possible that the bulk of them were agricultural labourers and through a process of improvement of their economic condition, many of them have become cultivators.

(b) The fact that a considerable diversification of occupation has taken place, suggest that the economy has not remained in a stagnant condition. Here, it is to be examined whether the diversification is the result of upward mobility, or downward mobility, or even horizontal mobility, and what is the actual process by which the diversification has taken place.

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1. BYAGARA

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Byagaras with a population of 16,668 (1961 Census) account for 0.53 per cent of the total scheduled caste population in the State. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956, the Byagaras constitute a Scheduled Caste, in the Hyderabad-Karnatak region i.e., in the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur, of the Mysore State. If the total Scheduled Caste population in these three districts alone is considered (4,32,775) it may be observed that the Byagaras form 3.85 per cent. In this region, the caste-name is also spelt and pronounced as *Begara*. However, the President's Order 1956, does not give any synonyms for the Byagara.

Fraser's (1902, Vol. XV Part I) considers *Byagara* and *Begara* as synonymous and observes that it is a sub-caste of 'Holeyas'. According to Thurston (1909, I) *Begara* or *Byagara* is a "synonym applied by Canarese Lingayats to Holeyas" (p. 395). But for these brief references, no other information on Byagaras is available from published sources. The ethnographic note is thus based on the field investigations conducted during July-August 1967 in the Taluks of Yadgir and Deodurg of Gulbarga and Raichur districts respectively. The village survey report on Sirwar of Manvi Taluk, Raichur district (Census of India 1961, Vol. XI—Part VI) also throws some light on the demographic and economic details of Byagaras.

Byagara or more properly 'Begar' is a Hindusthani term which connotes a person who works without remuneration. In other words, *Begar* is a forced or compulsory labourer serving the State. The Kannada equivalent of the term *Begar* as given in the Hindi-Kannada-English dictionary (Chitraguppi, 1957), is "*Bitti, Bitti maduvava*, Forced labour without remuneration; one who does such work". Prior to the abolition of the system of *Begari* or 'forced labour' in 1950, Byagaras formed a class of village servants whose duty it was to assist the touring officials in carrying from place to place their records and personal effects, in pitching tents, and grooming the horses. Besides, they were also expected to serve the

Kulkarni (village accountant) and the *Patel* (village headman). The task of digging graves was assigned to them for which they were entitled to gather *nelakki rokka*, the few coins dropped on the grave. They also participated in the disposal of dead animals. They carry the tradition of having been employed at several places in such unclean and degrading occupation as scavenging (but not as night-soil removers). Thus even to-day Byagaras are identified by their traditional functions though not actually on it now. They have no special mark, dress or other external insignia to distinguish their caste or occupation.

Byagaras are known by their caste-name in certain areas, especially all over Raichur district and in certain others—mostly in Gulbarga and Bidar districts—as a functional group within the larger community of Holeyas. In several villages this term is applied only to persons of the Holeyas caste who are engaged for digging graves and are the descendants of the *Begar* i.e. forced labourers. However, it may be observed that this occupation is not exclusive to this caste only and it is done in several villages by Madars, Upparas and Voddas also. While speaking among themselves they generally use the caste-name of *Byagara*, *Holeyas*, *Mala* and *Chalavadi makkalu* almost interchangeably. The other communities of the neighbourhood are well aware of these synonyms and call them by the more popular of the names in vogue in the respective village and its vicinity. Thus at Gurumitkal—a town in Yadgir Taluk bordering Andhra Pradesh and at Kyatnal a small village in Yadgir Taluk, only 4 out of the 45 Mala (also, sometimes, called Holeyas) households and 8 out of the 35 Holeyas households which are still attending to their traditional functions such as digging of graves, returned themselves first as Byagaras. On further probing it was given to understand that the Byagaras are an integral part of the Mala or the Holeyas caste and there existed no commensal or connubial restrictions between them. On the other hand, in the villages of Gabbur and Jalahalli of Deodurg Taluk and also at Kushtagi the entire community is called Byagara irrespective of the fact whether they are engaged in their traditional function or not. At these two places they frequently use the synonym *Chalavaderu* or *Chalavadi makkalu* and are aware that their own caste-fellows are known as *Holers* or Holeyas in the adjoining talukas.

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Similar to the Byagara, certain other functional groups such as *Natekara* (messenger), *Kotegar* (probably guards of the fort) *Padegar* etc., also exist among the Holeyas of the Hyderabad-Karnatak region and all these groups are differentiated only by name but not by the rule of endogamy.

As already explained, 'Byagara' has a functional origin. In former days when rural communication was difficult, especially in the hilly and least accessible areas where forest predominates and foot paths and indifferent cart-tracks are often the only communications, the official class had only to move about on horse back or on foot. Therefore, among other village functionaries, *Begari* was established primarily for the convenience of touring officers and the office was made hereditary. Gradually, over a period of time, the term *Begar* which denoted an occupational group came to assume the proportions of a caste-name. These *Begars* were not actually forced labourers as one might well imagine. They were receiving for their services a share of about 3 per cent of the land revenue collected in the village. In addition the farmers gave them grain at the harvest time. It is said that at some places the *Begars* also held service *inams* (rent-free land assignments) called *Byagariki inam* lands.

During the investigation no myths or legends associated with the origin of the Byagaras were reported. The belief is generally held among them that they owe their origin to Veerabahu who had employed Raja Harischandra to guard the crematorium. Some of them hold the view that because of this indiscretion committed by Veerabahu, a curse has descended upon their entire caste and they are therefore condemned to eternal backwardness both socially and economically. The Byagaras have always been a subjugated class to whom is often times assigned degrading occupations and they are at the lower end of the complicated scale of castes. On account of their filthy work and unclean habits they were considered to pollute the caste-Hindu by touch. They have not made a mark in the history of the region, and they do not appear to have ever been an effective and cohesive force to reckon with.

Before concluding this section it may not be out of place to mention how the synonym *Chalavaderu* or *Chalavadi makkalu* came to be applied to the Byagaras or for that matter to the Holeyas at several places. *Chalavadi* is himself a functionary belonging to an exterior caste viz., Holeyas, who serves the

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Lingayat Community and also his own community. In large villages or groups of several adjacent small villages with a moderate to heavy concentration of Lingayats, their local religious head i.e., a *mathadhipathi*, chooses a person from the Holeyas caste with due regard to the sentiment of that community, initiates him through a ceremony to Chalavadihood by *Karnopadesha* and invests him with an insignia of the office. This brass insignia, which is called either *Gante* (bell) or *battala* (cup), is shaped like a ladle and carries the images of *Nandi* (Divine Bull), the *lingam* (Emblem of Shiva) under the canopy of a cobra hood and a bell attached through a chain. The Chalavadi is expected to take part in all the important ceremonies and processions organised by the Lingayat community by carrying the insignia and ringing the bell. Such a recognition secures for him an elevated status in his own caste, and he assumes the leadership of the caste. It is for this reason that the caste-fellows prefer being called *Chalavaderu* or *Chalavadi makkalu* and thereby gain social prestige. In fact the name *Chalavadi* is applied only to the functionary in office. During the field investigation it was noticed that the office of the *Chalavadi* was kept vacant for 6 to 10 years at Kyatnal and Jalahalli for want of an acceptable heir. No efforts are being made to select and initiate a new incumbent. At Gabbur there is a *Chalavadi* who is actively serving the Lingayat community while at Kushtagi the *Chalavadi* has given up his functions since about 1963. The *Chalavadis* may seek alms as religious mendicants from the Lingayats as well as their own castemen. They are expected to maintain exemplary standards of behaviour and morals.

II. DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TREND

Besides Mysore, Byagaras are also found in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. They are a Scheduled Caste in the districts of Hyderabad, Mahbubnagar, Adilabad, Nizamabad, Medak, Karimnagar, Warrangal, Khammam and Nalgonda of Andhra Pradesh and in the districts of Aurangabad, Prabhani, Nanded, Bhir, Rajura and Osmanabad of Maharashtra according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Lists) Modification Order 1956. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the above said districts along with Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur constituted the former Hyderabad State (Dominions of H.E.H. The Nizam). The dispersal of Byagaras all over the three States is therefore the natural concomitant of States Reorganisation. The Constitution Order 1950 as relating to Madras listed *Byagari* as a Scheduled Caste but they were later deleted from the list in the Modification Order of 1956.

BYAGARA

The total population of Byagaras according to the 1961 Census is 22,572. Out of them as many as 16,668 (73.8 per cent) are in Mysore and the rest in Andhra Pradesh. In Maharashtra only one individual has been returned as of this caste [Mittra, A. 1966, I. V-A(i)]. Thus a high concentration of Byagaras is to be found in Mysore only.

The districtwise break-up reveals their number to be 15,257 in Raichur (91.5%) and 1,411 in Gulbarga (8.5%). They are totally absent in Bidar District. The people of this caste are concentrated in the taluks of Deodurg, Manvi and Sindnoor of Raichur District and Yadgir and Shahapur of Gulbarga District, the distribution being as indicated below:

Raichur District	Deodurg Taluk	3529
(Rural)	Manvi "	2956
	Sindnoor "	2364
Gulbarga District	Yadgir "	615
(Rural)	Shahapur "	325

As much as 49% of the rural Byagara population of the entire Gulbarga District are found in Yadgir taluk. Field investigation in Yadgir Taluk further indicated that they are distributed over a large number of villages. In Deodurg Taluk there is a fair concentration of Byagaras; the villages of Gabbur, Arakeri, Jalahalli, Maserkal and Chincholi each having about 40 to 45 households. Sirwar is having 24 Byagara households with a population of 98.

The following is a brief description of the places visited for the collection of ethnographic data.

(i) *Gurumitkal*: A small roadside town in Yadgir taluk, bordering Andhra Pradesh situated at a distance of about 42 kilometres west of Yadgir. It is a hobli headquarter enjoying several amenities such as electricity, school for secondary education etc.

(ii) *Kyatnal*: A small interior village situated at a distance of about one mile from the Narayanpet Road Railway Station on the Raichur-Poona main line.

(iii) *Gabbur*: Located midway between Raichur and Deodurg. A large village with a multi-ethnic composition. It is well served by road and is at a distance of 28 Kms. from Deodurg.

(iv) *Jalahalli*: A hobli headquarter; roadside village, with an equally large population and complex

composition and it is situated at a distance of about 20 Kms. from Deodurg.

(v) *Kushtagi*: A taluk headquarter town in Raichur District. According to the 1961 Census, only 341 Byagaras are found in Kushtagi Taluk (Rural). In fact the field study shows that there are 30 households of Byagaras in Kushtagi town proper, their rural population being scattered over some fourteen villages each having two to ten households. In general it may be observed that wherever they are found, the Byagaras constitute a minor component of the town or village population, and as a class they are landless labourers with a sprinkling of petty cultivators among them. Socially they are backward.

As Byagaras are concentrated in Raichur District a brief description of its general features may not be out of place. Raichur district, with its nine talukas, lies between 15° 10' and 16° 50' North latitude and an expanse of 5436 square miles. The total population of the district according to 1961 Census is 1,100,895 and the density per square mile is 202.51. It forms part of the northern maidan region of the State and is bound on the North and the South by the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra; on the East by Andhra Pradesh; and on the West by the districts of Dharwar and Bijapur. The vast expanse of the countryside is spotted by several hill ranges and shallow valleys. Black cotton soil is the predominant type and red-loamy and sandy soils also occur. Broadly speaking the district may be said to be devoid of dense forests, and afforestation works are now in progress. Krishna and Tungabhadra are the principal rivers of the district. The rainfall is capricious and the average precipitation is about 579.3 mm. per annum. The climate is hot and dry. The period June to October may be called the wet months as it is in this period that the district receives rains. Each Taluk headquarter town is a centre of trade, industry and commerce in respect of the villages in its neighbourhood and in every taluk are to be found numerous places of cultural and social importance where annual fairs are a regular feature. The Byagaras attend several of these fairs organised both within their taluk and outside.

Now, with particular reference to the places visited during the study a few observations may also be necessary.

Gurumitkal of Yadgir Taluk, Gulbarga District is an ancient town which was once a taluk headquarter. The terrain in this part is hilly and undulating. There

are numerous large tanks which provide facilities for irrigation. Rice, wheat, jowar and pulses are the important crops. There are no industrial units of any importance. Madhupalli and Mailapur situated at a distance of about 6 and 21 miles respectively are places of religious importance for Byagaras also. Kyatnal is somewhat close to Krishna river and the soil is for the most part loose and sandy. Saidapur which is hardly one mile from Kyatnal is a small but important trade centre, and is connected by road to Narayanpet in Andhra Pradesh. Deodurg taluk is of an undulating terrain with a few hill ranges. River Krishna separates the taluk from Gulbarga district. At Gabbur there are 3 cotton gins which provide seasonal work to some 30 or 40 labourers. Other industries are run at household level. It is a centre of trade for about 10 to 15 surrounding villages and a weekly market assembles every Thursday. Within the village there are a number of places of worship and the villagers visit the nearby centres of Kalamalla, Deodurg, Gugal, Amarapura and Sultanpur where annual fairs are an important feature. The important crops of the village and its neighbourhood are jowar, cotton, bajra, wheat, safflower and pulses. Jalahalli is close to a hill-range. Within the revenue limits of the village itself there are two hillocks called *Yellamma Gadda* and *Timmappan Gadda* respectively. The *Masari* (red) soil here is fertile and the main crops are jowar, groundnut, bajra, millets and pulses and to a lesser extent, cotton. There are a number of irrigation wells in the vicinity of the village and the chief garden products are vegetables and fruits. Every Monday is a shandy day and in the village there are some 20 or more commission agents and wholesale dealers. A saw mill, an oil mill (groundnut), and a cotton gin are the only industrial units apart from a few others such as carpentry, tailoring, flour mills etc. Ranganathaswamy temple of Jalahalli is famous in this neighbourhood and an annual fair is organised during April. Mundargi, Tinthini, Amareshvara and Masergal are a few other places of cultural importance in the neighbourhood.

According to the 1961 Census, 15,862 Byagaras are from the rural sector while only 806 are found in the urban sector. In other words, 95.16 per cent of the Byagaras are in rural areas and the remaining 4.84 per cent are in urban areas. The details of their population by towns are not available. Their urban population is normally preponderant in Raichur District reporting as high a percentage as 78.9 while it is only 21.1 in Gulbarga District.

The sexwise break-up of the population shows 7861 males and 8807 females. The sex ratio is 1120.

Strangely enough the picture presented by all the Scheduled Castes taken together in the rural parts of Raichur District is one of females outnumbering males. In concrete terms there are 49,030 Scheduled Castes males against 49,911 females giving a sex ratio of 1018. The excess of females over males among Byagaras may therefore be said to reflect the general pattern of the district. In Sirwar also it is noticed that there are 50 females against 48 males among the Byagaras.

A sexwise distribution of the Byagaras by age-groups is presented in the subjoined table:

TABLE 1
Population by Sex and Age Group

Sex	Age Group				All ages
	0-14	15-44	45+	Age not stated	
Males	3088	3674	1294	5	7861
Females	3244	4090	1470	3	8807
Total	6332	7564	2764	8	16668

Source: Census of India, 1961 Vol XI—Mysore, Part V-A.

The percentage distribution in the age-groups 0-14, 15-44, 45 + and age not stated is thus seen to be 37.99, 45.38, 16.58 and 0.05 respectively. Comparative figures for the total scheduled caste population of the State are 42.05%, 42.60%, 15.31% and 0.04%. It is thus seen that the percentage of this caste in the age group 0-14 is less and in others relatively more. This phenomenon may indicate either a regressive trend of population or adult immigrants from the neighbouring districts streaming into this area in search of labour due to improvement works taken up after States Reorganisation in these backward regions.

In the past censuses, Byagara appears to have been reckoned as a sub-caste (Francis, 1902 XV I) or as a synonym (Thurston 1909 I) of Holaya and hence their decennial population returns are not available. However, the "Census of India, 1931 Volume XXIII—H.E.H. Nizam's Dominions Part I—Report" on p. 260 shows "Begari" amongst the minor classes in the list of Adi Hindus and their population is given as 803. But the absence of reliable periodical data on the population of Byagaras defies any discussion of its growth or decay.

III. FAMILY, CLAN, KINSHIP AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

During the field study in four villages some 99 households were enumerated with a view to getting

a glimpse of the family size and composition. Tabulation of the data collected shows that the size varies between one and ten, the average size of a household being 4.38. Distribution of the households by size is given in the following table:

TABLE 2
Distribution of Households by Size

Size	Number of persons										Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Households	5	16	20	15	13	15	8	..	4	3	99
Population	5	32	60	60	65	90	56	..	36	30	434

If households having less than 5 members are to be considered as small then roughly 70 per cent of the Byagara households would come under this category. Large families with more than ten members appear to be few and far between. The average size of a household is found to be 4.08 at Sirwar.

Analysis of the households by composition reveals that 47 households with a population of 197 out of the 99 visited consist only of husband, wife and unmarried children. Eleven households with 33 members are composed of a parent and unmarried children. Five are single member households. Thus 63 households are simple. Six households contain a couple, their children and mother of the husband while two others contain a widowed sister in addition. In two households, brothers, their wives and children are living together and in four other households their mother is also living with them. Joint households composed of a couple, their married and unmarried children and grand children numbered four only. Most of the remaining households are quite simple in composition (e.g. self and servant; self, son/daughter and mother; self, daughter and husband's mother) and only a few are complex (e.g. self, daughter, daughter's son, his wife and children; self, wife, children, mother, father's brother). On the whole it may be observed that there is a preponderance of the simple type of family and joint household families are relatively few. Sons usually live with their parents for a few years even after their marriage and when their younger brothers also get married they separate. It is only occasionally that one finds two or more brothers living jointly with their wives and children.

Some two decades ago, marriage was not universal among Byagaras, as the *Basavi* system was widely prevalent. Such women could remain unmarried for life

and yet have issues through whom their parental family line would be maintained unbroken. In the absence of male issues, even married couples would make at least one of their daughters, a *Basavi*, and bequeath to her children the family name and property. Women rendered *Basavis* for want of sons were commonly known as *manethanekke bittavaru* i.e. 'dedicated for the perpetuation of the family line', while the others were *Basavis* dedicated to some favourite Goddess, such as Yellamma. In essence, it was a difference without a distinction and both served the community at large in the same manner. The *Basavis* had a claim to an equal share of their parental property along with their brothers. Children born of *Basavis* took on the family name of her parents, father or mother as the case may be. She remained in her parental home and was free to entertain paramours. Thus she and children born of her lived amidst her agnatic kin. Though this *Basavi* system has been prohibited by law after independence, a sizeable number of *Basavis* of the older generation are yet found and the system is still being practised though on a much reduced scale. At Jalahalli, eight women ranging between 22 and 55 years of age were returned as *Basavis* and two more doubtful instances were also reported.

Married women usually move into their husband's home when they come of age. Though this is the accepted custom of the community, a few instances of the husband moving into his wife's place were come across. This was at Gabbur where two women even after their marriage, have remained in their parental home and their husbands have come over to live with them. So also is the case with one woman at Jalahalli. The widow usually lives with her children in her conjugal village amidst the agnatic kin of her late husband. However, in the absence of any positive support forthcoming, some widows may opt to return to their

natal village and either establish a new household or stay with their parents or brothers. The Byagaras do not as a rule observe village exogamy though the circumstance of one particular clan only living in one village has for the most part necessitated their going out of the village for alliances. Therefore men and women of different *Bedagus* (clans) living in the same village may intermarry. Thus the possibility of a person having his agnatic as well as affinal kin ties within the village cannot altogether be excluded. The kinship extends both in one's father's as well as one's mother's family line. Uterine sisters married and living in different villages are also reckoned as among one's close kin and mutual visits would be quite common. So also, one's relatives through marriage are quite important. The kinship terminologies prevalent among the Byagaras are identical with those of the local Lingayats and other Kannada speaking communities. For all the children, male or female, born of a married couple the descent is reckoned in the male line. But in the case of informal unions and *Basavis*, the descent is reckoned in the mother's line.

The Byagaras constitute a single endogamous group along with the Holeyas or Mala population of the village in which they are found. They are sub-divided into exogamous groups called *bedagu* and marriage of persons hailing from the same *bedagu* is incestuous and taboo. At Kyatnal the 8 households of Byagaras belong to *Ketamayakara bedagu* while the other Holers belong to *Shettiyora bedagu*. The eight households belong to two lineages related through a common grandfather of the present heads of the household. In Jalahalli *Korinora bedagu* has a large following, the other *bedagus* reported being *Bhairyora bedagu*, *Boopalora bedagu*, *Thuppadora bedagu*, *Poothagulyora bedagu* and *Sajjanigeyora bedagu*. The *Korinoru* are said to be living in the village from times immemorial while the other clansmen are reckoned as later immigrants. Of the 44 households of Byagaras as many as 23 belong to *Korinoru* and 13 to *Bhairyora bedagu*. At Gabbur 21 out of the 43 households returned as belonging to *Noolinora bedagu* and 8 to *Sunkdora bedagu*. The other clan names reported are *Sorinoru*, *Heggadeyuru*, *Bhandaradoru* and *Kaddiyoru*. The question of one's clan comes up only on occasions of contracting marriages. This apart, clan has no other significance in the Byagara society. All the clans are exogamous and they are not graded in any hierarchical order. During the field study no legend or mythology was narrated regarding the origin of the several clans. Clan is in no way associated with one's occupation, rituals and food. The significance of the clan ends with the knowledge of its name and even

its etymological significance is unknown. Some people however, try to explain their clan names in their own way. Thus, *Korinoru* is said to have been derived from *Koru* which is taken to mean *Kumbli* (coarse woollen rug). All the families of a *bedagu* are considered to be descendants of a common ancestor. Generally a middle-aged man can name his father and his father's father but not beyond. He will also be knowing his father's father's brothers and their descendants and considers all of them as his agnates. It would be very difficult if not impossible to trace the genealogical link amongst the several households belonging to the same clan. There are no social organisations based on the lineage or the clan, and as such there are no occasions for a get-together of all the clansmen.

IV. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD AND DRINKS AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS

(a) Dwelling

It is very rarely, if at all, that villages solely inhabited by the Byagaras could be met with as they usually live in well settled villages and towns amidst other castes.

As a rule Byagaras who are low in the social scale live in the outskirts, or at times, a little distance away from *gramtana* (village site) and their settlement is termed either *Byagara oni* or *Harijanwada*.

The size of their settlement varies according to their numbers and it may assume any shape whatsoever, there being no restrictions or prescriptions regarding the shape of their settlement. It may, however, be observed that these are usually of a rectangular shape though, linear and somewhat circular patterns are sometimes met with. The houses face east or north if found singly or in a single row. In some of the streets houses may be found on either side facing each other. At Gabbur, their settlement is roughly of a rectangular shape with four narrow and crooked lanes in it. There are three large shade bearing trees in this *Byagara-oni* and platforms have been built underneath so that these serve as ideal places for squatting during leisure hours. These platforms are named as *Parameswaran katte*, *Durgamman katte* and *Dasara katte*, and the first two are also places of worship. The settlement at Jalahalli is of a very irregular shape. Some 23 households of Byagaras have recently purchased a two-acre plot adjacent to village site and some of them have put up temporary huts for their residence. Their old settlement contains two small shrines of Durgamma and a large shade bearing tree.

A brief description of the caste-composition of the villages visited for field study will shed light on the neighbourhood pattern of this community. Gabbur, having roughly 900 households contains some four-hundred and odd households of Lingayats; 125 households of Kurubas; 120 households of Muslims; 90 households of Mang (*Madigs*) (S.C.); 50 households of Gollas; 43 households of Byagaras and less than 15 households each of Upparas, Kabbaligars, Brahmins, Panchalas, Maratha Butchers, Bedars and Koravars. At Jalahalli nearly 500 households are of Bedars (also spelt and pronounced as Byader); 150 households are of Lingayats; 100 households each of Kabbers and Muslims; 80 households of Madars; 50 households each of Upparas and Kurubas; 44 households of Byagaras; 30 households of Brahmins and a handful households of other castes. Kyatnal, a small village with a population of about 800 is mainly inhabited by Lingayats, Kabbaligers, Madras and Holers (including Byagaras). In Gurumitkal town, the Kabbaligers (also called *Telugoallu*), Reddys, Bhahusar Kshatriya (also called *Khatiri*), Kuruba, Komati, Brahmin, Lingayat, Muslims and Mangs (*Madiga* or *Madars*) are the important caste-groups besides the Holeyas (also called *Mala*). Sirwar of Manvi taluk, Raichur district also portrays a similar picture. At all these places, the Byagaras reside in exclusive quarters and close to them but quite separate, live the Mangs (*Madars* or the *Madigas*). These two communities are considered to cause pollution by touch to the caste Hindus and they are therefore very much cut off from intercourse with other castes so much so that most of the influence which may improve their conditions are practically sealed to them. While they are collectively disclaimed by the higher orders, even among themselves, these two castes have degrees of superiority and do not mix freely. They have their own drinking water wells. In these villages the Muslims generally follow the pattern set by the caste Hindus regarding their behaviour and attitude towards the Byagaras and Madars. Some exceptions to the general rule may be found as in the case of a middle-aged Muslim living amidst the Byagaras of Jalahalli and a Panchala youth (a sojourner) living with a *Basavi* of the Byagara Caste. But the villagers treat these two persons as outcastes. It may be generally concluded that the old practice of segregation has not changed and the old order persists.

Generally, the Byagaras dwell in small, single storied, congested houses with neither a compound wall nor enough courtyard either in the front or at the back. Their houses adjoin each other with little space in between. The main components of a house

are the kitchen and a living room, though an extra room and a byre may be the additional facilities of a few houses. In small villages their houses seldom have a bath. In some larger villages (e.g. Gabbur) a few households do erect a small bath room (without roofing) adjacent to their dwelling. As it is a common practice in the rural parts to go to nearby fields for answering calls of nature, no house is ever provided with a latrine. Wells, and in their absence, tanks and streams are the chief sources of water. In several villages wells for their exclusive use have been constructed in the past from public funds. These wells usually lie within one or two hundred yards from their dwellings. If their wells dry up or the water is rendered unfit for drinking, the Byagaras have their pitchers filled by upper castes at the latter's wells.

At the outset it may be mentioned that the houses of Byagaras have no distinctive features of their own. Their houses are similar to those of the other poorer sections in the village. The houses invariably have a square or more frequently, a rectangular ground plan. The walls are generally of mud. Sometimes houses with walls built of rough hewn stones in clay may also be seen. Even within a village the material of the wall may vary according to one's economic conditions. Thus at Gabbur there are houses with mud walls and also those with rough hewn stones called *Kergallu*. At Jalahalli there is one recently built house with dressed granite stone, a large number of houses with mud walls and about half a dozen houses with mud-plastered twig walls. In Sirwar 20 houses have mud walls and only 4 have stone walls. As regards the roof-type, it is observed that in certain parts where the rainfall is relatively heavy, inclined roofs are common while flat-mud terrace appears to be the predominant type in the major part of the Hyderabad-Karnatak region. At Gurumitkal and its neighbourhood most of the houses have inclined roofs, the material used being stone slabs. On the other hand, at Gabbur, Kyatnal and Sirwar all the houses of Byagaras are flat-roofed. Though corrugated iron sheets are used in a few cases as roof-material, the most commonly used material is a variety of mud, called *Halamannu*. However, at Jalahalli there are some temporary huts with thatched roof, but houses with mud terrace predominate. The most commonly used materials for thatching are date-palm leaves and *apu* reeds. The terraced houses are almost always provided with skylights but not windows. The doors are generally of either mango or neem wood and the poorest of the Byagaras have doors of cheaper material such as split bamboo, tin sheets etc. Gravel is the most common flooring material and it is periodically smeared with

cow dung and red clay. The walls are also periodical—usually once a year—plastered with red clay sometimes mixed with cow dung. The Byagaras do not pay much attention to embellish or decorate their houses. Some of the older structures, however, have carved wooden door frames (e.g. Gabbur). At Jalahalli a well-to-do Byagara cultivator built a house in about 1960 and because he could afford, he has installed a wooden door frame with intricate carvings. Though small, this house is two storeyed and is built of dressed granite stone. However, such expensive constructions are rare to come across.

For construction of houses the Byagaras utilise the locally available material. In Raichur and Gulbarga districts there are large numbers of stone quarries and stones are available at nominal costs. The Waddars work the quarry and sell rough-hewn stones called *Kargalla* and dressed stones called *Suthagi Kalla* at rupees one to two and rupees 6 to 10 per cart load of 100 numbers respectively. Masonry work is got done by skilled workers (*Goundi*) of Uppara or Kabballiga caste on a wage rate of Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 3.00 per day. Mud (suitable for the construction of walls as well as roof) which is locally available is collected free of cost and sometimes this is converted into large sized unburnt bricks for constructing the walls. For building the walls also the Byagaras employ skilled labourers on contract basis. The wood required for the house viz. neem, mango, etc., is purchased locally if it is not available in one's own field. The beams are usually of neem wood and the rafters are of a variety of plant locally called *Kaddigalli*. For roof the mud is spread on a layer of *honne* leaves. The stone slab called *Chavani kalla* (literally, "roof stones") of size 18" x 24" are purchased at Rs. 50 to 70 per 100. The villagers at and around Gurumitkal obtain the roofing stones from places situated in Andhra Pradesh. Masons attend to the laying of stone slabs at Rs. 3 a day. Such stone-roofs are to be renewed once in 3 to 4 years.

Though indigenous material and labour are largely used, constructional activity among Byagaras is tardy as they are generally very poor. In their settlements hardly three or four houses come up in a decade and the Byagaras continue to live in over-crowded houses. At Gabbur, it is reported that no house has been built since 1961 in the *Byagara oni*. One of the Byagaras of Jalahalli got a subsidy of Rs. 600 from the Government in 1965-66 and his house happens to be the most recent. It measures 21 cubits by 17 cubits and consists of a prayer room, hall, a kitchen and verandah besides a sheep pen. It is built of dressed stones in clay and it has a flat mud roofing. The total cost of

the house is said to have come to Rs. 1,200. In this village as already stated, 23 households have purchased a two-acre plot at a cost of Rs. 700. A regular lay-out has been formed and the sites have been distributed among themselves. Now, they in a body are putting forth efforts to secure governmental assistance for building houses. At Kushtagi, there is a house building Co-operative Society formed by the Byagaras and Madars (*Mares*) in 1963. At present there are 145 members and 72 of them have their own house-sites. Efforts are now being directed to obtain loans for construction of houses repayable in easy instalments. Voluntary exertions of this sort on the part of the scheduled castes are a very welcome sign, and are indicative of a reformation of their backwardness, and an imperative need of their having to rise by their own boot straps.

(b) Dress and Ornaments

The influence of regional pattern is noticeable in the manner of dress and ornaments worn by the Byagaras. But, being poor they generally go in for cheaper varieties of cloth. The men's wear consists of a dhoti tied in *ka lke* style, a baniyan or a full-shirt, *patga* or *ramola* the head-cloth and a country woollen blanket called *kambli* slung over the shoulder to protect them against rain and cold. Owing to the increased price of *Kambliis*, the Byagaras at Gabbur reported that they have recently taken to the use of gunny bags instead. Though a considerable proportion among the Byagaras are now accustomed to the use of chappals, footwear is still considered a luxury. The annual expenditure on clothing of an adult worker comes to about Rs. 50. The boy's dress consists of knicker and a shirt. Women wear saris without *ka-fala* and a blouse and incur an annual expenditure of about Rs. 30 on dress. The style of tying the saree is a bit different in the villages bordering Andhra Pradesh. Women's counterpart of *kambli* is *kunchagi* which, besides affording them protection against the elements, serves other sundry purposes. These *kunchagis* are worn-out saris pieced together by the women-folk themselves. Women rarely use footwear. Girls aged 9 years or more wear *kinni* or *detti* (i.e., saris of smaller measurements) and blouses, while the younger ones put on skirts and blouses or frocks. At Jalahalli and at Kushtagi young girls were observed to use underwear also. This trend indicates a tendency to imitate upper caste Hindus.

The more commonly used men's ornaments are finger-rings and ear-studs of silver, gold and precious stones. A few men in and around Kyatnal village and Gurumitkal were also seen wearing silver armlets or

silver wristlets. A few relatively well-to-do wear on the upper lobe of the right ear the *Meimuruvu*—a crescent shaped gold ornament. Silver finger ring (sometimes of copper, if poor) worn on the small finger of the right hand is called *Hommugura* and is normally presented to a man by his in-laws on betrothal. Some men, more often boys, wear silver waist-strings. Poverty, however, precludes larger investments on gold and silver.

Their women use a variety of ornaments. All married women and Basavis have to normally wear ear-studs, nose-ring or nose-screw, a black-bead necklace with *tali* or marriage-badge, glass bangles, silver wristlets called *Kadaga*, waistbelt of silver and silver toe-rings. Custom enjoins giving to a bride the following ornaments:—

(i) *Achcherina Kadaga* i.e., two silver wristlets each weighing at least 12 tolas.

(ii) *Serina Daba*: Silver waist belt weighing 24 tolas.

(iii) *Tali*—Gold pendant in a black bead necklace.

(iv) *Moogigondur Muttha*: Nose-ring of gold and pearls for the nose.

(v) Toe-rings.

(vi) *Gold*.—Half a tola in the form of *kariyali* (necklace) and;

(vii) earstuds called *vali*. (The two last items are optional depending upon the economic conditions of the contracting parties).

Widows and the never-married however, should refrain from wearing *tali*. Also they (widows) wear wristlet of a different shape called *pollukadaga* or *bolkadaga* and eschew glass bangles. Affluent women use *kariyali*—a four stringed necklace of small black beads and a few gold pieces; *bugudi-kaddi*—gold and pearls ornament for the upper lobe of the ear; silver armlets, anklets etc. The gold and silver ornaments are made by the local goldsmiths. They share their fondness for tattoo with the other women of this region. Around Gurumitkal it is called *chukka hotudu* and in Deodurg taluk, *hanche bottu*. Women folk of a nomadic community called Katbu are the tattooers and they receive cash payment or grain for their service. Usually one,

other than the tattooed pays, as it is believed that her/his memory will thereby be cherished life long by the person tattooed. It is believed to be a cure for rheumatism and it is therefore not unusual to see men also with tattoo marks on their knees.

Byagaras are not served by the village barbers and therefore, they help each other. In each village there would be at least one or two sets of the barbers requisites owned by the Byagaras. Barbers are also known to lend their's at times to Byagaras for use and return. In larger towns there is no such discrimination against them.

(c) Food and drinks

The Byagaras are non-vegetarians and consume mutton, meat, flesh of poultry birds, rabbits, fish etc. In former days, all of them were accustomed to eat carrion and also beef and pork. In fact they participated in the distribution of carcass with the Madigas but most of them are now reported to have given up this habit in an effort to achieve social advancement. At Kyatnal and Jalahalli, the Byagaras have no scruples against beef and a few in Kyatnal even today consume carrion. Those at Gabbur, Kushtagi and Gurumitkal are reported to have been abstaining from beef, pork, and carrion for the last 10 to 15 years. There is growing realisation among a few of the more enlightened in the community that taking of food shunned by other caste Hindus has been the bane of their social backwardness. An intensive campaign was launched by the *chhalavadi* (the headman of the caste) around 1955 at Kushtagi. As soon as information came to him of carrion being cooked in any house, he and his supporters would raid the premises and pour kerosene on the stuff. The high price of mutton prevents their indulging frequently in meat preparations.

Their staple food consists of such cereals as jowar, bajra, small millets and pulses. Vegetables are consumed when available. They prepare *rotti* (unleavened round cake), *nuchchu* or *hana* (cooked jowar flour—a pastelike preparation) in jowar flour and use *pudikara* (red chillies powdered along with some salt and garlic), *beli* (cooked tur or beans dhal—a semi liquid preparation with requisite quantities of salt and green chillies) *pundipale* (semi liquid preparation—cooked leafy vegetables) etc., as side dish. Both adults and children take food thrice a day. The morning breakfast taken in the morning hours consists of two cakes,

pudikara and *Nuchchu*. This may either be taken at home or in the field. The mid-day meal taken in the afternoon also consists of jowar cakes, *pudikara*, *belli* and *nuchchu*. The same food is taken, though in lesser quantities, again in the evening around 8 p.m. Their special dishes are *holige* (called *polchu* in Telugu), round cakes stuffed with well-ground jaggery and cooked gram dhal, *huggi* (another sweet preparation) and *anna* (cooked rice) either of rice or broken and cleansed jowar. Their chief non-vegetarian preparation is *Mamsada Saru* (Mutton soup).

Cooking is done in earthen vessels. In the former days, the Byagaras, it is said, were using *theve* (earthen pans) but they now use iron pans. The *rottis* ie cakes then used to be very thick, but now-a-days thin cakes are prepared. The fuel is gathered free of cost in and around the village. At some places e.g. Gabbur, it is reported that food is cooked only once a day in the afternoon while at other places e.g. Jalahalli, Gurumitkal and Kushtagi, it is cooked twice—once in the early hours of the morning and again in the evening. The habit of eating stale food is also not universal. Variation in dietary habits is natural due to their wide spatial distribution.

Byagaras do not have any social inhibitions regarding consumption of liquor. This one-time, wide-spread habit is said to be steadily declining since Independence. As prohibition was not introduced in the districts of Gulbarga and Raichur, toddy and arrack have been freely available. The Byagaras are never known to have had their own home-stills. Toddy is their favourite drink and it can be had in the local shops. Due to its rising cost a few only are regular addicts.

Tea is the popular beverage in this region. All the 24 households of Byagaras at Sirwar are reported to be in the habit of taking tea. In the places recently visited, it is observed that tea is mostly taken in tea-shops by most of the adult male members. Women do not normally visit tea-shops and as such a few only can afford the luxury of tea at home. Men smoke *bidis* and pipes. The habit of chewing betel leaves and arecanuts is also wide-spread, specially among elderly women. These women also chew *kachu*—a black pigment-with betel leaf.

(d) Household goods

The material possessions of Byagaras consist of utensils, a few implements and other articles of every

day need. They cook food and store grain, water and other food articles in earthen vessels. These are purchased from local potters or at the weekly shandies. The hearth (*vah*) is also bought from them. Generally they use metal dining plates, but at some places (e.g. Jalahalli) earthen plates are also said to be in use. Metallic vessels are also to be found, though few in numbers. Every household possesses an iron pan called *Thava* (used for baking the cakes) and iron spatula called *kudachi*. A few aluminium vessels such as *Jambu* (tumbler for drinking water), *tambige* (narrow mouthed vessel) plates and one or two brass vessels such as *tambige* ladle, pitcher etc., are possessed by a reasonably fair proportion of the households. Other items of household articles are the grinding stone, pestle (of wood with iron rings at both the ends), sieves, basket, crow-bar, axe, spade, pickaxe, sickles, *kurpi* (weeding implement) etc. Those who are cultivators have wooden ploughs, harrows of different sizes and sometimes seed-drills. Mats made out of the date-palm leaves *kavadi* (patch-work coverlets made out of worn-out clothes by the female members of the household), a few bedsheets and some gunny cloth, one or two wooden or sometimes steel trunks are the other articles in use with them. They use small kerosene wick lamps without chimney (each costs about 25 paise) small lanterns (Rs. 1.50 each) or bed lamps (70 paise or more). Very few can afford large sized lanterns costing Rs. 5 or more. Of furniture, mention may be made of *horasu* (rope cot) which is extensively used in this region. Quite a number of households possess one or two rope cots. Each cot costs about Rs. 5 (Rs. 2 worth of rope and Rs. 3 towards wages of carpenter, wood being supplied by them) which if carefully used may last for about 4 to 5 years.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS DISEASES AND TREATMENT

The Byagaras are found to be oblivious of the need for the observance of environmental sanitation. This feature in villages is common to all lower castes. The streets in Byagara settlements are narrow, irregular and congested. They live in small overcrowded houses. In many mud-terraced houses ventilation provided by skylights is inadequate. However, most of their hours are spent in work in the open. The houses and their immediate surroundings are swept once a day by the female members of the house, and the floor is given a cow-dung wash at least once a week. The drain water is let into the streets emitting stink. In larger villages as was noticed in Gabbur, a few houses have soak-pit drains. The houses are not as a rule, pro-

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vided with latrines and all the members go to the open for answering calls of nature. Those owning cattle, clean the sheds in the morning and dump the refuse at a distance. They are irregular in their bathing habits. When they do, they go to a nearby stream or well for the purpose. Women and children bathe in their own homes. Very few Byagaras use toilet soaps. The soiled clothes are taken once a week or earlier to a well or a stream closeby and washed by women of the house using either fuller's earth or sometimes some cheap brand of washing soap. They are as scantily and poorly dressed as any depressed class member would. The village washermen do not serve them. They wash their face and clean their teeth every morning. The vessels are washed well once a day after use. Most of the Byagaras in larger villages and towns are striving to emulate the higher castes in the matter of cleanliness.

Though from modern standards Byagaras are far from being clean and are under-nourished, they are not more vulnerable to diseases than others, and suffer from common ailments only. In this region tuberculosis and leprosy are prevalent to some extent. But no Byagara (among those visited during the field study) is said to be afflicted with either disease barring one in Jalahalli who is a leper.

When taken ill if known remedies fail they resort to divination. Some visit hospitals if situated nearby but the lurking fear of heavy expenditure on drugs and tonics seems to act as a deterrent to many. In all the places visited during field study (except Kyatnal) provisions exist for medical facilities and Byagaras do utilise them without inhibitions. They also get vaccinated or inoculated against epidemics. However, at all these places mediums are consulted to divine causes for physical and mental ailments. This deep faith in divination, magical cure, witchcraft, etc., is shared by almost all the caste groups of the village and region. For instance, at Jalahalli two women, a Byagara and Madar are known to be possessed by Yellamma and Durgamma respectively. In Gabbur, there are four such mediums one each from Byagara, Madar, Bedar and Waddar castes. Maramma, Yellamma, Durgamma, Hulagemma etc., are said to be

goddesses believed to appear in the body of the devotees and enable them to foretell events. The villages of Mathapalli, Teggihal and Chintalakunti in Deodurg taluk are places noted for their mediums. Continued illness, a run of badluck, barrenness, successive deaths in the family etc., are often the causes that make the villagers consult these mediums. The mediums are said to be active on Tuesdays and on new moon-days. The remedies suggested are, offering of regular worship to a particular deity for a prescribed period; application of *adhara* (either turmeric dust or sacred ash) on the forehead for a specified number of days; worshipping at home of a lemon or coconut preferred by the medium etc. Evil spirits are exorcised some times by causing physical injuries to the patient. The mediums appropriate to themselves a few of the puja articles offered, and also get cash. However, consulting a medium does not cost much. But yet, as people are becoming more enlightened, their attitude towards divination and the remedies suggested by the mediums is gradually changing and this is mostly the outcome of urban influence.

VI. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Most of the Byagaras speak Kannada, both among themselves and with outsiders. It is their mother-tongue and also the regional language. Several Byagaras are fluent in speaking Telugu as well as the colloquial Urdu. On the bordering towns and villages of Andhra Pradesh the Byagaras identify themselves with the 'Mala' and claim Telugu as their mother-tongue. A large proportion of them are bilingual, and some speak an admixture of Kannada and Telugu. Thus at Gurumitkal though Telugu is claimed to be the mother-tongue, all speak Kannada barring a few women. They have their affinal kin in the villages well within Andhra territory. They also intermarry with Byagaras having Kannada as their mother-tongue.

Information according to the 1961 Census regarding literacy and education standards of Byagaras as presented in Tables S.C.T.III Part A(i) and Part B(i) [Census of India 1961, Vol. XI Mysore Part V(A)] respectively for urban and rural areas is reproduced here:—

TABLE 3

S. C. T. Part-A (i)—Education in Urban areas only for Scheduled Castes

Name of Scheduled Caste	Total		Illiterate		Literate (without educational level)		Education levels			
							Primary or junior basic		Matriculation or higher Secondary	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Byagara	398	408	325	403	43	2	29	3		

Name of Scheduled Caste	Technical diploma not equal to degree		Non Technical diploma not equal to degree		University degree or post-graduate degree other than technical degree		Technical degree or diploma equal to degree or post-graduate degree	
	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Byagara					1			

TABLE 4

S. C. T. III Part B (i)—Education in Rural areas only for Scheduled Castes

Total		Illiterate		Literate (without educational level)		Education level			
						Primary or Junior basic		Matriculation and above	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
7463	8369	7036	8351	391	44	31	4	5	

The total number of literates is 553 of whom only 53 are females. The percentage of literacy among them is thus as low as 3.32. Considered sex-wise, the male literacy is 6.36% and female literacy 0.56%. Literacy percentage in urban areas is 9.7 while in rural areas—which account for the bulk of Byagaras—it is hardly 3.0. The State figures for Scheduled Castes as a whole, being 21.4 and 6.7 respectively, the figures for Byagaras bear a poor comparison. The fact that only one out of the 16,668 Byagaras is a graduate and a mere 5 are matriculates emphasises further, their extreme backwardness in education.

During field study it was observed that in Gabbur only 7 out of the 187 Byagaras and in Jalahalli only

4 out of the 196 Byagaras are literate. Further, while some 12 children at Jalahalli are attending school regularly, there are hardly 3 or 4 school-going children at Gabbur. One boy of Gabbur is studying in the Pre-University class at Raichur and he stays in hostel. Three matriculates of Jalahalli are employed outside as school teacher, revenue inspector and clerk of a Tahsil office. These facts indicate that at least in larger villages the realisation for educating the children is slowly, but surely, gaining ground. According to the informants the elders, driven by poverty prefer to utilise even boys around 10 years of age for work with a view to augmenting the inadequate family earnings, and this has been acting as a deterrent to larger attendance at schools. One such instance involving a

boy studying in VII standard who is now working as contract agricultural labourer was reported at Gabbur. Though Christian missionaries are found to be active at several places to spread education with the offer of free boarding, lodging and other facilities both in Raichur and Gulbarga districts, the Byagaras have not taken kindly to it due to a lurking fear of proselytisation. Their children attend the local schools and avail themselves of whatever benefits and assistance the Government or school board provides.

VII. ECONOMIC LIFE

Byagaras are mainly a rural folk with agriculture as their principal source of livelihood. Cultivation, and agricultural labour are their two important occupations. A few also subsist by cooly work, petty trade, household industry and service. If any, *patta* (owned) land is held by them and there is no tradition of their ever having held community lands. In a few villages the Byagaras are employed as Talavaras i.e., village menials, and enjoy *inam* or rent-free lands. The inam lands are inheritable, but not alienable. Of the 43 households contacted at Gabbur, 12 are cultivators and the rest are mainly labourers. One person is a postal-runner. Twenty-two households own 167 acres of land and the average per household is less than 4 acres. The extent of land owned by individual households ranges between 4.00 and 16.00 acres and as for land owning households only, the average works out to 7.6 acres. There are 4 households which cultivate lands as share-croppers of whom 2 also own some bits. Of the land owning households 12 have either leased out their lands or mortgaged them to money-lenders. At Jalahalli also cultivation and labour happen to be the two important occupations. Some six persons are in the employ of the village panchayat and have a salaried income. Nineteen out of the 44 Byagara households are engaged in cultivation. Twenty-four households own lands aggregating 143 acres. The average per land-owning household is thus 6 acres and the average per Byagara household in the village is 3.25 acres. The extent owned individually ranged between 2.00 and 16.00 acres. Of the land-owning households 6 have leased out their land while one has left it fallow, as being barren. Ten of the land-owning households have lands on lease from others.

The village survey monograph on Sirwar, reveals that only 6 out of the 24 Byagara households own lands; one household has leased out all lands to others for cultivation; 2 households cultivate others' lands

as share-croppers in addition to the lands owned and lastly, one household has leased out all the land it owns to others but at the same time cultivates 28.00 acres of land taken from others, on lease. Agricultural labour is the principal occupation of the Byagaras at Sirwar.

Byagaras are associated with neither Forestry nor Fishery and related occupations. If in the proximity of forests, some of the poor gather fire-wood and sometimes grass, for sale in the local markets. At a few places some men may occasionally take to fishing. However, both fishing and forestry are not important to the economy of the community. As an adjunct to cultivation several households rear cattle, sheep and goat, and maintain poultry also though these may not be in large numbers and all households may not do it. For instance at Gabbur (on the date of enquiry) 17 out of the 43 households possessed cattle and one a goat. Bullocks were found in nine households and cows in the remaining eight. None of the households possessed a buffalo. Similarly at Jalahalli 27 out of the 44 households possessed livestock on the date of enquiry. Two of the households rear a large flock of sheep and goat, roughly 40 heads, while another has about 10 goats. Thirteen households had bullocks and the rest either cows or calves and/or other animals. A solitary she-buffalo was found in one household. Milk which is produced in small quantities is used for household consumption. The livestock statistics pertaining to Sirwar shows that 5 out of the 24 Byagara households possessed bullocks; 5 households possessed milch-cows and 2 others had a dry-cow each; goats, numbering 28 in all were found in 3 households; one household had a she-buffalo and a few other households possessed calves, sheep etc. All these figures indicate that livestock rearing is an important minor occupation of the Byagaras, though circumscribed by the circumstance of their bad economic plight. At several places the Byagaras are said to have been benefited by the Governmental assistance that is being extended in recent years through the N.E.S. Blocks to members of the Scheduled Castes.

According to the 1961 Census returns, of the 16,668 Byagaras as many as 8,745 are workers. In other words, the workers constitute about 52.5 per cent of the total population. Among Scheduled Castes in the State as a whole the workers constitute 51.9 per cent of the total. It may thus be observed that the working force among Byagaras compares favourably and even exceeds the State average for the Scheduled Caste population.

A sexwise break up of the workers shows that males contribute 59 per cent and the females 41 per cent to the working force. The percentage of workers among males is 65.6 while among females it is 40.6 only.

In the urban sector, Gulbarga district returns all the 170 Byagaras as workers, an unusual feature which eludes satisfactory explanation. In Raichur district however, 301 out of the 636 Byagaras or 47.3 per cent are workers. Further, it is seen that 55.4 per cent of the male population and 40.0 per cent of the total female population respectively have been returned as workers.

The workers in the rural sector constitute 52.2 per cent of the total rural population. The percentages of workers among males and females are 65.6 and 40.2 respectively. Comparison by districts shows that while in Gulbarga 60 per cent of the rural population are workers in Raichur District they account for 51 per cent only. It is in Raichur district rural that there is a heavy concentration of Byagaras and yet the percentage of workers here is less than in Gulbarga district. The explanation for this is obviously to be found in the preponderance of their women over men in the district with only 39% of the women being returned as workers. In general it may be observed that among Byagaras almost all the able-bodied, including children in the age-group 10-14, and a considerable pro-

portion of females, are economically active. At Gabbur and Jalahalli it is observed that 118 out of the 187 Byagaras and 106 out of the 196 Byagaras are workers. They, as a community are generally poor though some may be owning lands, and therefore, it is inevitable that they have to depend largely on labour for a living and a higher proportion of workers among them is thus inevitable. The distribution of non-workers among scheduled castes in the State according to the nature of activity and educational levels has been presented for all the Scheduled Castes put together and as such no statistics pertaining to the non-workers among Byagaras are separately available (Balasubramanyam 1966, XI Part V-A). Among the Byagaras 47.5 per cent are non-workers (*ibid*). The non-workers, when considered sex wise, account for 34.4 per cent and 59.4 per cent of the total number of males and females respectively. The percentage in the age-group 0-14 of male non-workers is 39 and of female non-workers 37. Except for a small proportion of boy students the rest are all dependants, though the possibility of some girls being economically active cannot be excluded. House work appears to be the chief activity among the rest of the female non-workers.

The following statement presents the industrial classification of workers among Byagaras in urban and rural areas according to the 1961 Census (Balasubramanyam, 1966, XI Part V-A).

TABLE 5
Industrial Classification of Persons at work by Sex—Byagaras

Workers	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Per- sons	Males	Fe- males	Per- sons	Males	Fe- males	Per- sons	Males	Fe- males
A. Total	471	264	207	8274	4896	3378	8745	5160	3585
I. As Cultivator	169	117	52	4408	2776	1632	4577	2893	1684
II. As Agricultural labourer	115	50	65	2816	1409	1407	2931	1459	1472
III. In Mining, Livestock, Forestry etc.	10	10	..	5	..	5	15	10	5
IV. At Household Industry	..	..	..	192	171	21	192	171	21
V. In Manufacturing other than HH. Industry	27	17	10	1	1	..	28	18	10
VI. In construction	13	13	..	51	49	2	64	62	2
VII. In Trade and Commerce	3	1	2	21	16	5	24	17	7
VIII. In Transport, storage and communications	11	10	1	28	28	..	39	38	1
IX. In Other services	123	46	77	710	404	306	833	450	383
B. Workers in special occupations									
(i) Tanning and currying of hides	..	..	..	15	9	6	15	9	6
(ii) Scavenging	1	..	1	20	8	12	21	8	13

An examination of the above figures supports that cultivation and agricultural labour are the two important occupations of the Byagaras. In terms of percentage, 86 per cent are tillers working either as cultivators or agricultural labourers, the percentage of the former being higher in either sex. The workers in other categories are numerically less. The economy of the Byagaras has thus a relatively strong agricultural bias and compares favourably even with State-wide figures for the entire Scheduled Castes which stand at 74 per cent. In the urban sector other services with 26.1 percentage takes precedence over agricultural labour (24.4 per cent) but, details of work are not known. As industrial classification data pertaining to any earlier period are not available a comparative study cannot be made.

It is also seen from the above statement that 15 Byagaras are engaged in tanning and currying of hides while 21 are engaged as scavengers. The field investigation however discloses a different position. The Byagaras consider any work connected with leather and hides as polluting and aver that none of them is engaged in leather work. However, as in a few villages Madars (or Madigs or Mangs) who work on leather are known to be employed as *Begars*, there is a distinct possibility of a few of them being wrongly returned as Byagaras. This can be the only plausible explanation for the figuring of tanners among Byagaras, in State S.C. II table *vis-a-vis* their own stout disclaimer. A few village panchayats (e.g. Jalahalli) have employed Byagaras for sweeping the streets. Generally *Bhangis* are employed to clean the lavatories and carry the night soil. Of the 21 scavengers only one is from urban area. Moreover a feeling is perceptible of late among the Byagaras to consider even sweeping a demeaning occupation.

As already stated, the Byagaras in days of old were forced labourers working for the State in each village and for their services they were entitled to receive in return 3 per cent of the land-tax collected in the village. In this respect they may be likened to "Dhers" of Gujarat (Sherring, 1872). By convention they were also to serve the village accountant and village headman. When free, they worked as tillers or agricultural labourers. At several places they are known to have been employed as village sweepers, and a few of them were, and also, are *Talawaras* i.e., village watchmen. They formed an integral part of the village community and for rendering such minor services as removing the dead animals, torch bearing before the processions of Gods and Goddesses and cleaning the village

streets, etc., they received grains from the cultivators at harvest time. Further, the Byagaras are considered traditional grave-diggers, and for cremation also it is their right to transport *kullu kattige* i.e., cowdung cakes and fire wood, for which they receive cash payment according to the economic and social status of the deceased. *Nelakki rokka* or coins cast on the grave by close relatives after burying the dead belongs exclusively to the Byagara. Even where Madras (*Madigs*), Voddars and others are employed on digging the grave the Byagara gets the *nelakki rokka* and also, the shroud—*Mukhada arive*—which covers the face of the dead. Sudugadu Siddhas, also called *Kadi papas* in some places, occasionally visit the Byagaras during their mendicancy and receive as the supposed lords of the crematory, cash and grain, besides a few pieces of the shroud-cloth from them. In this respect the Byagara has a strong resemblance to *kulavadi* of the Hassan district (*Lewis Rice*, 1897, 1 P. 216). Incidentally it may be mentioned that Sudugadu Siddhas are a nomadic tribe in the Hyderabad Karnatak region and a Scheduled Caste in the former Mysore State. Whenever Byagaras are found it is they who generally attend to grave digging while exceptionally Upparas, Voddars, even Madars are known to do it. The Byagaras zealously guard their rights and resist attempts at intrusion by other caste-groups. In villages this task is attended to by four Byagaras on yearly rotation if their population is large. Sweeping streets is also recognised as a traditional occupation of Byagaras at some places (e.g. Jalahalli). Thus at Jalahalli a few are employed as sweepers by the village panchayat, but at Gabbur all the sweepers belong to Madar (Madiga) caste. Even at Jalahalli they are divided into two groups viz., (i) the one attending to sweeping and (ii) the other which does not. The former is socially boycotted by the latter, but without an actual cleavage developing between them. This follows caste elders' decision taken 20 years ago that such unclean and demeaning professions should be given up by its members.

The present-day occupations of the Byagaras are primarily cultivation and general cooly work, the performance of traditional occupation being confined to only a limited few. They do not have any patron-client relationship with the landed caste groups but work on a casual basis or on annual contract. Annual contract labourer may be either a *umbalu* i.e. a labourer fed and clothed by the employer besides a small lump-sum cash payment made to him, or *onachakari alu* i.e. a labourer who works for cash payment only. Among Byagaras the latter type is said to be more common. At Gabbur for instance there were six such contract

labourers among Byagaras on the date of enquiry. The wage-rate to them varied considerably from village to village and therefore no generalization can be made. At Gabbur the annual payment ranged between Rs. 500 and 800 depending upon the age, ability, caste and such other factors. In Kyatnal also there were attached agricultural labourers among the Holeya (i.e., Byagaras). Here the annual payment made in kind consisted of *algala* (5 quintals) jowar, one woollen blanket, dress and chappals without meals or other perquisites. Particularly in the case of casual labour the variation in wage-rate is marked, depending on the nature of work, sex of the workers, availability of labour and so on. Inter-village (within a radius of 3-4 miles) migration of labourers, especially during peak agricultural seasons, is also quite common in the places visited during the field study. Mode of payment is also not uniform over the year or over the entire region. On the whole, it may be observed that a male agricultural labourer can earn per day Re. 1.00 to Rs. 1.50—either in cash or in kind—and a female labourer 50 paise to Re. 1.00. Non-agricultural labour involving earth work is reportedly more remunerative than agricultural labour, leading to a scramble for it. The employment opportunities are limited except in some large and rapidly developing villages or towns. Gabbur with a vast expanse of dry land offers little opportunity for non-agricultural work. As both kharif and rabi crops are grown and dependence is largely on hired labour, the Byagaras find work in the fields almost throughout the year. Here the wages are mostly in kind. In contrast, Jalahalli offers ample opportunities for earth-work due to the road that is being formed from Deodurg to Tintini for quite some years now, and also the earth work needed for well-irrigated garden fields. Agricultural labour is also available; but payments are usually in cash. At both the places there is comparatively a shortage of labour and the situation is well exploited by labourers of the surrounding villages, particularly during peak season.

The cultivation practices of Byagaras conform to those prevailing among the other settled peasant communities of the village or the region. The main crops grown are jowar, groundnut, cotton, millets and some pulses. As petty peasants most of the produce are self-consumed. Generally cultivation is carried on without any hired labour. They are familiar in the use of all the local agricultural implements and know the advantages of rotation of crops. Share croppers generally give half the produce as rent to the landlord. They are mostly tenants-at-will and so are the other poor classes of this region. Despite statutory regulation of the rent payable to a landlord, share-cropping appears to be

the widespread form of tenancy prevailing in this region.

To sum up, the Byagaras are no longer forced labourers and they do not have any patron-client relationship with the village community. Some of them, however are still in the employ of the State as Talawaras or village watchmen and enjoy rent-free lands. They continue to attend to one of their traditional callings viz., digging graves, but as to sweeping streets, conflicting opinions prevail within the caste. They have a strong agricultural bias, but the inadequacy of land available to them compels them to supplement their income by other means. Others solely depend on agricultural labour. Some of them work as farm servants in the houses of caste-Hindus. Agricultural labourers are usually paid in kind. They move about from place to place in the vicinity in quest of work. Cash-wage is, of late, becoming more common especially in large villages. There is a competition for non-agricultural work which is more remunerative. Other sectors of production contribute little to their economy.

Statistics relating to sources and extent of income, pattern of expenditure, indebtedness etc., could not be collected during the present brief field study. It may, in a formal way, be observed that the Byagaras are a poor section of the village community, being mostly labourers. The cultivators though seemingly better off are yet in the throes of poverty, their uneconomic holdings being exposed to the vagaries of monsoon. There is no wide variation in income from household to household. Food is the major item of expenditure and next to it comes clothing. They are a famished lot, and money required for such unforeseen items as marriage, funeral, run of bad-luck etc., can only come from borrowings.

VIII. LIFE CYCLE

A. Birth

Begetting children is a desirable consummation for Byagaras. A son as perpetuator of the family line is rated high, and hence the joy is all the greater if the child born is a male. If a man fails to have issues from his wife within a reasonable period after marriage, he takes a second wife. Barrenness is considered a curse, and prayers are offered to such Goddesses as Yellamma, Huligemma or even to the stone planted at the main entrance of the village. It was not uncommon in the past to take a vow that if a child was born, it would be dedicated to the service of the Goddess. Such a dedicated woman would spend her life singing the glory of the Goddess and leading the life of a prostitute. This system of dedication of girls had

become a well established institution among Byagaras and even couples having more children at a comparatively early age did not hesitate to make one a Basavi. The system appears to owe its origin to people holding it a sacred duty to choose a virgin in the name of a god to serve sadhus and sanyasis and religious mendicants who might be passing by their village. It was a holy order, but the calling came to be abused by carnally minded persons with the passage of time.

The first pregnancy is given official publicity by the observance in the fifth month of a simple ceremony called *Kubsa* or *Hoova mudisuvudu*. Her parents present her on the occasion new clothes, bangles and flowers and sweets and the guests are feted. The Byagaras share the common Hindu belief that a pregnant woman not keeping herself shut indoors during eclipse would run the risk of giving birth to a deformed child. The husband during his wife's pregnancy is precluded from carrying a corpse, digging a grave or even attending a funeral feast; he should also not start the construction of a new house.

The first birth invariably takes place in the parents' house, but not the subsequent ones. The pregnant daughter is usually brought a few days before delivery. A *soolagithi* (indigenous dai) renders parturition assistance. The *soolagithi* gathers the placenta (called *mava* or in some places *mayimunta*) in an earthen pot which she buries in the frontyard of the house either before dawn or after dusk (this spot they call *kavalugumi*) over which is laid a large stone slab. The sickle used for cutting the umbilical cord is placed by the side of the mother till the ninth day to ward off evil. In complicated cases, the services of a trained midwife are requisitioned if readily available near at hand. Offering prayers and taking a vow are the only supernatural remedies known to them. In towns also child birth is normally domiciliary and only when complications set in she is hospitalised.

For 2 or 3 days the mother and the baby are bathed upon the stone slab where the placenta is buried. These bathings called *Hedda Neeru*, help to enlist the co-operation of relatives and neighbours who supply hot water from their respective homes. The used water is allowed to soak into the pot containing the placenta. The spot *Kavalugumi* is covered with fresh earth after the third-day bath and in its place now appears a small earthen mound. It is believed that *Setagarva* comes on the third day to chart out the destiny of the baby. Late in the evening this Goddess is worshipped both in the lying-room and at the earthen mound. In this the *Soolagithi* is the chief participant though the mother may also join her in offering

the *pūja*. In the small hours of the following day the *Soolagithi* returns and incribes on the wall of the house some mark, in charcoal or lamp black (and also lime in some areas) such as a cross or a few dots by the side of the main door. This writing is supposed to have been done by *Setagarva* herself. Breastfeeding starts only after the visit of *Setagarva* and the baby which was hitherto lying in a winnowing basket is now shifted to its mother's side. Pollution which lasts for 4 days ends on the 5th day with the receiving by the mother, of water brought from a well after *pūja* in plates which the bearers would have used for eating the consecrated rice at the well. This, small boys are said to do at Kyatnal, and 2 or 3 married women at Gabbur.

In some places pollution is said to last only for nine days and at others for eleven days. Their opinion regarding the period of pollution is not uniform.

Naming ceremony takes place usually on the ninth day or the sixteenth day. The house and the household articles are cleaned and the old cooking pots are replaced by new ones. In the morning the mother accompanied by a few youngsters visits a well, offers *pūja* to the well and after partaking of the consecrated food gets back home with a pitcher full of water. This part of the ceremony is called *Gangamma bindige* and may be gone through on the 16th or 27th day instead of on the ninth and with this, her period of confinement is deemed to have formally come to an end. The baby is put in the cradle by five *muthaldes* (married women) in the evening of the ninth day and is christened. Usually the mother's brother or mother's father gives the name to the child. Two names—one suggested by a *Jangam* (Lingayat priest) or any other astrologer and the other a pet name—are usually conferred on the baby. While the person who names the child bends down repeating each name thrice and tries to pick out the soaked gram, called *hela gugri*, placed at the head and feet of the baby in the cradle, his relatives such as paternal aunts, sister's children etc., beat on his back. In several places at that moment noise is produced by beating the *Gangala* (bronze dining plate) as otherwise, the belief goes that the child would become deaf. The common names among males are Ningappa, Malla, Bheema, Yellappa, Rangappa, Nagappa, Hanumantha, Shivappa, Ramappa, Adiveppa etc., and among females Ningamma, Siddamma, Yellamma, Rangamma, Chandamma, Basamma Hanumanthi etc. The naming ceremony is attended by the parents-in-law of the mother but usually her husband stays back. He visits on the 16th or the 27th day and will have a first look at his child and places a

few silver coins (termed *belaka* meaning light) or an ornament in the hands of the baby.

Before the completion of the third month the maternal uncle of the child formally performs the tonsorial ceremony. He holds a pair of folded betel leaves in his hands and with them goes through the form of cutting the child's hair. Sometime later the head is shaved by the uncle or any other member of the family. Ears are bored for both boys and girls, but no special ceremony is observed.

The mother will be on diet for a month or a little more whereafter she starts taking the normal food. The suckling of the baby continues for 12 to 24 months. Solid food is given around 12 months.

In the case of first child-birth confinement lasts for 45 to 90 days. Sometime after the second month her parents-in-law call on her, present a new saree to her mother for her services, give the daughter-in-law also a new saree and ask her to return home. On an auspicious day she starts for her husband's home accompanied by her brother who literally carries the cradle on his head. On this occasion she wears a new saree given by her parents and, all the caste women fill her lap with grains and bits of jaggery. Her brother is given a headgear by her parents-in-law.

Many Byagaras believe that it is good to have a daughter first. They would like to have both sons and daughters rather than only sons or only daughters. In some large villages and towns Family Planning Programmes appear to have made a very slight impact on them. At Jalahalli among the ten who have undergone vasectomy, one is a Byagara. Two Byagara women of Kushtagi are using IUCD.

Puberty rites.—When a girl menstruates for the first time she is ritually impure. She is segregated and is confined to a corner of the house. If she is already married the news is conveyed to her parents-in-law who send choice food articles to her. On the ninth (or the fifth) day she is bathed and her clothes, dishes etc.,

are all cleaned. The caste-fellows are treated to a feast and in the evening a simple ceremony is held. Normally her marriage is consummated on the sixteenth day. The subsequent monthly periods are not considered impure.

B. Marriage

Among Byagaras pre-puberty marriage is more in vogue. The marriageable age is between 10 years and 15 years. Marriage after the girl's attainment of puberty exposes one to social ridicule. Boys are married before the age of 23 or 24 though economic stringency may have induced a preference in many, for late marriages which may be up to the age of 30. A woman is entitled to undergo the marriage rite (*lagna*) only once during her life-time while no such restrictions exist for a man. However, a widow or a divorcee is permitted to join another man, not being an agnatic kinsman of her former husband, and live as his wife. Such unions are called *Udike*. The issues do not incur any social stigmas.

Marriage within the same *bedagu* (clan) is not permissible. Marriage with such relatives as one's own mother's sister's daughter etc., are forbidden even if the clans are different. A person born of *udike* union should only marry person born of the *lagna* form of marriage, and this perhaps is intended to facilitate the eventual absorption in their society of the former family with no inferior status. The familiar types of consanguineous marriages among Byagaras are (a) marrying one's mother's brother's daughter (b) marrying one's father's sister's daughter and (c) marrying one's elder sister's daughter. Sometimes girls are exchanged. Occasionally two full-brothers may marry two full-sisters. So also a man may marry one of the younger sisters of his first wife in the event of her death or if she proves barren. But such instances are rare.

Statistics relating to marital status by sex and age-groups of Byagaras as per the 1961 Census are presented below.

TABLE 6
Marital Status By Sex—Byagaras

Marital Status	All Ages			Age-Groups						Age not stated	
				0-14		15-44		45+			
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Never married	7128	3958	3170	2992	2869	936	241	26	58	4	2
Married	7795	3520	4275	79	357	2412	3413	1028	504	1	1
Widowed	1594	341	1253	1	4	106	368	234	881	..	..
Divorced or separated	97	25	72	..	..	20	52	5	20	..	..
Unspecified status	54	17	37	16	14	..	16	1	7	..	..
Total population	16,668	7861	8807	3088	3244	3474	4090	1294	1470	5	3

(Source : Census of India, 1951, Vol. XI Mysore-Part V-A; Table SCT-II).

The figures above disclose that 11.13 per cent of the girls under 14 are married and of them four are widows, thus establishing the prevalence of the system of child marriage among them. Again though custom permits remarriage of widows, the existence of quite a sizeable number of widows suggests that a tug is felt in the heart of many to remarry after they become widows.

Among Byagaras monogamy is now the rule, and polygyny an exception. Polyandry is unknown. In the course of the present investigation only one instance of bigamy was noticed at Jalahalli. The custom of paying *Thera* (bride-price) is prevalent and in recent years the amount payable has also gone up. Curiously enough the bride price for a widow is twice or thrice that for a virgin. This is attributed to the advantage of the widow being able to join her husband immediately and attend to the domestic chores. The bride price which was Rs. 24 for a virgin and Rs. 12 for a widow, now ranges between Rs. 100 and Rs. 150 for virgins and goes up even to Rs. 300 for widows. Besides the bride price, silver ornaments are also given. Marriages are usually celebrated during the months of *Chaitra*, *Vaishaka* and first half of *Jyeshtha* i.e., mid March to mid June. The marriage takes place in the bridegroom's house. The expenses are more for the bridegroom's party than for the bride's party. The amount spent on the boy's side ranges between Rs. 800 and Rs. 1200 and on the girl's side between Rs. 200 and Rs. 400. Lingayat priests preside over their marriages while at a few places as at Jalahalli the *Muthaides* of their own caste may do it. The priests who serve the Byagaras are *Matapathis* (Beadles) who are esteemed lower to *Jangams* serving Lingayats. The priest will have the assistance of *Dasa* or *Cheluvadi* in the performance of the marriage. The priest is paid cash of at least Rs. 1.25 and grains and copra. The *Dasa* assistant gets Rs. 2 to 3 in addition to grains, jaggery etc. The Cheluvadi with his bronze insignia attends the marriage ceremony, heads all processions and does certain other managerial functions. He, in turn, gets Rs. 4 or 5 besides food. If the party is economically well off the Cheluvadi may get the gift of a cow or a calf. The marriage coronet-*Bashinga*—is supplied by a sub-caste of Lingayats known as *Dhecraru* or *Tambalavandlu* if any, and the flowers are supplied by florists i.e., *Hoogaras*. The barber and the washerman do not render any services to Byagaras even during the marriage.

Among Byagaras, families belonging to different *bedagus* (clans) sometimes live together in single villages and as such it is not improbable that alliances

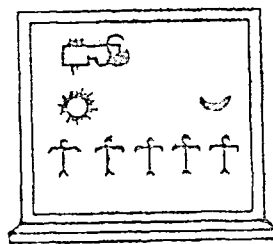
are made within the village. The sphere for choosing a spouse usually extends to villages well within a radius of 15 to 20 miles. The parents of the boy initiate the proposals and arranged marriages are almost the rule. But of late the consent of the boy and the girl also appears to receive some weight; in Gabbur cases were reported of three men being rejected in recent years by girls on account of certain bodily deformities, and their having to marry in consequence rather late in life. A Jangam or a Brahmin astrologer is consulted. Thereafter, on an auspicious day five persons proceed to ask for the girl. If the alliance is mutually acceptable, the betrothal called *Sakkare Veelya* or *Gattimaduvudu*, takes place on an auspicious day at the bride's residence. At least five kinsmen of the boy arrive at the bride's home bringing with them a new red saree, blouse pieces, copra, betel-leaves, arecanut, Rs. 5 in cash and other sundry articles. In the presence of caste elders and relatives the girl, dressed in new garments, will have her laps filled by the *muthaides*. The names of the clans (*Bedagu*) of the contracting families are announced loudly as follows *korinora hennu bhairyora gandu getthu* "Girl of *korinora* (such and such a) clan has captured a boy of *bhairyora* (such and such a) clan" and *vice-versa*. This announcement of clans is termed *bedaga hogalivudu*. Cheluvadi officiates during the ceremony and he distributes betel leaves, nuts and sugar to all the invitees. A settlement is reached regarding the bride price, ornaments and clothes to be given to the bride. A few days later the girl's parents call on the boy and give him a finger ring called *honnungara* and a *pataga* (headgear) or a *shalya* (upper cloth). This act is called *botikki baruvudu* or *hoova haki baravudu*. In consultation with a *Jangam* a convenient and auspicious day is fixed for the marriage.

Two or three days prior to the day of marriage the relatives and friends of the bridegroom (excluding his parents, himself and a few others who remain at his home for making arrangements) headed by a woman carrying *kalasha* proceed in a group to the bride's home for what is locally termed *hennu tharuvudu* i.e., fetching the bride. They take with them all the silver and gold ornaments meant for the bride, one new saree 5, 9 or 12 blouse pieces, rice, dhal, spices, copra, dates and such other articles each in nine or twelve small packets. They are properly received by the girl's party and taken to the house. Here the girl, dressed in the new saree and decked with the new ornaments and flowers, sits on a black woollen blanket over which rice grains are strewn to form geometrical figures. Then five *muthaides* in turn fill the lap of the girl with jaggery, rice, copra etc. *Arathi* is also waved

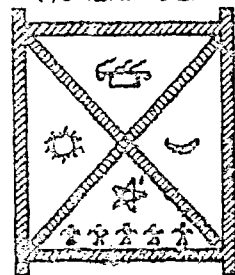
before her. The Cheluvadi or else the local leader disburses *Veelya* i.e. betel leaves and arecanut in a recognised order. In front of him lies the *Kalasha* which is placed on grains of rice or jowar strewn over a white cloth which itself is spread on a black blanket. The first *veelya* is earmarked for the King and called *arasana veelya* and the subsequent ones are *Taluka Veelya* i.e., for the taluk, *Nadgowdana veelya*, *Shetty chowdhuri* (leaders of Lingayat caste) *Veelya*, *Kattamane veelya*, *Kasabe Veelya* etc., in that order. All the assembled adults also get a *veelya*. Guests and invitees are feasted. On the following day, after the mid-day meal all the bridegroom's kinsmen except one or two depart for their respective homes.

At the bridegroom's house a pandal with four, nine or twelve pillars, is erected on the day previous to the marriage. By the side of the main door facing east or north, a *sase kotte* i.e. marriage booth is set up. This consists of a rectangular raised earth surface smeared with a red earth wash. On the adjacent wall certain designs are made in pieces of cloth or thread dipped in red paint. In this diagram are to be found the symbols representing the sun, the moon, *Bhasinga* and *Dandi* (marriage coronets for bridegroom and the bride respectively), and *Eidugitteru* i.e. five *muthaides*. The

(a) GABBUR



(b) JALAHALLI



form of the diagram varies from place to place but the content remains the same. In the morning itself the boy will have a shave. Thereafter he has a bath and dresses himself up in good clothes. This part of the ceremony is termed *Madu maganna maduvudu* i.e. making him a bridegroom. Similar ceremony for dressing up the girl takes place in her home. At Gabbur and Kyatnal another rite locally called *Guddiyag hoguvudu* was reported. In this the bridegroom wearing

dhotti and carrying a pitcher full of water (or else some grains of rice or jowar) called *Guddada magi* on his head, with garland and bouquet proceeds to the shrine of *Guddya* accompanied by some relatives, the entire procession being headed by a woman carrying a *kalasha*. There, the head of the family applies red earth to the deity, places the pot and the new clothes to be worn by the boy by the side of the deity and offers worship. Coconut, *holige* and rice are offered as *neivedyam* to the deity. After partaking of the consecrated food they would all return home making no noise. This appears to be the adaptation of a regional custom observed by several other communities in these two villages.

By evening the bride accompanied by her relatives arrives at the bridegroom's village. They are received by the groom's party and provided lodging. Their lodging house is termed *beedike mane*.

At Gurumitkal it is reported that soon after accosting the girl's people and providing facilities for their lodging a ceremony called *Yellamma chaka* or *Chaka chuttedi* as it is termed in Telugu, is held. For this, five *Basavis* of Madar (Madiga) caste are invited and they bring with them the idols and other articles representing the Goddess. These are placed in the pandal and after *pujas*, the couple accompanied by their parents go round them while the *Basavis* sing in praise of Goddess Yellamma. Each *Basavi* is given a 25 paise coin, some rice, copra and if acceptable cooked food also.

On the day of marriage, the first task is to appoint five *muthaides* and five married men to superintend the various ceremonies and ensure their performance in a proper manner. These persons are called *chaja maduvavaru*. Then the *muthaides* proceed to a potter's house in procession with the woman carrying the *kalatha* accompanied by music. They bring home *cairani* pots (4 pitchers, 4 small pots called *magi* and one big pot called *tayikoda*—mother's pot) in a ceremonial manner. The mother's pot is placed inside the house by the side of the altar of their family deity. The *muthaides* then fetch water in pots from a nearby well after offering *puja* to Gangamma. In the pandal, the four small pots brought from the potter are placed

in the four cardinal points enclosing a large imaginary rectangle and at the centre is placed a wooden pestle. Raw yarn is run around the pots five times. Then the bridegroom accompanied by his sister (or any other female relative) and the bride accompanied by her brother's wife (or any other female relative) circumambulate the rectangle formed by the raw yarn five times and place some grains in the small pots at the corner at the end of each round. *Kalashagittis* (women holding *kalashas*) also participate in going round the pots. Then all of them sit in a row on the pestle and are thereafter ceremonially bathed by the *muthaides*. New clothes are given to the couple and their aides, and *kankanas* are tied to their right wrists. The entire ceremony is known as *Suragi*, *Nceruminiyodu* or *Mayilapolu* (in Telugu). The bride's dress consists of a new saree usually of a reddish hue, a blouse, a white saree or a large piece of cloth called *Meldi* or *Melmusuka* used as veil and upper cloth, all ornaments except the *Tali* and a *dandi* (wreath of flowers) is fastened to her forehead. The bridegroom wears a new dhoty, a shirt, upper cloth, *pataga* (head gear) and *bhasinga* (marriage coronet). In his right hand he holds a knife with lime stuck to the tip.

Meanwhile one of the appointed men will have brought a twig of pipal, banyan or *basari* tree and fastened it to the main pillar besides the *Sase Kotte* i.e., marriage booth. This is called *halugamba* or milk post. As the *muhurtha* i.e., appointed time for tying the *tali* approaches the priest is sent for. The bridal couple are led separately to the marriage booth where they stand (in baskets containing some jowar or other grains) facing each other but separated by a cloth screen. The *tali* (gold pendant) necklace is placed in a copra-cup and shown round the assembly. The priest holding this in his hands chants some hymns. Then he hands it over to the bridegroom who, after the screen is removed, ties it round the neck of his bride putting three knots. In some places (e.g. Kushtagi) the couple are seated side by side when the *tali* is tied. At that moment the assembled persons throw rice or jowar grains on the couple. The couple then proceed to offer obeisance to the family deity and have a look at the light kept burning by the side of the *tayikoda* (mother-pot). All the guests and invitees partake of a dinner and those distant kin who wish would depart for their respective places.

For *Kastuiriya*, musk in the totem which they do not burn and simply use for worship at the time of marriages and other ceremonies. *Sannakkiyavaru* abstain from using small rice in preparing or cooking their food.

Towards the evening *Bhooma* ceremony is arranged. This consists mainly in the preparation and consumption of rice and *holige* with specified quantities of food stuffs (10 *seers* rice, 10 *seers* flour jaggery and pulses in proportionate quantities) by the men appointed earlier in the day. They will be dressed in wet clothes while cooking the food and when it is ready two *Gangalas* (dining plates) heaped with cooked food are placed before the images of the family deity. The food so consecrated (and also the remaining portion cooked for *Bhooma*) is then consumed by the five *muthaides*, and five men (*chaja maduvavaru*) who are conducting the marriage ceremonies properly, the couple and the two women who have been holding the *kalashas* since the commencement of the marriage celebrations. One among them termed, temporarily, *pujari* serves the food and all men eat from one dining plate while all women eat from the other. Nobody is allowed to look on while this *Bhooma* eating is going on and the doors are invariably kept closed. They repeat the spell *Elu Kotigi, Elu Kotigi* quite often while eating. If any food remains it is buried in some convenient place outside the house. *Bhooma* is one of the essential ceremonies in a marriage and the custom is being handed down from generations unknown. It is prevalent at all the places visited during the field study. However, it is reported at Kushtagi town that due to the high cost the Byagaras have almost given up this custom since about 1955 or so.

In the evening or on the following morning the couple are taken to the temples in procession and on their way home they may call on the house of the village headman, Kulkarni etc. If the bride and groom are of a tender age they sit on a bull while going to the temple. Otherwise a bull is led with them. Ceremonies such as *Nagoli* which evoke some fun and provide entertainment to the assembled relatives take place on the following day and after *halu bhooma*, the *kankanas* are removed. The relatives of the bride receive a *byati* i.e., a sheep or a goat, and other food articles for their food which they cook there itself and soon after the mid-day meal they may proceed to their destinations leaving behind the bride and the woman carrying the *Kalasha*. In some places (e.g. Jalahalli) the girl also gets back with her parents.

A couple of days latter the bridegroom with his bride, his sister and the women who had been hitherto holding the *Kalasha* arrives at his in-laws house. Here he is properly received and seated on a pestle placed at the threshold. He is ceremonially bathed and this is called *Jambara* or *Varada neeru*. He is given new

clothes and presents. The bride is also similarly bathed. It is only after five such baths at intervals of a week he or she is free to move out of the village and attend to work in the fields. For the sake of convenience, the present tendency is to finish all the five ceremonial baths in one day. Each bath is supposed to be complete when he gulps a piece of jaggery. The bridegroom stays for 2 or 3 days with his new kin and receives good food and affectionate treatment. He returns with his wife who a few days later however gets back to her parental home. Again for the *Nagamase* i.e., *Nagara Panchami* festival the wife comes to her husband's home and the newly weds pour fresh milk on the image of cobra. If she is already mature she stays on in her husband's family. Otherwise, sometime later she again gets back to her parents. She finally joins her husband after the consummation ceremony.

Though divorce is a socially approved practice among Byagaras, it is resorted to only in extreme circumstances when other methods at reconciliation fail. In some places, it is said a document annulling the marriage is also prepared. Most of the Byagaras are not aware of the fact that the Hindu Marriage Act now in force makes polygamy an offence and they are also not aware that the minimum age for marriage is 18 for boys and 16 for girls.

(c) Death

Continued illness and oldage are the two causes they accept as natural for death. Sudden and violent deaths prompt them to consult supernatural elements for a proper explanation of the occurrence. As already pointed out they believe in ghosts, spirits and witchcraft. The concepts of reincarnation, sin and consequent punishment in the next birth are familiar to them. When a person is about to die, his head is usually held on the lap of one of his sons and water is poured into his mouth by his kin. After death the corpse is washed in warm water by one of his relatives and dressed in clean clothes including a *pataga* (headgear). If the deceased is a woman, then her female kin attend to the washing and dressing of the corpse. A new saree, usually bought for the occasion by her parents or brothers, covers her person and a *dandi* (wreath of flowers) adorns the back of her head. According to the prevailing custom among Byagaras her husband should discard the *ududara* (waist-string) he had been wearing till now. The forehead of the corpse (both male and female) is marked with *Vibhuti* (sacred ash) and vermilion powder and a flower garland adorns the neck. The corpse is then seated crosslegged on the floor with its back against the wall, its head being supported in position by a piece of cloth fastened tightly to a *gootu*—i.e. peg

driven in the wall. If the wife survives the deceased, she ties a *kankana* (wristlet) to his wrist and waves a *kalasha* before him.

The dead are buried, the unmarried in a lying posture and the married in a seated posture. The dead bodies of a pregnant woman, a woman dying soon after child birth, and of a leper are cremated. At Jalahalli it was reported that the corpse of a leper is usually thrown into the river. In several villages and towns the Byagaras have a separate grave yard. The corpse is disposed of during daytime and never after dusk.

The corpse is laid in a *padya* (gunny cloth) or in a *kavadi* (patchwork coverlet) or sometimes, in a bamboo bier and carried by any four male members of the caste. The face of the corpse is covered by a piece of new cloth. The chief mourner, usually the eldest son carries in front, an earthen vessel containing some cooked food and another metallic or earthen vessel containing water. The practice of carrying cooked food has been given up in some places, (for e.g. Gurumitkal, Kyatnal and Kushtagi) during the past 10 to 15 years in imitation of the custom prevalent among the local Lingayat community. The Madigas—the drummers of the village—are said to refuse, in most of the places, service to Byagaras on the funeral occasions. Soon after crossing the *agashi bagila* i.e., the main entrance to the village, the funeral party halts, when the corpse is lowered and the chief mourner breaks the pot containing cooked food. The bearers exchange places and the procession is resumed. Soon after reaching the graveyard the pit is sanctified by the sprinkling of water and the corpse is lowered. The face is oriented towards the east or south. The close-kin start filling the earth, slowly removing the clothes covering the corpse. Even the waist-string is taken off as it is believed that a corpse buried with any remnants of old garment soon turns a ghost. The *pataga* (headgear) removed from the corpse is placed on the head of his eldest son or in his absence on the youngest, by some elderly kinsmen. On the grave a few coins are strewn. These coins, called *nelakki* or *nelagraha rokka*, are taken by the Byagara grave diggers. Then the chief mourner circumambulates the grave thrice (in some places, five times) simultaneously dropping water from the metallic vessel brought by him. The past practice was to carry an earthen pot for the purpose and the recent shift to the metallic vessel is said to be mainly due to the efforts of Byagaras to conform to the practices prevailing among Lingayats. A stone slab is placed on the grave and in some places e.g. Jalahalli, the Lingayat *Mathapathi* stands on it

and the chief mourner washes his feet. Then he blows the conch to signify the conclusion of the funeral. After everyone, excepting one or two elderly women, departs from the graveyard, the widow of the deceased removes her bangles and other auspicious marks and ornaments.

The participants in the funeral return to the house of the deceased and as they approach the house they either sprinkle some water over their bodies (supplied by some members who did not take part in the funeral) or else dip their left big toe in the water contained in a dish made out of cowdung and placed close to the house where death has occurred. An oil lamp burns at the spot where death has occurred. The participants in the funeral have a look at the lamp and make obeisance to it before departing.

On the third day a rite known as *mooru koola* is performed. In this, various dishes cooked at home are taken and placed on the grave for the spirit of the dead. The relatives wait till some crows consume it. There are some regional variations. At Gurumitkal a similar, though not identical rite is performed on the fifth day while at Kyatnal no such rite is held. At Kyatnal it is reported that when once the corpse is disposed of none visits the grave and in fact the people in general are very much afraid to move about in the vicinity of the graveyard particularly during the dark and when alone. Again at Gabbur, it is the *Mata-pathi*—priest—who carries with him *pancha kajjaya*—(puffed rice, fried gram, jaggery, copra and *gasagase*) and places it on the grave after turning the stone on the grave upside down.

On the ninth day (or even on the fifth or the eleventh day according to one's convenience) the most important funerary rite known as *divasa maduvudu* is performed in the house of the deceased. Till this rite is done, all the members of the household and the close agnatic kin are considered impure. The chief mourner (i.e. eldest son) will have his head shaved on this day. The entire house and the household articles are cleaned and cow's urine is sprinkled all over for purification. After bathing (in some places) the members of the household gulp a few drops of *padodaka*—water with which the feet of a Lingayat priest are washed. The old cooking pots in the family are replaced by new ones. In the house, at the spot where death has occurred, the washed clothings of the deceased are folded and kept. In front of these materials a large banana leaf is spread and dishes served. If possible, the heirs of the deceased give away some gifts in kind or a little cash to the *Dasa* or a *Cheluvali*. Then fol-

lows a funerary feast in which at least one member from each of the Byagara house in the village participates. The bearers of the corpse and those engaged for digging the grave are also invariably present. The food laid for the spirit is later consumed by the sons of the deceased. This feast concludes the funeral rites. For persons dying at a tender age and of unmarried status no funeral rites are performed.

Byagaras are not in the practice of performing *Shraddhas* i.e. death anniversaries. In some places, however, on the *Mahalaya amavasya* i.e. New moon day in the month of *Bhadrapada*—(September-October) a simple ceremony is held for feeding the spirits of the ancestors. The first *Mahalaya* following the death in a house is performed by offering *pauja* to a pot full of water. The widow may also perform this *pauja* though it is generally the prerogative of the son. Sweet dishes such as *holige* are prepared and offered first to the spirits of the ancestors and then served to all members of the household. In a few places on every *amavasya* (new moon day) a pot, full of water topped by a cocoanut, is worshipped and then food cooked out of that cocoanut is consumed by the members. To ward off the evil effects of deaths at inauspicious moments, gifts of grain and cloth are given and sometimes, premises are vacated for specified periods on advice from knowledgeable persons. Construction of memorials for the dead are occasionally met with. At Kushtagi a *samadhi* i.e. a memorial has been set up for one Basappa Pujari of Kelsapur village by his well-off daughters.

Byagaras have vague conception of pollution. The pollution on death is said to last till the performance of *Divasa* ceremony but members in pollution are found to observe little or no restrictions either in the matter of food or work. However, they do not, during the period of pollution enter the houses of their caste-men, nor do they accept from them cooked food. Pollution is removed by mere bathing on the ninth day but a few in imitation of the Lingayat customs, sip *padodaka*.

IX. RELIGION

Byagaras are Hindus and have strong leanings towards the tenets of the Veerashaiva or the Lingayat faith. They consider Lord Shiva as their Supreme Deity but yet show equal reverence to Lord Vishnu and his various manifestations. They offer worship to Hanuman. Goddesses such as Yellamma, Maramma, Durgamma, etc., are equally important to them and periodic offerings are made. The gods and goddesses worshipped by the Byagaras are in no way different

from those worshipped by the other local Hindu castes. For Byagaras of Gurumitkal, Bheemaraya of Madhupalli village and Malliah of Mailapur village are the family deities and for those residing in Jalahalli the family deities are Ranganatha and Yellamma. At Gabbur these people worship Malliah of Mailapur and Hanumantha of Thimmapur as their family deities. It is thus observed that the family deities usually vary from clan to clan residing in a particular village. They also worship the other village Goddesses such as Bangaramma, Marugemma, Devamma, Gajalamma, Durgemma and Huligemma etc., at the local shrines not to speak of their visiting other important temples as well in the neighbourhood. An annual fair is held in honour of Ranganatha at Jalahalli which Byagaras attend in quite large numbers. The Byagaras do not enter most of these local temples maintained by Hindus. They stand outside and make their offerings through the temple ministrants. In some places the Byagaras have built their own shrines for Durgamma, Huligemma and such other deities. Serpent worship is also common among them. In some houses idols of their family Gods may be seen. Every house, even if there be no idols normally contains a *Devvara Gadduge* or God's altar, and close to it will be found a niche in which an oil lamp is lighted while *pūja* is offered. In the absence of idols the Byagaras offer worship to a *kalasha* i.e. a pot filled with water with betel or mango leaves and a cocoanut in its mouth. Wherever the Byagaras have their own temples, they organise *Bhajans* (singing of devotional songs in chorus) during the month of *Shravan* (August). On the final day *Bhajan* is performed all through the night and it is customary to invite on the occasion caste-fellows of the neighbouring villages.

The important festivals observed by the Byagaras are *Nagara panchami*, *Karhunnime*, *Yellamase* and *Sankramana*. On the occasion of Nagarpanchami (July-August) cobra or serpent God is worshipped and this is specially important for the newly weds. Karhunnime (during June) is a community festival of the village. Cows and bullocks as also the God's altar are worshipped and sweet dishes prepared. In the evening two or three bullocks break through a festoon of neem leaves held across the *agashi* or the main entrance of the village. The remnants of these neem leaves are greatly valued and are tied to the necks of other bullocks of the village. During *Vijaya Dashami* (October) the Byagaras participate in the community festival of exchanging *hamni* (*prosopis spicigera*) leaves. *Yellamase*, which comes off in December, is celebrated by offering *pūja* to the family Gods at home, and to five pebbles in the field representing Pandavas, and to

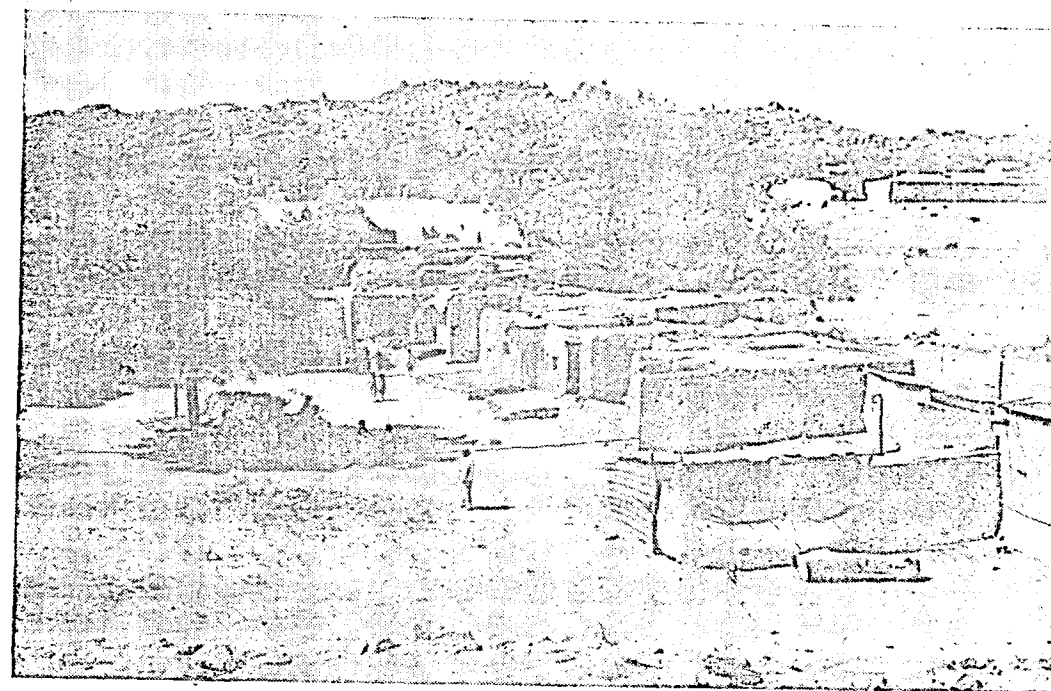
mother earth. *Holige* is the main dish for the day and a few *holiges* are buried in the fields perhaps as a token of thanks-giving. On the occasion of *Makara Sankramana* in January cakes of bajra flour mixed with til are prepared in each home, and after *pūjas* to family Gods, brothers and agnatic cousins partake of the *prasadam* (consecrated food). A dip in river, if nearby, is considered holy. If Mohuram is celebrated in the village, the Byagaras offer sugar to the martyrs. They also celebrate the various agricultural festivals common to the village.

X. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Byagaras are mostly a labour class toiling from dawn to dusk for a bare living. They have very little time to relax. Children sometimes play indigenous games with cloth balls, marbles, tops etc. Boys occasionally play kabaddi. In games they are segregated, and not allowed to mix with other caste groups. Men and women, while away their leisure in gossip. The periodical community festivals in the village such as *Karhunnime*, *Panchami*, *Dussera* etc., are the only occasions which provide them a break in their monotonous life. They visit several of the fairs and car festivals in and about their villages. At several places they have established *Bhajan Mandali* or prayer houses at which devotional songs are recited by periodical congregation. During *Shravan*, *Akhanda Bhajan* i.e., singing of devotional songs all through the night, is organised to which Byagaras of nearby villages are invited. Such intervillage meets helps to promote healthy rivalry in singing.

Occasionally in villages with a moderate to heavy concentration of Byagaras, *Bailata* or open-air drama with some mythological theme is staged. A few enthusiasts voluntarily combine to put on the show. At Gurumitkal in 1964 the Byagaras enacted the drama "*Raja Manimalla Shoora*". During April 1967, the Byagaras of Kyatnal staged *Indrajit Kalaga*. No such activity is reported from Gabbur and Jalahalli. The participants themselves have to pay the hire of dress and scenery. But appreciation comes to them in the form of gifts, both cash and kind.

The Byagaras witness *Bailatas* in their village and also in the neighbourhood. They patronise touring cinemas and circuses which come during fairs. If fairs are organised in the village the Byagaras perform such menial tasks as the splitting of wood and the bearing of lights for the deity's procession etc., and derive thereby a sense of participation. Members of the other castes in the village contribute in cash or kind for the



1. A view of the houses inhabited by Byagaras—Deodurg

I. BYAGARA



2 (a). Full-length portrait of a Byagara male



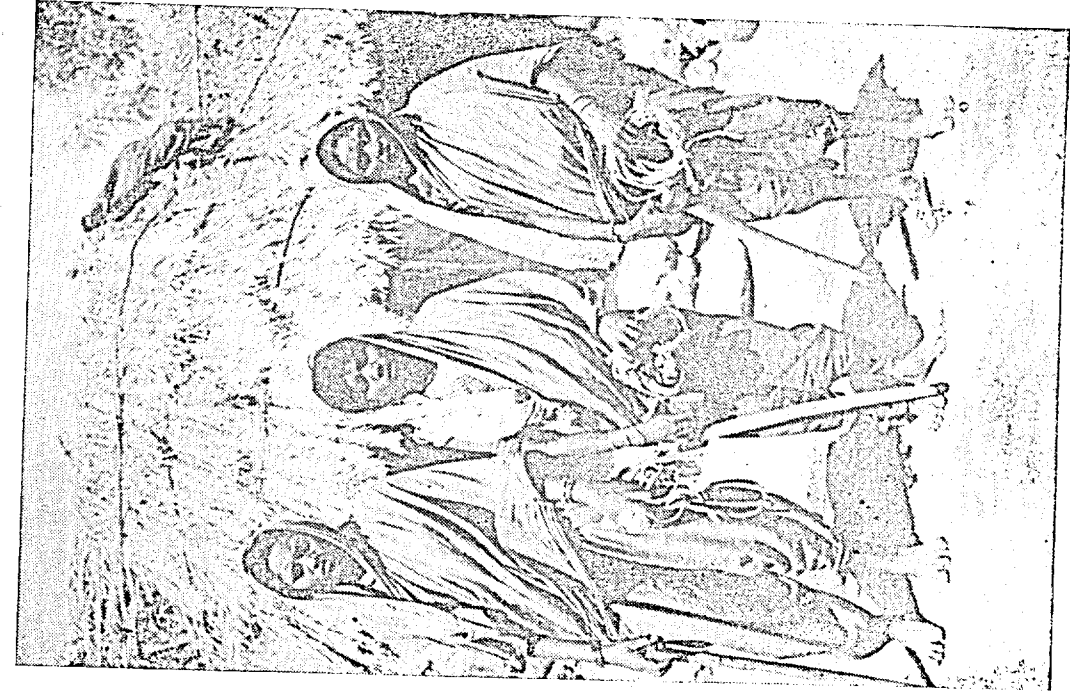
3 (b). Front-view (close-up)



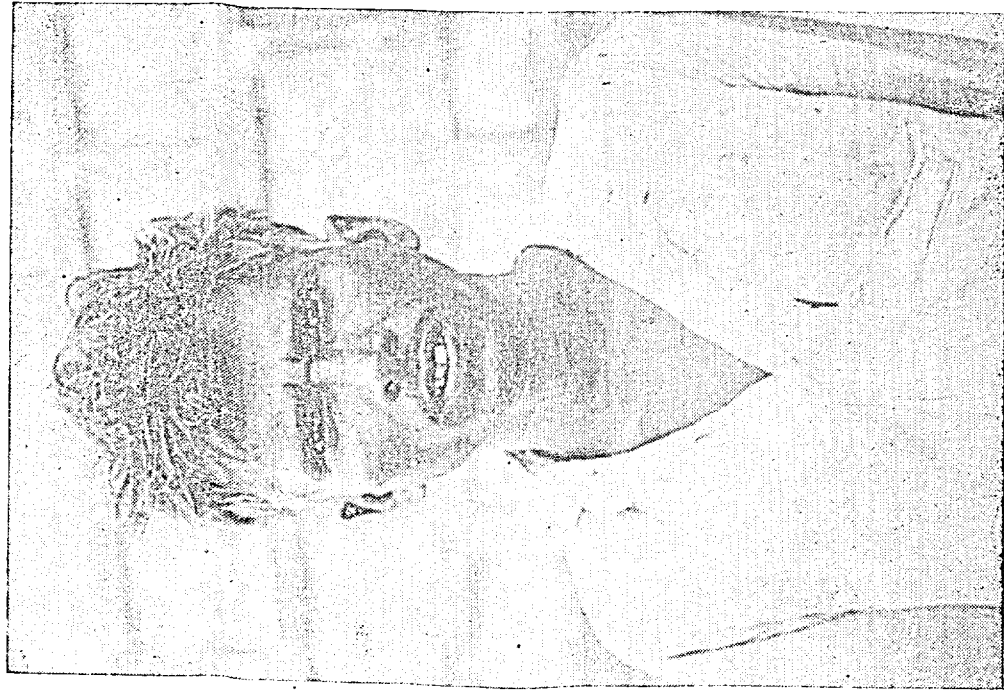
3 (c). Profile



3 (d). As viewed from behind



4. Byagara women in their working dress



2 (b). Front-View (close-up)

24 (b)

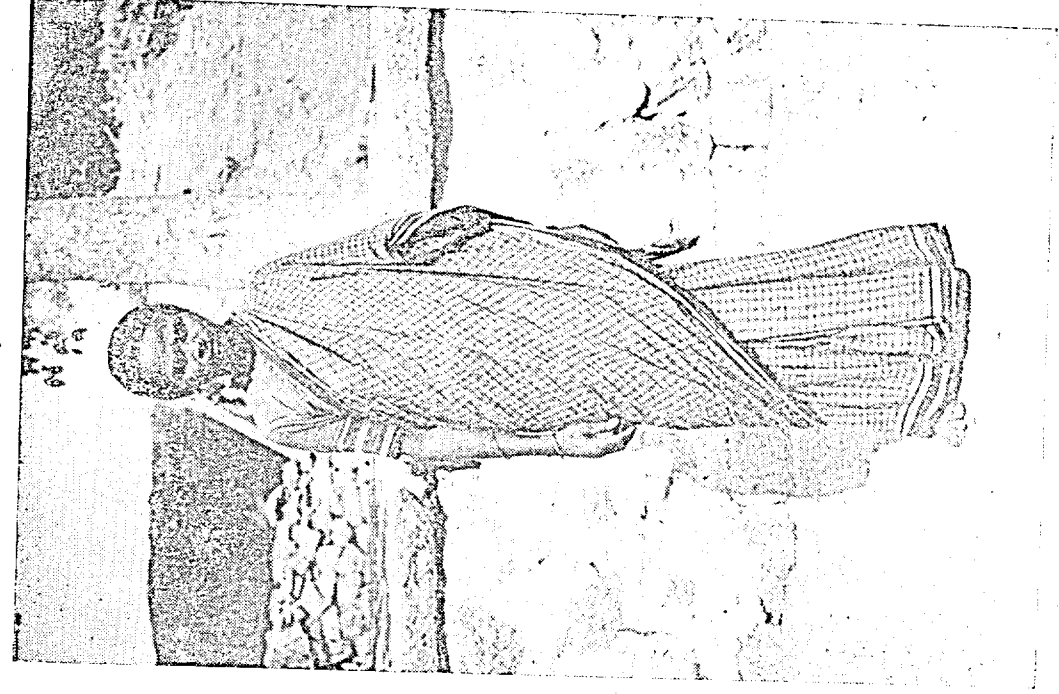


2 (c). Profile



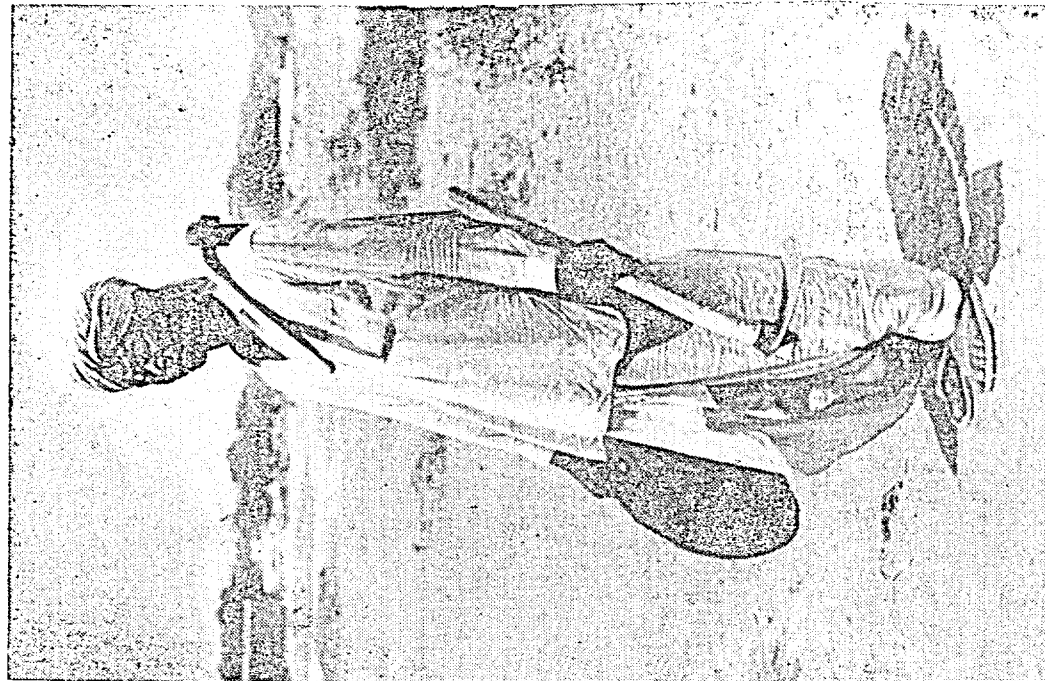
2 (d). As viewed from behind

24 (c)



3 (a). Full-length portrait of a Byagara female

24 (f)



5. Worker with the equipment for digging a grave

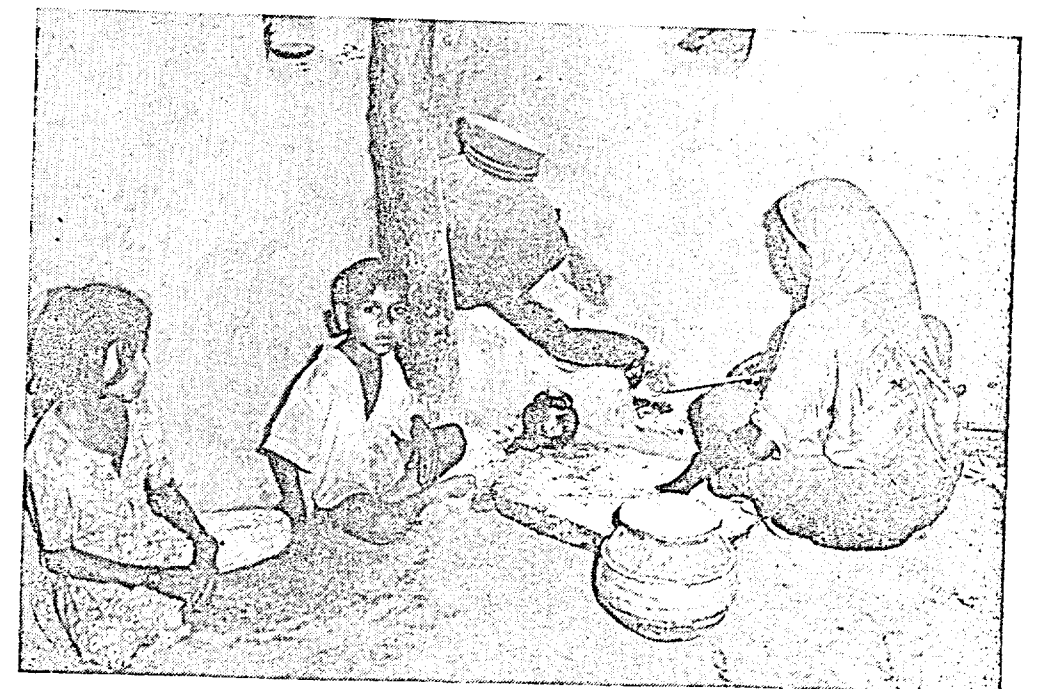
24 (g)



7. Household articles

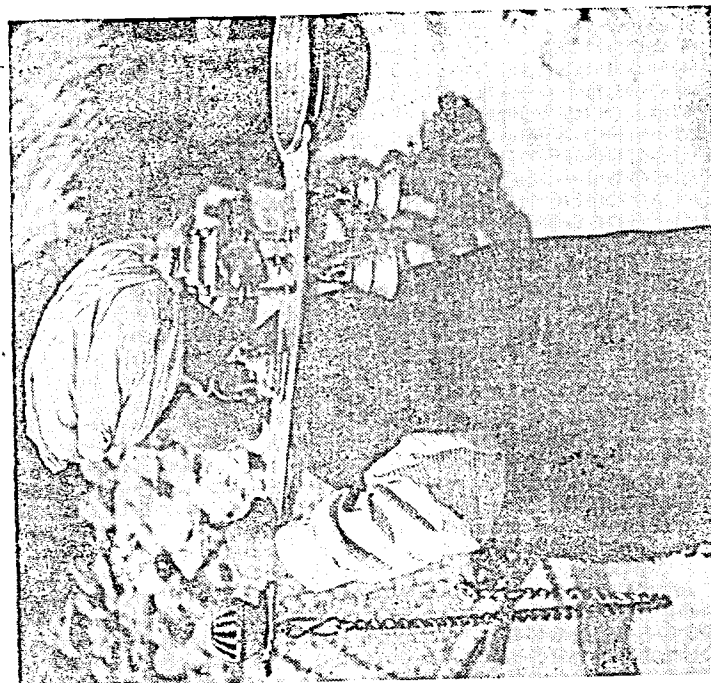


6. Mendicants singing in praise of Yellamma to the accompaniment of *Chowdki* and *Bhairki*

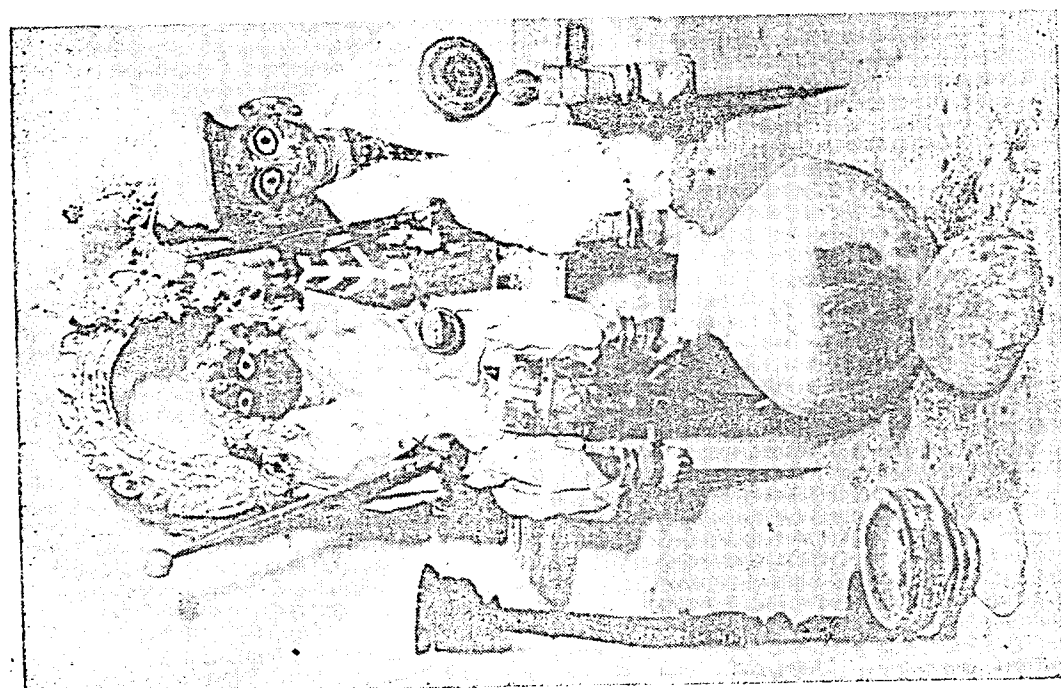


8. The kitchen scene

24 (h)



10. Bell and ladle happens to be the insignia of the office of Chalavadi—The headman of Byagaras



9. Idol of Marigemma in a shrine at Deodurg

fair. There would be community feasting on these occasions. The Byagaras and Madars (Madiga) are the last to be served.

Some men and women know several folk-songs, but these are sung only on special occasions such as marriages, and when the threshing of jowar is in progress. They do not have any distinctive musical or percussion instruments of their own. They use such instruments as *Ekathana*, *Dammadi*, *Dimma* and symbols which are common for the region. They have no tradition of folk-dances or any other form of recreation specially characteristic of their community.

XI. RELATION AMONG DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

Byagaras constitute a homogeneous group having no recognised segments based on territorial, sectarian, rural-urban, residential and other factors. Despite their fairly wide spatial distribution they are bound together by strong caste feelings and are well aware that in several areas they are known as Holers, Chaluvadimakkalu, Kotegar, Padevar etc. Social interaction normally takes place among people residing in close proximity. The urban and rural sections have an amicable relationship and maintain close social intercourse. The educated are only a few but yet they unreservedly identify themselves with the rest of the community. Their attainments are respected and they are also a source of inspiration to aspiring youngsters. Their parents and relatives gloat over their progress.

At several places they are found to have become alive to the fact that pursuit of their demeaning occupations has been the cause of their degradation. A perceptible change is seen in the offing. Removing the dead cattle and eating of carrion are being totally abandoned. At Jalahalli, a section of the Byagaras who are engaging themselves as sweepers are socially boycotted for the last 15 to 20 years. The situation appears to threaten with the consequence of a relatively inferior segment within the community making its appearance in course of time.

XII. INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Byagaras occupy a low social status in the village community. They are denied the services of Brahmin priests, village barbers, and village washermen. The actual disabilities other than religious, suffered by them are many. It is, in many places, customary for these people to be denied access to common wells or tanks used by other castes. In such

places if no separate well or a water source exists for them they should have their pitchers filled by upper caste Hindus. Places of worship, choultries, *dharma-shalas* etc., built from private funds are virtually shut out to them. They are not allowed to enter shops run by caste Hindus. In residential houses they are permitted to enter the cattlesheds only, but not the living rooms. While the upper caste Hindus sit on the *Katte* or pials, the Byagaras, conscious of their own backwardness, stand at a distance in all humility or else squat on the floor. Brahmins and other high castes consider the touch of a Byagara defiling. Though there is no restriction to Byagaras moving freely on the streets, the Brahmins, Lingayats and others do not enter *Byagara Oni* i.e. the street of Byagaras. In tea-shops and hotels, they are segregated and have to eat in vessels set apart for the inferior castes.

Byagaras do not call upon the services of Brahmin priests. They are affiliated to Lingayats and consequently require Lingayat priests to conduct their ceremonies. While Jangams of the highest order offer services to Lingayats, the Byagaras are served by the lesser Matapathis, that too only on occasions of marriage. But even this is not universal as in many places no other priest serves them except their own casteman.

In the post-independence period sustained efforts are being made by Byagaras to undo the wrong so far done to them and to assert their rights enshrined in the Constitution. Round about 1961 the Byagaras and Madars of Deodurg town along with their caste-fellows in adjacent villages tried to force entrance into hotels demanding equal treatment for them. After some protracted efforts by local leaders their demand was conceded and all public places in the town are now open to them. However, they have voluntarily refrained from entering the places of worship. Encouraged by this success, the Byagaras of Jalahalli launched a similar campaign during 1964. The peaceful resistance offered by the hoteliers and other caste groups scotched this move. A few months later an incident occurred at Jalahalli. A Byagara boy during his visit to a relative at the place, entered a barber's shop for a hair-cut. The barber, while cutting the hair casually enquired his whereabouts and his caste. Immediately on being told that he was a Byagara the boy was expelled, though his haircut was incomplete. This created a sensation and the local Byagaras went to the barber with the boy and, pleading his ignorance, made a request to complete the haircut. The barber did not oblige until the police came on the scene. As a pro-

test, all barber's shops in the village were closed for a fortnight and during this period the caste-Hindus were given home service. Normalcy was restored only after an assurance by the Byagaras that they would not forcibly assert their rights. At Gabbur which is also quite close to Deodurg and equally large, the Byagaras appear to acquiesce in their status. In 1965 Byagaras and Madars of Kushtagi fought for entry and equality of treatment in hotels. After intervention by caste Hindu leaders and some negotiations the matter was amicably settled and they are now allowed to enter all public places, and also, barbers and washermen have ceased to discriminate against them. In this town they have not so far insisted on entering places of worship. In several villages they have their own shrines dedicated to Durgavva, Yellavva and such other deities and they also offer worship to other local Gods and Goddesses through priests of higher castes.

It may generally be observed that the traditional pattern of behaviour still clings fast though in towns and large villages efforts are being exerted to improve their social position by abjuring unclean and demeaning habits. They are a minor group in the villages and are economically and socially backward. They have greater affiliation with Lingayats but bear no animus towards other local castes. In some places they claim superiority over the Madigas resulting in occasional rubs. To cite an example at Jalahalli the Madiga drummers do not serve Byagaras on funeral occasions and in retaliation the Byagaras refuse to dig graves for Madigas. Several villages round about Jalahalli have taken this lead.

XIII. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The institution of caste panchayat which, at one time, exercised effective social control at the village and regional levels though now weakened is yet seen to leave its discernable traces at several places. The eldest male member used to be the head of the household and all such elders constituted a caste-council at the village level. Their headman would be either the Cheluvadi or some other person termed *Yajaman*. This office was hereditary subject to acceptance by the generality of people in the caste. Villages with relatively large numbers of Byagaras were treated as the headquarters of a *Kasaba* and the Yajaman at this level exercised control over about half a dozen smaller villages. Several such *Kasabas* came under the jurisdiction of a *Kattemane* which had its own headman. It is said that Jalahalli *Kattemane* had under its jurisdiction 25 villages while Mundargi had 35. Gabbur, Kallur, Kadalur and Chandrabandi formed *Kasaba*

headquarters in the past and the nearby villages viz., Maserkal and Hospete were the headquarters of *Kattemane*. *Gurumitkal* came under *Kanakurti kasaba* (in Andhra Pradesh). Kadechur *kasaba* and Yadagir *katte* reportedly exercised social control over Kyatnal. *Kushtagi* itself was the headquarters of a *Kattemane* with the *Cheluvadi* as its headman. At all these places, it is reported that the caste-council has not met either at the *Katte* level or at the *Kasaba* level since about 1945. The traditional machinery for social-control has thus become effete. However, the offering of *Peelya* (pan) to the respective *Kasaba* and *Kattemane* headman as a token of respect on occasions of marriage etc., still prevails.

Disputes are now resolved by influential and elderly caste people. In serious disputes village leaders intervene and Byagaras generally honour their decisions. The rigidity with regard to the observance of caste-rules is now considerably softened. Sanctions such as ostracism, levying heavy penalties etc., are no longer in vogue. Abilities rather than hereditary claims determine leadership.

As there is now reservation of seats to Scheduled Castes in electoral bodies Byagaras are coming forward to contest the elections. In Kushtagi one of the Byagara leaders is elected from an unreserved seat to the town Municipal council. They are thus seen to be slowly gaining strength.

XIV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

In the former days, the Byagaras being of extremely dirty habits and low level of culture remained totally neglected by the caste conscious Hindu Society. They not only removed dead cattle but ate carrion and indulged excessively in intoxicating drinks. They actively encouraged promiscuity among their womenfolk in the guise of dedicating girls to goddesses. During the past two decades or more some of their leaders have come to realise that by giving up filthy habits their social status would elevate and better treatment would be assured to them at the hands of the Hindus. This has led to a strong movement for adopting Hindu ways of life and especially of Lingayats. They now prefer cultivation or casual labour to their own traditional occupation. In several areas by persuasion of a few local caste leaders they have abandoned eating beef and carrion. But the *basavi* system seems to die hard due to its economic implications. It is the opinion of the protagonists of the anti-Basavi movement that the response of the villagers is more encouraging than from the townsfolk. Economics rather than ethics have prevented many from taking intoxicating liquors.

No private agency is functioning in this region for the uplift of Byagaras. A few hostels and educational institutions are run by Christian missionaries, but enrollment is said to be restricted only to Christian converts. The Byagaras despise proselytization. Thus for economic betterment as well as furtherance of education they largely depend upon Governmental aid. During the past few decades some have been granted *Darakhast* lands, and cash grants have also been made for the purchase of cow or bullock, and for construction of houses. Boys at schools have been awarded scholarships. Considering the size of the community exclusive dependance on Government does not go far to improve their conditions. Voluntary organisations such as House-building Co-operative Societies etc., are now seen to be slowly coming up and it is by their own concerted efforts that they can achieve speedier progress.

XV. CONCLUSION

Byagaras are a functional division of the larger community of Holers. The difference lies solely in nomenclature, but not in social intercourse. Their one-

time traditional occupation of forced labour is no longer in evidence. They continue to attend to their other traditional tasks of digging graves, sweeping village streets (in some areas only) and removing dead cattle etc. Efforts of their leaders to ameliorate the conditions have been slow to catch up. Economically they are a very backward caste. Though a small proportion of them cultivate owned lands, the bulk subsists wholly on agricultural or non-agricultural labour. They are not active in the spheres of trade and industry. The standard of literacy and education is slowly improving with a corresponding increase of those in salaried jobs. In their material culture they resemble caste-Hindus of the region except that their possessions are fewer and cheaper. They are affiliated to the Lingayat faith and imitate closely the customs, beliefs and practices of Lingayat neighbours. They also venerate the Brahmin priests but seldom indent upon their services. The social disabilities they were subjected to in the past are still lingering particularly in interior rural areas. Efforts are being made by their own leaders to inculcate cleaner habits in them so that they may appear less obnoxious to caste Hindus.

2. CHALVADI OR CHANNAYYA

I NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Chalvadis or Channayyas are found in significant numbers in Belgaum and Gulbarga Divisions of the Mysore State. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Lists) Modification order 1956 lists Chalvadi under Scheduled Castes in the districts of Gulbarga, Raichur and Bidar. Again, Chalvadi or Channayya is scheduled in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara. Further, with slight spelling variation CHALAVADI is scheduled in the district of South Kanara and Kollegal taluk of Mysore District. Though declared as Scheduled Caste in the Kollegal taluk of Mysore District and in South Kanara District, they are not returned from these areas during the 1961 Census. They are also a scheduled caste in certain parts of the States of Maharashtra, Madras, Gujarat, Rajasthan and in the whole of Andhra Pradesh. In the course of the field study, the Chalvadis of Belgaum, Bijapur and Dharwar Districts reported that Holers, Channa Holers and Channayyanavaru are the synonyms of their caste. But this is not admitted in parts of North Kanara and Bidar Districts. In Sirsi Taluk of North Kanara District, Chalvadis and Channayyas live as distinct groups with no commensalism regarding food and marriage. The Chalvadis treat Channayyas as inferior. The Chalvadis of Mundgod taluk in North Kanara District reported that Kote-gar is a synonym of this caste while Channa Holers or Channayyas is a distinct caste. In the predominantly Marathi speaking taluks of Khanapur and Chikodi in Belgaum District, they are identified with Mahars which is a Marathi equivalent of Chalvadis. Hasegars and Kahaleyavaru are some of the other terms by which they are called in some parts of Belgaum District.

The Holers in the Bombay Karnatak and the Hyderabad Karnatak areas prefer to call themselves Chalvadis or Chalavadis as a social stigma attaches to the word 'Holer'. The term 'Chalavadi' in its strict sense applies to a Holey who carries a brass ladle bearing the figure of a bull and a 'linga' under a cobra canopy on the occasions of the marriage and funeral processions of Lingayats. As he enjoys higher social status among his own caste people and also among others, the Holers appear to exhibit a preference to being called Chalvadis. As a functionary Chalvadis general-

ly abstains from liquor, beef and other degrading habits. He acts as a priest for his caste people and serves them in marriage and death ceremonies. According to R.E. Enthoven (1922) "Holeyas are bound together by a strong caste feeling. In the Karnatak their social disputes are settled by their headman, the Chalvadi, and some leading men of the caste and anyone who disobeys their decision is driven out". Even in the old Mysore State the Holey who performs these duties is called a Chalavadi. In a note on Kulwadis, Kulavadis or Chalavadis of the Hassan District in Mysore, Captain J.S.F. Mackenzie writes (Ind. At. II. 1873) "every village has its Holigeri—as the quarter inhabited by the Holers is called—outside the village boundary hedge. This, I thought, was because, they are considered an impure race, whose touch carries defilement with it. A Kulwadi whom I came across was carrying a brass ladle bearing the figure of a Couchant bull (Basava) and a lingam under a many headed cobra canopy. This ladle is carried around and filled with rice, money and betel on the occasions of marriages in those castes of which the insignia are engraved on the handle" (Thurston, 1909, Vol. II PP 339-42). "Chalvadis with a strength of 107 were found in all towns with a considerable Lingayat population. The Chalvadis have no sub-divisions and no surnames. The names of men and women are the same as those of the Lingayats. The Chalavadis' chief office is to carry the ladle and bell in front of Lingayat processions. They live by begging and on money distributed by Lingayats on festive and funeral occasions." (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. XXI, 1884, P. 190).

This field study extended to more than 10 places in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar, Gulbarga and North Kanara. In all the places visited people pleaded ignorance of the origin of their caste or of any legend surrounding it. They, however, claim descent from Channayya, a disciple of Sri Basaveshwara and that in consequence they say they are called Channayyas in some places.

The traditional occupation of Chalvadis is agricultural labour and one or two families in a village attend to carrying the ladle and the bell in front of the pro-

CHALVADI *OR* CHANNAYYA

cessions of Lingayats. They also attend to grave digging which is their traditional duty to the society. In some villages where there are no Madigas they also attend to flaying the skin of dead animals. The Chalvadis generally live isolated on the outskirts of villages and towns as they are considered untouchables. Their hamlet or the street where they live is called Holigeri while they themselves call it Chelvadikeri. This rigidity is now gradually weakening and Lingayats, Muslims and Madigas live in close proximity with them just separated by a broad path or road.

II. AREA WHERE FOUND

Chalvadis or Chalavadis are found in large number in the districts of Dharwar, Belgaum, Bijapur, North Kanara and Raichur. Their number is insignificant in Gulbarga district. They are not returned from Bidar district where perhaps they are enumerated as Holeyas. The largest number of Channayyas are returned from the North Kanara and Belgaum districts with a high concentration of them in Sirsi taluk. The Channayyas are a scheduled caste only in the Bombay Karnataka region. The Channayyas found in the taluks bordering Shimoga are said to be migrants from Shimoga district.

The population figures of the caste in various States where they are scheduled is as follows :

State	Persons	Males	Females
Andhra Pradesh	1541	780	761
Gujarat	16	8	8
Maharashtra	349	160	189
Madras	1	..	1
Rajasthan	..	Nil	..

	Total			Age groups					
				0-14		15-44		45+	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Chalavadis									
Rural	32518	16257	16261	8497	8458	9002	8984	2927	3290
Urban	8640	4169	4471						

Note: Age-group figures separately for rural and urban are not compiled during the 1961 Census.
* includes 2 males and 1 female of the group 'age not stated'.

The percentage of rural-urban distribution as seen from the table is 79% and 21%. The corresponding figures for the general population is 77.7 and 22.3. Hence the distribution of population of the Chalvadis

III. DEMOGRAPHY

The Chalvadis, including Channayyas number 41,158 of whom 20,426 are males and 20,732 females. There are 32,518 persons in rural areas and 8,640 persons in urban areas. In the Belgaum division comprising the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara their population is 35,860 made up of 17,768 males and 18,092 females. In the Raichur and Gulbarga districts of the Gulbarga division, their population is 5,298 consisting of 2,658 males and 2,640 females. The districtwise break-up is as under:

District	Total	Males	Females
(1) Belgaum	6619	3266	3353
(2) Bijapur	5848	2842	3006
(3) Dharwar	18214	8975	9239
(6) North Kanara	5179	2685	2494
(5) Gulbarga	354	181	173
(4) Raichur	4944	2477	2467
Total	41158	20426	20732

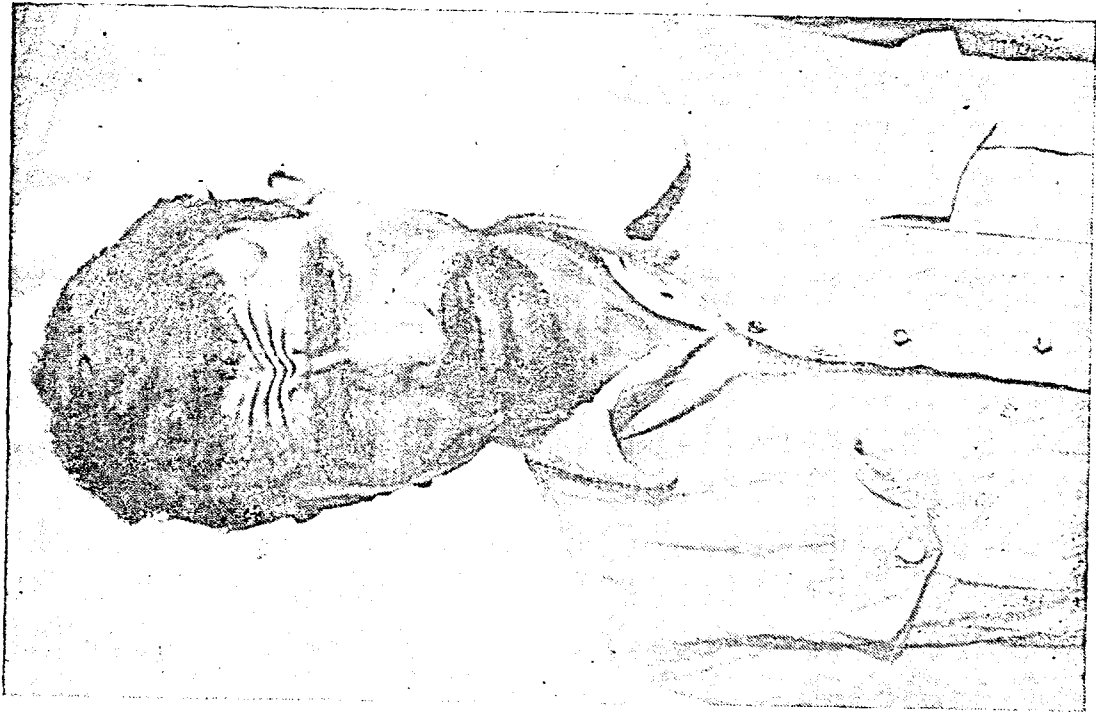
In Belgaum district they are concentrated in Khanapur and Chikodi taluks, and in Dharwar district they are to be found more in Ron taluk. It is not possible to make a study of their population trends as comparative figures for past censuses are not available. The territorial changes effected in 1956 consequent on States Reorganisation have further accentuated this difficulty.

The distribution of their population in 1961 by sex and broad age groups in rural and urban area is as follows:

closely follows the general pattern. The percentages of total population in three different age-groups of 0-14, 15-44 and 45+ are 41.25, 43.70 and 15.10+ respectively.

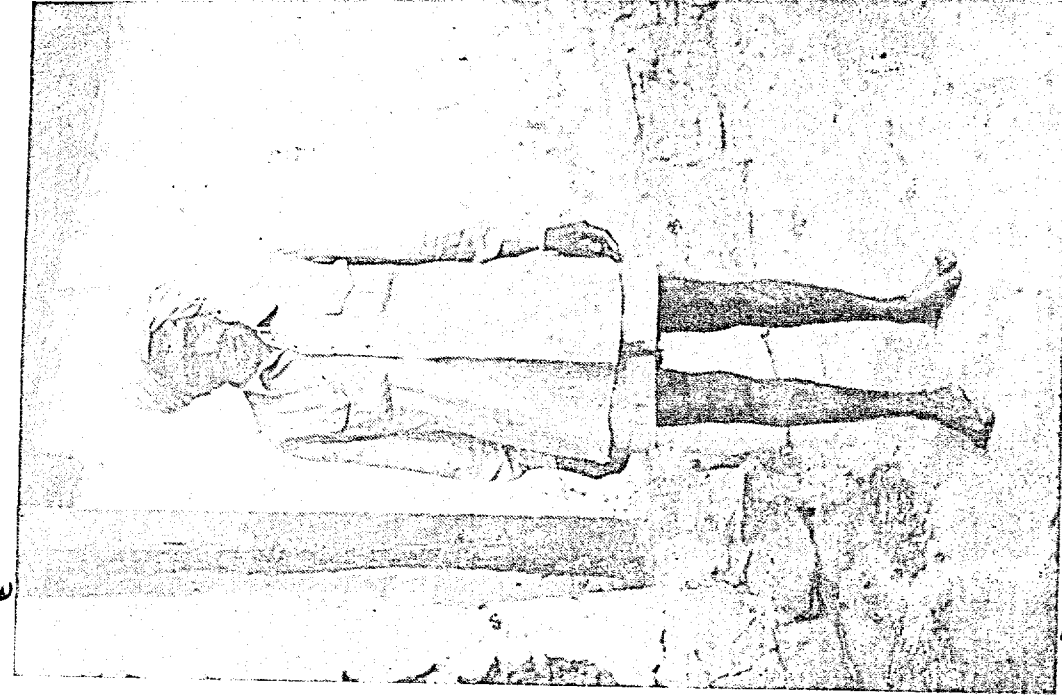


1 (b). Profile

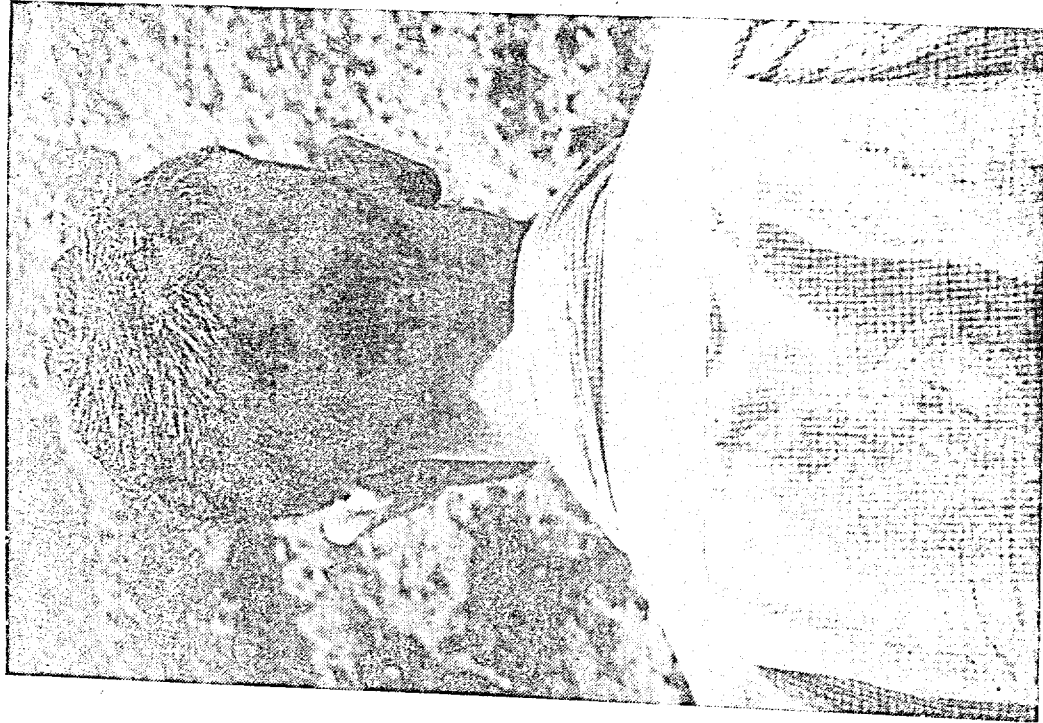


1 (a). Front view of a Chalavadi male

2. CHALAVADIS



1 (d). Full size



1 (c). As viewed from the back

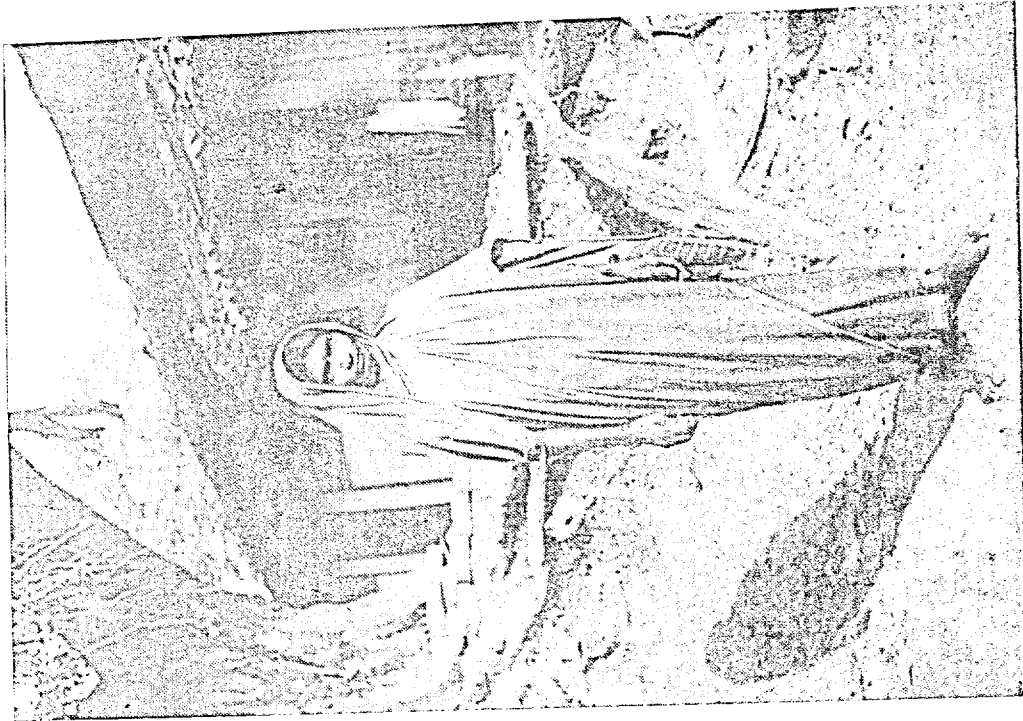


2 (b). Profile



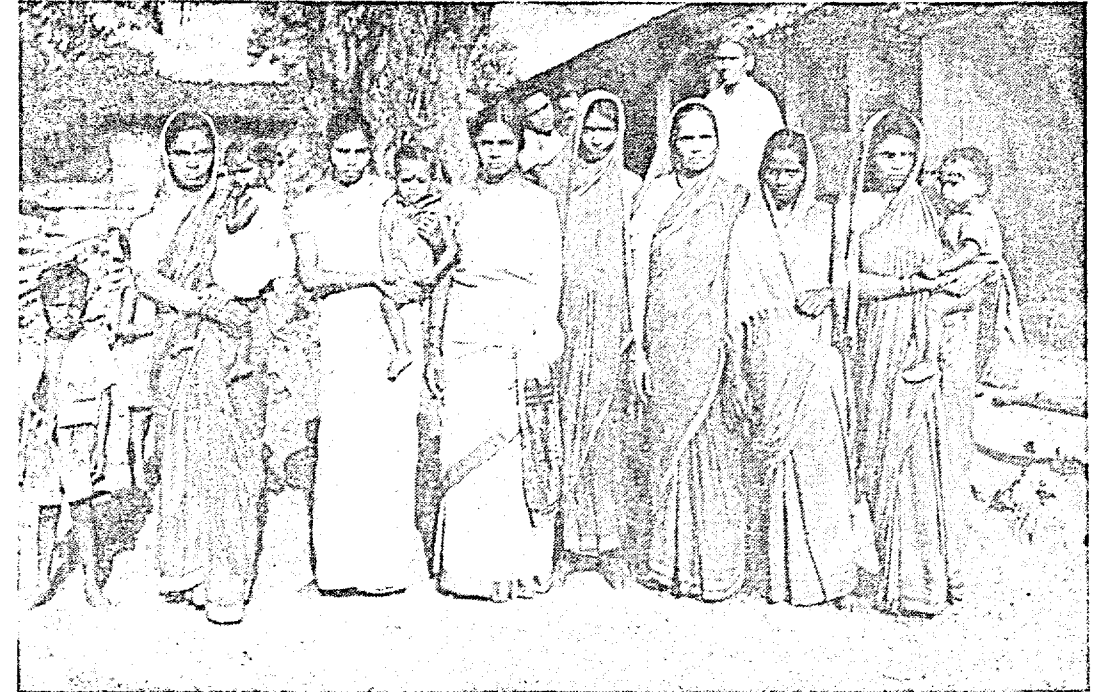
2 (a). Front view of a Chalavadi Female

32 (d)

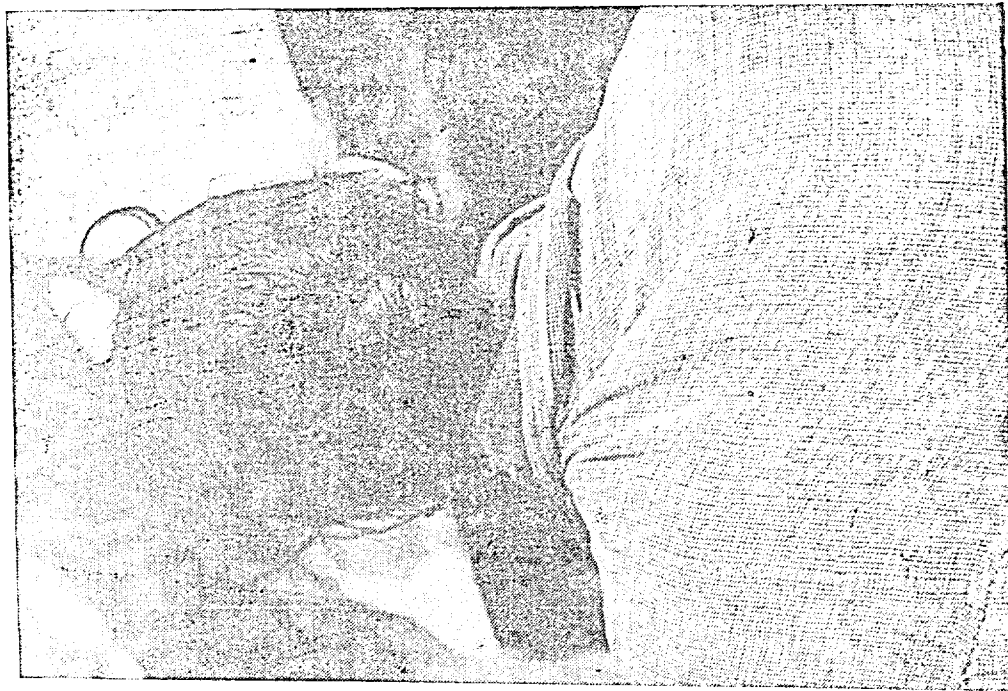


2 (d). Full size

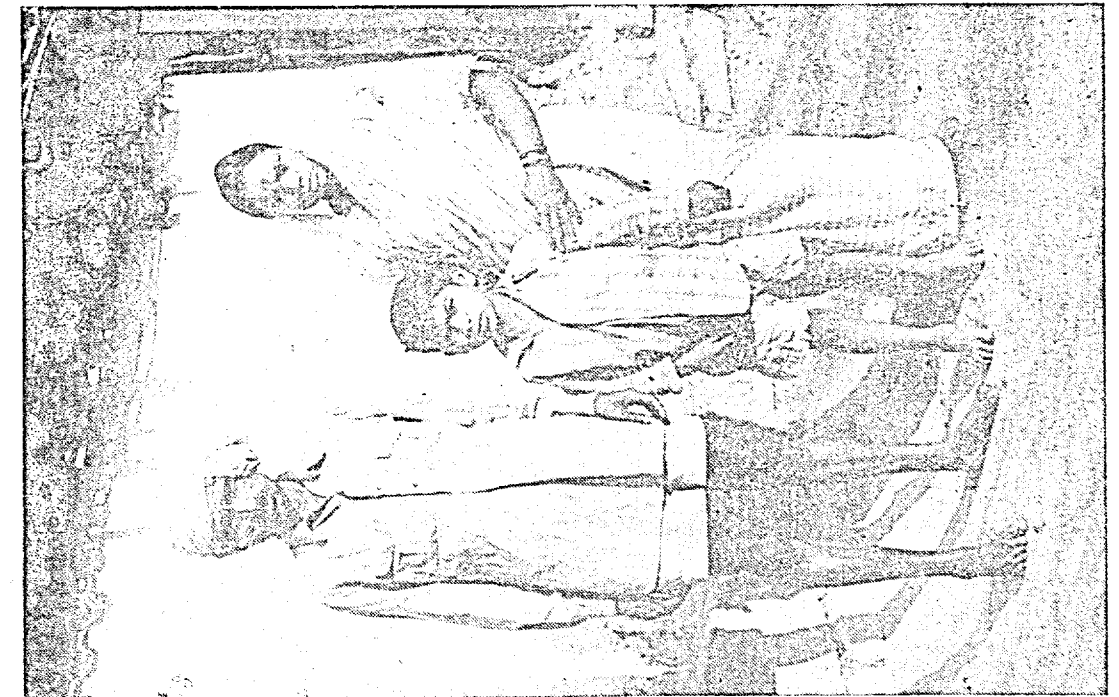
32 (e)



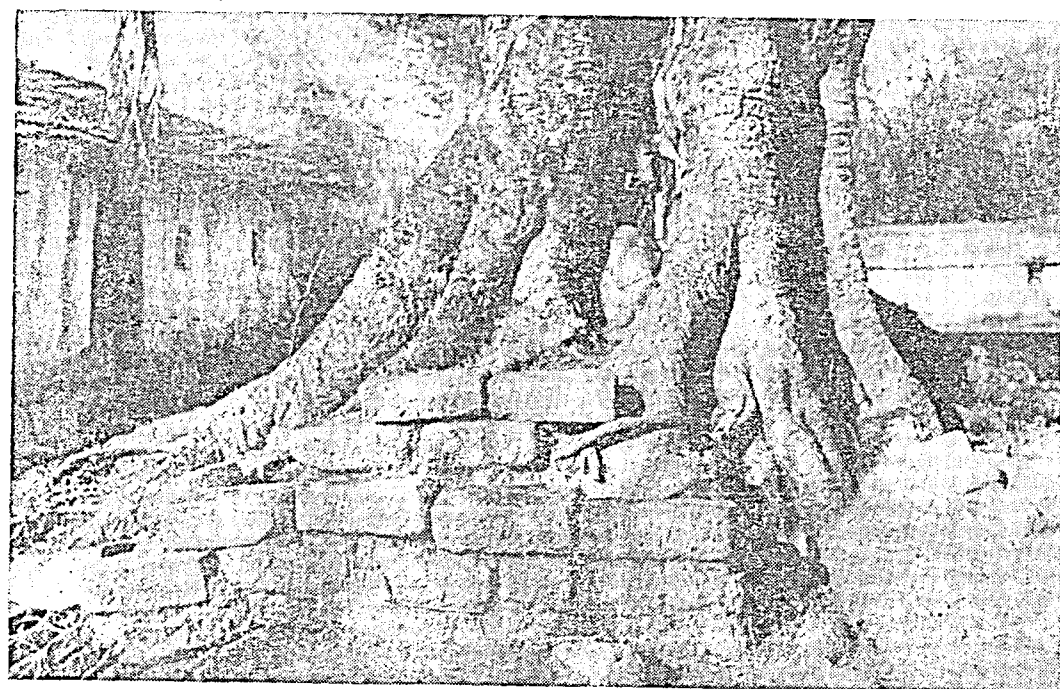
4. A group of females belonging to different age-groups



2 (c). As viewed from the back



3. Couple with a child



9. Object of common worship (a stone at the foot of the tree) representing Maremma

IV. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

They are a section of Holeyas. "Holeyas are dark middle-sized, muscular with fairly regular features. In their dress and ornaments they resemble the Mahars. Those of their women who are Basavis or prostitutes, unlike married women, wear rings on their great toes." (Enthoven, 1922, III, P. 75). "The men are dark and sturdy, middle-sized and dull of face and women much like the men except that they are regular featured." (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, XV, 1882, P. 365). "They are dark and like the Mahars only that they are less strongly made." (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, XXI, 1884, P. 190). Their physical features, dress, ornaments and daily life do not strikingly vary from other communities living in the region.

V. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Simple families are the more common among the Chalvadis. As the Chalvadis are mostly agricultural labourers and only a few own small plots of land barely sufficient to support extended families, joint family system offers them no more particular advantage. Hence a pronounced preference is to be noticed among them for nuclear families. They are patrilocal and patrilineal. Inheritance is through males only. The parents stay with one of their sons, usually the younger son, along with other unmarried children. Generally the married sons establish their own separate establishments within the course of one or two years after marriage. Joint families are to be found only among cultivators owning extensive lands. More than economic consideration it appears that it is the temperamental disagreement and a longing for independence that make them separate. The eldest male member, usually the father, is the head of the family. He is obeyed and respected. The mother is also highly revered, and she exercises a dominant role in marriages and other rituals. Even though the married sons separate after marriage they continue to live under the same roof, the house being shared equally among all heirs. The married daughters leave for their husband's houses within three or 4 months after marriage or soon after the consummation ceremony. Though the married sons and brothers live separately, they actively co-operate on occasions of marriage and death ceremonies. The family usually consists of husband and wife and unmarried children. The married sons who set up separate families are assisted by the parents, brothers and father-in-law. The married daughters and sisters are usually invited to their parental houses once or twice a year on festive and ceremonial occasions. In times of crisis all the agnates unite to face it.

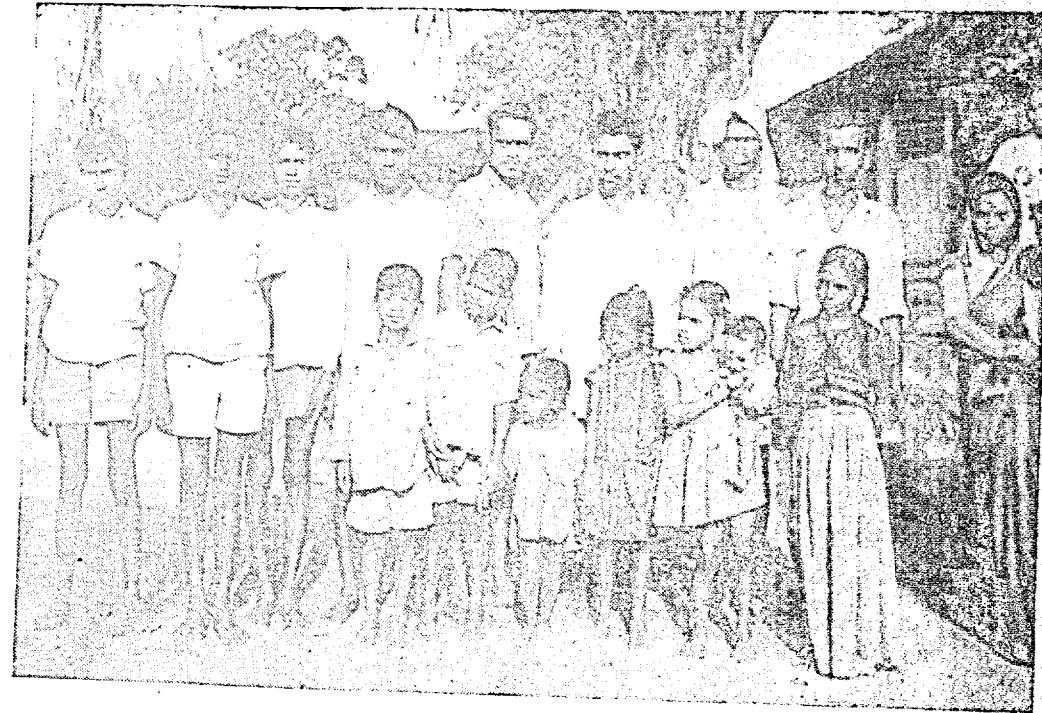
Ethnologists like E. Thurston. (1909), R. E. Enthoven (1922) and L. K. A. Iyer (1930) have treated Chalvadis not as a separate caste but as a functional group among Holeyas. According to Thurston one who carries a ladle and the bell in front of the processions of other castes is a "Chalvadi" R.E. Enthoven merely calls the headman of Holeyas a Chalvadi. An identical reference is made by L. K. A. Iyer also. However the gazetteers of the districts of Belgaum, N. Kanara, Dharwar and Bijapur treat Chalvadis and Holers as separate. According to the Gazetteer of Belgaum district "The Chalvadis have no sub-divisions and no surnames" (page 190). But at Nandgad in Khanapur taluk, surnames like Madar, Kahaler, Kamale or Camali were reported. It is not known whether they signify any sub-divisions though they have nothing to do with the taking of wives. Excepting agnatic relatives, marriages are essentially between members belonging to different exogamous units. The various exogamous units locally going by the name of *Kula* or *Bali* or *Bedagu* are *Kari Kambleru* or *Gongadeyavaru*, *Koriyavaru*, *Davaneru*, *Karisireru*, *Guttemmanavaru*, *Korellavaru*, *Honnabanni*, *Dorlara*, *Kasturiyavaru* *Sannikkiyavaru*, *Malaliyavaru*, *Kambaliyavaru*, *Javaladavu*, *Kanata Kudureyavaru* etc.

The members of the same '*Bedagu*' are considered descendants from a common ancestor. The totems of a *Bedagu* are held in high esteem and venerated. Though marriages are permissible between members belonging to different *Bedagus* alliances with unknown families are avoided. The sphere of their alliance is limited by usage to a particular area.

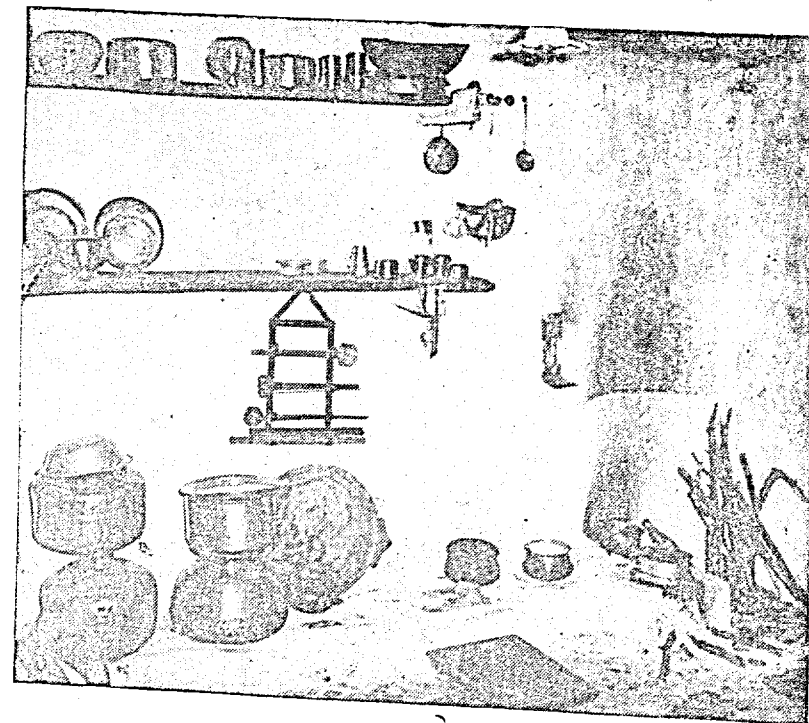
The pattern of their kinship follows the regional system. Their affinities and leanings are more towards the male agnatic than the female side. The maternal uncle, however, plays an important role in events touching the social and economic aspects of the family. He steps in as the head, if the father should prematurely die and takes responsibility for bringing up the children.

Cross-cousin marriages are prevalent and widely practised among them as in such other castes as Madigas, Mahars, Lingayats etc. Marriage with sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter is very common.

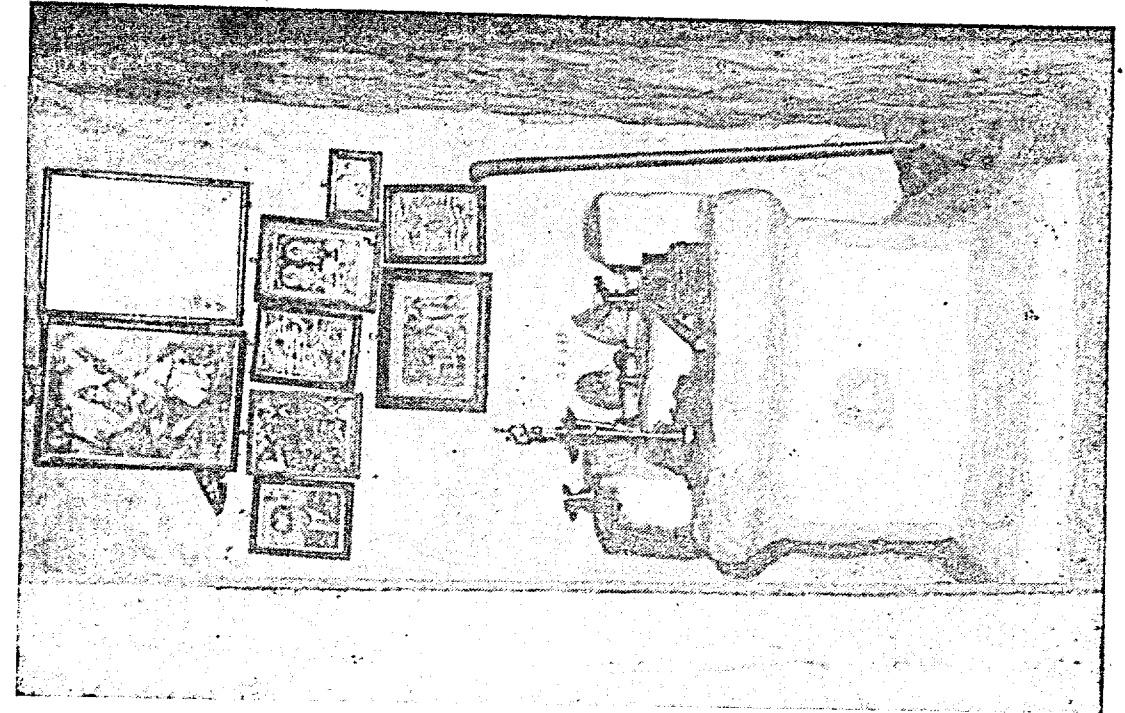
They follow Hindu law of inheritance. Males inherit property. Adoption is allowed and practised.



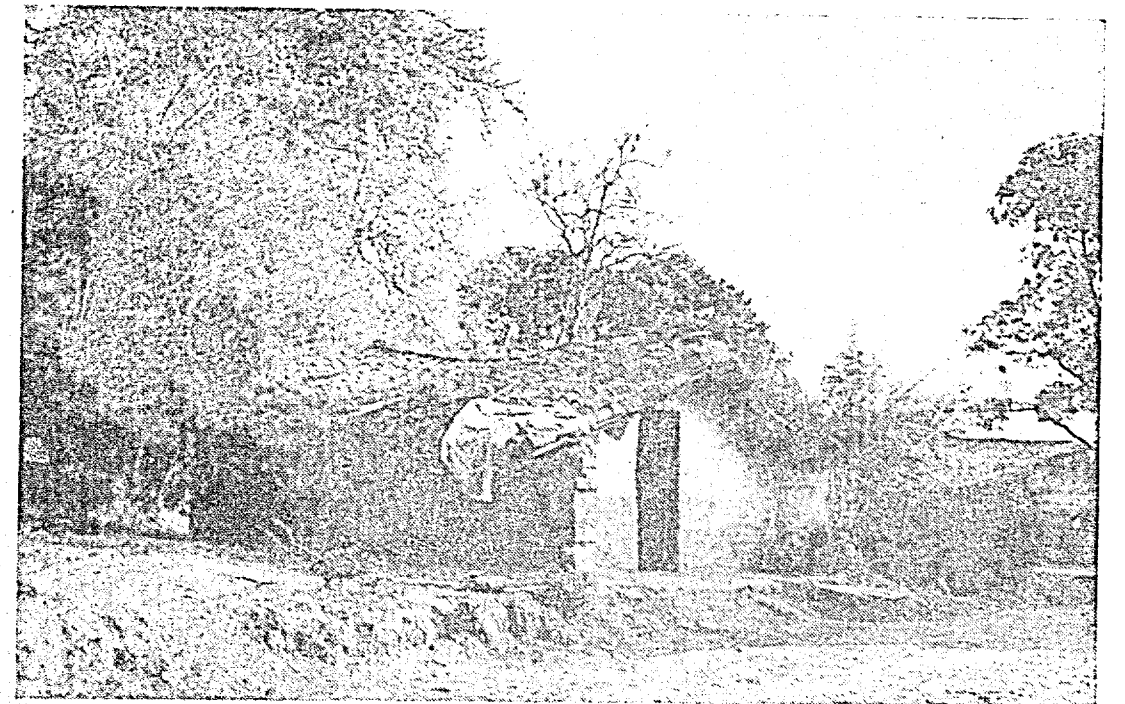
5. A group of males and children



6. An inside view of kitchen highlighting common household utensils



8. Object of worship inside the house



7. View of a tiled-house belonging to a Chalavadi

VI. DWELLING, DRESS, FOOD, ORNAMENTS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

(a) Dwellings

The Chalvadis are predominantly a rural folk though a few may now have settled down in towns. The locality in which they live is called Holigeri or Chalavadikeri. They, as a rule have their houses built on the outskirts of the villages and towns as they are considered untouchables. Their settlements have no specific pattern, shape and size. They have mostly settled in villages where Lingayats predominate and for whom they have greater affiliation. As the Lingayats are by and large agriculturists, the Chalvadis work as labourers in their fields, casual or attached and also employ themselves as removers of dead animals, sweepers of the village streets, village servants called *Kulvadis* or *Talwar* and as grave diggers called *Madar*. For all these services they are paid in kind on annual basis at the time of harvesting. The field study revealed that Chalvadis do not observe any rules regarding neighbourhood pattern with reference to religion. They are found residing in streets adjacent to those inhabited by Muslims, high caste Hindus and other scheduled castes viz., Madiga, Dhors, Samgars etc. In big villages where their number is small their houses are mixed up with the houses of other scheduled castes. It is also not uncommon to find their dwellings constructed just on the other sides of the streets which separate Chalvadikeri from the village proper, where the high castes live. Generally Chalvadikeri is located to the West of the main village. In the centre of their settlement is invariably found a small temple dedicated to any of the deities Mahadeva, Yellamma, Mallesha, Shankari etc. This temple besides being a place of worship on festive and ceremonial occasions, also serves as community hall for *bhajans* and as a court hall for elders to assemble. The houses in their settlements are spread in nucleated, linear clusters and shapeless clusters in which are formed straight and curved streets, lanes and bylanes. The houses are built on both sides if it is along a street and only on one side if it is along a lane or bylane. The shape of their settlement is generally rectangular and sometimes irregular.

The Chalvadis live in mud houses and thatched huts. Since about 20 years, tiled houses are also coming into vogue indicating trends of Change. In towns they live in country-tiled houses having rectangular ground plan. The roofs of the mud houses are flat and of tiled houses, inclined having slopes on two sides. The structures are simple. The mud houses are generally more spacious than tiled houses and perhaps the

cost determines the size. The plinth area of the mud houses ranges between 200 sq. ft. and 300 sq. ft. and that of tiled houses between 150 to 200 sq. ft. The two roomed structures are common and three roomed ones are few. In two roomed tenements, the interior smaller room serves as the kitchen and the other as living-cum-sleeping room. In the living room the domestic animals are also tethered during nights. The two apartments are separated by a dwarf-wall or bamboo-mat. The kitchen of many houses does not have any door. The objects of worship like lithoprint photographs of deities of Shiva, Basaveshwara, Vithala, Lakshmi, are hung on walls or placed in niches. Only a few cultivators have three roomed houses in which a part is set apart for tethering cattle. The walls are built of mud or of jowar stalks or split bamboos plastered with mud. All the house have levelled floors which are dung washed and kept clean. Stone slabs are used for floors where cattle are tethered. No house has latrines and they go to the open for answering calls of nature. The front door generally faces east, north, south and never west. The houses are dark and dingy. The huts are low and have no plinth. Mud houses are common in the districts of Bijapur, Gulbarga and Raichur where rainfall is low. In Dharwar, Belgaum and North Kanara districts where the rainfall is high tiled houses and thatched huts are predominant. Mud houses will have one or two small windows. They are built of either gravelly soil or stones depending upon the material available and cost. Some of the newly constructed houses having Mangalore tiled roofs are built of burnt bricks.

The Chalvadis pay little attention to house decoration. The doors and windows are simple and plain. The outer walls are neither painted nor whitewashed. Only the upper half of the inner walls are white washed and the lower half red plastered. Generally the houses are whitewashed on festive and marriage occasions. Garbage is deposited in separate manure pits, a little away from the house.

The site for putting up a house is selected after consulting a Brahmin Bhat or Lingayat Jangam. An elderly person of the caste prepares the plan and makes markings on the site. The construction is started on an auspicious day after puja. A minor function called *Bagilu puja* attends the fixing of the door frame of the front entrance. The housewarming ceremony is gone through before occupation.

(b) Dress

It is reported that Chalvadis used to move about in a loin cloth and a blanket slung over the shoulders

about 50 years ago. They now adopt the dress of others amidst whom they live. The common dress now is a shirt and dhoti. Whenever they move out of the village or town they wear a headgear called '*rumal*'. '*Rumal*' is now gradually yielding place to cap. The female dress consists of a saree and a blouse. Undergarments are used by the younger generation. In the North Kanara district where these people are mostly forest labourers, knickers are gaining popularity.

The mode of wearing dress does not in any way differ from the other castes in the region. In parts of Belgaum district and North Kanara men carry '*Kavadi*' (country woollen blanket) with them while working in the fields or elsewhere.

The headman of the caste and other leaders always wear '*rumal*'.

As they are poor they keep one or two sets of dresses which they wash once a week. They even seek gift of torn clothes from their employers and masters. They use soap for washing the clothes. Washermen do not serve them.

Elder men among them keep moustaches and grow tuft whereas the youngsters are clean shaven and wear crop. The women knot their hair and girls plait them. Only elder men use footwear.

(c) Food and Drinks

The staple food of Chalvadis consists of *rotti* made of jowar (*Holcus sorghum*) flour or *sajjee* or spiked millet (Bajra) and curry made of pulses and vegetables. In the North Kanara district, their staple diet is rice and ragi (*eleusine coracana*) and vegetable curry. *Bakri* or *rotti* is prepared out of jowar and *sajje* flour and is baked on iron plates. The other cereals they eat are *navani* or Italian millet and *same* (little millet) and numerous kinds of pulses. Cooked rice and soup are taken with sweets like *Holige* or *Vobbattu* (sweet cakes prepared with jaggery, Turdal or Bengal gram and wheat flour), *Payasa* (sweet gruel prepared with jaggery and soji) *Kadabu*, *Kajjaya*, *Tambittu*, etc., on festive and ceremonial occasions. They take only cooked food.

They are traditionally non-vegetarian. The Gazetteer of Bombay, Vol. XXI, District Belgaum reports that "they do not eat fish or flesh, drink no liquor and use no drug except tobacco", but this applies only to a Chalvadi who carries the ladle and bell. But even he as ascertained during the field study clandestinely takes flesh. All the Chalvadis contacted during the

field study have reported that they are non-vegetarians but only avoid pork. In the past, about 10 to 15 years ago, they were said to have been taking the flesh of dead animals. Now they shun it. They strictly resent others suggesting that they eat carrion. They do not go game catching and rarely trap animals and birds in jungles. They have few occasions to indulge in non-vegetarian food on account of its high cost.

The daily menu consists of *bakri* and vegetable curry. They take three meals a day. The timings are morning between 7 A.M. and 9 A.M. noon, between 7 and 9 P.M. with the same menu for all the meals. Morning meal is not regular to many as they can ill afford it. The noon meal is substantial. Very rarely they use milk and milk products. Spices and condiments are liberally used. Generally all the female members of the household co-operate in cooking and leave home early for earning wages in fields. The Chalvadis say they cannot afford to eat to their fill on account of their low earnings. It is when demand for agricultural labour is at a low ebb during the non-agricultural season that one can realise the plight of these landless classes. Their men are fond of smoking tobacco and hemp and of drinking spirits. Prior to the introduction of prohibition, men and women used to take country liquors. Particularly on marriage and other ceremonial occasions liquor was being invariably taken in excess. Even now, the elder people accustomed to drinking take illicit liquor. However a decline in liquor consumption among the younger generation even in wet areas is distinctly discernible. Coffee and tea are becoming popular and men take them in hotels. Smoking is widespread. Chewing of betelnuts and leaves is common to both the sexes.

(d) Ornaments

Women are fond of ornaments but poverty restricts their possession. Young boys wear ear-rings called *Mura* made of gold or brass. Males wear a girdle of cotton thread or silver round their waist. Men sometimes wear finger rings of gold and silver particularly on marriage occasions. The women have varied ornaments. *Bendoli*, *Bangarada hoovu* (of gold costing about Rs. 100), *Jogera haralu* (of cheap metal costing 4 to 5 rupees), *Huvinakaddi* (of silver costing Rs. 10), *Tirapani Sara* (of brass or silver Rs. 10) and *Bugudi* (Rs. 50) are different types of ear ornaments. *Nadupatti* or *Dabu* (waist belt made of silver) which was being uniformly worn by all women is now going out of fashion. *Muguti* and *Mugubattu* (the nose rings made of gold cost about Rs. 10) are popular. Silver anklets called *Kalandige*, and *Kalu chainu*, toe rings

called *Kalusuttu*, *Kalungara*, *Minchu* are worn by only the married, whereas the anklets and *Kaluchainu* are worn by girls. Glass, silver and brass bangles are worn for the wrists. *Kadaga* of silver (pair costs about Rs. 20) is now worn by some elderly women. The ornaments for the neck are *Tikki sara* (of gold costs Rs. 300) and *Gundina sara* (of gold costs Rs. 250). These are used only by well-to-do. The most commonly used ornament for the neck is *Karimanisara* a string of black beads which custom enjoins being worn by all married women. The *tali* (marriage badge) is also strung into it. Very few of them wear gold rings. Rings made of brass, silver etc., are worn. Ornaments are usually purchased, and rarely they are got made to order. A woman has to remove *Tali*, *Karimani sara*, *Kalusuttu* etc., on the death of her husband. Widows do not wear vermillion mark (on the forehead) or use flowers. Tatooing is popular particularly among women. The females belonging to the castes of Killekyata and Koravanji serve as tattooers and are paid in both cash and kind. By convention, payment for tattooings is always made by friends or relatives. The payment in cash is about 50 paise and in kind it is about one kilogram of grains. The fancy for tatooing is now wearing thin. Men and women use cocoanut oil to comb their hair. As the village barbers do not serve them, they help themselves. In towns there is no such discrimination.

(e) Other Material Objects

They acquire only such household goods as are absolutely essential. In villages they possess little furniture. Very rarely one comes across families having a chair, a cot or a bench. In towns, the educated among them keep one or two chairs and a cot. Essential common household equipments such as mats, utensils, grinding stone, mortar and pestle are acquired. The other household articles consist of cooking vessels made of clay, brass, copper and aluminium; water and grain containers made of clay and bamboo (baskets). They use kerosene tin lamps. Very few can afford hurricane lanterns. Wooden boxes and steel trunks are used for keeping valuables. Agricultural labourers will be in possession of some agricultural and earth digging implements. The cultivators keep in addition ploughs (wooden), seed drills etc. They own no modern agricultural implements. These, when required, are borrowed. The use of cosmetics is meagre and that too in urban areas only. Both toilet and washing soaps are widely used both in rural and urban areas. Many in parts of Bijapur and Belgaum districts keep musical instruments like drums (*Halage*), and pipe (bent brass pipe) etc.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

The Chalvadis or Channayyas claim higher social status over Mangs or Madigs and Bhangis. But they live adjacent to them on the outskirts of towns and villages. They pay little attention to environmental hygiene. It is observed that their settlements are without drains, the streets unpaved and the area filthy. Regarding their personal cleanliness they are better than Mangs, Bhangis and Samagars. They take bath twice a week, clean their teeth daily with ash or charcoal powder, wash their clothes once or twice a week and regularly comb their hair by applying coconut oil. Usually they take their bath in front of the house on a stone slab laid for the purpose. In addition to toilet soaps, some persons also use soapnut powder for cleaning the body.

The common ailments are fever, diarrhoea, stomach disorder, general debility etc. Being strongly built and hard working, they are resistant to serious communicable diseases. In the past they relied on herbal treatment given by the priestly class of Lingayats or Brahmins who also acted like medicinemen. They would also approach soothsayers or take vows to Gods and Goddesses. These practices are now seen to be on the wane mainly on account of the availability of hospital facilities and private dispensaries in nearby towns. Improvement in general standard of education and urban influence have also contributed to dispelling their ignorance. In the past, when plague and cholera used to take a heavy toll of life, they would hold community worship to Goddesses like Dyamavva, Maremma, Yellamma, Durgi etc. But now the faith in modern medicine is getting deeply ingrained. The ignorant among them still resort to superstitious remedies for barrenness, still births and complicated deliveries. Distance and inferiority complex have prevented their freely availing maternity facilities.

They have much faith in sorcery and witchcraft. They seek the help of middleman for exercising malign spirits which, they often believe, torment them.

VIII. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The Chalvadis or Channayyas of both Gulbarga and Belgaum divisions speak Kannada which also is the regional language. The subsidiary language spoken and understood by them is Marathi in the border taluks of Khanapur, Hukeri and Chikkodi in Belgaum district. In the North Kanara district, they understand Konkani and in Raichur and Gulbarga districts some understand both Telugu and Marathi.

IX. EDUCATION AND LITERACY

The Chalvadis are educationally backward. The curse of untouchability, and also their dire poverty compels parents using children also as wage earner. This appears to be responsible for their low level of literacy. The following Table gives the educational standards of Chalvadis or Channayyas in the State according to the 1961 Census:

Sl. No.	Educational standard	Rural		Urban	
		M	F	M	F
(1)	Literates without educational level	3,180	602	719	184
(2)	Primary or Junior basic	361	62	478	169
(3)	Matric or Higher Secondary	45	..	96	7
(4)	Graduates	..	..	3	..
(5)	Technical diploma	..	..	1	..
	Total	3,586	664	1,297	360
		Total			
		M		F	
	Illiterates	15,541		19,186	

The above figures reveal that as high a proportion as 83.5% of them are illiterates and only 16.5% literates. Sexwise 24% males and 5% females are literates. The percentages of literacy in the rural area is 22 for males and 4 for females, and in urban areas 19.32 for males and 8 for females. The literacy percentage for the scheduled castes taking the State as whole is a little more than 9 being 15 for males and 3 for females. Comparatively Chalvadis are seen to make a better showing.

It is seen from the above table that among them only 0.1% in rural areas and 1.1% in urban areas are matriculates who are mostly males. Only 7 urban females are matriculates. There are only 3 graduates in the Caste and one diploma holder, all being males. Despite sincere efforts of Government to promote education by opening schools in almost all the villages children are not sent to school. Schools exist at all places where the field study was conducted. In the village Chalachagudda in Badami taluk of Bijapur district there are about 45 boys and 40 girls of school going age. It is reported that only 8 girls and 10 boys are attending the primary school. 4 boys are attending high school at Badami (3 miles from the village), 5 have passed S.S.L.C. examination, 3 are studying in the College at Dharwar. They say that they can send children to schools only if free board and lodging are provided. These facilities are at present severely restricted and available only to High School and College

students. None of the Chalvadis is attending adult literacy classes. A general realisation appears to be just now coming that there is advantage in sending children to schools.

X. ECONOMIC LIFE

The Chalvadis who do not profess any single traditional occupation are at present mostly agricultural labourers. Numerous are the occupations followed by them as hereditary viz., carrying the ladle and bell in front of Lingayat processions, appropriating the dead cattle of the village and flaying their skin, and serving as village servants like Talwar, Kolkar etc. In addition they attend to some duties which are obligatory in nature, like carrying the death messages, street sweepers and night watchmen. They carry the death messages of Lingayats, Kurubas, Marathas, Brahmins etc.. However they do not carry the death messages of castes which are inferior to them like Mang, Chamar, Samagar, Bhangi etc. For all these services they receive *Aya* or *Baluta*—annual payment in kind. The village servants hold *Inam* lands. To supplement the earnings of the family the male and female members other than the head of the household, work as either attached agricultural labourers or casual agricultural labourers, in the households of Lingayats, Brahmins, Kurubas, Marathas etc. Majority of the Chalvadis do not own lands and even the holdings of the owners of lands are uneconomic and small, ranging between 5 cents and 10 acres. In addition to their owned lands their holdings also consist of lands taken on lease. They do not have any community land. The tenure of their lands is the same as is obtaining in the region. The members of the community mostly depend on others for taking land on lease. The lease paid in cash is called *Lavani* (lease) and the crop-sharing is called *Palu* (share). The tenants however are not protected from eviction, as the lease is a mere oral understanding. The rent is not fixed in accordance with the Tenancy Act. The caste does not have any community forest. Nor are they allowed special concession or rights in the State Forests. In the North Kanara district, where forests are extensive, the people of this community can get, like any other community bamboos and timber on a valid license. They also commit theft of timber and bamboos from the forests during nights. This community can lay no special claims for fishing. Only some of the members of the community practise fishing in small tanks, streams etc., for domestic consumption. Livestock, next important resource after land, is reared in fewer numbers by the Chalvadis. As they are predominantly agricultural

labourers, their households do not contain large number of cows, buffaloes and bullocks. Only cultivators among them keep working cows or bullocks of low value ranging between Rs. 250 and Rs. 400 per pair. It is uneconomic for others in the community to maintain cattle. There is no ready market for milk or its products produced by them as the other higher castes do not purchase the articles from them as they

CHALVADIS OR CHANNAYYAS

SCT-1 PART A—INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

Industrial Category	Total		Rural		Urban	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Total Workers	13,288	9,501	9,909	7,592	2,479	1,909
(i) As Cultivators	3,902	2,183	3,637	1,985	265	198
(ii) As Agricultural Labourers	5,375	5,634	4,805	4,912	570	722
(iii) In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishery etc.	395	205	347	189	48	16
(iv) At Household Industry	219	79	166	56	53	23
(v) Manufacturing other than Household Industry	330	107	62	17	268	90
(vi) In Construction	191	51	83	11	108	40
(vii) In Trade & Commerce	92	114	47	61	45	53
(viii) In Transport, Storage and Communication	104	1	48	0	56	1
(ix) In Other Services	1,780	1,127	714	361	1,066	766
Special occupations like scavenging and tanning	188	220	37	21	151	199

Workers constitute 53.18% of the total population. The male and female components of the total workers is 30% and 23.18% respectively. Sex-wise 60.64% of the total males and 45.82% of the total females are workers. Among workers 50.3% are agricultural labourers mostly in rural areas. The cultivators constitute only 27.8% of the total working force. The proportion engaged in livestock rearing, forestry, fishing and at household industry is insignificant. 'Other services' representing 13% include Government service, village service, road workers etc., being mostly urban dwellers. The majority of the population being rural and landless, agricultural labour happens to be the only means of livelihood. Both men and women go for field labour. Men do all kinds of work like ploughing, weeding, harvesting, threshing etc. Men are employed for doing hard labour and paid more. The daily wages of males range between Rs. 1.50 and Rs. 2.00 and of females between 75 paise to one rupee. Wages are paid in advance in busy seasons. Excepting for the labour employed for the harvesting of jowar, paddy or other food crops, the wages are paid in cash. The wages in kind range between 1½ kgs and 2 kgs. of grains for a day's labour. In towns also many of the females go for agricultural labour. In

are untouchables. They do not keep pigs being non-consumers of pork. Pig rearing is also socially ostracised in the community. They keep only sheep, goat and poultry in small numbers. The following statistics extracted from SCT-1 Part A—Industrial classification, 1961, give a picture of their economic activity as found in 1961:—

towns they prefer industrial labour where the wages are higher. In North Kanara district the preference is for forest labour where one can earn up to Rupees five a day as against Rs. 1.50 which an agricultural labourer earns. There is not any marked occupational mobility among them. Men and male children above 10 years work as attached agricultural labourers. This, however, is not to be mistaken for forced or bonded labour, which scarcely exists among them. It is voluntary and the maximum tenure is one year. Such a labourer called *Jeetadalu* is expected to attend to all items of work such as livestock rearing, house construction etc., in addition to agricultural operations. Their annual wages range between Rs. 150 and 300 besides food and clothing. Now, in straitened circumstances only they offer themselves to serve as attached labourers. Their need for loans in times of marriages and death for which they have no security to offer are exploited by the cultivators to pressurise them to work as attached labourers.

The cultivation practices of the Chalvadis do not differ from those of the region. After the introduction of Tenancy Laws they are experiencing difficulty in getting lands on lease. Dry cultivation is predominant

and it is only in parts of Belgaum and North Kanara Districts that they grow paddy and only 20 households in Chalachagudda of Badami taluk were found cultivating garden lands. Even here none of the households possesses more than 50 cents of land. The garden lands are irrigated by the Malaprabha river, from which water is drawn by Picota (A device for bailing of water for irrigation which consists of a long lever mounted on a central vertical fulcrum; one end of the lever is suitably weighted and the other carries a water bucket tied to a long pole). They dispose of the produce to local dealers against advances. They mostly borrow for unproductive purposes like marriage, birth and death ceremonies. It is said that at Chalachagudda out of 60 families 40 were indebted, the amount of debt per household ranging between Rs. 100 and Rs. 1,000. The rate of interest varied between 18% and 24% per annum. There is a co-operative credit institution at Chalachagudda. Only 10 out of 60 Chalvadi households are members of this Society and among them four only have secured loans during the year. The institutional finance which is controlled by big cultivators who are also money lenders has been of little avail to them. The households engaged in traditional service like *Kolkar*, *Talwar*, *Chalvadi*, *Madar* etc., receive *Aya* or *Baluta* in kind during harvest. *Kolkar* and *Talwar* attend to Government work like calling land holders to pay the land assessment at the village office etc., and *Madar*s carry death news to the relatives. In Dharwar district there are among them *Kahaler* who play on a musical instrument called *Kahale* on the occasions of festivals, marriage and death ceremonies of Lingayats and they receive *baluta* of 5 *seers* of grains from the communities they serve. The "Chalvadi" also gets similar payment for carrying the ladle and ringing the bell in front of the Lingayat processions. In most of the places these services are slowly disappearing. They remove the dead cattle outside the village where they skin it and keep the skin for themselves. They receive cash payments and other casual profits for digging graves. The Government itself has granted *Inam* lands for their hereditary services. In towns these services have long ceased to exist and the people of this caste are seen engaged in sweeping and scavenging. The educated among them in towns and villages look low upon these hereditary services and show a pronounced preference to Government service, factory labour etc.

A small proportion of workers (1.36%) are engaged in the household industries according to 1961 census though such workers were not come across during the field study. There is not any large scale migration

among them. Agricultural labourers in some parts of Belgaum and North-Kanara district go out of their villages to work in manganese mines during the slack agricultural season (January-March). Agricultural labourers also migrate to places where agricultural colonies for scheduled castes are started. About 50 households of Chikodi taluk settled down in Khanapur are of this category.

The small number engaged in trade and commerce (0.94%) are mostly petty shop-keepers and hawkers selling vegetables in shandy and towns.

The economic conditions of agricultural labourers are generally bad compared to other occupational groups. The range of income difference between cultivators and agricultural labourers is not much in dry tracts where as it is marked in fertile tracts. Regarding the expenditure pattern, it may be said approximately that an agricultural labourer spends 80% on food and 10% on clothing while the cultivator spends 55% on food 15% on clothing and 20% on agriculture. The other items of expenditure are mainly fuel and light, drinks, interest on loans etc. Expenditure on education, recreation and travelling etc., is practically nil.

XI. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

The Chalvadis like all other Hindus consider pregnancy and the birth as a divine boon. Miscarriages, still births and barrenness are attributed to sins committed in the past life. Pregnancy is recognised by the usual signs of stoppage of menstruation etc. Custom requires their bringing the girl to her natal home for the first delivery. During the 7th or 9th month of her pregnancy the mother with some relations go to her husband's house with some catables. *Bili Kuppasa niyama* is performed, the main features of which are waving *Arati* and feeding relatives with sweet dishes. Green saree and *choli* or *kuppasa* (blouse) green bangles etc., are presented to the daughter at the ceremony. Next day the pregnant girl is escorted to her natal home. The same ceremony is again performed in her natal home when her mother-in-law with her relations goes with fruits, a piece of cloth to make *choli*, a coconut, flowers etc. Subsequent deliveries take place at her husband's house. During pregnancy she is fed with rich food to the extent the purse permits. She attends to all her normal work till the 9th month. The eating of banana, flesh, pumpkin etc., are avoided. She can eat any normal food but during the

8th and the 9th months she consumes light food and avoids strenuous jobs. During pregnancy the husband does not carry a corpse, nor does he kill a cobra or other animals. Birth or delivery normally takes place in a part of the house, using a cloth screen or blanket to secure privacy. Experienced caste ladies and the mother of the girl attend to the delivery. In the absence of such aid the *Sulagittis* from other castes are called in. The help of a midwife is also sought whenever available. Complicated cases are admitted in hospitals and maternity centres. They also observe vows, sacrifice fowls and offer *pujas* to household deities. About 10 to 15 years ago, they used to take vows in the name of Goddess Yellamma that they would make *Jogti* or *Basavi* of the child to be born. *Jogti* has to remain unmarried throughout life signing devotional songs. They also obtain amulets known as *Taytha*, sacred ash (*Vibhuti*) and water (*Thirtha*) from the preists belonging to Lingayat and Brahmin castes, to ensure safe delivery. Whenever the services of a midwife are obtained she is paid Rs. 5. *Sulagitti* attends on the mother and child for 5 days and she is paid Rs. 2.00, 2 or 4 *seers* of grains, a coconut, betelnut & leaves, a piece of *choli* (blouse) cloth etc. If she is of their own caste, she takes food in their house. Umbilical cord is generally severed by the *Sulagitti* with a scythe called *Kudugolu* and the placenta is collected in a winnowing fan, put in an earthen pot and is buried in front of the house under the "bathing slab".

The Chalvadis observe pollution (*Hole*) for certain period after parturition. There is regional variation with regard to the period. In Bijapur district the period is reported to be till the performance of the naming ceremony which takes place on the 5th, 9th or 11th day after birth. In Khanapur town of Belgaum district, it is observed for 13 days. In Nandgad village of the same taluk, the pollution is observed for only 5 days while the naming ceremony is performed on the 11th day. During the period of pollution the mother and the child are given hot water bath daily. During this period they desist from any puja and other auspicious functions and ceremonies. On the fifth day after birth, they prepare *Ede* [i.e. offering sweet dishes in a new winnowing fan] the deity *Sattavai* and also offer *pujas*. Some relations, usually married women, are invited to dine. The mother is held impure for 3 days and none takes food touched by her. On the 13th day on which the naming ceremony takes place, the house is smeared with cow-dung, the mother and the child are given bath. They bring holy water (*Thirtha*) from a Lingayat Math which is taken by all. In Khanapur town it is reported that the *Ayya* or

Lingayat Jangam is asked to come and fasten *Rudrakshi sara* round the neck of the child. It is reported in other places like Chalachagudda (Badami T.K.) Ron (Dharwar dist.) Nandgad (Belgaum dist.) that about 10 or 15 years ago the *Jangam* was being invited and not now. The child is put into the cradle by the *Sulagitti* or paternal aunt of the child, after offering *puja* to the cradle. The name of the child is uttered loudly in its ears thrice by a married lady. The name of the child is selected after consulting a *Bhat* (Brahmin priest) who suggests the first alphabet of the name. The names of the grandfather, grandmother and other ancestors of the family are generally preferred. The common names for boys are Mallappa, Channappa, Bharmappa, Basappa, Pakirappa, Parasappa, Kariya, Neelappa, Gutya, Mada, Linga, Naga etc. The female names are Lakshmavva, Ningavva, Neelavva, Pakiravva, Yellavva, Dyamavva, Basavva, Karevva, Bangarekka, Bheemakka, Thippakka, Gangavva etc. The common surnames are Kaler, Madar, Talwar, Kolkar, Chalvadi. Ganachari, Kamsler, etc., which denote their functional groups. Sugar or other sweets are distributed to the members of their caste, and close relations are feasted.

The new born child is first given some honey or castor-oil and the child begins to suckle on the third day after birth. The mother is given some gruel or boiled rice, ghee and milk for 10 to 12 days. For a month she does not take vegetable curry, buttermilk and savouries. For three months during the post-natal period she is not permitted to take beef and mutton. Fried articles are not given. She has to take light food with less salt and pepper for a month. The mother and the child are given hot-water bath regularly on alternate days for a month, and thereafter twice a week for 2 months. Oil bath is given regularly to the child for 3 months. The period of confinement lasts for a month after delivery.

The Chalvadis do not believe in planned parenthood. One hostel cook at Khanapur is reported to have undergone vasectomy. However, it is said that indigenous medicines are taken for inducing abortions when widows or unmarried girls become pregnant.

In case of still births and barrenness they take vows, offer fowls and coconuts to the deities Satvai, Yellamma, Tulabhavani etc., to bless them with a child. They undertake pilgrimage to holy centres of Saundatti, Gokarna, Pandarpur to get children. They prefer male issues since they believe that the dead would reach the other world only if the son performs

the death rites. There is no decriing of the female children. They love daughters as much as they love their sons. Barren women are only sympathised, but not looked down.

Tonsuring ceremony (*Javala*) is performed for both girls and boys during the 5th, 7th or 9th month. For this ceremony the second year is specially taboo. Those who can afford would also go to holy centres of Saundatti, Mylara, Devaragudda etc., for this ceremony when the ear-lobes are also bored. The maternal uncle of the child first clips the hair by scissors after puja to the household deity. He gets a nominal fee of 30 paise; a *dhoti* and other presents are given by relatives on the occasion. Friends and relations are feasted. The cut hair are immersed in a nearby stream, river or pond. Piercing the nose of girls is done during their 3rd or 5th year by one of the artisan castes *pathar* who gets 30 paise and a cocoanut for his services.

(b) Puberty Rites

A girl attaining puberty is considered impure for 5 days. The period of impurity is prescribed by the *Bhat* with reference to the stellar combination at the time of her attaining puberty. She is given daily bath for 9 to 11 days. For 5 days she is segregated and it

is only on the 5th day that she can attend to her normal work. From the fifth to the 11th day, *Sobana* (singing ceremony for the occasion) is sung by ladies and *arati* is waved, the girl wears a new saree and is decked with flowers and ornaments. During this period she is given nutritious food. If she is married, the husband also sits by her side. Women are considered impure for 3 days during monthly sickness.

(c) Marriage

The boys and girls are married around the ages of 20 and 14, respectively. Betrothal or *Bhastgi* takes place a few months before wedding. For premarital and extra-marital relationships the offender is publicly disgraced, fined or excommunicated. A woman having connubial relations with a lower casteman loses her caste.

Marriages among the Chalvadis may take place among the known members of their caste irrespective of the functional groups to which they belong. The marriage between members of the same *kula* or *Bali* is prohibited. Generally marriage is celebrated after the attainment of puberty. According to the 1961 Census, the marital status of their population are as follows: (Source SCT-II Part VA—Mysore, Vol. XI. Col. 196).

Marital status according to age-groups

Marital Status	Total		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced		Unspecified status	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Age-group												
All ages	20,426	20,732	11,132	9,182	8,488	8,856	728	2,592	67	81	11	21
0-14	8,497	8,458	8,288	7,670	197	767	5	8	..	4	7	9
15-44	9,002	8,984	2,708	1,027	6,055	7,128	199	767	38	53	2	9
45+	2,925	3,289	135	484	2,236	961	523	1,817	29	24	2	3
Age not stated	2	1	1	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..

The above table reveals that 2.31% of the males and 9.07 of the females in the age-group 0-14 are married. This confirms that early marriages among females are still extant. Cases of divorces and separations are not significantly large and the sanctity of marriage is honoured. Though widow remarriage is permissible the existence of a large number of widows in the age-group 15-44 indicates a pronounced hesitancy on the part of widows to remarry.

The Chalvadis or Channayas do not marry within the same *Kula*. Monogamy is generally the rule, but there is no objection to marry another woman in case

the first wife is found barren. Brides are generally acquired on payment of bride-price (*Thera*). The bride-price varies from Rs. 25 to Rs. 60. The bride price is less if the girl is married to her maternal uncle. If the girl is married to others, the maternal uncle gets one-third of the *Thera*. Their custom requires the daughter of a woman being given to her brother on a reduced *Thera*. Marriage by capture, elopement or service is not prevalent and in fact such practices are punished by the caste panchayats. They generally contract marriages with known parties.

The marriage ceremonies closely follow those of the Lingayats in the region.

The negotiations for marriage are generally initiated by the boy's parents. They prefer consanguineous marriages. A man can marry his own elder sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter. The social and economic status are also considered. The boy's parents with some elderly castemen go to the bride's place for negotiating the alliance. After the boy's consent they consult a Bhat for the agreement of stars. They do not write horoscopes but only make a note of the dates of birth. After mutual agreement a betrothal ceremony (*Bashugi* or *Hasiru Veelya*) takes place on an auspicious day at the girl's place. The boy's parents present a saree, a blouse piece, betel leaves and nuts, fruits and some ornaments like *Dabu*, *Muguti* etc., to the girl. The headman of the caste and other elders witness the ceremony when the father of the boy and of the girl exchange *Veelya* (a cocoanut, betel leaves and nuts) to signify the confirmation of the marital alliance. The terms are also then settled. The girl wears the saree and the ornaments presented to her by the would-be father-in-law and she is seated on a *Hase*. The women sing *Sobana*. Jaggery or sugar is put into her mouth. This ceremony may take place 6 months or one year earlier to the wedding. Another ceremony, *Hire Veelya*, is performed to fix the date of marriage about a week or 15 days prior to marriage. Marriages are performed in the months of *Chaitra*, *Vaishakha* and *Jyeshtha* according to the Hindu calendar. An auspicious day for marriage is fixed in consultation with a Lingayat or Brahmin priest. The marriage generally takes place at the bridegroom's place and all the expenses are borne by the parents of the boy. If the marriage is to be performed at the bride's place, the boy's parents have to bear half the expenses of wedding. In addition, the father of the girl receives cocoanuts, betel leaves, arecanuts, flowers etc., required for the marriage from the bridegroom's party. The *Ayya* belonging to Jangam sub-caste of Lingayats officiates at their marriage. The marriage function used to be a three day affair in the past. But now it is done in two days. On the first day the ceremony called *Arashina* or *Devakarya* is performed in the respective places of the bride and the bridegroom. The marriage pandal consisting of odd posts and green roofing is erected in front of the house. The bride and the bridegroom are bathed after being smeared with turmeric and oil. Puja is offered to the family deities and the castemen and relatives are fed which they call *Devaroota*. Afterwards the bridal party consisting of the bride her relations and other castemen leave for bridegroom's place in bullock carts and reach the place the previous day after dusk. If the *Muhurtha* is fixed for the evening, the bridal party arrives before noon of the

day of marriage. Marriages are mostly performed in the afternoon. On arrival near a temple or *Aswatha Katte* the groom's party accompanied by *Kalasa*, *Thali* and musicians receive them and offer sweet drinks. Next day morning the wedding ceremony commences with a ceremonial bath for both the bride and the bridegroom. The *Kankanas* are tied to the wrists of both by unwidowed women. Five women go to a well to perform *Gange Puja* and bring water in five new pots which are placed at four corners and one at the centre of the pandal. The bride and the groom are dressed in new clothes and *Bashinga* (marriage coronet) tied to their foreheads by the respective maternal uncles. The *Bashinga* is brought from Hugas after paying for it some nominal amount and tambula. They prepare a marriage booth by fixing an auspicious pole *Halu Kamba* which is a twig of *Atti* or *Buruga*, or *Basiru* or *Ekke* tree. A cloth piece containing 5 kinds of grains, turmeric, betel leaf and nut is tied at the top of this pole. The bride and the bridegroom are made to stand facing each other in front of this pole and a cloth curtain on which a figure of bull (Nandi) is drawn by turmeric root, is held between them. The groom is made to stand on a wicker tray and the bride on a wicker basket. The *Ayya* recites sacred verses (*mantras*) and sprinkles rice on the pair. The *Akshate* (rice coloured with turmeric and vermillion) is distributed to all. The curtain held between them is removed. The groom ties the *Tali* or marriage badge on the girl's neck. Then the guests throw *Akshate* on the pair. Then the hands of the couple are joined and milk or water is poured over the joined hands. The pair exchange garlands and go round the marriage booth (*Pradakshine*) thrice, when the hems of their garments are tied. They pay their respects to the parents and other elders by touching their feet. Then they are seated on a cot or a woollen blanket, when the women wave *Arati* and sing songs. Friends and relations make presents to the couple. The marriage ceremony ends with a feast to the guests. During that night the couple are taken in procession in a decorated cart to the Maruthi temple to offer puja. The procession is headed by men beating *Halges* or bell-less tambourines. The second day ceremony is called *Nibbana* or *Nagoli*. The girl and the boy pour over each other turmeric water (*vokuli*) and a bath is given to them. The couple are seated on a blanket and *arati* is waved. The bridegroom is taken with the bride to the latter's place. After staying there for 5 days he returns home. Consummation ceremony takes place 3 months thereafter. If the girl is not mature, consummation ceremony takes place 16 days after her attaining puberty. Now-a-days the two functions are made to synchronise to minimise expenditure.

The remarriage of widows is permitted. However the widow is not permitted to marry the agnatic kinsmen of her deceased husband. The form of marriage is known as *Udki lagna*. The divorced or deserted woman is also married in the same form. This ceremony is simple, less expensive and is conducted mostly in other's houses during night time. The guests for marriage are only a small group of widows and widowers. The *Ayya* does not officiate as priest, but an elder casteman officiates. The bride price at a reduced rate is also paid. A person marrying a widow has to pay some fine to the caste panchayat. Generally widows are married to widowers. A bachelor cannot marry a widow. So if a bachelor wants to marry widow, he is first married to a *Ekke* plant. The *Bashinga* and *Kankana* are tied to the plant which represents the bride and then the plant is chopped off and buried. After going through this sham of first marriage he is supposed to have become eligible to marry a widow. An ordinary feast concludes the ceremony. The remarried widow does not, however, enjoy an equal status with an unwidowed woman of first marriage. She is not eligible to perform certain rituals and religious ceremonies. But her offspring suffers from no such disability. Divorce is permitted in the caste and the divorced women are free to remarry. The marriage is dissolved only with the sanction of the caste panchayat or *Kattemane*. Divorce on the ground of maltreatment by either of the spouse, incurable diseases, impotency, adultery etc., is allowed. Mostly divorce is preceded by desertion. The divorce is called *Sodchiti*. The lady has to return the *thali* and all the ornaments given by her husband and the *thera* is paid back by her parents. If the lady is living with another person before the divorce is sanctioned, the seducer is made to pay the fine and also *thera*. The divorce is usually executed on a paper both by the husband and wife before the Caste Panchayat.

(d) Death Customs

The Chalvadis, like other Hindus, believe in the immortality of the soul, and they consider that the persons who do good deeds attain heaven and those who do bad are reborn to suffer. The persons who die an unnatural death are believed to become malevolent spirits.

The Chalvadis normally bury their dead in a sitting posture and only the pregnant and those dying of protracted and chronic diseases are cremated and the unmarried are buried in lying posture. When the person is about to die he is brought outside the house and seated against a wall, when all the agnatic kins pour

water or milk into his mouth. After death the news is sent through one of their castemen to all the relations, who quickly arrive to have a last look. Before removing the body the corpse is washed in warm water after anointing it with a little cocoanut or castor oil. The corpse is wrapped in an old or new white cloth and garlands are put round the neck. The face is marked with *Vibhuti* (sacred ash) by the *Chalvadi* or *Ayya*. The body is carried in sitting posture, in the case of the married dead on a bier of bamboos made by agnatic kin, raw or in a woollen blanket by five persons. The eldest son acts as the chief mourner and heads the funeral procession carrying an earthen pot containing fire or lighted incense sticks and some cooked rice. The corpse is placed on the ground on reaching half-way and the carriers exchange positions. A cocoanut is broken and the fire-pot is thrown aside. On reaching the burial ground, the corpse is lowered into the pit measuring 5 ft. × 3 ft. The *Ayya* places a piece of gold and *Bilpatre* (aegle marmelo) leaves on the head and pours some water in the mouth. The *Ayya* then keeps his right foot on the head of the corpse and declares that the dead has reached the upper world. The chief mourner goes round the grave thrice with a water-pot on his shoulders and it is broken. He first puts a handful of earth into the pit followed by elders and then the pit is finally covered with some stones to protect against wild animals. The *Ayya* performs *puja* to the grave and throws *Bilpatre* leaves over it. Before returning home they take a wash or bath.

In the cases of death of married males, the widow breaks off her bangles and throws them on the grave. The *thali* and the string of black beads are removed. A lamp is lit or water in a vessel is kept at the place where death occurred. Those who accompanied the dead sprinkle themselves with water in which a blade of *garika* (a kind of grass) is put. They go to the grave on the third day to perform *Mooru Kulu* by offering cooked rice, molasses, curry and other eatables, to the deceased on plantain leaves near the grave. They return home after the crows or some cow, touch these offerings. Oil is applied to the shoulders of the bearers of the corpse with a leaf supposedly to relieve them of the pain. This rite is not performed at Banavasi and Sirsi in N. Kanara district and in Hanagal taluk of Dharwar district. They observe pollution for 9 to 14 days and on the expiry of this period, they clean their houses, take bath, wash their clothes and cook food in a new pot making a new fire brought from the neighbour. They bring *thirtha* (holy water given by the priest) and *Panchagavya* (a mixture of milk, curds, ghee, cow's urine

XV. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The Chalvadis have the traditional socio-political organisation called *Pancharu* or *Jati Panchayati* to enable the community to act corporately and to guide the behaviour of its constituent members. The caste council deals with matters regarding excommunication separation or divorce, adultery, division of property and settlement of disputes between the caste members. The influence and the hold of these caste councils are fast waning as many of the disputes are now taken to the law courts and other village leaders. At Chalachagudda, the caste council has not met since the past 15 years and all the disputes are referred to the village leaders like the Chairman of the Village Panchayat, Patil and other locally influential persons. The most important functionary of the caste council is called *Budvant* or *Metri* or *Onigowda* or *Yejamana*. His office is hereditary. He is assisted by an orderly called *Kolkar* whose duty it is to inform all concerned the date and place of the meeting of the caste council. The office of the *Kolkar* is also hereditary. They can be removed only by the head of the *Kattemane* (the regional caste panchayat) in a meeting attended to by the caste panchayats under his jurisdiction. Usually the head of each household attends these meetings. There is a separate caste council for each village or hamlet. In addition, there are regional caste councils for more than 10 villages called *Kattemane* presided over by a *Setty* belonging to Lingayat Banajigas. The regional council works more or less as an appellate authority over the village council. The sanction of the village council is indispensable for separation or divorce and widow remarriage. The caste panchayat's punitive powers vary from levying of fines to excommunication. If a widow or unmarried woman becomes pregnant, fine ranging from Rs. 5 to 25 is levied. If a married lady commits adultery, the seducer is asked to pay fine up to Rs. 300 to meet the marriage expenses of her former husband. Sexual indulgence with the members of lower caste is punished with excommunication. Petty quarrels entail a fine of Rs. 5. Shoe beating is punishable with a fine extending up to Rs. 25. A man beaten by shoe has to undergo a purification ceremony before his position in the caste is restored. He has to get his head, face and moustaches shaved, take bath in a pond or river or stream, go to some temple where the priest gives him sacred water after slightly burning his tongue with a neem or *Atti* stick. The fines levied are spent on feasting the caste-men or donated to the performance of community festivals. Formerly the fine amount was being used on drinking toddy.

The headman of the caste commands respect of his people. His presence is necessary on all ceremonial occasions like betrothal, marriage etc. The *Veelya* is first given to him before distribution to others.

XVI. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

The Chalvadis, or Channa Holeya are illiterates, and the influence of modern civilisation on them is insignificant. There is not any serious attempt on their part too to evolve schemes that would promote their social, economic and cultural amelioration. With the emergence of a new elite outside their caste enjoying greater sources of influence, the traditional leaders have almost faded into insignificance. During the last decade, the State and Central Governments are making sincere efforts to improve their economic condition and to raise their social status. Social welfare department of the State Government is also giving housing subsidies for construction of houses. Many collective and group farming societies are being started by the National Extension Scheme to rehabilitate landless agricultural labourers belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. In Khanapur taluk under the Multi-purpose Co-operative Rehabilitation Scheme two such farming societies have been started in the years 1950-51 and 52-53. A total of 84 households belonging to Holer and Chalvadis have derived benefits from the scheme. Many agriculturists and artisans are getting grants under the National Extension Service Scheme to purchase livestock, poultry, tools and implements. To improve the housing conditions, scheduled castes Housing Co-operative Societies are being established. In Khanapur taluk one such Society was started in the year 1961-62. The total membership of this Society is 512 of whom about 100 are Chalvadis. Housing Co-operative Society for Scheduled Castes in Sirsi Taluk is working since 1963 with a membership of 92 of whom 4 are Chalvadis. In addition the Social Welfare Department is also giving subsidies towards the construction of houses. In Sirsi town, one Chalvadi household was given a subsidy of Rs. 400 in 1958-59. In 1959-60, 2 households were given housing subsidy at Chalachagudda in Badami taluk. For the enlightenment of these people, community radio sets are being provided by the Social Welfare Department. During the course of field study, such centres were seen functioning at Chalachagudda and Khanapur.

The Government has started hostels for the students of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in almost all the taluk headquarters. However, the main grievance of Chalvadis is the failure of the Government to provide them with lands. The Government is also trying to solve this problem of the landless by releasing forests and other waste lands. During the last two

decades, there is a noticeable change in their social and economic life. Active steps have been taken by the Government to remove untouchability by encouraging their entering public temples and using public wells and other public places without let or hindrance. The services of barbers and washermen are freely available to them in towns. Devadasi system is

fast disappearing. They have given up eating carrion and taking intoxicating drinks.

Chalvadis are hardworking, trustworthy and peace-loving. The formation of co-operative farming societies and agricultural colonies may go long to improve their standard of living.

and cow-dung, the five products of cow) from the priest. The chief mourner's head is shaved by their own barber before he goes to the grave with others to offer cooked rice. The image of the dead embossed on silver, copper or brass plate by the goldsmith is also worshipped along with other images of the ancestors and the household deity. A feast is arranged on that day for close relations and friends. Regional variations are however found in the observance of death rites. In Khanapur taluk the Chalvadis do not perform any rites on the 3rd day and they perform the death ceremony on the 14th day. At Sirsi town in North Kanara district also the people of this caste do not perform 3rd day's rites, and the funeral feast (*Divasa*) is held on the 11th day. The pollution is observed for 3 days among those who perform death rites on the 3rd day.

Among others the pollution is observed from 9 to 14 days. Many-a-time, the funeral feast is given on 29th day, or before the expiry of one year from the date of death or during the 3rd or 5th year if circumstances prevent their having it immediately. For three days the members of the household of the deceased and the bearers do not attend to any work or move out of the village. The women do not use vermillion, flowers and other articles of decoration. Funeral feast is not arranged in the case of unmarried dead. If the death occurs inauspiciously a poultry bird is buried along with the dead. They perform annual death ceremony (*Shraddha*) in Mahanavami or Deepavali when the images of the ancestors are worshipped. Some sweet and non-vegetarian dishes are offered to the deceased. They do not raise or build any memorials for the dead. If the head of the household dies he is buried in his lands, if he had any, and a mound is raised on the grave. A twig of a tree is generally planted in his memory.

XII. RELIGION

But for a solitary exception of one female in Dharwar district who is a Sikh the rest of the Chalvadis belong to Hindu religion according to the 1961 Census. The Chalvadis and Channayyas are Hindus and there are the followers of both Shaivism and Vaishnavism among them. In addition to this worship of deities of Hindu pantheon they also worship their ancestors and also other local deities with regional variation. They worship spirits and practise offering fowls and other animals to their Gods and Goddesses. Due to their close contact with higher castes like Lingayats, Marathas etc., many of the customs and traditions of these castes are imbibed by them. The Chalvadis were

founded as a functional group at the time of Basaveswara, by one disciple called Channayya. Originally at the time of their conversion to the new faith of Shaivism, the doctrine of equality of all who wore on their persons, the Linga emblematic of the God Shiva, was proclaimed. However by the close of the 17th century when the Lingayat community had begun to develop endogamous sub-castes based upon social distinctions which their founder had expressly abjured, the Chalvadis were relegated to the former social status. The Chalvadis, who were said to have been wearing *Linga* in the past have now given up wearing it. Only the man who carries the ladle and the bell wears it. The members of his family abstain from eating beef and other carrion. His family enjoys higher social status among their castemen and will have marital alliance with only such families which are engaged in carrying the ladle and bell. The Chalvadis seek the services of Lingayat priests and imitate their rituals to some extent. The term 'Chalvadi' may be considered an appellation to distinguish them from Holer.

The important female deities they worship are Yellavva, Dyamavva, Sattavayi, Karevva and Marigevva. Sheep, goat and fowl are sacrificed to these deities. They do not generally build temples for these deities but only a small hut or erect a stone beneath a tree symbolic of these deities. They were holding 25 years ago, community worship to Goddesses like Dyamavva, Marigevva, Durgi etc., every 3 years or whenever there was an outbreak of cholera, plague or some cattle disease. They used to observe fast and kill a he-buffalo or a sheep or a goat to propitiate these Goddesses. Such public sacrifices of animals have since ceased being banned by law. The *Dyamavva Jatra* which was being performed once a year at Khanapur is said to have stopped since 15 years. Likewise the *Marigevva Jatra* which was an annual feature in Chalachagudda in Badami taluk is not being held for the past 20 years. They besides worship Eswara, Mahadeva, Basaveswara, Maruti, Mallikarjuna, Venkataramana, Vithoba etc. They have built their own small temples for Shiva, Ganesha, Nandi etc., where they offer worship. Though permitted by law practically they are not allowed to enter other public places of worship in the villages. Most of them put on *Vibhuti* mark on the forehead before taking their morning meal.

They abstain from taking meat and killing animals in the Hindu month of *Kartika*. They observe all Hindu festivals like *Yugadi*, *Shivaratri*, *Vinayaka Chauti*, *Navaratri*, *Deepavali*, *Nagar Panchami*, *Holi Sankranti* etc., On all full-moon and new-moon days,

they give a cow-dung wash to their houses and take bath. On the festival days they offer *puja* in a temple.

They have faith in sorcery, witchcraft and sooth-saying, and attribute many diseases and mishaps to the evil influences of malevolent spirits. They kill fowls, goats or sheep to appease them. The custom of dedicating girls as *Basavis* or *Jogties* was prevalent among them. About 20 years back the girls were being dedicated to patron deities like Yelamma, Marikamba etc., either in fulfilment of a vow or by way of custom and tradition.

On some auspicious day the girl would be taken to the temple and seated by the side of a dagger before the Goddess. The priest would tie round her neck a disk. A girl so dedicated symbolised the Goddess on earth in flesh and was privileged to lead the procession of the Goddess and the like. Such girls lived on alms and stayed in their father's household. Children born of her were considered legitimate. The *Basavi* also was entitled to a share in her father's property like sons. Since 15 years this system is fast declining. At a meeting of their castemen held at Hubli in 1949 they resolved that they should not in future, dedicate girls as *Basavis*. Since 1949, in Saundatti, Badami, Ron, Gadag, Bailhongal, Navalgund and Nargund the system of dedicating girls as *Basavis* was stopped consequent on a decision taken in a meeting held at Hubli. Representatives from about 300 villages of these taluks had participated in the meeting. The meeting was presided over by one Shetti of Bankapur which was their *Kattimani* (Regional Panchayat).

The Chalvadis owe allegiance to Lingayat *Mathas* and the heads of these *Mathas* are revered as their spiritual leaders. They pay *Kanike* (offerings in cash or kind) to them on their periodical visits to their places. The Chalvadis are in the employment of many of these 'Mathas' as sweepers.

The Chalvadis are religious-minded and often undertake pilgrimage to Pandharpur, Saundatti, Jejuri Mylara, Devaragudda, Gokarna etc.

XIII. LEISURE, RECREATION AND CHILD PLAY

The Chalvadis are predominantly agricultural labourers and cannot therefore afford to be leisurely at any time. They have to toil hard for a living. Being educationally backward and socially degraded, they do not have any organised recreational activities. Both men and women, spend their little leisurely time

in gossip. Their hours of work are 8 to 12 in the morning and 1 to 6 in the afternoon. In Chalachagudda in Badami taluk and Nandgad in Khanapur taluk, the men perform *bhajans* daily. The literates among them spend their evenings in the village panchayat office reading newspapers. They stage open air dramas called *Bailata*. In Chalachagudda a play called *Dharma Devata* was enacted in the month of June 1967. They take immense interest in witnessing *Bailatas* (open air dramas) and cinemas. In some villages they perform *Kolata* or *Sangrama* at the time of harvesting and a team visits neighbouring villages to give a display of these performances. They frequently visit the cattle fairs, car festivals and other *jatras*. In the past, before the introduction of prohibition, men used to drink toddy and spend their leisure time witnessing cock fights and ram fights. The children, when free, play games like *Chilli Dandu*, *Chendata*, *Goli*, *Marakoti*, *Uttutu*, hide and seek, *Buguri* etc., among themselves. They are not allowed to mingle with children of higher castes.

XIV. INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Chalvadis, though living at the fringes of villages, do come into contact with the various sections of the population in different spheres of their life. The services of the Chalvadis are essential in such spheres as agricultural operations, sweeping the village streets removing the dead cattle and the ringing of the bell and carrying the ladle in front of processions, etc. However, they do not have free access into the houses of other higher castes. They are served by Lingayat Jangams in their religious ceremonies. The washer man and the barber do not serve them though it is not so rigid in towns. In some villages they are not prohibited from entering temples. But the Chalvadis themselves refrain from doing so. In the past even their shadow was supposed to be defiling. The Chalvadis in villages do not use the public wells of the village. In most of the places they have their own wells constructed by the Block Development authorities. The evil of untouchability is gradually disappearing.

The Chalvadis consider Mangs or Madars and Chãmbars as lower to them. They do not accept food and water from Mangs or Madars, Mochis, Voddas, Dakkaliger, Dombar, Korawar and Samagar. They are served in separate plates and tumblers in hotels. The social status of Chalvadis is higher than that of other scheduled castes. In some villages they have given up eating carrion.

DHORS

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Dhors, also known as Kakkayya or Kankayya are hereditary tanners found in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar, North Kanara, Gulbarga, Bidar and Raichur of this State. The Presidential Order of 1956 declares them as a Scheduled Caste in all the districts enumerated above in this State, besides treating them so in parts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. The synonyms Kakkayya and Kankayya, though under the Presidential Order applicable to them only in the Bombay Karnatak region these names are seen to find free expression even in the districts of the Hyderabad Karnatak region.

Enthoven mentions, "Dhors or tanners, numbering 19,089 (1901) including 9,512 males and 9,577 females, are chiefly found in Ahmednagar, Khandesh, Satara, Sholapur, Belgaum, Bijapur and Kolhapur. The name is probably derived from *Dhor* meaning cattle, as they are tanners of cattle skins." (1920, I, P. 336) According to the Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, District-Belgaum, Vol XXI—"Dhors or tanners, with a strength of 1,717 are found in small groups of one or two families in all the larger villages in the district. They are divided into Maratha, Hindusthani and Karnatak Dhors, who neither eat together nor intermarry." (Bombay: 1884, XXI, P. 192). Thurston refers to them as a low caste of Marathi leather workers in the Madras Presidency. (Madras: 1909, II P. 170) According to Enthoven the caste has the following endogamous divisions:

- (1) Budlekari or Budligar.
- (2) Bundelkhandi.
- (3) Hindustani.
- (4) Kankaya.
- (5) Karnatak.
- (6) Ketarphadi.
- (7) Lingayat.
- (8) Maratha or Dhor proper.

"These divisions neither eat together nor intermarry. Budhlekaris, from *budhla* meaning the leather vessels prepared by them, Khetarphadis, and Dhors pro-

per are found in Sholapur district. Kankaya, Bundelkhandi, and Maratha or Dhor proper are found in Satara district. Maratha, Karnatak and Hindustani Dhors are found in Belgaum district, and Hindustanis, Budligars or Budhlekaris and Dhors proper are found in Dharwar district. The Bundelkhandi Dhors are supposed to be socially inferior to Kankaya Dhors. The tradition regarding the origin of the Kankaya Dhors professes to trace their origin from Mahadevas but the story is a mere play on the words *doha* a pool and a *kankh* the arm pit.

"The founder of this caste is also said to have been the sage Lurbhat, who was born of an Aygar father and a Dhigvar mother". (Bombay: 1920, I, P. 336)

The Kakkaya or Kankaya and Maratha Dhors speak Marathi, the Hindusthani Dhors speak Hindusthani and the Karnatak Dhors speak Kanarese. The Lingayat Dhors are invested with *linga* by a Lingayat Jangama soon after birth. They are said to be found in Sholapur district. "Such Dhors would be described as non-panchamasali Lingayats without *ashtavarna* rites; but many Lingayats would now deny that a Dhor can belong to their community at all." (Ibid P. 340) Their customs however are said to be not different from Maratha Dhors. The traditional occupation of leather tanning still continues to be their mainstay though the tendency for the past few decades is more pronounced towards a diversification of the occupations due to a lessening of demand for their traditional products. Cultivation and agricultural labour happen to be the subsidiary occupations followed by a few households which are partially engaged in leather tanning.

The field study extended to about eight places in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur and Gulbarga. In all these places visited these people claim descent from one Kankaya, a desciple of Shri Basaveswara. Apart from this they are not aware of any legend or tale tracing the origin of their caste.

As the Dhors are dubbed untouchables they generally live on the outskirts of villages and towns removed from the main stream of society. The settlement or street in which they live is called *Dhor galli*. Some of the other erstwhile untouchables such as Mahars, Mangs, Chambars etc., live in close proximity to

DHORS

them. Their street presents the ugly spectacle of hides hanging in front of the houses which emit an obnoxious smell making it highly repellent to a visitor.

II. AREA WHERE FOUND

Dhors are numerically preponderant in the districts of Belgaum and Gulbarga. They are found in small numbers in the districts of North Kanara and Raichur. They are mostly a rural folk but in the Dharwar District urban dwellers are more. In the order of concentration Belgaum District comes first and at taluk level Chikodi in Belgaum District and Aland in Gulbarga District hold the field. The Dhors found in the North Kanara District are said to be the migrants from Gulbarga District. (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Bombay: 1882 Vol. XV, P. 357).

III. DEMOGRAPHY

The population of Dhors in the State is 14,344, comprising of 7,255 males and 7,089 females. Out of them 9,614 persons live in rural areas and 4,730 persons in urban areas. In the Belgaum Division which comprises the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara their population is 8,694 with 4,366 males and 4,328 females. In the Gulbarga division which comprises the districts of Raichur, Gulbarga and Bidar their population is 5,650 with 2,889 males and 2,761 females. In the Belgaum division 582 persons have been returned as Kakkayyas and 47 as Kankayyas. The districtwise break-up of the population is given below:—

District	Total	Males	Females
(1) Belgaum	4,449	2,214	2,235
(2) Bijapur	2,787	1,423	1,364
(3) Dharwar	1,368	678	690
(4) North Kanara	90	51	39
(5) Gulbarga	3,219	1,627	1,592
(6) Bidar	2,314	1,216	1,098
(7) Raichur	117	46	71
TOTAL	14,344	7,255	7,089

It has not been possible to make a study of their population trends due primarily to the non-availability of comparative figures for past censuses and also due

to the territorial changes that have occurred in 1956 in consequence of States Reorganisation. The sexwise distribution of their population in 1961 under the broad age-groups is detailed below:—

Age groups										
Total			0-14		15-44		45+		Age not stated	
P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
14,344	7,255	7,089	3,188	3,124	2,890	2,921	1,177	1,043	0	1

The percentage distribution of population as above between rural and urban areas is 67 and 33 respectively. This presents a marked variation from that of the general population, the rural-urban figures of which stand at 77.7 and 22.3 respectively. This may be an outcome of the nature of their occupation which can thrive only in urban areas. The percentages of population in the age groups of 0-14, 15-44 and 45+ are 44, 40.5 and 15.5 respectively.

Men and women like other high caste Hindus, wear ornaments. They put on *vibhuti* mark on their foreheads in the morning after bathing or having a wash and offer prayer to Shiva. They are generally adequately dressed and fed.

IV. FAMILY, CLAN AND ENDOGAMOUS DIVISIONS

Joint families are more common among the agriculturists. Nuclear or simple family consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children is the common type among wage earners, artisans etc. In Chikodi town out of about 30 families only 2 were joint families which had agricultural lands. The average size of the family is 4 or 5. The marriages among them are generally after their coming of age and the newly weds leave their parents to set up a separate family. They prefer small and simple families to big joint families. Every adult member of the family has to contribute to the earnings either as agricultural labourer or a worker at tanning. Generally, the head of the household and other adult male members tan and work on leather, and the female members in addition to domestic chores work as labourers in the field.

The endogamous divisions among Dhors have already been mentioned. The exogamous divisions of the caste or *devaks* which they also use as their surname are, according to Enthoven, as follows:—

Borade	Darveshi	Gaikwad
Gajakos	Gaware	Ghodki
Hasanale	Navagane	Pole
Rajuri	Hotkar	Holkar
Ingle	Kadam	Kaikandadre
Katakavande	Kalambe	Sadhapale
Salunke	Sherkhane	Kavale
Kalgandre	Khandare	Mankar
Munimari	Nanande	Narayankar
Sinde	Sonone	Trimbake

"Surnames have different *devaks*. Persons bearing the same surname do not intermarry. Sameness of *devak* is usually a bar to marriage. Among common *devaks* of the caste are the *umbar*, the *Jambhul*, *Mariadvel*, a shrub grown on the sea-shore, and a hatchet. The mariadvel is brought from the coast for a marriage of a Dhor of this section. Marriage with a father's sister's daughter and maternal uncle's daughter is allowed." (1920, I, P. P. 336-337). The people of this caste are, however, unaware of the meaning, origin, and significance of these *devaks*.

V. DWELLINGS, DRESS, FOOD, ORNAMENTS ETC

(a) Dwelling

The Dhors, like all other scheduled castes, reside in clusters of houses segregated from the residential quarters of other high castes. Although the different scheduled castes live adjacent to each other, generally each will have a separate settlement of its own. These settlements are called *Gallies* (streets). Dhors who thus have their own separate settlement have also their own drinking water well and a temple for offering worship. The use of the common village well is denied to them and they have no access to other public places also.

Their houses are in no way different from the houses belonging to other castes of equal social and economic status. As most of them are landless and poor

the houses are usually small, having not more than 2-3 rooms. They live in small thatched huts, or mud roofed and country tiled houses with mud walls. In Belgaum and North Kanara districts roofs of houses which are mostly thatched and country tiled are seen to be deeply inclined with slopes. This type appears to be ideal for withstanding the heavy rains which this area receives. The houses have generally narrow verandah and court-yards. On passing through the verandah, which is generally open on three sides, is found the principal living room, which serves both for dining and sleeping purposes besides being a shelter for the cattle also. Household possessions are also stored in one corner of this room. Next to this room is a kitchen with a small door, with or without shutters. The houses generally do not have a separate bath. In most of the cases bath is taken in the front yard on a bathing slab. In a few cases improvised palm leaf enclosures are created by the side of the houses to serve as a bath. None of the houses is provided with latrine. In the districts of Bijapur, Dharwar, and Gulbarga, Dhors reside in houses with mud walls and mud roofs and thatched huts. Those living in huts may be considered economically weaker. The walls of huts are made of jowar stems plastered with mud. The mud roofed houses have flat roofs, with rectangular ground plans. Even the mud roofed houses are small and ill-ventilated. The windows are few and the doors are low and small. The walls of tiled or mud roofed houses are built of stones or unbaked bricks.

Like other scheduled castes the Dhors do not observe any elaborate ceremonies at the time of commencing house construction or on its completion. The construction is started on an auspicious day suggested by a Brahmin Bhat or a Lingayat Jangam. *Paya pooja* is performed by offering worship to implements such as crow-bar, pick-axe, spade etc., at the site by the head of the household or the family priest. The foundation work is commenced from the north-east corner of the site. If the house is mud roofed a foundation of 3 to 4 feet deep is laid and if it is a hut then there will be no foundation at all. In the case of tiled houses foundation goes to a depth of 2 or 3 feet. While putting up a hut the foundation ceremony is performed by worshipping a pole fixed in the north-east corner of the site. The ground plan of the house is usually rectangular. The roofs of the thatched huts are covered with jowar stalks, grass, and dry sugarcane leaves over a split bamboo frame. The walls of the huts are generally provided with round beams and smaller wooden poles. They serve

as buttress to the wall. The height of the walls of the mud roofed houses varies from 5 to 7 feet. The walls of the tiled roofed houses have height between 6 and 8 feet. The flooring is made of plastered earth, which is washed with cow-dung regularly.

The plan of the house is prepared by a carpenter or a mason depending upon the special needs of the household. The houses are constructed by the Gounders (Muslims), and Bhovis on piece rate basis. Labour is employed on daily wages. Local carpenters are engaged for preparing door-frames, shutters, windows, beams and reapers etc.

They perform *Hostilu puja* at the time of fixing the front door-frame. At the time of putting up the roof *oli puja* is performed by breaking a cocoanut and the burning of incense. They perform house-warming ceremony called *Mane Shanti* before moving into the new house. This ceremony consists of boiling, to overflow, milk on the new hearth. Sweet dishes are prepared and eaten with friends and relatives. No Brahmin or Lingayat priests officiates during these ceremonies but this religious service is rendered by an elderly man of their own caste.

(b) Dress

The dress of Dhors differs little from that of other castes in the region. The dress of men consists of a *Dhotra*, the lower unsewn garment, *Angi*, the upper sewn garment with half or full sleeves and *patka* or *peta* the headgear or a cap. The *Dhotra* covers the body from waist to the knees and it is worn in *kachche* style. Formerly the Dhors used to wear a red turban but since the past 10 or 15 years, they use only white turbans due to the increasing price of the former. Elderly men when going to cities and neighbouring villages wear coats. Very few use footwear.

The women's dress consists of sarees and blouses. They wear sarees measuring 8 yards of a coarse variety and of deep colours. Women while working in the fields tuck one end of the saree at the back drawing it between their legs. Women generally do not use foot-wear.

Young boys use half-sleeved slacks, shirts and knickers. Young girls use frocks. But generally the children move about naked till about the age of 6 or 7.

(c) Ornaments

Only a few elderly men wear gold earstuds and rings called *kudike* and *Mura*. This fashion has almost disappeared among the present generation. Irrespective of age and occupation silver and gold finger rings are worn by most men.

Some of the well-to-do wear silver waist strings. Women of course are fond of ornaments and their possession and use is limited by financial abilities. Women are fond of necklaces made of glass beads. The ornaments commonly worn by women are earstuds (*Hoovu*), nose screw (*Moogubattu*), bangles (of glass), necklace (*Gundudale*), waist belt (*Dabu*), wristlets (*Kadaga*), anklets (*Kalandige*), *Nagara* and *Bille* (worn on the back of the head), *Kalachainu* (worn at ankles) etc. Their ornaments are made of gold or silver. Married women invariably put on ear-rings, noserings, glass bangles and a neck ornament called *Karemanisara* (strings of black beads), toe rings and wear a *kunkum* mark on their forehead. Unmarried girls can also wear all these ornaments except *Karemanisara* and toe rings. A widow should eschew wearing nose ring, toe rings, glass bangles, strings of black beads, *kunkum* mark and flowers. Ornaments such as *Kadaga Bugudi* and *kalandige* are going out of fashion. Women were fond of tattooing in the past, but it is now on the wane.

(d) Food

The Dhors are meat eaters though on account of its costliness it is consumed occasionally on some festive days or when a sheep or goat is slaughtered in the village.

The staple food of Dhors is jowar. Wheat and rice are used on festive and other ceremonial occasions. The method of preparing *roti* which is their normal food consists of mixing jowar flour with water so as to turn it into a dough, which after being thoroughly kneaded is flattened into round cakes and baked on an iron pan. These breads are generally consumed with such side dishes as vegetable curry or *palya*. The consumption of vegetables is meagre except during the monsoon season when vegetables like brinjal, radish, gourds etc., grown in the village would become available to them. At other times, they manage with mere onions or chillies. The cultivators among them

grow jowar, bajra, wheat etc. Generally they take three meals a day, the menu being the same namely, *roti*, vegetable curry or *palya* or *chutney* made of chillies and tamarind. They take all kinds of fish both scaled and unscaled. They eat the flesh of sheep, goat, poultry, *kowjuga*, fowls, pigeon and hare. They avoid beef and pork. *Payasa* or sweet gruel, made of rice and jaggery, *Holige* (wheat flour cakes rolled round lumps of split gram boiled with molasses and baked) *Godi Huggi* and *Shavige* (vermicelli) are their special dishes prepared on days of festival. Milk and milk products are rarely consumed. The use of *ghee* is practically unknown to them.

Breakfast consists generally of the left over of the previous night. Lunch is taken in the noon and supper after dusk. Generally fresh food is prepared for lunch and supper.

The habit of taking tea has been gaining ground among them; tea is taken both in the morning and afternoon. Offering tea to visitors is considered a common courtesy.

They are fond of intoxicating drinks, particularly toddy, but with the introduction of prohibition its consumption has become restricted. In the past toddy used to figure prominently in most of their religious functions. Majority of the males smoke or chew tobacco. Narcotics like *Bhangi*, *Ganja*, opium etc., are unknown to them.

(e) House hold equipments

Dhors, being backward socially, educationally and economically, possess very few household articles. The only furniture articles they have are the low stools and a rope cot. A few possess hurricane lanterns and kerosene tin lamps. Their utensils mostly consist of earthen pots which serve the purpose of both cooking and storing. Each of their households will have one or two bellmetal plates called *gangala* which they use for taking food. Many possess aluminium and brass plates. Almost all the households will have one or two copper pitchers called *koda* and small water containers called *cherige*. Country woollen blankets (*kambali*) are common to almost all the households. Mats made of grass, leaves or palm are used for sitting and sleeping. The implements and tools used for their trade viz., tanning are *rapa* (knife used to remove flesh from the skin), *uli* (awl), *seepa* (used to remove hair from the skin), a sickle and a low wooden stool and every household would have them. Their agricultural implements consist of the traditional

wooden plough, spade, weed removers and pick-axes etc.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABIT DISEASES AND TREATMENT

Both men and women take bath twice a week. They generally use soapnut powder and a few well-to-do use toilet soaps. They wash their face and limb every day morning. They daily clean their teeth with charcoal powder or ash. Oil is applied to the hair once a week and most of the women comb it every day. After the morning wash *vibhuti* is applied to the foreheads. Generally the surroundings of their houses are dirty and the skins and hides that are hung on or near their houses, emanate an odious smell. The flesh and hair that is removed from the hide is littered around. In towns however the municipal scavengers attend to its clearing. But in villages, where the scavenging facility is not available the dirt and squalor of their locality badly assail the nostrils. They keep the inside of their houses and the courtyards clean. On full-moon days and new-moon days they smear the floorings with cow-dung. This is also done on festive occasions and social ceremonies. The house is white washed once a year either for *Nagara panchami* day or *Deepavali*. As they do not possess many sets of dresses, they change their clothings once or twice a week. The clothes are washed in the ponds, tanks, or nearby rivers with washing soap. The village washerman does not serve them. The common diseases which afflict them are general debility, fever, cold, diarrhoea, cough, stomach disorders etc. During the course of the field study it was observed that none among them suffering from any chronic or contagious disease like tuberculosis, leprosy etc. was encountered. As most of the villages totally lack medical facilities, whenever they have ailments they rely on some home made herbal decoctions and cures prescribed by experienced elders. They also observe vows to deities like Sattavai, Yelamma, Durgi etc. When the disease takes a serious turn the patient is taken to a dispensary in any nearby town.

VII. LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND EDUCATION

The mother tongue of the Dhors is Kannada. But the Dhors of North Kanara can understand Konkani also. The Dhors of Gulbarga and Bidar Districts can besides Kannada understand Hindustani. Their subsidiary languages are mixed with Marathi. The Dhors of Belgaum, Bijapur and Dharwar Districts can speak and understand only Kannada.

The percentage of literacy among Dhors is generally higher than among most of the Scheduled Castes, being as high as 22.3%. For a population of 14,344 there are 2,932 literates of whom 2,344 are males and 588 are females. Among literates a little over 67% are without any educational standard, 28% are of junior basic standard and 4% are matriculates and above. Considering sexwise, only 8.3% of the females and 32.3% of the total males are literates. One noteworthy feature is that the literacy percentage among Dhors compares very favourably with the general lite-

racy of the State which is 25.4% and stands much higher compared to Scheduled Castes as a whole which is 9%. When the overall position is so satisfactory, it is depressing to note that in the Gulbarga Division, strangely enough, their literacy percentage dips to as low as 10%. In this, it only looks as though this community shares along with others the general backwardness of the region, but only to a more pronounced degree. A Table showing the break-up of their population in each division by educational standard as in 1961 is furnished below:—

Literacy and Educational Standard among Dhors by sex in rural and Urban areas.

Division	Population							Educational standard							
	Persons	Males	Females	Illiterate		Literates without any educational standard		Primary or junior basic		Matricula- tion or hig- her secondary		Diploma (Tech. & non- tech.) not Equal to degree		University degree or post graduate de- gree (non-technical)	
				M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Belgaum															
Rural	5,069	2,517	2,552	1,632	2,349	693	182	155	20	37	1	..	..	..	..
Urban	3,625	1,849	1,776	852	1,449	530	223	408	96	51	8	3	..	5	..
Gulbarga															
Rural	4,545	2,359	2,186	2,154	2,155	242	23	60	8	3	..	..	..	..	..
Urban	1,105	530	575	373	548	82	17	66	10	9	..	..	..	..	..
TOTAL	14,344	7,255	7,089	4,911	6,501	1,547	445	689	134	100	9	2	..	5	..

It is only since the past 15 years these people have been sending their children to school. Now there are schools in almost all the villages. In the past, the scope for their education was restricted as they were treated by the high caste Hindus as untouchables.

VIII. ECONOMIC LIFE

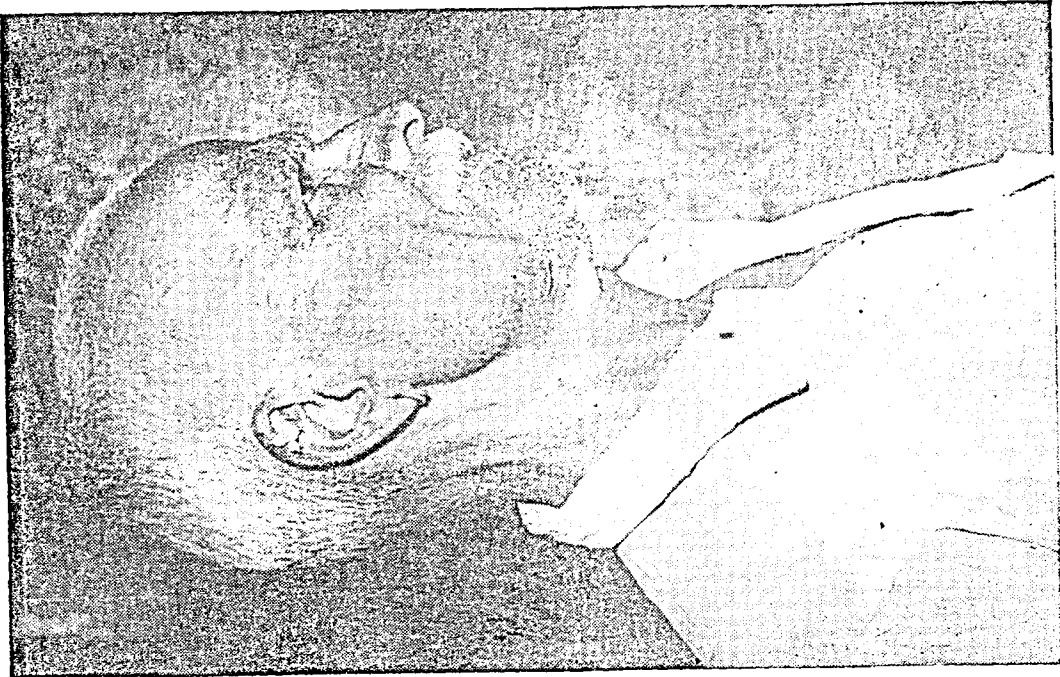
The hereditary occupation of Dhors is leather tanning and recently, since two or three decades, many of the households are seen to be pursuing cultivation and agricultural labour or general labour as their principal occupations. Substantial number of households are having agricultural lands, and a majority of the cultivators depend on lands taken on lease. Most of their women, in addition to assisting men in leather tanning, work on agricultural labour.

Leather tanning still continues to be the mainstay for them in the urban areas while in the rural areas most of them have taken up to cultivation and agricultural labour.

The main economic support to Dhors is land, household industry, houses and livestock. They do not

have any community lands and all the lands they own are held under individual ownership and are mostly inherited. During the course of the field study it was observed that of the 25 households in Chikodi town 20 are owning lands which they cultivate, the extent in individual possessions varying between one acre and 10 acres. Only six households are entirely depending on leather tanning for a livelihood. Again, of the nine households in Hirekudi village of Chikodi Taluk only two are engaged in leather tanning while the rest are all cultivators. These households are reported to have given up leather tanning during the course of the last ten years. In Aland town of Gulbarga District out of 80 households of Dhors only 20 are engaged in tanning, six households are cultivators and the rest are either agricultural labourers or general coolis doing odd jobs like house construction, roadwork etc., or are engaged as sweepers. Dhors in addition to tanning also work on leather and make shoes, water-bags, water-skins, leather baskets, horse's mouth bags and boxes. They buy skins from Mahars and slaughterers. Mahars have a monopoly for taking dead animals and this is their chief source of supply of skins. The cost of a skin which was about Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 ten years ago is said to have shot up to Rs. 30 to Rs. 45 now. The

56(a)

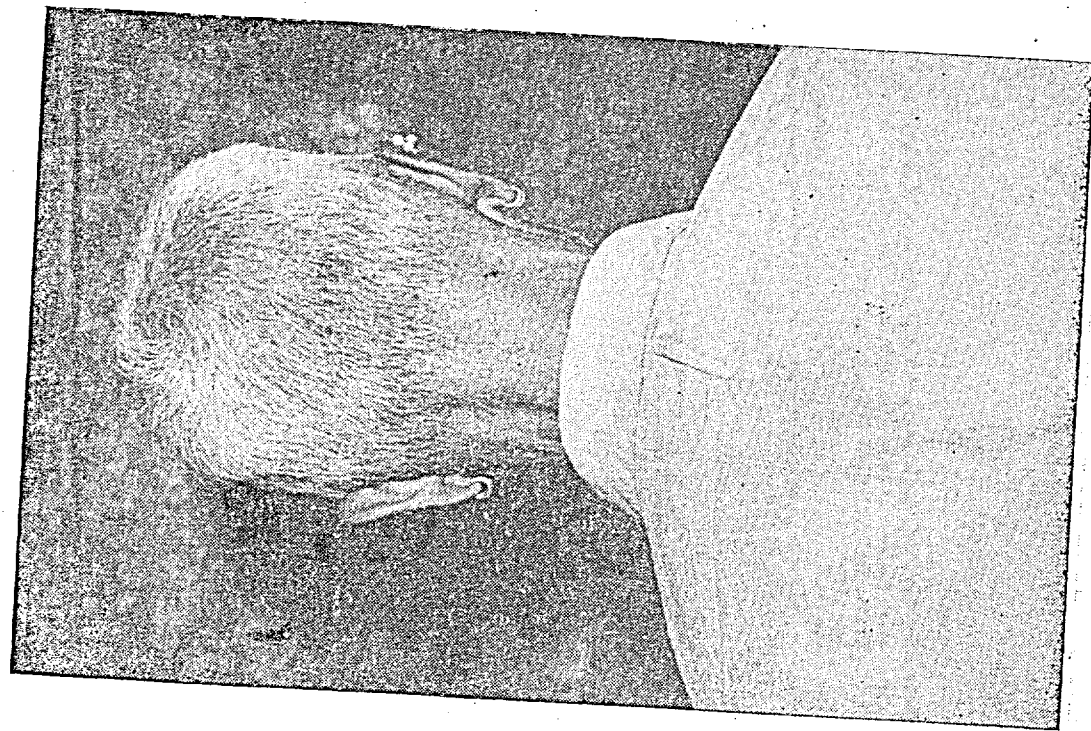


1 (b). Profile

3. DHORS



1 (a). Front view of a Dhor male



1 (c). As viewed from the back



1 (d). Full size

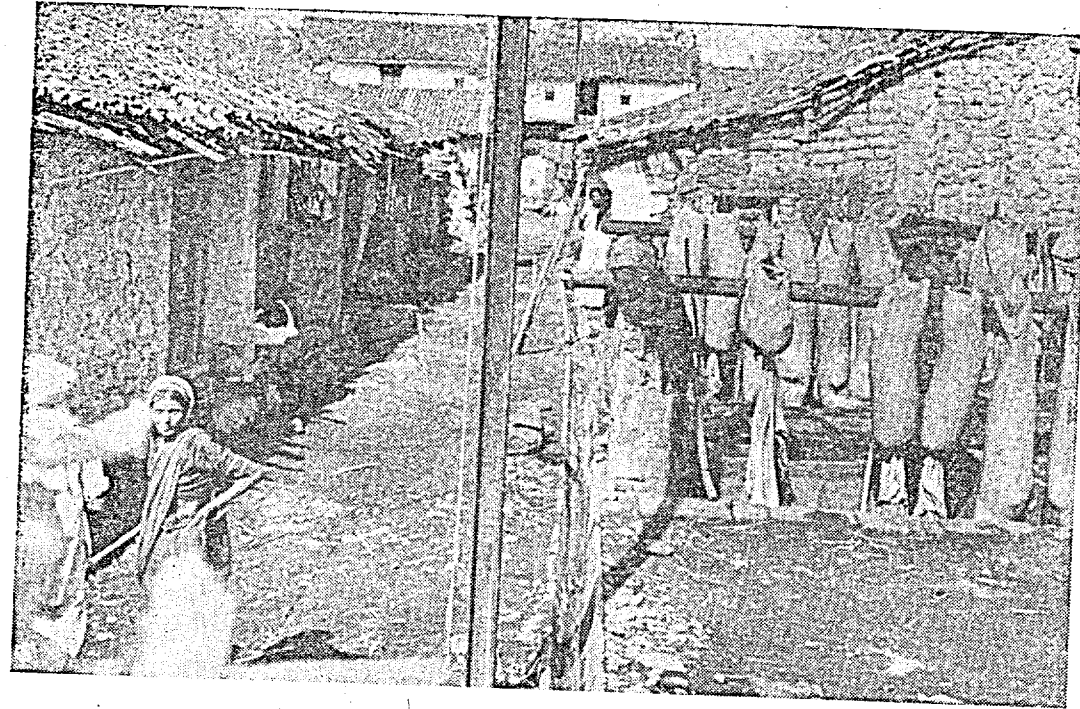


2 (a). Front-view of a female



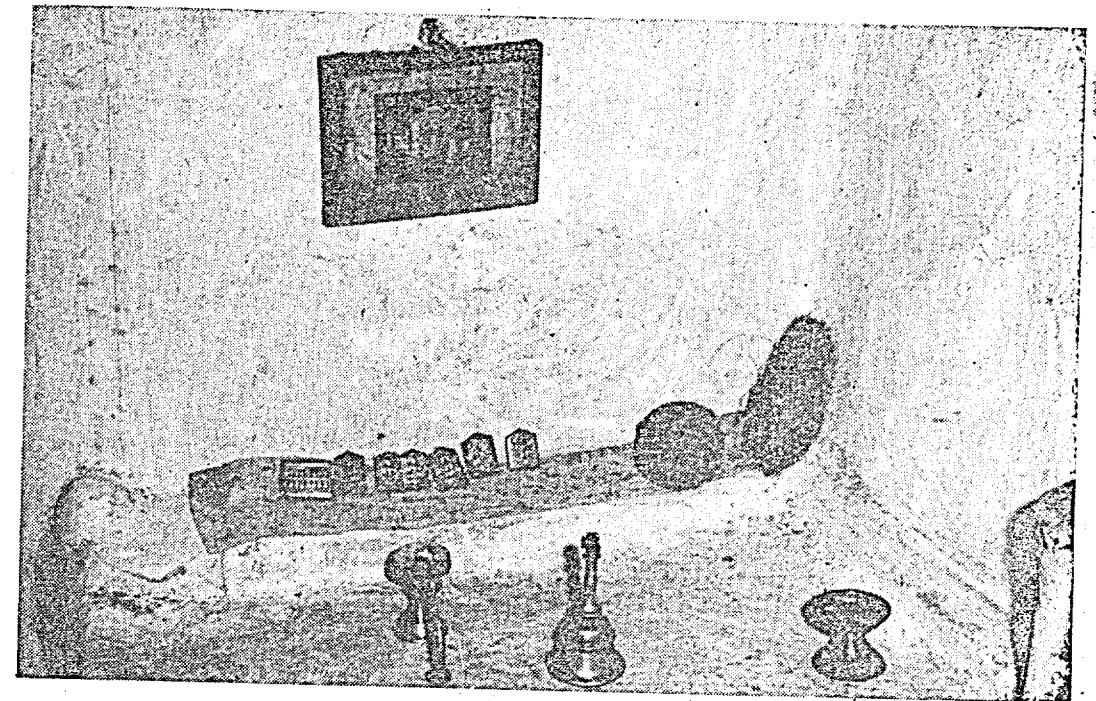
2 (b). Profile

56 (f)

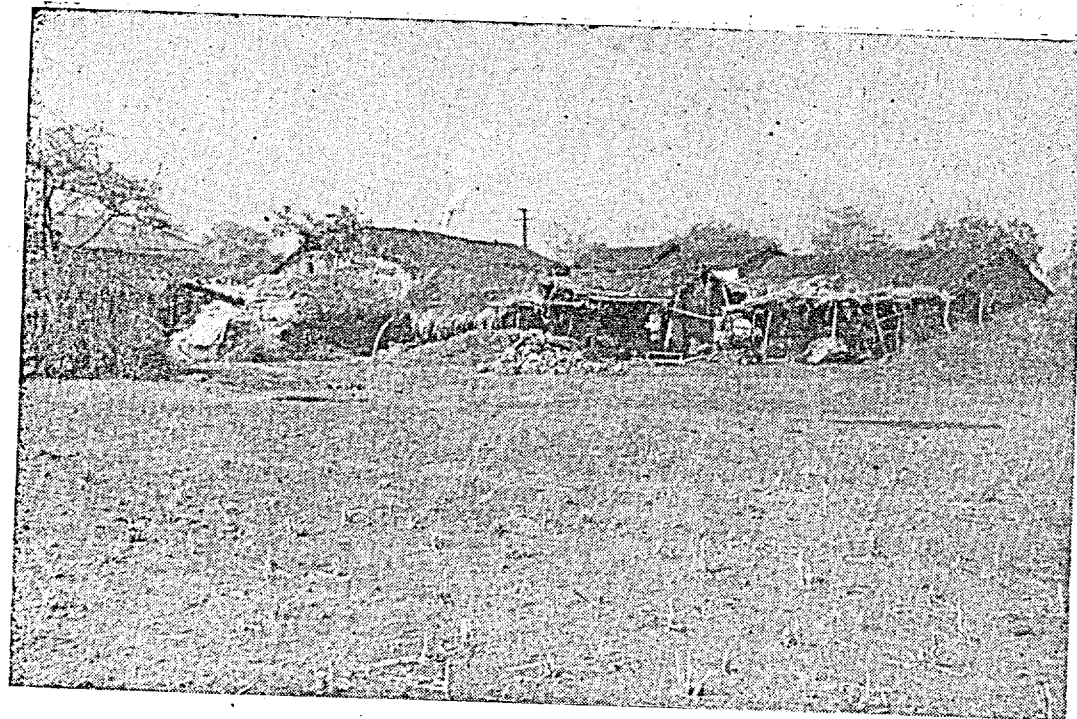


5. View of a Dhor galli (street)

56 (g)



7. Objects of worship in a household



6. Distant view of a Dhor settlement

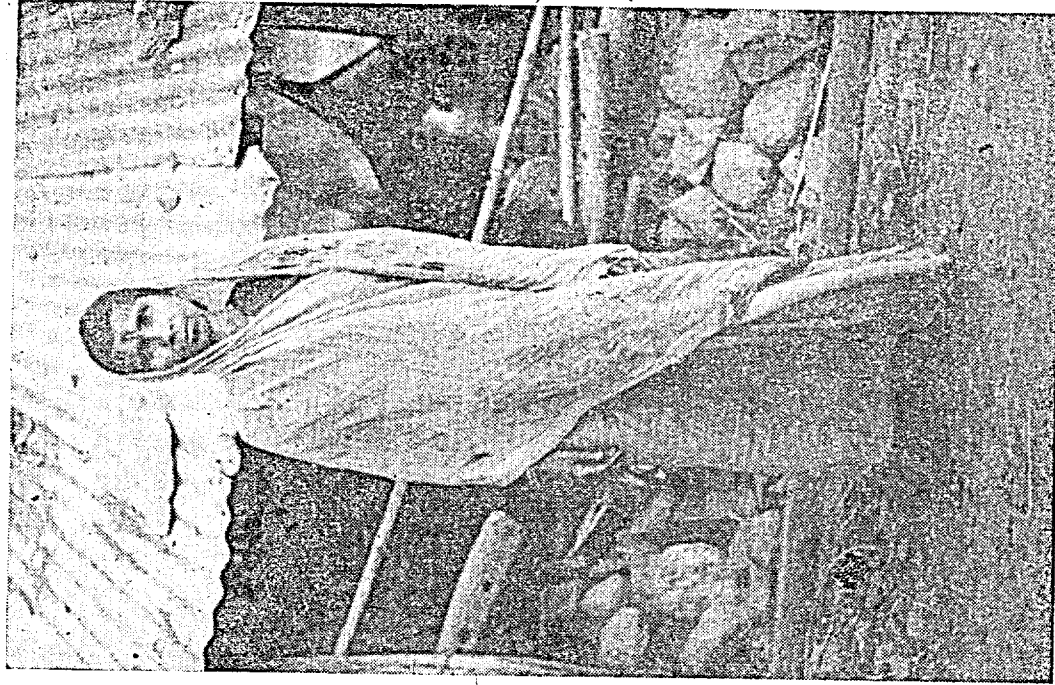


8. Dhors: males at work



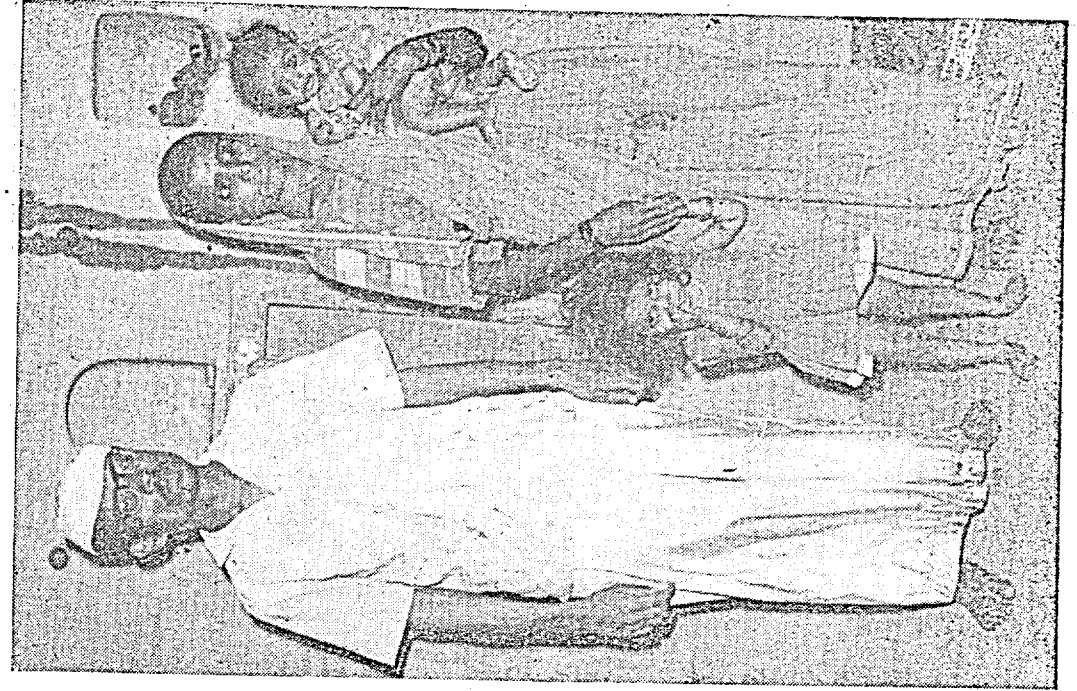
2 (c). As viewed from the back

56 (d)

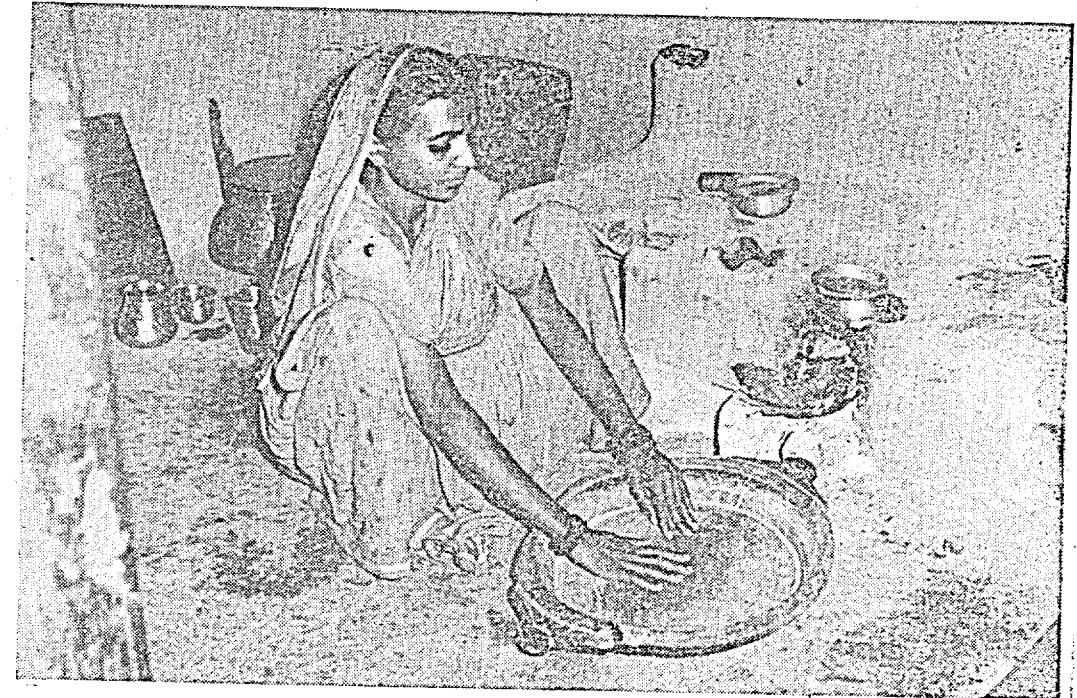


2 (d). Full size

56 (e)



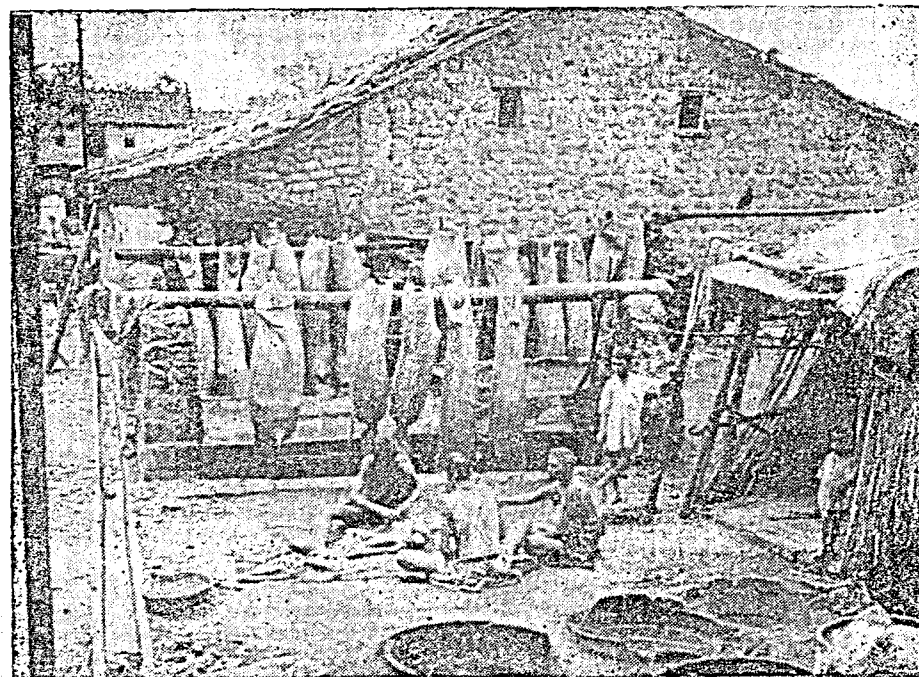
3. Couple with a child



4. Housewife preparing *Roti* in the kitchen



9. Female: beating Babul bark, one of the important ingredients used for tanning



10. Tanned hides hung for drying near their houses

skin of a cow costs about Rs. 30 and of a buffalo Rs. 40. Tanning of skins is a tedious and prolonged process. The raw skin is soaked in lime water in an earthen pot called *khooni* for four days. On the fifth day it is taken out and the hairs and flesh are removed. Then this skin is put in water mixed with pounded *babul* (*Acacia Arabica*) bark and *alale* or myrabalans (*Terminalia chebula*). After three days the skin is taken out and dried in the sun. The women assist men in such sundry jobs as pounding the babul bark, mixing lime etc. Tanning is brisk all the year round, but the cold weather is better than the hot, as in hot weather the skins rot quickly when dipped in water, and are spoiled. Most of the Dhors carry on their trade with borrowed capital. A minimum of Rs. 200 is required for the purchase of skins, lime and myrobalans. The tanned leathers are sold in towns and in nearby shandies. In a week 5 to 6 skins are tanned by a household. Each tanned skin is sold at Rs. 40 to Rs. 60 depending upon the quality and a profit of Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 on each tanned skin is made. The average earning of a household per week is about Rs. 40. The high cost of skins and scarcity of capital have forced many a household to give up tanning. They work on leather for advance orders by the customers. Now-a-days the demand for leather buckets and saddles is dwindling owing to the installation of pump-sets and horses going out of use.

The cultivation practices of Dhors do not differ from those prevailing in the region. Both wet and dry cultivation are common in the Belgaum division and dry cultivation is obtaining to a greater extent in the Gulbarga division. In dry lands jowar, bajra, groundnut and cotton are grown. In irrigated lands vegetables,

hybrid maize, sugar-cane and banana etc., are raised. The sources of irrigation are canals and wells. All the cultivating households own agricultural implements such as plough, seed-drill, hoe, leveller, pick-axes, harrow, spade, weeders, etc. None of the households seem to be in possession of modern implements like iron plough, sprayers, etc.

They do not have any community forest for their exclusive use. They also like other communities of the region, have to get bamboos and timber required for house construction from forests after obtaining a licence from the Forest Department.

The cultivators and the agricultural labourers rear livestock. The cultivators keep bullocks, sheep and goat whereas the agricultural labourers rear only a limited number of sheep or goat by way of supplementing their family income and to meet expenditure on such contingencies as festivals, social ceremonies, etc. Those households which are exclusively engaged in tanning generally do not keep livestock but some poultry birds purely for their personal consumption. Generally they do not rear cows and buffaloes as the high caste Hindus are even now loath to purchase milk or its products from these erstwhile untouchables.

All the Dhors in villages and urban areas live in owned houses only. Those in service occupations and other immigrants live in rented houses.

Working Force

Details of workers and non-workers among Dhors classified by sex as extracted from Table SCT-I of the 1961 Census are furnished in the table below:—

Dhors

Industrial Classification Workers

	Rural						Urban					
	Persons		Males		Females		Persons		Males		Females	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Total persons	9,614	100.00	4,876	100.00	4,738	100.00	4,730	100.00	2,379	100.00	2,351	100.00
Total workers	4,091	42.55	2,736	56.11	1,355	28.59	1,628	34.41	1,141	47.96	487	20.70
Workers:—												
(1) As cultivators	1,341	13.95	922	18.90	419	8.84	134	2.83	84	3.53	50	2.12
(2) As Agricultural labourers	1,080	11.24	507	10.39	573	12.09	178	3.76	70	2.95	108	4.60
(3) In Mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting etc.	31	0.33	25	0.50	6	0.14	9	0.20	8	0.33	1	0.4
(4) Household Industry	1,280	13.31	1,049	21.50	231	4.87	660	13.95	504	21.18	156	6.63

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
(5) In manufacturing other than household industry . . .	68	0.70	62	1.27	6	0.14	274	5.80	194	8.16	80	3.40
(6) In construction . . .	8	0.08	8	0.17	..	..	20	0.43	18	0.75	2	0.08
(7) In Trade and Commerce . . .	39	40	31	0.68	8	0.15	95	2.00	73	3.06	22	0.93
(8) In Transport Storage and communications . . .	5	0.06	5	0.10	..	..	31	0.65	31	1.30	..	..
(9) In other services . . .	239	2.48	127	2.60	112	2.36	227	4.79	159	6.70	68	2.90
Non-workers . . .	5,523	57.45	2,140	43.89	3,383	71.41	3,102	65.59	1,238	52.04	1,864	79.30
In special occupations tanning and curing of hides and skins . . .	833		657		176		549		423		126	
Scavenging . . .	1		1		..		2		2		..	

The above table reveals that there are in all 5,719 workers among Dhors out of their total population of 14,344. In other words the working force constitutes 39.87%. The percentage for rural being 42.55% and for urban is 34.41%. In rural areas 13.95% of the population is engaged in cultivation followed by household industry *i.e.* tanning and leather work which accounts for 13.31%. The agricultural labourers constitute 11.24% of the rural population. In the urban areas, the highest percentage of workers (13.95) are engaged in household industry followed by the workers engaged in manufacturing other than household industry. There are more numbers of non-workers among females who constitute only 28.59% of the total working force and from this the conclusion is irresistible that women play less significant role in the economic activities of the community. Among castes of similar status like Mangs and Chalvadis the proportions of females constitute 40% and 43% respectively of the total working force. The percentage of female workers to the total working force for all the scheduled castes in the State works out to 39.5%. Women's activities are confined to domestic chores and rendering partial assistance to men in the tanning work. Next in importance to cultivation and tanning is agricultural labour. More and more men and women are taking to this occupation since the last 10 years due to a perceptible decline in patronage for their hereditary calling, *viz.*, tanning and leather work. The female labourers are employed on such jobs as weeding, transplanting and harvesting while the males are employed for ploughing, digging and doing other items of earth work. They get daily wages either in cash or kind. The female labourer gets about 1.5 kilograms of grains for harvesting, and for the rest of the operations the wages in cash range between rupee one and Rs. 1.25 depending on the seasonal demand for labour. The male agricultural labourers are paid daily wages at

the rate of Rs. 2. The hours of work are from 10 A.M. to 5.30 P.M. with lunch-break of one hour. The wages are settled daily. During the busy seasons of transplantation and harvesting advance payment of wages are made. It was observed in the field that none of the Dhors work as attached agricultural labourer on an annual basis.

Trends of occupational mobility among the Dhors are perceptible as cultivation accounts for major percentage of total workers relegating tanning to a secondary place. Quite a sizeable number of them have also taken up to agricultural labour.

Majority of the Dhors live at a subsistence level. Tanning is of course a paying occupation. But all cannot engage themselves in tanning as capital for them is scarce, and also the availability of raw skins which is to come from the animals slaughtered or those dying is obviously limited. The economic conditions of tanners are better when compared to agricultural labourers. A tanner earns a gross income of about Rs. 40 a week. He is assisted partly by a female. His gross income per month works out to Rs. 160.00. After making an allowance of Rs. 30 towards myrobals, lime and babul bark which are purchased, his net income will be about Rs. 130.00. A male agricultural labourer earns on an average Rs. 2.00 per day and for 25 working days in a month his earnings may total Rs. 50.00. A female agricultural labourer getting an average wage of a rupee per day earns a monthly income of Rs. 25 a month. Thus a simple family of agricultural labourer, when both husband and wife work, will have to make do with Rs. 75.00. Nearly 80% of the income is spent on food, 10% on clothing and the remaining 10% is spent on drinks, fuel, light and non-cereal food items. The cultivating households supplement their earnings with the earnings from subsidiary occupations like tanning and agricultural labour.

IX. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

Conception and safe delivery are considered divine boons. Barrenness and abortion are deemed to be punishments for their past sins. Birth of the first child generally takes place in the parental house of the woman. Subsequent deliveries take place at her husband's house. Pregnancy is decided by the employment of the commonly known classical criteria. The girl is brought to her natal house for the first delivery in the 7th or 9th month after performing a ceremony called *Kuppasa Todisuvudu*, when the parents of the lady present her with a green saree, *choli* and feed her with sweet dishes. Some of the caste people and relations also participate in this function. The husband during the pregnancy does not attend a funeral or carry the bier and also abstains from killing a cobra or any live animals. The pregnant woman is denied chicken, banana and other items of food which are hard to digest. Generally she is not given any special diet.

The delivery normally takes place in a corner of the house screened off by a blanket or a bamboo mat to secure privacy and to provide warmth. Normally the mother of the lady or in her absence, the experienced ladies called *Soolagittis* attend to delivery in the rural areas. Only protracted or complicated cases are taken to hospitals in nearby towns. Vows and offerings or sacrifices are observed to the goddess Satvai. In the urban areas, where the services of midwife are available, the midwife attends. Payment ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 is made for the services rendered by the midwife. Tradition does not fix any remuneration to the *Dais*. The Dhors in the absence of such *dais* among their own caste seek the assistance of *dais* belonging to the castes of Madigas, Holers, Muslims etc. Social status of the caste, however does not come in the way of availing assistance from others in this matter. If the *dai* belongs to their own caste, she attends on the mother and child for 12 days during which period she is provided food. In addition, a nominal payment of Rs. 2 or 3 with a *choli* piece and a coconut is made. She anoints coconut oil to the child, bathes the mother and the child. The art of indigenous midwifery is not hereditary but is mostly learnt in some families from experienced elders. After the delivery the child is put in a winnow and the umbilical cord is cut by the *dai* or midwife with a sickle or knife. The placenta is put in an earthen pot and buried in a pit near the drain adjacent to the bathing place in the frontyard or backyard of the house.

Pollution is observed for 5 or 12 days according to the regional usage. At Kagawad in Chikodi Taluk and Khanapur town of Belgaum District they are reported to be observing pollution for 5 days. In all other places where the field study was made they observe pollution for 12 days. In certain places circumstances also appear to decide its duration. During the period of pollution both the mother and the child are given hot water bath daily. On the 13th day, the house is smeared with cow-dung and all the members of the household take bath after giving a ceremonial bath to the mother and the child. All the household utensils are cleaned before the special dishes like sweet-breads and *payasa* are prepared to feed their relations and other invitees. In the night the paternal aunt or the *dai* puts the child into a new cradle when unwidowed women rock the cradle after announcing the name of the child in its ears loudly thrice. The Lingayat priest *Jangama* is invited to invest the child with *linga* at the time of naming. However, the practice of *linga-dharana* by the *Jangama* was not uniformly prevalent in all the places studied. Sugar and other items of sweets are distributed to all the invitees. The father of the child brings new clothes to the child on the occasion and presents are made to both the child and the mother. The name of the child will usually be the one suggested by the Lingayat or Brahmin priest with reference to the almanac. They suggest the first alphabet of the name to be given to the child. Then the parents give one of the names of their deceased elders. The common male names are Dondeba, Nagappa, Mahadeva, Vittala, Mallappa, Basappa, Fakirappa, Krishna, Hanumanth, Yellappa, Kallappa, Shivappa etc., and the female names are Tangavva, Gangevva, Tulja bai, Lakshmibai, Parvatavva, Yamunabai, Chanda bai, Kamala bai etc. The child begins to suckle milk from the mother from the third day after birth. During the first three days the child is administered castor-oil and honey. Soon after birth the child is washed with hotwater. The weaning period comes usually after one, and half years or till another conception. The child may be taken out of the house after one month and the child is initiated to food after 4 months. The child is given boiled rice, *bakri* and cow's milk. On account of their low economic conditions they do not use baby foods like Glaxo or Amul milk powder even when the mother has no breast milk. The child is given oil bath on alternative days for three months. The child is trained to micturate outside bed when it is about one year old.

During the period of pollution the mother is given boiled rice along with dhall curry. She is not allowed to use vegetables for one month and fruits, like bana-

nas, papaya, mangoes, jack fruit etc., are strictly avoided. She uses only hot water for three months. She does not attend to normal household work for three months in the case of first delivery and for one month during subsequent deliveries. She returns to her husband's house during the third or the fifth month.

They generally prefer male issues, and consider female child a liability. The birth of a child is regarded as a divine boon. In rural parts they have little knowledge of birth control. In urban parts though they possess the knowledge they are shy of the society to use contraceptives.

Tonsorial ceremony is performed for both the sexes during the third or the fifth month. The child is taken to some holy place or the village temple along with near relatives and hair is cut by the maternal uncle who also presents to the child new clothes and to its mother a *choli* piece. The maternal uncle is presented with 30 paise and a piece of dry cocoanut. Puncturing of earlobes by the *Pathar* (of gold smith's caste) takes place during the third year. The nose may be pierced at any age.

(b) Puberty

On attainment of puberty a girl is considered impure for 5 days during which period she is given bath daily. She is confined to a corner of the house to segregate her from the rest of the members. She may enter the house on the sixth day after being purified by a bath

and sprinkling of cow's urine over her head. For 9 to 11 days she is seated on *hase* (wooden plank or bench) when the married women wave *arati* and sing songs. Betel nuts and leaves and sweet preparations are distributed to the invitees. The girl, during this period, is fed with nutritious food like milk, ghee, sweet cakes and other dishes. If the girl is married, the husband is also seated by her side on *hase* on the last day. The husband has to bring her a new saree, a *choli* piece, flowers etc., for the occasion. The father-in-law presents him with a new dhoti and a turban. The consummation ceremony takes place on the 5th day in the case of girls attaining puberty after the marriage. During monthly periods the lady keeps herself segregated outside the house for two days and takes bath daily. On the third day she takes a purificatory bath and then only attends to her normal household work.

(c) Marriage

The Dhors regard sex-relations before marriage as criminal and such practices are publicly disgraced, the offender being punished with excommunication even. Extra-marital and premarital relationship of a girl with the lower castes entails loss of caste. Early marriages are prevalent to some extent. The girls usually get married after puberty and the normal age for the girl to marry is 16 years and above, while the boys get married after 20 years of age. According to the 1961 Census the statistics about the marital status of their population is as follow:

Marital status according to Age-groups

Age-group		Total		Never married		married		Widowed		Divorced		Unspecified status	
		Persons	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
All Age-groups	14,344	7,255	7,089	3,915	3,039	3,100	3,301	210	714	23	32	7	3
0—14	6,312	3,188	3,124	3,137	2,869	45	251	1	1	1	1	4	..
15—44	5,711	2,890	2,821	756	143	2,050	2,582	66	170	15	26	3	..
45+	2,220	1,177	1,043	22	27	1,005	468	143	543	7	4	..	1
Age not stated	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..

During the 1961 Census only 45 males and 251 females in the age-group of 0-14 are returned as married which goes to support the existence of child marriage to a limited degree. Divorces and separations are also few there being only 23 divorced males and 32 divorced females for a population of 14,344. Though custom permits widow remarriage the existence of as

many as 714 widows, among whom 170 are in the age-group of 15-44, shows that they much demur to fully avail of this permissible privilege.

The offer of marriage generally comes from the parents of the boy. Before the negotiations are started, the parents of the boy ascertain through their

caste people and friends, the social and economic status of the parents of the girl. Only after being satisfied of the desirability of the alliance, the parents of the boy with some elder castemen go to girl's place for making a formal proposal, when both parties agree to this marriage. After the confirmation the bride-price is negotiated. Formerly the bride price *theravu* was fixed by custom at Rs. 50 but now it is between Rs. 100 and 300. Bride price is not paid if the boy is educated and is in Government employment. Instead, the girl's parents pay dowry to the boy. The Dhors do not marry within the same *Bedagu* or *devaks* (clan). In matrimony they have to avoid girls among their agnatic relations and others born in their own group the affinity to the group being traced through females. Monogamy is observed but there is no serious objection to polygyny. A man takes a second wife only when the first wife is sterile. In Chikodi town two persons were found to be having more than one wife for reasons of barrenness. Only marriages by payment are common though in certain cases marriages by exchange take place on grounds of convenience. Cross-cousin marriages are in vogue among them. A man can marry his sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter and mother's own brother's daughter. Bride price is nominal and formal in such marriages. Marriage between parallel cousins is taboo.

Marriages are contracted only with known families. They follow more or less the wedding rites of Lingayats and Marathas.

After the marriage is settled a ceremony called *Bhatagi* or *Kunkuma Sastra* takes place. This ceremony is performed on an auspicious day suggested by a Lingayat or Brahmin priest a fortnight or a month before the actual wedding. Formerly when child marriages were in vogue, this ceremony was being performed one year before the marriage. On this occasion the parents of the boy go with some caste elders to the girl's house and present her with a new saree, a piece of *choli* cloth, a pocket of vermilion powder, kernels of dry cocoanuts, betel leaves and nuts. By putting sugar or jaggery into the mouth of the girl, betrothal is declared before the castemen. On this day they would also fix the date for the marriage in consultation with a Brahmin or Lingayat priest. Marriage ceremony is performed for three days. First day's ceremony is called *Arishana*; second day's ceremony is called *Akki Kalu* and third day's ceremony is called *Dibbana* or *Nagoli*. The marriage generally takes place in the house of the bridegroom. On the first day the boy and the girl are given bath in their respective houses. Castemen and relations

are fed in the noon. By the afternoon the bride's party leaves for the bridegrooms in bullock carts. On reaching the place they are received by the groom's party at the village entrance and sweet drinks are offered. Accompanied by music they are taken to the groom's house. Thereafter the castemen and relations are fed with sumptuous meals. Economically well off families slaughter a goat or sheep as an offering to the family deity and feed the caste people.

On the next day the wedding ceremony begins with the bringing of *Atti* or *Umbar* (*Ficus Glomerata*) or *Basari* (*Ficus speciosa*) twig which would be fixed as *Muhurtha kamba* or *Halu kamba* an auspicious pole in the marriage pendal. These twigs which are deemed sacred are brought by the maternal uncle of the boy. They are first placed in the Maruti temple in their settlement and offered *puja*. Whereafter they are brought to the marriage booth accompanied by music. New pots are also brought from the potter's house and placed in the marriage pendal. Five big and five small pots filled with water bearing vermilion and turmeric marks are placed at each of the 4 corners of the pendal and one at the centre. A yellow cotton thread is passed five times round their necks. The bride and the groom are given oil bath. If the marriage is performed in the bride's house, the bridegroom is led on horse back in procession to the temple of Maruti. His brother goes in front to the house of the bride and returns with a turban for the bridegroom. On the bridegroom entering the marriage booth, rice mixed with curds is waved about him and thrown away as an offering to the evil spirits. After passing into the booth he is given a bath and brought to the milk-post. An altar is also raised for the bride and bridegroom to stand at the time of tying *Tali*. Lingayat or Brahmin priests conduct the marriage service. The bride and groom are asked to stand in front of the milk-post facing each other. The bride stands on a stone slab and the groom on a folded leather rope called *Mini*. A curtain *Jamanika* is held between them so that they may not see each other. The figure of *Nandi* (Bull) and swastika are drawn on the curtain with a turmeric root. *Bashinga* (brow horn) are tied to both on their foreheads. Five cotton threads are twisted into a cord and bits of turmeric are tied to each end. The cord is cut into two, one being fastened round the bridegroom's right wrist and the other round the bride's left wrist. The priest chants lucky texts or *mangalashtaks* and throw *Akshate* (lucky rice) over the couple. The *Tali* is then tied round the bride's neck by the bridegroom. A toe ring is also given to the bride to be worn. Then the curtain is withdrawn. The hems of their garments are knotted together, and they walk five times

have discarded it. Even at present some of them have reported that they worship *Linga* but keep it with the photos of the family deities to be worn only on occasions of marriage.

The Dhors worship the images of the elders embossed on metal plates along with other deities. They also keep nearby a *golka* or metal container into which coins are put whenever vows are taken. In every residential locality they have their own temple or shrine. They worship sweet basil plant. A platform is built for it in the frontyard. An elderly male member of the family worships this plant everyday morning after washing his face, and bows before the sun. They consider Ambabai and Yellamma as their supreme deities. Though they do not perform community worships to these deities, they freely participate in such worships when Holers and Mangs organise it.

In the district of North Kanara and parts of Belgaum the family deity is worshipped in the form of unhusked cocoanut. In times of epidemic, they kill a sheep or goat to propitiate the family deity. In the villages the Dhors are not allowed to enter temples of other Hindus, but no such restrictions are prevailing in towns. Though non-vegetarians they neither kill animals nor take meat in the month of Kartika.

The Dhors who are of a highly religious bent of mind often undertake pilgrimage to Pandharapur, Tuljapur, Saundatti, Jejuri, Tirupati etc. The Dhors of Bijapur, Dharwar and Belgaum districts are mostly the devotees of goddess Yellamma popularly known as Saundatti Yellamma. A fair is held almost every month at this shrine and a big annual fair is held during November-December. The Dhors of Gulbarga and Bidar districts visit Gulbarga town to offer prayer at Shri Sharana Basaveswara temple, and also visit Sholapur to offer prayer at Shri Siddarameswara temple.

They observe all the Hindu festivals. Yugadi, Nagar Panchami, Navaratri, Deepavali, Holi and Vinayaka Chaturthi are important among them. On all full-moon and new-moon days they wash their houses with cow dung and take bath. On every new-moon day they worship their tools and implements. On Yugadi day they dress themselves up in new clothes, offer worship to god Mahadeva and prepare sweet dishes. During Nagar Panchami, their women offer worship to ant-hills. During Ganesha Chaturthi they worship Ganesha over a period of five days. During Navaratri or Dasara festival they light lamps called *Nandadeepa* in their houses for nine days, worship their implements and sacrifice a fowl or a goat on the 10th day. At the

time of Deepavali they take oil bath and eat sweet dishes like *shamige Payasa*, *Huggi* etc.

The Dhors follow the Hindu law of inheritance. Only male members inherit the property. They have belief in sooth-saying and witchcraft. When anyone is possessed or haunted by ghost, they call in a *dev-rishi* (seer) skilled in incantations and charm. The seer visits the sick person, burns frankincense before him, repeats a charm with a handful of ash and rubs it on the sick person's brow.

XI. LEISURE, RECREATION AND CHILD-PLAY

Dhors are economically and socially backward. Both males and females have to toil from dawn to dusk for making even a marginal living and are thus left with little leisure. As most of them are illiterate they can think of no organised way of spending their leisure except by gossiping. They do have some leisure during the slack season between February and April. Tanning is also not brisk in the hot months of May and June. Festivals which are mostly timed to fall in slack season for the benefit of the farming community are the occasions when Dhors also indulge in such recreational activities as visiting cinemas in the nearby towns, and *Bailatas* organised on such occasions in the villages. The women-folk sing songs at the time of transplanting paddy or threshing grains and also while grinding grains. In some villages they sing *Bhajan*s in groups regularly. In the course of field study such *Bhajana Mandalis* were found in Aland in Gulbarga District and Chickabevanoor of Indi taluk in Bijapur Districts. Men and Women sing folk songs in the threshing yards during the harvesting seasons. On some festival days like Panchami the men play *Kolata* for five days. As the Dhors are considered untouchables they are not allowed to take part in the *Bailatas* staged in the villages by high caste Hindus. Only a few people who are literate read newspapers and listen to radio programmes in the village Panchayat Office. They frequently visit cattle fair and *Jatras*. In the past, about 25 years ago, they used to take immense pleasure in drinking toddy and most of their time in the evenings was spent near toddy and liquor booths. They also enjoy in ramfights and cockfights. Their children play games like *Chilli Dandu*, *Huttuttu*, *Khokho*, *Buguri* hide and seek and *Kuntala*. Their children however refrain from mingling with the children of high caste Hindus.

XII. INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Dhors claim that they are superior to Chalavadis, Mangs, Samagars etc., and they do not inter-dine

with them. The food prepared by a Dhor is accepted by the Mangs, Bhangis and Samagars.

The Brahmins, Lingayats, Marathas, Kurubas etc., do not accept food or water touched by the Dhors. They have no access to public wells and temples in the villages. In most of the places they have their own wells. The village barbers and washermen do not serve them. In villages their own castemen attend to hair-cutting needs.

Lingayat *Jangamas*, officiate in their marriage and death ceremonies. They are served in separate tumblers and glasses in the village tea shops. The social rigidity and discrimination that was being practised all along against them is slowly waning. Their children go to schools and mingle freely with others. Though they live on the fringes of the villages and towns they are not totally segregated. Their services are sought after by agriculturists for making leather buckets and agricultural labour.

XIII. INTRA COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Many sub-castes exist among them in different parts of the country. But in the course of field study only Kakkayya Dhors, Lingayat Dhors and Hindustani or Rajpur Dhors were come across. Of these, Lingayat Dhors claim higher social status. Inter dining is not prevailing among the different sub-castes. But restrictions exist in the matter of connubial relationship. These sub-castes are based not on religion or occupation but on region.

XIV. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The Dhors generally do not have any strong and elaborate socio-political organisation like caste Panchayats, only in Khanapur and Savanoor towns such traditional caste Panchayat were noticed. In other places, the caste disputes were said to be referred to informal panchayats attended by elder men of their caste. However, since about the last 20 years sanctity for the decisions of these panchayats is very much lost. But yet the Dhors constitute a well organised group. In each village they have an influential leader. In places where the traditional Panchayats exist, the head of the caste is called *Budavant* or *Patel*. He is assisted by *Ghatekar* whose duty it is to arrange for the meetings of the caste Panchayat. The heads of all households of the caste attend these meetings. Above these caste panchayats there is regional caste council called *Kattemane* presided over by *Yajamana* or *Setty*

also a member of the caste (or it may even be a Lingayat or Maratha). Caste disputes pertaining to division of property, widow remarriage, adultery, separation and divorce are decided in these councils and persons found guilty are usually fined, the fine amount ranging from Rs. 1.25 to Rs. 25. In the past the persons committing adultery with lower castes were being excommunicated. If the dispute cannot be settled at the caste level, it is taken to the village level, and then to the regional level.

Shoe beating, adultery and divorce are the common complaints dealt by these caste councils. If a widow should conceive she is excommunicated. Pre-marital relations with a person of the same caste is lightly viewed and the council insists on their marrying. A man beaten by shoe has to undergo a purification ceremony before his admittance to the caste. He has to go to a Jangama who gives sacred water (*thirtha*) after slightly burning his tongue with some stick. The fine amounts realised are usually utilised either for feeding to the caste people or on *Puja* to some deity in their settlement.

XV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

Majority of Dhors are illiterate pursuing agricultural labour, agriculture and tanning as their main occupations. They do not have any organisation of their own devoted to the cause of improving their social and economic conditions. Their main problem is one of getting lands for cultivation, and capital for carrying on the tanning trade. They are making frantic efforts to get released forest and grazing lands in their favour for cultivation purposes. But these efforts have proved futile as the lands available from these sources are limited and stiff opposition is encountered from the villagers to the moves. They do not have among them leaders of status who would champion their cause with an effective voice. The traditional leaders have become effete with the emergence of a new elite outside their community.

The Social Welfare Department is endeavouring to improve their economic, social and educational status. Many agricultural colonies have been established for the amelioration of the scheduled castes in general. But none of the Dhor was seen to have taken advantage of these benevolent programmes. Even the hostel facilities made available by the Govt. for Scheduled Castes are not availed of by them for fear of their boys having to mess in common with lower caste boys of Mangs and Holers. There was not a single Dhor student in the Scheduled Castes hostel of Aland

round the altar. After that they go to the house to offer prayer and bow to the family deities. They make obeisance to the caste elders. Then they are seated on a woolen blanket or a cot, when the women wave *arati*. Friends and relations of the couple give presents to them. Then the couple play games like *Ungura Adisuvudu* (searching the ring) and *Kusu Adisuvudu* (rocking the cradle). The marriage ceremony ends with a feast to the invitees. Generally food items like *Holige* (sweet cakes) or *gugri* (sweet wheat gruel) rice and vegetable curry are prepared for this occasion. During that night the couple are taken in procession on a decorated bullock cart or *Tanga*. The procession is called *varat*. This procession is taken through the streets of their settlement to the temple of Maruti where the couple offer worship to the deity. For all the ceremonies connected with marriage beating of *Halge* (bell-less tambourines) and music from pipers are indispensable. Madigas and Chalavadis are employed for beating *Halges* and Korars are employed as pipers. At the time the couple enter the house on their return after *Varata*, *Vaddike* is placed on the shoulder of the groom and his sister allows them to enter the house only after securing a promise that they would give their daughter in marriage to her son.

The third day's ceremony is called *Dibbana* or *Nagoli*. The bride and the groom are asked to pour on each other *Okali* or turmeric water and bath is thereafter given to them. The close relations of the bride and the groom are given special dinner consisting of sweet dishes. The couple leave on that day for the bride's place if the marriage is performed at the bridegroom's place and *vice versa*. After staying there for five days he returns home. Consummation of marriage takes place during the same month and if it is a pre-puberty marriage on the 16th day of the girl attaining puberty.

During the marriage four sarees have to be presented by the bridegroom. One of the sarees is called *Sakhar puda* the saree given at the time of betrothal. Another is called *Haldi sadi* which is worn at the time of rubbing turmeric paste and oil. The third one is called *Lagna Sadi* worn at the time of tying *tali*. The fourth one is called *Tai sadi* to be presented to the mother of the girl. This custom of presenting several sarees appears a regional practice. Several ornaments like *Vali*, *Dabu* etc., are to be presented to the girl at the time of wedding. The priest who conducts the marriage gets Rs. 2.50 in cash, 7 coconuts, 3 to 4 seers of rice, betelnuts and leaves as remuneration. If the marriage is performed at the place of the bride the expenses are shared equally by both the parties.

The remarriage of widows and divorced or separated women is permitted. However the widows are not to marry the agnatic kinsmen of their deceased husband. Widows are married in the same way as virgin girls but for the difference that the ceremony is not elaborate. The expenditure is also less. Widow marriages are also conducted on auspicious days which *Bhat* or *Ayya* fixes. Widow remarriage is called *Udki* and the bride price is payable when demanded. The marriage generally takes place at night or late afternoon. Such marriage is generally attended to by a limited number, who are mostly widows and widowers. The intending couple are seated and anointed with oil and turmeric paste. The widow puts on a new white robe and bodice and her lap is filled. Her brow is marked with red powder. After bath the *tali* is tied to the widow. *Kankana* and *Bashinga* are not used. Music and beating of *Halges* are also discarded. Generally widows are married to widowers. The remarried widows however, do not enjoy the status of *sumangali* (unwidowed lady). She cannot participate in the performance of rituals and other religious ceremonies. The consent of caste panchayat is necessary for the parties to enter into alliance. A fine ranging from Rs. 25 to Rs. 50 is also collected from them to feed the caste-men. A bachelor wishing to marry a widow is first married to a *rui* tree.

Divorce and separation are permitted on the grounds of misconduct, adultery, impotency etc. The sanction of caste panchayat is indispensable for effecting divorce. Divorce (*Soda chiti*) is given by the caste panchayat, after warning the party twice. Some pass divorce deeds (*Soda chiti*) while others break a straw into two parts in the presence of *panchas*. A woman divorced for adultery with a member of her own caste or of a higher caste is allowed to remarry like widows. A woman divorced for adultery with a member of lower caste is excommunicated. The divorced lady has to return *Tali* and other ornaments and her parents are asked to return *Thera* (bride price). Many a time divorce is preceded by desertion on the part of the wife. In such cases the woman lives with another man before divorce is sanctioned. In such cases the seducer is asked to pay the *Thera* and marriage expenses to her husband.

(d) Death Customs

The Dhors like the other Hindus have belief in the philosophy that soul is eternal and body only is perishable, and that death should follow birth as surely as night follows day. They have firm faith in the existence of heaven and hell and that the soul after death

should enter either depending upon the merits of ones deeds in this world. Persons committing sins are said to be consigned to purgatory of hell while those doing good are sent to enjoy the bliss of heaven. The span of life is believed to be pre-ordained.

The dead are generally buried. Only the dead bodies of pregnant women and lepers are cremated. Generally the married are buried in the sitting posture, while the unmarried are lowered down in the pit. It is said that in the district of North Kanara and some parts of Belgaum they cremate the married. The dying person is removed to the front of the house and seated against the wall when the kins pour water or milk into his mouth. When life is extinct the message is sent to all relations. Generally Mangs and Holeyas carry the death message. After the relations arrive the corpse is anointed with a little oil and bathed in warm water. The corpse is wrapped in a new white cloth. Flower garlands are put round its neck, and the forehead is marked with *Vibhuti*. The Jangam is invited and he puts some basil leaves in the mouth. The corpse is carried on a bier or in an old blanket. The married are carried in a sitting posture accompanied by music. The eldest son acts as the chief mourner and heads the funeral procession carrying an earthen fire-pot or lighted incense sticks. If the deceased is survived by his wife she has to remove the *Tali*, break the bangles and remove the *Kunkum* mark. The bier is carried generally by the agnatic relations and the corpse is placed on the ground on reaching half-way to the burial ground. Then the carriers interchange their positions and a coconut is also broken. On reaching the burial ground the corpse is lowered into the pit dug by the Holers. Then the Jangam places a piece of gold in basil leaves in the corpse's mouth and pours some water. *Bilapatre* leaves are placed on its head by the Jangam keeping his left leg on the head of the corpse and he announces that the dead has gone to heaven. The chief mourner with a pot containing water goes round the pit thrice and breaks the pot. He first puts a handful of earth in the pit followed by others till the pit is completely filled. Then three stones are placed on the grave to prevent wild animals meddling with the body. The burial over the party returns home after taking a bath or a wash in a pond, tank or stream. The place where death occurred is washed with cow dung, and a copper vessel containing water is kept at that place. All those who accompanied the corpse to the grave come to the house of the deceased and get themselves sprinkled with water from a *garike* (a kind of grass) blade dipped in copper vessel.

On the third day the chief mourner, the bearers of the corpse and some agnatic kins go to the graveyard to offer *Ede* (cooked rice, bread and other food items placed in a plantain leaf) and to pour milk over the grave in the name of the deceased. They wait for the crows to pick up these eatables and then return home. On that day they also whitewash the house, take bath and prepare food in new earthen pots. They kill a goat to feed their caste people in the night.

They observe pollution for three days. On to 9th or 11th or 12th day, an emblem of the deceased is embossed on a silver or copper plate and worshipped with the household deity. On that day also they feed their caste people. They perform the annual death ceremony *Mhal* or *Shraddha* in the month of September on the full-moon day of *Bhadrapada* month or in the month of *Chaitra*, when the images of all the deceased are worshipped and *Ede* is offered to crows in the names of all the deceased ancestors. Funeral feast is not given to the caste people in the case of the death an inauspicious moment *rugi* or some other grain is sprinkled along the route of the funeral procession. The belief is that the malign spirit or the ghost of the deceased will not be able to collect the fallen grain and reach the home of the deceased to do harm. A fowl is killed if a woman dies in pregnancy. They do not raise any memorials for the dead. In the case of the death of the aged they raise a mound on the grave and a twig of a tree is planted in the name of the deceased.

X. RELIGION

The Dhors are Hindus, and highly religious minded. They do not have any spiritual leaders and *Mathas* of their own, but pay allegiances to the Lingayat *Matha* and *Swamijis*. They worship both *Shaivite* and *Vaishnavite* gods. They may, to a degree, be considered animists since they worship spirits and offer fowls and goats to their gods and goddesses. The deities they worship are Mahadeva, Basavesvara, Pandharinath, Vitoba, Kandoba, Tulja Bai, Amba Bhavani, Yellamma, Margamma, Durgamma, Dyamavva, etc. They also worship other Hindu gods like Venkataramana of Tirupati, Maruti etc., and go on pilgrimage to Tirupati. Dhors are said to have been converted to Shaivism by Basaveswara and were invested with *Linga*. With the passage of time and the decline of Shaivite influence having most of the Dhors who once wore *linga* having found the consequential restrictions on meat eating and the killing of animals incompatible with their customary way of life

town whose inmates totalled 67. Agriculturists and artisans are given grants under the National Extension Scheme to purchase livestock, tools and implements. In village Chickabevanoor of Indi Taluk three artisans were given grants ranging between Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 each in 1962 for tanning and carpentry. There is a Scheduled Castes Housing Co-operative Society at Aland but no Dhor is a member mainly on account of his ignorance. The remedy appears to lie in giving wide publicity to the objectives of the society. The Khadi and Village Industries Board is also doing good work by way of advancing loans to the artisans through Co-operative Societies. Leather-workers Co-operative Society at Nipani in Chikodi Taluk which was started in 1945 was working well till 1966 and had a membership of 109. This Society was engaged in the tanning of skins and the manufacture of leather goods, thus creating employment opportunities for Dhors. In Chikodi town there is Nav-Yug Leather Workers Co-operative Society with a membership of 40. The members belong to Khasab and Dhor castes. At Kerur and Sadalga villages in Chikodi Taluk such Societies have recently been registered but they have yet to start functioning, as the Khadi and Village

Industries Board has not granted loans towards the working capital. The response from this caste to the training imparted in the Industrial Training Institutes is poor. Their main grievance is that the stipend of Rs. 30 per trainee is inadequate. Community centres with radiosets intended for the enlightenment of Scheduled Castes were seen to be working at Chikodi and Aland where Dhors live in quite a sizeable number.

There is a perceptible change in their social and economic life during the last 20 years. Since 10 years they are allowed to enter temples freely and are also getting the services of barbers and washermen as observed in Chikodi town. The unrestricted use by all Scheduled Castes including Dhors of public wells and taps, and their being permitted to enter hotels in towns is a progressive and encouraging sign. The consumption of toddy by them has very much decreased. They are aware of the various ameliorative measures introduced for their betterment. There are promising indications of their progress in the field of education. They are totally found to be a hard-working and peace loving lot.

HALLEER

HALLEER

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Halleers have been notified as a Scheduled Caste according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Lists) Modification Order, 1956, in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara of Mysore State. By the same order they have been classified as a Scheduled Caste throughout Maharashtra State except in the districts of Buldhana, Akola, Amravati, Yeotmal, Wardha, Nagpur, Bhandara, Chanda, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Nanded, Bhir, Osmanabad, Rajura and also throughout Gujarat State except in the Rajkot Division and the district of Kutch. The Halleers residing in the taluks of Kumta, Honavar and Bhatkal of Mysore State call themselves only 'Halleers' and those residing in the taluks of Karwar and Ankola call themselves Halleer Vajantris. According to Enthoven, "The Halleers in Karwar style themselves Vajantris, the general term for musicians and refuse to have any connection with their brethren in Gokarn, Hiregutti and Hegde. These so called Vajantris declare that the rest of the Halleers rank with the impure castes, and are not allowed to play at temples and at the thread or marriage ceremonies of Brahmins, being employed only by the lower castes." (Vol. II, Bombay, 1922 P. 44).

The members of this caste are referred to in the Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency as:—"Halleer Vajantris, a class of musicians numbering 1732, of whom 866 are males and 866 females are found in Bad, Shiddar, Shiveswar, Majali and Kadwad in Karwar; in Ankola and in Karki and Haldipur in Honnavar." (Vol. XV, Part I—Kanara P. 317). Halleers are found in considerable numbers in Kumta and Honavar taluks. *Vajantri* in Konkani and Marathi languages means a musician. Halleers are said to be hereditary musicians and it is for this reason that they are known as Halleer Vajantris in Karwar and Ankola taluks. There is also another caste called Vajantris in Karwar and Ankola taluks who deny any connection with the Halleers of Kumta, Honavar and Bhatkal taluks. The customs of the Vajantris also differ considerably from those of Halleers, so much so, that to a casual observer, these two appear to be quite distinct castes. The Vajantris have Konkani as their mother-tongue whereas the Halleers speak Kannada. The Vajantris claim social precedence over Halleers and state that they do not have intermarriages with the Halleers and that they also do not interdine. Further, Vajantris are not so much degraded socially as Halleers and they have neither been classified as a Scheduled Caste—nor shown as a synonym in the President's Order. Due to the similarity of occupations some of the Halleers might have tried to up-grade themselves by adopting the surname of Vajantris. Again, some of the Vajan-

tris, in order to gain advantages and some benefits they enjoy by being Scheduled, might be trying to call themselves Halleer Vajantris. However, the following points may be noted in this respect: (1) Halleers are found in Bhatkal, Honavar and Kumta taluks whereas Vajantris are found in Karwar and Ankola taluks (2) Vajantris refuse to accept that they have any kind of connection with the Halleers of the Honavar, Kumta and Bhatkal taluks (3) Vajantris speak Konkani whereas the Halleers speak Kannada (4) Vajantris claim that they do not interdine and intermarry with Halleers (5) Vajantris are not held impure and have access to public temples, wells etc., whereas Halleers are held impure and are denied access to public temples, wells etc. The local people distinguish the hereditary musicians of other castes like Devlis by calling the musicians coming from the Halleer caste as Halleer Vajantris.

A study of the birth and death register of Shedgeri village in Ankola taluk provides some interesting information as to how the name Halleer slowly changed to Vajantri. The caste of a child born to one Khemu, in March, 1881, has been shown as Halleer. In March 1885 another child by name Ganga born to one Ganesh belonging to the Halleer caste has been shown as Halleer Vajantri. In March 1885, a child by name Tulsi was born to one Narayan of this caste and the caste of the child has been shown as Vajantri. In June 1896 a child by name Gangu born to one Lingu has been mentioned as Vajantri Halleer and from 1900 onwards all the birth and death entries in this region relating to Halleers show the caste name as Vajantri. These details to some extent strengthen the view that Vajantris of Karwar and Ankola belonged to the caste Halleer about 80 years ago.

The Vajantris of Karwar intermarry with the Vajantris of Ankola. They state that they have no connection with the Halleers of the other taluks. However, in the course of field investigation it was reported in Hiregutti village of Kumta taluk that a girl from the Vajantri family from Karwar taluk had been married to a Halleer boy from Hiregutti about 50 years back. However, at present, the distinction between them is very wide and they almost function as two distinct castes.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

The total population of the Halleers in the State is 1721. The Halleers are mostly found in the coastal district of North Kanara. The distribution of their

rural population in North Kanara district is as follows:

Taluk		No. of persons	Males	Females
1	Kumta	468	258	210
2	Honavar	460	215	245
3	Ankola	125	60	65
4	Bhatkal	163	73	90
5	Siddapur	181	..	181
6	Supa	41	..	41
7	Yellapur	14	..	14
8	Sirsi	29	..	29
9	Haliyal	12	..	12
		1493	606	887

Of the rest of the Halleers (228) 214 are returned from Belgaum district where most of them (211) are urban dwellers and the rest are urban dwellers in North Kanara district.

In Kumta taluk of North Kanara District, Halleers are in considerable number in the villages of Hiregutti, Yennemadi, Kagal, Baad and Morba. In Honavar taluk, they reside mainly in Manki, Kudrige, Horangadi, Idgunji, Jawalkakki, Balkur, Hadinbal and Karwa villages. In Bhatkal taluk they are found in the villages of Talgod, Bailur, Murudeswar, Shirali and Kaikini. In Ankola taluk they are found in Achwe and Balale. Halleers are also said to be residing in Marawante village of Coondapur taluk in South Kanara district where this caste is not treated as a Scheduled Caste. If their regional distribution in 1961 is compared with their distribution in 1881 (as given in the Canara Gazetteer of 1883) it will be seen that they have ventured to move out from their known habitat of North Kanara to Belgaum District. As many as 214 persons of this caste have migrated to Belgaum district in search of labour or educational facilities.

Halleers are found mostly in North Kanara district particularly in the coastal region. The district is divided into two main regions viz., the coastal and the interior upghat region though sometimes it is divided into three belts with an additional central belt added to these two regions. The district lies between 13° 55' and 15° 31' North latitude and 74° 9' and 75° 10' East longitude. The coastal belt is known for its sandy beaches, palm trees and green paddy fields. This belt is a very narrow strip sandwiched between Sahyadri mountains on the east and the Arabian sea on the West. In this region, the seasonal condi-

tions can be divided into four types viz., the three hot months from March to May; the four wet months from June to September; the two hot and damp months in October and November and the three cool months from December to February. The average rainfall is about 130 inches and the major precipitation is in the months of June and July.

The coastal belt is studded with denuded hills and thick forests close in on the eastern border. Paddy and cocoanut form the important agricultural produce. Gokarn, Karwar, Kumta and Ankola are the important centres of social, cultural and economic activities.

III. ORIGIN AND HISTORY

According to the Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Halleers are immigrants from Tirupathi which was formerly included in the North Arcot District of erstwhile Madras Presidency (Vol. XV. Part I p. 138). However, in the course of the field study none of the Halleers contacted claimed this origin. The Vajantris of Karwar and Ankola taluks believe that their ancestors came from the Goa region. Enthoven writes "according to local tradition, when the Sonda chiefs were reigning at Panjim in Goa, the Halleers were their musicians and lived in the village of Kuppali. Originally they are believed to have migrated from Tirupathi in North Arcot. They came to Karwar about 8-10 generations ago and settled at Majali and Baad near Karwar, spreading Southwards as far as Honavar" (Vol. II p. 44). Thus, it would seem that Halleers of Kanara district have migrated to this region from Goa.

Halleers reside mostly in rural areas and in small villages. The name of the caste appears to have been derived from the word 'Halli/(village) meaning residents of villages (In Konkani, as also in Kannada, a village is known by the name Halli). It was also stated in the course of enquiry that the Aigals who are the traditional priests for several castes other than Brahmins in this region tried to gain influence over this caste and gave them the name Halliyavaru (meaning the residents of village in Kannada). However, there is no authentic evidence to support this view.

IV. DEMOGRAPHY

According to the Census of 1901, Halleers numbered 2079 including 1078 males and 1001 females. The Canara Gazetteer published in 1883 indicates the population of Halleer Vajantris as 1832 in 1881 of whom 866 were males and an equal number of females. Their population in 1941 was 1443 including 750

males and 693 females. In 1961 the population of Halleers has been returned as only 1721 consisting of 681 males and 1040 females which shows an adverse sex-ratio of 1529 females per 1,000 males.

Their population has registered variations over the decades between 1901 and 1961. Their population in 1961 is comparable with their population in 1881. Unfortunately, the population figures of this caste are not available for 1921, 1931 and 1951 for studying the trends. There is no reason why the population of this particular caste should show a decrease when the population of all the castes in India has recorded an increase during this period. It is likely that several of the Halleers who styled themselves as Vajantris or Halleer-Vajantris were not counted as Halleers during 1961 and this appears to be one of the factors for the apparent fall in their population.

The distribution of their population in 1961 by sex and broad age-groups and in rural and urban area is as follows:

Age-group	Males	Females	Total
0-14	272	475	747
15-44	326	426	752
45 and above	83	139	222
	681	1040	1721
Rural	622	874	1496
Urban	59	166	225

The statistics reveal that 43.40% of their population is in the broad age-group of 0-14 and 43.69% is in the age-group of 15-44 and a little more than 12% is in the age-group of 45 and above. The percentage of population distributed in rural and urban areas are 86.93 and 13.07 respectively. Data in respect of the distribution of population by age-groups separately for rural and urban areas is not compiled.

A close examination of their population distribution in urban areas reveals that of the 225 persons in urban areas as many as 211 are found in Belgaum District. All of them (49 males and 162 females) are non-workers. In the district as a whole there are 51 males and 163 females of whom only two males and one female are returned from Rural areas. It is observed that 50 males and 149 females are children being less than 14 years of age; one male and 13 females are in the 15-44 age-group while only one female is aged 45 years. These facts lead one to surmise that most of these urban dwellers are school going children residing probably in hostels or with friends. The inference

is strengthened by the fact that in the urban areas of Belgaum district 49 boys and 10 girls of this community are literates without educational level and 25 females have attained Primary or Junior Basic standard.

V. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Halleers are of medium height and have black complexion. "The men are dark, short and muscular, and the women are like the men but spare and somewhat shorter" (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. XV—Part I. P. 318).

VI. FAMILY, CLAN AND OTHER DIVISIONS

According to Enthoven, "There are neither endogamous nor exogamous sub-divisions of the caste" (Vol. II. P. 44). The Canara Gazetteer also states that there are no sub-divisions among them (Vol. XV—Part I. P. 318). However, the Halleers of Manki village in Honavar taluk stated that there are certain exogamous divisions among them. These divisions are locally called 'Balis'. The main Balis are Aan Bali, Shirin Bali, Honna Bali, Dyavara Bali, Shashti Bali, and Tolar Bali. However, they were not in a position to state the significance of these various Balis—excepting a few of them. The word Aan is said to have been derived from Ane meaning an elephant in Kannada. The families of this sept revere the elephant. Whenever a tame elephant is met they offer it cocoanuts. Persons with this sept are supposed not to touch combs, rings etc., made of ivory. When several persons with Shirin Bali were questioned about its significance, they were not in a position to say whether the name of the Bali is derived from an animal or tree. Considering other non-Brahminical castes having similar Balis, it appears that the name of this Bali is derived from a tree locally called Ejjala mara (Gynandropsis pentaphyllia). However, it was reported that members belonging to this Bali have snakes as family deity and do not kill or injure them. They also believe that snakes do not harm them and many of the households keep stone images in their backyards which they worship during their marriage ceremonies and on the Nagarpanchami festival. They also worship ant-hills by breaking cocoanuts and pouring milk. This custom is also common with other castes like Mukris, Hasalar etc. The Dyavara Bali is said to have been derived from Dyava meaning a tortoise in Kannada. Similarly Tolana Bali is derived from 'Tola' meaning wolf. None of them is aware of the significance of the names Honna bali and Shashti bali. When enquiries were made in other villages they admitted that they

too had a few such *Balis* and admitted their inability to name the *Balis* to which they belonged. The Halleers from Hiregutti admitted that they belonged to *Aan* and *Beth Balis*. *Beth* in Konkani means a cane. In Kannada too *Bethilla* means a cane. The Halleers take into consideration these *Balis* only when marriages are arranged but it has to be stated that these divisions of which the younger generations are totally ignorant have lost much of their significance.

Another point that needs consideration is the division among Halleers as Halleers and Vajantris. As already mentioned, the Vajantris consider their caste as quite distinct from that of the Halleers. The Vajantris form the more affluent sections. There is no intermarriage between Halleers and Vajantris but about 50 years back, one Vajantri girl from Majali village (Karwar taluk) is said to have married a Halleer boy from Hiregutti village. The Halleers are considered untouchables whereas the Vajantris are not. The Vajantris claim superiority over Halleers. In the course of enquiry it was learnt that one Ghanasham Joshi, a Dravidian Brahmin of Majali obtained a *Rayas* (sacred order) from Shri Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sringeri about fifty years back permitting him and his people to cater to the religious needs of the Halleer Vajantris. Since then, the Brahmin priests coming from his family participate in marriage ceremonies and other religious functions of the Halleer Vajantris. As a consequence, the social status of Halleer Vajantris has improved considerably. It is said that this factor was further responsible for disintegrating the Halleer Vajantris of Karwar and Ankola from the Halleers of Honavar and Kumta.

Both the Halleers and Halleer Vajantris observe patrimony in inheritance. The relationship between various members constituting a family are cordial. Parents are highly revered. The eldest male in the family manages all family affairs. Simple families are more common among them. In Manki village out of total of 45 families about 32 were simple families. The size of a family varies between 4 and 6.

VII. DWELLINGS, DRESS, FOOD, ORNAMENTS ETC.

(a) *Dwelling*. The Halleers reside in separate localities locally called *Keri* in Kannada and *Vados* in Konkani. Their settlements are at a little distance away from those of other Caste-Hindus. At Manki village, the settlement of Halleers are surrounded by Haslars, another scheduled caste. Kumbhars and Shirogars also reside near their settlement. The settlement is generally surrounded by green paddy fields and co-

conut gardens. The houses are generally spread in shapeless and dispersed clusters without streets and lanes.

Their houses have rectangular ground plans with inclined roofs on four sides. In some cases they have roofs sloping on two sides. The walls are made of mud or split bamboos or thatching grass plastered with mud etc. The roofs are generally thatched with paddy grass or sugarcane leaves and coconut leaves. Very few houses have roofs with tiles. The thatched huts have bamboo frames on which thatching material like grass or coconut leaves are uniformly and securely spread. The roof is supported from the ground by round wooden poles which are bought from timber depots or obtained from the nearby forests. They usually obtain permits from the Forest Department to bring timber and bamboos needed for house construction.

The huts are small containing a narrow verandah in the front, and a kitchen at the back, and a living room in between. The living room generally measures 12' by 14' and it is used for taking meals, sleeping etc. The roofs are low and the huts are ill-ventilated. The houses consist of only one door of the size 5½' by 2½'. At the most there will be one or two windows which are also small. The houses lack privacy. Many of them have a small courtyard enclosed by a thorny shrub or low compound wall of laterite stones. Well-to-do families owning cattle have separate cattle sheds. They bathe mostly in the open near a well or a place just by the side of the house which is screened by coconut leaves, for privacy. The houses are rarely provided with latrines. Open fields are used for this purpose.

The houses have low plinths covered with earth and rough stones. In the front yard of the house a small *Katta* on which *Tulsi* plant is raised, is found. They have their family deity in the form of an unhusked coconut near this *Katta*.

Before the construction of a new house, the site is selected on the advice of a priest belonging to Havig Brahmin community. After the selection of site, a coconut is broken at the place. Even while fixing the main door and roofing simple worship is offered. The Halleers generally prefer to keep their doors facing North and avoid the South.

(b) *Dress*. A Halleer is commonly attired in *Kachche* or *Langoti* and a *Rumal*. *Kachche* is a narrow piece of cloth worn to cover the loins. The *Rumal* is a piece of long and narrow white cloth used as head-

gear. Some of them wear a *panche* covering the knees. Very few use shirts and most of them leave their bust uncovered. Generally, men use *chappals* (foot-wear). By any standard it may be said that their dress is scanty and unclean. Their poor economic condition and the warm climate of the coastal region make for this mode of dress. On the other hand, the Vajantris are better clothed. A few of them also use Pyjamas and shirts. Roundabout Karwar several of the Vajantris have given up wearing *Rumal*.

The dress of a woman consists of only a *saree* used as a lower garment and a few of them use *Ravike* (bodice) as an upper garment. One end of the *saree* is taken round the neck so as to cover the bosom. The women of Vajantri caste wear *sarees* and blouses. The women generally do not use any foot-wear. Young girls wear skirts and young boys loin cloths or shorts. Small children are generally left naked.

(c) *Ornaments*

The young men wear ear-rings which are locally called *Muru* made of gold or silver. A few of them also wear gold, silver or brass rings on their fingers. A few of them wear a girdle made of silver, called *Ududar*, round their waist. But most of them wear cotton strings round their waist.

Halleer women are very fond of necklaces made of glass beads. A necklace of black beads locally called *Dharemani* or *Karemanisara* denotes the married status of a woman. Widows and unmarried girls are forbidden from wearing them. The Vajantri women are fond of a gold ornament resembling a flower which is worn in their hair. This is generally made to resemble flowers like jasmine, *Kadagi*, asters etc. The Halleer women wear ear-rings called *Kudka*, *Joda*, *Bududi* and *Sarpali*. However, *Bugudi* which is worn on the upper earlobe has lost its popularity among the present generation. Nose-rings called *Mooguti* or *Nattu* are worn only by the married. Toe-rings made of silver are also worn by the married women. Among the women, glass bangles are common, except for the widows. On the death of the husband, the widow has to remove nose-rings, bangles and *Dharegundu*. She is also forbidden to put on vermilion mark on her forehead. Tattooing which was popular among women in the past is said to have totally disappeared at present.

(d) *Food and Drinks*

The Halleers are traditionally non-vegetarians. Their staple diet consists of rice and fish. They generally take three meals a day. The first meal is taken in

the morning and it consists of ragi *conjee* or rice *ganji* and fish or vegetable curry. Their lunch at noon and supper are similar. They eat all kinds of fish both scaled and unscaled. They also eat fowls, goats, wild boar deer, rabbits, hedge hog called *pisaya* or *barka* etc. They do not eat beef, pork, flesh of peacocks and bisons. They also eat wild birds and wild fowl. Condiments are used in large quantities while preparing fish and non-vegetarian curries. Coconuts are also used in good number. The consumption of milk and milk products is negligible and is limited to those owning milch cows and buffaloes. The habit of drinking tea in tea shops is on the increase since 10 to 15 years. A few of them also prepare tea in their houses.

They have a strong craving for toddy and other intoxicating drinks. At the time of prohibition this inclination was said to have been reduced. In fact several of their festivals and religious ceremonies were being celebrated by consuming many potfulls of toddy. Men smoke bidis and cigarettes while both men and women chew betel leaves and nuts. It is said that about 25 to 30 years ago the Halleers used to smoke *ganja* but this habit has totally disappeared on account of its high cost and also non-availability.

(e) *Household goods*

The Halleers possess very few household goods on account of their poverty. The articles generally found are low stools (*Mene*), tin lamps or hurricane lanterns burning kerosene, mats made of *lava* grass, one or two country-woollen blankets (*Kambals*) and a few wooden planks used for squatting purposes etc. Earthenware vessels are used for cooking and storing food. Very few utensils made of brass are found in some of the households for taking food and drinking water. Most of the households use aluminium or bell-metal plates for taking meals. Only a few agriculturists among them own cattle. Majority of the agriculturists are tenant cultivators and only a few have *Inam* lands for rendering temple service. Their common agricultural implements are the wooden ploughs and yokes, axes, spades, crow-bar, pick axe, sickles, billhooks etc. Some of the households have a few musical instruments like *Dhol* (drum), *Sammel* (double drum) *Kansal* (Timbral), *Sana* (clarinet) and *Shrutti* (the brass horn). In the Canara Gazetteer it is observed that they play *Kahale* (cornet) and *Shing* (horn). But in the course of the field study the Halleers denied their use of *Kahale* and *Shing*. In Baad and Majali villages of Karwar taluk there are two musical troupes possessing a few musical instruments of the western type. In addition they also have two peculiar musical

implements called *Kane and Dholke*. The former, played usually at the time of offering sacrifices, resembles a drum and the latter which is smaller in size is used as an accompaniment at the time of *Bhajan* (devotional songs) and in religious processions.

VIII. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASES AND TREATMENT

As the settlements in the region in which they live are spread out in many clusters in the midst of fields and gardens the surroundings are generally clean and healthy. Though the houses are poorly furnished, they are kept neat and tidy. They sweep houses regularly and once or twice a month they smear the floor with cowdung. Garbage, animal refuse etc., is just thrown into pits by the side of their houses. They bathe regularly and use soapnut powder while taking bath. Their dress cannot be said to be clean and they wash their clothes once a week.

They have firm faith in soothsaying and there are many soothsayers in their own caste. They attribute and also trace all their ailments, hardships, deaths etc., to evil spirits, and deities. They promptly go to the soothsayers for consultation should there be any ailments in the family. They believe that the soothsayer is capable to cure these ailments by talismans or offering *puja* to the spirit or deity whose wrath is supposed to have caused the disease. They also take vows and sacrifice fowl. They strongly believe that if a devil or a spirit enters their house or person it does not disappear unless driven by a sooth sayer. They offer a coconut, some rice and some cash to the soothsayer. Now-a-days taking of medicines in local dispensaries to treat the ailing persons is on the increase.

IX. LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND EDUCATION

The mother-tongue of the Halleers is Kannada and that of Halleer Vajantris found in Ankola and Karwar taluks is Konkani. Very few Halleers are able to talk in Konkani though many can understand it. Kannada spoken by the Halleers is mixed with some Kon-

Area	Population			Illiterate		Literates without educational level		Educational level Primary or Junior Basic		Matriculation and above	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Total	1721	681	1040	543	985	127	28	11	27	..	..
Rural	1496	622	874	539	854	73	18	10	2	..	..
Urban	225	59	166	4	131	54	10	1	25	..	..

kani words which is also an important language in this district. Their language is similar to other Kannada speaking Mukris and Halavakki Vokkals. Most of the Vajantris know Kannada well and freely converse in that language. The Vajantris use some peculiar words which are not found in any other language. They are more or less like code words as would be evident from the following specimens:—

Words used by Vajantris	Meaning
<i>Jann</i>	Brahmin
<i>Varlamari</i>	Jeshi Brahmin
<i>Shetti</i>	Vani or trader
<i>Petnamuri</i>	Goldsmith
<i>Nars</i>	Christians
<i>Koylamari</i>	Muslims
<i>Gondhula</i>	Komarpent Komarpeik }
<i>Kattu</i>	Padti (a caste name)
<i>Hendan</i>	Fisherman
<i>Banag</i>	Vajantri or musician
<i>Hanyan</i>	Bhandari (a caste name)
<i>Komb</i>	Devli (a caste name)
<i>Nagan</i>	Food
<i>Moltan</i>	Rice
<i>Saran</i>	Sweet gruel
<i>Nadar</i>	Konkan Maratta (caste name)
<i>Henden</i>	Fish
<i>Hamen</i>	Toddy
<i>Kampan</i>	Bottle
<i>Kempan</i>	Gold
<i>Bhat mad Beda</i>	Do not quarrel
<i>Goodu</i>	House
<i>Halagege Hogu</i>	Commit theft

It is not known how these words have been derived or how they have come into vogue. It is probable that the word *Jann* meaning a Brahmin is derived from the word *Janvi* meaning sacred thread in Konkani. The Brahmins wear the sacred thread and so probably they are called *Jann*. The following table furnishes the educational status of Halleers according to 1961 Census:

Of the total population of 1721 persons, 1528 are illiterate. The literacy is only 11.22%. In the rural areas, the percentage of literacy is still lower (6.90%). Among the literates in rural areas 91 are literate without any educational standards and 12 are literates by Primary or Junior Basic standards. In urban areas the percentage of literacy works out to 40%. In rural areas it is seen that out of 622 males and 874 females, 539 males or 86.65% and 854 females or 97.71% are illiterate. In Urban areas, out of a total of 59 males, 55 or 91.53% and 35 females (or 21%) out of 166 females are literates. Again, 64 persons consisting of 54 males and 10 females are literate without any educational standards and 26 persons most of whom (25) are females are literate by Primary or Junior Basic standards.

Compared with the literacy rate of 9.02% for the Scheduled Castes as a whole of the State, the literacy rate of Halleers is a little higher though their percentage compares very unfavourably with the general literacy rates of the State.

None of the Halleers, either in the urban or in the rural, has studied beyond the Primary or Junior Basic standard. The low literacy standard and rate among the Scheduled Castes in general may be attributed to their poor economic conditions and low social status.

X. ECONOMIC LIFE

Halleers are no exception to the generalisation that in India castes are associated with traditional occupations. Halleers in the past were hereditary musicians. Very few of them are now engaged in this oc-

cupation. The Vajantris of Karwar and Ankola have instrumental music as their principal traditional occupation. At present, the Halleers are principally agricultural labourers. But for some of them music is a subsidiary occupation. The Vajantris of Karwar and Ankola play music at the time of marriages and other ceremonies of Caste Hindus and also in temples. The Halleers, on the other hand, are engaged as musicians at the time of marriages of Holers, Mukris and other Scheduled Castes and head the processions of temple deities at the time of annual fairs. The Halleers do all kinds of agricultural work on daily wages. Several of them also work as forest labourers during the slack agricultural season. Many of them work as general labourers in the construction of roads and in laterite stone quarries. Though many Halleers are tenants cultivating small bits of land, they depend to a large extent on daily wages for their maintenance.

The womenfolk, in addition to their household duties also work in the fields as labourers for weeding transplanting, harvesting and threshing of paddy. In Manki and Hiregutti villages, women were seen working in the construction of roads and laterite stone quarries. Some of the women are engaged as servants in the agricultural households for cleaning cattle-sheds and rearing cattle. In Ankola, Vajantris are employed as maid-servants even by the Brahmins. The Vajantris there are said to be not considered untouchables after the issue of *Rayas* referred to earlier from the Swamiji of Sringeri *Math*.

Particulars regarding their economic activities collected during the 1961 census are furnished below:—

Industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers

Sl. No.	Type of occupation	Total		Rural		Urban	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
1. Cultivator		71	98	71	98	..	..
2. Agricultural labourer		117	91	117	91	..	..
3. Mining, quarrying, livestock, fishing etc.		28	13	28	13	..	..
4. Household Industry		4	12	4	11	..	1
5. Manufacturing other than household industry		6	1	6	1	..	..
6. In Construction		9	4	9	4	..	..
7. In Trade & Commerce		..	2	..	..	..	2
8. Transport, Storage & Communication		..	..	..	..	..	..
9. Other Services		171	61	167	61	4	..
10. Non-workers		275	658	220	495	55	163
Total		681	1040	622	874	59	166

The information collected has been presented separately for rural and urban areas. It is seen from the table that the total rural population of 1496 consists of 781 workers and 715 non-workers. Thus 52.21% of the total Halleer population in the rural areas consist of workers and 47.79% of non-workers. Sex-wise, it is seen that of 622 males, 402 or 64.63% are workers and of 874 females, 379 or 43.36% are workers. Among the workers, 169 persons or 21.44% of the total working force are engaged in agriculture. Agricultural labour claims the largest number of workers accounting for 39.08% of the total working force followed by 'other services' which accounts for 29.43% of the total working force. The other occupations claiming negligible percentage of workers engaged in them are mining, quarrying etc., (5.20%); household industry (1.90%); construction (1.80%) and manufacturing other than household industry (0.90%).

Of the total urban population of 225, consisting of 59 males and 166 females, there are only 7 workers, 4 males and 3 females accounting for only 3.11% of the total urban population. No ready explanation appears available for this low proportion. Most (211) of their urban population is found in Belgaum District.

Most of the agriculturists cultivate lands held on *palu* (crop sharing) or *Geni* (lease) basis. In Hiregutti village of Kurata taluk, out of 43 households about 35 had lands held on lease but none owned any of the lands. The extent of lands held on lease ranged between 20 guntas to 2 acres. Agriculture provides them full employment only between June and October. The average rent per acre of land held on lease by the protected tenants varies between 1½ quintals to 2 quintals whereas for others it works out to 2½ quintals. About 30 households at Hiregutti were protected tenants.

At Manki village of Honavar taluk, of the 45 Halleer families only two owned lands and three were tenants cultivating an extent of 3 acres.

Only few Halleers who are cultivators maintain livestock in small number. At Manki, only 3 had cattle out of total households of 45. Of them only one had a pair of working bullocks. Most of them rear poultry, the production of which are domestically consumed.

The agricultural and general labourers usually earn wages at the rate of Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 for males and Rs. 1.25 to Rs. 2.00 for females. Generally, wages for the labourers employed for harvesting and threshing of

paddy are paid in kind viz., 4 to 5 kgs. for males and 3 kgs. for females. At Hiregutti, it was reported that the system of *Jeetha* (agricultural labourers employed on annual basis) is in vogue in many villages. Annual wages for the labourers so employed range between Rs. 300 to Rs. 500 in addition to the meals, clothing etc., provided to them during the period of employment. Children aged between 10 and 15 are also employed on annual basis on a wage of Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 for rearing cattle and collecting green manure, dry leaves, etc., from the forests.

The agricultural labourers migrate to Sirsi and Siddapur taluks in search of work in arecanut gardens. They generally migrate between November and January with their families. It was reported at Manki village that about 15 families of the 45 there had gone over to Sirsi and Siddapur taluks during 1968.

The few among the Halleers engaged in *Vadya* (instrumental music) earn about Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 per day during marriage seasons and fairs.

The Halleers have generally so few possessions that they are unable to raise even loans. At Manki village there were only 7 households out of the total 45 who were in debts which ranged between Rs. 150 and Rs. 1,000. Most of them had borrowed for meeting marriage and other ceremonial expenses. Residential houses are usually offered as security for the loans. In some cases the loans were also advanced by the landlords on the condition that the debtor should work as an attached labourer till the loan is paid off. The rate of interest charged, as reported, ranges between 10% to 24% per annum.

In their expenditure pattern food, including non-cereal items, clothing and drinks are the three major items. To cite an example the following expenditure statement was furnished by one Thippa of Manki village:

(1) Food- cereal and non cereal	750.00
(2) Beverage including toddy	270.00
(3) Clothing	120.00
(4) Pan supari, beedi etc.	50.00
(5) Fuel and light	10.00
(6) Travelling	15.00
(7) Others	10.00
(8) House-tax	0.75
Annual Total	1225.75

His family consists of

(1) Thippa (Head of the household)	aged 55 years
(2) Shivi wife	.. 48 ..
(3) Kanne son	.. 14 ..
(4) Bellakka daughter	.. 8 ..
(5) Devi ..	.. 4 ..

This typical family consisting of 3 workers earns about Rs. 1200.00 as agricultural wages and spends about 61.22% on cereal and non-cereal items of food 22.04% on beverages and drinks including toddy, 9.79% on clothing and 4.08% on pan supari.

Regarding inter community comparison of levels of living it may be said that Halleers are no better than Holers, Mukris and Haslars, the other Scheduled Castes. Their living standard is deplorable when compared with the cultivating castes like Namdhari, Sheregar and Brahmuns. Within the community itself, tenant cultivators and owner cultivators have a slightly higher standard of living than the agricultural labourers.

XI. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

Like all other Hindus, Halleers consider pregnancy and safe delivery as divine boons. By tradition, the first delivery of a woman takes place in her natal house. The husband, when his wife is pregnant, should not kill animals, fowls, snakes etc., and also should not carry a bier. In Manki and a few other villages the husband during his wife's pregnancy never used to shave his face. But now-a-days these customs are not rigidly observed.

The Halleers celebrate a small function called *Udi Thumbuvudu* or *Bayake Oota* during the seventh or ninth month of the first pregnancy. On this day the mother is decked in a new saree and blouse and some married women fill the upper fold of her saree with some rice, plantains, a coconut, betel leaves and betelnuts and some coins. During the pregnancy the woman avoids eating mackerel fish and food prepared from bamboo shoots, pine apple and papaya.

Traditionally, delivery takes place in the house and not in the maternity home. It is only at Ankola that some Halleer Vajantiris take pregnant women either to a Government hospital or a Christian Mission Hospital when they apprehend complications.

An elderly woman of their own caste serves as mid-wife and is locally called *Bezaditi*. In the absence of

such an experienced elderly woman, they seek the assistance of women belonging to Namdhari, Komrapanth castes. The *Bezaditi* serves the confined woman and the child till the observance of the naming ceremony. It is her duty to apply oil to the woman and the child during this period and for these services she is given a saree and a sum of Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 and if she is of their own caste, she is served meals also.

The placenta is buried in a pit near the bathing place by the *Bezaditi*. The mother and child are given bath near this pit after covering it. At Manki and a few other villages it is reported that Halleers worship this pit on the third day by breaking a coconut and burning some incense and placing flowers over it. On the 11th day, they plant a vegetable tuber called *Kesu* or a banana plant on this spot. They observe ceremonial pollution for three days. The Vajantiris observe pollution for 10 days. For purification they bring *Thirtha* (sacred water) *Panchagavya* (mixture of five products of cow) from a Bhat (a Brahmin priest) and administer a little quantity of it to the mother and the child. All the other inmates of the house also take some. On this day the floor of the house is smeared with cow-dung and cow's urine is sprinkled all over the house. All daily wear is washed clean.

Soon after birth, the child is administered honey. The baby begins to suckle on the third day. On the 6th day they observe a simple ceremony called '*Shashiti*' when they offer worship to the family deity and feast a few close relations. The naming ceremony takes place on the 11th day. For this purpose about one seer (1½ Kgs.) of rice and a coconut are placed in the cradle by the *Bezaditi*. Then an elderly lady of the caste proposes a name which generally happens to be that of one of the deceased grand parents of the infant. The names of males in common use are Manju, Thippa, Nagu, Narayan, Jattu, Durgu etc. The common female names are Mangamma, Nagu, Iru, Masti, Sukru etc. Some sweets are distributed among those present for the occasion. The Vajantiris generally consult a Brahmin for the name. Among the Vajantiris the custom is for a few married women to put the child in the cradle and propose the name of the child. The common names of males are Shankar, Shiva, Subraya, Maruthi, Nagesh etc., and the female names are Anasuya, Sudha, Nalini, Champa, Mangala etc.

In cases of difficult and protracted deliveries the Halleers of Manki approach a Brahmin priest to enquire about the cause and faithfully perform the remedial measures suggested by him. They also obtain *Thirtha* from a temple priest and administer it to the

woman in labour. In Ankola, there is a custom of a Brahmin giving a small piece of paper on which some *mantras* or sacred incantations are written. This slip which is tied round the arm, neck or wrist of the woman in labour is supposed to ward off the evil spirit afflicting the victim. They also observe vows to various deities in fulfilment of which *pujas* are offered and fowls sacrificed. In Hiregutti village of Kumta taluk, it was reported that they generally go to a maternity hospital since the last 10 years when it was established in the village. It is not the rigidity of custom or tradition that comes in their way of going to maternity homes but it is the convenience and availability of the facilities that matter.

The period of confinement lasts from one to three months depending upon the economic condition of the household and physical condition of the mother. Generally the woman starts attending to household work after a month. Economic conditions permitting, she does not go for her normal work for at least two months. They do not observe any special ceremony when the child is taken outside the house for the first time.

Among Vajantris, the women go for work only after 4 to 6 months. They observe a small ceremony when the child is first taken outside the house by visiting some temple and offering *puja*.

The child is breast-fed for one to two years after which it is fed on rice and *conjee* with vegetable curry or fish soup. The child's micturition and defecation habits are regulated at the age of two to three years. Young children are carried on arms, waists and shoulders.

The Halleers are generally not aware of contraceptive devices as they are too illiterate to appreciate or understand the advantage of planned families. They also do not practise abortions. However, it is learnt that in some villages unmarried girls or widows becoming pregnant secretly use some forest herbs for inducing abortions. In village Manki, it was reported by persons of this caste that 6 males had undergone vasectomy and 3 females tubectomy operation

between 1967 and 1969, on account of intensive propaganda by the Family Planning workers.

The Halleers generally attribute barrenness and still births to sins committed during a previous life. To overcome barrenness and successive still births they observe vows to deities like Jatakadeva, Mastiamma, Manjunatha etc. Barrenness is also attributed to evil spirits which are supposed to be driven away by the soothsayers. They have a special ceremony called '*cholangi*' for cutting the hair of the male child for the first time and also piercing the ears and nose of a girl. An auspicious day suggested by the Bhat is selected for this ceremony. The ceremony is performed for boys between ages 4 and 12 years. The hair is cut in the name of some deity by the maternal uncle of the child. The maternal uncle is presented with a *shawl*, one rupee and some rice as his formal reward for the service. On this occasion, the mother of the child is presented with a new saree and a blouse by her parents. The earlobes and nose are pierced by the maternal uncle at the age of 5 for girls.

On her attaining puberty a girl is considered impure for five days. From 6th day after taking ritual bath a few unwidowed women fill her lap with betel leaves, nuts, rice, fruits etc. *Sobana* songs are sung for 9 days while the girl is seated on a low stool called *Hase*. If she is married she is seated along with her husband. A woman during her monthly periods is considered impure for three days during which she does not attend to any household duties.

(b) Marriage

According to Canara Gazetteer "boys are married between 15-25 and girls between 8-13 as a rule before coming of age" (Vol. XV, Part I. P. 390). It is reported that in the past, pre-puberty marriage of a girl was the rule. In case the girl was not married before her attaining puberty the parents of the girl had to pay a fine to the caste Panchayat. Now the boys are generally married between 18 and 25 and girls between 14 and 20 i.e., after coming of age.

Statistics regarding the marital status of Halleers collected during the 1961 Census are presented below:

Age-group	Total			Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced		Unspecified status	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Total	1721	681	1040	410	500	214	373	50	148	7	19	...	...
0-14	747	272	475	271	465	1	10	..	..	..	..	..	..
15-44	752	326	426	136	32	154	316	30	61	6	17	..	..
45 and above	222	83	139	3	3	59	47	20	87	1	2	..	..

It will be seen from the table that of the total population of 1721, 52.88% or 910 are never married; 587 or 34.11% are married; 198 or 11.50% are widowed; and 26 or 1.51% are divorced or separated. Sexwise 60.21% of the males are never married, 31.42% are married, 7.3% are widowed and 1.03% are divorced or separated. Among the females 48.08% are never married; 35.86% married 23% widowed and 1.83% separated or divorced. By broad age-groups it is seen that 98.52% are never married and 1.48% are married in the age-group of 0-14. In the 15-44 age group of 22.35% of the population is never married, 62.38% is married, 12.12% is widowed and 3.15% is divorced or separated. In the age-group 45 and above; only 2.70% of the population is never married, 47.75% is married, 48.20% is widowed and 1.35% is divorced or separated. There are 374 married females as against only 214 males. Though this may lead one to conclude that among Halleers polygyny is prevalent, the field investigation indicates that very rarely do men have more than one wife. At Manki it was reported that there were only 5 out of the total of 45 households who had two wives each. At Hiregutti village there were only 6 males who had more than one wife out of total 43 households.

The negotiations for marriage are initiated from the boy's side. The boy's father accompanied by a few relatives goes to the girl's residence for settling the alliance. This consists of a small ceremony called *vilya*. Some castemen are invited for the occasion. The parents of the boy and the girl exchange *vilya* (a packet of betelnuts and leaves) to denote their agreement to the proposal. About 15 to 20 days after the *vilya* they perform a betrothal ceremony called *Hoovu Mudisuvudu*. For this ceremony, some married women from the boy's house visit the girl's place taking with them a saree, rice, betelnuts, betel leaves etc. The girl is decked with flowers and is made to wear the clothes brought by them. The married women fill her lap with rice, betel nuts etc. After this ceremony, the date for actual marriage is determined by consulting a *Bhat*. The *Budvant* or some elderly casteman officiates in their marriage ceremonies. The marriage ceremonies of the Vajantris in Karwar and Ankola are conducted by Brahmin priests.

The marriage ceremony usually starts with a function (*Survvi*) at which turmeric paste is applied to the bride and bridegroom in their respective residences followed by a ceremonial bath. An arch of mango twigs and leaves is prepared by fixing four poles and in the centre the bride or the bridegroom as the case may be is anointed with turmeric paste and coconut

oil and the unwidowed women bathe them. After this ceremony the bridegroom and his party proceed to the bride's place. The marriage ceremony usually takes place at the bride's place. The marriages are usually performed in the afternoons or after dusk. On the arrival of the bridegroom's party at the girl's place the parents of the bride receive the party with pipers and the party is led to their house. On approaching the ceremonial arch (*Handara*) in front of the house the bridegroom's feet are washed by the bride's parents and *arati* (lighted wick) is performed. He is then seated on a cot (*Mancha*) in the pendal. Then the bridegroom's party hands over the clothes and some jewels intended to be worn by the bride. The bridegroom wears *Bashinga* (marriage coronet) prepared from pith and flowers and the bride's coronet is called *Thondla*. The coronets are usually tied by the respective sister's husbands of the bride and bridegroom. Both sides offer worship to their deities. The *Budvant* and *Kolkar* always remain present for the occasion. The bride and the bridegroom are brought under a pendal and made to stand on a heap of rice. At the centre of the pendal a milk post (*Halugamba*) usually brought by the *Kolkar* with the accompaniment of music by pipers is fixed. A branch of *Atti* (*ficus Glomerata*), *Ala* (*Ficus Indica*) or *Mavu* (*Mangifera Indica*) is used as the milk post. The bride facing west and bridegroom facing east stand in front of this milk post and a cloth screen (*Parde*) is held between them. The *Budvant* applies some sandal paste to their foreheads and gives them packets of betel leaves and nuts. At this time the women-folk start singing some songs. Then the *Budvant* ties the string of black beads round the bride's neck and flower garlands are exchanged by the bride and the bridegroom. Now-a-days in many places the bridegroom ties the string of black beads. The screen is then removed. Then the bridegroom places his hands on the hands of the bride and the milk with water is first poured over their hands by the bride's father followed by her mother and other relations. The pouring of milk and water over the joined hands of couple is called *Dhare* ceremony. The position of the hands is changed five times. In Manki village there is a custom of placing a vessel below their hands when milk and water are poured over the joined hands of the couple. The water collected in the vessel is emptied at the base of a coconut tree or some flower plant. The coconut tree is then considered as a gift (*Baluvali*) to the bride. After *Dhare* the couple are seated side by side and the women sing *Sobana* songs. The day's ceremony is concluded with the feast to the castemen. The next day is called *Dibhana* which denotes that the bridegroom with the bride leaves for his place. *Arati* is

Holeya as its priest. Annually a *Bandi* or cart festival is performed in honour of this deity when fowls are sacrificed. There are similar deities in the surrounding villages where *Bandi* festivals are annually performed. They also worship Beeradeva by offering coconuts, flowers and plantains. The priest of this temple is usually a Gunaga (of potter's caste). At the shrine of Hirehonna the worship is conducted by a Brahmin and at the Shri Ganeshadeva temple at Balale the priest is a Gunaga or a potter. Dandisar Bandi Jataka is a very popular deity in this region. Its priest is a potter. Annually a fair called *Gadi Habba* is performed in honour of this deity. There are two popular stories as to how the word *Gadi Habba* has been derived. These fairs are generally performed in the month of May when the season is about to change from the sizzling summer to the wet monsoons. It is also said that these fairs are generally performed at a place where boundaries (or *Gadi* in Kannada) of two villages meet and hence the name. A large number of Halleers and other castes of similar status sacrifice fowl at the time of this fair. The *pujaris* (priests) of Sri Hosaba temple at Hiregutti and Balale villages are potters by caste. They also have an annual fair called *Gadi Habba* or *Aavare* in every May. During *Navaratri* in September-October the deity at Balale is offered special worship by a Brahmin priest. Besides these deities they have a deity called *Bobbaru* in Yennemadi village where also a *Gadihabba* is performed.

The Vajantiris of Ankola and Karwar have Venkataramana as their chief deity. They worship *Vetal* of Majali, *Mahamayi* of Sadashivgad and several other deities. There are several fairs held annually in honour of these deities. The fair in Baad village is held on *Marka Hunnime* or full moon day of March and the *Mahamayi* fair is held during Dasara in September-October. They sacrifice fowls in honour of these deities. The Vajantiris consider the head of the Sringeri *Matha* as their spiritual head.

As reported in Manki village, their spiritual head is a Srivyshnava Brahmin who is the head of a *Matha* at Sagar in Shimoga district. He is said to have visited them about 50 years ago. At the time of his visit every village in which their caste people reside paid *Kappa* at the rate of Rs. 10 which was collected from the households.

XIII. FESTIVALS

Though the population of Halleers is not large and though it is concentrated in Honavar and Kumta taluks there are regional variations in the worship of deities and observance of festivals. In Manki and surround-

ing villages, the important festivals are Ugadi (Hindu New Year's Day) in March-April, Bheemana Ekadasi in July, Aliyana Amavyase in July-August, Deepavali in October, Sankranti in January and Shivaratri in February. At Hiregutti village, the important festivals observed are Ugadi, Ganesh Chaturthi, Deepavali, Tulsi Habba and Sankranti.

The Vajantiris of Ankola and Karwar have Ugadi, Nagarpanchami, Gokulashtami, Ashada Ekadashi, Ashada Dwadasi, Ganesh Chaturthi, Dasara, Deepavali, Tulsi Habba, Sankranti etc. On the Nagar Panchami day they offer special worship to the stone images of snakes and ant-hills. In some houses they prepare images from flour on which milk is poured by their womenfolk. On the Ganesh Chaturthi day they offer worship to the Tulsi Brindavan. Ashada Ekadashi is observed by fasting. Vajantiris of Ankola state that they worship clay images of Ganapathi for 2, 5, 7 or 9 days. During this period they do not eat fish. After the ceremony the image is immersed in a well, river or sea. They observe Dasara for 10 days. For this ceremony they worship a metal pot containing water with an unhusked coconut, betelnut, betel leaves etc., kept on it. This is called *Ghat*. They worship this deity for 9 days, during which period they do not cook fish in the house. On the 9th day the spirit of their family deity is believed to enter the worshipper and at this time they enquire from him about their welfare and difficulties. On the 9th day they sacrifice a fowl. On the 10th day, they worship their implements and in Ankola they visit the Durga Devi temple. They exchange *Banni* (prosopis spicigera) leaves in the evening. For the Deepavali festival they ceremonially fill water into metal pots on the day prior to Naraka Chaturdasi, and on the following day they take an oil-bath. On this day, it is a custom with them as also with several other castes in the district to consume a little of a bitter fruit resembling a small cucumber called *Handalkai*. They crush this fruit under the feet and eat a little portion of it before taking any food that day.

Holi is an important festival for the Halleers. They call this festival Shimga and they often form into dancing groups playing *Kolata* moving from place to place.

The Halleers are very religious and conservative in their outlook. They believe in the transmigration of the soul. They believe that after death the spirit of a person hovers round their house and unless it is appeased by taking proper ritual measures, the spirit will harm them. It is for this reason that they consult *Ghadiga* (soothsayer). For all calamities and ailments

the first reaction is to observe vows to their important deities. Jataka Deva and the spirit of the deceased called *Bhutas* are considered malevolent deities.

XIV. LEISURE AND RECREATION

The Halleers lead a hard life and live hand to mouth. At the peak of the agricultural season the hours of work are long. Hence they find very little time for recreation. The little leisure which they find in the slack agricultural season is a forced one and idly spent. Being illiterate, they are not able to read newspapers and have little interest in matters other than those concerning their region or caste. The children below 10 years spend their time in playing the usual local games such as marbles, *kabbadi*, *kolata*, *chendata* etc. Women sing folk-songs while grinding grain, transplanting paddy seedlings and winnowing paddy in the threshing yard. They relax by participating in marriages of their caste people and some other ceremonies like naming ceremony, puberty rites etc. Those who are residing in villages near towns go to cinemas once or twice a month.

The village fairs, particularly *Bandi Habbas* provide them with entertainment. During Holi they arrange special folk-dances. Their *Suggi Kunita* is very popular but only the men participate in it. For this dance they wear pith flower garlands with some bouquets on their heads and *dhotis* with *kache*, shirts and a shoulder cloth. They hold small sticks about one foot in length and about an inch thick in their hands and start dancing to a set rhythm. A group of dancers generally consists of about ten to fifteen persons. They first dance at the place where they learnt the art of dancing, then before the village deities and later before the house of the *Budvant* and finally others' houses. At each house they are offered a coconut and some coins which they share among themselves.

They hunt in September and October for hog, Sambar (*Kadavi*), rabbit etc., in the forests with the help of *Doddabale* (big nets) and *Sannabale*. During leisure hours they also catch fish for domestic consumption.

XV. INTER AND INTRA-CASTE RELATIONSHIP

As already observed, there are no sub-castes among the Halleers. The Vajantiris who are referred to as Halleer Vajantiris in Ankola and Karwar taluks are more affluent than the Halleers of Kumta and Honavar. The Vajantiris disown Halleers from their caste and consider themselves superior to Halleers. They neither interdine nor intermarry. The village barbers,

goldsmiths serve the Vajantiris but not the Halleer who are still considered untouchable by high caste Hindus. However, in Hiregutti village it was reported that Brahmins perform Sathyanarayana puja at the time of construction of new houses by Halleers and also give *Akshate* (sacred rice) during Halleer marriages for sprinkling on the couple. The Brahmins, Namdharis, Sheregars, Komarpanths, Mukris, Chamgar etc., do not accept food or water from the Halleers, Ager, Chamgar, Upparas, Mukris and Bhangis are considered inferior to them in social status. The Halleers have no free access to public wells, temples and other public places like hotels.

XVI. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The Halleers have a caste council called *Koota* to control and preserve their customs and traditions. However, little is known as to how the heads of the caste at village and regional levels came into being in the remote past. At present, these offices are hereditary. The head of the caste is called *Yejamana* or *Budvant* who is assisted by *Kolkar* (beadle). Above the village level there is *Sime Yejamana* at the regional level. The meeting of the caste council called *Koota* is attended by all adult male members of the caste. They have their own regional divisions viz., *Gersoppa sime*, *Mirjan sime*, *Karwar sime* and *Ankola sime*. The caste councils have powers to fine, reprimand and excommunicate the defaulters. The normal subjects which come before caste councils for discussion are adultery, desertion, pregnancy of widows and unmarried girls, shoe beatings etc. For beating with shoes, the person who beats is usually fined about Rs. 10 or more depending on his capacity to pay. Then both the person beaten and the one who beats have to go on a pilgrimage to Gokarn where they shave their heads clean, bathe and accept *thirtha* (holy water) at the Mahabaleswara temple. The Kolkar generally accompanies them to ensure that the purification ceremonies are actually undergone. If a widow becomes pregnant, the person who is held responsible is fined up to Rs. 50. The fine amount is now-a-days utilised for arranging a feast to their castemen. About 30 years ago the fine amounts were spent on toddy. Whenever the dispute is not settled at the village level the matter is taken to the *Sime Yejamana*. Generally the decisions of the village and regional councils are obeyed and carried out. In Manki the social offenders are usually required to go to the shrine of Hanumanthdev of Hosapatan and obtain *thirtha* from the temple-priest as a purificatory measure. They consider it a sin to eat with a person of lower caste. Persons taking food from castes like Chamagar, Christians, Mukri etc.,

performed and they are made to cross the threshold of the bridegroom's residence by tripping over two rice heaps placed in two plantain saucers. On the 4th day they hold a dinner called *Beegara Oota* to feed the bride's parents and near relations. The consummation of the marriage called *Homa* is performed after 20 days at the bridegroom's place.

The Halleers do not marry within the same *Bali*. They prefer cross-cousin marriages except alliances with a sister's daughter. Levirate marriages are unknown among them. If the first wife dies, her sister may be married to the widower. Two brothers can marry two sisters. Monogamy is the rule though there is no objection to polygyny. Polyandry is unknown. The practice of marriage by payment is widely prevalent. The bride-price locally called *Thiru* or *Thera* ranges at present between Rs. 50 and Rs. 200. It is reported at Manki village that about 35 years ago the bride price was fixed at Rs. 12 together with other payments in kind like rice (2 maunds) betel leaves and nuts. This abnormal increase in the bride price is attributed to general rise in price level resulting in an increase in marriage expenses.

About 30 to 40 years ago it is reported that their marriage ceremonies used to be spread over for 6 days. On the first day they used to have a small ceremony of decking the bride with flowers and new clothes. On the second day they used to perform *Dhare* ceremony as already explained. On the third day the bride's party used to arrange a feast for the bridegroom's party. On the fourth day, the marriage party used to leave for the bridegroom's house, where the bride's people were feasted. On the 5th day, they held *Beegara oota* to the bride's people and other relations. On the 6th day the bride's people gave at their place a similar feast to bridegroom's group. But now-a-days all these ceremonies have been curtailed and the ceremony is gone through in two days in order to keep expenses low.

The remarriage of widows is permitted and practised among them. The widow marriage is called *Bidadare* or *Koodige* and it is a simple affair. The *Budvant* and the *Kolkar* of the caste in the village with a few caste people assemble at the widow's parental house and the intended husband, generally a widower, presents a saree to the widow and ties the marriage token (*Dharegundu*) round her neck. The bride price of Rs. 25 to Rs. 50 is paid to the widow's parents. The castemen are given a feast. A vegetable curry prepared from green papaya and banana stems is an essential preparation for this feast.

Divorce is allowed though rarely resorted to. A man can divorce his wife with the sanction of the Caste Council for reasons of adultery, misconduct and desertion. An adulterous wife is initially punished by the husband by beating. If she persists, a caste meeting of *Budvant*, *Kolkar* and other castemen is arranged. If the person involved on the other side is of their own caste the punishment usually consists of some fine (*kabuli*) amounting to Rs. 15 to Rs. 30. About 20 years ago such a person had to treat the caste council with toddy. In case of serious differences the council permits the husband to divorce the wife. Then the divorced woman is free to marry any other casteman. Should she misbehave with a Holey, a Christian, a Muslim or a person of a lower caste, she is excommunicated.

(c) Death

The Halleers, like all other Hindus, believe in the mortality of the physical body and the immortality of the soul. The life of a human, they believe, is predetermined and the cause of death is only a phase designed by God.

The Halleer either bury or burn the dead. The dead bodies of children and of persons suffering from *Thonnu* (leucoderma) and smallpox are usually buried and others are cremated. Whether buried or cremated the head of the corpse is always directed towards the south with the face upwards. The chief mourner is the eldest son and in his absence any other close relative.

When a person is about to die they bring him to the frontyard and put some coconut water with a leaf of *Tulsi* (*ocimum sanctum*) into his mouth. After death has occurred, their castemen assemble to arrange for burial or cremation. The corpse is washed with warm water after anointing oil and turmeric paste. Then *Kavala* (ground betel leaves, nuts, lime etc.) is put in its mouth and a garland of *Tulsi* leaves is put round the neck. Then the corpse is covered in a shroud of new cloth bought for the purpose or in an old *Dhoti*. Some rice and a copper coin are tied to the shroud. The corpse placed on a bier of bamboos or coconut leaves is carried by four agnatic kin to the cremation or burial ground locally called *Masana Katte*. The bearers change their positions halfway to the cremation ground. On reaching the cremation ground, the rice and a coin tied in shroud are placed on the ground together with a tender coconut. The funeral procession is led by the chief mourner who carries a fire pot and a water pot. In

case of cremation the chief mourner sets alight the funeral pyre. In the case of burial also he is the first to put a handful of earth in the grave. Before burial or cremation the chief mourner with a water pot on his right shoulder goes round the grave thrice and the pot is dashed into pieces on the ground at the end of third round. In case of burial they plant *Tulsi* on the grave and place cooked rice near it. After burial or cremation they go to a nearby water course and wash themselves. On returning home they bring *thirtha* from a Bhat and sprinkle it in the house. The Halleers observe three days as a period of impurity (*Mailige*). On the third day they collect the ash if the body is cremated and plant a *Tulsi* at the place of cremation. On the 11th day also after death they bring *thirtha* and only then do they consider themselves free from pollution. On the 12th day they arrange a feast for their castemen. For this feast they invite a person of their caste, of the same age as that of the deceased and he is presented a headgear or *dhoti*. His wife is also given a saree. This guest is believed to represent the deceased. On this day they wash their houses and clothes in addition to preparing food in new earthen pots and seek the assistance of a soothsayer who is believed to bring back the dead man's spirit called *Kole*. He cuts some paddy grains representing the spirit with a knife during the night and the spirit is believed to have peacefully rested in the *Tulsi Katte* in front of the house.

The Vajantris normally cremate the dead aged above 12 years. They observe pollution for 10 days.

The Halleers do not perform any annual death ceremony. However, on new moon days they place some cooked rice and fish curry which is eaten by crows or cows.

XII. RELIGION

The Halleers are Hindus and their chief deity is Hanuman. The important temples of Hanuman which are frequently visited by the Halleers are at Hosapattan and Manki in Honavar taluk and Bhatkal.

The family deity for all the Halleers is represented by an unhusked coconut kent at the base of the *Tulsi* plant in front of their house. The family deity is locally referred to as *Mane Devaru* or *Budada Devaru*. In many cases if there have been divisions of families, the *Tulsi* plant and the coconut are seen only at the ancestral place. They worship the *Tulsi-katte* every day after their wash or bath. In some households wooden images of Venktaramana are also

kept along with the coconut, for worship. They apply sandalwood paste to the deity and pluck a leaf of the *Tulsi* plant which is eaten while sipping a few drops of sacred water kept in a metal container near the *Tulsi* plant. Whenever there is a death in the family, they invite a soothsayer (*Ghadiga*) on the 12th night of the funeral feast and he is believed to invoke the spirit of the dead person, making it stay within the unhusked coconut.

The Halleers also revere a number of other Gods of the Hindu pantheon. In Manki of Honavar taluk, the important deities are Hanumanth Deva of Manki, Sri Venkataramanadeva, Sri Masti Amma, Sri Devikanamma, Sri Ginnothammadevi, Jatakadeva etc. They call Hanumanthdeva as *Gurudeva* or supreme God and offer coconuts and plantains to this deity. There are said to be many temples of Masti in the district of North Kanara. The word *Masti* has been derived from 'Mahasati' meaning a great woman who entered the funeral pyre of her husband. Most of the non-Brahmanical Hindu population of the district as also several Brahmins pay reverence to these deified women. Usually a non-Brahmin functions as a priest at these temples. The deity generally consists of a small mound or a platform with a stone image of a female figure bearing all the marks of a married woman. The main worshippers are Namdharis, Komarpais and Nadors. All these castes are reputed to belong to the former warrior classes. At the Devikanamma temple the priest is a Brahmin. This temple is in the thick forest. Fowls are sacrificed in honour of Ginnothammadevi.

In Kumta taluk as observed in Hiregutti the Halleers have Hanumanthdev of Hosapattan as their supreme deity. Their other deities are Balale Amma, Jataka deva, Holeyatradev, Ishwara, Hirehonna, Dandisar Bhangji Jataka, Sanna Hosaba of Hiregutti and Balale villages. A Brahmin is the priest at the Balale Amma temple. Here, the Halavakki Vokkals have a special part to play in the rituals. On important days and fairs a Halavakki Vokkal wearing a turban and *dhoti* keeps on his head a *Kalasa* (a copper container with narrow neck), containing water and rice. They keep the silver image of the deity on this *Kalasa*. They arrange flower garlands on bamboo strips round this image in such a way as to resemble a peacock spreading its feathers. Then the bearer moves from place to place and the devotees offer coconuts and plantains to the deity. They offer fowls in sacrifice in honour of Jatakadev during the *Bandi* or cart festival. The actual act of sacrifice is done by a Halavakki Vokkal. Sri Holeyatradeva temple has a

were being ex-communicated in the past. But now-a-days such cases are not discussed by the caste council. The ex-communicated persons were to be re-admitted only after a payment of fine and after they underwent purification ceremonies.

The Vajantris have no village or regional caste councils at present. It is said that about 50 years ago they had a regional council called *Panch Mahal*. Little information is now available regarding this council.

XVII. SOCIAL REFORMS AND WELFARE

Apart from legislative measures prohibiting untouchability and financial grants in the form of subsidies from the Department of Social Welfare of the State Government, there are no concerted efforts at the regional or community level by the Halleers or any other voluntary welfare organisations directed towards the amelioration of their backward economic and social conditions. Their limitations—illiteracy, lack of leadership, poor economic conditions—which are well known, are common to almost all the Scheduled Castes.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Housing Co-operative Societies have been started in almost all the Development Blocks. In Honavar though such a Society was started in 1966, the enrolment as members of Halleers was not very encouraging. In Manki village out of a total of 45 households, there were only 5 members who had shares in the Co-operative Society; in Kudrigi village, 25 out of 40 households were members; and in Hadinbal 5 out of 15 households were members at the time of investigation in 1969. Only two households of Manki had obtained loans of Rs. 400 each from the Society. In none of these places were there any community centres. There was one Balawadi functioning in Kudrigi village. There were only five children belonging to Halleers attending this Balawadi out of about 45 chil-

dren of school-going age. In Hiregutti also there was a Balawadi functioning which about 30 children of their caste attended.

Further in spite of the liberal grants of lands to the landless among the Scheduled Castes, there is no significant improvement. Only at Kudrigi village it was reported that about 13 years ago, 18 of the 40 families were granted forest lands at the rate of 4 to 5 acres each. But at present there are only 5 among them who have brought those lands under cultivation. The rest are reported to have not attempted to cultivate the lands due to their inability to meet the reclamation costs. In Hiregutti only one household was granted lands about 12 years ago.

It is encouraging to find that in Hiregutti, many labourers belonging to castes such as Ager, Halleer, Komarpanth etc., have formed a "Koolikara Sangha" with a membership of about 210 of which 50 are Halleers. The *Sangha* advances loans to its members to enable them to take up small contracts of road construction, forest work, quarrying etc. The *Sangha* itself also takes up works and employs labourers from among the members. The wages earned through this *Sangha* are higher and employment is ensured during slack periods.

XVIII. CONCLUSION

The Halleers constitute a backward community economically, socially and educationally. They still suffer from traditional caste disabilities including untouchability. Their problems are similar to those of equivalent castes and only concerted economic measures can improve their lot. Sustained efforts towards the betterment of their status, both economic and social are essential.

HANDI JOGIS

HANDI JOGIS

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN & HISTORY

The caste Handi Jogis is notified as a Scheduled Caste according to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes Part C States) Order, 1951, as modified by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Lists) Modification Order, 1956 in the districts of Bangalore, Bellary, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore (except Kollegal taluk) Shimoga and Tumkur of the Mysore State.

They are found in all the districts of the old Mysore State and the Bellary district and also in the Ananthapur district of Andhra Pradesh. They are called *Pandi Jogulu* in Andhra Pradesh, where they are not notified as a Scheduled Caste. They were considered as a class of Telugu beggars by L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer. In the 1901 Census, they were grouped under the broad term *Jogi* which included Mondaru, Helavas and Goravas.

Regarding their origin the enquiries in the field reveal a legend that they were the off-spring of a concubine of a person of Pakanati Reddy caste. Having found their father's occupation which was agriculture too taxing and expensive they took to begging and pig-rearing. They also call themselves Pakanati Jogis. They are not aware of any other legend regarding their origin. They admit that they are immigrants from the Andhra Pradesh. They are commonly known as Handi Jogis in Kannada and Pandi Jogulu in Telugu. In the Hassan district they are also known as Handi Chikkas.

During the course of field study it was reported that Handi Jogis are quite independent of other castes which suffix Jogis such as Pamula Jogis. Jogi is a generic term applied to all persons of different castes who dedicate themselves as devotees of Bhairadevaru of Chunchanagiri. Hence the term 'Jogi' does not denote the caste of a person as such but only indicates the status of a person in the caste to which he belongs. Handi Jogis is a homogenous caste of Telugu beggars engaged in pig-breeding. They are said to be immigrants from Andhra Pradesh. According to the 1901 Census Report of Madras, Jogis were Telugu beggars and besides begging they employed themselves in snake-charming and pig-breeding (P-142). It is probable that the name Handi Jogi was given by the people of this State because of their association with pig-breeding and begging.

Field study reveals that in the Hassan district the people of other castes call them by different names viz., Handi Gollaru, Havina Gollaru, Emme Gollaru, Hatti Gollaru and Danada Gollaru. But according to Handi Jogis themselves Emme Gollaru and Handi Chikkas are synonyms while the others are independent endogamous groups.

"The term 'Jogi' is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word 'Yogi' i.e., a man who practices Yoga after renouncing all wordly desires. The word may have come to be applied to this caste on account of their begging habits, selling of medicines and the conjuring which they practice. They are in some places styled Jangalaru and have given up pig-breeding. These people live by selling indigenous medicinal drugs and conjuring" (L. K. A. Iyer, 1928-36, Vol. III P-490). However, they are not selling herbs and roots or have anything relating to magic.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TRENDS

Handi Jogis are found in all the districts of the old Mysore State and the Bellary district. Their number is the largest in Kolar district followed by Bangalore. In the Kolar district they are highly concentrated in Gauribidnur taluk. They are not found concentrated in considerable number in any single village but are spread in small numbers evenly throughout the taluk. In any village the number of their households does not exceed ten. Mostly they live in places where there are muddy tanks which afford penning facilities for their pigs. They are primarily pig breeders and wanderers from village to village in quest of food for themselves as also for their pigs. Some of the cultivators among them also move about with their pigs generally within a radius of 10 miles, soon after the harvesting season in December and return to their villages on the eve of sowing operations. While on the move, they generally obtain cooked food from their homes. During this period they also trade in pigs.

According to the 1961 Census the Handi Jogis number 5299 in Mysore State, consisting of 2791 males and 2508 females. They are spread over in 10 districts of the State. Their population exceeds more than 1000 only in the districts of Kolar and Bangalore. In the

earlier censuses the Handi Jogis were enumerated and grouped under one broad caste called Jogis. Hence it is not possible to study the population trend of Handi Jogis as a distinct caste and compare their present population with their population for any previous censuses.

III. CLAN, DIVISION ETC.

Handi Jogis are not aware of any other endogamous groups among them. Even though there exist some castes like Pamula Jogis, allied to this caste in the matter of occupation and customs, they deny the existence of endogamous groups among them. These jogis were probably a single caste in the beginning, but difference of occupation gave rise to two divisions. Pakanati Jogis and Pamula Jogis (L.K.A. Iyer). All other castes known as "Jogis" are said to be quite distinct from them. According to 'The Mysore Castes and Tribes' (Vol. III page 490) their exogamous divisions are as follows:

(1) Bintavallu (2) Chirukurivallu (3) Dasaripurivallu (4) Gudilollu (5) Gollarivallu (6) Indukurivallu (7) Jallivallu (8) Mopurivallu (9) Origantavallu (10) Pindiralollu (11) Sivaralollu (12) Sirarapuvallu (13) Samatavallu (14) Sappadivallu (15) Taravallu (16) Ula-valavallu (17) Vagitavallu (18) Vadapillavallu.

These exogamous groups are called *Kulas*, some of which are of a totemistic nature. But the Handi Jogis are not aware of the etymological significance of these *Kulas*. The descent of the *Kula* is traced only through the males. The marriage alliance between persons of identical *Kulas* is prohibited. So also marriage alliances between some *Kulas* is prohibited as persons belonging to some *Kulas* are considered as brothers though their *Kulas* are different. For example Jannollu or Jallilavallu do not marry with Pindiralollu, Mopurivallu and Indukurivallu, as they are considered as brothers, and Vantiddavallu do not marry with Mopurivallu, Shivarollu. Whenever they negotiate marriage alliances they are very particular in tracing out the *Kulas* of the two parties.

IV. DWELLING, DRESS, ORNAMENTS, FOOD ETC.

Handi Jogis who were formerly nomads have now begun to lead a settled life in villages and towns. They generally live at a little distance from the main village or town. Their settlements are more like tiny hamlets with less than 10 households in each hamlet. Each of their habitation is a collection of a few low-roofed huts in a cluster of irregular shapes. Invariably, near the huts, there will be low sheds to pen pigs.

Their houses are mostly huts having low roofs, mud walls with one or two rooms. Most of the huts have rectangular ground plans with roofs sloping on two sides. Generally the roofs are covered with dry sugarcane leaves, *Kachi* grass, coconut leaves and wild date-palm leaves. Very few of them own mud roofed houses which are generally bigger than the huts. The walls of such houses are of either stones or unbaked kachha mud bricks. Such houses called *Malige* (Mud roof) have open space in the front which is generally covered with thatched grass. Such front portion is called *Vappara* (inclined thatched roof in front of the house) and used for resting during daytime and as a sleeping room particularly in summer. Guests are also entertained here. Huts are built by the Handi Jogis themselves and *Malige* houses are built by the Bovis.

The windows and doors are prepared by the local carpenters. The sawn wood is purchased either locally or at the timber depots in the nearby towns. Sometimes the standing trees of neem, mango, and *babul* are purchased from the villagers and their timber is used in making doors, windows, shutters and rafters.

Generally the plinth of a hut measures $15' \times 9'$. They will have no windows and are only provided with one or two small doors. They are ill-ventilated, dark and dingy. They lack in privacy without proper arrangements for bathing and washing. Bath is taken in the open near the house. In some cases such places are screened off by small mats of grass, coconut leaves or date palm leaves. Their cattle are also stalled inside the residential houses, as they do not have separate cattlesheds. The walls of the hut are as low as 4 feet and are made of mud and straw. They draw water from the common public wells from which other high caste people also draw water.

The site for the house to be constructed is selected only after consulting a Brahmin or Lingayat priest. On the eve of the construction of the house *Paya Puja* (foundation laying ceremony) is performed. On the occasion a few of the elders of their caste and some other village leaders are invited. The Brahmin priest performs *puja* at the site by breaking a coconut and burning camphor. The plinth of the house is always measured in terms of *ankana* (local measure to denote plinth area). Each *ankana* measures about 40 square feet or $4\frac{1}{2}' \times 9'$. The houses should always have plinth of odd number of *ankanas*. The foundation work commences either from the south-east or the north-west corner of the site. No foundation is required for

88 (a)

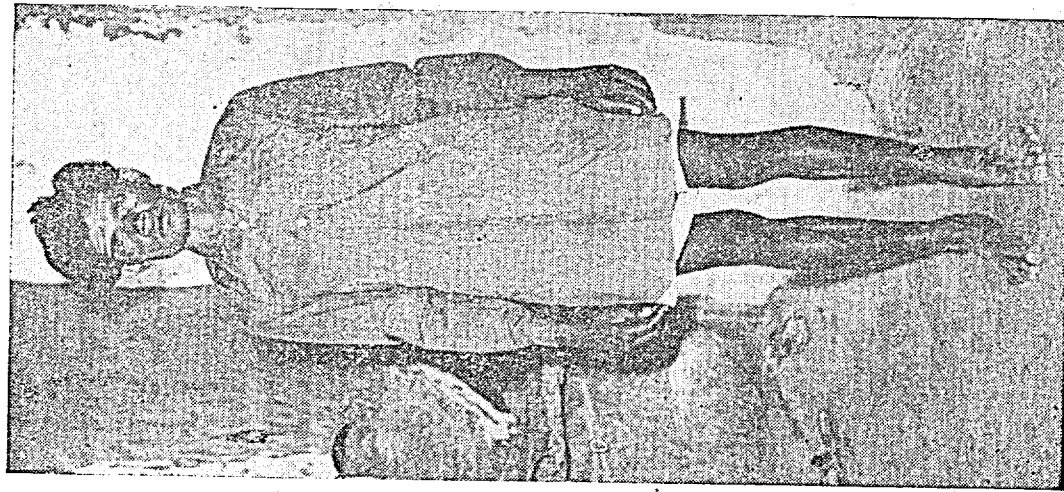


1 (b). Profile



1 (a). Front view of a male

4. HANDI JOGIS



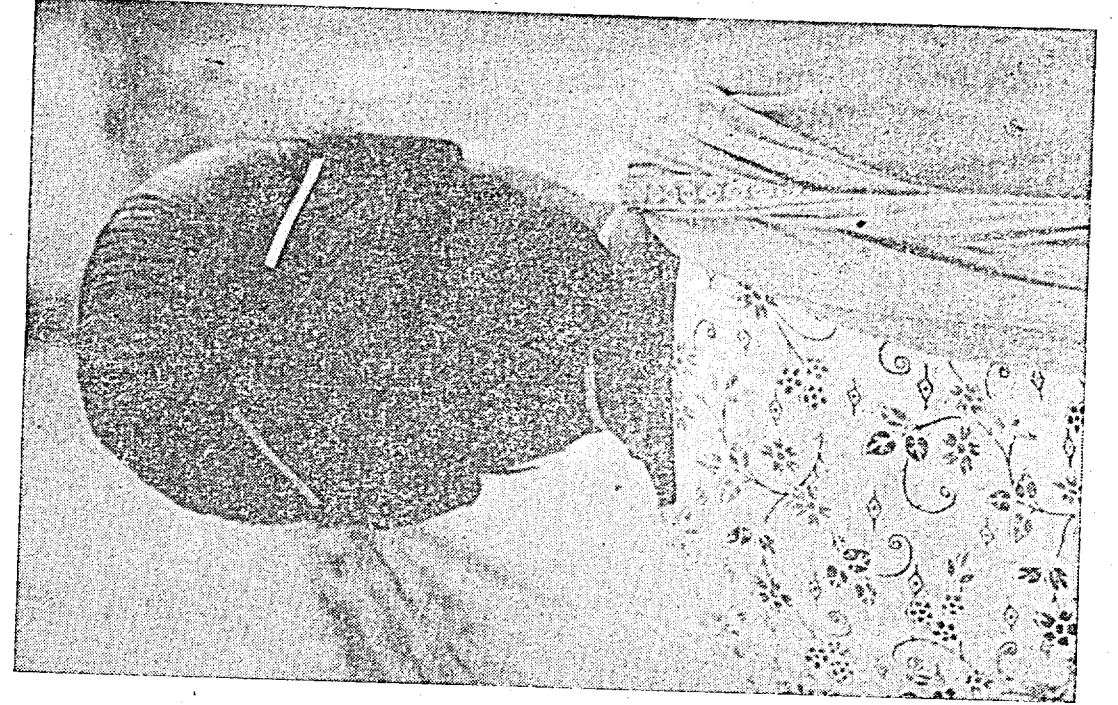
1 (c). Full size

88 (b)



2 (a). Front view of a female

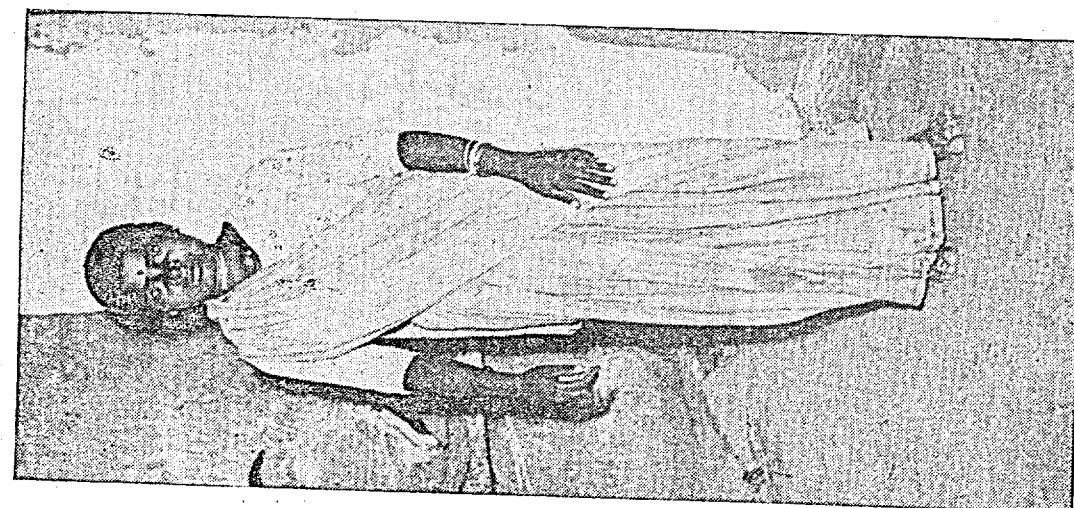
88 (c)



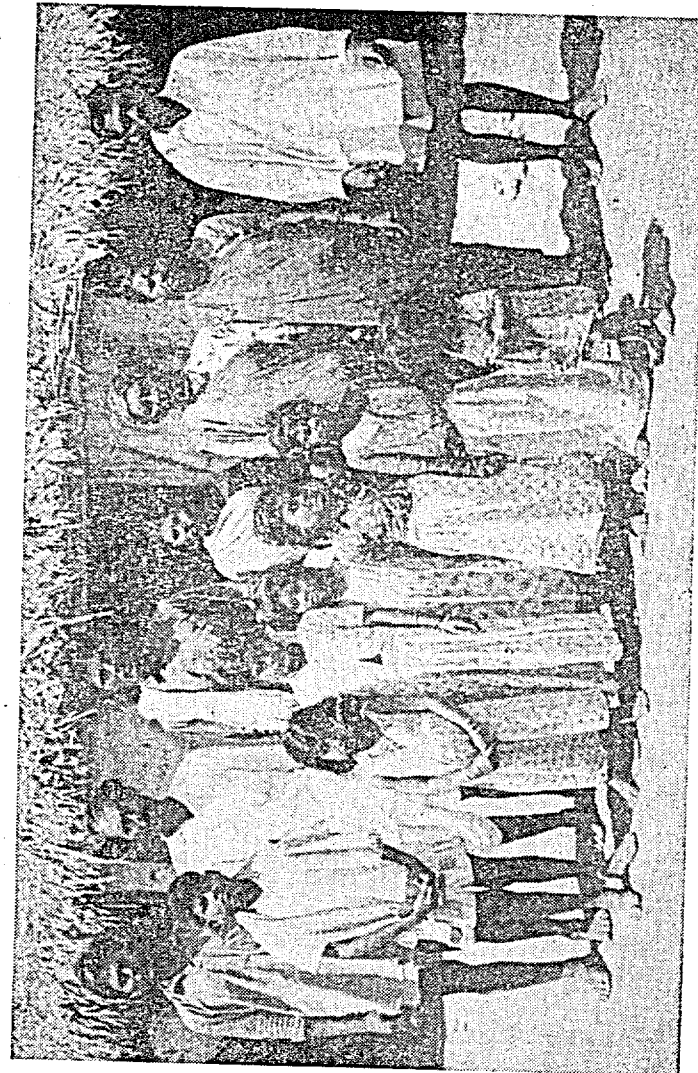
2 (c). As viewed from behind



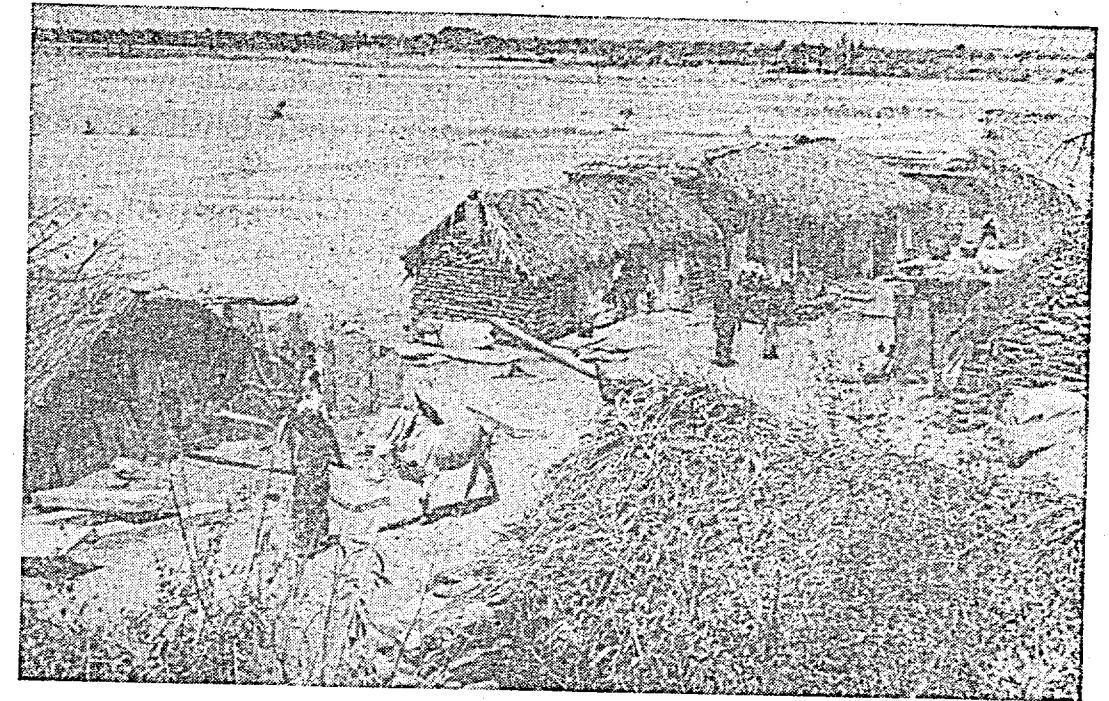
2 (b). Profile



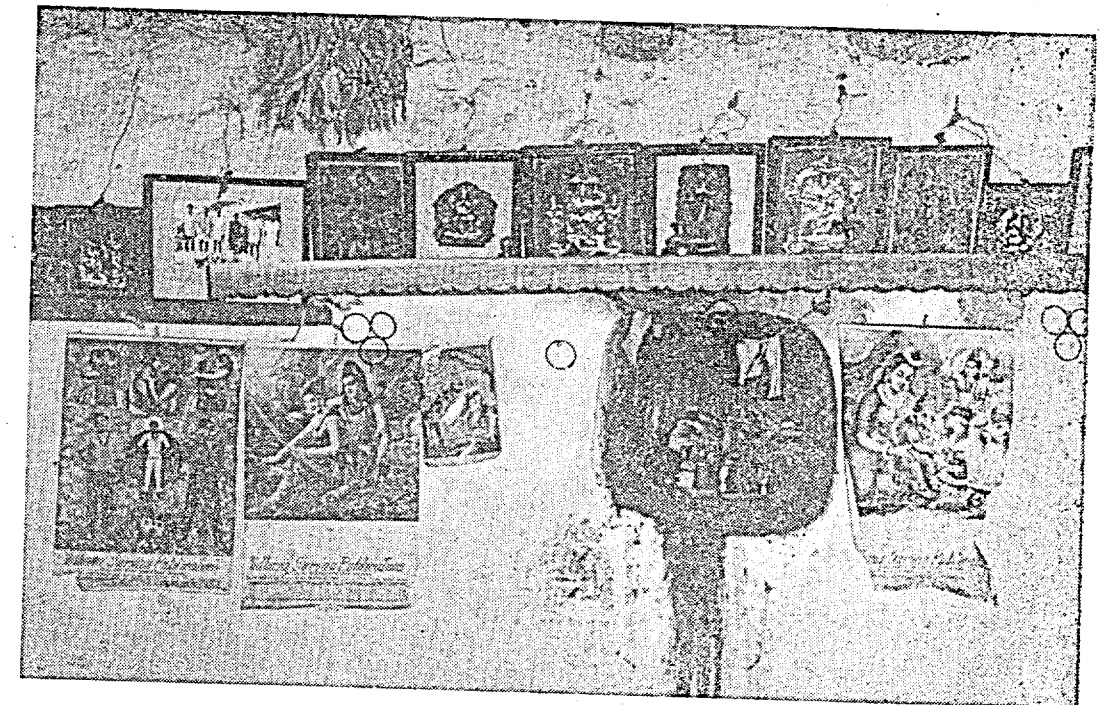
2 (d). Full size



3. A group of males, females and children belonging to different age-groups



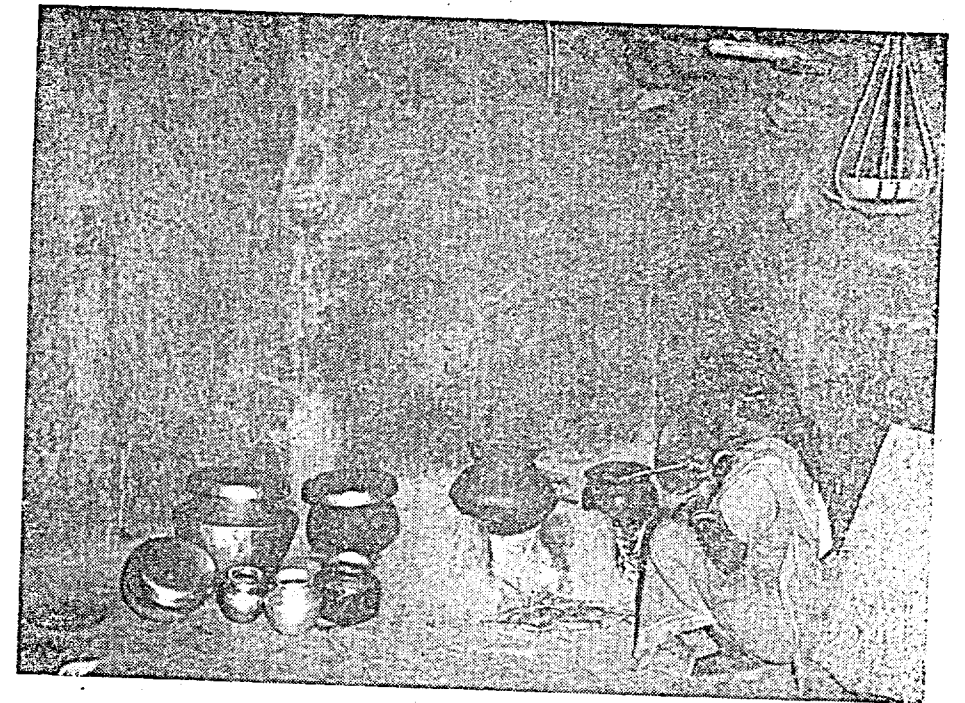
4. Partial view of a Handijogi settlement



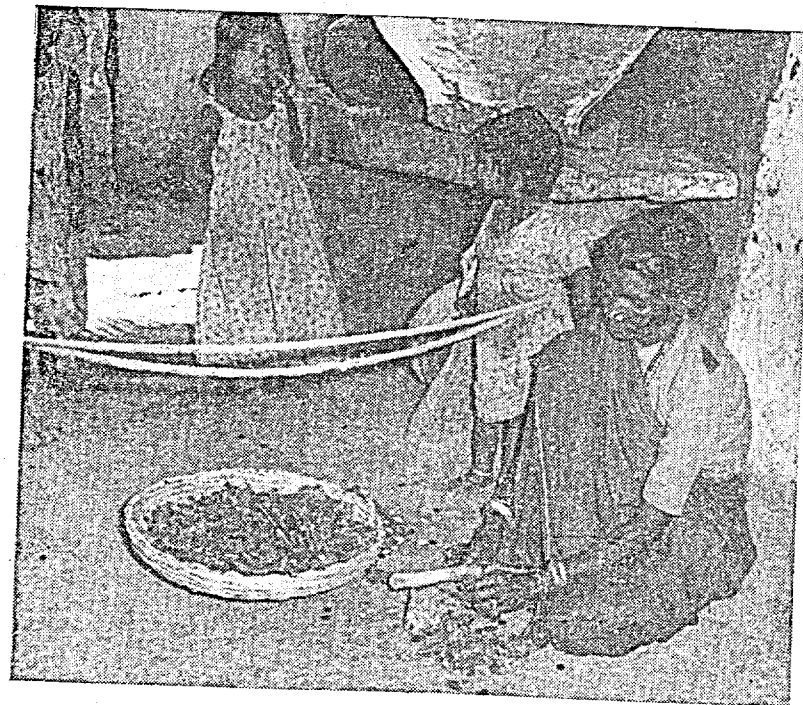
5. Objects of worship hung on a wall and kept in a niche in a household



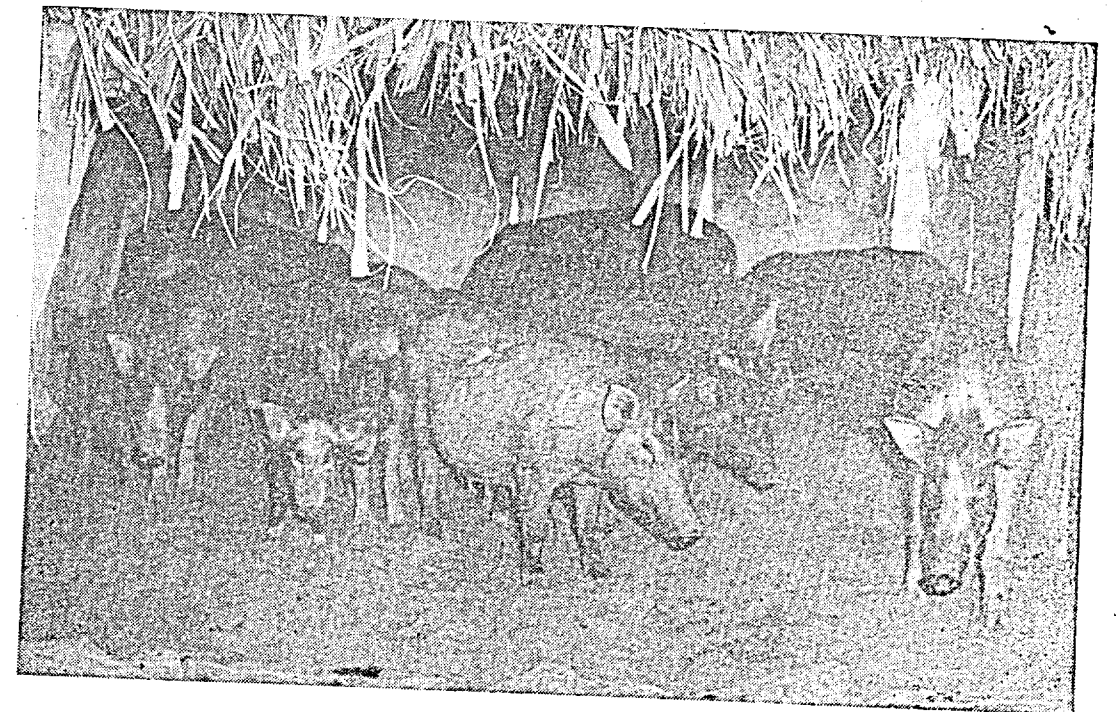
6. Stall feeding of working bullocks by a female



8. An inside view of a kitchen



7. An old lady engaged in separating seeds from tamarind fruits



9. View of a pig-pen

huts and in such cases wooden or stone poles are erected first in the four corners. For a hut 3 such poles or posts are required. On each side cross beams of casurina or bamboo are fixed over these poles. Then a framework is prepared with small *agase* poles or stems arranged and tied in a criss-cross manner. Sugarcane leaves or *kachi* (a kind of grass used for thatching) straw is spread for roofing over the framework. Dried sugarcane leaves and *kachi* straw are obtained during summer from the fields and the field bunds.

The floors of the houses are generally plastered with gravelly earth. The floor is washed with cow-dung once a week. Occasionally floorings of lime plaster are also prepared.

They settle in the newly constructed houses only after performing a housewarming ceremony called *Kothinti Samaradhana*. On this occasion a sheep is sacrificed in front of the newly constructed house and its meat is cooked and served to their relations and friends. *Ede* or boiled rice is offered to the sheep before its sacrifice and *ede* (food items) is thrown over the roof after the sacrifice to appease the evil spirits and ghosts. Milk is first boiled on the new hearth till it overflows from the vessel. Neither a Brahmin nor a Lingayat priest is invited to perform the housewarming ceremony.

On account of their social and economic backwardness they possess very few household goods. They possess little furniture. For lighting they use small kerosene lamps (chimney) made of tin and many of them cannot even afford to purchase hurricane lanterns. For cooking and storing water they possess earthenware. For drinking water they use aluminium cups. Most of them possess one or two brass vessels called *Chombu*. They take their meals in aluminium plates called *Theli* in Telugu. Each house possesses one woollen blanket called *Kambali*. Handwoven cotton blankets called *Duppati* are used both as beds and for covering. They also use date-palm mats and gunny bags as beds. Agriculturists among them possess the traditional agricultural implements like plough spade, crow-bar, pick-axe, weeder and baskets made of date-palm. Bamboo baskets of varying sizes are used for storing grains in small quantities. Only a few well-to-do cultivators own bullock carts which are used for all their agricultural operations and also for transport. At times they hire out these carts.

Men wear knickers and shirts (*Angi*) with half sleeves. Old men wear dhotis as lower garments. In the past, about 20 to 30 years back men used to wear

only a loin cloth as their lower garment. But now with their increasing contact with other villagers and their closer access to the village community, they have begun to wear knickers. Headgear or *peta* which was worn by their elders is slowly being replaced by a towel hanging on the shoulders which at times is also tied round the head. The use of footwear (chappals) is limited to a very small number.

The women wear saree as the lower garment and a blouse as the upper garment. They do not wear any undergarments or footwear.

Young boys wear *angi* (shirt) which is a half sleeved shirt and young girls wear, frocks and long skirts covering up to the knees.

Due to their poverty stricken conditions, they possess very few ornaments inspite of their inherent love for them. The ornaments now in use among them are (1) ear-rings (*Kammalu*) (2) ear-chains (*Shempachainu*) (3) silver anklets and chains (*Kalandiga* and *Kalu-chainu*) (4) silver waist-belts (*Dabu*) (5) nose-rings (*Moogu bottu*). (6) silver *todu bale* (armlet). Married women wear strings of black beads with *Mangalya* (Marriage badge). *Kadagas* (silver wristlets) are only used by aged women now-a-days. Their use is fast declining particularly among the younger women. Married women are commonly seen with ear-rings, glass bangles, strings of black beads and nose-rings. They put on a vermilion mark on their forehead to signify their marital status. Widows are seen with bare foreheads signifying their widowhood. Widows do not wear, bound by their custom, glass bangles, strings of black beads and flowers. Many of their women particularly elder women are tattooed. Women in general are found of tattooing. Tattoo marks are chiefly found on the forehead and arms, the tattoo marks being their favourite deities, flowers and their own names or names of their close friends. Tattooing is slowly disappearing due to the fact that the tattooers who are mostly Koracha women have taken to other occupations and their visits to the villages are becoming less frequent now-a-days. Even men have marks tattooed on their foreheads and arms.

Men wear few ornaments. Only on special occasions like marriages do they wear ear-rings and golden finger-rings. In the past men used to wear ear-rings called *Mura* in the lower lobe of the ear. But this practice is not popular now.

The food and dietary habits of Handi Jogis are very much similar to the other castes of the region, their staple diet being ragi. Generally they consume

hittu (balls prepared of *ragi* flour) made of *ragi* flour boiled with water. The use of rice is limited to only those who grow paddy. They take three meals a day and the menu is common for all the meals. The menu consists of *ragi* balls and vegetable curry or *saru* prepared with pulses and chillies. They are non-vegetarians. They eat domesticated animals like sheep, goat, pig and poultry. They eat parrot, *Shambar* crow (pheasant crow) fish and rabbit. They abjure from eating beef and bison flesh. Their festival sweet dishes are *payasa*, *holige*, *kajjaya*, *kadabu* etc. *Dosas* and *rotis* are occasionally prepared for breakfast. Non-vegetarian dishes are not prepared during festivals and other religious ceremonies. However on the days immediately preceding certain festivals like *Yugadi*, *Deepavali*, *Navarathri* they prepare non-vegetarian dishes. They are very fond of toddy. Prior to the introduction of prohibition toddy was indispensable for celebrating occasions like marriages, betrothals, births and other community festivals. Now they consume intoxicating liquor only when it is available. Both men and women have a strong craving for such drinks. If chewing *pan supari* is popular both among men and women, only menfolk smoke beedis and cigarettes. The habit of taking tea and coffee is on the increase particularly after the introduction of the prohibition.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASES AND TREATMENT

During winter they seldom take bath. They use soapnut powder and toilet soaps for bathing. They wash their clothes once a week with soap. Their clothes are also sent for washing to the washerman who is paid in kind annually. Generally two sets of dresses are possessed by a person. They sweep their houses daily and the floors are smeared with cowdung once a week, generally on Saturdays. On ceremonial and festival occasions they invariably clean and wash their houses with cowdung and decorate the walls and floors with red earth and *rangoli* (powder of white soft stores). Houses are white washed once or twice a year on festival occasions like *Yugadi* and *Deepavali* and ceremonial occasions like marriages and death ceremonies. They clean their teeth every day with charcoal, sand and brick powder.

As they are believers in soothsaying and witchcraft the diseases and ailments are attributed to the evil spirits. Serious and chronic ailments are considered as the acts of God and their family deities. On the outbreak of any disease, they first seek the advice of a medical practitioner and then soothsayers and astrologers are approached. They observe vows to

their family gods, which they fulfill by sacrificing sheep, goat or a cock. *Kanike* or *mudupu* (money kept as an offering to God) is also offered to the God Venkateswara.

The common diseases among them are fever, cold, headache and general debility. Ailing persons are first taken to the medical practitioner since now-a-days medical facilities are provided at several places of easy access and within a short distance. In their absence, diseases are treated with local herbs and roots.

VI. LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Though the Handi Jogis are spread over in all the districts of the old Mysore State their mother tongue is Telugu. Most of them can understand Kannada. Only in the predominantly Telugu speaking areas of the Kolar district, very few of them can understand Kannada. However, many in the other districts can fluently converse in Kannada with others.

The percentage of literacy among Handi Jogis is very low and it works out to a little over 4%. For a population of 5,299 the literates number only 228 of whom 214 are males and 14 females. Even among the literates as many as 211 are only literates without any educational standards, 15 have reached junior or primary basic standards and only 2 males have studied upto the matriculation standard. They are not sending their children to the schools regularly even though primary schools are functioning in almost all the villages of the State. For example in the village Kasaragutte surveyed in Gauribidnur taluk, it was noticed that only one boy was attending the school out of 15 to 20 boys and girls of school-going age. On enquiry, it is noticed that these young children of school-going age are always engaged as cattle herds and also in helping their parents in other domestic and economic duties. They are also required to watch the house, taking care of the small babies when their parents are out for agricultural labour or cultivation. No doubt they appreciate the advantage of education and also disadvantages of illiteracy. Despite this, they plead their inability to provide education to their children.

Further insight into the tables contained in volume XI Part V-A of the census publications for 1961 shows that 94% of the Handi Jogis in the urban areas and 95.8% of them in the rural areas are illiterate. Percentage of illiteracy for males and females is 92.3% and 99.4% respectively.

VII. ECONOMIC LIFE

The traditional occupation of the Handi Jogis is pig rearing and begging, the latter having practically disappeared during the last 5 or 6 years. At present they generally pursue cultivation, pig rearing, cattle rearing and agricultural labour. Only a few of them own lands acquired during the last 10 to 15 years by Government grants or purchase. Majority of those engaged in agriculture are tenant cultivators. Those not owning lands are mostly agricultural labourers. Their womenfolk also, besides attending to the domestic duties work in the field and contribute their mite to the income of the household by working as agricultural labourers. The Handi Jogis do not like to work as attached agricultural labourers. They are very particular in rearing pigs, buffaloes, sheep, goat and poultry. Generally they do not move out of their habitation in search of wages. They do not know fishing and very rarely consume fish. During December and January, when the groundnut crop is being harvested they move out with their pigs for grazing in the harvested groundnut-fields. They move during such times within a radius of 10 miles. When on the move, they also do trading in pigs.

They do not stall-feed the pigs as they cannot afford it. During the rainy season they find it very

difficult to feed the pigs whose movement is very much restricted on account of the standing crops in the fields all around. In case the pigs trespass into the fields, the farmers claim heavy damages from the rearers. So they do not allow pigs to graze freely in the open and keep them in pens. During such period many pigs die of starvation. Pigs are mostly sold to the butchers coming to them from Bangalore, the price range being between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100 per pig depending on its size. The pigs are generally sold when they are about two years old.

Working Force

According to the 1961 Census, out of the total population of 5299 belonging to this community in the State, 2812 are workers comprising of 1802 males and 1010 females. Hence the working force constitutes 53% of the total population. The sex-wise break up of the working force shows that 64.5% of the males and 40.3% of the females constitute the workers. This shows that a sizeable proportion of the population is engaged in various economic activities like cultivation, agricultural labour, and household industry.

The industrial classification of workers and non-workers by sex is presented below: (Source Census Volume XI-Mysore of India Part V-A SCT-1 Part B).

Industrial category	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
A Total Workers	1634	929	168	81	1802	1010
Workers						
(1) In cultivation	674	457	8	3	682	460
(2) Agricultural labour	387	152	22	..	409	152
(3) Livestock, mining, quarrying	169	67	31	13	200	80
(4) Household industry	328	199	67	34	395	233
(5) Manufacturing: other than household industry	14	2	7	2	21	4
(6) Construction	12	7	12	15	24	22
(7) Trade & Commerce	6	13	2	3	8	16
(8) Other Services	44	32	19	11	63	43
B Non-workers	857	1335	132	163	989	1498

Of the total rural population of 4,755, 2563 are workers and 2192 are non-workers. Hence in the rural areas the working force constitutes 53.9%. Among the workers in rural areas the males constitute 63.7% of the total workers and the females account for 36.3%. Sexwise, 65.5% of the males and 41.1% of the females

are economically active in rural areas. Further it is seen that of the total workers in rural areas 43% is engaged in cultivation and 21.8% is engaged in agricultural labour. Thus a total 65% is engaged in occupations connected with agriculture. As much as 20% of the workers in rural areas is engaged in

household industry. Only 10% of the workers are engaged in their traditional occupation of pig rearing and other livestock rearing.

In the urban areas, of the total 249 workers 101 or 40% are engaged in the household industries and 44 are engaged in livestock rearing. The rest are distributed in small number in occupations like construction, trade and commerce, service etc.

The percentage of non-workers among them is 47%. Of the non-workers, males constitute 18.6% and females constitute 28% of the total population. As the data on these aspects is not available for previous periods, it is not possible to obtain a comparative idea about their economic activities for any of the previous periods. However on the basis of the observations made during the field study it may be said that they are just taking to agriculture and agricultural labour pushing back pig breeding to a secondary position. From the figures cited in the table on industrial classification, it may be noticed that as much as 20% of them are engaged in household industry though they are not traditionally connected with any particular industry. These workers at household industry mostly pursue basket making. Some of them also prepare mats from wild date-palm leaves.

Handi Jogis live under difficult conditions. A correct idea or estimate regarding their income and expenditure pattern cannot be had due to statistical difficulties. But it may be said that their earnings fall short of even their basic needs. They come under the low-income group households, throughout the State. A few who earn by the sale of pigs squander away their income on drinking toddy and other intoxicants. Very few among them use such money in purchasing lands for cultivation. In the village Kasaragutte it was found during the course of field survey that about 6 households out of 10 have acquired land in the course of 20 years. The major item of their expenditure is food, which takes about 45% of their total earning followed by clothing. The other items of expenditure are cultivation expenses, social activities like marriages, birth and death ceremonies. Expenditure on items like recreation, education and travelling figure out to be almost negligible in most cases. Those engaged in cultivation have to pay interest on the loans obtained from their landlords or other village money-lenders for their cultivation expenses at the time of sowing and manuring. For example at Kasaragutte 6 families who own land were indebted to the tune of Rs. 10,000 on which annual interest amounts to Rs. 1,500. All of them had borrowed money to

sink one common irrigation well after all their personal resources were exhausted. The rates of interest charged vary depending on the time, the region and the security offered. The prevailing rates of interest range between 12% and 18% per annum.

VIII. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

Handi Jogis consider the birth of a child as a divine boon or blessing of God. Still births, abortions or miscarriages are attributed to the wrath of God or other evil spirits. To prevent such occurrences pujas are performed to the family deities and at various temples in their villages. Vows are also observed to various deities. Barrenness is likewise attributed to sins of the past life and they undertake pilgrimage to sacred places like Tirupati, Vidurashwatha, Nandi etc. They do not generally practise abortion excepting when the conception is due to premarital relationships. In such cases they resort to the use of some herbs and roots, which are known only to a few of the elderly women in the village.

Birth of the first child usually takes place in the parental house. The pregnant woman is taken to her parental house in the 7th or 9th month. While bringing the pregnant daughter, the parents with their daughters-in-law and other daughters go to her place with betel leaves, betelnut, fruits, a *choli* cloth, vermilion, turmeric powder, which are presented to her. A small ceremony called *Udigattedi* (filling the lap) is performed there when *arati* (lighted wick) is waved about her and a few members of their caste are entertained at a feast. After this ceremony she leaves for her parental place. A similar ceremony is performed in her parental house by the parents of her husband. During the wife's pregnancy the husband shall not kill or harm a cobra and also cannot carry a corpse. The pregnant woman also observes some restrictions regarding her diet. She does not consume plantains, pumpkin, fish and other food stuffs fried in oil. She is not allowed to travel long distances. These restrictions continue to be observed for 3 months after the delivery also. During the pre-natal period the expectant mother is given normal food like *ragi hittu* and *saru*. She does not take any special nourishing food like fruits, ghee etc. During the post-natal period she is given rice and *thili saru* (soup) prepared of tur dal (pigeon pea) and chillies.

Deliveries usually take place in their own residential houses and are attended to by experienced women of their caste for one or two days. There are no traditional *dais* (untrained midwife) among them. In the

case of difficult and complicated deliveries they seek the assistance of trained midwives or go to the nearby hospitals or maternity centres. They also observe vow and offer *mudupu*. Even some local *pandits* are approached who give certain oils for administering to the pregnant woman.

After the birth, the mother is considered to be impure for 9 days. During this period, she cannot perform any religious or social ceremonies. The naming ceremony is performed on the 9th day, when the child is put into a cradle and a feast is given to some of their castemen. Usually the woman who attended on the mother at the time of delivery puts the child into the cradle. The house is generally white washed for such occasions. *Pujas* are offered in the house and at the village temple. The husband or his parents also attend this ceremony. Soon after the birth, the child is given castor oil. The suckling starts on the third day. The child is bathed with hot water a day after the birth. The mother is given bath on the third, fifth and ninth day after the birth. On the 9th day, leaves of neem, lime, and orange are put into the hot water with which she bathes. The child is given oil bath on alternative days for 2 or 3 months. Normally for 3 months after delivery the mother takes bath once in 3 or 4 days. She drinks only boiled water during this period. The common names given to their children are Hutchappa, Rama, Ganga, Vankataraya, Gurraya, Sanjeevayya for the males and Yellakka, Hutchakka, Doddakka, Gangamma, Gowramma, Ramakka, Aswathamma etc., for the females. The name for the child is usually suggested by the *dai*. The name of the first child is usually that of its grand father or grand mother.

The umbilical cord is severed with a knife by the female who attends to the delivery. As the delivery usually takes place on a bed of paddy straw, the placenta is mixed with straw and put into a basket which is buried in a manure pit or in an Ant-hill.

The woman in attendance at the time of delivery is given a rupee on the day of the name giving ceremony. A son born after the deaths of a number of children has his nose pierced and a ring is put on. On the birth of a male child the head of the caste panchayat is paid 25 paise and half that sum is paid if a girl is born. In the past, their castemen used to be entertained with toddy. But now-a-days they are only entertained to a feast at the time of naming the child.

Tonsure ceremony is performed for children of both the sexes before they reach the age of three years. This ceremony is called *Puttentigalu*. It is generally performed at some place of pilgrimage like Muduganakunte.

The hair is removed by the barber who is paid upto one rupee in cash. On this occasion the maternal uncle of the child and the parents of the mother present the child and the mother with clothes. The maternal uncle performs the ceremony of piercing the earlobes and nose (for only females) on this day. The ceremony is followed by a feast to the castemen. On the attainment of puberty, the girl is considered to be polluted for 12 days. During the first three days she stays in a separate hut in front of the house and is helped by some women. Generally the hut is constructed with green leaves of neem by her maternal uncle. The girl is given a hot water bath everyday for 12 days. She may enter the house on the third day but her movements are limited to only particular portions of the house. She cannot enter the kitchen. On the third day she is given bath and cow's urine is sprinkled over her head. From the third day she is seated every night on *Hase* (wooden plank or elevated platform) and *arati* is waved about her by some females gathered for the purpose. During this period the girl has to pass sleepless nights as they believe that during her sleep, the ghosts and spirits haunt her. For 12 days she is given some nourishing food like rice, ghee, fruits, and special dishes. She does not attend to any work during this period. The temporary hut prepared is burnt by the maternal uncle on the twelfth day. If the girl is married the consummation takes place within 3 months after she attains puberty.

(b) Marriage

Boys and girls are generally married at the ages of 25 and 15 respectively. In the past till about 10 years back, pre-puberty marriages were common. Marriages by payment are generally in vogue. Till about 30 years back marriages by elopement were also taking place. But this practice has disappeared due to their contact with the villagers and their settled habits. They have now started celebrating marriages more or less in a similar fashion as some other castes in the village do. The practice of paying bride-price called *voli* is prevalent among them. The price varies from Rs. 50 to Rs. 120. Formerly the bride price was said to be about Rs. 12. Negotiations for the marriage are initiated by the parents of the boy. Usually the father of the boy accompanied by some other elders visits the parents of the girl. If they reach a settlement after the exchange of visits a betrothal ceremony called *Vakkaku Sastram* takes place in the house of the bride. *Vakkaku Sastram* is performed generally 15 to 20 days before the celebration of the wedding ceremony. The expenses of the betrothal ceremony are borne by the parents of the boy. The father of the boy and the girl's father exchange *tambula* (pan supari) between them to signify their

ried. There are as many as 57 widows in the age group of 15-44 and 156 in the age group of 45 and above who have not remarried.

(c) Death

The Handi Jogis bury their dead as is the practice with several other Hindus. Only lepers and a few others are cremated. It is reported that in some parts of the Mysore district that in the case of the death of a pregnant woman, the corpse is seated in the burial ground and water is placed in a new pot in front of it. The corpse is allowed to be eaten away by vultures and crows. Death takes place outside the residence usually in the frontyard as the dying person is shifted outside the house before life becomes extinct. Just before the death, the person is seated against the wall and a few drops of milk are poured into the mouth by the agnates. After everything is over the body is washed and word is sent round to all the agnates of the deceased. In the case of males they put *Vibhuti* mark on the forehead of the corpse and the corpse is carried by four persons in a sitting position. They do not carry the corpse on the bier but carry it on their hands after wrapping it in a white cloth. All the relatives throw rice on the eyes of the corpse. Some cooked rice called *Kulu* (food) is carried in a pot by the eldest son in front of the corpse while it is taken to the burial ground. This rice is strewn before the corpse while being carried. Midway the corpse is laid on ground and the carriers exchange their positions. It is again laid on the ground near the graveyard. The corpse is carried thrice round the pit and is lowered into it with the face towards the south. An egg or chicken is placed in the armpit of the corpse and jewels, if any, are removed before burial. All pour handfuls of earth into the pit and the pit is filled up. A mound is raised on the spot and a *Vibhuti* lump, betelnut and leaves and four coins are placed on it. Then they go to a stream, river or well, wash their hands, face and feet and return to the home to see the light kept burning at the place of death.

On the third day a small ceremony called *Chinna divasamu* is performed. They cook rice, eggs, etc., and take it to the grave and offer it to the deceased by placing it near the grave. They return home after the crows touch the *kulu*. They observe pollution for 11 days. On the 12th day *Pedda divasamu* ceremony is performed. The house is cleaned with cowdung and water and all the old earthen pots are thrown away and new ones are substituted. The sons and other agnates get shaved, take a bath and cow's urine is

sprinkled over their bodies and around the house. They go to the graveyard with some cooked food and place it near the graveyard on a piece of new cloth. If the deceased is a married male, his widow's bangles are broken over the grave yard and her *thal*i and toe rings are removed. If the deceased is a married woman, her husband is made to stand before the grave and a widower related to him as brother-in-law throws a new cloth on his head. As on the third they go to some well, stream or river, where an earthen image is made on a mound to represent the deceased and food is offered to it. The food is buried there and it is called *Buruda Samadhi*. On their return home, they get purified by crossing a lump of cowdung placed in their way. Some of their relatives stand near the house and give betelnut and leaves to the members of the family of the deceased which they chew and spit out. In the evening a goat is killed for the feast. The goat should belong to the sex opposite to that of the deceased. It is observed that in Hassan district a pig instead of a goat is killed for the purpose. *Puja* is offered to the family deity, to a new earthen pot and a set of new clothes before the feasting starts. *Pedda Divasamu* is not performed if the deceased is unmarried. They do not observe Shraddhas (Annual death ceremony) but they offer puja by burning incense and offering cocoanuts on important feasts such as Yugadi, Navaratri and Gowri to all the predeceased ancestors. They believe that the dead turn into ghosts if the death ceremonies are not performed. A widower can marry only before the completion of one year after his wife's death or after two years. He cannot marry during the second year.

IX. RELIGION

The Handi Jogis are Hindus. Formerly they were nomads and after they started settling down in villages, they have borrowed many customs and beliefs prevailing among other castes in the regions they reside. They worship several deities of which the chief are Maramma, Yellamma, Chickamma, Mopuramma and Doddamma whom they worship on a raised platform by offering cocoanuts and sacrificing sheep, goat etc. They also offer worship and observe vows to the deities like Tirupati Venkateswara, Nandiswara, Nanjundeswara, Viduraswatha, Subramanyeswara etc. Their religion is a mixture of several beliefs. Primarily they are Shaivas and owe allegiance to the Lingayat Mathas of Parvata and Jignur. Those living north of Bangalore owe allegiance to the Parvata Matha in the Bellary District and those living to the south of Bangalore owe allegiance to the Jignur Matha in the Salem district. Generally the agents of the heads of

these Mathas visit the villages once in three or four years to collect *Guru Kanika*. Apart from these Mathas there are mathas viz., Palaraswamy Matha in the Hassan district, Gangadharaswamy Matha in the Chitradurga district to which also the *Gurukanike* is paid once a year. The amount of *Gurukanike* is prescribed by the Guru and ranges between Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 4 per household. The failure to pay *kanike* is punished with ex-communication. Generally *Gurukanike* is collected once a year by the head of the caste in each village and paid to the *Guru*. The Handi Jogis also offer worship to the Vaishnava Gods like Tirupati Venkateswara and go on pilgrimage to Tirupati and other Vaishnava shrines. They hold annual and communal feasts in honour of their tribal gods when they sacrifice goat, sheep and poultry to satisfy them. Their priests are Jangamas. Anyhow they do not officiate in marriage, birth and death ceremonies. They are merely consulted when fixing the date for marriage and performing other ceremonies. In some parts of the Kolar district, they solicit the services of Brahmin priests.

The centres of pilgrimage to which they make visits are Tirupati, Ghati Subramanya, Viduraswatha, Nandi, Kaiwara, Nanjangud, Siddagange etc.

They observe all the Hindu festivals and particularly Yugadi, Shivaratri, Navaratri, Gowri, Ganesha, and Sankranti. They celebrate these festivals in a simple manner on account of their poor economic conditions. On all festival occasions only vegetarian dishes are prepared. Houses are cleaned and washed with water and cow dung. All the members of the household take bath on these days. On the festival days of Shivaratri, Karthika Somavara, the head of the household observes fast and takes meals only after performing puja to the household deity. The Yugadi festival is observed in the month of April when they wear new clothes and offer *Ede* (food items for offering) to the deceased ancestors. On the Sankranti, they decorate their cattle and offer them dishes prepared at home. Community festival known as Maremma Jatire or Uru Jatire is observed once in 3 or 5 years for two days. During the festival a clay image of Maremma is prepared and placed in a green hut prepared for the purpose near their settlement. They observe fast on the first day. A green pandal is raised in front of the hut. All their womenfolk come out of their houses with *Deepas* (lighted wicks) made of rice flour and jaggery. The procession is headed by the drummers and after reaching the hut, they go round it thrice and the *Deepas* are waved about the deity. Then a consecrated sheep, goat or a buffalo is killed in front of the

hut. The head of the animal killed is placed on the ground before the idol. The people pour water on the head and pray the deity to speak out (*Polaku*). If the mouth of the animal killed is open they believe that the deity is appeased. After the killing, the people go round their habitat shouting *Ko bali* (receive the sacrifice) in procession carrying a sword meant to drive away the evil spirits. Before the introduction of prohibition an offering of a pot of toddy was made to the Goddess. Generally each of the households kills a lamb or a goat as an offering to the Goddess. Non-vegetarian dishes are prepared and a feast is held in every home. They feed their relatives and friends who are generally invited for such festivals. The frequency of such festivals is very much reduced now-a-days as the epidemics such as plague and cholera are very much brought under control. In former days the outbreak of such epidemics was immediately followed by the Maremma Jatire. In those days epidemics were attributed to the act of the angry deity. Even now, the failure of crops and the rains are attributed to the anger of the deity.

The Handi Jogis are freely admitted to the village temples of the other caste Hindus. They do not suffer from social disabilities like untouchability. They have a lot of faith in soothsaying, sorcery and witchcraft.

X. LEISURE AND RECREATION

As the Handi Jogis are economically very poor, they find hardly any leisure and even if it be there, it is mostly spent in anxiety and in thoughts for the morrow. In the rainy and winter seasons they are fully engaged in cultivation and agricultural labour. During summer the men go about with their pigs. They are illiterate and hence cannot think of any organised system of recreation. Only festivals and fairs provide them with a change in their daily rut. They visit cattle fairs and car festivals held at the holy centres like Viduraswatha, Chunchanakatte, Nandi, Ghati Subramanya, Magadi etc. As they were formerly leading a vagrant life and lived on begging, they know very little of popular games like *Kolata*, folk-dance and *Suggi kunita* (dance during the harvesting season). Most of their leisure hours, they spend in gossip. Only children and a few adults play some indigenous games like hide and seek, *Maragoti*, *Goli* and *Chendata*.

XI. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The Handi Jogis, since long have an important and strong socio-political institution in their caste panchayat

agreement to the matrimonial alliance. They also come to some settlement regarding the marriage expenses, the place of marriage, the date of marriage, the ornaments to be presented to the girl etc., on this day. All their castemen are invited to the betrothal. The presence of the head of the caste panchayat is essential. The marriage generally takes place in the house of the girl and the marriage expenses are borne by the parents of the boy. As marriage expenses a bag of rice, 5 seers of Tur dall (Arhar pulses) one maund of jaggery, 20 cocoanuts and betel nuts are given to the parents of the girl. The bride is given 3 sarees, 2 choli pieces and some ornaments like nose-ring, ear-rings, silver waist belt, anklets, chains etc. Consanguineous marriages are popular among them and only if this is not possible do they go in search of brides of other families. They can marry maternal uncle's daughter, paternal aunt's daughter and elder sister's daughter. The marriage with parallel cousins is taboo. Monogamy is prevalent, though a few instances of polygamy are found. They never practise polyandry.

Marriages are celebrated on auspicious days selected by the Brahmin *purohit* after referring to the almanac. In olden days they never used to consult the *purohits* (priests) with regard to the day of marriage.

The marriage ceremony lasts for 3 days. The first day of the ceremony is called *Telipasavu*, the second day is called *Muhurthamu* and the third day of the ceremony is called *Nagoli*. On the first day they raise the marriage pandal in front of their respective houses. The pandal consists of 9 pillars and is roofed by green cocoanut leaves. The bride and the bridegroom are given bath in the morning in their respective places. *Nagaru Puja* (worship of an ant hill) is performed by them. Their castemen are invited to a lunch on that day. The boy is besmeared with turmeric powder before leaving for the bride's place. On their arrival at the bride's place they are welcomed by the bride's party with sweet drinks and food and they are led to the Aswatha Katte (the peepal tree) or some temple. The bride's party welcomes the bridegroom with 'Kalasa Dibbana' and pipers. The party is led to a *Vidadillu* (house) for their stay on that day. Then the bride and the groom are besmeared with turmeric individually by 5 married women of the caste.

On the second day of *Muhurtha* the bride and the groom are besmeared with turmeric powder and oil and given bath early in the morning. The ornaments and clothes meant for the bride are presented to her.

Bashingas (marriage coronets) are tied to the foreheads of the bride and the groom by their respective maternal uncles. The bridegroom puts on his *Dhare* dress consisting of white shirt, white turban, a shawl and a dhoti. Afterwards the bridegroom is led to the marriage pandal. Twelve *arivenis* (pots filled with water) are placed round the marriage booth. Two milk posts of Jambalona branches are erected at the centre of the marriage booth. Then the bride and the groom are led to the marriage booth where they stand on a heap of rice facing each other in between the milk posts and a cloth curtain is held between them. A cocoanut, a piece of cloth containing 9 kinds of grains, one seer of rice, betelnut and leaf, are tied to the milk post. The Yajamana (Headman) of the caste or some elder man conducts the marriage ceremony. *Thali* or *Mangalya* (Marriage badge) is tied round the neck of the bride by the bridegroom. Then the cloth curtain held between them is removed. This is followed by *dhare* (pouring of milk) ceremony, at which both the bride and bridegroom hold a cocoanut in their joined palms. Their parents first pour milk on the cocoanut followed by others. They are then blessed with the sprinkling of rice grains. The bride-price is paid at the time of tying *thali*. Then they are led out of the pandal and are shown *Arundhati* (name of a star) star. Afterwards they sit side by side on *Hase* and some folk songs are sung by the womenfolk. The relatives and others offer presents to the couple. Then all the invitees are given a feast. In the evening a ceremony called *Simhasana* (throne) is performed. For this the parents of the boy give betelnut and leaves which are distributed to the assembly. The headman of the caste gets Rs. 16 as his *kanike* (fees) and a rupee is paid to him as *Guru Kanike* (fees paid to preceptor) for their *Guru* (preceptor). Then the couple is taken out in a procession to the accompaniment of music.

On the next day *Surige* (pouring) is performed at which the couple plays by sprinkling turmeric water on each other. Thereafter the bridegroom with the bride leaves for the village. He is accompanied by the parents of the bride and some of their relatives. While crossing the threshold of her husband's house, she is made to knock a heap of rice placed on the threshold and *arati* is waved about the couple. The wife lives with the husband till the Hindu month of *Ashada* when she is taken to her parents house. The marriage is consummated on the day of wedding itself if the girl has attained puberty. Formerly it is said that they were not observing any ceremony for consummation of the marriage and the girl used to live with the husband directly after the marriage ceremonies were over.

Now-a-days they observe a separate ceremony for consummation as this practice prevails among other castes like Vokkaligas, Lingayats, Balijas etc. Formerly, a marriage ceremony was always followed by community drinking of toddy. But now as toddy is not freely available, its use is very much limited. They prepare non-vegetarian dishes on the day of the consummation.

Widow remarriages are permitted among the Handi Jogis and they call them *Kudukattu* (widow remarriage). Such marriages are not celebrated on an elaborate scale. Widow marriage is performed after sunset. Generally a widow after choosing her spouse seeks the permission of the *Yajamana*. No bride-price is paid to the parents of the widow. Instead a sum of Rs. 100 or more is paid to the *Yajamana* for feeding the community. This ceremony is performed in the house of the widow. *Tali* is tied round her neck after she returns the *tali* of her former husband to the parents. Widows are generally married to widowers. However, there is no bar to the bachelors marrying widows. The remarried widows suffer from several social disabilities. They cannot participate in religious ceremonies and marriages. But their offspring do not suffer any such disabilities.

Divorces and separations are permitted among them. Formerly a mere expression of a desire by either party to be freed from the union was enough. But now-a-days such dissolutions are permitted only for adultery, ill-treatment, incurable disease etc. The return of the *Tali* and the tearing off of the loose end of her garment by him completes the divorce proceedings. When a divorce is sought, the Yajamana of the caste convenes a meeting of the caste panchayat which has to give its consent after hearing the two parties. Generally a divorce is preceded by desertion. There are instances of elopement with married women among them. In such cases there would be a dissolution of marriage and the former husband is paid the marriage expenses by the seducer besides the fine levied on him by the caste panchayat. The caste panchayat wields great influence on its members and always tries to set matters right. The Handi Jogis regard cases of premarital and extra marital relationship with horror and the offender is punished. Extra marital relationship of females with males of lower caste is seriously viewed and they are excommunicated.

According to the 1961 Census the statistics about the marital status of the Handi Jogis is as follows:-

Marital Status by Sex and Age-Groups.

Age-group	Total			Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced		Unspecified	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
All Age-groups	5299	2791	2508	1523	1127	1165	1139	92	213	11	28	..	1
0-14	2231	1128	1103	1127	1057	1	45	..	..	..	..	..	1
15-44	2167	1124	1043	372	63	719	900	22	57	11	23	..	..
45+	897	536	361	21	7	445	193	70	156	..	5	..	..
Age not stated	4	3	1	3	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..

During the 1961 Census only 1 male and 45 females in the age group of 0-14 are found to be married. This clearly indicates that child marriages are not very common among them. Divorces and separations are

also found to be not very common as there are only 11 divorced males and 28 divorced females for a population of 5299. Even though widow marriage is permitted, many of the widows have remained unmar-

or *Kulam Panchayati*. Similar institutions are also to be found among several other castes like Madigas, Holeyas, Lambanis, Bovis etc. The Caste Panchayat plays a major role in preserving the traditions and customs of their people. With the passage of time, however, this organisation has lost some of its old influence. There has been some change in their dress, habits as also in the occupational pattern during the last thirty years. Still the Handi Jogis constitute a well organised community. For each village they have a headman called *Buddivantadu* or *Yejamana*. He is assisted by *Chinna Yajaman* or *Kolkar* or *Bandari*. The *Kolkar* carries out the instructions of the *Yajamana* in arranging the meeting of the members of the Caste Panchayat. It is also his duty to smear the forehead of any person who has to be purified with Vibhuti (*Bandaram*). These offices are hereditary. The *Yajamana* gets a fee of one rupee as a perquisite at every marriage in addition to betel leaves and nuts. At every marriage the *Guru* (preceptor) of the caste also gets one rupee. It is collected by the *Yajaman* and such collections are sent to the *Guru* once a year. The regional head for about 20 to 30 villages is called "Khandasta". The regional meetings are called only when the decision of the caste panchayat are not accepted or when the caste panchayat does not arrive at a decision.

The caste council meets to discuss subjects like adultery, divorce, separation, partition, beatings with shoes etc. The punishment of ex-communication is inflicted on a woman cohabiting with a man of lower caste. The culprits are also punished by the levy of fine. If a person is beaten with shoes, usually a fine of Rs. 15 is levied. For adultery the fine may go upto Rs. 50. The guilty persons undergo purification ceremonies by taking bath and receiving *thirtha* from the *Bandari* after paying some fine to the *Yajamana*. The fine amount so realised is usually utilised in arranging feasts and performing community festivals. Half of the amount so collected is sent to their *Guru*. In former days the fine amount was utilised for drinking toddy.

XII. INTER AND INTRA-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Handi Jogis rank very low in the social hierarchy. However, they rank higher than the scheduled castes of Madigas, Holeyas and Korachas. They do not eat in the houses of Agasas, Akkasaligas, Adikarnatakas, Adi Dravidas, Bovis, Bedas, Upparas, Bestas and Lambanis. Agasas, Upparas, Bestas and Bedas are considered as higher castes than the Handi Jogis and they also do not accept food from the Handi

Jogis. The barber and the village washerman serve them and they are paid in kind or cash on annual basis. They draw water from the village wells and have access to the Hindu temples and the places of pilgrimage. The Brahmin and the Lingayat priests do not hesitate to perform the housewarming ceremony of them though they do not serve them in their marriage and death ceremonies. They have free access into the house of all other castes.

XIII. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

In spite of the efforts of the State Government as also several agencies promoting the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes there has not been much advancement in the economic or social life of the Handi Jogis during the last two decades. Most of them live in thatched huts with clay walls. In a few places they have been provided with some financial assistance for purchase of bullocks, digging of irrigation wells etc. As an example, it may be stated that in Kakanalli village of the Krishnarajanagar Taluk of Mysore District, one household has been given a pair of bullocks by Government. In the same village, a loan of Rs. 1,700 has also been advanced for sinking an irrigation well. In Kasarguttee village of Gauribidanur taluk of the Kolar district, six households have received a loan of Rs. 4,000 for sinking an irrigation well. Arrangements have been made to provide facilities for free education and primary schools have been established in almost all the villages. The State Social Welfare Department has also been alive to the needs of the Handi Jogis and other backward classes. But in spite of these, it has to be observed that the Handi Jogis have still to go a long way to reach the level of at least the other socially advanced castes in the region where they reside. Their backwardness is due to ignorance, illiteracy and lack of leadership. No doubt some of them have acquired loans from Government but there are only a few instances of this type.

XIV. CONCLUSION

The Handi Jogis were leading a nomadic life all these years and have now settled down in the villages only during the last two or three decades. Their principal occupation is agriculture but very few of them possess their own lands. Most of them are doing agricultural labour. Pig rearing was the principal source of income for all the Handi Jogis till recently. But now-a-days for the cultivating classes, this has become a subsidiary occupation. Socially, economically and educationally they are very backward. Though

they are not treated as untouchables, they are almost on the lowest rung of the ladder in the social hierarchy. Prior to the introduction of prohibition, they were very much addicted to drinking toddy and other intoxicants. In fact, all their ceremonies both religious and social were invariably associated with the drink-

ing toddy. But now-a-days this habit of consumption of intoxicating liquors appears to be on a decline though it cannot be said that the craving for such liquors has totally disappeared. Many of them who do not own land, still lead a nomadic life and move about with their pigs from place to place.

6. KOOSA

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Agrestic serfdom was widely prevalent in the past in the coastal district of South Kanara. Koosas who now number 7597 according to the 1961 Census are mainly inhabitants of South Kanara. They have been primarily agricultural labourers. The agricultural servants were known by different caste-names in different localities. Holeyas seems to have been the generic name used, in the past, to denote these more or less independent, localised endogamous groups. Stuart (1893, XII, P. 250) indicates that the then Holeyas population consisted of 196 sub-divisions and among them Bakuda, Mari, Mera and Mundala have been mentioned as the four important sub-divisions in South Kanara. However, any reference to Koosa is conspicuously absent.

Francis (1902, XV, IP. 168) lists Koosa as "a sub caste of Holeyas in the Udipi and Coondapur taluks which speaks Canarese". In the 1931 Census, lists of exterior castes,—a less innocuous term adopted for "depressed" class—were prepared separately for each province on the sole criterion of disability suffered on account of low social position. In the Madras list so prepared is included the Koosas in the districts of Bellary, South Kanara and Mysore. They became a Scheduled Caste in these three districts with the issue of the Government of India (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1936 [Census of India, 1961—Vol. I, India, Part-V-B (ii).] According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956, they now constitute a Scheduled Caste in the South Kanara district and also in the Kollegal taluk of Mysore district in the Mysore State.

The Presidents' Order 1956 does not mention any synonyms for the Koosa; so also, the 1901 Madras Census Report. Thurston (1909 IV), however, states that "Kusa a sub division of Holeyas in South Kanara" also called themselves Uppara (P. 187). Buchanan (1870 II), in his travelogue speaks of two castes, Bacadaru and Batadaru in the northern parts of Tuluva country. It is, further, stated that both of these castes were slaves, spoke Canarese followed the same customs and each had its own claims for superiority in rank. By the President's Order, 1956, both Bakuda and Bathada have been declared as Scheduled Caste in the South Kanara district.

It is fairly obvious from the above account of some of the reputed previous writers that in the past Koosa may have been a synonym of Uppara. But the present field study has revealed that in the north and north eastern parts of Udipi taluk and in Coondapur taluk the term Koosa, or more properly, *Koosalaru*, is a generic term applied to the erstwhile untouchable and hereditary attached agricultural servants. Thus in these tracts one may find *Koosalu* belonging to Uppara. Mera, Mundala, Bakuda, Bathada and even, in a few places, Koraga community. But recent trends noticed amongst these agricultural servant classes appear to be towards discarding the term 'Kusa' in favour of the admittedly dignified name 'Uppara'. In towns and many large villages they found to be even more touchy in this regard. They are also quite alive to the fact that 'Upparas' are not a Scheduled Caste according to the President's Order, 1956 and calling themselves Upparas would deprive them of the benefits conferred by the Constitution on Scheduled Castes. In consequence, considerable efforts are being expended during the past decade and a half to bring into currency the name "Adi Dravida" as a synonym. Among themselves they use the name Uppara. But in their applications for admission to schools, for grant of scholarships, government grants etc., they invariably mention Adi-dravida as a synonym. Outsiders, particularly among the older generation and also women use the term *Koosa* when referring to them while the younger generation call them Upparas. In some of the house lists maintained by the Panchayats their names will either have the prefix Koosa or the suffix Uppara. To cite an instance the house list of Barkoor Panchayat contained names 'Koosa Nagu; Koosa Basava' and also, 'Nandi Uppara, Basava Uppara, Krishn Uppara etc.'

In some places the Koosas are found engaged in the production of *Chunam* (lime for consumption with betel leaves) by burning oyster shells. In a few places, their men and women also make *gorubu*—the monsoon coverings—for women field-workers. But these two occupations are not in anyway exclusively associated with this caste. Again, in the towns there are stone-quarry workers, stone dressers and masons with

no special significance for the caste. Perhaps they are best identified by the association with agrestic serfdom under former landlords. Local custom enjoined Koosa men to assist in the disposal of dead persons of upper castes at least nominally. It was his duty to provide the fuel and arrange the pyre. In some places it was enough if he merely stuck thrice, the tree to be felled for fuel and for each wielding of the axe he would get a coin. In case of disposal by burial he was expected to turn the first sod by striking thrice with a crowbar. In a few places it would suffice if he handed over three handfuls of earth to the chief mourner for covering the corpse. By virtue of their association with disposal of the dead they were known in several places as *Kavina Koosalu*.

The term Koosa is locally believed to be a derivative of the word *Koosu* in Kannada which means a 'child'. It may also be figuratively used to imply the child like innocence that may be seen in the agrestic slaves of the past. Thurston (Ibid) considering Uppara as a synonym, derives Kusa from *Ku* meaning 'earth' and connects them with the manufacture of salt from salt-earth. It may, however, be said that the Uppara or Koosa of South Kanara do not even remember the existence of any such past tradition. It is possible that their forefathers gave up that occupation immediately on migrating to the coastal plains of South Kanara.

Regarding the origin of their caste, the Koosas do not have any legend or myth to narrate. In all the places visited they uniformly held the view that they are an immigrant community. They believe that their forefathers belonged to the Veerashaiva (or Lingayat) Faith and were inhabitants of Sagar, Hosanagar and other taluks of Shimoga district. They used to wear *Linga*, the symbol of Lord Shiva on their persons as is expected of true Lingayats. They are uncertain about either the cause of or period of their exodus. Some believe that a severe and prolonged famine forced them to move out while some others think this to be due to Haider Ali's conquest of Ikkeri and Bidnoor. It is, however, the generality of opinion that their forefathers came down the ghats and reached the coastal village Koteswar in Coondapur taluk. As Lingayats, their religion enjoined upon them refusal of food (particularly cooked food) and water at the hands of non-Lingayats. The call of hunger, however, knows no bounds, and it is stated that their elders in desperation instructed their casting away the *Linga* in the pond situated close to the Iswara temple in Koteswara. Thus freed from religious inhibitions, they started

begging primarily for their starved infants in the words *Koosige Ganji Needi* 'kindly give some gruel for the infant'. In the process they began to accept food indiscriminately in consequence of which other castes in the locality gradually applied the term Koosu or Koosa to this immigrant group as a whole. As immigrants they were economically backward and also incurred social degradation which forced them to take up agricultural slavery under the flourishing landlords of South Kanara. Perhaps under such severe conditions some of the Upparas might have offered to sell themselves or their children to those who undertook to feed and clothe them for life. Another version related in the context of their coming to South Kanara is that for the propagation of Veerashaivism in South Kanara, several monasteries were founded in which were engaged the Upparas hailing from the Shimoga district for general services, and for cultivating the lands held by the monasteries. This was reported only at Udipi and appears to be of less general acceptance.

Authentic information about migration based on historical facts is not available. According to the informants their community has never been associated with warfare or military adventure. Their traditional occupation prior to their immigration is shrouded in the misty past. The readiness with which they took to agriculture labour is a pointer that they must have been agriculturists.

Upparas of the former Mysore State have had their counterparts called Uppaligas in Tamil and Telugu country. The 1901 Mysore Census report mentions that they were called Melusakre in western districts of the State. Their population then was more than one lakh they being predominant in the Mysore District.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Besides Mysore, Koosas are a scheduled caste throughout Madras State (except in Kanyakumari district and Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district) and in Malabar district of Kerala State. The 1961 Census count, however, records a nil return from both these States. Thus, the Koosas are virtually to be found in the Coastal-district of South Kanara, Mysore State. Taluk-wise break-up of their rural population within the State indicates a high concentration in Coondapur taluk. Udipi taluk is also quite an important centre. Of the 6683 Koosa returned from the rural tracts of South Kanara during the 1961 Census as

many as 3514 (52.6%) are from Coondapur taluk and another 2953 persons (44.2 per cent) are from Udipi taluk. Population particulars for still smaller units such as towns, *hoblis* and villages are not available.

Field data for the present report, gathered during June 1968, relates to Barkoor village of Udipi taluk, Kumbhashi, Shankaranarayana and Edathare (Byndoor) villages of Coondapur taluk. Information has also been gathered from informants of Voder hobli in Coondapur town. According to Koosas or Upparas of Barkoor, their caste fellows are found in nearby villages of Brahmavar, Handadi, Baikadi, Nilavara, Aroor, Madpadi Sasthana etc. They are also aware that members of their community are found in Coondapur and Gangolli extending up to Byndoor in the northern tip of the taluk. But marriages between groups staying in distant villages are very rare and hence there is practically little social intercourse. They have knowledge that south of Bhadravari beyond the Kalyanpur river, the Mundalas (another Scheduled Caste in South Kanara) also call themselves Uppara. During the past 10 to 15 years the bar on inter dining between these groups has gradually waned while inter-marriages though rare may take place. Mundalas speak Tulu whereas Koosas speak Kannada and the Kalyanpur river forms some sort of a natural barrier between them.

Koosas of Beilur hamlet in Shankaranarayana village reported their caste name as Uppara and on further probing they revealed that they were formerly being called Bakudas. They identified themselves with (those) of Coondapur, Gangolli, Koteswar and Byndoor and recounted the same story of migration. In Shankaranarayana a household of Mera Koosalu was found and it was learnt that they also had assumed the name of Uppara. It was also reported that *Mera Koosalu* were found in large numbers in the eastern sectors of both Udipi and Coondapur taluks. The Meras form an independent endogamous group.

The Koosas met with at Coondapur and Kumbhashi village are of the same group. The term Uppara is in vogue and the term Koosa is distasteful to them. In Byndoor there are two groups of Koosas (Upparas) one known as *entu Koodige yavaru* (i.e. of the eight hamlets) and the other *hadinentu Koodigeyavaru* (i.e., of the eighteen hamlets). The latter group is considered superior in rank and is equated with those found in Gangolli, Coondapur and Kumbhashi. The *entu-koodige* people are a small localised group not having their caste fellows south of Kirimanjeswar in Coondapur taluk. However, they have their relatives in several

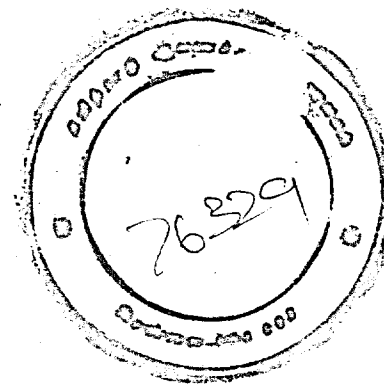
villages of Bhatkal taluk in North Kanara. Perhaps they are a part of territorial section among Upparas with whom they share the common legend relating to migration and also owe allegiance to a common religious preceptor.

To summarise, Koosas are found in Coondapur taluk and also in the northern half of Udipi taluk where Kannada speaking population predominates. They are now concentrated more in coastal towns and large villages (i.e., plains) than in the interior hilly terrains. The places of their living is subjected to heavy rainfall where paddy is the chief agricultural produce. The month of July experiences a heavy downpour with swollen rivers. Besides paddy, coconut (in plains) and arecanut (in hilly tracts) are the two other important crops of the district. The inadequacy of the resources of coastal villages and towns appear to have helped promotion of large scale seasonal migration of labourers to hilly tracts in search of work in gardens and plantations. Dharmasthala near Ujire in Belthangadi taluk is a reputed place of pilgrimage. Udipi itself is important particularly for the Brahmins of Madhva sect. The Krishna temple in the town is thronged with a large number of devotees from far and near. The temples in Shankaranarayana, Koteswara, Kumbhashi, Barkoor etc., are also of some local importance. The Koosas, however, do not generally enter these Hindu shrines. None the less they do offer worship through priests and derive satisfaction in witnessing the car festivals or *Utsavas*. Barkoor, a place of historical importance is associated with King Boothala Pandya who (it is popularly believed) introduced Aliya Santhana Law of Inheritance. There are numerous inscriptions and the local belief goes that there are 365 temples in this village. Coondapur is also a place of some historical importance.

III. DEMOGRAPHY

Though a depressed community till 1936 and later a scheduled caste in the districts of Bellary, South Kanara and Mysore till 1950 data about their numbers in each district are not available. Earlier Census reports do not throw any light either about their population or about their social and economic conditions. It may be that they came to be enumerated separately for the first time in the 1961 Census. There being none in Kollegal taluk where also they are declared as scheduled caste, all of them hail from the district of South Kanara only. In Bellary district which formed part of erstwhile Madras State they are no

KOOSA



20
7.21326 (15)
172.11

longer a scheduled caste. However, any discussion on the population trends of Koosas will be an exercise in futility in the absence of periodical data.

Of the 7597 Koosas returned in 1961, the rural inhabitants number 6683 or 87.96 per cent and the urban inhabitants 914 or 12.04 per cent. Compared with the total scheduled castes population in South Kanara district which is 88.58 per cent rural and 11.42 per cent urban, this more or less fits in with the general pattern. Compared with the general population of the district where rural is 82.1 per cent and urban 17.9 per cent the proportion of urban dwellers among the Koosa is very low.

Sexwise, the female population of Koosas is 4181 for a male population of 3416. Females outnumber males and the sex ratio is 1224. The sex ratio for the scheduled caste population in Mysore State is 965 and in South Kanara district it is 1015. Relatively the position in this regard among Koosas is rather marked. The seasonal migration of male labourers to villages in Shimoga district to work in areca gardens leaving behind the females may be the cause. In South Kanara such abnormal male-female proportion is common to many other scheduled castes. (Balasubramanyam, 1966, XI, V-A).

In Urban areas there are 500 females and 414 males and in rural areas 3681 females and 3002 males. The sex ratios for urban and rural areas work out to 1203 and 1226 respectively. The tendency for seasonal migration appears to be uniformly high in both rural and urban areas among the Koosas. Several other local labouring caste groups such as Billavas, Shervegars, Devadigas etc., exhibit similar trends.

TABLE 2: Distribution of the total Scheduled Caste Population in South Kanara by Sex and Age-Groups

Sex Age Group	Male		Females		Persons	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All Ages	38,453	100.00	38,911	100.00	77,364	100.00
0-14	17,418	45.30	15,686	40.31	33,104	42.79
15-44	14,080	36.62	16,360	42.05	30,440	39.34
45+	6,942	18.05	6,850	17.60	13,792	17.83
Age not stated	13	0.03	15	0.04	28	0.04

IV. FAMILY, CLAN AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

As among others, among Koosas also the size of households varies greatly. During the field study 59

The sub joined table shows the age-group composition of Koosas by sex:

TABLE 1: Distribution of Koosa Population (1961) by Sex and Age Groups*

Sex Age Group	Male	Female	Persons
All ages	3416	4181	7597
0-14	1703	1632	3335
15-44	1163	1675	2838
45+	550	873	1423
Age not stated	..	1	1

(*Source—Census of India, 1961 Vol. XI Mysore—Part V-A Table SCT-II-A)

In terms of percentages, 43.90 per cent are under 14 years; 37.36 per cent are in the age-group 15 to 44; 18.73 per cent are aged 45 years or more while 0.01 per cent come under "age-not stated". Sexwise, the male population consists of as high a percentage as 49.86 below 14 years of age while in the other two age-groups viz., 15-44 and 45 and above males contribute 34.04 per cent and 16.10 per cent respectively to the total. The total female population is made up of 39.03 per cent of those below 14 years; 40.06 per cent of young adults in the age-group 15-44; 20.88 per cent of women aged 45 years or upwards and 0.03 per cent (only one person) of age-not-stated category. The table reveals that the excess of females over males is to be found in the higher age-groups consisting of potential workers only which further confirms its being due to the seasonal emigration of male-workers. An examination of age-group distribution of scheduled caste population (table below) in South Kanara district also reveals similar trends though not to an equal degree. The following table is furnished for purposes of comparison:

households which were listed, contained 387 persons. The average size of household thus works out to 6.56. This is much above the State average viz., 5.4 persons per household. Details regarding the number of house-

holds listed and population at each of the places visited are given below:

TABLE 3: Households and Population

Name of Villages	Number of Households	Population			Average size
		P	M	F	
(1) Barkoor	8	43	23	20	5.38
(2) Shankaranarayana	15	90	49	41	6.00
(3) Byndoor	11	85	38	37	7.73
(4) Kumbhashi	12	75	35	40	6.25
(5) Coondapur (Voder hobli)	13	94	51	43	7.23
TOTAL	59	387	196	181	6.56

A classification of the 59 households by size-groups reveals that two are single member; 9 households have 2 or 3 members each; 21 households have 4 to 6 members each; 18 households have 7 to 9 members each and the remaining 9 households have each ten members or more. The size ranges between 1 and 23. Published data regarding size of household among Koosas are not available for any earlier periods. The general impression conveyed by informants during the survey is that the larger family units are splitting up into smaller ones during the past 15 to 20 years.

Koosas are matrilinear and they follow *Aliyakattu* Law of inheritance. The right of ownership over property if any is normally vested in the elderly female member of the house and her mother's brother, if alive and active or her own brother or in his absence her son would be the head or manager of the family. A man thus succeeds to the rank of his mother's brother. They are matrilocal. Even after marriage a woman continues to reside in her natal home with her mother and maternal kin. Her husband will be a privileged and frequent visitor. She also may occasionally go and stay with her husband's maternal kin for brief periods. Among them the emphasis is on consanguineous type of family. This system strengthens more the

bondage between brothers and sisters than of husband and wife. Matrilineal joint family system is said to have widely prevailed among them till recently. A Koosa family would therefore generally consist of an elderly woman, her brothers and sisters, mothers' sister's children, her own as well as her sister's children and grand children through daughters and so on. Her married sons will also live with her. The scope for a man's association with his paternal kin is very much less and many a man would not even know the name of his paternal grandfather. But all the same he not only remembers his mother's mother but considers his grand mother's sisters and their progeny his own. They are all descendants of a common female ancestor.

During the past one or two decades there have been noticeable changes in this normally accepted form of family structure called *Kutumba* or *Samsara*. After marriage, in several instances, the husband has moved to his wife's family forsaking his own maternal kin. He may in due course, on grounds of overcrowding, set up an independent *Bidara* or nuclear family unit. The reverse case of a wife moving to the home of her husband is also frequent now-a-days. Then he may either break off from his maternal family and establish a nuclear family unit or continue to live in his family home and put up a house for his wife and her children close to his own. The old pattern is gradually disintegrating under the influence of education, new employment opportunities and their widening vision of life around them. A Koosa as could be ascertained has now begun to feel his responsibility towards his sons but also finds it hard to shake off his customary responsibility towards his sisters and sister's children.

In the matter of family composition, the 59 households listed, do not conform to any particular type. Eleven of them are nuclear families consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. Of the remaining, 21 households are matrilineal joint; one household is patrilocal joint and the rest viz., 26, fall under the category 'others'. The following genealogical diagrams indicate the composition of two of the Koosa families listed during the survey.

FAMILY OF MACHA OF PADUVARAI VILLAGE BYNDOOR

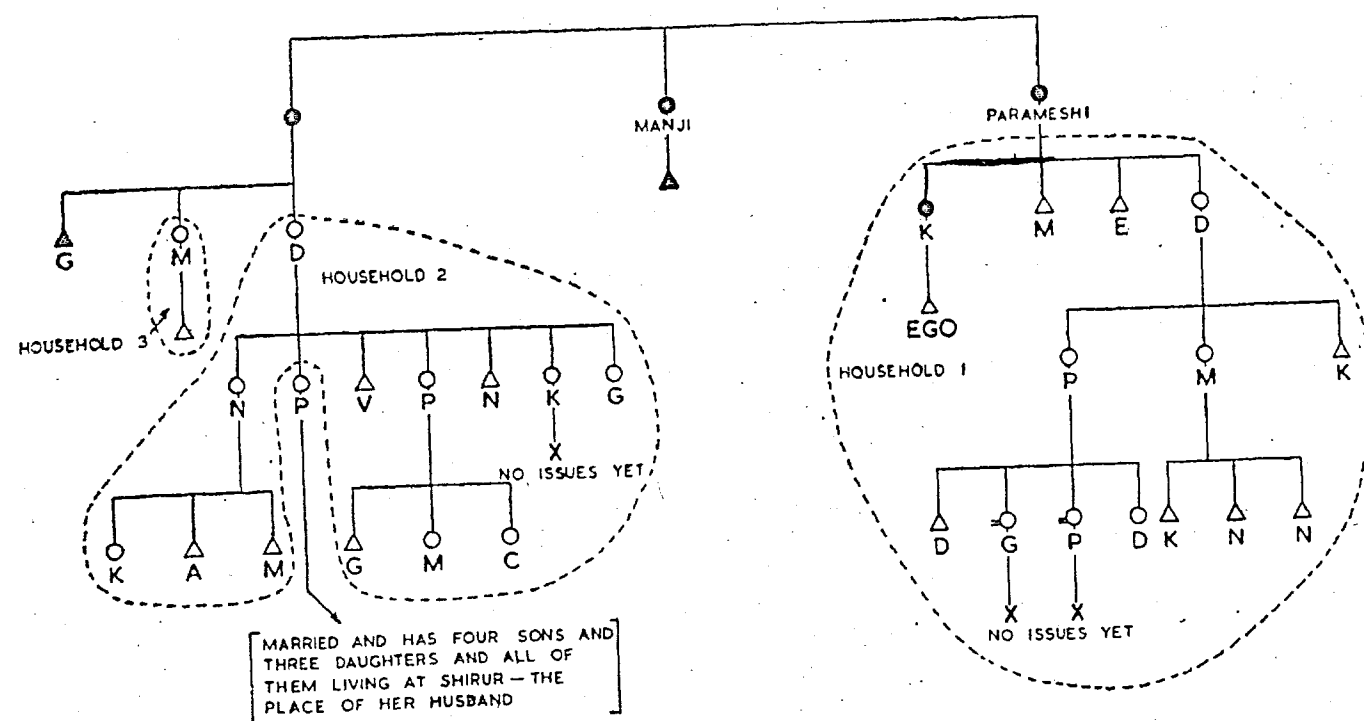
O : FEMALE

Δ : MALE

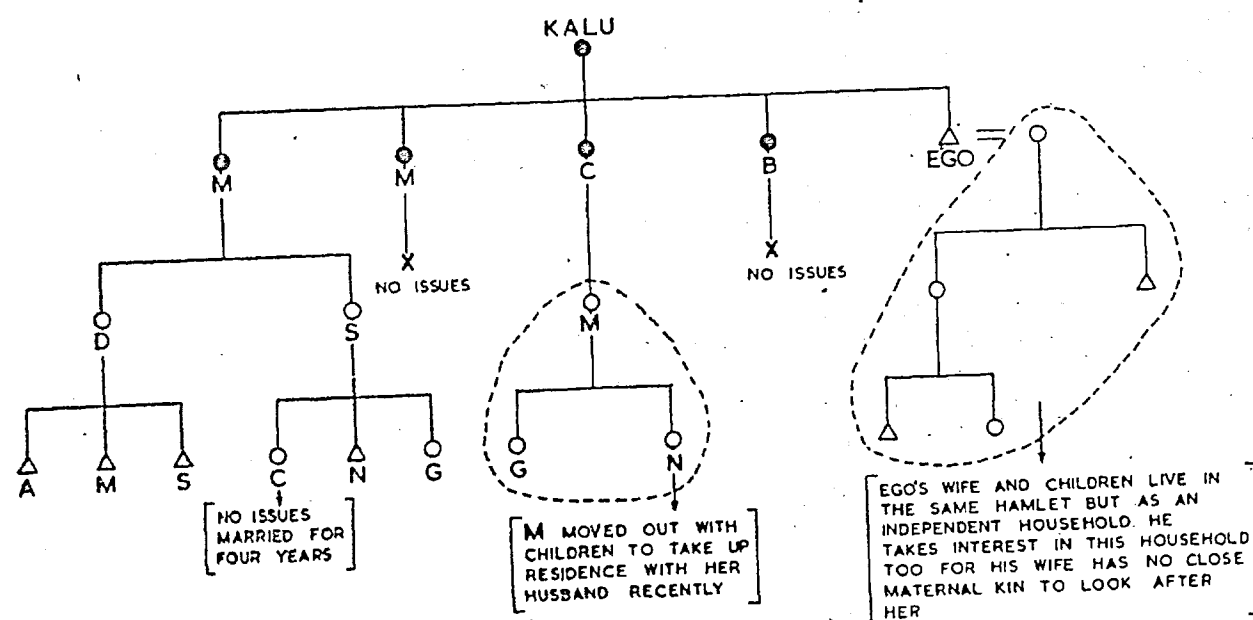
⑤ : DEAD FEMALE

▲ : DEAD MALE

(THE ALPHABETS IN THE DIAGRAM INDICATE THE FIRST ALPHABET OF THE PERSON'S NAME)



II FAMILY OF GURUVA. KUMBASHI VILLAGE



The Koosas are divided into several exogamous units called *bali*. Descent is reckoned in the mother's line for both sexes. This inevitably results in the *bali* of the father and the son being different. However, the *bali* or the exogamous unit of one's father (Pater) is also important. A man is forbidden to marry a woman the *bali* of whose father is the same as that of his father. The families in a hamlet who can trace their origin to a common female ancestor constitute a lineage. Generally, the head of the household of the lineally senior household would be the ritual head of the lineage. Each family lineage or *bali*, has a *Naga-bana* or serpent grove where annual offerings are made by the head of family or lineage as the case may be. This apart, the head of the lineage has no other social, political or religious duties towards his lineage. Members belonging to a particular *bali* may be found living in distant villages and hamlets. Unless they are biologically related to each other through one or two of their ascendants they do not recognise any form of relationship. Yet the common *bali* unites them all and the rule of exogamy is strictly followed. Some of the *bali* names reported during the study are given below:

BARKOOR	KUMBASHI	SHANKARA-NARAYANA
Shetti bali	Khaskanabali	Chendi bali
Khaskana bali	Tholara bali	Gangar bali
Hullinamore bali	Amman bali	Holi bali
Kombana bali	Emmi bali	Tholar bali
Amman bali	Holi bali	Mundakan bali
	Shirin bali	Chittina bali
	(Siriyen bali)	Shettibali
COONDAPUR (VODER HOBLI)	BYNDOOR	
Chendi bali	Honnayan bali	
Gangara bali	Tholara bali	
Khaskan bali	Shirin bali	
Amman bali	Gangar bali	
Shetti bali	Ajjar bali	
Emme bali		
Sittina more bali		
Shivan bali		
Shirin bali		

Bali membership implies no restriction regarding consumption of any particular item of food; or killing or injuring of any specific species of animal or plant; nor does it indicate any association with specific inanimate objects. Its main function lies in regulation of marriage and every one knows the name of the *bali* to which he belongs and also that of his pater. None of the informants met during the study could relate either the etymological significance or the derivation of the names of *balis* he knew. The institution of *bali* is found among several other caste groups such as,

Bunt, Nadavar, Pujari or Billavas,⁷ Devadigas, etc., of South Kanara. In all cases, *balis* are exogamous and all appear to be of equal status. During the study no myths or legends were revealed in the matter of origin and distribution of *balis*.

In any Koosa settlement or *Koodige* there would normally be a concentration of families belonging to one particular *Bali* with a sprinkling of others. These family groups will have direct or indirect affinal relationships with each other.

V. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD AND DRINKS, AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

(a) *Dwelling*

South Kanara district is characterised by villages and towns with dispersed, and sometimes isolated homesteads. Each cluster of houses bears a specific name. The settlements of Koosas are no exception to this general pattern. Even within a village they may live in two or more distinct hamlets. Normally their settlements are called *Koosalara gudi* or *Koosalara Salu* and the hamlets where they reside may be known by other names such as *Thoplu*, *Nagaramathad Darkast*, *Kambigara Kodlu Kotebagila*, etc. Their settlements do not conform to any established pattern but personal convenience seems to be its chief determinant. In keeping with the regional pattern, their houses are also independent units with open space all-round and in some cases are encircled by hedgerows. Except the few who have secured Darkast grants of housesites, the rest are tenants. While most of them are *Husivakkalu* or tenants-at-will some are *genivokkalu* with legal recognition of their tenancy rights.

The residential pattern of the region, militates against the true mixing of the several of the caste-groups which form a village or a settlement. Segregation of families or sometimes a small group of families of a particular caste is seen to be a characteristic feature. The communities other than Koosas found in the villages visited are Billava (Pujari) toddy-tappers, Mogaveers (fishermen), Bunt or Nadavar (Landlords), Brahmins, Devadiga (Musicians), Christians and Muslims. Here and there a Koraga family or two could also be found close by. Even this proximity of living of these diverse castes has not promoted a corporate community feeling. Wells are the major source of water for them. At a few places they depend on rivers and streams. Except during the rainy season, water in the rivers at coastal villages is brackish. Generally each family or a group of related families owns a

well. However, the poorer sections cannot afford a well of its own and use nearby private wells. Caste-Hindus do not permit use of their private wells to Koosas but themselves draw water and fill their pitchers wherever necessary. In the villages visited for study there were one or two wells owned by Koosas besides one or two public wells. Right of access to public wells is enjoyed by them in the villages and members of upper castes also use the same wells without inhibitions. Their houses are not provided with latrines and they go to the fields for answering calls of nature. So also their dwellings lack proper sanitary arrangements, and sometimes sullage water collects and stagnates. For purposes of bathing the Koosas do not normally put up a separate structure but use a spot underneath a large shade-bearing tree or a small cocoanut palm the spreading leaves of which serves to providing partial privacy. Such spots are marked by three large stone-slabs (arranged in a triangular form) supporting a large earthen pot containing water for being heated.

Koosas live in houses with mud walls having thatched roofs. Those having cattle, normally have a separate cattleshed adjacent to the main structure. In all other cases a single structure serves all purposes. Normally each household occupies an independent structure. The main elements of a house are *Chavadi* (open verandah), and kitchen. Some of the houses, however, make provision for a room as well. The plan of the house is rectangular and all their houses are single-storeyed. The building is constructed on a raised plinth of about two feet above the ground level. Gravelly mud and stones are the material with which the plinth is built and the floor is of gravelly mud. The floor is often smeared with cowdung. *Chavadi* or the front verandah occupies most of the built area and is open. From *chavadi* a door made either of wooden planks or of twigs and bamboo leads to the kitchen. Sometimes such communication will be to a hall and from there, another door leads to the kitchen. In the front, at one of the ends, a den like provision is made for keeping the poultry. The walls about 18 inches thick are almost always of mud. Some are even unable to invest on walls and a few houses therefore have bamboo wattled and mud plastered walls. The walls are usually three or at the most, four feet high. The materials required for construction of a dwelling are, as far as possible, collected free of cost. Rough-hewn stones and the mud for walls are obtained from nearby places. Either bamboo or some jungle wood which can be had free or at nominal cost serves as pillars, beams and rafters. A frame of bamboo strips supports the roof which is covered by plaited

cocoanut leaves and a thick layer of *Karda* or *mundige* (dry thatching grass). Each bamboo, about 15 feet long costs about Re. 1; *Tengina madlu* or plaited cocoanut leaves cost about Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 per hundred; and hundred sheaves of grass or hay costs around rupees four. Efforts are made to keep down cost by avoiding wood and bricks and using instead all thatched material. Pucca houses are extremely rare.

When the construction of a house is contemplated, the Koosas consult a Brahmin Bhat regarding the selection of a site. *Muhurta Kallu Puja* (foundation stone worship) marks the commencement of the construction and the *mestri* (mason) who offers the worship receives a rupee and some rice. Again, when the door frame is fixed, the *mestri* (mason) or the *Achari* (carpenter) offers worship to it. In case, it is a tiled house, the commencement of the construction of the *Chowka* the wooden frame work for the roof is marked by the sacrificial offer of a fowl. A new house is occupied only after performing the house-warming ceremony. On this occasion the spirits are propitiated by the sacrifice of a fowl and the breaking of an ash-gourd. *Charu*, the food cooked out of the fowl's flesh is strewn in the four corners outside of the house. In the evening, a cow and its calf are first led into the premises followed by the baby and its cradle, rice bags milk and other food articles. On the new hearth milk is boiled to over-flow. Close relatives and fellow castemen of the Koodige are feasted. However, this observance of these ceremonies are not distinctive of the Koosas and follows the regional practice.

During monsoons, the outside of the outer walls of their huts is covered by leaves as a protection against the fury of elements. The thatched roof is also mended preceding the monsoon.

(b) Dress, Ornaments and Personal Decorations

The dress worn by members of this caste does not exhibit any distinctive features. It more or less fits into the regional pattern prevailing among the poor. Men's dress consists of an unsewn lower garment (which may be either a *dhoti* 4 yards by 50 inches or a loincloth) and an upper sewn garment, viz., a *baniyan* or a shirt. Some of the younger men use underwear-knickers. While at work they wear caps made out of *adike hale* sheaths covering the inflorescence of arecanuts. Head scarves are also used and some leave their heads bare. Use of footwear is not very common. Boys wear knickers and shirts with or without *baniyans*. Students in secondary schools or colleges use pyjamas. Women cover themselves with sarees and

most of them also use blouses. The young and the middle aged women are also accustomed to the use of petticoats. Use of footwear is a luxury. Girls put on skirts and blouses and the younger ones frocks.

Formerly men used to grow long, untrimmed hairs but now-a-days there is a marked preference for-crop. As the services of traditional barbers are denied, mutual assistance is an inevitable necessity. However, after Independence, Koosas in towns are getting the services of barbers. Generally, the Koosas do not wear moustaches or beards. Their women comb their hairs and gather them into a bunch at the back or else plait them into a pigtail. They are fond of flowers and *hingarada hoovu*—the areca palm flowers—are liked most, being also considered auspicious. Women mark their foreheads with *Kunkuma* (vermilion powder). Flowers, Vermilion and other auspicious articles are barred to widows.

The common ornaments worn by men are earstuds of gold and finger-rings of silver. On the occasion of marriage they put on a pair of toe-rings also (termed *Kalminchu*)—and a black-bead necklace. They may also adorn their necks with a borrowed gold necklace. Most of the women use gold ornaments for the ears and the nose. Only a few can afford to have gold necklaces. All married women invariably wear a necklace of black-beads and only a few, who are relatively affluent, insert *Tali* the gold pendant, in it. All married women and girls use glass bangles while some of the widows may use bangles made of brass or aluminium. The use of toe-rings of either silver or copper or brass is optional among the married women even though it is an essential ornament on the occasion of their marriage. Young girls and the very poor whet their appetite for jewels by going in for tawdry.

In this region decorating the body with tattooings is not very common. However, men and more often women, of the lower Hindu caste groups, who have been in the habit of periodically staying in upghat villages of Shimoga district have succumbed to the charms of tattooing. Thus during the field-study, several women (and a very small number of men) of the Koosa community with tattoo could be met with. The tattooing is reportedly got done during their stay in villages of Shimoga district.

(c) Food and Drinks

Koosas are non-vegetarians but consider beef and domestic pork as specially taboo. They eat both scaled and unscaled fish. Fish happens to be the most fre-

*Prohibition has since been removed.

quently consumed non-vegetarian foodstuff. Oysters are locally brought for consumption. Sometimes these are gathered by their own women-folk also. Crabs if found, are consumed. Occasionally they consume the flesh of fowls and chicken. On account of their extreme poverty, mutton or meat are to them a very rare delicacy. They are not given to hunting wild-game but occasionally a few individuals may catch rabbits using snares mainly for personal consumption.

Rice is their staple cereal. Like other indigenous people of the region they also prefer parboiled rice, to raw rice. It is consumed in the form of gruel and also as cooked rice with soup, vegetable or fish curry. Pulses such as arhar and gram are used only occasionally. Normally both adults and children take food thrice a day. The breakfast consists of salted gruel (usually the stuff prepared on the previous evening and kept overnight) and the mid-day meal of freshly prepared gruel with *Chutney* or salt to pep it. Little quantities of cooked rice, fish or vegetable curry and gruel constitute the menu for the night. Their food habits vary little from season to season. However, during bearing season of June and July Jack fruits are consumed either raw or making *doses* (Pancakes). *Paramanna*, (a dish prepared out of rice Jaggery and gramdal, *Kajjaya*, *Kadabu*, *dose* Pancakes are some of the dishes prepared on important occasions.

The fuel used for cooking and bathing consists of faggots collected in nearby fields. Sometimes firewood obtained from jungle is also used. Some among Koosa women living nearer towns daily gather firewood from jungles for sale and earn about 50 paise or more.

Koosa are known to have been given to consuming intoxicants in the past. Toddy tapped from palmyra or cocoanut has been their favourite drink. In the past it is said, that even women could drink. But now in consequence of prohibition liquor became scarce and only some addicts take illicit stuff surreptitiously*. The habit prevails largely among the older generation tea is a popular beverage in the region and Koosas also visit tea shops. Occasionally tea is prepared at home for all the members of the household.

Smoking beedi is common among men while chewing is common to both men and women.

(d) Household Goods

Koosas are known from generations for their acute poverty. Their earthly possessions consist of a dozen or so of earthenware which are used both for cooking

and for storing water, grains, salt etc. In a few households some 3 or 4 metallic, small sized vessels may also be found. Other articles possessed normally include one or two *mane* (small wooden planks), mats, gunny cloth, a few bedsheets, Palymraleaf umbrella, *Gorabu* or monsoon coverings, sickles, cutting knife felling axe wicker baskets, etc. Those households which cultivate land possess wooden ploughs while those which are engaged in stone-dressing possess crow-bars, pick axe and *bachhi* (adze). For fishing in streamlets during rainy season most of the households have *gooli* a wicker-trap. For light they also use kerosene-oil lamps without the glass chimney though occasionally a household possessing a small hurricane lantern or a bed lamp may also be seen. In a few households old calendars depicting the pictures of gods of Hindu Pantheon or some popular cinema star were seen hung on the walls. There are no household goods which are distinctive of the Koosa community. Recent trends indicate their eagerness to acquire such items as furniture (wooden chairs and stools were noticed in two households, during the study), torch-light, bicycle, wristwatch etc.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS DISEASE AND TREATMENT

Their houses—usually independent structures with some open space all round—being sparsely distributed in their settlements obviate any necessity for drainage system. In each house, the sullage water feeds the useful plants raised in the kitchen garden. Their using open fields for answering calls of nature has solved for them the problem of disposal of night-soil. The cattle sheds, if any, are cleaned daily and the litter and dung are heaped close to the house. The stink from this dirty material fouls the atmosphere. Their settlements in many villages, are situated in low-lying areas and are inundated during heavy monsoons, causing them severe hardships.

All are in the habit of cleaning their teeth with ash or earth. Chewing pan is common but spitting in the house is not. They may, however, spit on the exteriors of the wall and indiscriminately in the yard. The sultry weather of the coastal belt seems to have infused in them the habit of bathing quite often. Generally, men bathe more often than women and children. In the evening soon after the day's labour many of the Koosas enjoy a cold-water bath at the nearby well. Women and children bathe at the place provided close to their huts in hot water. During summer almost everyone bathes daily but not so in the rainy season. They themselves wash their clothes

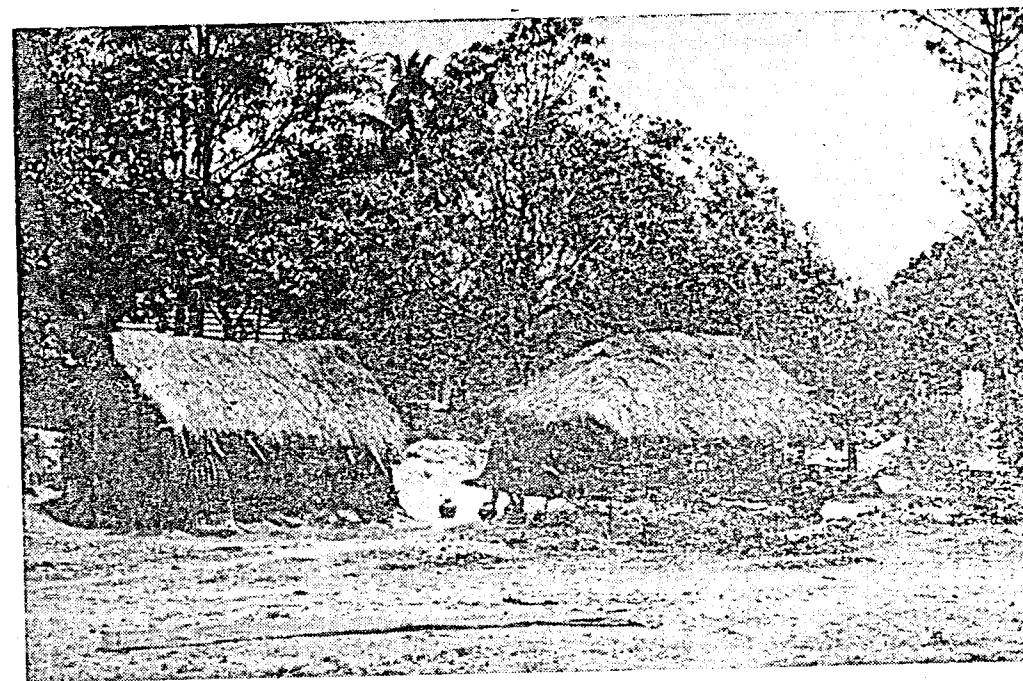
once in two or three days. They use washing soap of some cheap brand or *norekayi* (soapnut berries). They are not served by washermen. In towns, most of the Koosa youngmen tend to be cleaner than their brethren in interior villages. The vessels and dishes used for cooking and consuming food are cleaned well every day.

The diseases which affect the Koosas are the common ailments such as, cough, fevers, colds, stomach disorders, scabies, cuts etc. At the initial stages their tendency is to neglect any treatment and simply wait for the disease to get cured in its normal course. But when it takes a serious turn they rush to the nearest allopathic dispensary or to a medical practitioner. Sometimes, they approach reputed native *pundits* (medicine-men) of herbal medicine, in the vicinity for medicines. Of late, it is said, their faith in indigenous cures has diminished. Continued illness arouses suspicion of foul play or the wrath of some malignant spirit. In such a case a *patri* or medium usually of his own caste is approached for divining the cause of trouble and suggesting remedies. The practice of taking vows and promising propitiation by sacrifice of fowls also prevails among the Koosas.

VII. LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND EDUCATION

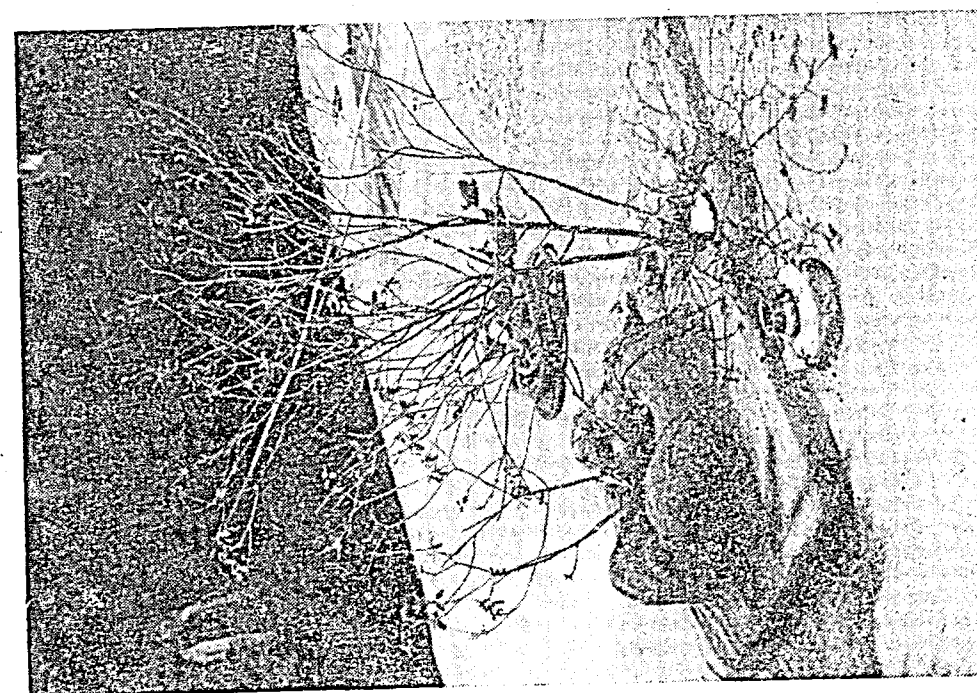
Kannada is the language spoken by the Koosas and it is their mother-tongue too. It is also the predominant regional language in Coondapur taluk. In the northern parts of Udipi taluk, up to Kalyanpur river, both Kannada and Tulu are equally in vogue. In this tract many of the Koosas are bilingual. But as one proceeds towards north or northeast Tulu disappears. While conversing among themselves the Koosa speak colloquial Kannada which sounds like a separate dialect.

According to the 1961 Census, the literates among Koosas number 766 and constitute 10.83 per cent of the total Koosa population. The percentage of literacy in rural areas is 9.65 while it works out to 13.84 in urban areas. Sexwise, it is observed that 17.65 per cent among males and 3.90 per cent among females, are literate. As the following table reveals, the percentages of literacy by sex in urban areas (*viz.*, 22.94 and 5.25 respectively) are higher than those in the rural areas (*viz.*, 16.92 and 3.72 respectively). This difference perhaps may be due to the better educational facilities available to the urban dwellers. Since the bulk of the Koosa population is rural their overall percentage of literacy and more so of females is low.

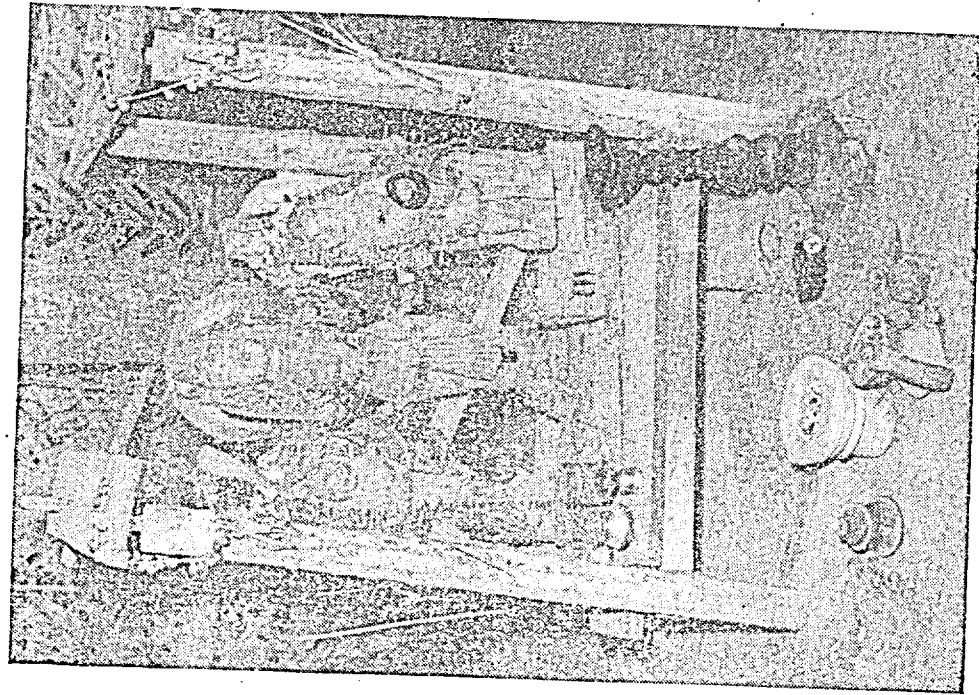


1. Huts of Koosas at Bharatkal

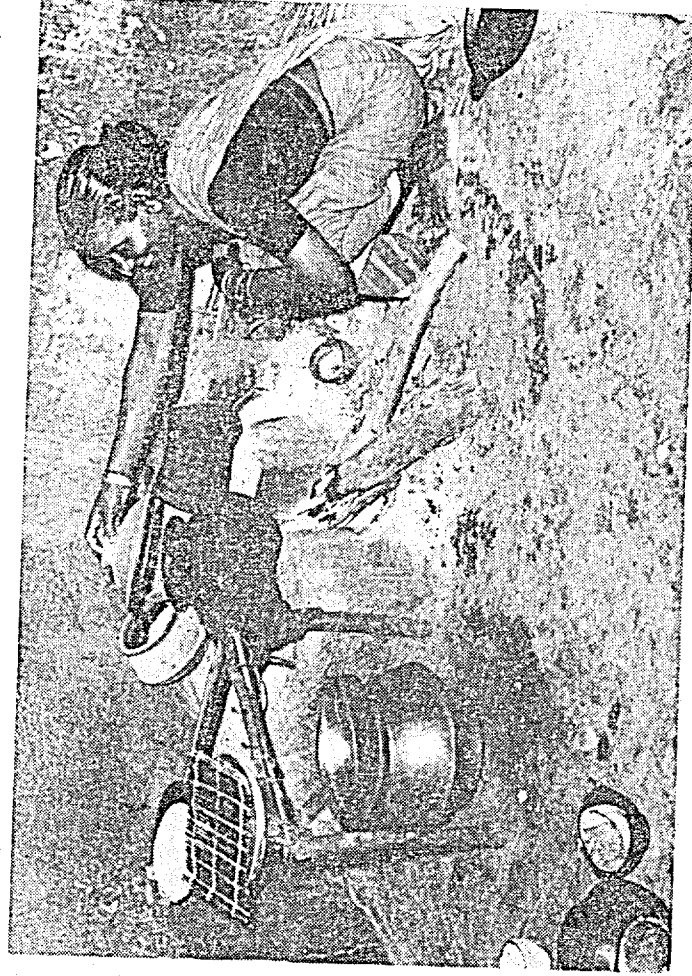
5. KOOSA



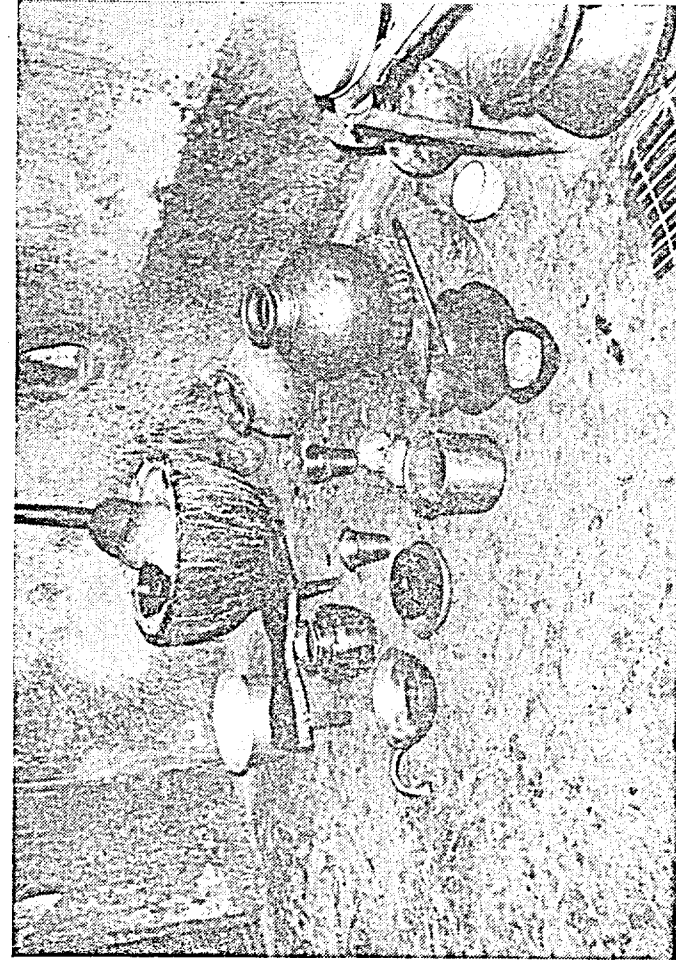
2. Koosas worship the sweet basil and most of their houses have in their courtyards the *katte* or altar for the plants



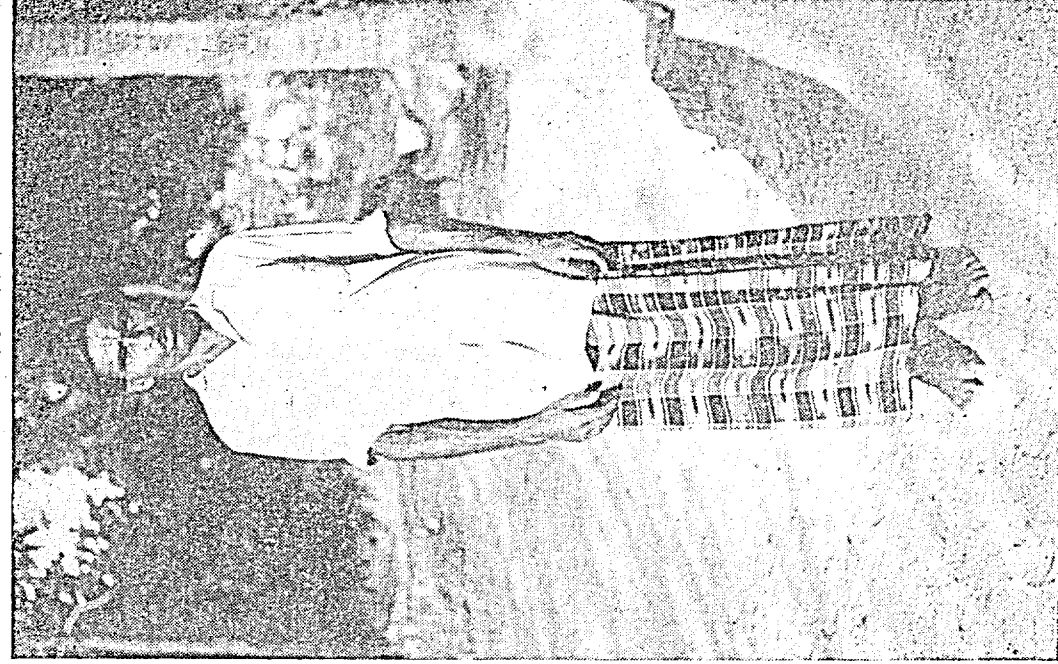
3. *Anima*—the female deity revered by the Koosa;



4. Cooking in progress



5. Household articles



6 (a). Full-length portrait of a Koosa male



6 (b). Front view (close up)

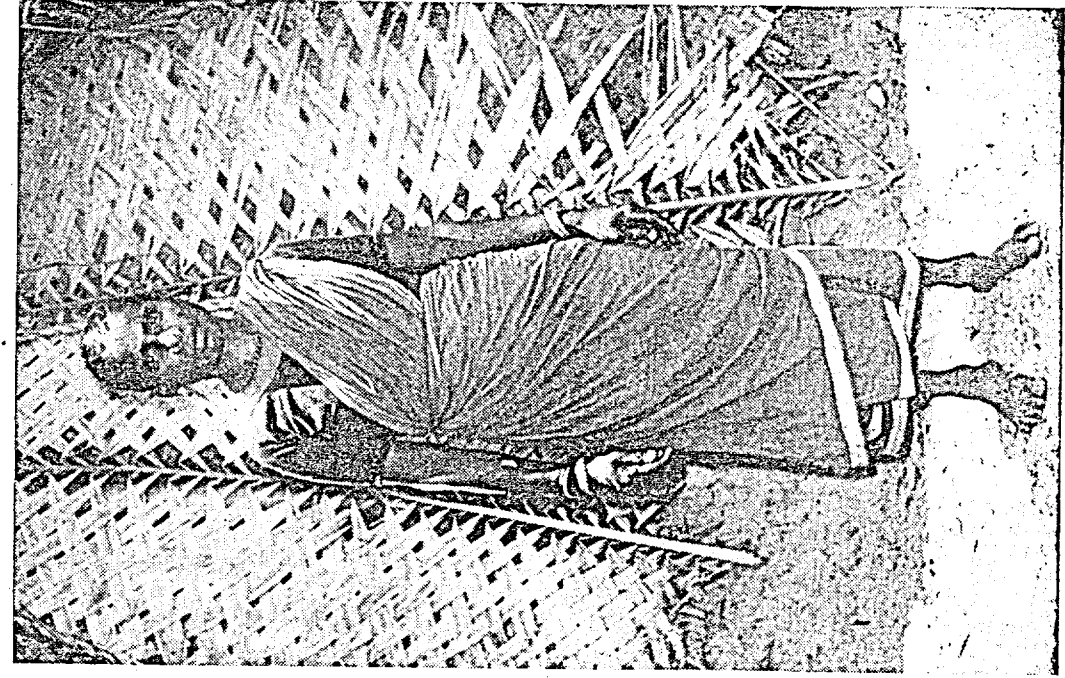


6 (c). Profile

112 (d)



6 (d). As viewed from behind



7 (a). Full-length portrait of a Koosa female

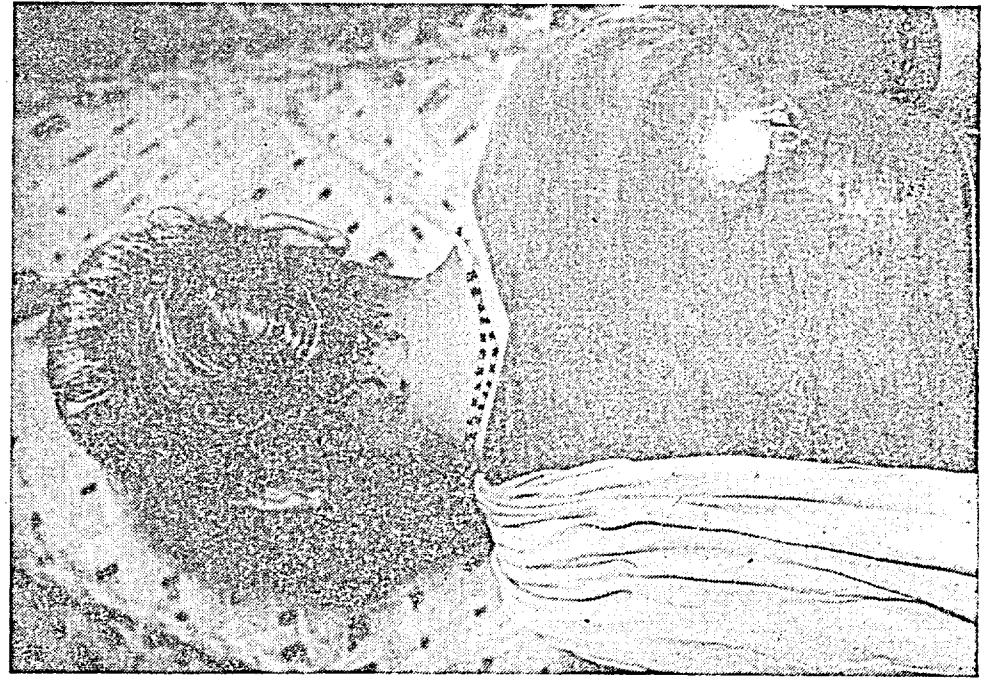
112 (e)



7 (b). Front view (close up)

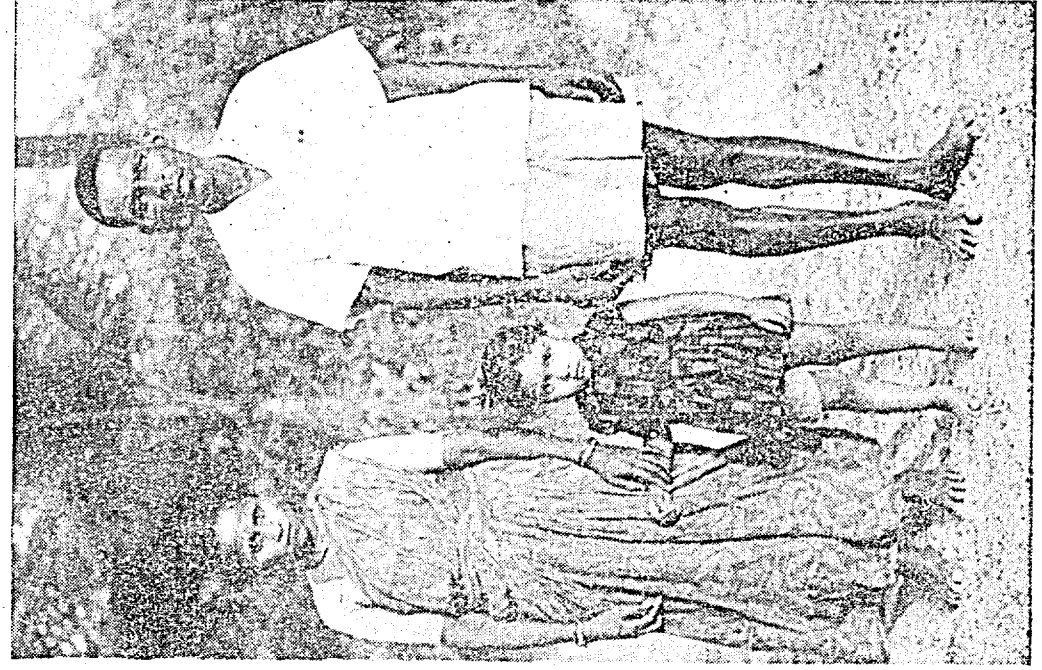


7 (c). Profile



7 (d). As viewed from behind

112 (g)



8. Koosa couple and their daughter



9. Towards a promising future.
Koosa children attending nursery classes run under the auspices
of the women welfare centre

TABLE 4: Education and Literacy Among Koosas

Sector	Total population		Illiterate		Literate without Educational Level		Primary or Junior Basic		Matriculation or higher secondary and above	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
URBAN . . .	414	500	319	474	75	17	18	9	2	..
RURAL . . .	3002	3681	2494	3544	421	121	74	16	13	..
TOTAL . . .	3416	4181	2813	4018	496	138	92	25	15	..

[Source: Census of India, 1961, Part—V-A-Vol. XI Mysore SCT-III Part A(i) and B (i)]

The percentage of literacy among Scheduled castes in the State as a whole is 9.06. Sexwise, it is 14.86 per cent for males and 3.04 per cent for females. The figures for Koosas thus compare favourably with the State average for Scheduled Caste. As Koosas are

found only in South Kanara district it may be of interest to compare their literacy figures with those of Scheduled Caste in the district. The sub joined statement discloses this position.

TABLE 5: Comparative Statement Showing the Percentages of Literacy

	Percentage of literacy in								
	URBAN			RURAL			TOTAL		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
General Population (S. K. Dist) . . .	52.00	59.85	44.29	28.05	37.18	19.72	32.35	41.38	23.99
Scheduled Caste Population . . . (S. K. Dist)	27.07	37.34	16.90	7.25	10.69	3.86	9.52	13.74	5.35
Koosas	13.84	22.94	5.25	9.65	16.92	3.72	10.83	17.65	3.90

A further probing of Table 4 above reveals that among literates 634 or 82.77 per cent have not attained any educational level. Those who have completed matriculation or higher secondary (incidentally, all of them are males) constitute a meagre 1.95 per cent. Of the 163 literate-females, only 25 have completed their primary education.

Now-a-days the Koosas also show keener interest in sending their children, specially boys, to schools. About 2-3 decades ago, the then active Depressed Class Mission, it is reported, was managing primary schools in places where these depressed castes are concentrated. But now, most of the schools are run by Government. These are with hostel facilities also in a few places (e.g., Voder hobli). In the villages, boys find easy employment as cattle-grazers under the local landlords and get for this some food and clothes and also some grain or cash. This lures away boys from schools despite parental compulsion. Poverty seems to make parents also less persuasive. No agency other than Government, has been actively engaged in the educational betterment of the Koosas.

Koosas do not have any traditional institutions such as dormitories for imparting formal education. The informal education mainly consisted of training girls in domestic chores and also in agricultural work. It continues to be so even now and it is the duty of the mother to train her daughters. In the existing matrilineal pattern of residence, it is incumbent on the mother's brother to train up his sister's sons for a proper adult life. The recent shift towards patrilocal or viri-local residence (though not to any appreciable extent) has created some complicated problems of adjustment. A man, particularly the one who has received some education, and has seen the ways of life of other peoples and is ambitious, is faced with the dilemma of either conforming to the custom which binds him to his sister's children or breaking away from it, and to devote more care on his own sons. To cite an instance in one place of study, the informant charged his mother's brother (i.e., the head of his family) to have prevented his studies supporting at the same time his (mother's brother's) own daughter elsewhere in completing her secondary education and that later when this uncle fell ill he had to at-

tend on him and not his aunt or cousins. A thorough investigation may reveal more such conflicts in the Koosa society.

VIII. ECONOMIC LIFE

Koosas have been landless agricultural labourers. According to their own version they are immigrants—not as conquerers but as people ready to take up servitude. Most of them were agrestic serfs of indigenous land-owning castes such as Bunts or Nadavars, Jains, Brahmins etc., and a few of them, it is learnt from enquiries, were cultivating their master's lands as share croppers. They do not even seem to have had any rights on utilisation of forest-wealth nor did they have any special association with forests. As labourers, they would gather leaves and twigs for their landlords but a few would, occasionally, gather faggots for sale. Fishing with traps called *Kuli* or with rods happens to be a minor and seasonal pastime for a few Koosas. The catch is usually consumed. Sometimes their womenfolk gather oysters the flesh of which they would consume and would make lime of empty shells. As regards livestock, a few only possess cows and fewer still, working oxen or he-buffaloes. She-buffaloes, goats and sheep are rarely possessed and pigs are not raised. Poultry birds are common to most households though the number of birds may be small. Seasonal work on plantations and orchards in the up-ghat villages of adjacent districts is a main activity. In recent years a sizeable number of them have taken up to such non-agricultural pursuits as masons, stone-dressers etc., in nearby places where they may be available.

According to the 1961 Census, the workers, among Koosas number 4194, and constitute 55.2 per cent of the total population. Sexwise male workers number 1818 and form 53.28 per cent of their total and female workers number 2376 and form 56.83 per cent of their total. Female workers are in excess

over males. This is a departure from the normal condition.

As already pointed out while discussing the age-group composition and sex-ratio, there is amongst them, a preponderance of females aged 15 years and more, as a result of a considerable number of men in the higher age-groups being away for a part of the year in adjacent districts to work as labourers, particularly during Census Counts, thus eluding enumeration in their native villages. This again appears to account for the distortion in the proportion of male and female workers. If the Scheduled Caste population in South Kanara district alone is considered, workers constitute 57.06 per cent, the sex break up being 57.95 per cent for males and 56.19 per cent for females. There being 22,285 male workers and 21,864 female workers, the male component exceeds that of the females. But the figures for Koosas shows a lesser percentage of male workers and this appears to have the effect of depressing the percentage of workers.

In the urban sector, of the 914 Koosas 392 or 43.09 per cent are workers. The percentage of males to total workers is 53.83. The percentage of male workers to their total population is 50.96 and of females 36.2. In the rural areas the workers number 3802 and bear to the total rural population a percentage of 56.89. This working force is made up of 42.27 per cent of males and 57.73 per cent of females. Sex-wise 53.53 per cent of males and 59.63 per cent of the females are workers.

The urban population of the Koosas accounts for 12.03 per cent of the total, but its contribution to their total working force is 9.35 per cent only. There are less of female workers in urban areas than in rural areas with a relatively higher proportion of male workers. This is perhaps indicative of the trends of male migration to urban areas in quest of work and may also imply that urban population is more stable.

The industrial classification of workers according to the 1961 Census is presented below:

Industrial Classification of Workers Among Koosas

[Source: Census of India, 1961, Vol. XI Mysore, Part-V-A Tables SCT-I]

Category	TOTAL			RURAL			URBAN		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total Workers	4194	1818	2376	3802	1607	2195	392	211	181
1. As Cultivators	423	159	264	419	156	263	4	3	1
2. As Agricultural Labourers	2503	969	1534	2444	949	1495	59	20	39

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. In Mining, Quarrying, Live-stock Forestry Ect.		108	79	29	67	55	12	41	24	17
4. Household Industry		117	46	71	114	43	71	3	3	..
5. In manufacture other than Household Industry		126	92	34	108	78	30	18	14	4
6. In construction		108	71	37	94	59	35	14	12	2
7. In Trade and Commerce		79	6	73	41	2	39	38	4	34
8. In Transport storage and Communications		34	34	..	5	5	..	29	29	..
9. In other services		696	362	334	510	260	250	186	102	84

Agricultural labourers constitute 59.68 per cent of the total workers and this indicates the poor economic plight of the Koosas. The cultivators account for a mere 10 per cent most of whom are tenants-at-will. A few only may be owning lands granted under *Dar-khast*. Thus agriculture provides sustenance to roughly 70 per cent of the Koosa's population, and they have been unable to break away from their traditional association with field labour. Other services provides work to 696 persons (16.5 per cent of the workers) and its importance appears to be steadily growing. Manufacture of lime by burning oyster shells and preparation of *Gorabu*—monsoon coverings-out of reeds and leaves, are the household industries pursued by some of the Koosas. Trade, Commerce, transport and communications are poorly represented by them. An other factor to be noticed in the table is that, female workers preponderate in commercial activities while, those engaged in transport and communications are all males.

In urban areas, 47.45 per cent of the workers are found to be engaged in 'Other services' which is in sharp contrast to the rural image. Again 29 of the 34 workers in transport and communications are urban dwellers. Cultivation accounts for hardly one per cent and agricultural labour supports another 15 per cent.

Thus 84 per cent of the workers find employment in non-agricultural pursuits. General labour, masonry stone-quarrying and stone-dressing, service in Government and other institutions etc., are among the important urban occupations.

Agricultural labourers predominate the rural scene constituting 64.28 per cent of the rural workers. Cultivators account for 11 per cent while workers in other services 13.7 per cent. In household industry and in trade the majority of workers are females. This stems from the fact that women consider it their job to manufacture lime and also *Gorabu* which they sell door to door or in weekly shandies. Rights on land either by ownership or tenancy—are usually held by women. This perhaps accounts for a higher proportion of female-cultivators.

Industrial classification data are not available for any earlier period. Information collected during the field study, at five places though scanty is presented in the paragraphs that follow. In the 59 household covered in the study there were 220 workers. Female workers slightly out number males. Also the proportion of workers among females is slightly higher than among males. The field data thus corresponds with the picture emerging from the 1961 Census count.

TABLE 6—Population and Workers by Sex

Place of Study	Population			Workers		
	P	M	F	P	M	F
1. COONDAPUR (Voder Hobli)	94	51	43	48	22	26
2. BYNDOOR	85	38	47	47	23	24
3. BARKOOR	43	23	20	25	13	12
4. SHANKARANARAYANA (Bailur)	90	49	41	57	33	24
5. KUMBHASHI	75	35	40	43	17	26
6. ALL PLACES	387	196	191	220	108	112

completion of the seventh month of pregnancy her husband is refrained from taking a shave or haircut, bowing and offering cocoanuts to gods, taking part in funerals, killing any animal, plucking flowers of areca palm etc. till her delivery. Also, in the house in which she resides no coconut is broken, nor animals killed. Vows are taken to invoke higher blessings for safe delivery.

Generally, child birth takes place in a portion of the hut though occasionally, cattleshed may be used as laying—in rooms. The woman in travail is assisted by a *bijjanti* or *dai* (untrained but experienced mid-wife) and is reassured by the attendance of one or two of her elderly female kin. When complications set in they seek the help of a trained midwife or doctor; but such instances are said to be rare. While the local *dai* may be satisfied with a rupee or two, together with a measure of rice and small quantities of gur and copra a minimum of rupees five is required to be paid to a mid-wife and much more to a doctor.

Soon after the child-birth, the *dai* or any other experienced woman cuts the umbilical cord with a small knife called *Gijjakathi*. This knife is kept by the side of the mother for the next eleven days with the belief that it helps to ward off the evil spirit *Rahu*. Placenta is gathered in a new earthen pot and buried by the *dai* or any other woman in a pit close to the house. The pit is called *ame honda* at which the mother and the baby are given bath and is so loosely covered as to allow water to percolate into the pot below. A temporary enclosure is erected around the *ame honda*. Soon after the severance of the naval cord, the baby is washed in warm water and swathed in dry clothes. A little quantity of neem-oil is administered to it as a purgative. The mother also takes a small quantity of neem-oil. The women who assisted delivery also bathe and have a change. From the following day the mother and the baby are given oil bath at least for a period of eleven days. In some places, it is reported, the mother starts to take the bath from the third day onwards.

On the third day after child-birth, *moorara ame*—a preliminary purificatory ceremony—is performed. The premises is swept and layed. The clothes and utensils are washed and *punyahada neeru* (consecrated water) got from a Brahman *purohit* or *thirtha* got from their own caste headman is sprinkled all over the place. Breast-feeding commences on this day and the mother starts taking solid food. On the seventh, eleventh or the twelfth day—whichever is convenient—*ame honda*

is sealed and the naming and cradling ceremony performed. On this occasion also the house and household goods are cleaned and purified by sprinkling *thirtha* (holy-water). All the members of the family bathe and take *thirtha*. This twelfth day ceremony is also known as *Hettavara Sutaka Kaleyuvudu*. On this day, after the mother and the baby receive their oil-bath at the *ame honda*, the *dai* covers up the spot and plants a sapling of either a banana or an arca or a coconut palm. In the evening the mother offers *puja* to the plant and also the rope (that is intended to support the cradle) placed besides it and then a piece of black thread is tied round the waist of the baby and another piece loosely tied around its neck. Later an elderly female relative puts the child in the cradle and it is she who utters the name proposed for the child in its ears, and also puts a small lump of butter in its mouth. The affinal kin of the mother are invariably invited to the feast on this day and to be present for the naming ceremony. Custom enjoins upon a woman not to utter the names of her husband, his elder brother and his father. This fact is borne in mind while selecting a name for the child. In some places, the practice of consulting Brahmin *Purohitis* to give out the first syllable of the name is slowly gaining currency. For generations, Guruva, Bachcha, Choma, Manja, Basava etc., have been the popular names for men and Seshi, Subbi, Devu, Marli, Nagi, Chikku, Bachchi etc., have been the common names for females. Now-a-days these old names are being given up in favour of the more modern names such as Raju, Sekhar, Gopala, Babu, Ganesha, Lakshmana, for boys and Kamala, Susheela, Saroja, Girija, Vimala, Gulabi etc., for girls. In the past, Koosas had a pronounced preference for girls but now it is for a son.

The baby feeds on breastmilk from the third day until it is weaned after growing up to 18 or 20 months. When the child is about six months old it is initiated into taking solid food. The mother keeps on a liquid diet for two days following delivery and from the third day till the tenth, takes rice and pepper-soup in small quantities, twice a day. For the next about 20 days she takes a home-made preparation (consisting of ginger, copra, gur, cummin, garlic, onion etc) for recoupment of her health. When the child is about a month old she commences consuming fish and flesh of poultry and a fortnight thereafter, gruel and chutney—the staple food of the Koosas.

Between the thirtieth and the fortieth day after the child-birth, on a convenient day the mother offers *puja* to water either at a well, pond or stream. She breaks a coconut and then drops a *veelya* (5 betel leaves

and 2 whole arecanuts) in the water. Later, she waters a coconut or arecanut palm closeby thrice or five times bailed from the well. She wears new glass-bangles and decks herself with flowers. In the evening she visits a local temple. This function is known as *thingala maduvudu* which is observed to signify her eligibility to resume normal household duties.

Ear-boring for both boys and girls is done during the third or the fifth year. On this occasion new garments are bought for the child but there would be no feasting. This is done by experienced elderly women of their caste or in some places by goldsmiths. They do not perform any tonsorial ceremony.

Barrenness and infant deaths are sought to be remedied by taking vows. Sometimes Brahmin astrologers or, their own diviners are consulted to know if barrenness is caused by *Sarpadosha* (wrath of Serpent God). To overcome *Sarpadosha* and to propitiate the serpent god, *Pujas* are offered at the *Nagabana* and sometimes, a new snakestone may be installed. Donating a bull-calf is believed to please Lord Eswara who may bless the woman with a child. But this is resorted to by a few of the more affluent. They have faith in herbal cures for still-births dispensed by some local quacks. Koosas do not follow any family-planning methods and their knowledge about the programme is also scanty.

(b) Puberty rites

Girls menstruating for the first time are held impure for 5, 9 or 12 days. Soon after its occurrence she is given a ritual bath known as *eaidu moge neeru*. Five unwidowed women of the *Kudige* each carrying a pot, full of water circumambulate the girl, who sits on a plank, five times and bathe her. Though well-dressed and decked with areca and other flowers, the girl should remain outside the residential hut. She may use cattle-shed or else the *Chavadi* (pial) of the hut. Elderly women of the caste try to engage and entertain her by singing songs and by gossip as she should not attend to any outdoor work whatsoever. If already married, message is sent to her husband's kin and they are invited to attend the purificatory rite performed according to convenience on either the fifth, ninth or the twelfth day. This rite is known as *Thale neeru madume* or *hatu moge neeru huyuvudu*. On the

occasion, the girl sits on a plank and some five or nine unwidowed women, each carrying a pot full of water mixed with *Thirtha* or *punyahada neeru*—the purificant—go round her five or nine times and pour the water on her. This ritual bath purifies her and she sips a few drops of *thirtha*. She gets a new saree and a blouse from her parents, and also from her in-laws. Select guests participate in the feast. The custom of waving *arati* before the couple seated on a plank is in vogue in some places. Later, in the afternoon, a measure of rice and a coconut are placed in the upper part of her saree and, accompanied by her husband's kin, she proceeds to his house. In a few places (e.g. Barkoor) it is considered a taboo for a girl to stay in her mother's house on the day of purificatory rite. So much so, in case she is unmarried, she proceeds to some of her relatives house and spends the night there. Formerly pre-puberty marriage was the rule and even now, to avoid social ridicule some try to keep a secret of their girls, attainment of puberty. But, slowly post puberty marriages are becoming more common and the stigma attached to keeping unmarried mature girls at home is gradually waning.

(c) Practices connected with marriage

The Koosas have exogamous divisions called *bali*. *Bali* is traced through females and a man cannot marry his own or classificatory elder sister's daughter as that would amount to incest. So also parallel cousin marriage is taboo. Cross-cousin marriages are allowed and practised, but such marriages are of late on the decline. While contracting an alliance utmost care is taken to see that the *bali* of the marrying couple and of their fathers are different. An elder brother's wife is reckoned as equivalent to one's own mother. The relationship subsisting between a man and his younger brother's wife is characterised by strict avoidance. A man may sometimes be permitted to marry his wife's sister even during her life time. A widow or a divorcee who wishes to remarry should choose a man belonging to a *bali* other than the one to which her former husband belonged.

Till about 1950 the marriageable age for boys and girls was 20 and 12 respectively. Now-a-days girls are married between 15 and 18 years and boys after their 25th year. Even in the case of remarriages the husband will be senior to his wife by 5 to 10 years. The statistics regarding marital status (according to the 1961 Census) are presented below:

In Coondapur, a majority were returned as labourers. One person was found to be employed in a Government office, while another in a tile factory. Two others were working in Mysore State Electricity Board and another gave himself to be a building contractor. None of these 13 households possesses any land. Three of the households had one cow each and a few possessed some poultry birds. Since many Koosas find work as agricultural labourers their settlement is usually close to agricultural fields. The tendency to depart to upghat villages in search of work was also reported.

Besides agriculture, manufacture of lime and of Gorabu were reported as important occupations in Byndoor. In one family, all the workers were found to be cowherds. Some five households reported that they have been granted *Darkhast* lands but they have not been surveyed and possession given. Three of the 11 households possessed a cow and a calf each.

All the eight households enumerated in Barkoor hold *Darkhast* land grants varying in extent from 5 cents to 3 acres. These plots have not yet been cleared for cultivation, but around houses built on these lands some useful fruit trees have been planted in most cases. One household reported that it was engaged in cultivation of lands taken on lease and this household also possessed a pair of cows and calves. In Barkoor agricultural labour and also stone-quarrying and stone-dressing were reported besides the prevalence of seasonal emigration of men to upghat villages for work in gardens.

One of the workers among Koosas of Bailur (Shankaranarayana) is a postman. His father is a cultivator owning some 3-50 acres of *Darkhast* land (only 60 to 70 cents brought under the plough), and a pair of bullocks. Another household of agricultural labourers possessed 2 cows and a calf. The *Darkhast* land possessed by another household has not been yet cleared of jungle. Agricultural labour is the Chief occupation of Koosas in this place and women sometimes manufacture and trade in lime and in *Gorabus*.

Of the 12 households covered in Kumbhashi, 3 reported cultivation (as tenants) as their occupation. The extent cultivated by each of these households respectively was 25 cents, 1.25 acres and 2.25 acres. Rent is paid annually in the form of rice. Another household which owns about one acre of *Darkhast* land has yet to bring it under the plough. In the past, this household had taken about 2.00 acres of land on lease locally but owing to a feud with the landlord, the land

is allowed to lie fallow since 1965. Bullock-cart transport and agricultural labour now constitute two important occupations for this household. None of the Koosas in Kumbhashi is interested in the preparation of time. Two households possessed a pair of he-buffaloes each and one of them a cow and a calf also. Another household possessed a pair of bullocks and a cart while two of the remaining households had a calf each. The tendency for seasonal male migration was reported here also.

Thus, among Koosas the landless are preponderant and even the few, who may have come to get lands under *Darkhast* have not cleared them for cultivation. A few only raise livestock. Agricultural labour happens to be their chief occupation. Seasonal migration of male-workers was reported at all the places. During the months of May and June, women and also men prepare *Gorabu* from bamboo reeds, leaves and creepers mainly for marketing. Each *Gorabu* fetches Rs. 2 to Rs. 3. During the period February to May, women and children gather oysters and make *chunam* (lime) from the shells for supplementing the family income. If required by any boat-owners, some of the Koosas go gathering wax called *Dhoopada Mena*. After heavy rains, they catch fish in submerged paddy fields using *Gore* net. Fishing in rivers or rivulets using *Guli* (traps) also prevails. In a few places men work on quarrying and dressing of laterite stones and a handful of them are masons and contractors. Those in salaried jobs are too few to merit mention.

Agricultural serfdom has been the traditional occupation of the Koosas. But now this institution is totally extinct and they are all now casual and free labourers. They no longer render service to upper caste Hindus at the time of disposal of the dead. At Bailur (Shankaranarayana) this custom was reportedly abandoned in the early fifties following the directions issued by their *Swamiji* (preceptor). The informant (*Gowda*) at Kumbhashi gave the information that this was a decision taken by the chiefs (*Gowdas*) of several *Koodiges* (hamlets) when they met somewhere in 1953. Any work associated with the disposal of the dead is held *Anishta* (ceremonially unclean) and hence the decision. This break from the long established tradition has not resulted in any conflicts. It is also significant that this change has occurred subsequent to Independence.

The casual agricultural labourers earn about a rupee and a half if male and about 75 paise to a rupee if female. In most of the places wages are paid in kind (rice) and according to the current standards a

male worker gets 2 *seers* while females and children get a *seer* and a half. During the harvest, the labourers—both male and female get 6 *seers* of paddy. Non-agricultural labour secures Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 for males and Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 for females. Boys and girls are sometimes engaged by local landlords for tending cattle. They are fed and clothed or else, some contracted quantity of rice is given. Debt-bonded labourers, or even, attached (*i.e.*, contract) agricultural labourers are said to be few and far between.

Agriculture, in this coastal tract, offers lesser employment opportunities to the local labourers. On the occasions of transplanting, of weeding and of harvesting, the labourers are engaged for about a period between 20 to 30 days for each operation. Thus work will be available for about 60 to 70 days in a year. Men therefore migrate to work in plantations in the upghat villages of Sagar, Hosnagar and Tirthahalli taluks. They spend the first half of the rainy season at home and move out in August. Usually they return in the following May. Most of the labourers get back home for a few days for harvest in November. Those who go seeking work in plantations are the young and the middle-aged. The women, children and the aged are left behind. In the place of work their leader called *Seregara*, usually feeds them at a common mess and if required pays them some cash periodically. Usually the accounts are settled after they return home. An average worker makes about Rs. 250 to Rs. 300 rupees as wages on each such exodus and a part of which will however be spent away during his sojourn. In large joint families, a number of men and also some women were observed to have migrated to upghat villages more or less permanently. But the unit of migration is still the individual worker. *Seregara*s usually enter into a subsisting relationship with the landlords by periodical visits and keep a group of labourers at their command. Such relations, often extends beyond a generation and the contacts established by ones forefathers are continued uninterrupted even today. The work group usually consists of a single caste though the *seregara* may belong to any caste. It is ascertained there are a number of *seregara*s among the Koosas also. In the course of the study two *seregara*s, who have now taken up to other pursuits were come across. The *seregara* enters into a contract with landlords, owning large plantations and obtains advances from them for supply of labour. This business is said to be not always profitable and therefore there is hesitation to enter this field. As a contractor in charge of the labour force he makes a judicious assignment of men to various places in a manner that would secure satisfactory fulfilment of his obligations.

One of the main economic consequences of this seasonal migration is the lessening of pressure on the local resources. The women and children left behind in their homes can look after themselves with what little work that comes their way supplemented by periodic assistance from the earners away from home. The cash earnings of these labourers are usually spent over marriage, social functions and also purchase of essentials. Marriage, among them, involves no change of residence either for the husband or the wife. Seasonal migration, therefore, makes no dent in the pattern of their conjugal life. Perhaps it is this factor that favours seasonal migration of men among Koosas. The changing trends, now observable, of establishing elementary households after the marriage may prove deterrent to migration, over a period of time.

IX. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Practices connected with birth

Pregnancy is recognised by the commonly known biological changes. In the case of first pregnancy, during the fifth month a ceremony called *Hoovu Mudisuvudu* or *Halanna Hakuvudu* is observed. A good feast is got up for the occasion and her affinal kin are invited to participate. The *Bayake* ceremony performed at her natal home is intended to mark the commencement of the ninth month. The pregnant woman receives the present of a new saree and a blouse from her parents-in-law. A feast is also held to which her affinal kins are invited. Later, decked with flowers and ornaments and dressed in new garments the pregnant woman sits on a plank or a chair. In front of her are displayed a variety of choice dishes such as, *ladu*, *kajjaya*, *chakkuli*, *karjikai*, etc. Those who wish to, may offer her presents. Then two married women wave *arati* before her. Thereafter, a measure of rice and a cocoanut are placed in her robe this being known as *Shakuna*—and lead by her husband's kin and accompanied by her brother who holds the basket in which are kept the dishes on display referred to earlier, she leaves for her husband's home. Here also a similar function is gone through. Taking a basketful of dishes she returns to her natal home on the following day. These exchanged dishes are distributed among their caste-fellows in the village.

Pregnant women among Koosas do not observe any taboos regarding either work or diet. However, during the advanced stages she may attend to hard work only if she is able to withstand that strain. She abjures certain articles of food which are supposed to disagree with the condition of her system at that time. On

TABLE 6—Marital status by sex and age-group (Koosa)

Age Group	Total population		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced separated		Unspecified status	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0—14	1703	1632	1703	1602	..	28	..	1	..	1	..	2
15—44	1163	1675	490	147	636	1396	26	103	10	27	1	2
45 & above	550	873	6	3	443	381	86	480	14	9	1	..
Age not stated	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
All Ages	3416	4181	2199	1752	1079	1806	112	584	24	37	2	2

The fact that 30 girls aged less than 14 years are married permits of the inference that the practice of child marriage, though considerably reduced, is not altogether extinguished and that customs die hard. Though marriage is an universal institution a few who are physically handicapped or mentally retarded tend to remain unmarried for life. An abnormality in the proportion of married women to married men in the age-group 15 to 44 is also noticed. This obviously is attributable to their being given to seasonal migration. Their custom permits remarriage of widows and divorcees and a man, marrying any number of times. Despite its being so the number of widows (relatively to widowers) is much larger and the possible reason for it may be that only the young and the childless widows remarry.

Though polygyny is permitted, monogamy has virtually become the rule. Polyandry is unknown. Marriage are arranged by elders. Other forms of marriage such as by intrusion, by elopement and the like have not been in vogue. Marriage involves payment of 'bride-rice' called *Tera* (or *Teru*). The amount ranges, between rupees twenty and fifty. Formerly the bride price was only rupees eight, but there is now a steep rise. Marriages by exchange are rather rare. The main qualification considered either for the bride or the bride-groom are a good physique, capacity to work, modesty, respect to elders and the like. Except when the would-be couple are closely related they do not see each other before marriage. The field for selection of spouses usually covers villages lying within a radius of 10 to 12 miles, known and related families being preferred. Thus one section of the Koosas at Byndoor (*Entu Koodigeyavaru*) do not have any affinal kin in villages South of Kirimanjeswar (a village about 5 miles South of Byndoor) and also in villages situated to the East of Taggars. But their relatives are found in northern parts of Byndoor in several villages of Bhatkal Taluk and also at Gerusoppa. The

other section (*Hadinentu Koodigeyavaru*) confines itself to the villages lying between Shirur (four miles North of Byndoor) and Gangoli (about 19 miles South of Byndoor). The Koosas in and around Coondapur proper do not go South of Mabukala river. Usually marriages take place during the months of May, June and early July. Their own castemen solemnize the marriage and the services of Brahmin priests, barbers, Devadigas, musicians, washermen and other village functionaries are not utilised. In some places their own castemen have now organised band sets and their services may be procured on payment. According to their custom—which is prevailing even to this day in many places—their women sing folk-songs while accompanying the bridegroom to and from the brides home. The auspicious day for marriage is chosen according to convenience following their own conventions. In a few places (e.g. Kumbhashi) consulting a Brahmin priest is also reported. Generally a Thursday or a Sunday is chosen but care is taken to see that it does not coincide with either, Newmoon, fully moon or *Sankramana*. But the point to be observed is that the day of marriage should be different from the day of the week in which either of the spouse is born. The ceremonies which constitute the marriage take place during day-time. The minimum expenditure incurred on marriage is about Rs. 500 for the bridegroom's party and Rs. 300 for the bride's party. But one's kinship circle, economic and social status determines the expenditure. When the boy comes of age his relations suggest eligible girls to help a tentative selection. Then his sister's husband and Kudige Gowda (headman) will usually visit the girl's place to move the matter. The mother's brother may sometimes assume the role of the headman or else the boy or his father may themselves initiate the negotiations. Having already got wind of the move the girl's relations would have given a deep thought to the matter and discussions when they meet would reduce to a mere formality with the only purpose of giving out their

decision. *Prasada Kambudu* is an observance resorted to in some places to help a decision. Two or three representatives from each side visit a temple and if in answer to their prayers an areca flower from the right of the idol should fall divine blessings for the alliance is taken for granted. If on the other hand should the flower fall from the left further negotiations are abandoned.

On an appointed day *Oppanda Veelya* or *Oppige* (Betrothal) takes place at the girl's residence. Two or three close kins of the boy and the headman and a few kinsmen of the girl and the headman of her village are the main participants. After the feast, the two headmen exchange *Veelya* (5 betel leaves and an areca nut) which sets the seal of approval to the agreement. Any backing out thereafter involves punishment. This may also be an occasion for payment of bride-price either fully or in part. It is customary in some places to present a silver ring to the girl and in others to tie a necklace of black-beads round her neck. The day for celebrating the marriage is also fixed.

The sequence of events in a marriage may be summarised as follows: *Chappara* (putting up pandals) ritual or ceremonial bath—*dibbana* (bridegroom's journey to bride's place—receiving the bridegroom—*Dhare—Shashakki hakuvudu* (blessing the couple by sprinkling of rice grains on them)—*maru dibbana* (bridegroom makes for his home with his bride), *maruseshe*—return of the bride to her natal home. Pandals are erected in front of the houses of the bride and the bridegroom two or three days prior to the marriage. Headman and other caste people attend to this and are feasted. The hearths for cooking food are got prepared and after *pūja* and *arathi* by unwidowed women, the headman places a large earthen vessel on one of the hearths. This is called *muhurthada hari sthapane*. The pot is lowered only on the completion of marriage. The bridegroom takes a shave and a ritual bath called *balimeeyuvudu* on the day of *dibbana* in which his sister's husband (either real or fictitious) takes the leading part. Unwidowed women go round the boy and pour on him *Kalasada neeru*. Thereafter his sister will also have a ritual bath called *malaneeru*. On this occasion the boy should present some clothes to his mother, sister and mother's brother. The relatives are fed and the boy is dressed by his *chattigara* or *kaikara* (sister's husband). The dress consists of a dhoti, baniyan, shirt, shawl and a red turban. He puts on *Kalminchu* and *Kalminchu* (silver rings for fingers and toes). The headman fastens a necklace of black-beads around his neck and marks

his forehead with vermilion powder. Holding betel leaves and a whole areca nut in his hand he starts for his bride's place accompanied by his kin. Usually his mother stays back. His sister holds the large plate in which are placed a new saree and ornaments for the bride. Formerly it was customary for the women-folk to sing folk-songs all along the route. But now, in many places this custom has worn thin and instead a band troupe is employed.

The bridegroom's people are received with honour at the girl's residence and offered gur and water to quench their thirst. Five women from each side wash each other's feet and mark foreheads with vermilion powder. Then the clothes and ornaments are handed over to the bride's elder sister. By now, the bride (and so also her elder sister) will have received the ritual bath. The girl is dressed in the new saree and her mother's brother, mother's father, or her own brother leads her to the entrance of the pandal where she washes the feet of the bridegroom. Her brother also washes his (*i.e.*, bridegroom's) feet and gets present of a rupee or so. The bridegroom and his kin now enter the pandal. At the centre the couple are led to stand either face to face or side by side facing the east. Their hands are joined, palm upwards, on which a *veelya* and a silver coin are placed. The girl's parents then pour little quantities of fresh cow's milk or water which is collected below in a dish and later applied either to the scalp of the bride or poured into the pit of a coconut plant. This pouring of water or milk is known as *Dhare*. The couple then sit side by side on chairs or on planks and in front of them are placed two *harivanas* (plates)—one empty and the other containing rice grains—and an oil lamp on a plank. One by one the relatives of the bride go near the couple and throw a few grains of rice on them and drop some cash in the empty plate. This is called *Shase iduvudu* or *Seshe hakuvudu*. The invitees are feasted with *Paramanna* (sweetened rice) as the main dish. Thereafter the bride with an old female relative as her aide, accompanies her husband to his house. The couple are seated on a bench or plank in the pandal and *maru seshe* in the manner previously described is observed. Here the bridegroom's party sprinkle rice on the couple and deposit cash in the empty plate. The boy removes the black-bead-necklace he has worn and ties it on to the neck of his bride. On the following day the bride's parents come to take her back. They are hosted. Leaving an invitation to the bridegroom and his *Kaikara* (sister's husband) to call on them the next or the following day, they depart with the girl. In response, the bridegroom visits his in-laws for the first time and he is offered a cup of milk.

The couple are given oil baths and they visit a local temple. After food, the bridegroom returns home with his wife whereafter the marriage pandals are removed.

The foregoing is a broad description of Koosa marriage and subject to local variations. Of late, the tendency is to economise expenses necessitated by the rising of prices. The number of feasts given to caste-people are reduced from five to one or two.

Remarriage of women known as *Seerudki* or *Kai hidisikonduruvudu* is a simple ceremony. The local caste people are feasted and the man presents some clothes and ornaments to his bride if he can afford to do so. But the parties to a remarriage enjoy lesser status in the society. The man is precluded from holding any office of Gowda, Mukhari, Patri, etc.

In recent years there have been a few inter-marriages between Kannada-speaking Upparas (Koosas) of Barkoor and its neighbourhood, and the Tulu-speaking Upparas (known as Mundalas) South of Brahmar. In Coondapur, inter-marriage of this sort has led to the social boycott of the contacting families. The village caste-group still plays an important role in matters of marriage through its headman and his assistant.

(d) Practices connected with death

Koosas generally bury their dead. According to their belief, death may also be caused by evil spells and wrath of Spirits. Physical ailments are treated by dispensing either native drugs or by allopathic medicines. Prolonged illness arouses suspicion of the influence of evil spirits and Patri (mediums) are consulted for propitiation. A person in his death bed is removed to the *Chavadi* (Pial) of the hut. His relatives pour water sanctified by *Tulsi* (Sweet basil) into his mouth, when life is about to be extinct. The nearest and the dearest are sent for to have a final look of him. Soon after death a cocoanut is broken and in each half, cocoanut-oil-wick-lamps are lit. These are placed on grains of rice and paddy spread over the ground near the head and feet of the corpse. Burial takes place before dusk. If death occurs late in the afternoon or in the night the corpse is disposed of, the following day.

The corpse is daubed with cocoanut oil and turmeric dust and then bathed in hot water. If male, the brothers, sons and sister's sons clean the corpse; the female-corpse is attended to by female relatives. The string tied around the waist of the corpse is removed

and the body is enclosed in a shroud. It is then carried on a bamboo bier to the grave by four men who will usually be the sons, sister's sons or brothers of the deceased. Their headman leads the funeral procession and except in a few places (e.g. Kumbhashi) women and boys are allowed to join the funeral. The two halves of the cocoanut (after putting off the lights) the rice and the paddy grains are tied in a piece of cloth and carried to the grave. Meanwhile, the caste men will have got ready the grave-pit. On reaching the burial ground the bearers go round the pit thrice and then place the bier closeby on the ground. The corpse is carefully lowered on its back with its head oriented towards the South. The bundle containing rice and paddy, and cocoanut halves are also placed in the grave along with a few coins. Then elders throw three handfuls of mud whereupon others join to fill the grave. Generally the corpse is buried nude and the shroud is thrown away. On the grave some thorny bushes are spread, over which large stone-slabs are placed, to make it secure against the ravages of wild animals. On the third day one or two members of the family visit the grave to assure themselves that the grave has not been meddled with.

The participants while returning bathe at a stream or pond, the members of the family who remained at home will also have bathed by then and after cleaning and purifying the place where death occurred with cowdung, will have prepared a fire close to the hut. Crossing the fire, the funeral party reaches the hut of the deceased to partake of either tea, coffee or food.

The belief that the dead returns for quenching its thirst is widely prevalent. A pot full of water is placed near the spot of death and closeby an oil-lamp is also kept burning all through the night. An uniform layer of ash is spread at the spot where death occurred as a device to obtain the footprints of the newly assumed form of the spirit of the dead and this layer is examined carefully the following morning to ascertain if any prints have been left behind. The water kept in the pot is emptied to a plant-bed.

Among the Koosas death causes pollution to all members of the family for a duration of either a full, a half or a quarter of a *mandala*, a mandala consisting of 48 days. The sprinkling and administering of holy water by their headman on the occasion of performing *bojja*, the final obsequial rite, removes the impurity. On this day all the household articles and the premises are cleaned. In the morning a *hulludi* (manikin) is prepared out of grass and dressed in a

piece of cloth. It is treated as a real corpse and after applying vermilion powder and turmeric dust and burning incense, it is carried to a distant place—usually near a water source. All the members of the family of the deceased and the headman accompany this manikin. It is laid on a pyre of mango wood and burnt to ashes. Meanwhile the Chief mourner—eldest son or sister's son of the deceased—carrying a pot full of gruel prepared at that spot goes round the burning manikin thrice and breaks the pot by dropping it on the ground. The ashes are gathered into a heap and mixing it with earth and water an altar is made. Here a *Tulsi* (Sweet basil) sapling is planted and an oil lamp is lit. Thereafter, the participants bathe at the river or the pond. The chief mourner gets his face and head shaved by one of his caste-mates and then bathes. The headman then sprinkles water on them and renders them free from ritual impurity. They get back home in wet clothes and by now an elderly person will have prepared special dishes such as *Kadabu*, *Vade*, curry of raw plantains and ashgourd. A little distance away from the hut on a large plantain leaf these articles of food are spread and all the members of the family let one or two drops of water from their wet clothes drip on the food (in some places they sprinkle *Tulsi* water instead). All sit closeby awaiting the arrival of crows to consume this food. If no crow turns up the food is allowed to be eaten away by a cow. Then all the members of the family sip a few drops of *thirtha* (holy water) offered by their headman and sitting in the *angala* (front-yard) eat food. They then put on dry clothes and enter the hut. The caste-people and relatives are then feasted. In the evening with the assistance of a *Patri* or *Gadiga* (priest) of their own caste, the spirit of the dead called *Jakani*, is invited to the hut and served some non-vegetarian food. In all earnest the head of the family requests the spirit to keep on coming often to partake of the food offered to it in the family and to refrain from causing any mishaps or troubles in the family. This rite is known as *meesalu iduvudu* and consists in displaying food on a plantain leaf spread before a plank, near which are placed an oil lamp and a pot, full of water. After imploring the spirit all the members of the family turn their backs to this food or go out of sight and a few moments later consume the remnant food. On the following day a cocoanut is offered at a shrine and this marks the conclusion of the funeral rites. Thereafter once a year (in May) food is offered to all the ancestors in every family.

In the traditional matrilineal family where a man is merely a privileged visitor at his wife's home, he would usually die in his natal home amidst his mater-

nal kin and siblings. The obsequies are also performed at this place and his wife and children participate during the disposal of the corpse and again in the *bojja* rite. They are expected to bring with them raw plantains and ash gourds for the *bojja*. The auspicious marks and ornaments worn by the wife are removed either on the day of burial or on the occasion of the *bojja*. In case the woman is also residing with her husband at the time of his death she is taken to her natal home along with her children on the third day and she too attends *bojja* as an invitee. She would no longer dwell in the house of her deceased husband. Barring a few exceptions her children remain with her amidst her own maternal kin.

Elaborate rites are performed for the married and sometimes, the unmarried adolescent dead. Death of children causes pollution for five days. Sipping a few drops of *thirtha* (holy water) after bathing removes the impurity. Those under pollution should not enter shrines or offer worship. But they have no restrictions regarding their work and food. Expenditure over funerals ranges between Rs. 75 and Rs. 150 depending on the kinship ramifications and the status of the family.

X. RELIGION

The Koosas are Hindus. Lord Eswara is their supreme God and they revere Goddess Parvati in the form of Chaundi (Chamundi). They worship *Tulsi* (sweet basil) and almost every household has a *Tulsi-katte* in its yard. Serpent-worship also prevails widely as among most of the other Hindus of this tract. There are innumerable *nagabanas* (serpent groves) in the villages of this region and if in some of these, Brahmins officiate as priests in many others, Koosas themselves perform *pujas*. These latter type of *Nagabanas* are reckoned as *moolasthanas* (place of origin) of the clans and the senior man of the clan acts as the priest. Thus at Kumbhashi their headman of the hamlet has a Nagabana for his clan-mates while, the two other clans in the hamlet offer worship through Brahmins at a different grove. Ordinarily the Koosas do not visit the local Hindu-temples, but on special occasions they do offer cocoanuts and plantains to these Gods.

Considering the fact that the Koosas have immense faith in *Bhootas* (demons or devils) they can very well be called demonolaters. The *bhootas* held in esteem vary from place to place. Around Barkoor, Kotada Babbu (also called Kordabbu) of Kachur has a large following while in Coondapur, Byndoor and Shankaranarayana *Hayaguli* is venerated. The Mundalas

reckon Babbu as their culture hero and have spun several legends around it. Legends regarding *Haya-guli* are not known to the Koosas contacted during the study. The other *bhootas* (demons) feared and propitiated by the Koosas are *Kallukutiga* (Kalkuda), *Panjurh*, *Neecha*, *Bobbarya*, *Masti*, *Berma* and *Jattiga*. Several households (particularly in Barkoor) have shrines for one or two of these *bhootas* in their own yards and offer daily worship. They also worship Marikamba of Sirsi and have small shrines near their habitats. The form of daily worship at these family shrines and *Tulsi-Kattes* consists in placing water in a small earthen or a metallic container before the object, which is changed every day. Women subject to monthly periods are ineligible to offer worship at these shrines. Once a year during March-April on a convenient day a fowl is sacrificed to propitiate the *bhoota*. In cases of severe hardships they take vows in fulfilment of which they organise *Kolas* (the form of worship in which devil dancers become possessed by the spirit and dance while the glorious deeds of the demon is being recited to the accompaniment of drums). Some of the *Bhootas* which have *Bhootasthanas* in the village are supposed exert their influence on the whole village and sometimes beyond. In such cases the villagers contribute in cash and kind and *Kolas* are held periodically. At current prices the cost of organising a *Kola* is said to come to at least Rs. 250 (rupees two hundred fifty). This form of worship is more popular in southern and eastern tracts of the taluks of Udipi and Coondapur.

Dharmasthala, Koteswara, Kollur and Subramanya are their chief centres of pilgrimage. It may, however, be mentioned that the Koosas have no shrines or places of pilgrimage exclusively their own. They consider themselves to be Shaivates (worshippers of Shiva) and their preceptor is the head of the Veerashaiva monastery at Barangi Kudli in Sagar taluk of Shimoga district. Whenever the *Swamiji* tours the neighbourhood they offer their obeisance to him. Occasionally some of them go to the monastery and offer *Kanike* (submission of cash) and seek his blessings.

The Koosas, as most other caste-Hindus of the locality, follow the solar year. The Ugadi (New Year) during April is an occasion to revel and eat sweet dishes and non-vegetarian food, after they are offered to their ancestral spirits. Karkataka Amavasya (New Moon day in August) during *Sona* is observed especially by the newly weds who incur an obligation to offer worship to linga, the emblem of Lord Shiva, made of sand at the sea. *Hosathu* or *Kadiru Kattuvudu* during Kanya, is the occasion for

offering *puja* at the paddy fields to the new crop. Ears of a few paddy plants are brought home and fastened to beams, pillars, lintels of the doors, and also to the fruit-bearing trees such as the jack, mango etc., in the kitchen garden. Rice (cooked out of grains obtained by dehusking the new paddy) is offered to the deities first and then consumed by the family. They observe Deepavali by offering *puja* to the cows and implements. 'Holi' is a community festival in which many Koosas participate. After making a bonfire of Kama, groups of men (belonging to Koosa, Koraga, Billava etc.) go round the village singing songs and collecting rice, cocoanuts and cash from landlords. They return to the spot where Kama was burnt, mark their foreheads with ashes and share the collections. In recent years there is less fervour in observing this festival, and the custom of collecting presents is being given up.

The Institution of priesthood is recognised in their community. Priests are called either *Darshana Patri* or *Gadigas* and they are the mediums through whom the spirit, either ancestral or *Nambida Daiva*, speaks when invoked. Though priesthood may be seen to run in certain families it is not hereditary. The older group among the Koosas are ardent believers in the power of spirits. If a man has been wronged by a person against whom he is weak or helpless to take action he would sooner or later invoke the *Nambida Daiya* (his guardian spirit) to inflict punishment on the wrong doer. The custom of offering a fowl to propitiate the spirits of the ancestors and also that of their guardian spirit utilising the services of their priest is widely prevalent. The Koosas also respect the Brahmin priests, through whom they offer their prayers to Hindu Gods.

XI. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Poverty has made both men and women toil in the fields all through the year for a marginal living. Unskilled manual labour is their primary occupation. After the peak agricultural season most of their men move upghats while women and the remaining men seek casual labour in their neighbourhood. A sense of relaxation is only to be had during the months of May and June, when men return from the ghats and will be in a holiday mood. It is also the period when marriages, and also *pujas* to ancestors and spirits are celebrated. In some of their settlements the Koosas have formed informal *bhajan mandalis* and youngmen occasionally spend an hour or two singing devotional songs in a chorus. One such *mandali* is now defunct at Byndoor while the one at Gangolli is very active.

They witness *Yakshagana Melas* (dance-drama performance) and also *Kolas* organised in the neighbourhood. Cockfights and also buffalo race in some places, are the other means of recreation, besides witnessing cinema shows. They have no folk dances of their own. Neither have they organised any dramatic's troupe. Their women sing folksongs on such occasions as marriages, puberty and naming ceremonies, etc. Both men and women spend their spare hours in gossip. During rainy season women sometimes play *channemané*. Boys play numerous games throughout the year. *Chini ata*, *Sodi ata*, *Goli*, *topi ata*, *huli-dana*, *Kabadi* are a few of the popular games. During October they greatly enjoy kite-flying, and play several games with cloth balls.

XII. INTER AND INTRA-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Koosa is a composite caste name applied by higher caste-Hindus to the erstwhile non-beef-eating untouchables in Coondapur taluk and its neighbourhood. So also is Uppara a general term and now many of them prefer being called Adidravidas. This larger community is thus composed of several localised endogamous groups which at one time were known by specific names such as Bathada, Bakuda, Uppara, Mera, etc. In the eyes of the caste-Hindus all these enjoy equal social status while among themselves, each claims a superiority over the others. Of late, the rule against inter-dining among these groups is gradually weakening though the female members continue to be rigid. Inter marriages are avoided and if ever it occurs, social boycott will be incurred. The Koosas at Byndoor belong to two distinct groups (*viz.*, *Entu Koodige* and *Hadineutu Koodige*) who may interdine occasionally. Their affinal relatives have spread in different directions. Each small group tries to confine its social interaction strictly to families known to be of its own group. The larger community of Koosas appears to have been united because of the common religion and their affiliation to the same monastery and preceptor. The educated among the Koosas are said to be following the traditional group in all social matters. No distinct segment of the educated has emerged in any of the places covered in the present study. There is close interaction between the urban dwellers and those in rural areas. Marriage links these two sectors through kinship ties.

In the past Koosas were agrestic serfs and were required to cut mango wood for cremation of the dead among higher castes or otherwise help in the disposal of the dead. Since about 1945 this obligation towards the higher castes is gradually being shaken

off either on their own volition or at the insistence of their elders and preceptors. The patron-client relationship that existed between a landlord and his labourer has almost come to an end, and a Koosa is now free to work anywhere. Because of their past servitude they appear to have incurred several social disabilities. They were denied the services of village barbers, washermen and Devadiga musicians for centuries. So also entry into the Hindu Shrines and other public places such as hotels had been barred to them. They could not use the wells of upper caste Hindus and no Brahmin priest would officiate at their marriages. Even now in interior villages this broad pattern remains. But in towns and big villages the rigidity of these rules has greatly softened. At Byndoor and Coondapur the Koosas enter the teashops and other public places without restrictions. They have access to public wells. They may enter the front-yards and cattle-sheds of the caste-Hindus but not any living apartments. Their touch is considered defiling by the more orthodox group while the younger generation slur it over. Thus, the several social disabilities to which they were subjected to in the past have very much declined though in some interior villages steeped in tradition and ignorance the change may be slowly coming about as witnessed at Kumbhashi, Bailur (of Shankaranayana) and Barkur where tea and eatables are served to them in a corner in separate vessels. In some such areas they fail to get even now the services of barbers, washermen and Devadiga musicians.

XIII. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The population of Koosas is distributed in numerous *Koodiges* (hamlets or settlements) situated in larger villages inhabited by several other caste groups. The number of their households in each settlement varies but is nowhere big. Each *Koodige* has a recognised headman called *Gurikara* or *Gowda* and he is assisted by a *Moktesara* or *Buddivantha*. Both these offices are hereditary, succession to office being in accordance with the Aliyasanthana Law. Thus it is a man's eldest sister's eldest son or else his own brother that succeeds him. In the past organisation at pan-village level seems to have been quite strong. But only traces remain now. Thus, according to the informant at Coondapur the area lying between Shirur bridge in the north and Mabukala river in the South, there were 68 *Koodiges* of the Koosas. About a dozen *Koodiges* were grouped to form *Hoblis* and Voder-hobli at Coondapur is one such. At Barkur it was reported that the *Gowda* of Kachur hobli ranked higher than the rest. Their inter-koodige meetings

were called *Kootas* but since the early forties no such meeting seems to have taken place. A few *hoblies* would be combined to constitute a *seeme* or a geographical unit with well-defined boundaries. The pontiff of the monastery at Barangi Kudli in Sagar taluk is held in high esteem and disputes which can not be settled locally are referred to him for adjudication.

The organisation for social control at the *Koodige* level is functioning at almost all the places effectively. But much of its past halo is lost. A headman, though comes to office normally by succession, may also be chosen by popular consent as happened at (Barkoor) Hosahalli. These posts may also remain unfilled as at Bailur (Shankaranarayana). But if the office remains so unfilled an informal and temporary council deals with any severe intransigence. At Voderhobli (Coondapur) a family has contracted marital alliance with a Mundala youth from Mulki. This and its constituent family units have virtually been boycotted by the rest of the local community since about 1966, for non-compliance with the summons of the caste council to appear before it. Again, another unmarried girl of the neighbourhood having refused to go before the caste council after a clanrestine childbirth has been ostracised. The villagers of an adjoining village who connived in suppressing the truth about the illicit sexual relationship of a Koosa resident of that village with a Koraga woman around 1964 became victim of a social boycott. The leaders of the caste sent a report on these and several other matters with a *Kanike* (cash submission) of Rs. 25 through messenger to their preceptor at the monastery. They have been assured of a visit by their preceptor. So also at Byndoor, social boycott has recently been imposed on a group of related households who aided and abetted a girl accused of bearing an illegitimate child. In Hosahalli (Barkoor) a married woman was seduced by a Koosa and when the villagers and her husband wanted to set the matter right, the paramour, it is said, filed a police complaint stating that he was being manhandled. On local enquiries his charges were held baseless and the police as also the other village elders advised the man to leave the village forthwith along with the woman. But yet the man continued to live amidst them and they had to threaten him stating that they would again approach the police officials. His sister is a resident of the hamlet and for all practical purposes she is treated as an outcast because she supported her sinful brother rather than upholding the caste norms and supporting the villagers. Detailed enquiries may bring to light a number of such instances wherein the social group as represented in the *Gowda* or the *Gurikara* asserts its

supremacy over the caste member. There is now-a-days a tendency (though feeble) to refute the authority of this group.

When the caste elders feel unequal to the task of settling the disputes they seek the assistance of influential leaders outside their caste. Fining and imposing effective social boycott are the two sanctions available to them. As it would be an uphill task to get on in the village without the co-operation of the local group the members sooner or later bow to the decisions of the group. The services of the *Gowda* or *Gurikara* in the prevailing caste set up are indispensable wants at marriages as well as purifactory ceremonies and he is also an active participant in the performance of obsequies.

XIV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

The intensive dislike manifest in the community regarding *Koosa*—their traditional caste-name—has already been pointed out. They prefer being called Upparas. This desire for change in nomenclature has come about gradually during the past 2 decades because of their contacts with people in villages of Shimoga district, their traditional affiliation to a Lingayat monastery in Sagar taluk, their tradition of migration in the past and more than all, their knowledge that Upparas of former Mysore State region have always enjoyed a high social status. No formal organisation, however, directed this movement. At Voderhobli (Coondapur) they founded in 1957 a voluntary organisation named *Channabasava Yuvaka Sangha*. The functioning of caste associations such as Mogaveera Sangha, Shiva Samaja of Mundalas of Udupi etc in the neighbourhood provided them the necessary inspiration. The founder-members had also realised that unity is strength and that the voice of an association can be very effective. Initially 40 members in and around Coondapur were enlisted and care was taken to propose the leaders of the traditional-Panchayat-set-up only, to offices of President and Vice-President. Secretaries were, however, from among the educated young. The membership fee was stipulated at Rs. 3 per annum. Besides, the Sangha was authorised to raise subscription to meet certain public needs such as financial assistance to poor and deserving students etc. The area of operation of the Sangha was proposed to be the whole Koosa Community in Coondapur taluk. However the Sangha has not achieved this objective of mobilising the entire community. The Koosas of Gangolli have a separate voluntary organisation called Indodara Bhajana Mandali which is not affiliated to Channabasava Yuvaka Sangha. So also

at a few other places, it is said *Bhajan Mandalis* are functioning. These organisations it is asserted are not poised in opposition and hence may be regarded as complimentary to each other. The chief activities of the *Bhajan mandalis* are occasional get-together of their men, group singing of devotional songs and conducting their festivities. The Yuvaka Sangha has on occasions presented memorandums to visiting dignitaries seeking economic and other facilities for the community. The leaders of these voluntary organisations are striving hard to convince their fellow caste-men to be more economical on social occasions such as marriage etc. They too are not suggesting any radical changes in the traditional customs and rituals but are pleading only on economic grounds. Thus marriages should be over within a few hours and the traditional code of each party hosting the other for 3 or 4 dinners is disapproved. Response at Coondapur is said to moderate.

During the post-Independence period, the Government has been their main welfare agency. Even before, the practice of assigning land to the landless was in vogue but it assumed greater importance after 1947. Several among them are recipients of *Darkhast* grants during the past 20 or 25 years. However, their major complaint is that such assigned agricultural lands are almost always situated far away from their settlements and, more than all, need heavy initial expenditure which none of them can afford. Another grievance voiced at almost all the places visited for study is that such grants have not been regularised and that the local landlords influence the officials to the detriment of the Koosa's interest. A few of the Koosas have received governmental assistance for house construction while a few students have been benefited by scholarships. Where residential schools are functioning the Koosas send their children as it

solves the acute problem of poverty also. So also, they are availing of the hostel facilities provided at Taluk headquarters, though only to a little extent. The results of these welfare activities of the Government among the Koosas in particular have not been very impressive. However, there are no other organisations in this area that are striving for the welfare of the Koosa Community.

CONCLUSION

In an effort to raise their social status they are relinquishing their erstwhile name in favour of the term Uppara which bears no stigma of untouchability. They have mostly given up their traditional occupation of servitude under landlords and many of them are now stone workers and masons. Their practice of migrating for work to plantations of Shimoga district is however continuing unchecked. Their response to scholastic-education has not been very impressive mainly because of poverty, inaccessibility of educational institutions in some places of their concentration and their own reluctance to persuade their children. Their family organisation is undergoing change—a transition from matrilocal to patrilocal and from consanguineous to the conjugal—in recent years and as a result, some among them are experiencing psychological conflicts. The restrictions regarding their entry to temples, service of traditional barbers and washermen etc., are however effective in the interior rural tracts even though these have disappeared in towns and larger villages. Their economic conditions are improving but slowly and poverty is their major problem. The elite of the community have realised the need for organised efforts for achieving social and economic uplift, but, are faced with the paucity of leaders and selfless workers within the community.

7. KORAMAS AND KORACHAS

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Koramas and Korachas have been notified as Scheduled Castes according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order 1956 in the districts of Bangalore, Bellary, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore (except Kollegal taluk), Shimoga and Tumkur in Mysore State. In Andhra Pradesh, Koramas are known as Yerukula, in Maharashtra they are called Kaikadis and in the Madras State, they are called Koravas. In the State of Andhra Pradesh they are listed under Scheduled Tribes. In the State of Maharashtra they are a Scheduled Caste in the districts of Akola, Amravati, Bhandara, Buldana, Chanda, Nagpur, Wardha and Yeotmal. In the Coorg district of Mysore State Koramas are listed under Scheduled Tribes. Korachas and Koramas though enumerated separately are one and the same caste and hence they are dealt with together in this note. Nanjundayya in "The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore" (1906, Vol. VII P. 1) observes "In the last two Census Reports of the State, it has been in a way assumed that Korachas and Koramas are two different castes, but there is a strong reason to hold that the names are mere local variations for one and the same caste. The exogamous divisions among them and family names wherever they are found, and the customs such as maternal uncle's right to the first two daughters of his sister at reduced *tera* and the payment of the *tera* amount in easy instalments spread over a number of years are all common to both the branches, who moreover speak the same language."

Mr. E. Thurston in his "Castes and Tribes of Southern India" (Vol. III P. 438, 1909) observes "Korava—members of this nomad tribe, which permeates the length of the Indian peninsula through countries where many languages and dialects are spoken are likely to be known by different names in different localities, and this is the case. They are known as Korava from the extreme South to the north of the north Arcot district where they are called Koracha or Korcha and in the Ceded districts they become Yerukula or Yerakala."

Koramas and Korachas are called by different names viz., Koravanji Makkalu, Yerukulas, Koramasettys etc. On account of their alleged thieving propensity they are also called Kalla (thief) Koracha and Kalla

(thief) Koramaru. Abbe Dubious calls them Kalla Bantaru to mean their predominant profession as a thieving fraternity. Basket making and sooth saying are the principal and traditional occupations of their men and women respectively.

"Korama and Koracha both seem to be derived from the verb "Kuru" meaning to divine or prognosticate and are applied to the caste on account of their professions of fortune telling, which their women practice. Some derive these terms from a word which means a hillman (if of Tamil *Kurunj* a hill country) showing that these people are a wild tribe living in jungles. But the former appears to be the more probable derivation and is in meaning equivalent to the Telugu name of the caste namely "Erukula" which comes from the root "Erugu" to know or divine" (Nanjundayya, 1906, VII, P. 2). The name Koravanji makkalu is derived on account of their claims of descent from Parvathi, who was a Koravanji in the days of Ramayana. Parvathi, the consort of Shiva appeared as Koravanji and foretold the King Dasaratha, who had no issues at the time that he would beget 4 sons the eldest of whom would kill Ravana the demon ruler of Lanka. On the fulfilment of her mission, she created her descendants by presenting them with a bamboo stick and a basket to earn their living. So it is said that they are traditionally fortune tellers and basket makers.

"Mythology apart, they are a wandering tribe found all over the State. They are decidedly of Tamil origin borne out by the language they speak which is common to them irrespective of the place they live in, whether as Yerukulas in the Telugu country, as Koravas in the Tamil tracts, as Koramas and Korachas in the Kannada parts or as Koravis or Kaikaris in the Mahratta country." (Ibid P. 3.)

Though they are said to be a wandering tribe 30 years back, now we find them as peaceful settlers pursuing cultivation and basket making as their principal and subsidiary occupations respectively.

The various divisions or sub-castes found among them are (1) Haggada (rope) Korama (2) Kukke (basket) Korama or Ura (village) Korama, (3) Valagada

KORAMAS AND KORACHAS

shared by all the legal heirs. The wife continues to live in her husband's house as their society is purely patrilineal. Their descent is patrilineal. The divisions into endogamous and exogamous groups have already been discussed above.

V. DWELLINGS, DRESS, FOOD, ORNAMENTS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

Of their housing conditions Thurston observes "The dwellings in which the Koravas live are made with low mud walls and thatched. The wanderers erect a temporary hut called 'gudise' with mats or cocoanut or palmyra palm leaves not more than 4 feet high. It is constructed of crossed bamboos tied together and connected by another bamboo which serves as a ridge, over which they fasten the mats." Such of the Koramas and Korachas as are given financial grants by the Government for the construction of houses live in Mangalore tiled houses. Their houses are not provided with latrines and bath rooms. Mostly the houses consist of one or two rooms. In the two roomed houses one room is used as kitchen and the other is used for sleeping and all other purposes like storing, tying the cattle etc.

The residential houses of Koramas and Korachas are found both in the villages and towns. In towns they invariably have a colony of their own a little away from the town proper. About two to three decades ago the wandering Korachas used to stay outside the villages in temporary huts made of bent bamboos stick in the ground (Iyer L.K.A. 1930, III P. 587). In villages their houses are found adjacent to the houses of other castes like Vokkaligas, Bedas, Kurubas etc. They will have a street of their own in the village. Some of those households which rear pigs live a little away from the village proper. As the Koramas and Korachas enter the houses of the other higher castes they are not prevented from constructing the houses near the residential area of castes like Vokkaligas and Lingayats. They freely mix with others and have access to all the public places like temples, public wells etc.

They live in simple tiled houses and thatched huts having rectangular ground plan. The roofs of the tiled houses or huts have two slopes and the plinth area ranges between 200 Sq. Ft. and 300 Sq. Ft. in the case of tiled houses and in the case of huts it is about 150 sq. ft. The main elements of their residence are a kitchen and a hall-cum-sleeping room. The houses are constructed with mud walls. Dung washed floors are common. The houses are not provided with latrines

and separate bath rooms. They go out to open spaces for answering calls of nature. The roofs are either tiled or thatched depending upon the region and the economic status of the household. In Bangalore and Mysore districts tiled and thatched roofs prevail. There is no separate accommodation provided in their houses for sleeping, kitchen, storage and cattle. The houses generally consist of one or two rooms. The houses are constructed at the ground level without a raised plinth. Doors are fixed only at the entrance. Small windows are fixed to the kitchen walls to facilitate the smoke to go out. Wooden doors are preferred by the economically well off households whereas the poor fix the doors made of bamboos. They use gravelly soil in raising mud walls. Sometimes grass or straw is mixed with mud to build the walls. For a few tiled houses the walls are made of unburnt bricks. The roofings of huts are covered with sugar cane leaves and cocoanut leaves. In two roomed houses the smaller room serves as a kitchen and the bigger one is used for living purposes where almost all the household possessions are also stored. The deities and other objects of worship are placed in niches in the walls of either the kitchen or the hall.

The Koramas pay little attention to beautify or decorate their houses. Neither the doors nor the windows have any carvings or engravings. The outer walls are neither painted nor whitewashed. The upper halves of the inner walls are whitewashed whereas the lower halves are coated with red earth. They sweep their houses daily once and once in a week the floor is dung washed. Garbage and animal refuse are deposited in manure pits by the side of their habitat. The houses are whitewashed on ceremonial occasions like marriage and death. Like the other Hindus they move to the newly built houses after performing house warming ceremony and feeding their castemen. The housewarming ceremony is performed on an auspicious day suggested by the Brahmin priest. In a newly built house they first boil milk on the new hearth till it overflows. *Puja* is offered to the family deity by breaking a cocoanut and burning camphor and incense sticks. A goat or sheep is killed in front of the house and relations and friends are feasted.

Dress

The traditional dress of females consists of a *sari* and a blouse. The males wear knickers, dhoties and shirts. However there is some regional variation in the matter of dress. In the districts of Mysore, Bangalore and Kolar, men use knickers as the lower garment, whereas in the districts of Shimoga, Bellary and Chitra-

durga dhoti is used as the lower garment. It is not uncommon to see younger persons in pyjamas/trousers and bush shirts particularly in the urban areas. Elderly men in the districts of Shimoga, Bellary, Chitradurga and Chikmagalur use a headgear called *Mundasu*. Elderly men among both Koramas and Korachas keep moustaches but the younger generations prefer to shave them off. Young people get hair cropped whereas the older grow tufts. The elderly among women, knot their hair while the younger ones plait their hair. The use of footwear is limited to the elderly men and the well-to-do.

Ornaments

The ornaments worn by males and females are usually made of gold, silver, brass etc. The females have ornaments called *Vali* or *Bendoli* (ear stud) for the ears besides *Bugudi* (ear ornament which is worn on the upper lobe of the ear; silver anklets (*Kalandige*) or silver chains (*Kaluchaimu*) for the ankles; glass bangles or *Kadagas* (wristlet) for the wrists; *Gejjedabu* (waistbelt) or *dabu* for the waist; and *Nattu* or *Besari* (nose ring) for the nose. They have many types of necklaces made of glass, brass or silver. A few of them also wear finger rings made of gold or silver. Some of their elderly men wear silver ornaments called *Mura* (ear ring) in the ears and toe-rings called *Minchu*.

Only married women wear stringed black beads round their necks with a *Tali* or *Mangalya* (Marriage badge). A woman has to remove this string on the death of her husband. Some of the ornaments like *dabu*, *Kadaga* and *Gejje dabu* are losing popularity particularly among the younger generations. However, it has to be said that in spite of their inherent love for ornaments their women possess only a few of them as economically they are very poor. For marriages etc., they actually have to borrow them from others.

Both men and women are fond of getting their arms, chin, cheek, shoulders, chest and hands tattooed, especially women are more fond of it. The women of Kunchige Korachas and Dabbe Koramas are the traditional tattooers. In the district of Chitradurga, Bellary, Mysore and Kolar the women belonging to Killekyatha practise tattooing. Women use flowers on ceremonial and festival occasions.

Food and Drink

Metal and clayware are used for cooking and eating purposes. The eating plates are made of brass or alu-

minium and all the households will have one or two tumblers made of these metals for drinking purposes. Koramas and Korachas are non-vegetarians. They eat mutton, fowl and pork but not beef. They also consume fish and eggs. Their daily menu consists of *Ragi* balls and vegetable curry in the districts of Mysore, Bangalore, Kolar and Hassan and in the districts of Chitradurga and Bellary. *Rotti* (Bread made of Jowar flour) and pulses. Only on festival and ceremonial occasions do they take rice and non-vegetarian food. They use groundnut oil as the medium for cooking. Spices and condiments are used in the preparation of special dishes and non-vegetarian food. They usually have three meals a day but many of them take food according to convenience and not at a fixed hour.

Drinking of country liquor wherever it is available is common. They have a strong craving for it. However with the introduction of prohibition the use of liquor is very much on the decline, being restricted to only the areas where illicitly distilled liquors are available. Women however are generally tee-to-tallers. Chewing of betel leaves and nuts is common among both the males and females. Men usually smoke *beedies* and cigarettes. The use of coffee or tea is getting popular. Men among them go to hotels for coffee or tea. In towns and other urban centres females also visit such hotels.

Household Goods

As the Koramas and Korachas are economically very poor and socially backward they possess a small number of household goods. Their household goods mainly consist of cooking vessels made of brass, aluminium and clay, and materials like mats, beds and baskets. They use mats made of date palm leaves and gunny bags as beds. Most of them possess coarse country made woollen blankets. Tin lamps burning kerosene but not having glass globes are used for lighting. Most of them cannot even afford to have hurricane lanterns. The cultivators among them possess age-old agricultural implements like country plough, pick-axe, crow-bar, spade, cultivator and hoe. They cannot afford to have the improved implements like iron ploughs, Japanese weeders, sprayers etc. In rural parts, none of them seems to possess goods like radio, gramophone and furniture. The use of cosmetics like snow and toilet powder is negligible and confined to the city and town dwellers. However they use toilet soap and soapnut powder while bathing. For cleaning the teeth they use ash, charcoal, brick powder etc. They do not use tooth powder. Soap is used for washing the clothes.

(piper) Korama (4) Pungi (piper) Korama (5) Ettina (Bullock) Korama (6) Kunchige (brush) Korama (7) Sonai Korama and (8) Uppina (salt) Korama. All these divisions are found both among Koramas and Korachas and these divisions are of a functional nature based on various vocations and have now assumed an endogamous character. Uru Koramas or Kukke Koramas are so called because they have settled down in towns and villages pursuing agriculture and basket making as their principal occupations. The women of Kunchige Koramas and Kukke Koramas practice tattooing and fortune telling. Kukke Koramas are also called Dabbe (split bamboos) Koramas as they prepare bamboo baskets and follow other wicker work. Uppu Koramas or Korachas are so called as they were trading in salt on donkeys. Ettina Koramas use bullocks as beasts of burden. The manufacturers of brush which is called *Kunchige* in Kannada are Kunchige Koramaru. Sonai and Pungi Koramas are pipers and snake charmers respectively. Haggada (rope) Koramas prepare coir ropes.

Thurston mentions the following sub-divisions among them viz., (1) Bidar Koravas (2) Kunchu or Kunchil Koravas (3) Ur or village Koravas (4) Pamula Koravas and (5) Koot (dancing) or Kothee (monkey) Kaikaries (1909, III, 453-60). According to Iyer the following are the sub-divisions among them:—

- (1) Bhajantree Koravar . Musicians
- (2) Thappai . Bamboo splitters
- (3) Kaval . Watchmen
- (4) Koonchi . Brush makers
- (5) Koodi ketti . Those who make strings and nets
- (6) Nari . Jackal hunters
- (7) Pacha Kutti . Those who tattoo
- (8) Uppu . Salt carriers
- (9) Koot Kaikaries . Dancers
- (10) Paum . Snake charmers
- (11) Ram . Stone workers
- (12) Sadepati . Jungle people
- (13) Karuve pillai . Those who deal in leaves

With regard to exogamous divisions Thurston writes "As examples of inti peru or exogamous sects, the following, which were given by Uppu Yerukulas, may be cited, Dasari (Vaishnavite medicant), Sukka (Star), Kampa (bush of thorns), Avula (Cow), Thoka (tail),

Kanaga (pongamia glabra), Bandi (Cart), Gajjala (small bel.) Uyyala (Swing,) Ragala (Ragi grain), Pula (flowers), Katari, (dagger,) Ambojala (lotus), (Samudrala), (Sea), Venkatagiri, (a town)" (1909, III P. 451). The same divisions are mentioned by Iyer also.

They are further divided chiefly into four exogamous divisions viz., (a) Satpadi (b) Kavadi (c) Menpadi and (d) Mendragutti. The people of these castes are not aware of the etymological significance of these names. The people of the Satpadi division regard the Kakke plant as sacred and those of Kavadi, the Margosa tree and they set up stones to represent their family deities, underneath these trees. "The meanings of these exogamous divisions are obscure and is said to be connected with the various services performed to the God (Venkataramanaswamy) at the shrine of Tirupati. It is stated that Satpadi are so called because they adorn their God with flowers and jewels, this process in Tamil styled *Satpadi* which is equivalent to *Samarpane* in Sanskrit, Kavadi means a carrying pole and the people of this division are said to have carried their offerings to their God, suspended to a pole at both ends. Menpadi division sing praises of God before the idol; and Mendragutti division offer shoes to the idol.

"Satpadi and Kavadi are said to be the only two proper divisions, the other two Mendragutti and Menpadi being the late immigrants from Bandar country (Krishna district). Intermarriages between Satpadi and Mendragutti or Kavadi Menpadi are not allowed." (Ibid P. 5).

II. AREA WHERE FOUND

Koramas and Korachas are found in the States of Mysore, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Madras. In the State of Mysore, Koramas are found in all the districts of the old Mysore State and in the Bellary district. Koramas are more numerous, in the districts of Bangalore, Tumkur and Chitradurga and in the taluks of Bagepalli in Kolar district, Kadur of Chickmagalur district and Kanakapura of Bangalore district. Korachas are found only in the districts of Bangalore, Bellary, Shimoga, Chickmagalur, Hassan, Chitradurga, Kolar and Tumkur. They are not found in the districts of Mandya and Mysore, though they are notified as Scheduled Caste in these districts also. Korachas are more numerous in the districts of Kolar, Bellary and Chitradurga and in the taluks of Harpanahalli in the Bellary district and Srinivasapur of Kolar district.

III. DEMOGRAPHY

According to the 1961 Census the population figures of Koramas and Korachas in the State are 28,665 comprising 14,469 males and 14,196 females and

15,326 comprising 7,764 males and 7,562 females respectively. Their population figures for the various Censuses from 1911 are as follows. The figures for 1911, 1931 and 1941 do not include the figures for the Bellary district.

Caste	Year	Males	Females	Total
1. (a) Koramas (animists)	1911	3061	3057	6118
(b) Korama (Hindus)	1911	88	77	165
2. (a) Koracha (animists)	1911	7333	7246	14579
(b) Koracha (Hindus)	1911	3086	3040	6126
1. Koramas (animists)	1921	2674	2479	5153
2. (a) Koracha (animists)	1921	2220	2202	4422
(b) Koracha (Hindus)	1921	2653	2580	5233
1. Korama	1931	8694	8430	17124
2. Koracha	1931	6284	5801	12085
1. Koramas	1941	10275	9743	20018
2. Korachas	1941	4888	4514	9402
1. Koramas	1961	14469	14196	28665
2. Korachas	1961	7764	7562	15326

As already stated the Korachas and Koramas go by different names in different States. It may be of interest to give their population as per 1961 Census in each of the neighbouring States :

State	Persons	Males	Females
1. Maharashtra	1946	953	988
2. Madras	78470	39360	39110
3. Andhra Pradesh	128024	65011	63013
4. Kerala	144442	71006	73436

During the 1911 Census the Koramas and Korachas each are counted separately as Hindus and Animists. In the 1931 Census also they are counted separately as Hindus and Tribals. The population of Korachas has shown a decrease between 1911 and 1961 even though the area covered by 1961 enumeration is larger than that for which figures were given in 1911. This decrease is due to various factors. As the Koracha and Korama are considered synonyms, they might

have been enumerated as Koramas who show an abnormal increase of 456.2% during the 1911-1961 period. Again as they were nomads till about last 25 years, there might have been emigration of Korachas to the neighbouring States of Madras and Andhra Pradesh. The population figures for the Koramas and Korachas for 1951 are not available as the figures for each scheduled caste were not compiled then.

IV. FAMILY, CLAN AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

Koramas and Korachas live mostly in simple families the size of which varies between 4 and 6 members. Joint families are found only among cultivators owning sizeable land holdings. The predominance of simple families is attributed to the nature of their occupations like basket making, agricultural labour, coir industry, their temperament and nomadic life to which once they were accustomed. The joint families get split into single families after marriages in the family. However, even after their division many of them continue to live under the same roof which is

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

Both the Koramas and Korachas live mostly in *Kachcha* houses. The cultivators and the well-to-do live in *pucca* mud roofed houses called *Malige*. In towns they live in huts. Their settlements in towns are generally located near slums. They throw away the garbage and animal refuse just by the side of their huts and the manure pits are adjacent to their settlements. They generally take bath once a week and wash their clothes once or twice a week. Their houses and huts are dungwashed once in a week and white-washed once or twice a year.

The common ailments to which they are susceptible are fever, diarrhoea, general debility, stomach disorders etc. There are not diseases and ailments peculiar to the caste. In the past they used to depend entirely on indigenous herbal treatment for their ailments. Often they also used to observe vows to different deities and seek assistance from soothsayers. Though these practices have not totally disappeared during the last one or two decades they have started availing of the facilities provided in the hospitals and dispensaries.

A. Words used by Korachas in the Kodagenahalli village of Madhugiri Taluk of Tumkur District

English	Koracha Equivalent	Tamil	Telugu
(1) Father	Ava	Appan (Tandai)	Appa (Tandri)
(2) Mother	Amma	Amma or Tai	Amma (Thalli)
(3) Elder brother	Anna	Annan	Anna
(4) Younger brother	Tembi	Tambi	Tammudu
(5) Younger sister	Tensi	Tengachchi	Chelle
(6) Wife	Pondu	Pendati (Manavi)	Pendlamu (Bharya)
(7) Husband	Monagam	Kanavan	Mogudu
(8) Son	Moganu	Magan	Koduku
(9) Grandson	Petanu	Peran	Manamadu
(10) Eye	Kann	Kann	Kannu
(11) Mouth	Vai	Vai	Noru
(12) Hand	Kai	Kai	Cheyvi
(13) Leg	Kal	Kal	Kalu
(14) Tongue	Nak	Naakku	Naluka
(15) Tooth	Pellu	Pal	Pallu
(16) House	Udu	Veedu	Illu
(17) Pigs	Pandari	Pandri	Pandi
(18) Fish	Min	Min	Chapa
(19) Dog	Nai	Nai	Kukka
(20) Stone	Kallu	Kal	Rayee
(21) Fruit	Pang	Param	Pandu
(22) Toddy	Kallu	Kallu	Kallu
(23) Rice	Erise	Arise	Biyyamu
(24) Earth	Terra	Terai (Tharai)	Bhumi
(25) Rain	Maga	Mazhai	Vana
(26) Sour	Puli	Pulipu	Pulipu

VII. LANGUAGE

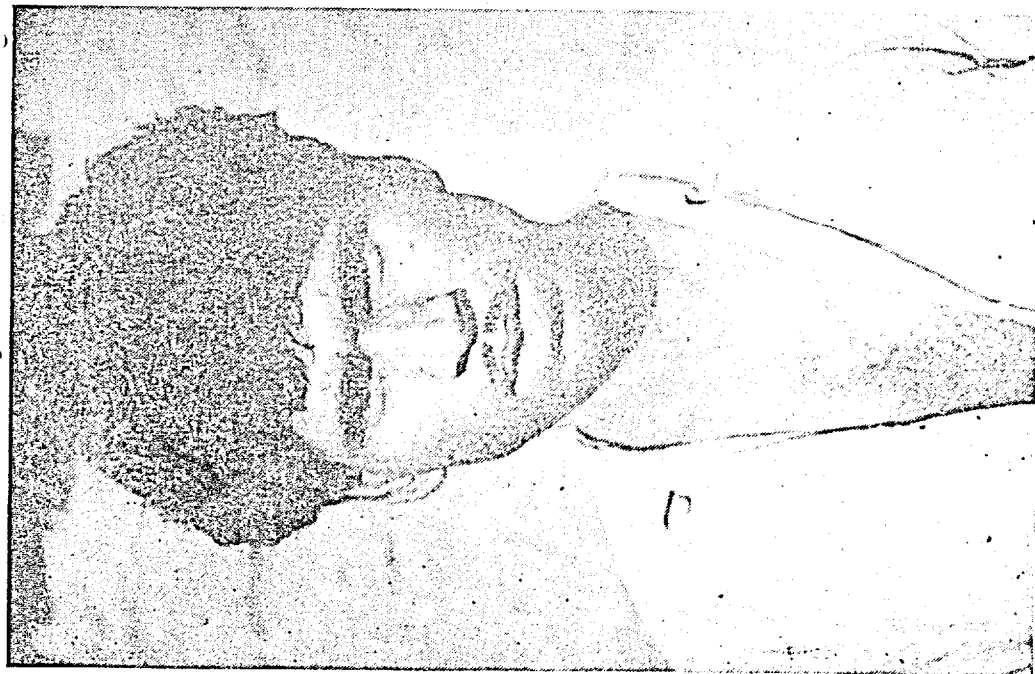
"They speak a language which appears to be a dialect of Tamil or a medley of Tamil, Telugu and Kannada, the first element preponderating. It is not easily intelligible to common people and like all criminal tribes they have a slang of their own which the uninitiated cannot understand. They are said to have, says Mr. Rice, a peculiar gipsy language of their own with a system of signals which enables them to converse with the initiated unobserved." (Ibid P. 3).

With outsiders they speak in Kannada or the prevailing regional language. Their younger children also can understand and speak the regional language. In the districts of Bangalore and Kolar they speak Telugu and Kannada as subsidiary languages. Koramas call their language by their caste name viz., *Korama Bhashe* (language of Koramas) and the Korachas call it *Korcha Bhashe* and in the Andhra Pradesh their language is called *Yerakala* (language of Yerukulas) language. Their languages has no script and hence no literature of its own. During the course of the field survey some of their words are recorded and they are as follows:—

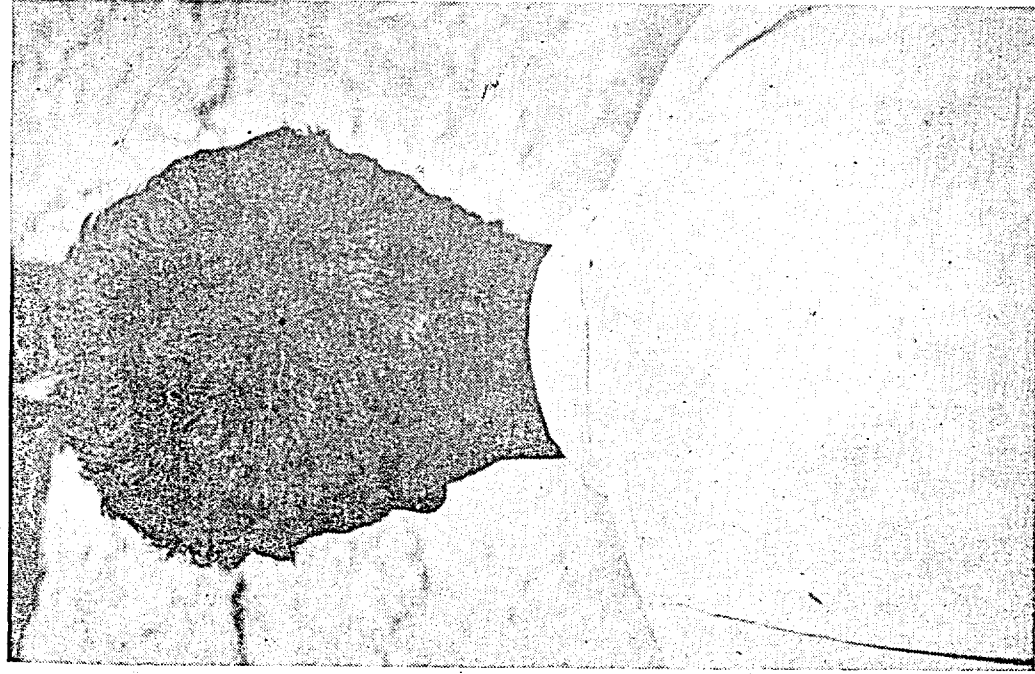
6. KORAMAS



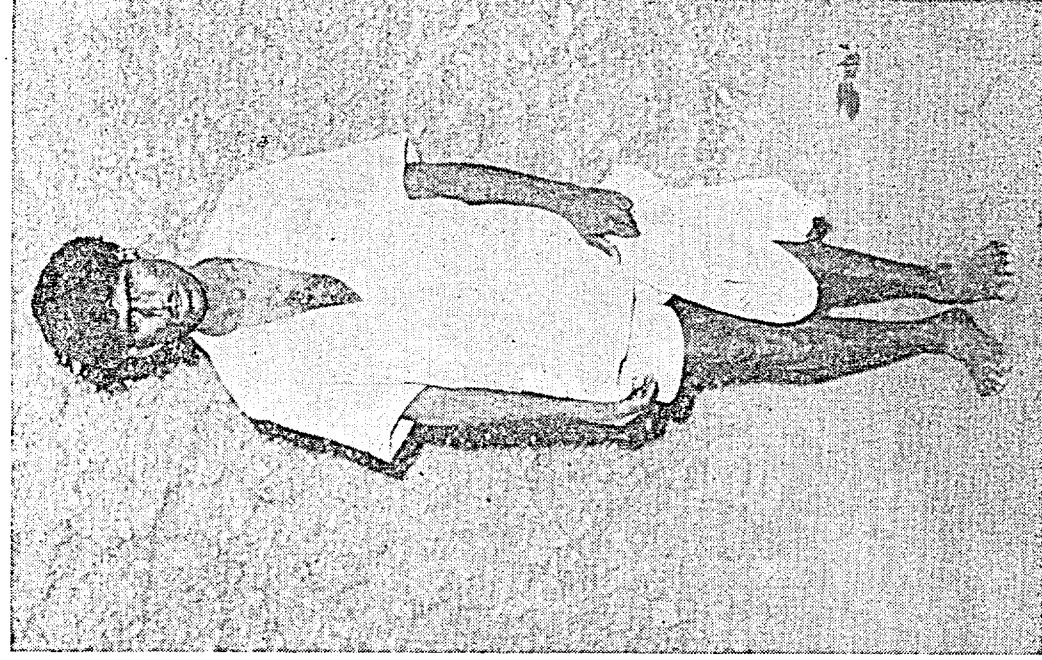
1 (b). Profile



1 (a). Front view of a Korama male



1 (c). As viewed from behind



1 (d). Full size

136 (b)

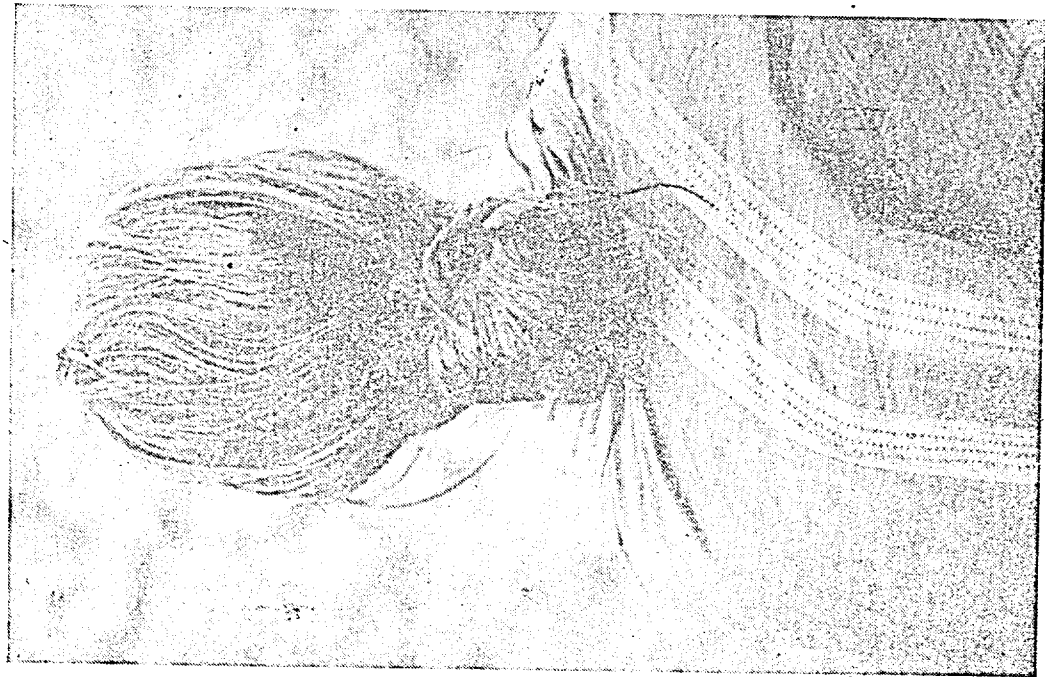


2 (a). Front view of a Female

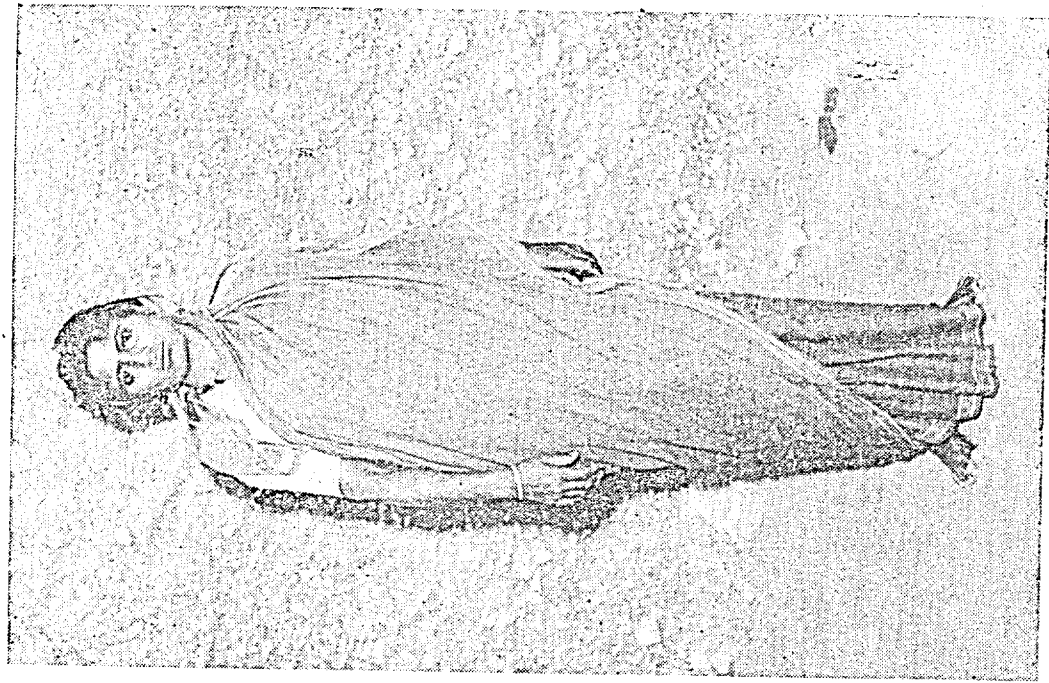


2 (b). Profile

136 (c)

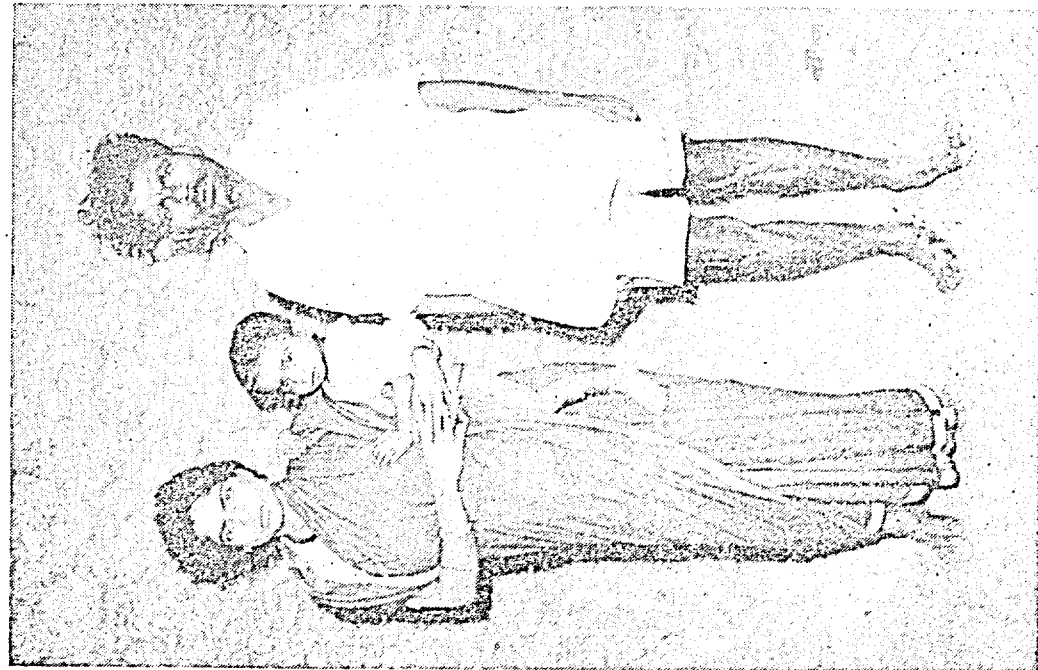


2 (c). As viewed from behind

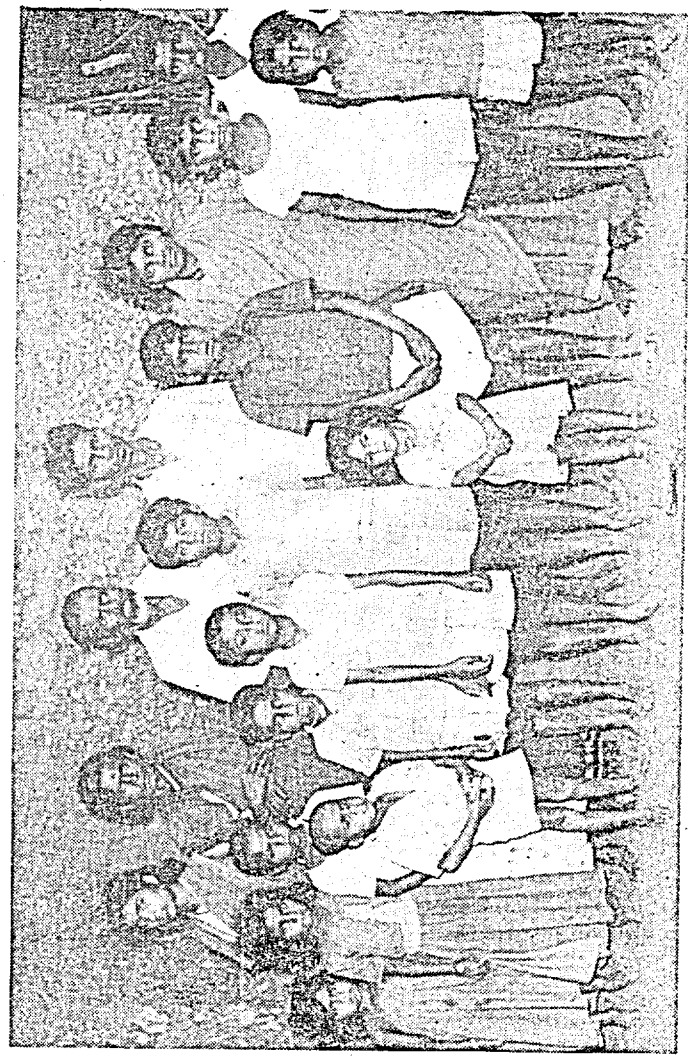


2 (d). Full size

136 (d)



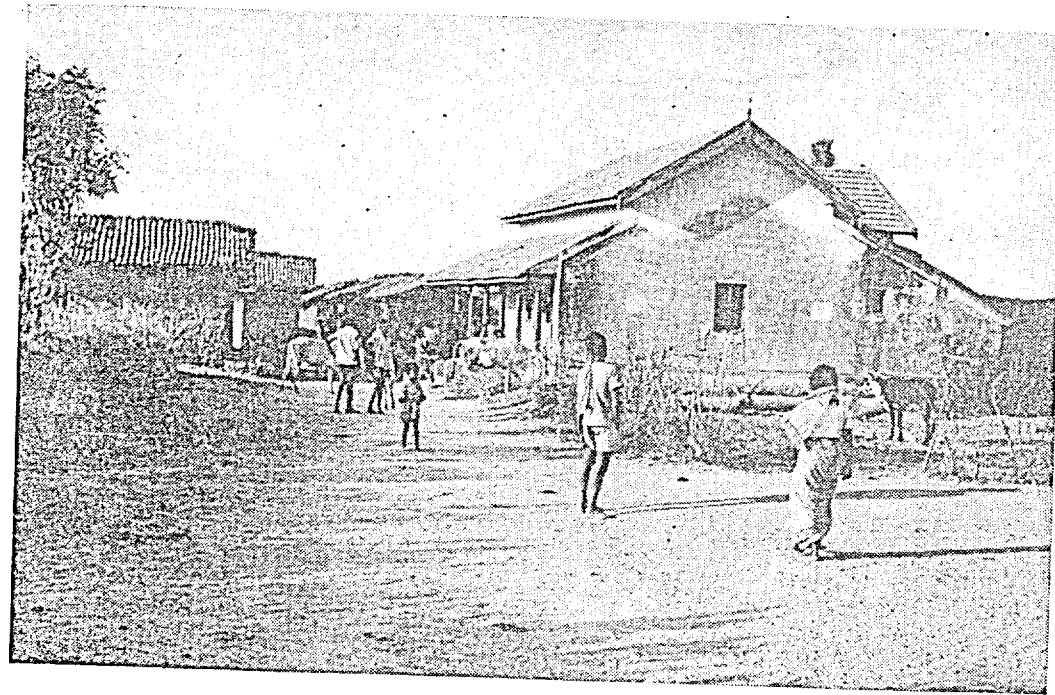
3. Couple with a child



4. A group of males, females and children

136 (e)

136 (f)

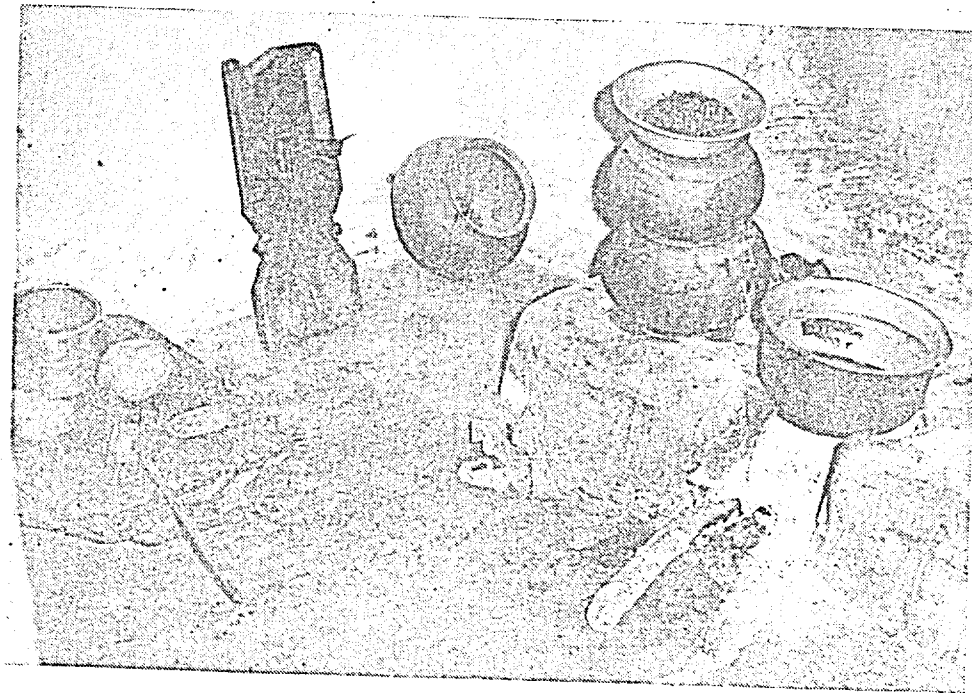


5. View of a street of Koramas

136 (g)



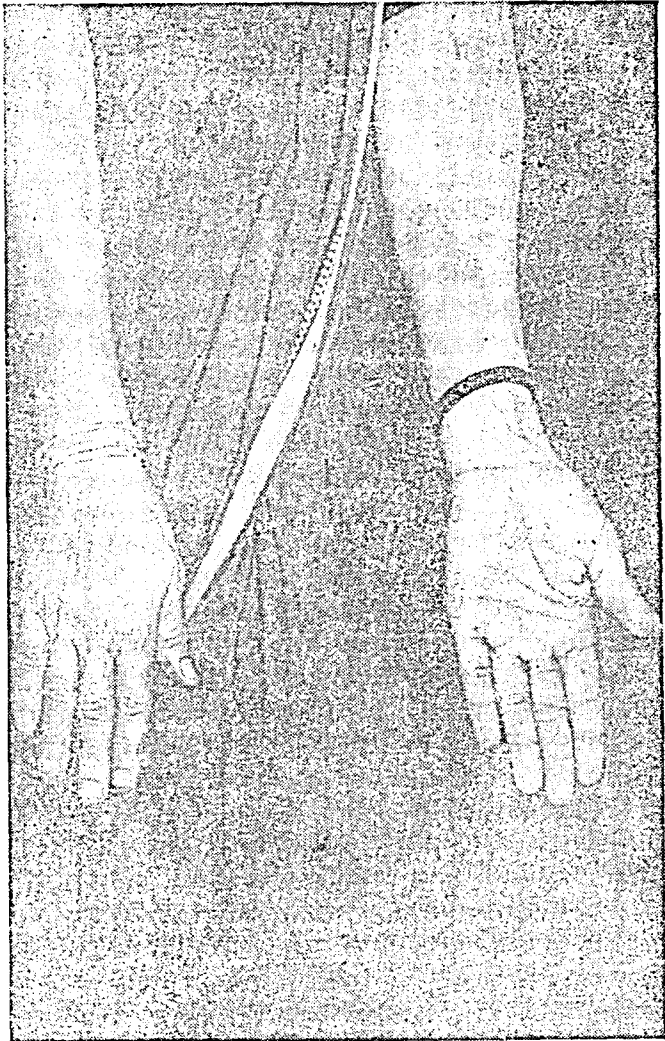
7. Common household utensils



6. An inside view of a kitchen



8. Couple engaged in basket making which is their main traditional occupation



9. Tattoo marks on the hands of a female

B. Words used by Koramas in Hirebidanur of Gauribidanur taluk in Kolar District

English	Korama	English	Korama
(1) Mother	Amma	(16) Earth	Terra
(2) Elder sister	Akka	(17) Tree	Mar
(3) Husband	Maag	(18) Goat	Ad
(4) Son	Magu	(19) House	Udu
(5) Daughter	Magalu	(20) Stone	Kellu
(6) Grandson	Petan	(21) Fruit	Pang
(7) Daughter-in-law	Maru Magal	(22) Rice	Erise
(8) Ear	Shevvu	(23) River	Ar
(9) Wife	Pondu	(24) Tank	Eri
(10) Younger brother	Tembi	(25) Plough	Madaka
(11) Younger sister	Tengai	(26) Leaf	Ela
(12) Mouth	Vai	(27) Fish	Min
(13) Water	Tanni	(28) Pig	Pandri
(14) Rain	Maga	(29) Mountain	Mala
(15) Sour	Pulsa		

Closer study of the language spoken by the Koramas and Korachas reveals that they speak an identical language and the difference is only found in accent and substitution of regional words, for some of their words. In the district of Kolar, their language is mostly influenced by Telugu and in the district of Bangalore it is influenced by both Tamil and Telugu. In other parts their language is influenced more by Kannada.

VIII. EDUCATION AND LITERACY

According to the 1961 Census returns the percentage of literacy among the Koramas is 13.5 whereas the percentage for Korachas is 7.8%. Out of the total population of 28,665 and 15,326 of Koramas and Korachas there are 3981 literates among Koramas and 1183 literates among Korachas. The literacy rates of Koramas and Korachas, when compared with the lite-

racy percentage for the general population of the State which stands at 25.4 is much lower. However, they compare favourably with the literacy rate for the Scheduled Castes as a whole which is 9.02%. Sex-wise the percentages of literacy among Koramas are 24.25 for males and 4.36 for females, and among Korachas the percentages work out to only 13.66 and 1.62 respectively. In the urban areas the literacy for Koramas is 26% and for Korachas it is 11.3%. In the rural areas the percentage of literacy for Koramas and Korachas is 11.20 and 7 respectively. Among Koramas there are 17 persons (15 men & 2 women) holding non-technical degrees: 3 men holding technical diplomas not equal to degree and 3 men holding technical degrees or diplomas equal to degree. There are no graduates among the Korachas and there is only one male having a diploma. A table showing the break-up of population by educational standard as found in 1961 is furnished below:--

Caste	Area	Illiterate		Literate without education standard		Primary or Junior Basic		Matriculates or higher secondary		*Technical diploma not equal to degree		University degree or Post-graduate degree other than Technical Degree		Technical degree or diploma equal to degree or Post-graduate degree	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Korama	Rural	9451	11374	2146	286	145	14	29	3	..	..	..	..	..	..
	Urban	1655	2204	809	251	129	51	84	11	3	..	15	2	3	..
Koracha	Rural	5681	6294	769	78	49	1	8	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
	Urban	1023	1146	172	37	46	5	15	1	1	..	..	..	..	..

*In the case of rural areas the figures under these 2 columns refer to "Matriculates and above".

X. LIFE CYCLE

Birth

Koramas and Korachas, like any other Hindus regard the birth of a child as a divine boom. Still-births, abortions or miscarriages and barrenness are attributed to sins committed in this or the past life. Birth of the first child generally takes place in the parental house of the woman. During the fifth, seventh or ninth month of the pregnancy the mother is taken to her parent's house after performing a ceremony called *Sogula*. At the time she is presented with a saree, a *choli* (blouse) and also served with a sumptuous meal. During her pregnancy she is given ordinary food and she continues to attend to all her normal work at the household as also in the fields. During the pregnancy her husband does not carry a corpse or kill a cobra. They generally prefer the birth of a male child. The delivery takes place in a screened off corner of the residential house. A local *Dai* belonging to their caste generally attends to the delivery. If complications arise or if a *Dai* (untrained midwife) is not available they seek the assistance of a trained midwife. In towns and cities they call a trained midwife from the hospitals and the maternity centres. At times, if the delivery is protracted the woman is taken to a hospital or a maternity centre if such a centre is closeby. They also observe vows and offer special prayers and pujas to the family gods. The midwife or *Dai* cuts the umbilical cord which is buried at the backyard or in an ant-hill. The new-born child is first given castor oil and the suckling starts on the third day. The mother is given nourishing food like ghee, chicken curry and rice after the delivery for a month. The mother and the child are given hot water bath on the third or fifth day. Pollution is observed for 3 days, 5 days, 9 days or 12 days depending upon the practice of the different castes in the region. On expiry of this period food is cooked in new earthenwares as the old are considered polluted. The old earthenwares are thrown away. The mother is not given, butter milk, cold water, vegetables like pumpkin, snake gourd and food-stuffs fried in oil etc., for a month. The period of confinement is generally three months.

The child is given the name on the 5th, 9th or 12th day. Generally the child is named after its ancestors. Their castemen are invited for the naming ceremony and served with sumptuous feast. The maternal or paternal aunts of the child puts the child in the cradle and the women sing songs. Before the child is put into the cradle, the cradle is worshipped by breaking a cocoanut and burning camphor. The common names

for males are Yella, Macha, Madasetty, Rama, Subba, Malla, Honnura, Thimma, Channa, Muniya, Venkata Lakshmiah etc. The common names for females are Gangamma, Gowramma, Kadamma, Yellamma, Rangamma, Sunkamma etc.

"When a child is born after the death of one or more children, a peculiar custom is observed in some places. Soon after she is purified by a bath the mother either really or nominally goes begging to a few houses, to perform a vow previously taken to Venkataramana of Tirupati, or other family deity, while the father follows her with the child in his arms. Out of the money collected, a silver or copper necklace is made and put round the child's neck. The nose is bored and a ring is inserted in the hole, and the child is given a name, to denote that he has been borne for the sake of begging or by begging" (Iyer L. K. A. 1930, Vol. III P. 601). Anyhow in the course of the field study prevalence of this practice either in the past or at present was totally denied by them at two places and the Koramas at Hirebidanur in Gauribidanur taluk admitted the prevalence of this practice even today. In "The Mysore Tribes and Castes" a peculiar custom as relating to Korachas has been reported. It says "The Korachas seem to have traces of the custom called *couvade*, according to which when a wife is delivered of a child, the husband is confined to bed and treated as a delicate patient. The practice seems to be dying out, and exists only in remote parts in the Shimoga district and elsewhere. These people were questioned in Hiriur, Sira, Madhugiri, Kanakanahalli, Mulbagal and Gauribidanur taluks but they were generally unwilling to admit of its existence without a roundabout cross examination. There is a proverb in Tamil, which means that when a Korama woman brings forth a son, the Korama man eats *asafoetida*. Even where the usage has not disappeared it is nominally observed by giving the husband a little of the medicines prepared for the wife." (Iyer L. K. A. 1930, Vol. III P. 601). Here again the enquiries in the course of the field studies do not reveal any such practices among the Koramas or Korachas.

The child is given an oil bath for three months on alternate days. Generally castor oil is used for the purpose. But in some parts of the Chitradurga and Bellary districts cocoanut oil is used. The mother also takes oil bath frequently during her confinement.

Tonsure ceremony is performed for both the sexes before the child completes a year. The ear lobes are pierced on the same day. At times the ceremony is

deferred till the child is about five years of age. The child is usually taken to a sacred place like Nanjangud, Tirupati, Nandi etc., for the ceremony and it is accompanied by a few close relatives. They have no ceremony for marking the day on which the child is given solid food for the first time. On attainment of puberty a girl is considered to be under pollution for 5 or 9 days. For three days, she lives in a separate green hut specially constructed for the purpose. The girl is given bath daily. She may enter the house on the third day when she is purified by the bath and cow's urine is sprinkled over her head. From the third or 5th day she is seated on *Hase* (wooden plank) *arati* (lighted wick) is waved about her and the women folk sing songs. The green hut is destroyed on the 9th day by the maternal uncle who had constructed it.

Bringing up of the child

In the past the children were tutored in the art of lying, stealing and robbery. L.K.A. Iyer reports "They are taught the different methods of stealing and the easiest way of getting into various kinds of houses. One must be entered through the roof, another by a hole in the wall, and by making a hole near the bolt of the door. Before letting himself down from the roof, the Korava must make sure that he does not alight on brass vessels or crockery. He generally sprinkles fine sand in small quantities, so that the noise made thereby may give him an idea of the situation. The methods to be adopted during the day when hawkingwares must be learnt." (Iyer L.K.A. 1930, III, P. 613). They never disclose the names and addresses of

their parents, if caught by the police. To them theft is a sporting method and not a crime as understood by the society. (1930 III, 613) "The Koravas have many varieties of method for the removal of other people's property and of concealing it when stolen. They sometimes use drugs to produce unconsciousness. They have been known to play the part of beggars going down the street after dark calling for night alms, and the unsuspecting housewife to earn merit, helps a poor man and goes out with rice when the thief quickly snatches off her jewel and disappears in darkness" (ibid). In the past they were also employing armed decoity as one of their favourite methods of robbery.

Marriage

The Koramas and Korachas regard the cases of premarital and extra marital relationship with horror and the offender is publicly disgraced and fined or ex-communicated. Extra-marital or premarital relationship of the female with the lower castes is seriously viewed and punished with ex-communication.

Marriages among Koramas and Korachas take place only among the members of the identical endogamous groups. Generally marriages are celebrated after girls attain puberty. There are some stray cases of child marriages also. According to the 1961 Census the statistics about the marital status of their population is as follows:—

Their poor economic conditions have made them to keep away from higher education. Now-a-days we find their children attending the schools in fairly good number. Most of them cannot pursue their studies beyond the primary or middle standards as they are required to assist their parents in their daily chores like basket making, cultivation, rearing cattle etc.

IX. ECONOMIC LIFE

According to the 1961 Census, out of 28,665 persons belonging to the Koramas in the State, 14,361 are workers. Hence the working force constitutes 50% of their total population. There are 8445 workers among Korachas in a total population of 15,326.

Hence the working force among them is 55% which is higher than the percentage of Koramas. The sex-wise breakup of the working force shows that 8780 out of 14,469 males, and 5581 out of 14,196 females are workers, among the Koramas. In other words 60% of the males and 39.3% of the females constitute the working force among them. Again among the Korachas 62% of the males and 47.9% of the female constitute the working force. This shows that sizeable proportion of the population is active at various economic activities like basket making, cultivation, agricultural labour etc. A good number of females assist the males in preparing bamboo baskets and in cultivation. The Industrial Classification of workers by sex is presented below (Source: Census of India, 1961, Mysore Vol. XI Part V-A S.C.T. 1 Part B).

	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
I. KORACHAS :						
A. Workers						
Total workers	4054	3061	764	566	4818	3627
(i) Workers in (1) Cultivation	2209	1297	118	53	2327	1350
(2) Agricultural Labour	388	368	41	31	429	399
(3) Livestock, Mining, quarrying	74	26	28	4	102	30
(4) Household industry	1014	1186	314	398	1328	1584
(5) Manufacturing other than household industry	76	48	66	24	142	72
(6) Construction	23	8	25	6	48	14
(7) Trade & Commerce	49	44	24	15	73	59
(8) Transport, storage etc.	60	2	25	1	85	3
(9) Other Services	161	82	123	34	284	116
(ii) In Special occupations						
(1) Tanning and currying of hides and skins	..	..	1	..	1	..
(2) Scavenging	2	1	5	..	7	1
B. Non-workers	2453	3312	493	623	2946	3935
II. KORAMAS						
A. Workers						
Total workers	7332	4828	1448	753	8780	5581
(i) Workers in (1) Cultivation	3890	2246	107	39	3997	2285
(2) Agricultural labour	617	487	15	12	632	499
(3) Livestock, mining, quarrying	95	32	10	3	105	35
(4) Household industry	2045	1722	600	446	2645	2168
(5) Manufacturing other than household industry	167	110	175	45	342	155
(6) Construction	32	10	45	13	77	23
(7) Trade and Commerce	79	66	177	115	256	221
(8) Transport, storage, etc.	7	..	63	4	70	4
(9) Other Services	400	155	256	76	656	231
(ii) In Special occupations						
(1) Tanning and currying of hides and skins	..	..	3	2	3	2
(2) Scavenging	2	1	5	..	7	1
B. Non-workers	4439	6849	1250	1766	5689	8615

It is seen from the above table that the majority of them are engaged in cultivation and agricultural labour, with quite a substantial number working at household industry viz. basket making. Among them there are both owner cultivators and tenant cultivators. Most of the cultivators have inherited their landed property from ancestors and some of them also have acquired lands, granted to them by Government in recent years. The tenant cultivators usually share the produce with the owners of the lands. In addition to cultivation many of them attend to basket making and agricultural labour as subsidiary occupations. As cultivators, a few of them also rear sheep, pigs, poultry and cattle.

Basket making is their principal household industry and it is also their hereditary occupation. They prepare bamboo baskets of different sizes and shapes. Their work does not require much technical skill or capital. Women and children also work in this industry. About one or two decades back basket making was almost a preserve of this caste and a few other castes like Medars etc. But now-a-days many other castes have also taken to this occupation. The Koramas and Korachas purchase bamboos in nearby towns or obtain them from the forests on the permits issued by the Government. Bamboo baskets are sold in the villages where they reside and also in the neighbouring villages. Their women sell them by hawking. They are also sold for either cash or kind. They find a ready market in the local shandies. At times they have to move to the towns and cities to sell their wares. Some of them residing in towns work as middlemen by purchasing the articles from the village workers and selling them at some profit in the towns and cities. The average daily income of a male worker at this industry ranges between Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2 and a female may earn from Re. 1 to Rs. 1.50. Marketing of the products is indeed a difficult problem as their products do not always have a ready market and so their womenfolk have to trudge over long distances in different villages. The tools for this craft are very few and simple. A sickle and a knife are enough to cut and split the bamboos and the baskets and other bamboo articles are woven and worked by the hands.

They also work for wages in the fields and gardens. Both men and women go in for agricultural labour. The daily wages for a male agricultural labourer range between Re. 1.00 and Rs. 1.50 and for a female between Re. 0.75 and Re. 1.00. A few men also work as attached agricultural labourers on annual basis. Their annual wages range from Rs. 150 to Rs. 200.

In addition to the wages such a labourer is provided with food and clothing. He attends to all types of agricultural work like ploughing, weeding, interculturing, harvesting, thrashing etc.

There has been much occupational mobility among the Koramas and Korachas as the majority of them today are pursuing cultivation and the household industry of basket making is pushed to the second place. Slowly they are getting adapted to changed conditions and they are taking to various occupations like agricultural labour, trade and commerce and other services. Fourteen males and 2 females are returned under scavenging among them in 1961 Census. Now-a-days members belonging to castes like Bhovis and Mochis are working as street sweepers in village panchayats and Municipalities. Likewise the Koramas and Korachas do not have any serious objection to the taking up of this occupation. Such sweepers might have been included under scavenging. Scavenging in the local parlance means removal of night soil and this is not attended to by the above-mentioned castes. Anyhow as in the past their women also move out of the villages and earn some income as tattooers and soothsayers. Their faith and dependence for livelihood on the age old traditional occupation is losing ground and they willingly take up any other occupation. The educated among them seek employment elsewhere. They show much enthusiasm to acquire lands, pursue trade etc. The basket making industry also faces competition from the Medars who are also traditional basket makers. The baskets prepared by the Medars are superior to those prepared by the Koramas and Korachas and so have a better market. Traditionally the Koramas and Korachas were pig rearers. For the nomads pig rearing is still the principal source of income. But those who have settled in villages are fast giving up pig rearing as the villagers have serious objection to it.

The Koramas and Korachas live at subsistence level and they find it difficult to make both the ends meet. Their earnings fall short of even their basic needs like food and clothing. They come under low income group households throughout the State. Those who could save something after meeting their needs, squander away their income on drinking toddy and other intoxicants. A major item of their expenditure is food which takes away about 50% of their total earnings followed by clothing. The other common items of expenditure are social activities like marriages, birth and death ceremonies and expenses on cultivation and on raw materials like bamboos etc.

STATEMENT

	Total		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced		Unspecified status		
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
A. KORAMIAS													
All ages	28,665	14,469	14,196	7,836	6,246	6,007	6,302	561	1,498	53	119	12	31
Age 0-14	12,068	5,959	6,109	5,928	5,956	27	125	..	1	..	1	4	26
15-44	11,901	5,855	6,046	1,870	276	3,813	5,290	131	417	35	59	6	4
45 and above	4,682	2,650	2,032	36	9	2,164	885	430	1,078	18	59	2	1
Age not stated	14	5	9	2	5	3	2	..	2	..	..	..	..
B. KORACHIAS													
All ages	15,326	7,764	7,562	4,149	3,246	3,271	3,518	312	730	32	58	..	10
0-14	6,413	3,236	3,177	3,229	3,090	7	82	..	2	..	..	..	3
15-44	6,376	3,086	3,290	916	141	2,091	2,915	62	181	17	48	..	5
45 and above	2,479	1,441	1,038	3	13	1,173	495	250	519	15	10	..	1
Age not stated	58	1	57	1	2	..	26	..	28	..	..	..	1

KORAMAS AND KORACHAS

During the 1961 Census only 27 males and 125 females in the age-group of 0-14 were found to be married among the Koramas and only 7 males and 82 females were married in the same age-group among the Korachas. This shows that the custom of child marriages is prevalent in the community though not common. Divorces and separations are also found to be not very common among the Koramas as there are only 53 divorced males and 119 divorced females for a population of 28,665. Among the Korachas there are only 32 divorced males and 52 divorced females. Even though widow remarriage is permitted among them, widows seem to be hesitant for remarriage as there are as many as 417 widows in the age-group of 15-44 and 1,078 widows in the age-group of 45 and above, among the Koramas. Among the Korachas there are 181 widows in the age-group 15-44 and 519 in the age-group of 45 and above who have not remarried.

Koramas and Korachas do not marry within the same *Kula* or *bedagu* (clan). In matrimony they have to avoid girls among their agnatic relations and others born in their own group, the affinity to the group being traced through males. Monogamy is generally observed but there is no serious objection against polygamy. Boys and girls are generally married at the ages of 22 and 15 respectively. In the past till about 10 years back pre-puberty marriages were common. The marriages by payment of bride price are in practice. Till about 30 years back the marriages by elopement were also taking place and the marriage ceremonies were not observed on a scale now observed. The marriage payment or bride price varies from place to place ranging from Rs. 10 to Rs. 60. The bride price is to be paid to the girl's father. The bride price is usually fixed at a lower figure if the girl is married to her mother's brother or any other relative.

"It is a binding custom among the Korachas that the first two daughters of a woman must be given on a reduced *thera* to her brother to be married either by himself or to his sons. If he has no sons and does not himself stand in need of the girls for marriage, his right to them is exercised by his getting two-fifths of the *thera* amount payable for each of them at their marriage, but if he takes them, he pays only 12 pagodas each, while the usual *tera* is 20 pagodas" (Iyer L. K. A. 1930 III, P. 591).

Both among the Korachas and Koramas the wife may be older than the husband by years due to their disinclination to forego their right to marry a sister's

daughter, which is generally recognised in the caste. Though there are no barriers imposed by religious or professional considerations they generally contract marriages only with families that are known to one another and that are already so connected. Such of the Koramas and Korachas, who have long given up, vagrant, criminal and predatory habits and have settled in villages and towns will not naturally enter into alliance with their castemen who are still addicted to such habits.

The Koramas and Korachas settled in villages and towns imitate Vokkaliga, Lingayat and other similar castes in their marriage ceremonies.

Consanguineous marriages are common among them. A man can marry his elder sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter. Generally the proposal for marriage comes from the boy's side and usually the grand father or the father takes the initiative and visits the girl's house and negotiates with his counterpart. Now-a-days there are also a few instances where the proposal emanates from the girl's side. Usually, before the formal proposal is made, the girl's parents are informally sounded through friends and relatives in the matter.

The spouse is selected by the parents of the boy. The selection of the girl depends upon the economic and social status of her family. The bride price is settled after the acceptance of the proposal and the marriage expenses are borne by the parents of the boy. The ornaments to be presented to the girl are also settled in advance.

After the settlement of marriage alliance *Veelya Sastra* (betrothal) takes place. For this ceremony on a mutually agreed day, the parents of the boy accompanied by a few relatives, visit the girl's house and present turmeric powder, fruits, a saree, a *choli*, betelnut, betel leaf, a comb etc. The elderly men of the caste and the members of the Caste Panchayat assembled are also served with a sumptuous feast. The *veelya* (a cocoanut, betelnut, betel leaf etc.) is exchanged by the parents of the boy and the girl to signify the confirmation of the marital alliance. They also fix a date for the marriage in consultation with a Brahmin priest.

Monday is considered auspicious to commence the actual marriage ceremony. On the previous Friday, the bridegroom goes to the bride's house and presents her with a few coins, the acceptance of which signifies her consent. They are both then rubbed with

XI. RELIGION

They were classed as animists in the 1901 Census. Owing to their contact with the higher castes and their residence in the vicinities of villages, they have been adoring the village gods and goddesses. But as we go down the scale, the belief in spirits and the practice of offering worship to them are found to assume more and more importance. In the 1931 Census the Koramas and Korachas are classified under two categories viz., Hindus and Tribals. In the 1921 Census all the Koramas are listed under animists. Hence even in the past, no attempt has been made to list them under one definite caste and religion. Anyhow they cannot be regarded as pure animists as their principal God is Venkataramana of Tirupati commonly known among them as Tirupati Thimmappa. Tirupati is their important centre of pilgrimage, which they visit periodically.

Their important female deities are Durgamma, Halagamma, Mathangamma, Satyamma, Madduramma, Yellamma, Sallapuramma etc. Worshipping of spirits such as Muneswara, is very common among them. Sheep and goats are sacrificed to these deities. They do not observe any fasts but observe all Hindu festivals such as Yugadi, Navaratri, Shivaratri, Gauri, Sankranti etc. Saturdays are devoted to the worship of Venkateswara. On that day they take bath and offer *puja* in a nearby Vishnu temple before they take meals. They have belief in sorcery but do not consult soothsayers. The want of faith in soothsaying is quite significant as their women are professional soothsayers. The people of lower orders resort to this primitive oracle called *kani* in Kannada. Even today *Kani* enjoys strong belief among the people in its infallibility. "To consult the Kani has become so deeply... ingrained in the customs of the people that the proverb... *Kani Keli* (ask Kani) is very common among them" (The Indian Antiquary, 1874, Vol. III, P. 214). "The modus operandi may be briefly described thus—A middle aged woman belonging to the Koracha tribe among the Indian gypsies is generally selected as a 'medium'. Her profession is mendicancy varied by tattooing and hawking rangoli or powdered white sandstone, with which washed floors of Hindu houses are decorated. The person (almost invariably a woman) who wishes to divine her own future provides half a local seer (*padli*) or ragi, betelnut and a little incense and crosses the palm of the fortune teller with a small copper... The proceedings commence with the burning of the incense and the consulter taking a handful of ragi touches her eyes with it and mentally utters a prayer for the realisation of her wishes.

The Korachar woman, making her dupe sit before her, shakes an iron ring (*gilike*) about six inches in diameter, to which small bells of the same metal are attached, and which emits a double sound. She then puts her right hand in the ragi, sounding the *gilike* all the time with her right hand and chants in a droning tone, the names of all the Gods and Goddesses, promiscuously strung together from the omnipotent and fierce Shiva, to the blood thirsty Mari. At the end of this incantation—she raises with her thumb and fore-finger a pinch of ragi, and asks her invisible patron or patroness whether good or evil befalls the anxious inquirer. The ragi grains thus raised are placed in the palm of the consulter, and if they are of an odd number such as 5, 7, 9 etc., they are taken as a favourable omen.

"The person consulting the Kani then states in general terms what her grievance is, and asks what steps should be taken to redress it. The *gilike* is again brought into requisition and the chanting is repeated, when the soothsayer takes the right hand of the inquirer, and touches with it either the chin or the ear of the latter, the former indicating the man and the latter indicating a female as the source of her trouble. She then advises the offering of sacrifices and other rites, to propitiate the family God. When the oracle is not satisfactory or the matter in the inquirer's mind is not rightly divined, the process is repeated *ad nauseam* and either her chin or ear is always touched, the former signifying sickness, and the latter health and so on. At the end of Kani the Korachar woman walks away with the offerings to attack fresh victims, whilst... her late dupe returns to her daily avocations with her perturbed spirit, much allayed and with the firm belief that she has secured her future prosperity.

In the attempt to rise above ourselves, we seek though in vain, to dive into the dark future; and the uneducated Hindu with his mind impressed with the ignorance and superstition of countless ages is easily deceived by the plausible tricks of the wicked and artful." (ibid).

The Korachas and Koramas traditionally accept all Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon and perform all the important Hindu festivals. Their *Guru* who belongs to the Vaishnava Caste visits them once in three years. *Kanike* in the form of cash and kind is paid at the time of his visit.

They participate along with the other villagers in the communal feasts in honour of goddesses like Mari, Sunkamma etc. For marriage and some other cere-

monies a few of them employ Brahmin priests for the last 20 years or so. Mostly the ceremonies are performed by the elderly men of the caste. However all of them consult Brahmin priests in selecting the day for marriage, construction of a new house etc.

The Koramas and Korachas have free access to the temples of other caste Hindus. They do not suffer any social disabilities. They follow the Hindu law of inheritance.

XII. INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Koramas and Korachas mostly live at the fringes of the villages or a little away from the towns. Socially they hardly suffer any disability. They receive traditional services from the washerman, barber and the Brahmin priest. They draw water from the wells common to the other Hindus without any restriction. They are not in any way restricted in the village tea-shops and temples like the Adikarnatakas and Adidravidas.

Several other scheduled castes like Adikarnatakas, Adidravidas, Lambanis, Bovis, consider them to be of higher status. At the same time it cannot be considered that the social and economic status of the Koramas and Korachas is high. In towns and some of the villages they are secluded from the main habitat. Their houses are small and consist mainly of thatched huts. They follow an occupation which is not considered high and the income from this is very meagre. They own small land holdings and they are reputed to be not efficient in agricultural operations. All these points if considered together present an image of depressed social status.

XIII. INTRA-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Various sub-castes among the Koramas and Korachas exist in different parts of the State. These sub-castes are more or less of a regional and functional character. But all the sub-castes are not considered equal in ceremonial status and social prestige. *Kukke* Koramas are considered superior to the rest of the sub-castes like *Kunchige Korama* and *Valaguda Korama*. There are restrictions in the connubial relationship among the different sub-castes but there are no restrictions in the commensal relationship. Segmentation anyhow is not based on religion but on occupations. The educated section among them anyhow try to disassociate themselves from the rest of the community and identify with superior castes like Balija Setty.

XIV. LEISURE AND RECREATION

They do not have any special recreational activities exclusively for their own caste. They find little time for recreation and entertainment. Whenever they find some time they while it away in gossip on matters relating mostly to domestic subjects. Whether he is a cultivator or an agricultural labourer, a Korama and Koracha attends to basket making as a secondary occupation. Women also are no exception to this. Soon after their domestic work like cooking and catering, the womenfolk gather together under the shade of a tree in their locality to weave bamboo baskets. The children while they are free from their regular engagements like schooling and cattle grazing etc., are taken to assist the elders in basket making. Children also help in the sale of baskets by hawking. While not at work they play games like hide and seek, *Buguri*, *Kabadi*, *Kho-Kho*, *Maragoti* etc. On festival and ceremonial occasions they visit cinemas in the nearby towns. They regularly visit the popular cattle fairs and car-festivals held in their regions. They also witness the dramas and *Bailatas* (open air plays) enacted in their villages.

XV. ORGANISATION OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The Koramas and Korachas have traditional Caste Panchayats which play important role in regulating the affairs of the community. The office of the head of the Caste Panchayat is hereditary. The eldest son inherits the office on the death of his father. In case he has no male issues the office goes to the eldest brother of the family. In their absence close agnates like brother's son or cousin brother's son inherit the leadership. The head of the caste panchayat is called Setty or Yejamana. His presence is necessary on occasions like marriages. Disputes within the family or among the relatives are settled by the elderly members of the caste. Disputes involving other members out of the family are referred to the Caste Panchayat. Disputes involving persons from different localities are referred to *Katte Mane*, the regional Panchayat. The head of the regional panchayat generally belongs to a Vokkaliga or Balija Caste. The sanction of the Caste Panchayat is necessary for widow remarriages, separations and divorces. The caste panchayat's punishments vary from levying of fines to excommunication.

The Caste Panchayats which once used to exercise powerful control over the communities are now waning in their importance and losing their influence. Now-a-days majority of the cases are not referred to the Caste Panchayat. In most cases the disputes are

turmeric paste and have general feasting separately in their own places. If the parties live in different villages the bridegroom and his party arrive at the village of the bride. The marriage ceremony takes place in the house of the parents of the girl. All the relatives belonging to the parents of the boy and the girl are informed and invited to the marriage. The first day of the marriage is called *Chappara* or *Devaroota*. On this day they raise the marriage pendal with 12 posts arranged in rows. The marriage dais is set up at the centre of this pendal. One of the posts set up at the centre for the marriage dais is called *Muhurtha Kamba* or milk post. *Puja* is offered to the hole dug to receive this post. Washed clothes dipped in turmeric paste are wrapped round it and a packet containing nine kinds of grains is also tied to it. It is prescribed by their custom that the milk post should be brought by the maternal uncle of the girl. The bride and the bridegroom are besmeared with turmeric paste and oil and are bathed in their respective homes. Afterwards their castemen are offered meals which they call *Chappara-doota*. Then the bridegroom's party consisting of close relatives and other invitees leave for the bride's place in bullock carts and they reach the place in the evening. On their arrival near a temple the groom's party accompanied with pipers go in a procession and are accommodated in a separate house set apart for their lodging for the night. The bride and the bridegroom are seated separately and wristlets (*Kankana*) are tied to their wrists. Five married women, 3 belonging to the groom's party and 2 belonging to the bride's party bring water in new pots from the village well or a pond or river after performing *Ganga Pooja* (worship of Goddess water). These pots are deposited in a room or in the pendal on a bed of sand mixed with some staple food grains. A cotton string is tied round these pots and some lamps are lighted which keep on burning during the duration of the marriage ceremonies. After these ceremonies a feast is offered for their castemen and the groom's party.

The *Muhurtha* or the main ceremony takes place, the next day. It begins early in the morning at about 5 A.M. The bathing with *malameeru* takes place. The bride and the groom are seated on *Hase* a wooden plank and they are besmeared with turmeric paste and oil by married women, usually five in number and bathed. They put on new dress and the groom goes to a temple or *Aswathakante* (a peepal tree). In the meanwhile, the various clothes, jewels, ornaments and other articles brought with him are taken to the bride's house. Then the groom is led to the marriage pendal. Both the bride and the groom are conducted to the

marriage booth after *bashinga* (marriage coronet) is tied to their foreheads by their respective maternal uncles. A screen is held between them when the bride and the groom stand facing each other. The priest usually belonging to Brahmin caste chants marriage *mantras*. In many parts of Kolar and Chitradurga District's some elderly men of their own caste conduct the marriage ceremony. The ceremonies of *tali* (marriage-badge) tying, rice (*Akshate*) sprinkling etc., are then conducted. Then the screen held between them is removed, with the hems of their garmens tied together and holding each other by hand the couple walks round the milk post thrice. Then they are seated together when the friends and relatives offer presents to them. Pan-supari (betel leaves and nuts) is distributed to the assembly. Pot searching (*unguradata*) ceremony takes place next. A pot decorated with *Chunam* (lime) lines is filled with red coloured water and coins of silver and copper and a jewel are thrown into it. The bridegroom and the bride are made to search and pick them out. Then the bride and the groom take meals together.

In the evening the bride and the bridegroom dressed in rich clothes, and the girl profusely bedecked with flowers go in a procession to a temple, offer worship and return home. While crossing the threshold, *arati* (lighted wick) is waved about the couple by two women. The groom has to put one rupee coin into the plate whenever *arati* is waved about him.

On the third day called *Neravi* or *Nagoli* the bride and the groom are seated together and *arati* is waved. They go to the temple, offer *puja* and visit a few houses of their castemen and others which invite them to receive *Mollakki*. After this the bride accompanied by some of her relatives leaves with her husband for his place. She stays there for a day or two and is then escorted back to her parent's house by her husband. Consummation generally takes place after three months if the girl has come of age or else 16 days after her attainment of puberty. After the consummation she leaves for her husband's village. The custom of using *mangalya* and *bashinga* by the Koramas and Korachas came into vogue only three or four decades ago when they started copying or imitating the caste Hindus. Even today the nomads among them do not use them. Their use is being copied from other castes like Vokkaligas, Balijas and Kurubas after they began to settle in villages and towns. Instead they were using a string of black beads. Even today in some parts

they are not using *bashinga* and in some parts it is being used only during the last 10 years or so. Widow marriages are permitted and allowed among them. The widow remarriage is called *Kutike* or *Kudike*. It is performed in a simple manner. No elaborate rites are observed. A string of black beads with *tali* (marriage badge) is tied round the neck of the widow, with the consent of her father in the presence of a few elderly men and women of the caste and members of the caste panchayat. In some cases even *tali* or string of blackbeads is not tied, and only pan-supari is exchanged. Widow marriage takes place only late in the evening or at night. However, a remarried widow continues to suffer some social disabilities. She cannot participate in any marriage or religious functions. But her offspring do not inherit any such social disabilities. Widows are generally married to widowers though bachelors are not barred from marrying widows. Generally widows having children avoid a second marriage.

Divorce or separation is allowed and permitted by their customs and traditions. The elders of the caste and the members of the caste panchayat try to settle differences, if any, amicably and only in extreme cases like adultery they accord their permission to divorces. The causes for divorce or separation are adultery on the part of the wife, ill-treatment of the wife by the husband, temperamental incompatibility or being victims to incurable diseases etc. Divorces and separations are recognised only after the sanction of the Caste Panchayat or the *Kattemane* (diocese). Apart from divorce and separation, desertions also occasionally take place among them.

Death

The Koramas and Korachas normally bury their dead though in some parts of the State they cremate the aged, the pregnant and those who suffered from chronic diseases. The corpse is carried on a bier prepared from bamboos. Normally death takes place outside the house as the dying persons is brought out a little before he breathes his last. The dying patient is given a few drops of milk or water. The corpse is bathed and covered with a new white cloth. Usually word is sent through their castemen round to all the relatives. The corpse is carried to the burial ground usually by four persons of their caste. In Bagepally it is reported that either 3 or 5 persons carry the corpse. "The carriers must if possible, be all related to the deceased. The corpse is placed on the ground when half-way to the burial ground and the chief mourner going round it three times from right to left breaks a new pot, standing by the head of the corpse

and throws cooked rice round about the bier. Thereupon the carriers change sides, and take the body straight to the burial ground. They lower the body into the pit, and the chief mourner flings into it the first handful of earth, the others all doing likewise after him. When the grave is closed up the chief mourner goes round the ground with a burning faggot and quenches it at the headside of the grave. The body is buried with the head turned to the South, only the cloth in which the body has been rolled up is buried along with it." (Iyer L.K.A. 1930, Vol. III, P. 609). The eldest son acts as the chief mourner in the case of his father's death and the youngest son in the case of mother's death. In their absence, brother or some other close relative from the male's side acts as the chief mourner. A few copper coins are placed at three places near the grave and it is collected by the Madigas. "The party returns home after washing their faces and legs in a river, well or pond. They have to see a light kept burning at the place where the deceased expired. On the third day the chief mourner, the carriers and other relatives go to the burial ground and offer cooked rice and water to the deceased. Again, on the fifth day, they similarly offer food at the grave. It is believed that the spirit of the deceased is lingering about in the bodies of crows, which should eat this food. This day all the agnates take a bath which removes the pollution" (ibid). For three days the carriers do not attend to any work or move out of the village. On the 11th day or 13th day or any other convenient day within a month after the death a ceremony called *Swargakke Sermadu*, *Peri Divasamu* is performed. Some of their castemen and relatives are invited to dinner and offerings of food are made to a *Kalasa* set up in the name of the deceased. They do not observe *Shradhas* (annual death ceremony) but during the Dasara or on the Mahalaya new-moon day they offer *puja* to the *Kalasa* set up in the names of all the deceased and new clothes are kept near it. They observe pollution till the purification ceremony is performed on the 11th or 13th day. The purification ceremony consists in all the members of the family taking a bath and all the clothes and utensils being washed. The *Setty* or *Yajamana* of the caste sprinkles cow's urine over their persons and all over the house. In some parts pollution is observed for only 5 days. During this period they do not take food with other households or offer *puja* at the temples. They are also not permitted to have a shave. All the female members of the household do not put on *kunkum* (vermilion) mark on their forehead or use flowers for their personal decoration during this period to signify their grief and sorrow. They do not raise any memorials for the deceased.

referred to influential persons in the village. The decision of the Caste Panchayat or such influential leaders is accepted in most of the cases. In case the decision of the Caste Panchayat is not accepted the matter is referred to a higher Panchayat called *Nadu Panchayat*, consisting of the heads of the different caste panchayats. If the decision is not accepted even then, the matter is referred to *Katte Mane*, which is the head of all Caste Panchayats. Here the decision is accepted and carried out.

The reasons for the waning of the influence of Caste Panchayats are manifold. In the fast changing nature of the economic activities and social and political ideologies, the caste plays a subsidiary role in the day-to-day life. With the emergence of a new elite, with new sources of influence, the traditional leaders of the community have ceased to exercise sufficient control over their community.

XVI. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

There is no serious attempt on the part of any organised segment of the community to give a modern stance to the aspirations of the younger generations. The Koramas and Korachas have not formed any associations or *Sabhas* to chalk out the means to improve their social and economic status.

The system of dedicating girls as *Basavis* or *Jogtis* which was widely prevalent in the districts of Shimoga, Chitradurga, Bellary and Chikamagalur has declined considerably during the past three decades. Even now, it is reported that *Jogtis* or *Basavis* can casually be met with in rural parts. Education, growing dislike among the younger generation towards this degrading practice and the legislative measures are the factors which have brought about this change. With the introduction of prohibition consumption of intoxicants is also very much on the decrease. In the past such intoxicants were a must on important occasions like marriages, festivals etc. But the craving for such intoxicants is still there and so at times they entertain themselves by consuming illicit liquors. They are now more or less a settled community. About 60 to 70 years back they were a wandering tribe very much taken to evil habits like thieving. Now-a-days many of them are sending their children to schools. But the student population among girls is insignificant as they are required to assist their mothers in the kitchen.

They do not suffer from any social disabilities. Traditional apathy towards education is fast disappearing. Now the State Government has set up several *Ashram* schools to eradicate the educational backwardness of

the Scheduled Castes and Tribes which was primarily due to lack of educational facilities in the rural areas. Acute poverty and illiteracy have made the parents to understand and appreciate slowly the benefits of education.

Economic deficiency—an important cause for their backwardness, is being slowly eradicated in various ways by the Government. Mostly they live in rural parts as basket makers, cultivators and landless agricultural labourers which occupations do not provide them with full employment and sufficient income. The Government is attempting to improve their economic condition by assigning cultivable lands and providing financial grants and subsidies for purchase of ploughs, bullocks and agricultural implements. Under the housing scheme for depressed classes the Government has provided finance and material to the extent of 50 to 75% for the construction of houses. Anyhow ignorance and illiteracy have come in the way of availing all these benefits. In most cases the villages leaders of other castes are also responsible for their not getting these benefits. Because upliftment of these down-trodden would seriously hamper their standing and they cannot continue to squeeze their labour and dictate terms to their own advantage. In the course of the field survey many such instances were reported by the members of the Scheduled Castes. Apart from this, in some cases the aids received are misused.

XVII. CONCLUSION

The Korachas and Koramas were nomads till about last 30 years back and they were considered as members belonging to the criminal tribes and were brought under Criminal Tribes Act, 1924. They were then forming gangs to commit house breaking, theft of movable property etc. Koramas were the members of the Criminal Tribe in only Shimoga District, whereas the Korachas were the criminal Tribes in all the districts of the old Mysore State and Bellary District. After the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act they seem to have fast given up their nomadic way of life and have begun to settle in villages. According to the information received from the office of Inspector General of Police the tendency among them towards committing crimes is now almost insignificant. As the Korachas became very unpopular and suspects after the introduction of the Criminal Tribes Act, 1924, most of them seem to have called by themselves as Koramas. This fact is supported by the fact that the population of Koramas has increased by three times between 1921 and 1931 and the population of Korachas has not increased even by 20%.

MAHARS

8. MAHARS

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

During the 1961 Census, Mahars have been enumerated, as a Scheduled Caste, in eight States and in the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Ranking amongst the most widespread and numerically important Scheduled Castes, their numbers approximate to eleven lakhs, they constitute roughly 1.6 per cent of India's Scheduled Caste Population. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956, Mahars are a Scheduled Caste in the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur of Mysore State and also in several districts of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Rajasthan and in the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Under the name 'Mahar, Taral or Dhegu Megu' they have been a Scheduled Caste in the districts of Belgaum, Dharwar, Bijapur and North Kanara of Mysore and also, throughout Gujarat State (except in Rajkot Division and the district of Kutch), and in several districts of Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. Throughout Orissa and in certain tracts of Madhya Pradesh and also Maharashtra, "Mahar or Mehra" is a Scheduled Caste while in Rajasthan a Caste called 'Mehar' is Scheduled in certain tracts. Evidently, one cannot expect any homogeneity in such a widespread community. It is likely that each linguistic or territorial group has developed its own customs, manners and tradition. However, everywhere they seem to have been subjugated in the past both economically and socially. Rendering as they did, menial services to Village Communities, they were being treated as untouchables.

This note pertains mainly to Mahars of Mysore State *i.e.*, "Mahars, Taral or Dhegu Megu" of the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara and "Mahars" of the districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur. It is based on a rapid field-study at a few places in the districts of Bidar, Belgaum and North Kanara*.

*In "Census of India, 1961, Volume XI, Mysore, Part-V-A, special Tables for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" Statistical data have been presented separately for Mahars of Hyderabad-Karnataka region and 'Mahar, Taral or Dhegu Megu' of Bombay-Karnatak Region. In this note, however, the two sets of figures have been combined for presentation at suitable places.

Earlier references to Mahars—particularly of those residing in the territorial jurisdiction of the present Mysore State—may be traced to James M. Campbell, who compiled the District Gazetteers of the Bombay Presidency which were published during 1883 and 1884. The name of the community has been spelt as Mhar and in the districts of Belgaum and Bijapur, the term Holia has been treated as its synonym. Campbell distinguishes three linguistic groups in the Mhar Community of Belgaum district and states that while the Kannada speaking and Telugu speaking sections could inter-marry, the Marathi speaking group formed an independent endogamous unit. They have been described as ".....village servants, watchmen, boundary markers, treasure carriers, escorts, removers of dead animals, drummers and bugle and horn blowers. In large villages they guard the village door, keep a muster of all persons entering or leaving and after the door is locked take the keys to the headman. They also guard the stack-yard during harvest-time, attend to travellers in the name of the village, letting them know where they can buy food, and supplying them with grass and firewood..... Besides working as village servants, they are husbandmen, labourers and weavers of coarse cloth....." (Campbell, XXI 1884, P-193). Though Mahar and Holia have been treated as synonymous in both Belgaum and Bijapur there is no reference either to Tarals or Dhegu Megu. Campbell (XV Part—1, 1883) mentions of Mhars as being called Hulsavars and Parvars in North Kanara. Their homespeech being Konkani, 'they could speak Kanarese'. About their occupation, he states, "They gather the skins and horns of dead animals; plait bamboo mats and baskets; clean towns and villages; and play kettle-drums at Bhand and car festivals. The hangman belongs to this caste." (P-379). Here again nothing has been said about "Tarals or Dhegu Megu".

In his note on Mhars of Kolhapur, the same author (Campbell, XXIV, 1884) remarks that, "of the many divisions into which Mhars say they are divided, thirteen are represented in Kolhapur. The thirteen are Andvon or Virgin born, Beles or broom, basket and mat makers, Jhades or sweepers, Ghadshis or musicians, Ghat kamblis, Gondwans or beggars, Hedshis, Kabules, Sankamblis, and Saladis. The members of these divisions neither eat together nor

intermarry. Except those living in the villages bordering on the Kanarese country who speak Kanarese, most Mahars speak incorrect and oddly pronounced Marathi both at home and abroad". Further, they have been described as village servants, street sweepers and removers of dead cattle, a few amongst them being husbandmen and a few others, brick-layers. Commenting on their religion Campbell observes "..... (they) have also teachers or *gurus* of their own caste. The head of their teachers is called Dheguji, Meghuji or Cloud of Clouds. There are three Cloud of Clouds The jurisdiction of the Kolhapur Cloudy Highness passes as far South as the Tungabhadra..... His office is hereditary. The Dheguji Meghujis are much respected: they eschew beef and do not allow other Mahars to touch their food". (P 112 ff). It is very likely that the title "Dheguji Meghuji", in due course, came to be appropriated by all the teachers under him who together formed an independent endogamous unit bearing an eponymous name (*viz.*, Dhegu Meghu) and claiming superior status in the Mhar Community. In the Kolhapur Gazetteer too, there are no references to Tarals.

According to Laird and Macgregor (1912, VII Part I, P-287) "Mahars or Mhars" are "a tribe or more properly speaking, an assembly of tribal units, found throughout the Marathi speaking area of the (Bombay) Presidency, including the coast portion of North Kanara District. The term includes over fifty tribal fragments that do not intermarry and in reality, like the word Koli, connotes more a status than a tribe, being the broken residue of many former waves of Aryan and post-Aryan invaders..... Mahars are hereditary village servants and are considered authorities in all boundary matters. Most of them enjoy a small Government payment, partly in cash and partly in land. The chief source of their income is yearly allowances or *baluta* given by the villagers. They have fifty-three endogamous divisions *viz.*,

1. Abne.
2. Andvan or Andhon.
3. Ananthkulya.
4. Auta Kamble.
5. Balhi.
6. Balkamble.
7. Barke.
8. Bavan or Bavane.
9. Bavcha.
10. Bavise.
11. Bel, Bele or Belia.
12. Ben.
13. Bole.
14. Bunkar.

15. Chelkar.
16. Daule.
17. Dhed.
18. Dharmik.
19. Dom or Domb.
20. Gardi.
21. Gavasai or Gavase.
22. Ghadshi.
23. Ghatkamble.
24. Godvan or Gondvan.
25. Gopal.
26. Hedshi.
27. Holar or Huvale.
28. Jhade.
29. Jogti.
30. Junnare.
31. Kabule.
32. Kadvan, Kudvan or Kadu.
33. Kamble.
34. Kasare.
35. Kharse.
36. Kochare, Khosare or Kosare.
37. Ladvan or Ladhan.
38. Math Kamble.
39. Murli.
40. Nirale.
41. Pan or Panya.
42. Pradhan.
43. Pular.
44. Rati.
45. Saladi or Salade.
46. Silvan.
47. Sirsalkar.
48. Soma or Soma Vanshi.
49. Som Kamble.
50. Son Kamble.
51. Sonai Kamble.
52. Sutad, and
53. Tulvan.

Of the above divisions the Soma Vanshis, who claim descent from Soma or Moon, are the most numerous and the social superiors of the rest." Here again, reference to Tarals or Dhegu Megu is conspicuously absent. In his elaborate notes on Mahars, Enthoven (1922, II PP. 401—418) repeats verbatim the sentences of Laird and Macgregor, quoted above, and adds information about synonyms, giving the following 15 names as synonymous with Mahars :

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. Antyaja | 6. Dhed | 11. Mirasi |
| 2. Atishudra | 7. Domb | 12. Parvari |
| 3. Bhumi Putra or | 8. Hulsava | 13. Taral |
| Dharnicheput | 9. Kathivale | 14. Thorlegharache |
| 4. Bhuyal | 10. Mhetre | 15. Veskar |
| 5. Chokhamela | | |

These two reports on Mahars (*viz.*, Laird and Macgregor, and Enthoven), it is needless to emphasise, cover the Mahars spread over a vast territory which, in former days, formed the Bombay Presidency. Only a part of it has now come to be included in Mysore State and naturally, one cannot expect to find here the representatives of all or even most of the 53 endogamous divisions mentioned above. Similarly, the fifteen synonyms may not be in vogue in the Bombay—Karnatak region of the State. Enthoven, further mentions that the synonym Hulsava 'is peculiar to Kanara' and this fact has been borne out by the present field study as well.

The field study has revealed that in the narrow belt, running all along the northern borders of the Mysore State (cutting through the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Gulbarga and Bidar; and also North Kanara which is bounded on the North-West by Goa) where both Kannada and Marathi are equally in vogue, Mahar is reckoned by the people as the Marathi equivalent for Holar or Holey and both the terms are used interchangeably according to context. Thus, a person who reports himself as a 'Mahar' when questioned in Marathi, simultaneously claims to be a Holar or Holey in answer to a query in Kannada and hastens to explain that the two terms are synonymous. This border area between Mysore and Maharashtra may very well be imagined as a continuum in space, in which, as one moves from South to North, the term Holey or Holar gradually gives way to Mahar. Regardless of State boundary limits and differences in mother tongue intermarriages, it could be ascertained, are very common (in this transition zone) thus fusing together the Mahars of Maharashtra and Holers of Karnataka. The Mahars of Nippani Town and Umarani Village, Chikodi Taluk, Belgaum District, reported Holar as the term by which they are known in Kannada. Those of Bhalki, Talavada (K) and Chidri of Bidar District also emphasised that while they are known as Mahars in Marathi, they are called Holers in Kannada and Dhed in Hindusthani or colloquial Urdu. In Telugu language, it was reported, they are called Malollu (plural of Mala). In former days (2 decades ago), it is said, they had amidst them a separate endogamous group called *Karedaradavaru* (so called because of their custom of wearing a black thread around their necks) and the informants tried to identify them with the Dhegu Megu. However, such a distinction is now extinct and the Mahars constitute one endogamous unit irrespective of their mother tongues (in border villages) and the names by which they are known in different languages.

The informants at Chidri, Bhalki and Talavada (K) further reported that in villages some among them—depending on the functions they performed—were known by different names, such as *Bhutalya*, *Agashya* (*Veskar* in Marathi), *Mehtrayya* or *Mehtri*, *Potaraja* etc.,. The Bhutalya had to kill the sacrificial he-buffalo during the periodical worship of Lakshmi in the village and, in the dead of that night dressed only in leaves and smeared with blood he had to circumambulate the *gaontana* (inhabited area of the village) thrice, to propitiate the village Goddess and protect the village. (The descendants of such a functionary are even now called Bhutalya; in certain remote villages this one time popular custom of sacrifice is alleged to be still in vogue). Agashya or Veskar the gate-keeper or watchman at the main entrance received *rotti* (unleavened cakes) and cooked food from every household in the village in lieu of his services. At many places it was his daily duty to supply a few *Tumri* leaves (used for rolling beedi or cigar) to every household in the village. This function (of watchman) it is said, was being shared amongst all the Mahar households, each one serving for a specified period by rotation. At Talavada (K) the Mahars, true to their tradition, are even to this day discharging the functions of Agashya and in spite of the fact that the *Tumri* leaves they supply are no longer used for making beedies at home (leaves are now used for scrubbing the cooking pots and vessels) such leaves are gathered in shrub jungles near Khanapur—a village 4 miles away—and supplied to the households during the rounds when he collects the food to which he is entitled. Mehtri or Mehtrayya refers to their own headman at village level who also acts as a beadle or minisrnat (similar to *Mata pathi* among the Lingayats). Potaraja is the one dedicated to the service of Goddess Lakshmi (or any other) and he deems it his duty to beg on all New moon and Full moon days. Such functional differences, it is claimed, have not resulted in the formation of subcastes. For, at Talavada, the Mahars are grouped into four lineages which eat together and also may intermarry. One of the lineage groups is called Mehtrayya, another is called Tikarenavar, (they performed, in the past, the functions of Bhutalya), while the other two are known as Chattenavar and Sayudunavar respectively. Households of all these four groups have been performing by rotation the functions of Agashya.

In Ankola of North Kanara District, it was reported that while they were being referred to as Mahars in Konkani (by the Konkani speakers), the Kannada-speaking people called them Hulsavar. Those at Baad in Karwar Taluk indicated Holder also as a

synonym for Mahar. It may be pointed out here that the Mahars of North Kanara speak Konkani at home and constitute an independent endogamous unit distinct from the Kannada speaking Holers of the same area.

In the Hyderabad Karnatak Region, Mahars were reckoned as a Depressed Class during the 1921 and 1931 Censuses and ever since 1936, they have been a Scheduled Caste in the region. The 1931 Census (Gulam Ahmed Khan XXIII, 1933) considers them as 'Adi-Hindus' by religion and groups Mahars with Dhers and Mala. (However, the population figures have been given separately.) In the Bombay-Karnatak Region too, they were regarded as 'Depressed Class' during the 1921 Census and ever since 1936 when the 'Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order 1936' was issued—they have been a scheduled caste. For purposes of presenting statistical data they have been treated separately even during the 1941 Census (of Bombay Province).

The etymological significance of 'Mahar' is not known to the members of the caste. All that they seem to know is that it is the name of their caste and that they are being called by this name by others from times immemorial. Enthoven (1922, II) inviting reference to Bombay Gazetteer, volume XVII P. 172, writes that "according to a Hindu tradition, Mahars were originally night rovers (*nishacharas*) whom the god Brahma turned to men lest they should eat his whole creation". Another tradition regarding the origin of the Mahars—reported by Enthoven and based on Bombay Gazetteer Vol-XVIII Part-I—"relates that, once, when Parvathi was bathing, her touch turned some drops of blood on a bel leaf into a handsome babe. She took the child home and showed him to Mahadev, who named him Mahamuni. One day, while still young, the child crawled out of the house and, seeing a dead cow, began to eat it. Mahadev was horrified and cursed the child, saying that he would live outside villages, that his food would be carcasses, that nobody would have anything to do with him, would look at him, or would allow his shadow to fall on anything pure. Parvathi, who took great interest in her child, begged her lord to have pity on him, and Shiva agreed that people would employ him to supply mourners with wood and dried cowdung cakes, to burn the dead. As the child's appetite was so great, he turned his name into Mahahari or the great eater" (P403). Such a myth, on the one hand provides a rationale for the caste-Hindu to treat the Mahar as the lowest of the low, and on the other hand the rationale for Mahars themselves to

accept as divine dispensation the position accorded to them by Hindu Society. Enthoven also states that "According to others (*traditions*), it (*the term Mahar*) is derived through Prakrit from the Sanskrit word *Mritahari*, which is given as the name of the lowest caste, in the Markandeya Puran (Chapter 35, Verse 36). In Verse 28 of the same Puran they are also called *Mritaharins*. This name they are said to have earned by their occupation of removing carcasses of dead animals." (P410). Another common belief about their origin reckons them as having been born from the left eye of Soma the moon and hence many claim themselves as *Somavamshis* i.e., of the Soma race. In Chidri, the informants stated that the Pandavas too were of *Somavamsha*. During the field study, however, no myths or legends regarding the origin of the caste were narrated by any of the informants.

No authentic information seems to be available regarding either the history of the Mahar Community or its migrations in the days of yore. John Wilson (Aboriginal Tribes of the Bombay Presidency P23) observes that 'Maharashtra'—the Maratha country—derives its name from Mahars or Parvaris. On the analogy that 'Gurjarashtra' means the country of Gurjars it is thought Maharashtra or Maharashtra means the country of the Mahars. Further, he states that "The Mahars always represent themselves as the remains of the original owners of the soil on which they dwell. They are to this day the oracles of the villages in all boundary disputes. From them are chosen the lowest officers of the Balutadar associations, or burgh corporation, so general in the west of India...". However, this contention has been repudiated by Campbell who remarks, "But though the Mahars are a large and important class in the Marathi-speaking country their depressed state makes it unlikely that the country should have been called after them. One derivation, which has the approval of Prof. Bhandarkar, remains, that Maharashtra is the sanskritised form of *Maharattha* that is, the country of the *Maharathis* that is, the Great Rattis, a tribe which under the name Ratta or Ratthis and its sanskrit form *Rashtrakas* or *Rashtrikas*, from very early times have at intervals ruled in the Bombay Deccan—Bombay Karnataka" (Campbell 1884, XXIV P-81).

II. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TRENDS

As already pointed out the total population of Mahars all over India (that is, in the Census tracts

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where they have been reckoned as Scheduled Caste) is about eleven lakhs. True to expectations, the bulk of their population—about 70 per cent—has been returned from Maharashtra State. A considerable proportion of them, about 19 per cent, are in Madhya Pradesh. The contribution from Mysore State to their All India total is only about 5 per cent.

In Mysore, during the 1961 Census they have been enumerated as 'Mahars' in the Hyderabad Karnatak region and as "Mahars, Taral or Dhegu Megu" in the Bombay Karnatak region. Together, their population comes to 55,618, which it is seen incidentally, accounts for 1.46 per cent of the State's Scheduled Castes' population. The "Appendix to Table SCT—1" presented in "Census of India 1961 Volume XI—Mysore" Part V-A" gives data on "industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex" for 'each synonym or generic name' of the Scheduled Caste included in the President's Order.

TABLE 1: Districtwise Population of Mahars
(Source: Census of India, 1961, Vol. XI—Mysore Part—V-A)

Region	NAME OF THE District	TOTAL			RURAL			URBAN		
		Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
BOMBAY—KARNATAK	Belgaum	27016	14071	12945	24429	12850	11579	2587	1221	1366
	Bijapur	420	223	197	407	214	193	13	9	4
	Dharwar	667	300	367	300	124	176	367	176	191
	North Kanara	1278	665	613	1227	636	591	51	29	22
HYDERABAD—KARNATAK	Bidar	25207	13996	11211	24218	13554	10664	989	442	547
	Gulbarga	919	365	554	500	234	266	419	131	288
	Raichur	111	27	84	87	22	65	24	5	19
MYSORE STATE		55618	29647	25971	51168	27634	23534	4450	2013	2437

Belgaum and Bidar districts, respectively, account for 48.57 per cent and 45.32 per cent of the total Mahar population, while North Kanara, which contributes only 2.3 per cent to the total occupies the third-rank. The districts of Dharwar and Raichur are interior, being relatively far away from the boundaries of Maharashtra and the influence of Marathi language is also feeble. Though one or two taluks of Bijapur and Gulbarga adjoin Maharashtra territory, the borders are not very lengthy. Therefore, in these tracts, a lesser percentage of Mahars are found. Talukwise (rural) population figures further

strengthen the view that as one moves farther South from the borders of Maharashtra (or the area where influence of Marathi is strong) lesser and lesser number of Mahars are encountered. In the taluks of Khanapur, Belgaum, Hukkeri, Chikodi and Athani of Belgaum district, their numbers in rural areas are: 1,309; 4,563; 1,479; 14,115; and 2,021 respectively while in the interior Taluks such as Ramadurg, Parasgad etc., their numbers are insignificant. In Bidar district, they have been returned from all the Taluks, their main centres however, being Bhalki (11,257) and Aurad (5,844).

It may be observed that 52.82 per cent of the Mahars are in the Bombay Karnatak region, the rest being in the Hyderabad—Karnatak region. District-wise break up within the respective regions indicates Belgaum (having 91.95 per cent of their population in Bombay—Karnatak region) and Bidar (having 96.07 per cent of their population in Hyderabad Karnataka region) as their chief centres of concentration. The following table presents the distribution of Mahars (including Taral or Dhegu Megu) by districts, with rural—urban break-up.

The above table further reveals that 92.54 per cent of the Mahars dwell in rural areas. As, according to the 1961 Census, 83.7 per cent of the State's Scheduled Castes population is rural, it may be inferred that the Mahars are predominantly rural. In Bidar district, where there is a high concentration of Mahars, only 3.9 per cent is urban while in Belgaum—another centre of concentration—the urban component is as high as 9.58 per cent. Districtwise, it may be observed that the urban component (in the Mahar's population of that district), is highest, (being 55 per cent) in Dharwar. Gulbarga, with 45.6 per cent, ranks second. It is lowest in Bijapur district (being only 3.09 per cent). Considering the urban population of Mahars as such, it is evident, that more than one half of it (58.1 per cent) is found in Belgaum district (which had 15 towns within its jurisdiction during 1961), while another 22.2 per cent is in Bidar (which had only 5 towns). Bijapur district with only 13 Mahars in its urban areas contributes less than 0.3 per cent to the urban total.

The sex ratio, as per the 1961 Census, among Mahars which works out to 876 only, is very much

lower than the average sex ratio (965) for the Scheduled Caste population of the State and also as compared to 959 for the total population of the State. In four out of the seven districts, males are preponderant while in the other three districts of Dharwar, Gulbarga and Raichur (which anyway, have a lesser proportion of Mahar's population in them), the females outnumber the males. Inter-district seasonal movement of men perhaps accounts for such a disparity in these three districts. The rural-urban dichotomy shows that while in the rural areas the sex ratio is so low as 852, it is 1,211 per thousand males in the urban areas. This appears to be in sharp contrast to the norm, for, when the Scheduled Caste population is considered, the sex ratios in rural and urban areas are seen to be 969 and 944 respectively. Similarly, for the State population, the sex ratio in the rural areas is 973 and that in the urban areas, 913.

The following table, based on 1961 Census data, shows the distribution of Mahar population by sex and broad age-groups:

TABLE 2: Population by sex and broad age-groups

SEX		AGE-GROUPS				
		0—14	15—44	45—	Age not stated	All ages
MALE	Numbers	12,053	12,794	4,780	20	29,647
	Percentage	40.66	43.15	16.12	0.07	100.00
FEMALE	Numbers	10,374	11,656	3,930	11	25,971
	Percentage	39.94	44.89	15.13	0.04	100.00
PERSONS	Numbers	22,427	24,450	8,710	31	55,618
	Percentage	40.32	43.96	15.66	0.06	100.00

In all these age-groups males are more numerous. The differences noticed between the sexes regarding their age-group compositions are not very marked. The age-group composition position amongst the Mahars reflects the general picture presented by the total Scheduled Caste population of the State which is composed of 42.05 per cent below 14; 42.69 per cent in the 15—44 age-group; 15.31 per cent in 45 and above age-group and 0.04 per cent in the 'age not stated' group.

Comparable population figures are not available for previous censuses. The 1931 Census of the ex-Hyderabad State (Gulam Ahmed Khan XXIII, 1933) reports 5,29,364 Mahars being found in the State. However, districtwise breakup is not available and it

is not possible to have any idea regarding their numbers in the districts that were transferred to Mysore State in 1956 as a consequence of the re-organisation of States. According to "Caste Tables—Bombay Province based on 1941 Census"—a booklet published by the Government of Bombay in 1942—the population of Mahars in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara stood as follows :—

	Persons	Males	Females
Belgaum	23,727	11,969	11,758
Bijapur	542	257	285
Dharwar	2,551	1,285	1,266
North Kanara	440	250	190

A broad comparison with the 1961 Census data shows that the Mahar community has gained in the districts of Belgaum and North Kanara. Dharwar which returned only 667 Mahars in 1961 appears to have lost heavily. In view of the fact that several jurisdictional changes have occurred during the past two decades and also, that the terms Holers and Mahars are used interchangeably—both being Scheduled Castes in the Census tracts under reference—in the areas where both Kannada and Marathi are (or were) in vogue, a proper assessment regarding the growth or decay of Mahar population cannot be attempted.

Mahars, who have been for generations living in settled villages and towns are to be found in the Coastal, the Northern Malnad and the Northern Maidan regions of the State. They have been mainly dependent on village communities—being their menial servants—for their livelihood. In view of the geographical spread of the community over a vast area, the physical aspects can only be mentioned in respect of the districts with a high concentration of the community. Belgaum district, situated in the north western border of the State, may be divided into four parts: the western fringe and the tract of lands that runs west to the Sahyadris, and the three belts of the eastern plain that, running East and West are drained by the Malaprabha in the South, by the Ghataprabha in the centre and by the Krishna in North. Thickly covered with ranges of hills, the district is rich in forest and mineral wealth. The Southwest monsoon is heavy in the western fringe while it is moderate in the eastern portions where showers are received during the Northeast or Madras Monsoons as well, in the October and November. The climate is healthy and even during summer, the nights are cool. Paddy, jowar, bajra, wheat, ragi and pulses are the important food crops, some of the cash crops being tobacco, sugarcane, groundnut and cotton. Well-irrigation is a characteristic feature of the district. The waters of Ghataprabha have been harnessed, recently for irrigation.

Bidar is the northern most maidan district of the State. In the North and the West it is bounded by Maharashtra State. The rural scene is characterised by compact villages, dry cultivation, large holdings and preponderance of landless labourers. Rainfall is heavier in this district (850 mm p. a.) as compared to Raichur and Gulbarga. So also the climate is comparatively cool and healthy. While in the Northern half of the district black soil is predominant, in the southern half, red loam and laterite soils are more frequent. Jowar, bajra, urd, gram, groundnut and

cotton are some of the important crops. There are no large scale industrial establishments in this district. Bidriware articles (handicraft) produced at Bidar are famous both within and outside the State. Handloom weaving (cotton and wool) is also an important household industry of this district.

North Kanara the coastal district is bounded on the North by Goa territories. The rainfall is heavy and the district abounds in forest wealth. Fishing, production of garden crops (arecanut and coconuts) and cashew are important aspects of its economy. Paddy is the main food-crop and in recent years cultivation of groundnuts has become popular. Dandeli is an important industrial centre. There are several ports and linking towns which augment export and import trade.

III. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Information based on any systematic anthropometric survey is not available. Enthoven (1922, II) commenting on the appearance, dress and ornaments of Mahars, observes, "The Mahars of the Deccan are generally tall, strong, muscular and dark, with regular features and unintelligent foreheads; those in the Southern Maratha country are darker than Kunbis, with gaunt cheeks, irregular features, a dreamy expression and flat noses; still except in colour, they differ little from Kunbis. The (North) Kanara Mahars, both men and women are tall, fair, and regular featured" (P403).

IV. FAMILY, CLAN AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

Mahars are patrilocal and descent is reckoned through the male line for both the sexes. Exceptions to this generalisation may also be found among them, for in former days, dedication of girls to Goddesses—who could enjoy sexual freedom despite being 'never married'—was an established social usage among them. The offspring of such women were affiliated to their mother's (i.e., mother's mother's or mother's father's lineage as the case may be) group, perhaps, because of the difficulty in identifying the biological father of the child. Unlike in patrilineal families, such children grew up amidst their mother's relatives. However, it is claimed that during the past three decades or so, the custom of dedicating girls has been gradually abandoned and now, families based on regular marriages have become the rule. Even after becoming a widow, the woman usually lives in her conjugal village as a part of her son's (or some other relative's) household. It is also not very uncommon for a few such widows to return to their natal villages to live with parents if alive, or brothers.

In the absence of published data regarding type of family and size of households a reference to the following village Survey monographs may prove useful:

- (i) Kamalnagar, Aurad Taluk, Bidar District.
- (ii) Bhatambra, Bhalki Taluk, Bidar District.
- (iii) Umarani, Chikodi Taluk, Belgaum District.

(Census of India Vol-XI, Mys-Part-VI Series).

The information compiled in "Table 1: Caste/Tribe or community and nature of family" reveals that in Kamalnagar, of the 63 households of Mahars, 43 (68 per cent) are of simple, 10 (16 per cent) are of joint and another 10 (16 per cent) are of intermediate type; of the 70 households of Mahars in Bhatambra 40 (57 per cent) are of simple, 10 (16 per cent) are of joint 6 (9 per cent) are of intermediate type the rest viz., 15 (21 per cent) falling under the category 'others'; the 55 households at Umarani comprise 29 (53 per cent) simple families, 14 (25 per cent) joint families, 12 (22 per cent) intermediate families, and the rest come under "others". The 'intermediate type' by definition consists of 'a married couple, and unmarried brother, sister, and one of the parents' and with passage of time it either gives forth a new nuclear family or else reconstitutes itself into a joint family. Thus, among Mahars, it may be inferred, simple families are very popular while the incidence of joint family is also fairly high.

The average size of a household in the State works out to 5.42. On the basis of the data furnished in the three monographs, it is clear that the average size of a Mahar household works out to 5.36 (70 households 375 persons), 5.40 (63 households, 340 persons) and 5.45 (55 households, 300 persons) respectively in Bhatambra, Kamalnagar and Umarani. The position among Mahars is thus seen to compare favourably with the State average. Data regarding the range of variation in size are, however, not available.

Mahars are subdivided into several exogamous units, analogous to Gotra or Clan. However, no specific name depicting the unit (such as, *Bedagu*, *Balli*, *Kula* etc. as may be found among caste-Hindus of different regions in the State) seems to be in vogue among them. In a few places, e.g., Bidar and Bhalki Taluks, such a group of agnatic kinsmen is identified by a common surname. (The identity of the clan of the female merges with that of her husband after her marriage). At Talavada (K): *Sayudimavaru*, *Tikarennavaru*, *Chattenavaru* and *Mehrtrenavaru* (*navaru* simply means "of the" *Sayadu*, *Tikare* etc.,

group) were the four such units reported; at Bhalki, *Lamle* and *Byage* were reported while at Chidri of Bidar Taluk the informants did not give out any specific names. Another significant fact disclosed a Chidri is that, of the hundred and odd households of Mahar all except four belong to the same agnatic group. At Umarani of Chikodi Taluk, Belgaum district, also several surnames such as Kamble, Kalasingi, Bheemanayak and Ramanayak, are reported to be in use especially during the past two decades. The field study has revealed that in North Kanara, they suffix their names with 'Mahar' or 'Hulasavar' even though they are subdivided into exogamous units such as Hulasavar, Kapadarkar, Tanekar, Somavanshi etc. However, in none of these places were the informants able to provide any etymological significance for the terms in use among them.

Enthoven (1922, II) lists numerous surnames (exogamous units) and further observes "The evidence obtained in the course of enquiries tends to establish the fact that each of these exogamous subdivisions originally owned and worshipped a *devak* or *totem* closely corresponding to the *bali* of the Kanarese tribes. The object represented by the *Devak* is worshipped, protected from injury by the section owning the *devak*, and brought into prominence at the time of the marriage ceremony." (PP. 406 and 407). No corroborative data could, however, be gathered during the present field study of the Mahars in Mysore State. Objects (either animate or inanimate) of totemic significance were also not reported at the few places visited for study.

Mahars follow the classificatory system of kinship which is in vogue amongst the Hindus of the region, and also recognise the bilateral extension of kinship links. One's affinal kinship links are also considered important for among them too, cross cousin marriages are permitted. At the time of selection of spouses, the elders are careful to trace out the existing relationship, through kinship links, between the families of the proposed couple and thus avoid union within prohibited degrees. As has already been remarked, the areas of their concentration being mainly bilingual, the kinship terms in use among them are an admixture of Marathi and Kannada languages.

V. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD HABITS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS

(a) Dwelling

Having been in the past, a part of the village community organisation, Mahars (or Holers) are found in almost all the villages in varying

numbers. Their settlements, termed Maharwada in Marathi (and Holer Oni or Holer Keri in Kannada), are usually situated at some distance from the caste-Hindu settlement in towns and villages. Muslims too do not live amidst the Mahars. Sometimes, quite close to the Maharwada, the dwellings of Mangs or Madigs (another wide spread scheduled caste which too had a place in the village community organisation) may also be found. Such is the case, for example at Chidri of Bidar Taluk where however, most of the Mangs are reported to have embraced Christianity recently. Mahars and Mangs vie with each other for superior social status and between themselves they do not even accept water at the hands of the other. Their settlements too are bifurcated at least by an intervening lane, and they do not use a common drinking water well.

In the Maidan region, their settlements are single clusters of irregular shape, in which small lanes and bylanes can be discerned. Their houses face either the North or the East, and in large villages several rows of houses abutting the street may be found. In the Malnad tracts, especially in North Kanara district, their dwellings are more or less scattered, being located in the fields owned by caste-Hindu or Muslim landlords, whom they have been serving for long as tenants or labourers. In both the regions, the settlement patterns among Mahars conform to the predominant regional pattern.

In most of the villages where Mahars are found in recognisable numbers, they have one or two draw wells for their exclusive use. Other Scheduled Castes of the village are not allowed to use these wells. In the absence of such an exclusive water source, the Mahars depend on the caste-Hindus, who draw out drinking water from the village common well and fill the pitchers of Mahars. Mahars have free access to other sources of water such as rivers, canals and ponds; and in the case of irrigation wells too (the water of which can be used for drinking) they are not denied access. In Chidri, the Mahars have two common draw-wells while the Mang-Christians have one, and most of the Caste-Hindu households have separate wells within their respective compounds. So also, at Thalavada (K) the Mahars have (common for their community) a well for their exclusive use and so do the Mang converts to Christianity. The Dhors (another Scheduled Caste), being numerically a minority, have no such facilities. They obtain drinking water from the nearby irrigation-wells. Helavas, another caste of low social status which rears pigs and Korers (basket makers) of Thalavada (K) use the water from a pond about two furlongs away.

The impact of the regional pattern may be discerned in the matter of houstypes, too. Being economically badly off, their houses are built of cheap and locally available material. These are single storeyed with no compound or fence around. Most of their settlements are overcrowded and usually no open space is allowed all round the house. (North Kanara district however proves an exception because, here one finds isolated huts unlike in the Maidan region). The houses generally have only one entrance at the front leading to the hall or the main living room. Kitchen is another important element of the house. Other amenities such as separate bath and latrine are totally lacking. As their houses are overcrowded (average size of a household being more than five) they lack privacy too, for in most of the cases, the hall itself serves as a sitting room, sleeping room and store room. Stones of irregular shape and size, mud and sometimes, twigs of plants (Jowar stalk) are used for construction of walls while mud and jungle wood, country tiles, thatching grass, bagasse, leaves of date palm in combination with bamboo, are used as material for roof. More often than not the flooring is of ordinary mud and this is covered with cowdung frequently. Wood is used sparingly and the huts usually have doors fastened out of bamboo or other twigs.

In Umarani, 26 out of the 55 Mahar households lived in stone walled houses, while another 10 are in houses with unburnt bricks; 8 in houses with mud walls; 5 in thatched huts, and the other 6 in houses with walls of stone and mud or stone and unburnt bricks. When the material used for roof is considered, it was observed that 37 households lived in houses with country-tiled roofing while the remaining 18 were in houses with a thatched roofing (vide, Tables 13 and 13-A of the village survey monographs). In Bhatambra of Bidar district, 68 of the 70 Mahar households lived in houses with stone walls while the other two lived in houses with a thatched wall. Regarding the roof types, it was noticed that 36 lived in houses with thatched roof; 19 in houses with roofs of zinc sheet; 10 in houses with mud roof (flat mud terrace) and the rest in houses having more than one material (such as zinc sheet and mud, zinc sheet and thatched) used for its roof. Likewise, in Kamalnagar all the 63 Mahar households lived in houses with stone walls—the predominant type in the village. Thirty one of their houses had zinc sheet roofs, 15 thatched roofs, 13 flat mud roofs and 2 each country tiles and Mangalore tiles respectively. In this regard too, their houstypes conform to the prevailing types in the village.

Since the Mahars are spread all along the north-western and northern fringe of the State they do not

have any distinct type of dwelling associated with their caste. Wherever they are found, they too build their houses or huts in conformity with the types predominant in their respective villages. Owing to poverty, however, most of them dwell in congested houses or huts fabricated out of cheap or locally available materials. But, when sufficient funds are available they eagerly imitate the better type of structures in their village.

(b) Dress and Ornaments

The impact of regional ways may be perceived in the matter of dress too. Dhoti, which covers the waist and below upto ankles, is the man's lower garment in common use. It is worn in the Kache style in which one of its ends is passed between the thighs and tucked at the back. In North Kanara district the Mahars are more frequently seen in mere loin-cloths which cover the waist and thighs. In this case too one end is passed between the thighs and tucked at the back. The sultry and hot climate of the coast, their poverty and the fact that they usually perform manual labour perhaps account for such scanty clothing. In towns and large villages, many among the Mahars, nowadays, use underwear knickers. Pyjamas and trousers are also slowly coming into vogue amongst the educated and urban youth. Shirt and sometimes a mere baniyan is the popular upper garment. A few among them occasionally put on coats. The use of headcarf (*rumala*) is also common among Mahars, especially of the older generation. Some of their youngmen put on caps while many others prefer to remain bare headed. Leather chappals constitute the footwear in common use.

Woman's dress consists of a saree and a blouse. Saree is generally worn without a Kache (i.e., end of the saree is not passed between the thighs and tucked at the back) but while attending to work in fields the saree is tucked up to facilitate easy movement of the limbs. In conformity with the regional practices the upper end of the saree is drawn over the head by Mahar women also. Among women too, use of leather chappals is common. Boys put on knickers and shirts while girls dress themselves in frocks or skirts and blouses. Because of poverty, many among Mahars—men, women and children—are often seen in tattered clothes. For want of sufficient spare clothing, it is difficult even to maintain their clothes clean.

It is a common practice among the Mahars to pierce the earlobes of their infant boys and adorn them with earrings or ear-studs of gold (sometimes

copper is also used). Anklets of silver and silver waist-string are the other ornaments in use for boys of a tender age. Those men who can afford to do so put on finger rings of either gold or silver. Women put on several ornaments, such as, earstuds, nose screw, necklaces, bangles, waistbelt and toe-rings. The names of these ornaments vary from region to region. In North Kanara, the ear-rings are known as *Kuduk*, while the nose-screws are called *Moti* or *Butti*. In Belgaum, the nose-ring is called *Muguti* and the ear-rings are called *Mudi* or *Phul*. The nose and ear ornaments are usually of gold, especially in the case of married women. Young girls put on tawdry pieces when their parents cannot afford gold. The gold necklaces in use are called *Bormula*, *Eksara*, etc., but it is only a few among the Mahars that can afford such costly pieces. Necklace of black beads with a gold pendant—together termed *Mangala sutra*—is a must for every married woman. Widows, divorcees and the never married should not use *mangalasutra*. So also, the silver toe rings are a mark of the woman's defacto married status. Girls and married women adorn their forearms with glass bangles of pleasing colours. Bangles made of brass or silver-alloy are worn usually by the widows. In the Maidan region, most of their married women adorn their waists with *dabu* or silver waist belts. These ornaments are usually purchased ready made at the shops run in nearby towns by goldsmiths or else are got prepared by local gold or silversmiths. It is generally on the occasion of her marriage that the woman gets her gold and silver ornaments. Glass bangles being cheap are brought frequently.

Tattooing is recognised as a beauty-aid among their women. Forearms, foreheads, the back of the palms, etc., are the parts of the body which are decorated with tattoo marks called *Hanachi battu*. Young girls have large circular dots tattooed on their foreheads and also on the chins and after attaining puberty or sometime later, get floral or geometric designs tattooed on their forearms. The tattooers are the women of Killekyata or Katabu caste (said to be of a nomadic temperament), who go roaming about the villages during the winter season.

Men have short, cropped hair and most of them shave once or twice a fortnight. As the services of village barbers are not available to them, except in towns and in a few large villages, mutual assistance is obligatory within the caste. Women comb their hair and gather it in a knot at the back or as is sometimes done, plait it into a pigtail. Both men and women frequently use coconut oil to keep their hair tidy.

MAHARS

(c) Food Habits

Mahars are non-vegetarians, as a caste group. However, being poor, they can afford meat only occasionally. Their custom allows them to eat the flesh of goats, sheep, fowls and birds besides fish (both fresh and dried). There has always been, it is claimed, a taboo on consumption of pork. The reason offered for the taboo is that, it cannot be rendered Halal (i.e., slain according to the manner prescribed by Muslims). They have had no inhibitions since generations with regard to the consumption of beef and also carrion. However, during the past 25 years, it is claimed, carrion eating has been given up by many among them and also that their fondness for beef has greatly declined. At a few places—Chidri for example—they are moving towards total vegetarianism. Such a change is said to be due to the efforts of some of their leaders who have been preaching wholesale conversion of their caste to Buddhism. Effects of such a movement appear to be more pronounced in towns and in places where Mahars are in large numbers. Thus at Thalavada (K) where they appear to be submissive to the Old Order at first they admitted of their continued habit of consuming beef, but later revealed that it has been given up in recent years as a result of a social movement organised by their caste leaders.

In the Maidan region, jowar happens to be their staple cereal while in the Malnad tract i.e., in North Kanara and parts of Belgaum district rice is consumed in larger quantities. They also use pulses such as turdhal, gram, masur and moong besides other millets. Wheat is rarely consumed. In North Kanara, most of them take food thrice a day. The morning breakfast consists of rice gruel and the menu for the other two meals would usually be rice and fish or vegetable curry. In the Maidan region, unleavened cakes of jowar called *rotti*, constitute their staple food. These are eaten with *beli*, i.e., cooked and spiced dhal or vegetable curry or with *khara* (powdered chillies). Here too, the custom of taking food thrice a day is common. The breakfast termed *Nyari* or *Nehari* consists of *rotis* prepared the previous evening and kept over night. The other two meals also consist of *rotis* and side dishes. Rice is cooked only on festival or other important days. The use of millets, maize and wheat is more frequent. *Holige* and *payasa* are the two sweet dishes they prepare on festival days.

Mahars are known since very early times, to have been excessively fond of liquor (cf: Campbell 1883 and Enthoven 1922). At one time, perhaps the habit

of drinking was universal among them. But during the past two or three decades, many among them, it is claimed, have become strict teetotallers. Nowadays, the habit of drinking tea is becoming more common. As most of them cannot afford to prepare the beverage at home, the male members usually visit the teashops of the village or town. In Umarani, members of 42 of the 55 Mahar households (76 per cent) were in the habit of taking tea. Tea drinking has been reported by the Mahars of Bhatambra (6 households out of the 70) and also by those of Kamalnagar (8 households out of 63). In Bombay-Karnatak region (where Umarani is situated) it may be mentioned, that Prohibition was in force for nearly two decades while in the Hyderabad-Karnatak region no such restriction was imposed. This factor accounts for lesser addiction to the habit of taking tea in the villages of Bidar district visited for the field study. At Chidri and Thalavada (K), the Mahars reported that they have given up liquor as a result of the propaganda carried out by the progressive leaders of their caste. The habit of drinking tea has been slow in catching up because of their poor economic condition.

The habit of smoking beedi (or tobacco dust in earthen pipes) is widespread among men. Chewing of betel leaves and arecanuts with chunam is common among elderly women and a few men.

For cooking and also for heating water, they use dried twigs and stalks of plants (besides occasionally using cowdung cakes) or faggots as fuel.

(d) Other Material Objects

For cooking and also for storing foodgrains, water and other material, Mahars generally use earthenware. These utensils are of different shapes and sizes and the number in possession of a household varies according to its size and economic condition. Most of their households also possess a few metallic vessels such as pitchers, tumblers, plates, wide mouthed vessels, etc. Those in the Maidan region invariably have iron pans, wooden rollers and large wooden (or sometimes metallic) plates that are required for making unleavened cakes. Of the household goods, mention may be made of the sieves, winnowing baskets, millstones, grinding stones, a few tins and bottles, etc. They use kerosene lamps either with or without glass chimneys.

They are too poor to own any furniture or other consumer articles which may be regarded as relatively luxurious. In Kamalnagar, where rope-cots are very common, only 29 out of the 63 households of Mahars are reported to have one cot each. None of these 63

households possesses any other item of furniture such as a chair, table, bench, stool, etc. As regards consumer goods, it is observed that only 2 households of Mahars possess battery torch lights. In Bhatambra, 42 of the 70 Mahar households possess rope-cots and here too, none of them has any other item of furniture. One of their households is reported to have a wrist watch. However it would appear that none of the households in this caste has any of the other items listed in the Table 12-A. Of the 55 households of Mahars at Umarani, 4 have a bicycle each, 2 have a time piece each and three have each a battery torch light while none has any item of furniture. In these villages, it may be pointed out, it is only among the few (2 or 3) socially and economically advanced caste groups that a higher proportion of households are seen to be in possession of such consumer goods and items of furniture. The economic conditions of several other caste groups, Scheduled and otherwise are as deplorable as those of the Mahars.

Those who cultivate lands possess wooden implements such as the plough and horrows. As most of them are labourers who work in agricultural fields and also in construction activities the sickle, axe, pick-axe, crowbar and wicker baskets are common in their households. In Bhalki and also at Chidri where many of the Mahars are said to be working in stone quarries and also as masons they possess the necessary equipment such as adzes, hammers, crowbar etc.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS DISEASE AND TREATMENT

In the matter of sanitation and cleanliness, the settlements of Mahars differ little from the conditions generally prevailing in the villages of the region. For want of space, their houses or huts are generally huddled together, giving a look of congestion to their settlement. Most of the huts (or houses) are provided with small drains to lead out the waste water. But, as adequate drainage is not available, waste water collects in cess pools and stagnates. Both men and women resort to the open fields near their settlements to answer the calls of nature. Children, however, commit nuisance around the house, which when noticed is removed to a little distance away. The house and also the front yard are swept clean every day and the sweepings are thrown away at a distance from the dwelling. The floor is laid with cowdung wash once a week and on all festival occasions.

They do not appear to be very particular in the matter of personal cleanliness. Cleaning of teeth is a fairly widespread, regular habit both among the aged

and the young. For this purpose, they use charred tobacco, ash or mere earth. Most of them bathe at least once a week. Men bathe usually in cold water at the nearby wells or streams or ponds, while women and children prefer hot water bath in or near the house. For cleaning the body, they use either the flour of jowar or of gram. In recent years, a few occasionally use toilet soaps. At Thalavada (K) and Chidri the Mahars reported themselves as in the habit of bathing on every Monday and a few among them, more frequently. Clothes are washed once a week at the nearby streams or irrigation wells. Use of washing soap is widely known but it is not very much in use. Wherever available, they utilise fuller's earth instead of the washing soap. Other clothes such as bedspreads, towels, etc., are washed only occasionally. The utensils used in cooking and also the dining plates are washed daily and kept clean.

Mahars are susceptible to diseases that are common in the region such as fevers, cold and cough, diarrhoea, dysentery and the like. The tendency in rural areas is to neglect the ailments at first and when no relief is obtained within a reasonable period, to resort to indigenous medicines prescribed by knowledgeable persons. If dispensaries are situated nearby they take recourse to allopathic medicines also. The services of doctors, especially of private practitioners, are very costly and it is only in very serious cases that they ever avail of such aid. They believe in soothsaying and, at times, to diagnose the cause of continued illness, they utilise the services of sorcerers and media. The general belief is that some divine power, usually a Goddess takes possession of a human being when invoked and helps divination and also suggests curative measures. Such media are termed *Bhoote* in Chidri and its surroundings while in North Kanara they are known as *Ghadi*. At Chidri, it was reported, a Christian (formerly Mang) woman acts as a medium as she can invoke Goddess Ambabai, whenever she wishes to do so. However, faith in such magico-religious cures is said to have declined during the past two decades. Most of the Mahars living in and near towns are now familiar with patent medicines such as tablets, mixtures and injections dispensed by the allopathic medical practitioners. The custom of taking vows to propitiate Gods and seeking thereby divine assistance in overcoming the illness is also in vogue.

VII. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Mahars of North Kanara usually speak Konkani which they regard as their mother-tongue. Most of them, especially the men, are conversant with Kannada.

and because of their Konkani back-ground, can also manage spoken Marathi well. Marathi is the mother-tongue of the Mahars who dwell in villages and towns very close to the Mysore-Maharashtra border, but a considerable proportion among them too are bilingual. A little interior in Mysore State, Mahars regard Kannada as their mother-tongue and some among them are conversant with spoken Marathi too. Thus at Nippani town, which is close to the Mysore-Maharashtra border, the Mahars speak Marathi as their mother-tongue, while in Umarani village (14 miles west of Nippani) the Mahars speak Kannada as their mother-tongue. In this region, most of the people are bilingual and Mahars are no exception. Similar

observations hold good in the case of Mahars of Bidar district also. Statistical data on mother-tongue and bilingualism have not been separately compiled in respect of the scheduled castes, during the 1961 Census. Earlier references (Enthoven 1922 etc.) indicate Marathi to be the mother-tongue of Mahars. But Campbell (1883) mentions three distinct linguistic groups viz., Marathi, Telugu and Kanarese, among Mahars of Belgaumi. Mahars have, apparently adapted themselves to the language predominantly spoken in their respective towns and villages.

Statistical data on literacy and education, based on the 1961 Census are presented in the following table:

TABLE 3: Education among Mahars

Sector	Total Population (sex-wise)		Illiterate		Literate without educational level		Educational Level			
							Primary or Junior basic		Matriculation or Higher Secondary & above	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Rural	27634	23534	22618	22727	3421	652	1464	154	131	1
Urban	2013	2437	1226	2188	257	114	485	134	45	1
STATE	29647	25971	23844	24915	3678	766	1949	288	176	2

Source: S. C. T. III Part A (i) and part B(i) Tables from Census of India, 1961, Vol. XI, Mysore Part V-A.

With 6859 literates, the percentage of literacy among Mahars works out to 12.33. Sexwise, it is observed that 19.57 per cent of their males and 4.07 per cent of their females are literate. The percentage of literacy among the total Scheduled Caste's Population in the State is 9.04, being 14.87 among males and 3.04 among females. Thus, in the matter of literacy the Mahars rank slightly above the State averages for Scheduled Castes.

In the rural sector, the percentage of literacy among Mahars is 11.38, being 18.15 and 3.43 for males and females, respectively. True to expectations, in the urban sector the proportion is higher with 23.28 per cent, among Mahars, literate. Sexwise, 39.10 per cent of their urban male population and 10.22 per cent of their urban female population, are literate. Urban residence among Mahars too, implies a higher percentage of literacy and also higher standard of education. However, the bulk of the Mahar population is concentrated in rural areas, where the literacy standard has yet to improve. A sectorwise comparison with the State average for Scheduled Castes (Rural: 6.65 per cent literate; 11.44 per cent among males and 1.7 per cent among females; Urban: 21.44 per cent literate; 32.33 per cent among males and 10.01 per cent among

females) also reveals the somewhat better position prevailing among the Mahars.

Significant differences emerge when the literacy data are analysed regionwise. Mahars of Bombay-Karnatak region have a higher standard of literacy than the Mahars of Hyderabad-Karnatak region. In the Urban areas of Bombay Karnatak region 28.06 per cent of them are literate, the sexwise break up being 45.02 per cent among males and 12.70 per cent among females. In contrast, their urban population in Hyderabad-Karnatak region comprises only 13.20 per cent of literates—24.40 per cent among males and 5.62 per cent among females. In the rural areas of Bombay-Karnatak region 13.15 per cent of the Mahars are literate, the sexwise percentage of literacy being 29.22 and 5.94 respectively for males and females. But in the rural areas of Hyderabad-Karnatak region only 4.19 per cent of the Mahars are literate, the sexwise percentage of literacy working out to 7.07 and 0.56 respectively for males and females. It is interesting to notice that when the literacy figures for the general population of these two regions are compared, Hyderabad-Karnatak region suffers by contrast. This general difference is reflected amongst the Mahars too.

It is clear from Table 3 that of the 6859 literates as many as 4444 persons (or 64.79 per cent) are literate without any level of education; 2237 persons (32.61 per cent) have attained only the primary or junior basic level; 174 persons (2.54 per cent) have attained only Matric or higher secondary level and the remaining 4 persons (0.06 persons) are Degree holders—3 University Degree or Post Graduate Degree other than technical and one holding a Technical Degree. All the four degree holders are men while amongst the 174 matriculates two are women. This indicates the relatively poor attention to higher education amongst their women.

Though their attitude to education is favourable their economic plight renders it difficult for them to provide proper or adequate education to their children. The medium of education at the primary and secondary levels, is Kannada. However, in several towns and villages near the border of the State there are schools providing education in Marathi medium also. Generally, their children, especially the boys, attend the schools for two or three years or even less, and then their services would be utilised by their parents to take care of the infants at home while the elders are away at work. Sometimes such boys, hardly 10 years old, are put to work under landlords to tend cattle or sheep and thus augment the earnings of the family. They are not very particular about sending their girls to schools.

VIII. ECONOMIC LIFE

Mahars have been for centuries an integral and essential part of the village community life both in its economic and social spheres. Economically they have been a subjugated people and socially they were being discriminated against. Their main source of livelihood has been rendering service to the village community in various forms and in turn many were enjoying *inam*-rights over small bits of Government-owned agricultural land besides *baluta* or *aya*—a periodic payment in kind by their patron-cultivators. Enthoven (1922, II) provides the following details about the occupation of Mahars. (cf: Campbell 1884. Vol—XXIV—Kolhapur Dt. Gaz). "The Mahars are hereditary village servants and are considered authorities in all boundary matters. They escort Government treasure, act as guides and messengers to public officers, call land holders to pay the land assessment at the village office, watch boundaries and the village office, repair the village office and village gate or gaonkusu and sweep the village roads. Most of them enjoy a small Government payment, partly in cash and partly in land. The chief source of their income

is the yearly grain allowance or *baluta*. They say that they used to have fifty-two dues, but now the number is greatly reduced. Some of these dues, which were allowed by the Muhammeden and Maratha Governments, are as follows:

1. *Sina-devi* or a part of a standing sugarcane crop.
2. Village or town gate offerings.
3. *Holi* food offerings on the full moon day of *Phalgun*.
4. Bendur grain gifts on the full moon day of *Ashadha*.
5. Hides of dead cattle.
6. *Hatshekne* or hand-warming, a money gift for watching the fire made for boiling sugarcane juice.
7. *Ghar-takka* or home money.
8. Money paid for digging graves.
9. Grain lying on and about the threshing floor when the floor is used for the first time.
10. Grain at the bottom of a Pev or grain-pit.
11. The rice thrown on the two low stools which are set for the bride and bridegroom.
12. A yearly pair of sandals for watching the village or town gate.
13. *Rukka* or marriage gift including two coppers in cash, a piece of cocoa-kernel and a handful of rice.
14. *Oti-pati* or lap-tax, that is, handfulls of grains put into the laps of Mahar women at the first treading of the grain.
15. Money thrown into her platter when a Mahar, woman comes to wave a lamp round the head of the bride's or bridegroom's mother.
16. *Madhe-pade* or carcass tax.
17. *Manguli* or gifts for winding a string round the village on the new moon of *Ashadha* and of *Kartik*.
18. *Ranisodvan* or forest-leaving, that is, grain ears given to Mahars on the first cutting and stacking.
19. *Pendha* or straw.
20. *Lagin-takka* or marriage rupee, that is four annas given to the village Mahar when the booth is raised.

"The duties of the Mahars to the villagers are to cut firewood, carry letters, sweep and clean the yards in front of their houses, carry cowdung cakes to the burning ground and to dig graves. For their private services they are paid in cash, or what they like better, in cooked food. They have a monopoly of the dead village animals, of the shrouds used in carrying the village dead, and of the copper coins which in the name of the dead are thrown to one side at the resting place or *Visaviachi jaga*. Mahars are largely employed by Europeans as domestic servants, and as grooms, or syces, they perform service in all parts of India. Recently they have taken readily to attending motor-cars and earn high wages in that capacity. As unskilled labourers they are employed in very large numbers. Of recent years complaints have arisen in villages near large centres of industry that the Mahars have been so depleted in numbers by emigration to the cities as to leave an inadequate staff for village requirements. Some are husbandmen. Many are contractors and money-lenders, and manage their business without the help of any high caste clerk. Mahars are excellent railway gang labourers and have gained almost a monopoly of the unskilled railway labour market in some districts. The Mahars of Kanara and Savantvadi plait bamboo mats, baskets and fans, and play Kettle-drums at some of the religious festivals and at the marriages of some of the lower castes....." (PP 416-418).

The above narrative provides not only a broad picture regarding the economic life of the Mahars some 50 or 60 years ago, but also a background for an understanding of their present plight. In the feudal order of the former days and even during the British regime, Mahars could not own any lands. They were fit only to serve and at the most, some among them could work the lands of their masters as share croppers or tenants-at-will. Their lowly social status and their dispersal over a large number of villages in small numbers strengthened the hands of the landlords. Commenting on the economic situation of the 'Depressed Classes' of the then H. E. H. The Nizam's Dominions, Gulam Ahmed Khan (1933—Volume—XXIII), writes. "The Depressed Classes have no economic independence in most parts. Some cultivate the land for caste Hindus as tenants at will; and some are farm labourers, payment being in kind. The wage level of the unskilled labourer is generally low; and it is when the demand for labour is at a low ebb, during the non-agricultural season, that one realises the wretched plight of these landless classes. With a view to escaping privation they engage themselves, whole families, under large landholders, for any ser-

vice and on any terms of remuneration. Payment is made in kind. The landlord accommodates them for marriage and other occasional expenses and thus secures the services of the families from generation to generation. The labourers themselves choose to serve their masters under such conditions rather than go out into the world and starve. The depressed classes, who invariably form an integral part of the village community, have been in the enjoyment of some lands as a "service grant"; but it is quite inadequate at the present day to feed the enhanced population, more particularly as the yield has been getting less year by year. In return for this grant they perform services pertaining to the public needs of the village as a whole... The Government has long ago abolished compulsory service in any form as far as service to Government officials is concerned". (PP 257—8) Land, thus appears to have been an indirect source of livelihood—the more direct one being manual labour. Submissiveness became a chief characteristic feature of the community and they tended to be entirely dependent on the work and wages or the charity provided to them by the landlords. During the past three decades or so, however, there has been an awakening among them and now at most of the places they have gradually given up the servile attitude. In recent years a few among them have acquired agricultural land either by way of *Darkhast* grants by Government or by purchase in the local market. In several villages the lands that their forefathers once held under *inam* (rent-free) tenure have due to succession been fragmented into small bits and the legatees are now virtually enjoying proprietary rights over these.

In Umarani (Belgaum District), of the 55 Mahar households 18 are landless while another 27 own less than an acre each; 8 households own between 1.00 and 2.49 acres each and the remaining 2 own an average of 5.50 acres each. The land owned per household comes to only 72 cents. It is further seen that most of the land held by Mahars were formerly under *inam* tenure. Four out of the 18 landless households it is seen, are cultivating an extent of 38.40 acres taken on lease; one land-owning Mahar has leased out the 75 cents owned by him, while 2 others have leased out part of their holdings and 3 have taken bits of land on lease besides cultivating the lands they themselves own.

In Bhatambra of Bidar District (Bhalki Taluk) 61 out of the 70 Mahar households do not have any interest in agricultural lands; six households have taken land on lease for cultivation; one household cultivates the land it owns; another has taken land on lease

In the rural areas 57.61 per cent of the Mahars—64.02 per cent among males and 50.02 per cent among females—are workers while in the urban areas the proportion of working force within their population is considerably lower. Workers in urban areas constitute only 34.52 per cent—44.91 among males and 25.93 among females—of their total urban population. This is perhaps indicative of the somewhat better economic conditions in urban setting such as higher wage-rate, availability of work in all seasons, salaried jobs, etc. The low female participation is also suggestive of the attitude associated with prestige prevailing among those Mahars (males) who are in the employ of Governmental and other institutions that it is improper to allow their women to work. In the rural areas the proportion of workers in Mahar community exceeds the State average for Scheduled Castes which is 54.3 per cent (63.4 per cent males and 45.0 per cent females). But in the urban areas, the percentage of workers among Mahars falls short of the State average for Scheduled Castes of 39.3 per cent. Comparison by sex makes it clear that while the female participation among Mahars is slightly higher than the State average (for S. C.) of 25.17 that among males is far below the State average for S. C., of 52.78. This perhaps is the result of a higher proportion of school-going children who may be residing in hostels, rooms etc., in towns—in their urban population. Such an inference should remain a conjecture because of the non-availability of data on age-group distribution and nature of activity of non-workers.

A further analysis of the 1961 data brings out significant differences in the working force component of the two regions. To permit easy comparison the following statement should be of some help.

Region-wise working force component among Mahars

	Working force component in percentages	
	Bombay-Karnatak region	Hyderabad-Karnatak region
A. TOTAL POPULATION		
Persons	49.16	63.14
Males	56.79	69.00
Females	40.92	56.03
B. URBAN POPULATION		
Persons	26.64	51.12
Males	36.93	64.71
Females	17.31	41.92
C. RURAL POPULATION		
Persons	51.74	63.84
Males	58.85	69.18
Females	43.90	57.13

The distribution of workers by industrial categories shows that 58.27 per cent of the working population are agricultural labourers and only 23.90 per cent are cultivators. Other services happens to be the next important category in which 7.97 per cent of the workers are engaged. Rest of the workers—a little less than 10 per cent in all—are distributed amongst the 6 other industrial categories of which household industry seems to be of some importance. The rural urban dichotomy shows that 60.38 per cent of the workers in rural areas are agricultural labourers in contrast to only 17.64 in the urban areas. So also the proportion of cultivators is relatively less in the urban areas. On the other hand, 48.43 per cent of the workers in urban areas are engaged in "other services" against the rural average of 5.86 per cent. Further, in urban areas those engaged in manufacturing other than household industry account for 12.89 per cent, while those in construction form another 8.46 per cent.

Agricultural labour and cultivation are the two most important occupations for Mahars. Occupational diversity is perceivable to a greater extent in the urban areas, where other services, miscellaneous labour including construction and in manufacturing industries assume same importance. At Bhalki town and also at Chidri, most of them reported work in 'construction' (termed locally *Uppara* or *Goundi Kelasa*) as their chief occupation. In villages however agricultural labour and cultivation to some extent continue to be their mainstay. Even in former days, as the payment by patrons or Government used to accrue only to the functionaries, they and also the other members of the caste used to depend mainly on agricultural labour and some petty cultivation. The present day village servants from this community attend to only a few tasks such as, to call the landlords to pay revenue (when the village officials are collecting the revenue) and some sundry items asked of them by the village officials.

The traditional patron-client relationship between caste Hindu population and the Mahars group no longer exists. During the past two decades and more, in most of the places Mahars have gradually given up the task of removing the dead cattle. So also sweeping of village streets is no longer compulsory. Only those, if any, specifically employed on a salary by the Panchayat, attend to the task of sweeping. With a few exceptions [such as Talavada (K)] at most of the places the servile functions they were attending such as gate-keeper, Bhutalya, guarding the threshing grounds of caste Hindu landlords, etc., have been

abandoned. Likewise grave-digging, supplying of firewood and dung-cakes are not being attended to by them as of past.

In recent years some of their educated men and women have taken up occupations such as teaching service in Government and other institutions on salaried jobs. At Chidri, the Mahars recounted that eight persons of their caste from Chidri, are now in employment—3 as teachers, 2 as P.W.D. Supervisors, 2 as post-masters and one as Malaria Surveillance worker—and are residing elsewhere. In villages some of their men work as agricultural labourers on annual contract basis—such a labour is called *Sakalu* or *alumaga* in parts of Bidar district—the salary ranging between Rs.600 and Rs. 800/- or a little cash besides their annual maintenance. It may not be out of point here to mention that such *Sakalus* can be found belonging to other castes including some poor Lingayats of this region. In all such cases the landlord-labour relationship is defined by the terms of contract. Most of the workers are casual labourers free to choose their employer and also place of work. The wage rate in villages fluctuates from season to season and also from village to village and sex and age of the worker himself. The mode of payment for weeding, transplanting and ploughing operation is usually in cash. During harvest and threshing operations the wages are invariably in kind. An adult male worker can earn between Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2.00 (non-agricultural labourers upto Rs. 3.00) per day while female and child labourers can earn about a rupee.

Mahars mainly subsist on their day-to-day earnings. Data about the source and extent of income as also about the pattern of expenditure are not available even in respect of the three villages covered under socio-economic survey as the compilation has not been done caste-wise. So also sufficient information about indebtedness among them is not available for a proper discussion. It might however, be said that despite their generally low creditworthiness they too borrow from local landlords to meet the out of the way expenses such as over marriage, purchase of livestock and even for domestic needs.

IX. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

Mahars are well aware of the physiological causes of conception and child birth. They regard barrenness among women a curse and attribute it to sins committed during her previous life. When a man's wife

remains barren even after a reasonable period of conjugal life, he is permitted by their society to take another wife and in all such cases the former wife herself takes the lead in arranging for the second marriage. To overcome barrenness they take recourse to prayers and undertake vows including the one in which the woman promises to dedicate a daughter for the service of the Goddess granting her the boon. During her first pregnancy, the woman receives greater care and attention. Pregnancy is recognised during the third month when the well-known symptoms such as morning sickness etc., are noticed and it is confirmed during the fifth month. In some villages a preliminary *Kupsa* (Blouse) ceremony is performed during the fifth month, to announce, to their relatives, the glad news. It is however more common to hold this ceremony during the seventh month at her husband's home and also at her parental home. On this occasion choice dishes are prepared and a number of relatives are feted. She too receives presents from her in-laws, parents and other relative and *arathi* is performed. With the commencement of the eighth month she refrains from doing heavy and exhausting work and also eschews certain items of food considered injurious for her health. Her husband too observes certain restrictions until the delivery occurs. He should not kill any animal, should not participate in funerals and in former days was required by custom to give up shaving and hair cuts. The pregnant woman is taken to her parental home during the ninth month, for confinement and delivery. The second and subsequent deliveries usually take place at the woman's usual place of residence which is her husband's home.

In exceptional cases where complications are likely the pregnant woman is taken to a hospital. In all other cases birth occurs in a portion of the dwelling, which is enclosed and kept warm. The woman in travail is assisted by a *Soolagithi* of the'r own caste. Services of a midwife, if readily available, are sometimes requisitioned. The umbilical cord is severed by the *Soolagithi* using either a sharp knife or a sickle. This instrument is placed at her bed side till the naming ceremony is held in order to ward off evil spirits. The placenta is gathered in an earthen pot and buried near the house and a stone slab is placed on the spot. It is at this spot that the woman and the infant are bathed on the following fifth, ninth or eleventh day. The *Soolagithi* attends on the mother and the infant for five days and for her services, receives some cash (Rs. 2 to Rs. 5) besides a blouse piece, some food grains and jaggery. If a midwife is called in for assistance she attends only to childbirth and is paid about Rs. 5 to Rs. 10.

besides cultivating the piece owned by itself while one more household has leased out a portion of land it owns to others for cultivation. Of the three land owning households 2 own on an average 2.75 acres while the third owns 5.33 acres. The total land held by the caste being only 10.83 acres, the average per household comes to only 15 cents.

In Kamalnagar of Aurad Taluk, Bidar District, 13 out of the 63 Mahar households own lands. It is further seen that 3 of these 13 have lands, in Rampur village to an extent of 26 acres. Considering by size groups, it may be observed that, 2 households own above 15 acres each; 2 households own in the range 10 to 15 acres; one household owns 6.00 acres; 6 households own in the range 1.00 acre to 2.49 acres while the other 2 household own less than one acre each. Altogether, the Mahars of Kamalnagar own 75.18 acres and the average per household works out to a little more than an acre. Six of the landless households have taken land on lease for cultivation while 8 of the landowning have given out their lands on lease to others. One landowning household cultivates some lands taken on lease in addition.

At Talavada (K), the Mahars reported themselves to own small bits of land which they held in the past under *inam* tenure. So also at Chidri of the hundred and odd Mahar households only 12 are reported to

have small bits of lands each, while some other 10 or 12 households are cultivating lands taken on (*Lavani*) lease. There have been no *Darkhust* grants by Government to Mahars at both these villages.

Mahars have no tradition of ever owning community lands. Even when "service-grants" were in vogue, the right of enjoyment and possession always used to be specific devolving on those who did actually render prescribed services to the village community or the Government. The rights recently acquired by a few among them are of individual proprietorship and as a household happens to be the fundamental economic and social unit among them, such lands are usually held by the head of the household.

They seem to have no particular association with either forestry or fishery as a source of livelihood. Like many other settled communities they too occasionally gather firewood, etc., if a forest be situated close to their village, and occasionally resort to fishing in the village ponds and streams. Some among them rear domesticated animals such as cattle, goats and sheep, but livestock rearing as such has no special significance for the community. To illustrate, data about possession of livestock animals by Mahars in the three villages Umarani, Bhatambra and Kamalnagar (culled out from Table 7 presented as appendix to the village Survey monographs) has been given below.

TABLE 3 Comparative Statement Regarding Possession of Live-Stock

TYPE OF ANIMAL	Name of the Village, Number of Households possessing and Number of Animals					
	Bhatambra		Kamalnagar		Umarani	
	House holds	No. of Animals	House-holds	No. of Animals	House-holds	No. of Animals
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cows in milk	6	6	24	24	3	3
Cows dry	29	36	7	8	..	..
Adult females not calved	..	..	1	1	2	2
Bulls	7	9	8	11	..	..
Working bullocks	7	12	5	9	6	10
Other adult males	1	1	3	4	2	2
Young Stock (Male)	8	9	6	6	1	1
Young Stock (Female)	11	13	..	..	1	1
He buffalo (Adult)	1	1	2	2	1	2
She buffaloes in milk	6	6	9	9	4	4
She buffaloes dry	2	2	9	10	16	17
Young stock	11	11	9	9	11	11
Sheep	6	16	7	35	..	..
Goats	2	7	6	34	11	26

MAHARS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pigs	..	..	..	3	11	..	..
Horses, Ponies etc	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Donkeys	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Cocks	..	5	31	..	..	..	..
Hens	..	4	29	..	..	16	27
Chicken	..	..	..	..	..	6	25
Any other animals or birds	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total number of Mahar households in the village		70		63		55	

(As the Tabulation has been done by type of animal the same household will be counted for each type, and as a result, from the above statement, the number of households which do not possess any livestock animals whatsoever cannot be deduced).

A general tendency noticed among them, is that they buy cows and buffaloes when these are 'dry' at cheaper rates and later, when the animals are pregnant sell them at a slight profit. The animals they own are of poor stock, and generally old. Due to paucity of agricultural or pasture land they cannot maintain quality cattle. In view of the aversion to pork by Mahars, the fact that three of their households at Kamalnagar are rearing pigs perhaps indicates that sometimes the profit motive overrides traditional conventions.

By and large, manual labour, either agricultural or non-agricultural, constitutes their main source of living. According to the 1961 Census, 55.78 per cent among Mahars are economically active. Sexwise, it is observed that 62.72 per cent of their males and 47.81 per cent of their females are workers. When compared to the State averages of working force for the scheduled castes (viz., 51.92 per cent total; 60.4 per cent among males and 39.6 per cent among females), the Mahars appear to contain a higher proportion of workers amongst them.

Statistical data according to the 1961 Census, about industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers in respect of Mahars are furnished below:

TABLE 4: Industrial Classification of Persons at Work and Non-workers by Sex

	URBAN			RURAL			TOTAL		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Total Population of Mahars	4450	2013	2437	51168	27634	23534	55618	29647	25971
A. TOTAL WORKERS	1536	904	632	29476	17690	11786	31012	18594	12418
WORKERS:									
I As Cultivator	44	27	17	7369	4676	2693	7413	4703	2710
II As Agricultural labourer	271	103	168	17799	9728	8071	18070	9831	8239
III In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing etc.	20	19	1	638	372	266	658	391	267
IV At Household Industry	33	17	16	1222	1095	127	1255	1112	143
V In manufacturing other than household industry	198	99	99	253	202	51	451	301	150
VI In Construction	130	106	24	311	278	33	441	384	57
VII In Trade and Commerce	16	7	9	54	46	8	70	53	17
VIII In transport, Storage and Communications	80	80	..	103	103	..	183	183	..
IX In other services	744	446	298	1727	1190	537	2471	1636	835
B. NON WORKERS:	2914	1109	1805	21692	9944	11748	24606	11053	13553
C. WORKERS IN SPECIAL OCCUPATIONS:									
I Tanning and Currying of hides and skins	10	9	1	31	23	8	41	32	9
II Scavenging	130	87	43	28	28	..	158	115	43

Source: Tables SCT-1 Industrial Classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex for scheduled castes; Census of India, 1961, Vol. XI-Mysore Part -V-A.

The mother and the infant as also the premises where the birth has occurred are regarded as impure for 5 days. In certain areas (Ankola for example) the impurity lasts only for 3 days while in certain others it lasts for 11 days. On the fifth day *Eaidu Deshi* is performed by cleansing the premises, (white washing its walls and sprinkling cow's urine or *thirtha*) and performing puja to Shetegavva (or Settavva). On this occasion the spot containing the placenta and the sickle used for severance of the umbilical cord is also worshipped by the mother. The child is placed in the cradle on the same evening and a name is also conferred on it by some elderly woman, or its maternal uncle. In certain villages (example, Talavada (K), Ankola) naming and cradling ceremonies are held on the 12th day. Such variations are usually regional and Mahars follow the customs that prevail among the dominant caste-Hindu groups in their respective villages. In the choice of names for their children too, the Mahars in almost all places, seem to have given up the ones that were formerly very common among them in preference to modern names.

During the post-natal period the woman is expected to restrict her diet. For the first two days, following child-birth she is given very little solid food. In case a hospital or dispensary is nearby, they fetch mixtures for her and in certain areas, it is common to give her arrack in little quantities to keep her warm. From the third day onwards she is fed on rice and pepper soup for a week or a fortnight. Thereafter, she gradually reverts to her normal diet of Jowar-cakes, etc. A recuperative tonic preparation called *Bananthi Khara* or *Bananthi hechcha* is also given to her for a fortnight or more depending on her health and on the economic level of the family concerned. Breast-feeding of the infant starts on the third day and it is weaned away when it is about 18 months old. On completion of nine months, the child is gradually initiated to solid food.

The period of confinement for the woman and the infant is usually three months in the case of her first child birth and 4 to 6 weeks in the case of subsequent deliveries.

Tonsorial ceremony is held for the infant (for both boys and girls) during its eleventh month or the third or the fifth year. The cutting of the hair is performed by the baby's maternal uncle. In case a vow has been taken, the infant is taken to the particular temple and the hair offered to the deity. Otherwise the

ceremony is held at home and some of the close relatives are feasted. The earlobes of the child are pierced on any day without any special ceremony and gold or copper ear-rings are inserted.

(b) Puberty

A girl menstruating for the first time is considered impure for five days. Soon after the event a few women gather together and ritually bathe the girl. She remains in a corner of the 'pial' which is in front of the house and her touch is defiling. She does not attend to any work whatsoever and instead, is fed on a rich diet. Women of the neighbourhood keep her company and sing *Shobane* songs to keep her amused. On the fifth day a final purificatory bath is given by married women and the girl is usually given a new saree by the parents or her in-laws in case she is already married. She is later seated on a low-stool or a chair, decked with flowers and ornaments and married women perform in *Arathi* before her. It is customary on this occasion to hold a feast for the fellow caste-men.

(c) Marriage

In former days, the custom of dedicating women for the service of some Goddess or the other was widespread amongst the Mahars. Such women (called *Basavi*, *Joguni* or *Jogti* etc., in different regions) were ceremoniously wedded to some symbol representing the spouse of the patron Goddess and in their day-to-day life, were permitted to live with any paramour of their choice. Prostitution, it is said, was very common and their standards of morality, loose. Children born to such women belonged to the family line of their mothers and property, if any, was also transmitted in the female line and such women did not generally move out of their natal villages. Under such a system, there could exist a number of never-married men, who could, nonetheless, enjoy the conjugal bliss, though not on a permanent basis with a particular woman. During the past three decades, this custom has been gradually abandoned and marriage has become an essential event in the life of a man or woman. Pre-marital sexual license is despised and the culprits when caught are severely punished. Chastity and fidelity are esteemed virtues among them. Girls are generally married at the age of 12 upto 16 or even a little more, while boys get married at the age of the 20 or thereabouts. Late marriages do occur among men because of poverty.

The following table, which furnishes data on marital status for Mahars (according to the 1961 Census) indicates that child marriages do occur among them. Among boys and girls in the age-group 0-14, it is observed, 2.14 percent and 9.47 percent respectively are ever married. In the age-group 15-44, 25 percent of the males and only 4.36 percent of the females are never married while in the 45 and upwards age-group the percentage of never married dwindles to 1.5 and 2.6 respectively among males and females.

TABLE—5 Marital Status by sex and Age-Groups

Age Group	Population		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced/separated		Un-specified Status	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All Ages	29647	25971	15072	10003	13597	12714	837	3058	122	181	19	15
0-14	12053	10374	11786	9381	256	974	1	8	1	3	9	8
15-44	12794	11656	3197	509	9258	10176	251	836	83	129	5	6
45+	4780	3930	72	102	4083	1564	585	2214	38	49	2	1
Age not stated	20	11	17	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	3	..

attaining widowhood at the age of 30 or even less. Widowers are free to remarry either virgin brides or widows. Of the 3058 widows, it is observed, as many as 2214 (72.4 percent) are aged 45 years and upwards. Similarly 585 (or 69.9 percent) of the 837 widowers are in the 45 and above age-group.

Among Mahars cross-cousin marriages are allowed and practised while the union of parallel-cousins is taboo. In certain villages of Belgaum district (e.g., Umarani) village exogamy seems to have been in vogue in former days, when a village usually consisted of families belonging to a single clan. But now, due to migrations people of different clans live inter-mixed and marriages are therefore possible amongst persons now belonging to the same village. A man may marry his elder sister's daughter and under certain circumstances may marry his wife's younger sister either during the life-time of the former or after her demise. Sterility is one of the most important causes for polygyny. Their custom does not permit a man to unite with his elder brother's widow and infact one's elder brother's wife is equivalent in status to one's own mother.

Consanguineous marriages are said to be less frequent nowadays because of the growing apprehension that such unions may not be successful. Because of

The married males exceed their female counterparts. But this phenomenon is not a result of polyandry. Among them polyandry is not allowed while polygyny is allowed and practised to some extent. As compared to the number of widowers there are a large number of widows in the community. Mahars allow remarriage of divorcees and widows but the chances for such reunion gets reduced as the woman grows older and loses her charm. Moreover, women who have borne sons prefer to remain single in case of

the increased transport facilities and mobility within the community, there is a pronounced preference to contract new alliances thus widening one's kinship circle. Though polygyny is allowed monogamy has almost become the rule. Formal marriage is called *lagna* and a woman is eligible to undergo this rite only once whereas there is no such limit in the case of men. Remarriages are called *Patta* in certain areas of Bidar district and *Seerudike* in parts of Belgaum district. Marriages are arranged by one's elders and this is generally true in case of remarriages also. Other forms such as by elopement, intrusion or by force are neither socially approved nor do they occur in the community. The custom of *Mane aliyathana* (also spoken of as *Manevalathana*) according to which the husband moves over to his wife's household—foregoing his own partiliny and manages her parental property, if any, for her and her children is prevalent to some extent. So also marriages by exchange occur occasionally. The terms of settlement comprises brideprice (even in the case of remarriages)—the amount of which varies very widely, from a minimum of Rs. 12 to a maximum of Rs. 300 and also the ornaments and value of clothes to be presented to the bride. A recent development in this regard especially among the educated is that, instead of they themselves accepting a brideprice, the parents of the bride pay some dowry to the bridegroom.

The parents of the boy after a preliminary selection of the bride, initiate the negotiations on an auspicious day. If agreement is reached both the parties exchange visits and at an arranged meeting in the bride's home attended by a few relatives on either side and caste-headmen, of their respective villages, a final settlement is reached. This is followed in a few days by the betrothal ceremony-called *Sakkare haki baruvudu*. On this occasion, a few ornaments, blouse pieces and a part of the brideprice are handed over to the bride's side and a feast is held. An auspicious and convenient day is selected for the marriage in consultation with a Lingayat *Ayya* (Jangam), a Brahmin *Bhat* (*Purohit*) or a Hugar who can make a reference to the Hindu almanac. However, the marriage is solemnised by the Mehtrayya (headman of their caste) and married women. The ceremonial services of traditional barbers or washermen are not available to Manars during their marriages, either in towns or villages [in their daily life too such services are denied to them since centuries and it is only in towns and that too during the past 15 or 20 years that such discrimination is slowly disappearing.] The pipers and drummers of the village, if they are also of a lowly social status (such as Mangs) provide the music on payment of a fee. The religious mendicants especially from among their own caste called *Bhutya*, *Vagya*, *Gurulinga Pedy* (in parts of Bidar district) attend their marriages and while ringing the bells chant God's name or sing. They are given a rupee and a quarter besides being fed. In North Kanara, the Mahars obtain consecrated *akshata* (coloured rice) and a pair of *Kankanas* (Yellow thread wristlets for being tied to the couple) from Brahmin *purohit* as the *purohit* does not participate in the marriage ceremony.

The marriages usually take place at the residence of the bridegroom. A day or two period to the one chosen for the *Muhurthā* (auspicious moment), the marriage pandal is raised by the caste-fellows, in front of the boy's residence. The task is initiated by the mother's brother (actual or classificatory) of the bridegroom who brings and plants twigs of mango and Indian fig trees. Another small pandal is also put up to serve as a kitchen and hearths are built after pujas and *arathi*. The next activity is *arisina emne* (anointing with turmeric and oil) and *Devara Karya* (offering puja to Gods). The pestle, mortar, the grinding stone, the millstone and the hearth are also worshipped by the head of the household and married women. *Muthaides* (Married women) ceremonially fetch water after pujas to the source of water for the ritual bath of the bridegroom. Meanwhile *Suragi* is set up. This consists of four small pots ar-

ranged so as to form a large imaginary rectangle underneath the pandal. On the eastern side one more pot is kept; at the centre is placed the pestle and around the pots forming the rectangle a yellow thread is passed 5 or 9 times. The *Muthaides* then anoint the bridegroom with turmeric dust and coconut oil (taking care to see that a portion of the turmeric paste remains, so that it can be later taken to the bride's home for anointing her), and when he sits on the wooden seat in the middle of the *Suragi* give him a ritual bath. His sister or any other close female relative is also similarly bathed. The mode of performance of puja to family deities does not appear to be uniform in the different regions. In parts of Bidar district 'Chidri' Talavada (K) and surroundings for example the head of the household carrying a basket containing cooked rice, gruel and other dishes ceremonially approaches the stone, outside the village, representing *samusthani* (also called *Sambavva*) a female spirit and after daubing it with *Chandra* (Ochre dust) breaks a coconut and offers the food brought along. He is accompanied by the bridegroom who holds on his head the basket containing new garments bought for the marriage. Then they proceed to a source of water which is worshipped and the sprinkling of its water sanctifies the new garments. The party returns home and a feast follows. In Umarani of Belgaum district the custom of *Earanamaduvudu* was reported. (The bridegroom and his *aide* are dressed like *Earas* (warriors); a *lathi* or baton brought from a Medar (Basket maker) is adorned with a turban, worshipped and to it are offered *holiges* (sweet pancakes). Then the bridegroom covers five paces inside the marriage pandal only while his *aide*, accompanied by five more men visits their temple. After return, these five men who will have been on fast since the previous evening, partake of the pancakes that were offered to the *lathi* earlier).

Soon after Devarkarya, a small party from the bridegroom's home proceeds to 'fetch the girl' locally called "*hennu tharalikke hoguvudu*". They carry with them some auspicious articles besides the remnants of the turmeric paste. At the bride's residence, she is then anointed with turmeric paste by *muthaides* who also give her a ritual bath. Later, the bride and her relatives set out for the bridegroom's residence for the marriage. There, they are received, fed and separately lodged for the night. The next morning, being the *lagnada dina* (Marriage day), the bridal couple are separately bathed by *muthaides* and are given new garments. The bridegroom dresses himself in a dhoti worn with a *kache*, shirt, turban and a *shalya*

(upper cloth) at one end of which is tied some grains of wheat and halves of copra. *Kankanas* or wristlets are tied by their Mehtrayya (headman) and when the appointed moment arrives *bhashingas* (marriage coronets) of pith, locally available with Hugar (florists) are also placed on the foreheads of the couple by their headmen or maternal uncles. The bride after her bath in some villages, performs *Gowripuja*—a *kalasha* pot near which is placed the copra half containing *mangala sutra* (*Tali* and blackbead necklace). The bridegroom also offers puja to the *Mangala Sutra*. At the appointed time, the couple are brought to the marriage seat where they stand facing each other. The *mangalasutra* is then passed around so that the married men and women in the assembly may touch it. Finally the bridegroom receives the *Tali* (*Mangalasutra*) and either himself ties it around the neck of his bride or allows the *muthaides* to do so. At this auspicious moment prayers and verses are sung by the Mehtrayya, Vagya and any other persons in the assembly. Then the couple throw grains of rice on each other's head and exchange garlands. They are seated on low stools or a bench and the relatives give them presents, mostly in cash, this being called *ayyar maduvudu*. Later, all the invitees are feted on vegetarian dishes such as rice, *Huggi*, *Payasa* (sweet), curries etc. During the afternoon the couple are seated side by side within the *Suragi* and ceremonially bathed. Again new clothes are presented to them by their respective parents-in-law. In Chidri and also Talavada (K) this rite is called "*becdi batte udusuvudu*". Dressed in these new clothes the couple and a batch of their relatives visit a temple in procession. On return an *arathi* is waved before them to counteract the effects of any evil eye cast on the newly wedded couple. Another feast follows and the relatives depart. (Those who cannot afford to provide two feasts on the same day arrange the visit to temple well before the evening sets in and in that case, the bride and her relatives also get back to their home the same evening. The bridegroom joins them on the following day for a feast). On the following day after breakfast the bride and her relatives start their homeward journey leaving an invitation to the bridegroom and his parents to join them for a feast a day or two later. On the fifth or ninth day after the marriage, the pandal is formally dismantled.

The marriage rites and customs naturally vary in some details from sub-region to sub-region and sometimes, even from village to village within a sub-region. As a result of long, settled domicile in villages and consequent acculturation, they too will have adopted some of salient features from the customs of the locally dominant caste groups. A change worth noticing

is the gradual discontinuance (during the past 3 or 4 decades) of preparation and consumption of non-vegetarian food and liquor on the occasion of the marriage. Secondly, with a view to reducing the expenses and also inconvenience, some of the details (e.g., *Koosu adisuvudu*—mock drama of looking after the infant) have been either abandoned or are hurried through. Thus, a marriage which was formerly a five-day celebration is now over in three days (I day *Devakarya* II day *Lagna* and III day dispersal of relatives and return of bride to her home) or, even in a day and a half (I day *Devarkarya* II day *Lagna*, same evening dispersal). At the existing prices of commodities, the marriage of a boy involves an expenditure of Rs. 600 to Rs. 1,000 while that of a girl requires about Rs. 200 to Rs. 300.

If a man is not satisfied with his wife he can divorce her and after convincing her relatives and other caste fellows about the veracity of his allegations or complaints can obtain *Pharakathina Chiti* (divorce agreement) and thus be free to marry again. On the other hand if a woman is dissatisfied with her husband, she can desert him and go away to her parents. If efforts at reconciliation fail, an informal meeting of the caste fellows is held and her husband usually demands compensation—this is especially so, if she has a paramour—and then gives the *Pharakathina chiti* which renders the woman free. The remarriage of a widow or divorcee is a simple ceremony held on an appointed evening at the bride's residence. The amount of bride price ranges between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200 besides a saree, blouse and a few ornaments including *Tali*—the gold pendant in a blackbead necklace. After the feast, the *muthaides* (those married by *Lagna* rites only and have their spouses alive) from among the relatives of the would-be-couple disperse—for it is taboo for such persons to witness the ceremony which unites the couple. Late in the evening, the Mehtrayya or some elderly caste fellow joins the hems of the robes of the couple and hands over the black bead necklace to the bridegroom for being tied round the neck of the bride. The onlookers are generally the men and women who themselves have remarried under a similar rite. A widow should not put on auspicious ornaments and flowers while a remarried woman has no such disability. But their custom forbids the widow and the remarried woman alike, from participating in religious functions and social ceremonies such as carrying the *Kalasa* and handling auspicious articles. Her children, however, do not suffer such social disabilities. In case a widow or a divorcee with one or two children wants to remarry, such children are usually taken care of by the agnates

of her former husband. The man who wishes to marry a widow or a divorcee should have already undergone the *lagna* rites. Otherwise he is formally married to a plant, which is chopped off moments later to render him eligible for remarrage. But such instances are said to be almost unknown at all the places visited for the study.

(d) Death

Among Mahars, the dead are usually buried. Corpses of pregnant women are, however, cremated. In the case of normal deaths, as the final moment approaches the members of the household gather round the person and pour drops of water (*Tuisi* water or *Bilva* water or *Thirtha*) into his mouth. After death of the person messages are sent through caste fellows of the neighbourhood to the close relatives of the deceased, living in nearby villages. The corpse is detained till their arrival. It is washed in warm water by the sons or brothers of the deceased (women attend to a female corpse) and dressed in new clothes or else shrouded in a piece of new white cloth. It is seated on the 'Pial' of the house, with its legs folded and the chin held upright with (*mukhada arive*) a piece of cloth passing below the chin and fastened to a peg driven to the wall slightly above the head of the corpse. Joss sticks and incense are burnt, flowers are showered on the corpse and its forehead smeared with (*vibhuti*) sacred ash. A coconut is broken and an oil lamp (*arathi*) is waved before it. Meanwhile grave-diggers (members of their own caste) proceed to the grave and a few others prepare a *parimela* (chair like device for carrying the dead) or a *sidgi* or *Kamana* (flat bamboo bier). The body is transferred to the bier and four persons carry it to the grave. (The corpses of children are usually wrapped in a cloth and carried in the arms of a relative and is put to rest on its back in the grave with its head to the South and the extended feet to the North). In Chidri of Bidar, it was reported that, instead of their past custom of allowing only a single set of four men to bear the burden, other adult male participants in the funeral also help to carry the corpse for some distance on the way to the grave. On reaching the pit, the bier is placed on the ground and again the corpse is worshipped and one by one the assembled persons pour a few drops of water in which the leaves of *bilva* (egg-le Marmelos) are kept immersed. The body is carefully lowered and placed in the niche in the pit, facing the South. The *Mukhada arive* is removed and so also all the old clothes on the body are gradually removed as the pit gets filled up. The *rumala* (turban) is removed from the corpse by an elderly man and placed on the bare head of the

eldest son of the deceased (i.e., the chief mourner and successor). The task of filling in the pit is initiated by the sons and brothers of the deceased or else by some elderly men and thereupon others join them. When this is over, all the persons hold a few *bilva* leaves each and after prayers place them on the grave. The *Yajamana* (head) of the household to which the deceased belonged (the chief mourner) puts a few coins also on the grave—this being called *Bhumi Kanike* (offerings to earth) which are later taken away by the grave diggers. The *Mukhada arive* is discarded nearby and large stone slabs are placed on the grave with a view to preventing the wild animals from exhuming the body. Women may also take part in the funeral rites among the Mahars. The party then gets back to the house where the death occurred bathing en route at a wayside well, stream or tank. On approaching the house each one sprinkles water (kept in a pot near the house) from a twig of neem, and then glance at the lamp lit inside the house (and placed on the place where death occurred which has been rendered pure by smearing cow dung). They are then free to depart to their respective places. The members of the household in which the death occurred partake of *Sappananna* (or its variant) i.e., food to which no salt, tamarind or spice is added.

At Nippani it was reported that, in case the death is suspected to have occurred as an act of some evil spirit (and in case of the dead pregnant women) all along the journey to the grave, the mourners go on throwing behind them some cereals usually ragi (elousine corocona), with a view to preventing the spirit also moving along with the corpse. It is believed that the spirit engages itself in feeding on the cereals and fails to pursue the corpse or the other members of the household. In certain villages of North Kanara district the Mahars reported that if a pregnant woman dies, the members of the household offer in sacrifice a fowl at the shrine of (or in the name of) the *Amma* or Goddess of *Kankon* (a village in Goa territory). This measure is resorted to because of their belief in the efficacy of that Goddess to counter ghosts and evil spirits.

They observe pollution for 3, 5, 9 or 11 days depending upon the local practices and also convenience of the persons concerned. The agnatic kinsmen of the deceased are held impure and during such a period they abstain from non-vegetarian food, from offering pujas to Gods and if possible from any economic activity also. On the third day, food is offered at the grave to the spirit of the deceased—the rite being called *halerudu baruvudu* in and around Talavada (K) and by different names in different areas. There may

also be variations in details of the rite. The premises are whitewashed and floorspace is layed with dung. All over the house cow's urine (*Gota*) is sprinkled as the purificant. All the members of the family bathe and purify themselves, by sipping a few drops of *thirtha* obtained from their caste headman, Ingayat jangama or a temple. The chief mourner accompanied by a few relatives and carrying cooked food in a pot visits the grave, where pouring some milk on to a *donne* (leaf cup) he places it on the grave. Before this cup is laid out a plantain leaf and the food brought along is served. Some joss-sticks are burnt and prayers are offered. The party then waits at a distance till crows (or any other birds) arrive and touch the food. They then return home and washing their limbs enter the house. The same day the pall bearers and a few more relatives are feasted. According to the Mahars of Chidri near Bidar, on the fifth day an earthen manikin is prepared at home, shrouded in the *Mukhada arive* is carried by the mourners and a few onlookers on a bamboo float to a nearby river or stream. Puja is offered to it and alongside it, in a lump of cooked meal on oil wick light is also lit. The float with the manikin and the light is then let afloat the stream and the party gets back home and a feast for which *holige* (sweet pan cakes) is the main dish is held. The funeral feast may be held on the ninth, eleventh or any other day according to convenience and local practice. In North-Kanara it is said to be held on the twelfth day.

Among Mahars, formerly the custom of the chief mourner walking around the grave on the day of disposal of the dead or on the day of purification, carrying on his left shoulder a pot of water and at the end of the third round casting it on the ground and breaking it was widely prevalent. So also, the chief mourner had to shave on the day of purification but this too, has been given up during the past 15-20 years in most of the villages. In memory of the dead, a brass fascimile used to be bought and placed for worship in the house but this custom too has been declining fast. A few Mahars have in imitation of socially advanced castes (in Chidri and also other places) perform *S'radda* or death anniversaries. *Hiriyara puja* (worship of ancestors) is however held in every household during *pitru paksha* (second fortnight of Bhadrpada (September month) or on the New Moon day preceding the Ugadi or Deepavali festival. On this occasion, a pot full of water is worshipped and alongside are kept images, if any, and a set of new clothes. The dishes prepared for the day are served in a plantain leaf before it and later, consumed by the family members.

X. RELIGION

According to the 1961 Census (*vide* Vol. XI. Mysore Part-V-A Table S.C.T. IV) the Mahars are Hindu by religion. However, the field study in parts of Bidar district revealed that a loosely organised movement has been initiated (for some time past) by their own caste leaders with a view to preparing the Mahars for ultimate conversion to Neo-Buddhism. As a preliminary step vegetarianism and abstention from liquor are being preached and several families are reported to have gladly accepted the change in their dietary habits. The masses have, it seems, been instructed to talk less about these matters to strangers and also to the aggressive and conservative villagers. The cult of Doctor Ambedkar (called Baba Saheb) has been popularised in most of the villages and everywhere, those who subscribe to the movement celebrate his birth anniversary, on the fourteenth of April. Moreover in most of their houses, in Bidar and Bhalki taluks the people worship the picture of Dr. Ambedkar along with the pictures, if any of the Gods of the Hindu Pantheon. Some social workers (*Precharaka*) of their own caste move about from village to village singing verses and poems which elaborate the tenets of the new faith. Such verses are eagerly adopted, by the informal Bhajan groups of Mahars in the villages and are sung in chorus on occasions. At Chidri, because of the relatively large concentration of the community, the movement appears to be strong while at Talavada (K) it apparently seems to be feeble. Towards the end of 1967, the Mahars of Chidri prepared a statue of Dr. Ambedkar and when everything was ready on an appointed day took out a procession and mounted the statue at one of the important squares of Bidar on the *Chatri*—the open umbrella-like construction at the traffic island to protect the police man from the elements. The opposition voiced by a few caste-Hindu people of Bidar, it is said, was futile and no untoward incident took place according to the informants.

The Mahars of Bidar district do not appear to have embraced Christianity in recent years, while there have been reports of large scale conversions from amongst the Mangs, another numerically important Scheduled Caste of the district. When questioned about their attitude to taking up Christianity the Mahar informants expressed that such a conversion would not result in any real "elevation of the self", for they can continue to consume liquor and flesh. On the other hand if they chose Buddhism it was because in pursuance of the doctrine of *Ahimsa*, they would abstain from liquor and flesh and also from injuring or killing any animal. Such a change in their dietary

habits, would, it is felt naturally give them a higher place in the social hierarchy of castes in their respective villages and also the stigma of untouchability would disappear. The informants opined that the ultimate aim of the movement was to persuade the converted Mangs also to embrace the new faith and abandon their unclean habits.

Among the Mahars there are both Shaivites (worshippers of Shiva) and Vaishnavites (worshippers of Vishnu). In North Kanara district the Shaivites acknowledge the Supremacy of the pontiff of the Brahmanical monastery at Sringeri as their religious head. But, in the Maidan districts of Dharwar, Bijapur, parts of Belgaum, Gulbarga, etc., where the influence of the Veerashaiva faith is strong the Mahars generally acknowledge the supremacy of Lingayat Swamijis and Jangamas. However, in villages as they are said to be denied access to the local temples at which the caste-Hindus worship it is only occasionally that they offer pujas through priests while they themselves stand outside the precincts. Such a restriction has disappeared in the large towns during the past two decades. At Bidar, on the occasion of Shivarathri festival, the Mahars too bathe at Papanashini stream and visit temples.

They revere Hanuman, Rama, Krishna, Eswara (under various names of His manifestation), Basava (the divine bull and vehicle of Lord Shiva), Basaveswara the great reformer, Panduranga and many other gods of the Hindu tradition. They also offer worship to Bhavani, Durga, Maramma, Marigemmma, Pochamma and such other female deities as may be popular in their respective sub-regions. Generally they maintain a small shrine in their own residential locality especially for the female deities which require frequent propitiation. Marigemmma shrines are said to be common in Bidar and Bhalki taluks. In Umarani of Belgaum district, the mahars have a temple enshrining Sthaladappa or Thaladappa (a deity or spirit of local importance to the caste) symbolised in a *gad-duge* (tomb like structure). The Mahars of North Kanara usually have a *Tulsikatte* (an altar in which a sweet basil plant is reared) in their yards and they also (like many other socially advanced castes of the region) keep a cocoanut with husk, inside their homes for worship. (This cocoanut is periodically renewed). Among the other favourite Gods revered by the Mahars of North Kanara Venkataramana, Shanta Durga, Maramma of Sirsi and Mahadev may be mentioned. In former days Mahars used to offer animal sacrifices to propitiate their female deities but now this custom has greatly declined. As a protective

measure against epidemics the villagers used to collectively arrange for the periodic propitiation of Goddesses. At such community ceremonies, the Mahars had the privilege of killing the sacrificial animal (cf Enthoven, 1922 II PP 413 ff). A *Bhutalya* (functionary from Mahar caste—Bidar district) after such a sacrifice was required by the village community to circumambulate the village boundary at about midnight to ensure that the Goddess had been duly satisfied. However, to most of the contemporary Mahars such incidents have become mere memories of the past. The Marikamba fair at Sirsi where innumerable animals such as buffaloes, sheep, goats and fowls were being sacrificed every year and on that account the shrine had acquired fame in several districts outside the State also, has during the past 20 years, become a purely religious affair and now animal sacrifice has been totally given up (cf Census of India, 1961, Vol. XI-Mysore-Part-VI-Village Survey Monograph 'Banavasi').

Mahars observe most of the festivals observed by the Hindu of their respective villages. The important festivals are *Ugadi* (Lunar New Year), *Nagar Panchami*, *Dasara*, *Deepavali* (festival of lights) and *Shivarathri* (the night dedicated for Lord Shiva). Besides in most of the villages of Bidar and Bhalki taluks (and also elsewhere according to the informants at Bidar) the Mahars celebrate Dr. Ambedkar's birthday on the fourteenth of April. *Ugadi* is the occasion for offering pujas to the set of five stones placed in the agricultural lands owned or held by the household representing the Pandavas, to the bullocks and to the plough or the harrow. On the same day they formally start ploughing. At one of the temples, usually of Maruthi, all the villagers including the Mahars assemble to witness the *puja* and then listen to the reading of *Panchanga* (almanac) and the interpretation provided by the priest. On the occasion of Nagar Panchami, among Mahars too, the daughters of the household are invited and given some clothes or some other presents. Stone images of cobra and ant-hills are worshipped by pouring fresh milk on them and the women spend their time joyfully in groups, singing and swinging underneath large shade-bearing trees. *Dasara* is a community festival and Mahars too participate particularly on the tenth day when the *utsava moorthies* (procession images) of the Gods in the temples are taken to a *banni* tree (*prosopis specigera*) where, after due worship, a branch is ceremonially cut. The people gather the leaves and on return to the village exchange the leaves as a token of goodwill. The agricultural implements are worshipped on the ninth (Navami) day. At Chidri, the informants indicated

that the Mahars have been conducting this festival separately since about 1960 because of some misunderstandings with the other residents of the village. On this occasion they carry the picture of Dr. Ambedkar to the *banni* plant and as of old exchange the leaves mostly among themselves. *Deepavali* is the occasion for performing puja to *Lakshmi* (Goddess of wealth) and also to the cows. *Shivarathri* is not observed by all the Mahars and at all places. At Thalavada (K) for instance they do not observe it while at Chidri the Mahars fast and pray all through the night and also bathe in the Papanashini stream and offer worship in a temple. *Holi* (burning of *Kama*) is another important festival and in most of the villages the Mahars make a separate bonfire and according to tradition in many villages it is only after the lighting of the Mahar's *Holi* pyre, the other one (of the caste Hindus) is lit. In several villages of Bidar and Bhalki Taluks, it was reported that Mahars too have been of late (since 1950 or so) observing *Raksha Bandhan* on the full moon day of Shravan (July-August) in imitation of caste Hindus. Whereas among the caste Hindus a priest (Jangam or a Brahmin or a man of Hugar caste) visits each household and fastens the *Rakhi*, among Mahars, their own headman officiates. In his absence they help each other.

Mahars believe in transmigration, and also believe that meritorious deeds lead to heaven while for the sins committed men are bound to be punished either during their own life time or in their future lives.

XI. LEISURE AND RECREATION

The General economic conditions of Mahars are such that most of their men and women have to work hard, everyday, to earn even a marginal living. Besides, the time required for domestic chores such as gathering fuel, fetching water from distant wells, cooking and taking care of infants is also considerable. The few moments of leisure that they are able to snatch in their daily routine is usually spent in gossip. Children of their own caste and locality join together during their leisure hours to play some local games like hide and seek, marbles, tops and games with a cloth ball. Like the other children in the villages they too enjoy kite-flying during the season (usually during *Dasara* in Bidar district). This apart, Mahars occasionally witness open-air dramas that are performed in the villages in their neighbourhood. Cinemas are only occasional and it is generally the youngmen and women that are more interested in these. They attend fairs and car festivals that are organised in villages and towns of their respective regions. These occasions

provide them welcome opportunity to visit their relatives and enjoy a short spell of carefree existence. When the fairs and festivals are celebrated in their own villages they play host to some of their close kith and kin, and despite incurring some expenditure, they enjoy the social occasion.

In villages with some recognisable strength of the community, there will generally be an organised (or more commonly an informal) *Bhajan Mandali*. Men assemble at some convenient place or at their own shrine, if any, at least once a week and spend an hour or two singing devotional songs. Such associations usually possess a few musical instruments such as *Shriti pettige*, harmonium, *tabala* (percussion instrument) and cymbals. Once a year during Shravan (July-August) they would organise *akhand bhajan* (singing devotional songs continuously throughout the night) and invite fellow castemen from outside their villages. Women do not participate in such Bhajans but they sit a little distance away and listen or el'e while away their time in gossip.

XII. RELATION AMONG DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

Mahars are not divided into any recognised segments. There is social interaction between groups living beyond the State borders irrespective of the fact that their mother tongues are sometimes different. Regarding Mahars within the State, it may be stated that they are aware of the presence of their fellow castemen in the different districts especially those bordering Maharashtra territory. Distance, however, is a great disincentive for greater social interaction. The Mahars of any particular village will generally have a set of villages and towns where they have personal contacts with their fellow castemen and marital alliances are contracted usually within this sub-region. This may cut across taluk and district boundaries and what matters most is the geographic contiguity. In former days it seems there were segments on the basis of specific occupation or function. But now all are considered equal. The educated in the community identify themselves with the rest of their brethren and the villagers in particular feel happy to recount the number of educated men and women of the community and those personally known to them. They are at an advantage in that they can read newspapers and follow events in the country and disseminate their knowledge to the illiterate. The aged are respected and in former days leadership was their prerogative. But now youngmen are considered capable of managing the affairs of the community as leaders.

XIII. INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Mahars have been in the past village servants who were assigned unclean tasks such as sweeping the streets, carrying away and disposing of dead animals, digging graves etc. Their touch was considered defiling by all the caste-Hindus and at one point of time it appears even their shadow was thought sufficient to defile a caste Hindu, in certain areas (Enthoven 1922 II P. 402). However such a situation no longer exists now even in remote villages. The very orthodox try to avoid the touch of Mahar especially the one of their own village or else known to be of that caste. Mahars are not generally served by Brahmin purohits during their marriage and death ceremonies. However, they do act as consultants for a small fee and indicate the auspicious days for holding ceremonies, find out whether a proposed marital alliance will come off well, specify whether the moment of a death or a birth was auspicious or not, etc. Enthoven (*ibid*) reports of a custom in certain tracts according to which the Brahmin priest conducted the Mahars marriage while standing at a distance. Corroborative information could not be obtained in places visited for the present study. In the absence of Brahmin priests, the Mahars resort to the services of Jangams (Lingayat priests) which are also on the same lines. The village barbers and washerman do not normally render services to Mahars nor do they do so on special occasions. In towns, the past restrictions have vanished and Mahars now have access to the public hair-cutting saloons and laundries. They do not, however, requisition the services of such functionaries for ceremonies (such as tonsure, marriage, death) in their homes. Discrimination was being practised by caste Hindus with regard to the entry of the erstwhile untouchables to shops, hotels and other public places. These continue, though not as rigidly as in the past in villages. In hotels run in villages, Mahars are served food and beverages in a separate corner and in exclusive dishes which they themselves have to wash. In consumer stores too they stand at a little distance and make their purchases. The village temples, where mostly the caste-Hindus offer worship, are not freely accessible to Mahars. They may however stand outside the precincts and offer pujas through the caste Hindu priests. The villagers, generally, accede the constitutional rights, enjoyed by the socially backward caste groups, of entry to all public places and contend that the Mahars themselves being conscious of their own tradition and unclean habits dread the divine fury, and so do not insist on gaining entry to temples. In several towns temples have been thrown open to all castes and in all such places (for example Lakshmi Narasimha Tem-

ple at Bidar) Mahars do visit and offer worship. In almost all villages with some considerable strength of Mahars, there is a drinking water well for their exclusive use. Such wells may not be used by other scheduled castes (such as Mangs, Dhors etc). The right of access of one and all to public wells is generally accepted but the villagers soon make separate arrangements. The Mahars too are indifferent to, assert the rights that have been conferred on them by the Constitution, conscious as they are of their own economic, social and educational backwardness. Some leaders of their community who are eager to effect some real change and are aware of the numerical strength and spread of their caste, are in recent years trying to organise them for social and political action. In Bhalki and also Bidar for instance, there is one unit office of the Republican Party and also of Bheemasena. Information about the membership and activities of the Bheemasena are not divulged to outsiders but it could however be gathered that there are a few thousand members in Bidar and Bhalki Talukas and that they are all Mahars.

XIV. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The effectiveness of caste panchayats at village and regional level has gradually declined during the post Independence years. Formerly, each village had a caste headman called Mehtarayya, Yajaman, Budwant, etc., in the various regions. His office was hereditary. It was his duty to organise his fellow castemen for any common action, render service during birth, death and marriage ceremonies, preside over meetings of caste councils at which the heads of all the households of their caste in the village participated and settle disputes. Such councils could levy heavy fines and the powerful punishment possible was ex-communication of the offender. A group of their villages constituted a sub region (called *Mahal* in North Kanara district and *Kattemane* in Kannada speaking areas) and the headman at this level settled intervillage disputes and also those which could not be reconciled at the village level. Mahars of North Kanara are and were in the past, grouped into the following five territorial divisions called Mahals:—(i) Ponda (a place in Goa), (ii) Kadwad in Karwar taluk, (iii) Ankola, (iv) Mirjan of Kumta taluk and (v) Chandavar of Honavar taluk.

The caste councils were mainly concerned about cases of adultery, desertion and divorce, exchange of blows with leather footwear, transgression of commensal and connubial norms of the caste and the like. Nowadays, people evince little interest in these matters and if a conflict arises an informal council is assem-

bled and the matter settled. The advice and assistance of the influential leaders of the village are also sought and this is true in case of disputes involving people from different villages too. The caste headman at village level continues to be recognised but his functions are few and his influence, greatly reduced.

XV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

In an attempt to raise their social status many Mahars have in several villages given up consumption of carrion and even beef. Secondly, tasks assigned to them in the past such as removing dead animals, sweeping streets, cleaning of the cattle sheds in caste Hindu households, digging graves, keeping a watch over the village entrance etc., have been gradually abandoned by them during the post-Independence period. This has been possible because the villagers and their leaders, in general, are aware of the changes being introduced by the State in the Political and Socio-Economic situation of the country. The educated and also the youngmen of the community are eager to forget their past. In recent years, there appears to be a preparatory movement in certain areas (for example Bidar, Bhalki) for an ultimate change of faith. The ideals of *Ahimsa*, vegetarianism and abstention from intoxicants are being preached and inculcated in the caste.

It is well known that Government has been the main (if not the sole) welfare agency working country wide for the economic, educational and material uplift of the Scheduled Castes. Mahars too have been benefitted to some extent by the schemes implemented from time to time by the Government. Among them may be found a few who have acquired lands for self cultivation on application; a few who have received grants or subsidies for construction of houses and a number of students who were granted scholarships and free hostel facilities during their studies. In most of the taluks, co-operative Housing Societies have been functioning in recent years for the benefit of the scheduled castes. Those members owning house sites can secure a loan

of Rs. 3,000 repayable in easy instalments. The society at Bidar taluk, has 970 members on its rolls and 120 houses were under construction in September 1969. Again, at Bhatambra in Bhalki taluk about 24 houses were under construction at this time. These are merely illustrative and actual statistics about the number of Mahars, in different areas, who have joined the co-operatives or have been beneficiaries of the various schemes of the Government are not available. In the places visited for the study no other organisation was found engaged in the welfare of the Mahars.

CONCLUSION

Mahars have been returned mainly from the areas adjacent to the borders of Maharashtra. They and also the other people of the region are well aware that Mahars are the exact counterparts of the Holers of Karnatak and the difference in nomenclature is only a matter of language. Both these caste names are used in this bilingual zone and in areas where colloquial Urdu (Hindustani) is prevalent Dhed is also used as a synonym. In days of yore, they formed part of and served the village communities in a menial capacity attending to tasks which were regarded as physically and also socially unclean. Their touch was considered defiling by the caste Hindus and they had no access to public places. Economically, they were mere servants and landless labourers solely dependent on the farmers and landlords for their existence. Their economic and social conditions were too low for them to provide any formal education to their children. It is only since the past 3 or 4 decades that a wind of change is blowing and its intensity has increased during the post-Independence period. In most places they have already given up the demeaning tasks and also some of their unclean habits of the past. The treatment meted out to them by the caste Hindus has also improved and in towns and some large villages the discrimination they once suffered has almost vanished. In the field of education and economic life too at least a few among them have become successful.

9. MANGS

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Mangs have been notified as a Scheduled Caste according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes List (Modification) Order, 1956 in the Districts of Gulbarga, Raichur, Bidar, Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara in Mysore State. In the Belgaum Division consisting of the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara, the Mangs are notified with synonyms viz., Matang and Mini Madig. By the same order they are notified as a Scheduled Caste in the whole of Orissa and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Though Mangs claim Madiga or Madar as synonym of their caste, Madigas have been listed as a separate caste in the Gulbarga Division. Only the language they speak seems to be the basis for their being called by different names. In areas where there is the predominance of Marathi language, the members of this caste call themselves Mangs. In these areas the Kannada speaking section of the population calls the same caste by the names Madiga, Matang and Mini Madig. According to Enthoven "The Mangs have three main territorial divisions: (i) Maratha Mangs known as Mangs, (ii) Kanarese Mangs or Madigs, and (iii) Gujarat Mangs or Mange'as, who neither eat together nor intermarry". (The Tribes and Castes of Bombay, 1922, Vol. II, P. 434). Even in the Bombay Gazetteer for the districts of Belgaum and Bijapur the Mangs and Madigs are treated as one and the same caste.

Regarding their origin Enthoven writes "The Tribe is described in Sanskrit literature by the name Matang of which Mang is a corrupted form. In the Kanarese districts, the Madigs are often addressed as Mangs and vice versa. In Gujarat the Mangelas, who follow the occupation of fishing, are now regarded as a separate caste. Regarding the origin of Mangs, it is held by them that they are descended from Jambrishi, who had seven sons, one of whom named Karkamuni was offered by him to the earth. Karkamuni had two sons, Madar Chanaya and Niluchandava. The former was sentenced to be a Mahar by Shankar for having eaten his cow and the latter to be a Mang for having gone before Shankar with his body sprinkled with the blood of the cow. Their dark complexion, features, and the fact that they are held impure point to their being one of the aboriginal tribes whom the later settlers reduced to slavery" (P-434).

Enthoven mentions following endogamous divisions among them:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Asal Mangs, Gastis Marathas or Mangs proper | 13. Kakar |
| 2. Burud | 14. Kokalvar |
| 3. Bale | 15. Manbhav |
| 4. Chapalsande | 16. Mang Garudi or Mhaisbadre |
| 5. Dabkar | 17. Mochi |
| 6. Desur | 18. Nade, Nudar or Khot ra |
| 7. Dhakalvar, Dakkalgar or Vajantri Mangs | 19. Parit |
| 8. Dhors | 20. Pend or Ped |
| 9. Ghadshi | 21. Shivate |
| 10. Jingar | 22. Telangi |
| 11. Holge or Holar | 23. Tokar Phode |
| 12. Jiraitis | 24. Zare |
| | 25. Musalman |

According to the Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, District Belgaum "They are divided into Madigerus, Mochi Madigerus and Mang Rants, who do not eat together or inter-marry". According to the same Gazetteer (Bijapur District) "They are divided into Dalya Mangs, Mochi Mangs, Ped Mangs and Sandadi Mangs who eat together but do not inter-marry".

According to the Gazetteer of Dharwar District "Madigars or Mangs are returned as as found all over the District. They do all the leather-work required for field purposes, and, in return, are allowed to take away all cattle that may die in husbandman's houses and receive gifts or grain during harvest time. They generally live on outskirts of villages and towns. They have two divisions Madigars and Asadarus" (P-218. 1884).

"Of these some have Akarmashe or bastard division. The Assal Mangs are considered to be the highest in social rank. In Sholapur their leavings are eaten by the Holar Mangs and Dakalvars. In some places, the Tokarphodes and Kakars call themselves Maratha Mangs, but they do not eat together. The Kakalvars are the Mangtes or bards and priests of other Mangs". (Enthoven R. E.). Kanarese Mangs or Madigs have

the following sub divisions:

1. Asadaru

2. Channa Holey

3. Dakaleru

4. Dabke Madig

5. Dalya

6. Dhors

7. Mangs Gadderu
8. Mang Gadiger

9. Mini Madig

10. Mochigar or Mochi

11. Ped or Phed

12. Mang Raut

13. Sanadi or Vajantri

Though the above sub divisions are mentioned as sub-castes among Mangs or Madies, some of them like Channa Holey, Dhors, and Mochis are independent castes without any kind of affinity with Mangs or Madigs. This is also ascertained in the field. During the course of field study we came across only some sub-castes viz., Asal Mangs, Dakkaleru, Mini Madig, Mang Rauts, and Sanadi or Vajantri. Asal Mangs work on leather, Mini Madigs are traditional rope (mini) makers. The Mang Rauts are Marathi speaking snake-charmers, and Sanadi's are traditional musicians serving their community.

"Asadarus are a class of Madigars who are set apart to dance before and abuse the goddess Dyamavva during her fair. When they dance both men and women wear long curiously worked, and dirty gowns. The women dance and the men hang large drums round their necks and make a horrible noise" (Dharwar District Gazetteer).

Dakaleru or Dakkalgar, are said to be found in very small numbers in some of the villages of Bijapur, Raichur and Gulbarga districts. They are vagrants generally carrying with them dogs and bitches. Dakkalgars occupy the lowest position among Mangs. Generally they live on alms given by Mangs and Mahars. They are also called Sopachas or Svapachavvas meaning men of very low or degraded caste—dog-feeders. They are not allowed to enter a village or even its Mangwada. Dakkaligars are not even allowed to touch the sources of water supply from which Mangs and Mahars fetch drinking water (Enthoven).

II. LOCATION

Mangs are found in the States of Mysore, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In the State of Mysore they are found in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar, North Kanara, Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur. The

ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES ON S. C. OF 1961

distribution of their population in various districts where they are scheduled is as under:

		Males	Females	Total
I.	1. Belgaum . . .	3730	3715	7445
	2. Bijapur . . .	1242	1419	2661
	3. Dharwar . . .	84	112	196
	4. North Kanara . .	10	5	15
II.	1. Bidar . . .	9100	8539	17639
	2. Gulbarga . . .	371	388	759
	3. Raichur . . .	81	105	186
	Total . . .	14618	14283	28901

From the above table it may be deduced that their population is highly concentrated in districts bordering Maharashtra. Chikodi Taluk of Belgaum district and Bhalki Taluk of Bidar District have the largest proportions of their population.

III. DEMOGRAPHY

According to the 1961 Census the population of Mangs, Matang and Mini Madig is 28901 comprising of 14618 males and 14283 females. Of them 18584 or 64.3% are returned from the Gulbarga Division (Bidar District alone accounts for 61%) and 10317 are returned from the Belgaum Division (Belgaum district accounts for 25.7%). The percentage of males and females to the total population are 50.6 and 49.4 respectively.

The distribution of their population in 1961 by sex and age-groups and in rural and urban areas is as follows:—

Age-group	Males	Females	Total
0—14 . . .	6514	6224	12738
15—44 . . .	5758	5934	11692
45+ . . .	2335	2123	4458
Age not stated . . .	11	2	13
	14618	14283	28901
RURAL . . .	13528	12968	26496
URBAN . . .	1090	1315	2405

The statistics reveal that 44.07% of the population is in the broad age group of 0-14, 40.45% is in the age group of 15-44 and 15.42% in the age group of 45 and above. The percentages of population distributed in rural and urban areas are 91.67 and 8.33 respectively. Data in respect of the distribution of



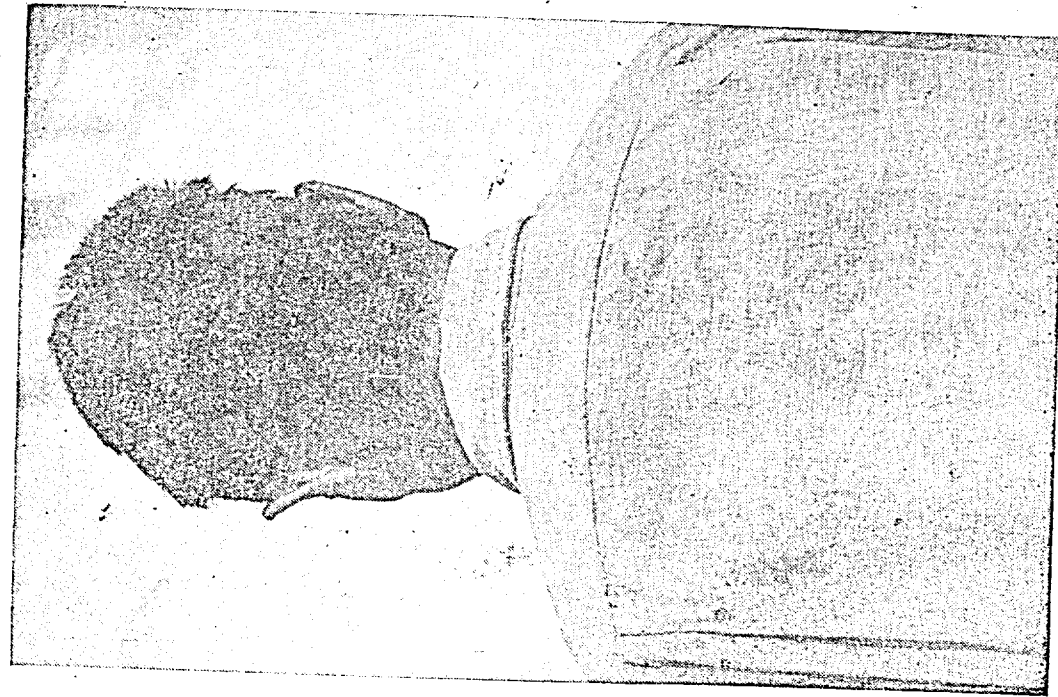
1 (b). Profile



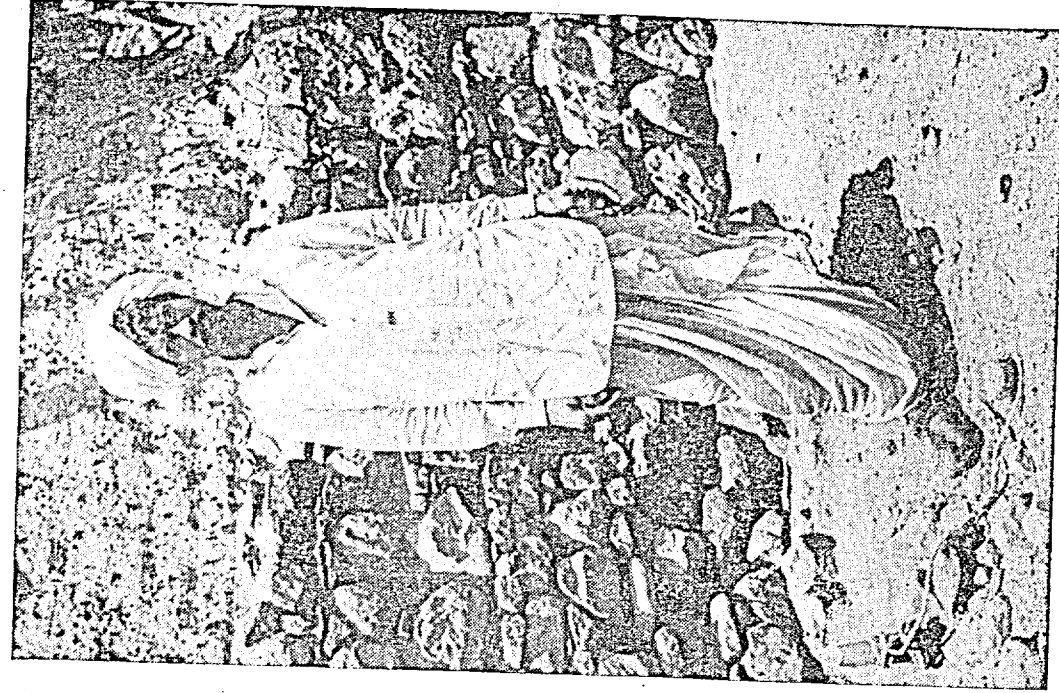
1 (a). Front view of a male

7 MANGS

MANGS



1 (c). As Viewed from behind



1 (d). Full size

184 (b)

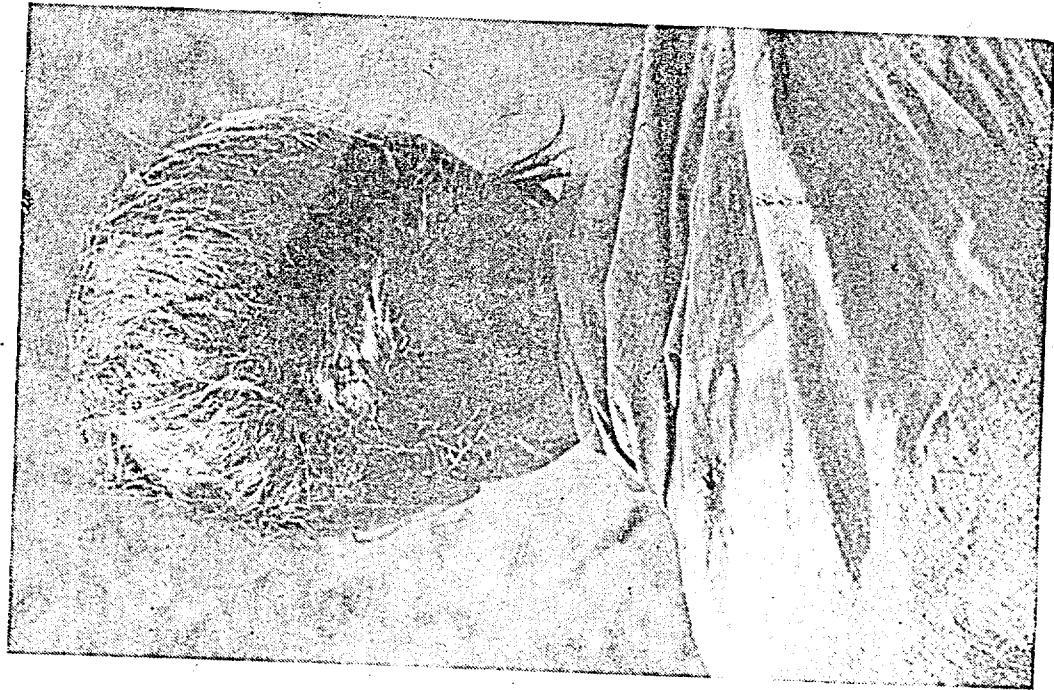


(a). Front-view female



2 (b). Profile

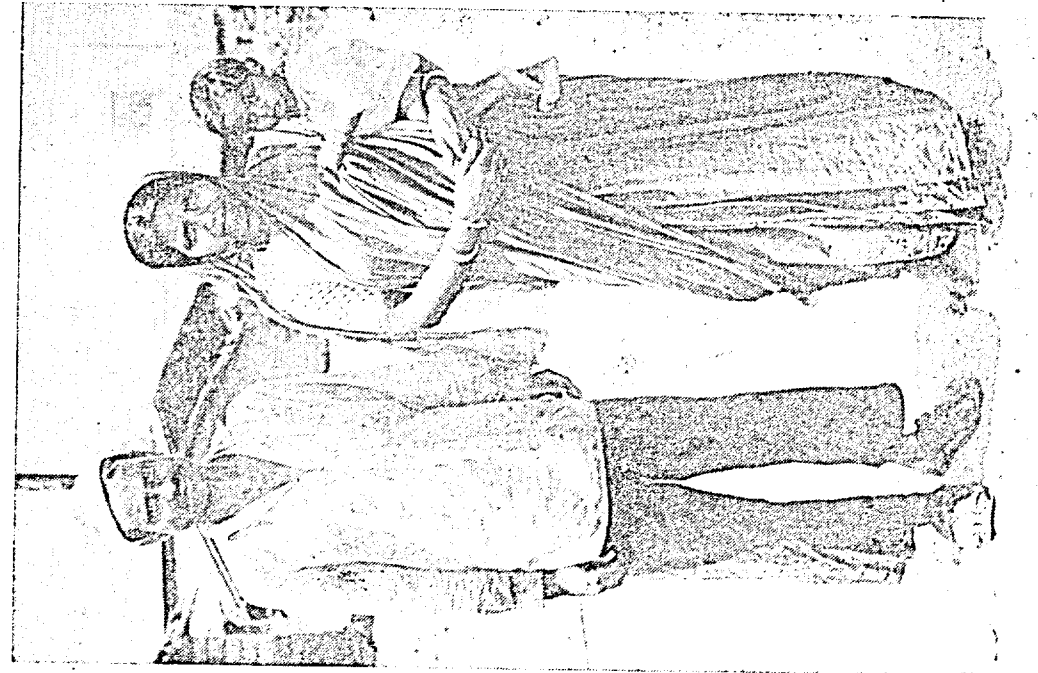
184 (c)



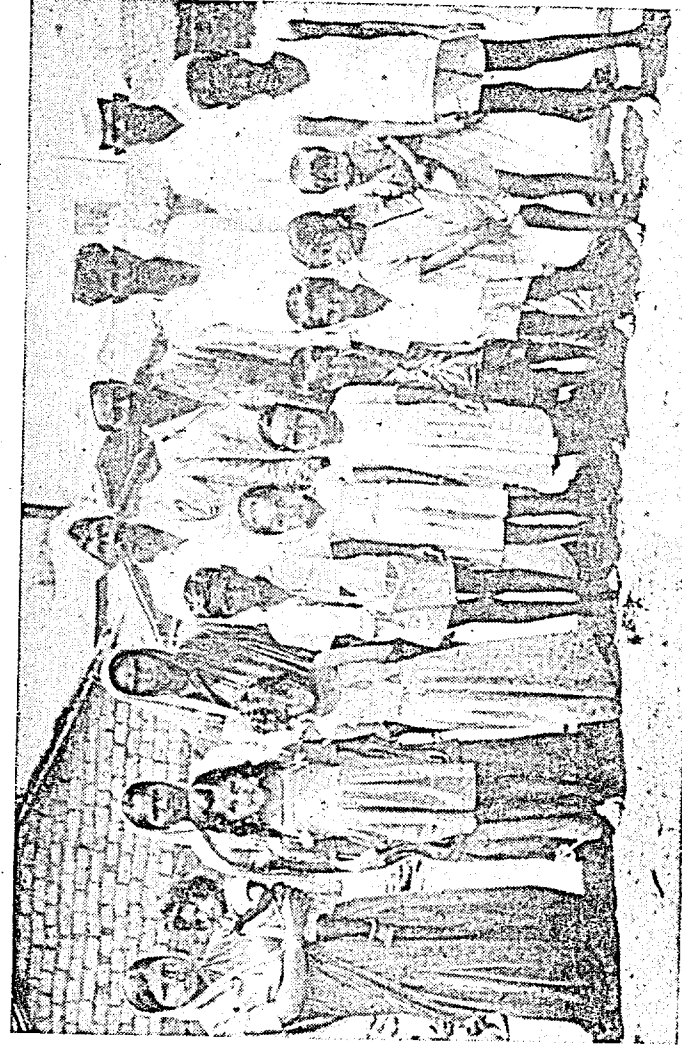
2 (c). As viewed from behind



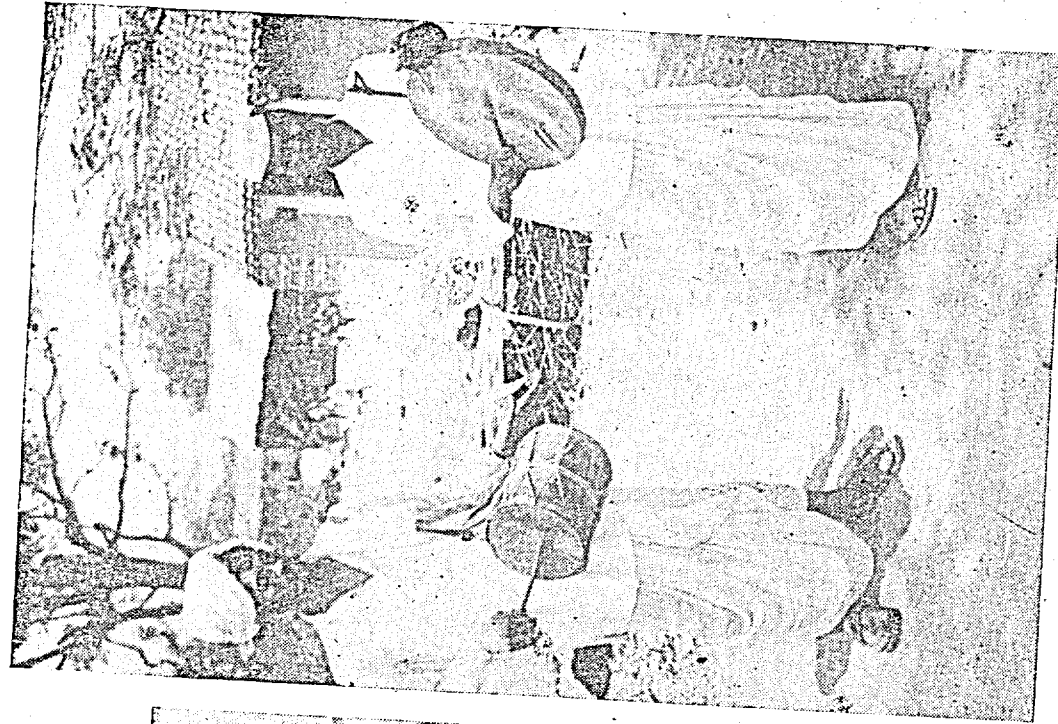
2 (d). Full size



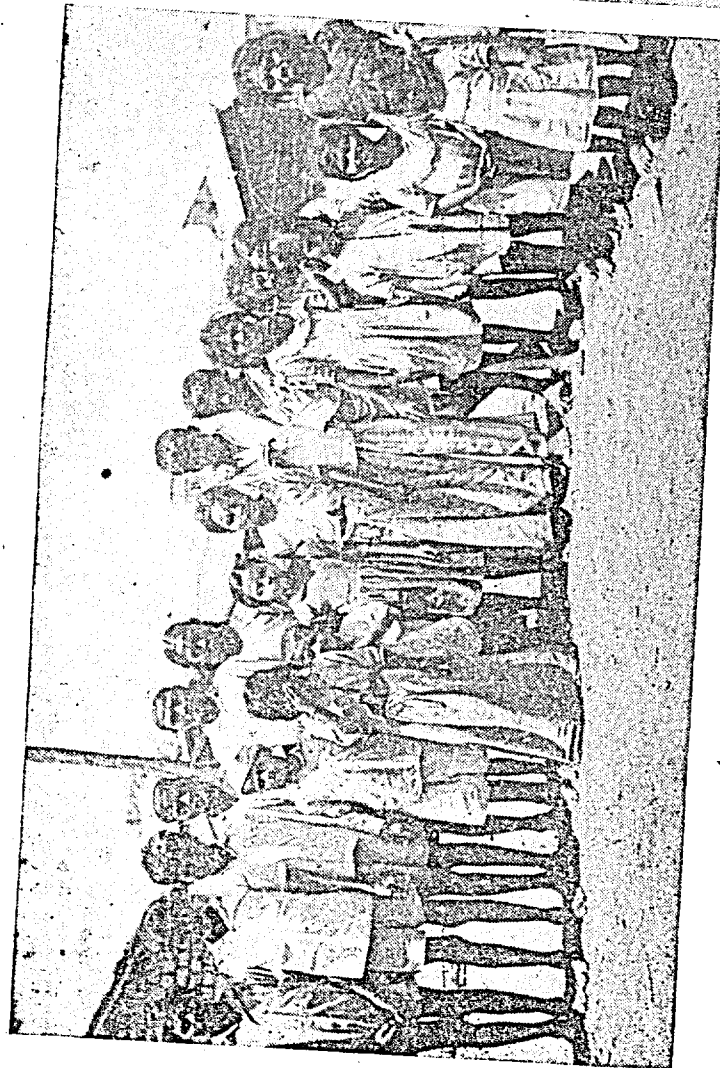
3. Couple with a child



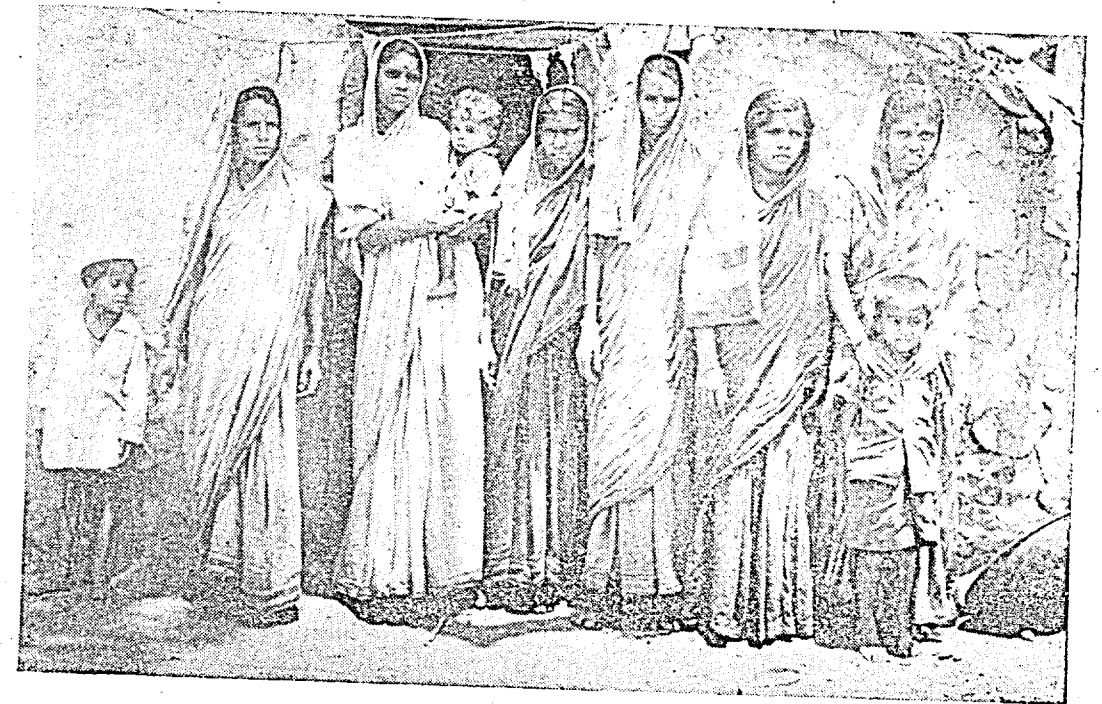
4. A group of males, females and children



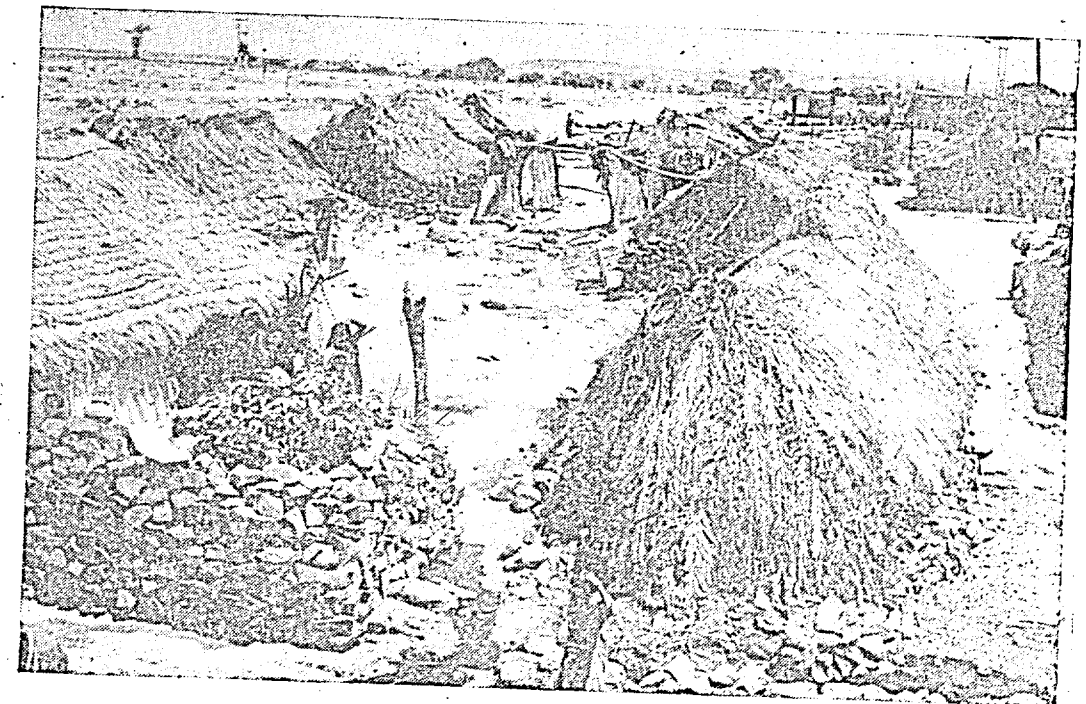
6. Mang males beating the drum and tambourin, which are their traditional musical instruments



5. A group of children



7. A group of females belonging to different age-groups



8. Partial view of a Mang settlement

population in different age-groups for rural and urban areas is not separately compiled. It is also not possible to analyse and compare (with the previous corresponding figures) the trends in the growth of their population as the areas in which they are scheduled were transferred to this State in 1956 from erstwhile Hyderabad and Bombay States as a result of the Reorganisation of States.

IV. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

According to Enthoven "As a class, Mangs are tall, coarse featured, and strongly made and the whites of their eyes are generally bloodshot. They can be easily recognised from Kunbis by their darker complexion. The hair on their face and head is black and thick. Most of the men wear top-knot, moustache.

"Women tie the hair in Kunbi fashion. They do not use false hair or flowers. Their hands and arms are profusely tattooed, the figures of a cypress, scorpion and snake being preferred. A mark 111 will often be found tattooed on all fingers of the right hand, except the thumb, and a sun-flower on the back of the same hand. In dress and ornaments they resemble the Mahars" (Vol. II-Bombay: 1922, PP. 434-435).

V. FAMILY, CLAN AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

Simple families are more common among them. This may be mainly attributed to the predominance of agricultural labour. Only three joint families out of total house-holds of 15 families were come across at Karoshi village in Chikodi taluk which were mainly cultivating households. They are patrilineal and patrilineal by tradition and custom. When there are no male issues in the family the old practice was to dedicate one of the females in the family preferably one of the daughters as Jogti who was sole heir to the property. Normally, a family gets divided after the sons get married. In such cases the parents and the unmarried sisters usually stay with one of their sons. The size of the family, as observed in the course of the field study, varies between 4 and 6. The eldest member, usually the father is the head of the family. Both the mother and father are highly respected and obeyed. Mother plays a dominant role in social and other religious activities like marriage, birth and other ceremonies. Though living separately after marriage the sons sometimes continue to live under the same roof which is shared equally among all the

heirs. The married daughters continue to live with the parents till the consummation of marriage takes place. Active co-operation on the occasions of marriage and the performance of other religious rites can be found among the sons and daughters. Family of very common type consists of husband and wife with unmarried children. The married daughters are invited by the parents and brothers once or twice a year on festive and ceremonial occasions.

The District Gazetteers of Bombay Presidency and also Enthoven have equated Mangs with Madigs. Strictly speaking, Mangs are a Marati speaking caste and Madigas are Kannada speaking caste. In areas where both Marati and Kannada are spoken the terms Mang and Madiga are both used to designate the same caste. However, it was found in Madan Hipparga village in Aland taluk of Gulbarga district that these two castes were really differentiated. The outstanding difference noticed between these two was the language spoken and also the social institution of dedicating girls as *Jogtis* was not practised among Mangs, whereas it was practised among the Madigs. Elsewhere, Mangs who are Kannada speakers are found to have followed this system. Kannada Mangs and Maratha Mangs however do not intermarry or inter-dine.

Their leading surnames are Aivalyavaru, Bhandaryavaru, Honichiryavaru, Kamblyanavru and Kengar, names of which are peculiar to this caste. Persons bearing the same surname do not intermarry. Their surnames indicate the totems or exogamous divisions or *bedagu* or *Devak* (Marati) into which they are subdivided.

Enthoven mentions following *Bedagus* among the Kanarese Mangs or Madigs:

Aivallanavaru	Iragad
Avale	Kablyanavaru
Bhandaryavaru	Kengar
Ganikenavaru	Kumbalenavaru
Gantenavaru	Mashal
Honichiryavaru	Ojenavaru
Hule	Pandur
Hutre	

The exogamous divisions mentioned among Maratha Mangs are as follows:

Admane	Nande	Khavade	Gaikwad
Avle	Pardhi	Lakade	Jadhav
Bhode	Rajguru	Mohite	Jogdand
Dhongade	Shenge	Netke	Kamble

Gavli	Vairasgar	Pavar	Kote
Jagtap	Alhat	Satane	Lokhande
Kable	Avar	Sinde	More
Khade	Bhore	Vavrat	Palute
Kunchekar	Divate	Apte	Pitare
Londhe	Hunde	Bhise	Sathe
	Janavare	Chavan	Thokar
	Kalukhe		

The members of an identical *bedagu* are considered descendants from a common ancestor. They enter into marriage alliance only with the known families. The alliance is generally confined to a particular traditional area since generations. Their affinities and leanings are through the male agnatics.

Marriage with a father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter is predominant. Cross-cousin marriages are prevalent and widely practised among them as in the case of all other castes in the region.

VI. DWELLINGS, DRESS, FOOD, ORNAMENTS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

(a) Dwellings

Mangs are predominantly living in rural parts though a small number of them have settled down in towns. The habitat where they live is called *Mangwada* or *Madarkeri*. Being treated as untouchables they are found to be living on the outskirts of villages and towns. Their settlements are found to be just adjacent to those of other scheduled castes like Holer, Chalvadi and Mahars. They are found in almost all villages of Dharwar, Belgaum, Gulbarga and Bidar districts. Their number is significant in villages dominated by agriculturists. Mangs work as agricultural labourers, and cobblers and also attached labourers with big cultivators. In villages where there are no Holers or Mahars, they employ themselves as removers of dead animals which they used to consume in the past. For the services rendered to *ryots* they are paid in kind called *Bahuta* on annual basis. Generally in all the *Mangwad*s we find a temple dedicated to the goddess Dyamavva or Yellamma or Karevva in the midst of their houses. This temple besides being a place of worship on festive and ceremonial occasions also serves as a meeting place for the caste people. They perform *Bhajan*s and conduct meetings of the caste council in the temple. Their houses are spread in nucleated, linear and shapeless clusters in which are formed straight and curved streets, lanes and by-lanes. The houses are generally

built on both sides along streets and only on one side along lanes and by lanes. The shape of their settlement is generally irregular.

The Mangs mostly live in small low huts and mud houses. However, a few tiled houses have come up during the last 30 years or so. In Bijapur and Dharwar Districts country-tiled houses are more commonly come across. Their houses and huts have rectangular ground places. Only square ground plans are come across in the case of mud-roofed houses. The huts will have generally low walls and inclined thatched roofing having two slopes. The plinth of a hut varies between 150 and 200 square feet. The mud houses, which are more spacious than the huts have flat roofs and a little higher walls. The plinth area of such houses varies between 200 and 300 square feet. The mud and country-tiled houses are generally of equal size. The roofs of huts are generally covered with sugar-cane leaves, jowar stalks, date-palm leaves and cocoanut leaves over a network of bamboos. The walls of huts are low and are made of mud or of *kachha* bricks and random rubbles and thatched walls are made of either bamboos or jowar stalks plastered with mud. The roofs of mud houses are covered with bamboos and twigs of margosa tree over a network of beams and rafters supported by wooden and stone pillars. Country-tiles are obtained from the local potters at Rs. 30 per thousand and Mangalore tiles are obtained from the nearby trading towns. The plinth area of a house is generally measured in terms of *Ankana* which equals about 45 sq. ft. A foundation is necessarily provided for mud and tiled houses. Foundation is dug to a depth of about 3 feet and a plinth is prepared 2 feet above the ground level. The two-roomed structures are common and three-roomed structures are few. Of the two-roomed structures the smaller room which is also the interior one serves as kitchen-cum-dining room. The bigger one serves as a sleeping and also living room. In the two roomed apartments the cattle and other livestock, if any, are also tethered in the living room. These two apartments are generally separated by a short wall. The kitchen will normally have no door. The objects of worship, i.e., photos of deities like Basaveswara, Hanuman, Eswara, etc., are hung on walls or kept in niches. Well-to-do cultivators in villages generally live in three-roomed houses in which a portion is set apart for cattle and agricultural implements. The mud and tiled houses have levelled floors whereas the huts have unlevelled floors. The floors are washed once or twice a week with cow-dung. Stone slabs and lime mortar are occasionally used for the mud and tiled houses. Only the inner walls of the houses are white

washed once a year. The houses have no latrines and open fields are used for answering calls of nature. None of the houses are found having separate bath rooms. Bath is taken just in front of the houses. A stone slab is used for this purpose. The front door generally faces the east, or the north and south and west is avoided. The houses are generally dark and ill-ventilated. The water from the bath and also kitchen is simply let out to form cess pools. Mangs seem to pay little attention to house decoration. The main doors and the windows are simple and plain. The outer walls are neither neatly plastered nor white washed. Garbage and other refuse is just thrown out of the houses. The children and the young are seen answering calls of nature, in the vicinity of the front yards. Animal refuse is deposited just at the back of their habitat in the manure pits.

Before putting up a house the site is selected in their locality after consulting a Brahmin or Lingayat priest. Before starting construction, the house-site is worshipped on an auspicious day and a plan is drawn by an elderly man of the caste. This worship is called *Paya-puja*. The head of the household breaks a cocoanut, burns camphor and lights incense sticks. Some of the implements like pick-axe crow-bar, spade etc., which are used for house construction are placed in a corner of the site and are worshipped. In the case of mud and tiled houses the work is commenced with the digging of foundation and in the case of huts a wooden post is erected in the north-east corner of the site. Another worship called *Bagilu-puja* is performed while fixing the doorframe of the main entrance. House-warming ceremony is performed before the house is occupied by the inmates.

For construction of mud and tiled houses the Gounders belonging to Muslim and Bhovi caste are employed on piece rate basis. The unskilled labourers are employed on daily wages. In the case of huts most of the labour is contributed by the members of the household itself.

(b) Dress

The members of this caste about 50 years ago were, it is stated, used to only a loin cloth as the lower garment with a coarse woollen blanket slung over their shoulders. The common dress now, however, differs little from the other castes of the same social and economic status. The common dress of a male now is a half sleeved *Angi* or *Jubba*, *Dhoti* and a *rumal* (headgear). The present day youth prefer Gandhicap in place of *Rumal*. In urban and semi-urban areas

the use of pants and slacks is noticed among the youth. The common dress of a female consists of a saree and *kuppasa* as the lower and upper garment respectively. On festive and ceremonial occasions they use cleaner and a little costlier sets of dresses. The mode of wearing dress does not in any way differ from other castes in the region. It is only during busy agricultural seasons that women in the districts of Belgaum and North Kanara tuck up the ends of their sarees at the back while working in the fields. Male children use knickers and half-sleeved shirts. Females below 10 years old use frocks and jackets. The use of undergarments among both males and females is limited to the educated in urban areas.

The use of headgear is a must for elders while going out and also while attending religious and social ceremonies. The use of foot wear is limited to a very few elder members of the caste.

On account of their poor economic condition they can generally afford only one or two sets of dresses, which are washed by themselves once a week. They also accept old clothe from their employers and other patrons. The village washerman does not serve them. The use of soap is increasing for washing clothe. The aged males among them sport moustaches and grow tufts whereas the younger generation trim their hair and shave. Women knot their hair and girls plait them. Flowers are used on all ceremonial occasions.

(c) Food & Drink

The staple diet of Mangs, like other castes in the region, consists of jowar bread *Roti* or bread made of *Sajje* (bajra), pulses and vegetables. Millets are also consumed considerably. In the North Kanara district the staple diet consists of rice, *ragi* and other millets. The millets generally consumed are *Navane*, *Same* and *Arka*. Their holiday dishes are *Polies* (sweet cakes prepared with jaggery, *Tur dhal* and wheat flour) *Huggi* (sweet gruel) *Kajjaya*, *Kadubu* etc. Cooked rice and soup are taken only on special festive occasions with holiday dishes. The food is cooked in earthen pots and vessels of cheap metal. *Roti* is baked on a circular iron pan. Food is taken in aluminium and bronze plates. In the past it is said that they used take food in earthenware plates.

By tradition they are non-vegetarians. They formerly ate carrion but of late they have given up it. They eat beef, sheep, poultry and birds like kaujugs, parrots etc. They do not take pork. Seldom do they go for hunting of animals or birds. They catch fish

for their own consumption. They eat all kinds of fish. They rarely consume non-vegetarian food on account of its high cost.

The normal daily menu of a Mang consists of *Roti* and vegetable curry. Meals are taken thrice a day. The first meal is taken in the morning between 7 and 9 A.M., the second at noon and the third at night between 7 and 9 P.M., with same menu for all the meals. Food is cooked once a day. Morning meal is generally the left-over of the previous day's preparation. The second meal is generally carried to their place of work. The meal taken at noon is substantial whereas the one taken in the morning is very light. Medium of cooking is generally groundnut oil except in North Kanara where it is coconut oil. The commonly used vegetables are brinjal, onion and greens which are purchased in nearby shandies. Very few use milk and milk products. Spices and condiments are used only while preparing dishes and non-vegetarian food items. We find little variation in food habits with reference to age, occupation or season. Generally food is cooked and served by the mother or wife as the case may be. Meals are served first to the males and thereafter to the females and children. It is reported in the field that they cannot afford to take as much food as they require on account of their meagre income from wages. During slack agricultural season when their income falls they are forced to take two limited meals.

Tea is their common beverage which is taken at teashops. They are very fond of toddy (wild date-palm juice) which is taken to excess. Even now Mangs may be seen in their quarters drunk and quarrelling. They smoke tobacco hemp and chew *Pan Supari* and by tradition are not prohibited from taking liquor.

(d) Ornaments

The women among Mangs are fond of ornaments, except that their circumstances do not permit any sizeable acquisition. Both men and women wear ornaments made of gold, silver and brass. The women have varied ornaments to wear on different parts of body. Generally women wear ornaments on the ears, head, leg and neck. The value of the ornaments is very much dependent on the economic condition. *Bendoli*, *Bangarada hoovu*, *vali* (of gold costing between Rs. 75 and 100). *Jogera haralu*, (of cheap metal costing about 5 rupees) *Hookaddi*, (of silver costing Rs. 10) *Terapina Sara* (of brass and silver costing about Rs. 10) are different types of ear-rings worn by

the women. *Bugudi* an ornament on the upper ear lobes is going out of use among the younger generation. Waist belt called *Nadupatti* or *Dabu* made of silver costing Rs. 50 is worn by the older women. Nose ornaments like *Muguti*, *Moogubattu* made of gold costing about Rs. 10 are worn by all the married women. *Kalandige*, *Kaluchainu* or anklets made of silver costing about Rs. 15 are worn by the young and old females. Different types of toe-rings locally called *Kalu-suttu* *Kalungara*, *Minchu* etc., made of silver are worn by the married only. *Kadaga* made of silver costing about Rs. 25 a pair is worn by the old ladies only. It has gone out of use among the present generation. The ornaments the neck are *tikkisara* (of gold costing Rs. 300) *Gundina Sara* (of gold costing Rs. 250) etc. These are found to be in use only among the few economically well off families. *Tola-bandi* an armlet made of silver is worn by the elderly women only. An ornament for the neck called *Karimani Sara* (a string of black beads) is a must for the married ladies. This is tied during the wedding by the husband with the *tali* (marriage badge) strung in to it. We also find finger rings made of cheap metals like brass, copper etc., worn by both men and women. Glass bangles are worn by the young and married females whereas brass and silver bangles are worn by the widows. Some of the ornaments called *Nagara*, *Billi*, *Kucchhu* worn on the head are brought from those who possess them to be worn on the occasion of marriage. The ornaments are purchased from the jewellery shops and also at village shandies. Some of the ornaments like *Karimani Sara*, *Kalusuttu* are removed by women on the death of their husbands. A widow is prohibited from wearing vermilion mark on her forehead and also using flowers. Both men and women get themselves tattooed on their arms, forehead, chin, cheek and eye-corners. Women consider tattooing as an aspect of personal decoration. Women of Killekyata and Koravanji caste serve as tattooers who are paid both in cash and kind. Conventionally, tattooers are paid by the friends and relatives of the tattooed. The younger generation and the educated show aversion to tattooing. Regarding the designs, the males get the names of their friends and the images of gods like Hanuman, Mahadeva tattooed on their forearms and chest. The females prefer star motifs on one side of their cheeks or on chin, full moon on their foreheads, flower-motifs on their forearms and on the back of palm. We also find the designs of chariots, scorpion, snakes etc., being tattooed on the body of males. Nowadays both men and women trim their hair with coconut oil. As the barbers in the villages do not serve some of the scheduled castes the Mangs have to help themselves. In towns there is no such discrimination.

(e) Other Material Objects

They keep only household equipment that is felt indispensable. In rural and semi-urbanised parts they keep few items of furniture. Only in towns the households employed in white collared jobs keep one or two chairs, a cot or a bench. Among the common household goods, mention may be made of mats made of date-palm leaves, blankets, earthen utensils, grinding stone, a mortar and a pestle. Most of them use unusable gunny bags as beds and blankets. Bedsheets and *Duppatis* (cotton, hand-oven buff coloured sheets) are used as covers during nights. Vessels used for cooking, storing water and also for taking meals are made of clay or aluminium, brass and copper. Kerosene tin lamps for lighting are most commonly used. Only in towns does one across a few houses using electricity for lighting. Only the well-to-do can afford hurricane-lanterns. Of late steel trunks in place of the traditional wooden boxes are used for keeping valuable jewels and clothes, watches, clocks and cycles are also found with the educated employed in Government service. The number of agricultural implements is minimum even among the cultivators. The commonly used implements are *Kurpi* (weeder) sickle, spade, hoe, crow-bar, pick-axe which are essential for agricultural labourers and cultivators. Some of the poorer cultivators did not possess even a wooden plough. Improved agricultural implements were not noticed among the cultivators. Some of the cultivators in the community with comparatively larger holdings in addition to the implements already mentioned keep seed drill, etc. Some of the implements which are often needed, like sprayers, Japanese weeders are borrowed from the big cultivators in the villages. The shoe makers and those engaged in repairing the old footwear keep a *chimta* (used to stitch the leather) a wooden plank, a knife to cut leather and hide and a wooden plank.

The use of cosmetics is confined to a minority in the towns. The use of toilet and washing soaps is widespread both in rural and urban areas. Most of the Mang households keep musical instruments like tambourine (*Halige*) and brass pipes. These musical instruments are used during marriages, community festivals and processions.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS DISEASE AND TREATMENT

The Mangs rank lowest in the caste scale among Hindus. Even among the Scheduled Castes they are considered inferior in their social status to Dhors,

Chalvadis, Mahars, Holeyas etc. Their Settlements are situated just adjacent to the settlements of other Scheduled Castes in the villages and towns, though all the Scheduled Castes live on the outskirts of villages. However, the houses of Scheduled Castes sometimes are found together without any clear demarcation by caste. As the attitude of these people towards environmental sanitation is indifferent, the lanes and the surroundings are covered with dirt, garbage and excreta. No drains can be seen in the settlements. It is also not always easy to construct drains because of the manner in which houses have been built. The streets are never swept. Drain water collects and stagnates in the streets. Sweepings and animal refuse are just dumped in the pits close to the habitats. There are no public latrines in villages and though there are public latrines constructed in towns for their exclusive use they are unusable on account of irregular cleaning. The fields and approach roads are used for answering calls for nature.

Each of the Mangs habitat has a separate drinking water well. The other wells are not permitted to be used by the Mangs and other scheduled castes.

With regard to the personal hygienic habits they look dirtier than Holers and Mahars and cleaner than Bhangis. Bath is taken twice a week and they regularly clean their teeth with ash or charcoal powder. Clothes are washed once a week on the weekly holidays. They apply oil to their hair before combing. They use soapnut powder and toilet soaps (in urban areas) while taking bath. They keep their houses clean by washing the floor with cow-dung once a week and also on all festival and ceremonial occasions. Cooking and other household utensils are washed every morning.

Some of the common ailments to which they are susceptible are fever, diarrhoea, stomach disorders and general debility. The incidence of diseases like leprosy and tuberculosis is very negligible as observed in the field. They are resistant to serious communicable diseases. They avail of modern medical facilities now available in all towns and big villages whenever they are attacked by any disease. In the past they used to favour indigenous treatment given by the priestly section of Lingayat and Brahmins. They also used to invoke deities, rely on soothsayers and take vows to the family deities for cures. These practices are fast waning with the availability of modern medical facilities. General awakening among the people with the improvement and spread of education, and urban influence in the rural parts is mainly responsible for loosening

the grip the superstitions. It is said that in the past plague and cholera used to take a heavy toll of life. Then the prime remedy the people would resort to was holding of community worships to the goddesses like Dyamavva, Marevva, Durgi, Yellamma, etc. These epidemics are unknown since 30 years. Even to-day the conservatives among them resort to superstitious remedies for still birth, barrenness and difficult deliveries. However, modern medical facilities are increasingly being used.

VIII. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The Mangs of Dharwar and Bijapur districts speak Kannada as their mother tongue. Both Marati and Kannada are spoken by them in Gulbarga, Bidar,

Belgaum and North Kanara districts. Subsidiary language, urdu is known to them only in the taluks bordering the old Hyderabad State. Their language in the districts of Belgaum, Gulbarga and Bidar contain corrupt words from Marati and Hindustani languages.

IX. EDUCATION AND LITERACY

The Mangs are educationally very backward which may be attributed to the social disabilities of the past which excluded the benefits of education from them. In addition, their dire poverty compels them to send their children for earning wages to supplement family income. The following table gives the educational standard among Mangs, Matang and Mini-Madig in the State according to the 1961 Census:

Area	Population			Illiterate		Literates without educational level		Primary or Junior basic		Matric or Higher secondary*		Technical diploma not equal to degree	
	Persons	M	F	M	F	LM	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
TOTAL	28901	14618	14283	13400	14058	939	164	266	60	12	1	..	..
RURAL	26496	13528	12968	12541	12837	814	119	164	12	9	..	..	..
URBAN	2405	1090	1315	859	1221	125	45	102	48	3	1	1	..

Ninety five per cent of the Mangs are illiterate and only 5% are literates. The percentages of literacy in rural and urban areas are 4.21 and 13.51 respectively. Sexwise, 8.4% males and 1.6% females are literates. The percentage of literacy is higher in the urban area by 9.30 than in rural areas. The percentage of literacy for all the Scheduled Castes in the State is a little higher than 10, being 15 for males and 3 for females. The percentage of literacy for rural areas works out to 6.7 and for urban areas it works out to 21.4. Judged by any standard the literacy figures of Mangs compare very unfavourably with that of the general literacy standard of the Scheduled Castes. Their educational

backwardness is also apparent when compared with the figures for the general population which are 25.4% for the State as a whole, 19.9% for rural areas, 44.3% for urban areas, 36% for the males and 14.2% for females. The greater educational backwardness in rural areas is due to the nonexistence of educational facilities and traditional apathy towards education on account of the prevalence of unfavourable social conditions in the past. About three decades ago the children of Scheduled Castes were not freely admitted to educational institutions. But after independence attempts have been made for advancing the cause of education of these castes.

Percentage Figures For Literates by Educational Standards

Area	Literates without any educational standard		Primary or Junior Basic		*Matric or Higher secondaries		Graduates	Diploma Holders	Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F			
RURAL	3.06	0.44	0.60	0.08	0.04	..	..	..	4.22
URBAN	5.19	1.87	4.24	1.99	0.12	0.05	..	0.05	13.52

*In the case of rural areas this category includes 'Matriculation and above'.

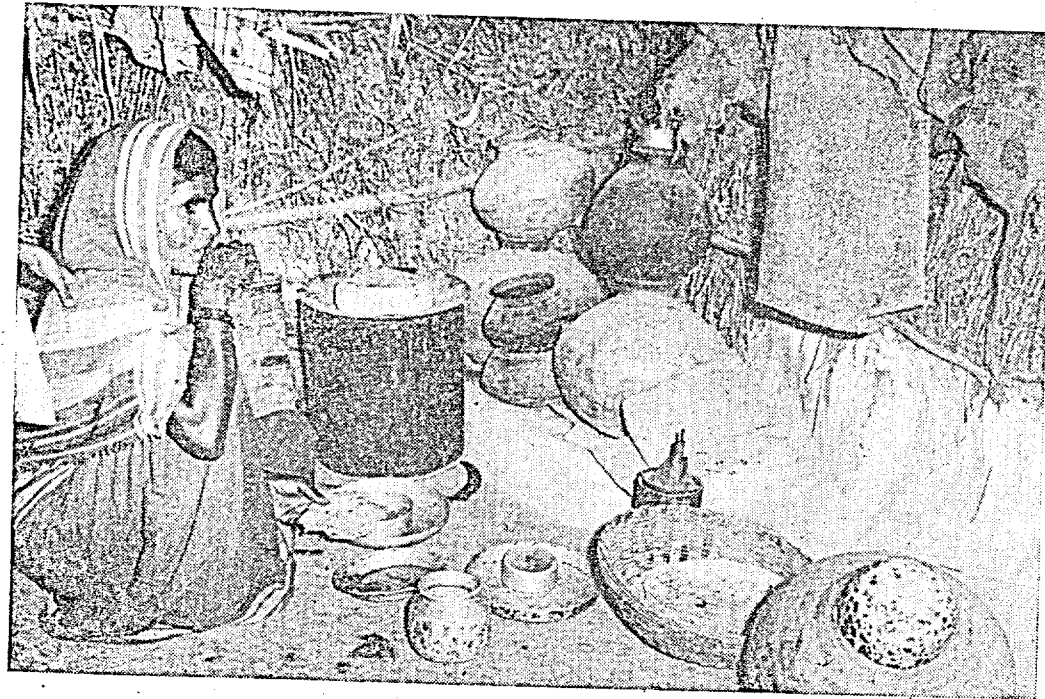
The above table reveals that 83.5% of the literates in rural areas and 52.3% of the literates in urban areas do not have any educational standard. Only 0.04% of the literates in rural areas and 0.12% of the literates in urban areas are matriculates most of whom are males. For the caste as a whole there are 13 matriculates of whom 12 are males. There is not even one graduate for such a considerable size of their population and there is only one diploma holder. Though educational facilities in almost all villages are being provided progressively, the Mangs, like other Scheduled Castes of the same social status are not sending their children to the schools. During the course of field study it was observed that primary schools existed in all the places visited. However, it was observed that nearly 75% of the children of this community in the school-going age were not attending schools. Residential schools which are now available for students in Taluk and Hobli Headquarters will go a long way in getting their students admitted to the schools. At present these facilities are available to the high school and college students. The response to adult literacy classes has not been encouraging. None of the Mangs is reported to have been attending these classes. However, it can be said that there is a general awakening and appreciation of the advantages of education and attempts are being made to send their children to the schools.

X. ECONOMIC LIFE

Mangs follow a number of avocations of which some are traditional and hereditary viz., making sandals, village watchmen etc. However the Mangs do not profess any single traditional occupation. At present a large majority of them are agricultural labourers. In some place, where it is not the monopoly of Holers and Chalvadis they remove, by tradition, dead cattle of the village. Many of them also serve as Madaris and Gastes whose duty it is to big graves and also night watching. They also attend to duties like carrying death messages, sweeping the village streets, beating tambourines in front of the processions, which are in nature obligatory to the society. For all these services they receive annual payments from the cultivators. This payment is called *Aya* or *Baluta*. The quantum of *Aya* is fixed informally taking the size of holding of the cultivators into account. Those who are employed by tradition as village servants enjoy the lands which are given as *Inam* by the Government. Even these households are compelled to supplement their earnings by agricultural and other daily wages. Only the heads of the households in those families are in their respective traditional avocations. The other

members of the household usually (the wife, sons and daughters) work as either casual agricultural labourers, or attached agricultural labourers with the big cultivators of Lingayats, Brahmins, Kurubas and Marathas. A high proportion of Mangs do not own any lands and the holdings of the few land owners of the community are uneconomic and small, ranging from a few cents to 10 acres. In Chikodi town, out of about 30 families of Mangs only 3 owned lands. Of the 3, none had a holding of more than 2 acres. None of them was found to have been cultivating lands taken on lease. In Karoshi village of Chikodi taluk, out of the 15 households about 10 households own lands. The smallest holding is 5 cents and the largest is about 10 acres. They also take lands on lease on crop-sharing basis. They do not own any community land. The pattern of ownership of land is the same as for the region. In rural areas the petty cultivators among them have to depend upon big land owners for land which they cultivate in addition to their own lands. The lease paid in cash is locally called *Lavani* whereas crop sharing is called *Palu*. The lease is merely an oral agreement between the landlord and the tenant. As such, in cases of eviction the tenant is unable to resort to courts. They do not enjoy any special concessions or rights with regard to fishing or forests. The fishing rights in big rivers, tanks and ponds are auctioned by the Fisheries Department once a year. Only a few members of the community engage themselves in fishing during rainy season that too on days when they do not find other employment. The fish that they gather in small tanks streams etc., is negligible and domestically consumed.

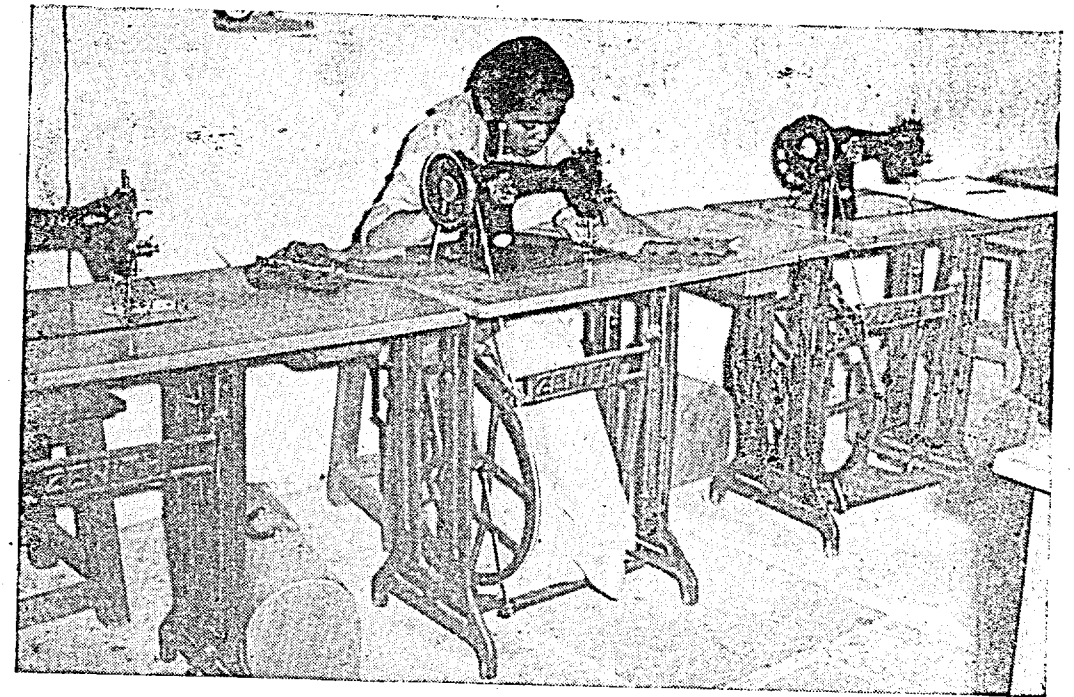
After land, livestock ranks next as one of the important economic resources in possession of the Mangs. Being predominantly agricultural labourers they cannot afford to keep large number of livestock. Even the possession of pair of plough bullocks is the privilege of a few well-to-do cultivators. Petty cultivators usually keep a pair of cattle to plough their lands. Others keep a cow, or a buffalo and one or two sheep or goats. To cite an example, in Chikodi town only one cultivator had a pair of bullocks while others had non-milch cows. Fifteen households of agricultural labourers had only one or two sheep and goats. It is almost impossible for agricultural labourers to maintain cattle as they find it difficult to feed them in the absence of supply of fodder or grazing ground. Though rearing of milch buffaloes and cows is profitable as there is a great demand for milk products, the Scheduled Castes, particularly the so called untouchables, find it very difficult to market these products on account of the prevailing social conditions. They do



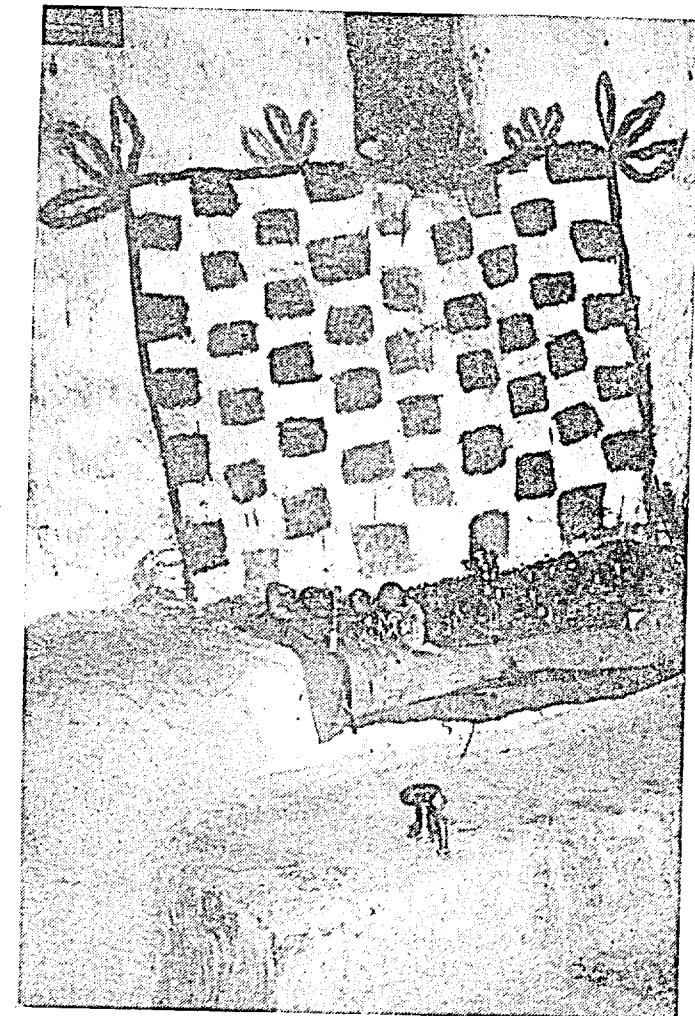
9. An inside view of a kitchen



10. A Mang female engaged in rope making



12. A Mang girl apprentice at a Tailoring Centre



11. Shrine of worship in a household

not keep pigs as they do not eat pork and also pig-rearing is socially boycotted among the members of this community. Even rearing poultry birds is limited to a few as the absence of the members of the household during most of the day makes it difficult to look after them. During the course of the field study it was observed that only 10 households at Chikodi and 3 households at Karoshi reared poultry birds.

It may be observed that the Mangs usually work as unskilled manual workers. Some sections among

them work on leather make ropes etc. A very small member is engaged in sweeping village streets. A large majority of them is engaged in unskilled work connected with agricultural operation, building road construction requiring manual labour. They are generally engaged in professions which are least remunerative and expose them to exploitation. The following extracted from SCT-1 Part-A Industrial classification 1961 give data about their economic activity as in 1961 (Census of India, 1961, Mysore Vol. XI-Part-V-A, New Delhi, 1966).

Industrial Classification
Mang, Mating and Mini-mading

	TOTAL		RURAL		URBAN		GRAND TOTAL
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
TOTAL POPULATION	14168	14283	13528	12968	1090	1315	28901
TOTAL WORKERS	9088	6739	8530	6261	558	478	15827
As Cultivators	1661	753	1638	744	23	9	2414
As Agricultural labourers	5069	4790	4817	4584	252	206	9859
In mining, quarrying, livestock, Forestry and Fishery etc.	80	10	51	9	29	1	90
At household industry	1225	597	1163	458	62	139	1822
Manufacturing other than household industry	80	47	50	20	30	27	127
In construction	66	14	62	6	4	8	80
In Trade & Commerce	56	27	43	9	13	18	83
In transport storage and communication	30	..	12	..	18	..	30
In other services	821	501	694	431	127	70	1322
NON WORKERS	5530	7544	4998	6707	532	837	13074
Special occupations like tanning & scavenging.	47	9	40	7	7	2	56

In terms of percentages, the workers among Mangs, constitute 54.75 of the total population of which males constitute 31.44% and females 23.31%. Analysing sexwise the workers account for 62.16% among males and 47.18% among the females. In the rural areas 63.05% of the males and 48.28% of the females are workers, whereas in the urban areas 52% of the males and 36.34% of the females are workers. Among workers 62.29% are agricultural labourers most of whom are in rural areas. This percentage compares unfavourably with the State figure for the Scheduled Castes which is 29.10%. Cultivators are the next largest group accounting for 15.25% of the total working force most of whom are in the rural areas. The other important livelihood classes are workers at household industry (mainly working on leather) which accounts for 11.5% of the total working force and other services which accounts for 8.35%. An insignificant proportion of workers pursue livestock rearing (0.56%)

and manufacturing other than household industry (0.88%).

As a high proportion of their population is rural and landless the only means for eking out their livelihood is as agricultural labour. In the absence of acquisition of skills required for profession which are traditional and hereditary, they continue to be economically very weak. Both men and women and sometimes children are engaged in agricultural and general labour. Men do all kinds of agricultural operations, whereas children above 10 years do weeding, livestock rearing, harvesting and threshing. Men are usually employed for hard labours like ploughing, digging, watering gardens and sinking wells. For these items of work the wage rate is higher. Ordinarily, daily wages for males range between Rs. 1.50 and Rs. 2.00. The wages for women and children range from 75 paise to Rs. 1.25. The payment of wages takes place in advance

order to ensure labour in ploughing, weeding and harvesting seasons. Otherwise the wages are normally paid at the end of the day or on weekly *shandy* days. The wages for the labour employed for harvesting jowar, paddy and cotton are paid in kind. The wages in kind range between 1½ Kgs and 2 Kgs of grains for both males and females. The wage in kind is in money terms higher than that paid in cash. Though in towns industrial labour is in much demand, the proportion of agricultural labourers among Mangs in urban areas is more than 44% of the total working force in urban areas. Disparity of wages is also found between agricultural labour and labour employed in works such as road construction and other public works executed by the P.W.D. Forest Department etc. In such cases there is a sudden shift from agricultural labour to other employment which are more remunerative. This kind of occupational mobility is gradually spreading. Only men and male children above 10 years work as attached agricultural labourers on annual basis. However this is not in any way comparable with the bonded or forced labour which is rarely prevalent in the region. This kind of labour is called *Jeetha* and has been prevalent since time immemorial. This kind of labour is mostly volunteered by the members of the caste themselves forced by their domestic circumstances. The tenure of this labour ranges between one and three years. The attached labourer called *Jeethadalu* is expected to attend to all items of agricultural operations in addition to other works like livestock rearing and house construction and repairs. Annual wage for such an adult labourer ranges between Rs. 150 and Rs. 300 besides food and clothing. They obtain the wages in advance to meet the inevitable expenses on marriage, death, ceremony etc. The wages are paid under the pretext of loan by the employer who in turn executes from them a promissory note or mortgage deed. The children are employed on annual basis only for attending to light jobs like rearing sheep or cattle, sweeping cattle sheds and collection of manure. It is said that this practice has very much declined during the last 20 years. At Karoshi village it is reported that each of the Mang households had one such labourer about 20 years ago. But now there are only 5 such labourers. The cultivation practices of Mangs are not different from those of the region. Since the majority are petty land owners and tenants they keep minimum of livestock. Dry cultivation is predominant among them as in the region where they are found. The important crops they cultivate are millets, jowar, and groundnut. Only in some parts of Belgaum District is paddy grown. During the course of field study none of the cultivators of this community seemed to have irrigation wells. The culti-

vation of commercial crops such as groundnut and cotton is limited to a few big cultivators owning more than five acres of land. Commercial products are disposed off to the local money lenders of the village who also happen to be the traders. The money lenders and the local merchants advance loans to these growers in advance at the time of sowing on the condition that the produce should be delivered to them at a low price soon after the harvest. The Mangs are no exception to the general rule of rural indebtedness. Their main source of credit are the indigenous money lenders and their employers. Debts are incurred mostly for unforeseen exigencies and for the performance of some social ceremonies which are unproductive in nature. It is gathered at Karoshi village that out of 15 families as many as 12 were indebted, the amount of debt ranging between Rs. 50 to Rs. 700. Of them only 2 were reported to have borrowed Rs. 400 each for the purchase of livestock on the security of land. The rest had borrowed for various purposes like marriage, death ceremony and ordinary domestic wants. Those who are not indebted simply were not able to get any loans though they were in need of them. The rate of interest charged ranges between 18% and 30% per annum. The establishment of co-operative credit institutions has not helped petty cultivators and agricultural labourers of this community. At Karoshi village, where there is a co-operative credit institution functioning out of 15 households only 5 households have become members of the society. Of the 5, Rs. 150 each have been borrowed by 4 members to meet the seasonal cultivation expenses. At Chikodi town about 10 households are reported to have become members of co-operative societies. Since these members are unable to assert their rights, they derive little benefit. Regarding the Artisan's Co-operative Societies, it is found that at Chikodi 5 Mangs are the members of a Leather Workers Co-operative Society which is now defunct. The Mangs are not active participants in any other Artisans Co-operative Societies.

The households engaged in traditional services like sweeping village streets, removal of dead cattle, etc., to the rural communities in villages receive *Aya* or *Baluta* at the rate of 20 Kgs of grains from each household receiving such services. The *Aya* is paid after the harvesting of crops is completed each year. Even on some of the ceremonial occasions like marriage and community festival the cultivators have to make some obligatory payments in kind to the Mangs. These payments range between 5 Kgs to 10 Kgs of grains. In most of the places, more so in the urban areas these obligatory services are slowly disappearing. In

Chikodi town it is said that there were about 20 households of Mangs which used to render their services about two years ago. But at present no Mang household is rendering these services. At Karoshi at present there are only 5 households practising this age-old tradition whereas about 10 to 15 years ago all the households were rendering such services. The Mangs wherever they had the monopoly of appropriating dead cattle have given up this since the last decade or so. Such cattle are now being removed by the slaughter houses. By convention they collect the grain which is left over on and about the threshing floor. In towns and also villages many of them are seen engaged in scavenging and sweeping. The enlightened among them look down upon the hereditary services and show preference to Government services, industrial labour etc.

The household industries which are less remunerative which the people of this caste follow are, manufacturing and repairing of foot-wear and manufacturing of ropes from *Kathale* (Hemp) leaves. They make and sell leather ropes called *Naddas* Mini thin cords of hemp, slings for hanging pots and throwing stones with and bamboo baskets. Some are musicians, sellers of cow-dung-cakes, grass, firewood, brick-layers etc.

There is no significant migration among the Mangs. However from parts of Belgaum and Dharwar Districts a few adult males leave their villages to work in the manganese ore mines in Khanapur taluk of Belgaum district during the slack season from January—March. Agricultural labourers from villages during slack season and under drought conditions go temporarily for short periods to towns and project areas. The movement of population to places where the Government have established agricultural colonies also take place. Less than 1% of the workers are engaged in commerce and trade. They are mostly petty hawkers selling foot-wear, ropes and women engaged in selling vegetables in towns and shandies. Those engaged in construction are brick-layers and masons.

Regarding intercommunity comparison of level of income it may be said that the conditions of Mangs are generally bad compared to other caste Hindus and some of the Scheduled Castes like Dhors, Chala-vadis, Holers and Samagars. In the community itself the economic condition of agricultural labourers is worse than that of other sections among them. The conditions of agricultural labourers is the same in all the regions where they live but the conditions of cultivators in Belgaum and Dharwar districts are better

than those in the districts of Bidar, Bijapur and Gulbarga on account of better rain fall and comparatively fertile lands in the former regions. Range of income difference is not conspicuous among the various sub-castes among them.

A rough estimate of expenditure on various items based on expenditure statements of a few households reveals that the household of an agricultural labourer spends about 65% of its income on cereal and non-cereal items of food, 15% on clothing and 3% on beverages, while a cultivating household spends 68% on food, 21% on clothing, 4% on drinks, and about 3% on cultivation. The other items of expenditure are mainly, fuel and light, beverages and interest on loans. Expenditure on education, recreation, medical treatment etc., is not regular and is practically insignificant.

XI. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth:

Pregnancy and safe deliveries are regarded as the grace of the Almighty. Still births, miscarriages and barrenness are attributed to the misdeeds and sins committed during the former and/or present life. They recognise the biological symptoms of pregnancy which is confirmed after the second month. By custom they bring the expectant mother to her natal home for the first delivery during the 5th or 7th or the 9th month of her pregnancy. She is taken home by her mother and some close relations after performing *Bili Kuppasa Niyama*. Eatables, fruits and flowers are taken there and the pregnant woman is seated on a plank and *arati* is performed by *sumangalis* (unwidowed ladies). A green saree, a choli and green bangles are presented at the ceremony. A few relations and neighbours are feasted. The pregnant woman is escorted to her natal home on an auspicious day. After a few days the same ceremony is performed in her natal home by her mother-in-law. Subsequent deliveries take place at her husband's house. They generally do not perform these ceremonies then. She continues to do all her normal domestic duties. However she does not perform field work during the first pregnancy. During the period of pregnancy she is fed as far as their resources permit with nutritious food. The intake of foods such as banana fruits, meat, fish, pumpkins, jackfruit etc., are proscribed. She is given food which is easily digestible. The husband also, during his wife's pregnancy has to observe certain restrictions. He must not carry a corpse, should not kill any animal such as

sheep, goat, poultry, etc. Some also grow beards and moustache. Her parents and other relatives do not observe any restrictions. The expectant mother is not segregated from the other members of the household. She continues to dine, work and sleep as before, with her mother and sisters-in-law.

Delivery takes place in a part of the house which is screened off by a bamboo mat or a cloth or a blanket to ensure privacy. Even in towns they generally do not go to hospitals and maternity homes though they are available. Assistance during the birth is rendered by the indigenous *dais* locally called *Sulagitti*. These *Sulagittis* are generally elderly ladies of their own caste or of Dhors, Mahars, Bhovis, etc., who are well experienced in their profession. Most of these ladies have inherited their skill from their mothers or mothers-in-law. In towns, the trained mid-wife attends in cases of difficult or protracted deliveries. In villages in difficult and protracted deliveries they take vows, offer prayers and special worship and sacrifice fowl to their family deities. About 20 years ago they also used to offer the expected child as *Jogti* or *Basavi* in the name of the Goddess Yellamma. Amulets and *Thirtha* or *Vibhuti* were also obtained from the priests, astrologers, and religious heads to ensure safe delivery. The *Sulagitti* attends on the mother and child for 5 days. If she belongs to their own caste she attends for 13 days. She is paid about 2 rupees and is given 2 to 3 Kgs of jowar, bangles, a *choli*, a cocoanut and pan-supari. A *Sulagitti* of the same caste is also served food on all these days. Whenever the services of a midwife are obtained she is paid Rs. 5. The umbilical cord is cut by the *dai* or *Sulagitti* with a knife called *Kudugolu*. The umbilical cord together with the placenta collected in a bamboo winnow is securely deposited in a pit under the bathing slab in front of the house. They carefully keep watch on this so that dogs may not unearth it.

Like other Hindus who consider the birth of a child polluting Mangs also observe ceremonial pollution (Hole) for 13 days. During this period none excepting the agnatic kin take food and water from the household. Auspicious ceremonies and worship of deities is also forbidden. In some parts of Bijapur district the pollution is for either 5 days or 13 days. On the fifth day, after a child is born they worship a dough image of Satvai or simply five pebbles arranged in a line in the mother's room and offer them rice and soup. Lamps of wheat dough (Panathani) are kept burning the whole night. The naming ceremony is generally performed on the 13th day and in a few places it is

reported to have been performed on 12th day and 14th day. This variation is in line with the regional practice. On the 13th day the mother and the child are bathed, clothes are washed and the house is also washed with cow-dung. Puja is performed first to the goddess Satavai in front of the house. The local priest is consulted about the Nakshatra under which the birth has taken place and also the name to be given. Females of the caste are called, sweets or boiled gram and pan supari is distributed among them. The child is placed in the cradle by its paternal aunt or in her absence the *Sulagitti*. The name is first announced loudly thrice in the ears of the child. The names of the grand-father, grandmother or some ancestors of the family are generally preferred. The common names for boys are Bheerna, Pakirappa, Dyava, Malla, Satyappa, Channa, Basappa, Siddappa, Govinda, Balappa etc. The common female names are Durgavva, Renuka, Mallavva, Ningavva, Fakiravva, Sakkubai, Yellavva, Laxmavva, Radhabai etc. The usual surnames are Arale Kamble, Kengar, Iragad, Bandare, Kivalleek which denote their exogamous groups. The child soon after birth is first given castor oil. Thereafter, honey is given for three days. The child begins to suckle on the fifth day after birth. The mother is first given some liquid food like gruel and afterwards boiled rice for 10 to 12 days. For a month she is given *Chatni* prepared out of copra, pepper and chillies. She is forbidden from taking vegetable curry during this period. The period of confinement is normally three months during which she is proscribed from taking beef, flesh of sheep and goat, eatables fried in ground-nut-oil etc. The mother and child are given hot water bath regularly on alternate days for a month and twice a week thereafter for 2 months. Oil bath is taken by the mother for a month and oil bath to the child is given for 3 months. The normal duration of suckling is 2 years if there is no conception within this period. Upto nine months the child is not usually given any solid food. In case the mother is unable to feed the child sufficiently, the milk of the cow or goat is given. The use of commercial milk products is limited to a few in towns. The infant's feeding habits are regulated after 2 years and so also the habits of micturition and defecation. Children up to the age of one year are carried on the waist and shoulders. The Mangs are not serious on planned parenthood. They do not use any contraceptives to limit their families. The belief that pregnancy is a divine boon and any action against the law of nature is considered sin very much comes in the way. They take vows, sacrifice fowls, undertake pilgrimages to holy places like Pandharapur, Gokarn, Saundatti etc to get children. The same measures are adopted to

overcome successive still births, delayed conception and barrenness. Abortion is considered immoral and punished by the caste group. However in cases of illegal conception occurring in cases of unmarried and widowed females abortion is secretly effected by using indigenous herbs. None of the Mangs is reported to have been using any contraceptive or to have undergone vasectomy. They prefer male issues since it is their belief that the son should put milk into the mouth of the dying father or mother if they are to attain salvation. Barren women are looked low upon.

They do not observe any ceremonies at the time of first bringing the child out of the house. Normally the young baby is not brought out on days other than Monday and Thursday. A cocoanut is broken when the child first crosses the main threshold of the house. An auspicious day is chosen to give food to the child for the first time. Tonsuring (*Javala*) is performed for both boys and girls during the 9th or 11th month of the first year. Hair-cutting ceremony is performed in the residence and the hair is offered in the name of some deity. Those who can afford take vows to offer to deities, go to holy centres of Saundatti, Devaragudda, Mylara etc. The maternal uncle first cuts the hair by scissors after performing puja. Close relations make presents to both the mother and the child on the occasion. The maternal uncle or other person who cuts the hair is rewarded nominally with a *dhoti*, *pan supari* and some coins. The cut hair is immersed in a nearby river, stream, pond or a well. The earlobes are also bored on the same day. The nose (only for females) is pierced during the third or fifth year by the Pathar (gold smiths caste) who is paid a nominal fee of about 50 paise and a cocoanut.

A girl attaining puberty is considered impure for 5 days, 7 days or 10 days depending on the regional practices. The period of impurity is prescribed by the *Bhat* if the stellar conciliation at the time of her attaining puberty is not auspicious. The girl bathes daily during the period of impurity. Every day she

is seated on a plank when the women sing *Sobana* songs and wave *arati* about her. The invitees are given some sweets and *pan supari*. If she is married the husband is also seated by her side and consummation of marriage is also to take place within that month. Her husband is presented with a new *dhoti*, shawl and shirt by her father. Every day delicious food is prepared for the lady attaining puberty. Women are considered impure during their monthly sickness for three days during which period, she has to remain out of the kitchen and she is not touched.

(b) Marriage

The Mangs like all other Hindus regard marriage as an important social institution to legally recognise contract between man and woman with some obligations of a permanent character. Only children born after this ceremony are considered legitimate and honourable. The marriage contract is only dissoluble with the sanction of their caste council. The boys are married around 20 and the girls are married around 15. Early or pre-puberty marriages which were widely prevalent in the past have now decreased to some extent. Even child betrothal which was said to be in practice about 50 years ago has totally disappeared. Now betrothal or *Bhastgi* takes place a few days or weeks before actual wedding. Pre-marital and extra marital relationships are considered grave crimes and the offenders are publicly disgraced and even ex-communicated by the caste council. Extra-marital relationship of a female with a lower caste man means loss of caste. The marriages are contracted only with the known members and in the known regions. There are no marriage alliances between different sub castes based on occupations which are traditional and hereditary. Marriage between members of the identical exogamous group ('*Kula*' or '*Bali*') is prohibited. Both post-puberty and pre-puberty marriages are prevalent. According to the 1961 Census (Census of India, 1961—Mysore Vol. XI-Part-V-A—Delhi:1966) the statistics about the marital status of their population are as follows:—

Marital Status by Sex and Age-groups

Age-group	Total			Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced		unspecified status	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
All ages	28901	14618	14283	7623	5709	6493	6887	426	1599	60	73	16	15
0-14	12738	6514	6224	6316	5331	183	874	4	4	..	1	11	14
15-44	11692	5758	5934	1220	322	4369	5158	118	389	47	64	4	1
45+	4458	2335	2123	78	55	1939	855	304	1205	13	8	1	..
Age not specified	13	11	..	9	1	2	..	..	1	..	..	..	..

This table reveals that there is an almost equal distribution of a little more than 46% of the total population in each of the groups of never married and married persons. It is striking that as much as 8.3% of the population in the age group 0-14 is married, of which 6.8% are females and the rest males. Cases of divorce and separation are not very significant, an indication of the sanctity attached to marriage by the members of the caste. Though the remarriage of widows and divorced women is permitted by tradition and custom there exists a large number of widows. There are 2025 or 7% widows and widowers of the total population of whom as many as 1599 are females. We find quite a significant number of widows in the age group 15-44.

The Mangs avoid girls from the same *kula* (clan). The affinity to the group is traced only through the male. Monogamy is generally the rule. The offer of marriage generally comes from the boy's parents. A bride-price locally called *Theru* is paid. In the past this payment was fixed by tradition at Rs. 50 but now it is a matter of discussion and might be fixed any where between Rs. 150 and Rs. 300. Marriage by exchange also takes place but is not frequent. Marriages by elopement were said to be occurring in the past about 50 years ago. Mangs show preferential mating system with certain categories of consanguineous relations for consanguineous marriages. They are one's own sister's daughter, (ii) marrying mother's brother's daughter and (iii) marrying father's sister's daughter. Two brothers may marry two sisters. The bride price is only nominal if the girl is married to her maternal uncle. The maternal uncle of the bride gets a share, about one third of the bride-price, if she is married to others.

As already stated, the boy's parents with some elder castemen go first to the bride's place on an appointed day for negotiating the alliance. Afterwards a second visit to the bride's place is made by the boy with some of his friends. After his consent, a Brahmin or Lingayat astrologer is consulted regarding the comparability of the stars under which they are born. If there is mutual agreement of stars based on their dates of birth, horoscopes being rarely written, a betrothal ceremony called *Bhastgi* or *Hasiru Veelya* is performed on an auspicious day at the girl's place. The parents of the boy have to present a saree, choli, 5 kgs of jaggery, one kg of arecanut, fruits and turmeric and vermillion powder in addition to a jewel like waist-belt, ear rings etc. The headman of the caste and the others witness the ceremony when the boy's father exchanges *Veelya* with the girl's father to symbolise confirma-

tion of the marriage. Then the girl wears the saree and the ornament presented and she is seated on a *Hasu* (a wooden plank) when the women sing *Sobana* Songs. Jaggery or sugar is put into her mouth and betrothal is declared. Marriage negotiations as also betrothal may take place six months to one year earlier than the actual wedding ceremony. *Bhastgi* is followed by *Hire Veelya* when the date of actual wedding is fixed. This may take place about 10 to 15 days prior to the wedding ceremony. Marriages are generally performed in the Hindu months of Chaitra, Vaishakha, Jyeshtha, Shravana and Kartika. They prefer the slack agricultural season and hence marriages are concentrated in the months of Chaitra, Vaishakha and Jyeshtha. The day of marriage is fixed in consultation with the Brahmin or Lingayat Priest. According to Enthoven (Vol. II-Bombay:1922-P:443) "In some places Brahmins are employed to conduct the marriage service; in others, an elderly woman chosen for the occasion from amongst the guests conducts the service". But in the course of our field study it was not reported anywhere that they employed Brahmins to conduct the marriage ceremony. According to the Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency "The ceremony is performed by a woman of the caste who knows the formula. The woman is not called by any particular name nor is any woman specially appointed for the purpose. Any good natured experienced elderly woman is chosen at the time from among the guests". (Vol. XXI-Bombay:1884-P-195). However, it is reported at Chikodi that the Lingayat *Ayyas* (priests) officiate in their marriage ceremonies. In the past the marriage functions were elaborately observed for three days. But at present marriage ceremonies are gone through in a day or two depending upon the economic condition of the parties concerned. The first ceremony called *Arishana* (rubbing turmeric) is performed just a day previous to *Akkikalu* or *Muhurtha* in the respective places of the bride and bridegroom. In the early morning the marriage pandal (*Mantap*) with odd posts (5, 7 or 9) and roofed with green leaves, preferably cocoanut leaves is erected. Festoons of mango twigs are tied round the pendal. The bride and the groom are smeared with turmeric paste and oil, and bathed. *Puja* (worship) is offered by the bride and the groom to their respective family deities. The castemen of the village and other invitees are feasted which they call *Daivada voota*. Afterwards the bridal party leaves for the bridegroom's place on the same day in case the wedding is fixed in the morning of the next day. If the wedding is fixed in the afternoon the party leaves on the next day morning. If the wedding is fixed in the afternoon the party leaves on the next day morning. Generally, the wed-

impure during this period. On that day he goes to the burial ground with some castemen, has his face and head shaved and bathes. Food is also placed on leaves near the grave. All the domestic earthen vessels are thrown away and replaced with new ones on this day. The house is white-washed and floor is smeared with cow-dung. A *Kalasa* is placed at the hall which is worshipped and cow's urine is lightly sprinkled all over the house to overcome pollution. The widow of the deceased is presented with a *rande* (widowhood) saree by her parents on that day. The widow has to discard her bangles and wipe off her *Kumkum* (Vermilion) mark on the day of performing *Murukulu* i.e. on the third day. The widow cannot thereafter put the vermilion mark, use flowers or wear coloured bangles. But these restrictions do not apply to the remarried widows and divorced or separated women. Funeral feast is held among their castemen on the 9th day or 11th day. In some places (Gokak in Belgaum District) the funeral feast may be given to the caste men any time before the completion of a month after death. The images of the dead (*Mukha*) embossed on a copper, silver or brass plate by the *pathar* (goldsmith) is brought within that month and a goat or sheep is killed before it to feed their castemen. The images of the dead are worshipped along with their family deities on all religious and ceremonial occasions.

Pollution is observed for three days and the chief mourner is held impure till the funeral feast is held. During this period performance of religious and auspicious ceremonies is forbidden. They perform annual death ceremony (*Shradha*) in the month of *Mhal* (Navaratri) or on the day of Yugadi (Hindu New Year's day) festival when they set up 'Kalasa' and offer worship to images of all the deceased of the family. A few castemen are fed on the day.

They do not raise any memorials in the name of the deceased. Funeral feast is not given in cases of deaths of the unmarried and children. If the wife is dead, the widower may marry within a year after death or during the third year but is forbidden to marry during the second year. The widow is forbidden to remarry during the period of mourning and until the funeral feast is held. If the death occurs in an inauspicious constellation (*Nakshatra*) the members of the household should vacate the house of death for a period suggested by the *bhat* (Brahmin Priest).

XII. RELIGION

"The Mangs profess Hinduism. Most of them are Shaivas, their chief God being Mahadeva. Their

favourite goddess is Mariai or the Cholera goddess. Their family deities are Bhairoba, Khandoba, Mhasoba, Ambabai, Bahiri, Janai, Taki, Vithoba and Yamai." (Enthoven, 1922, II-440). Again, writing on Kanarese Mangs or Madigs, Enthoven writes "The Madigs of Karnatak do not worship the regular gods worshipped by the higher castes. Their favourite deities are Yellamma, Durgavva, Taladavva, Dyamavva, Margai, Thaloba, Bharmaya, Khandoba, Mailar and Maruthi. Their patron saints are Chanaya, Haraly and Kakkaya. Goats and fowls are offered to these deities on Fridays and Tuesdays and are partaken of by themselves (According to Enthoven, *Ibid.* P-443). According to the Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency "Mangs are Brahmanical Hindus and respect Brahmans who fix their marriage days and marry them from a distance; but take no part in their birth and death ceremonies. They worship all Hindu Gods, but their favourite deities are Durgavva and Yellavva. Brass images of the family dead are seated along with the house gods. They keep most Hindu holidays, and some fast on the Mondays of Shravan or July-August and Shivaratra in January-February. They make pilgrimages to the shrine of Yellavva in Paragad in Belgaum and to the tomb of Musalman sat of Yamnur in Navalgund in Dharwar" (Bombay: 1884 Vol. XXIII—P. 217). Mangs worship both Shaivite and Vaishnavite Gods and Goddesses. The presiding deity of the caste is said to be the Goddess Yellamma of Saundatti, in Belgaum District. The people of the caste have imitated many customs and traditions followed by the high caste Hindus in the respective regions. The worship of Gods like Hanumantha or Maruthi, Shiva, Venkataramana of Thirupathi etc., is a clear indication of such a trend. About six to seven decades ago, the common form of worship of their household deities was the killing of a fowl or a sheep or a goat to propitiate the deities. But now the practice of killing as a form of worship has almost disappeared, though resorted to on special occasions such as community festivals. The community festivals, which were frequent in the past, used to be performed to propitiate the Goddesses like Mariamma, Dyamavva who were believed to be the Goddess of death, and Goddesses of Cholera or Plague respectively. Since about 15 years the community festivals are performed without the usual public sacrifice of a sheep or goat or a consecrated buffalo in front of the booth for the goddess specially erected outside their habitation. They used to raise subscription from all the households of the village under the leadership of the village patel. In Chikodi town it is reported that they did not perform the community festival since 30 years. They used to perform community worship for God-

desses Durgavva and Marigevva once in three years before. In Karoshi the last festival performed was in the year 1945. According to Enthoven "They are staunch devotees of Mariamma or mother-death. Once every two or three years they raise subscriptions, make a small shed, buy a brass pot which represents the Goddess Mariamma, stop it with a cocoanut, cover it with flowers, and keep it for three days, which they spend in feasting and drinking, sacrificing lambs and fowls. At the end of the third day the pot is thrown into a river or pond." (*Ibid* P-443).

The Mangs are religious and observe all Hindu festivals such as Ugadi, Shivaratri, Navaratri, Deepavali, Holi, Sankrantri, Nagar Panchami etc. The head of the household or any male member of the household fasts on major festival days of Ugadi, Shivaratri, Navaratri etc. Like the other non-vegetarian groups in the region they abstain from eating meat or killing fowls during the Hindu month of Karthika. They wash their houses on all Mondays, full-moon and new moon days. In every *Mangwada* or *Madar ker* (settlement of Madigs and Mangs) there is a shrine dedicated to the Goddess Dyamavva or Mariyamma or Durgi. They offer worship on all festival days.

The Mangs bound by their age-old custom refrain from entering other village temples and public places. In towns however, we do not find any such constraints and they unhesitatingly enter all public places. In villages they are not served by the village barbers and washermen. They also are not allowed to enter public tea stalls and restaurants run by the high caste Hindus. They are served outside the restaurants in cups and tumblers set apart for them. The conditions are similar with regard to the drawing of drinking water from public wells.

The Mangs believe in sorcery, witchcraft and soothsaying. "When ordinary remedies fail an exorcist is asked to find out whether the sick person suffers from having offended any of the house-gods, or if his sickness is due to a charm cast over him by an enemy, or if a family ghost is troubling him, or if he is possessed by an outside ghost. If any of the house-gods is the cause of the patient's sickness, he is taken to bow before them, is told to make a vow to the offended deity, and his brow is marked with ashes in the name of the god. If the sickness is due to the charm the exorcist overcomes the charm by binding a talisman on the patient's neck or arm. To humour a family ghost a sweet dish, a goat, or a cock is offered to the ghost. An outside ghost is driven away by thrashing the patient or by burning chillies before him.

When these remedies fail, some food, especially boiled rice and curds mixed together are waved round the patient and left at the place where the ghost lives". (Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Bombay: 1884—Vol. XXIII-P-218).

The custom of dedicating girls as *Jogtis* or *Basavis* was prevalent among them till about two decades. Even now we come across *Jogtis* aged between 40 and 60 in villages and towns. In the past the girls were dedicated to some patron deity like Yellamma by tradition or in some cases to fulfil a vow taken during a difficult delivery. The girl after she comes of age would be taken to the goddess and seated by the side of a dagger in front of the goddess. The temple priest would then tie a disc round her neck. The girl so dedicated would live the rest of her life singing songs in the praise of the goddess. "The *Jogtis* generally live on prostitution, and on alms when they grow old. The *Jogtis* by tradition, enjoy equal rights like sons over their father's property and the children born to *Jogtis* are not considered illegitimate".

The Mangs go on pilgrimage to holy shrines of Pandharpur, Saundatti, Mailar, Jejuri etc. They hold the Sun and the Moon as sacred and many of them bow to the Sun in the morning after a wash. They observe lunar and solar eclipses by offering food and breaking a cocoanut. Their religious teacher is called Jambu whose monastery is said to be at Kadapa (Cuddapah) (according to Enthoven) in Andhra Pradesh where they go on pilgrimage.

They follow the general Hindu Law of Inheritance. Even after the coming into force of the Hindu Succession and Adoption Act, only male heirs continue to inherit property. Adoption is permitted and practised among them.

XIII. LEISURE, RECREATION AND CHILD-PLAY

Mangs being economically and socially backward cannot afford to be leisurely. However, their leisure during slack agricultural seasons (between January and March) is a forced one. Throughout the year they have to toil hard to make both ends meet. Majority being illiterate they do not have any organised recreational activities. Women, whenever they find leisure, during day or night, spend time in gossip. Occasionally during night times, they listen to songs and legendary tales from the elderly *Devadasis*. The working hours for both males and females are between 8 A.M. and 1 P.M. and between 2 P.M. and 6 P.M. At Kolar village in Bijapur District it was reported that Mangs perform *Bhajana* (Singing devotional

ding takes place in the afternoon. On their arrival at the bridegroom's place they go to a peepal tree (*Aswathakatti*) or some temple. The bridal party is given a warm welcome with the offering of sweet drinks. Afterwards they are led to the groom's house with the accompaniment of *Kalasa* (a brass narrow-mouthed vessel with water and an areca flower fixed in the mouth) *Thali* (a cloth held tent-like over *Kalasa*), and pipers and drummers. Wedding rites commence thereafter. They fix *Halugamba* (milk post or auspicious post) to one of the posts in the *Chappara* (pendal). The *Halugamba* may be a bough of a *Atti*, *Buruga*, *Banni*, *Basiru*, *Ekke* and *Jambhul* trees. Five kinds of grains with turmeric root and betel-leaf and nut tied in a cloth piece is tied at the top of this pole. Five unwidowed women go to a well with new pots and bring water after performing *Ganga Puja* (worship of goddess water). These pots are placed in each of the four corners of the pendal and one at the centre. The bride and the groom are bathed after being smeared with turmeric and oil. The bride and the bride-groom are dressed in new clothes. The *Kankanas* (wristlet) are tied by the unwidowed women to both. The *Bashingas* (marriage coronets) are tied to their foreheads by their respective maternal uncles. Both of them offer *Puja* to their respective family deities. Then they are made to stand facing each other in front of the *Halukamba*. A cloth curtain on which a figure of *Nandi* (Bull) or Swastic mark is drawn by turmeric root is held between them. The girl stands, facing the East, in a wicker basket containing rice or jowar and the boy, facing the west stands on a low stool, or a stone slab (*Mase Kallu*). "In Dharwar the ends of their robes are tied together and they are seated on rice spread on a raised seat, at the time of performing the marriage. In Belgaum they are seated on a blanket" (Enthoven, 1922-Vol.II-P: 443). In Jamakhandi town it is reported that the girl holds a sickle in her hand and on boy's shoulder is placed a *Mini* (rope). Then one of their elderly castemen or women recite the holy mantras and also sing songs. The *Mangalya* (Marriage badge) is fastened round the girl's neck by the boy. Then the guests throw *Mangalakshate* (rice grain tinted with turmeric) on the pair. The curtain held between them is now removed. The hands of the couple are joined and a cocoanut is placed in their hands. And all the guests pour milk over it. Flower garlands are exchanged between the bride and groom. The hems of their robes are tied and they go round (*Pradakshina*) the *Halukamba* thrice. They pay their obeisance to their parents and other elderly men and receive blessings. They are seated side by side on a square woollen blanket when the women sing songs and wave *arati* (lighted wick)

about their faces. The ceremony ends with a feast to the guests in the evening. The married couple are taken in procession (*varathi*) in a decorated cart or on a horse to a Maruthi temple to offer *Puja*. The procession is headed by their caste musicians beating bell-less tambourines and blowing pipes. On the next day *Nagoli* is performed. The boy and the girl are made to pour turmeric water (*Vokuli*) on each other and seated for *arati*. After a feast the bridegroom is taken to the bride's place from where they return after staying there for 5 days. The consummation of marriage takes place three months after the wedding. If it is a prepuberty marriage the consummation takes place 16 days after the girl attains puberty. Now-a-days the practice of synchronising consummation ceremony with the marriage ceremony to minimise the expenses is resorted to by some of the households.

The average expenditure on a marriage ceremony of a boy among them ranges between Rs. 400 and Rs. 600 and that of a girl between Rs. 100 and Rs. 200.

The remarriage of widows is permitted among them and such a remarriage is called *Udkilagna* or *Kudike* form of marriage. However, the widow is not permitted to marry any member of her deceased husband's section. She may marry her mother's brother or her father's sister's son. If she is living with her parents after her husband's death the consent of her parents is necessary for settling the alliance. The payment of bride price or *thera* is not compulsory and paid only when demanded. Generally those widows who are young and issueless are remarried. Like other marriages the widow marriages are also performed on auspicious days but they are mostly performed during night times. The ceremony is simple, less expensive and short. Many of the rites like rubbing turmeric and oil, erecting marriage pendal and fixing auspicious post and tying of wristlets and *bashingas* are not performed. The ceremony is performed in a house other than that of the widow or of the bridegroom. Only widows witness the marriage ceremony, which an elderly man or woman of the caste officiates. Mostly widows are married to widowers. The widow is dressed in clothes and ornaments presented by her intended husband. Then the pair are seated on a carpet or a woollen blanket, the ends of their garments are tied in a knot, the widow's brow is marked with red-powder, her lap is filled with rice, copra etc. The married pair with their relatives start for bridegroom's house, after giving a feast to the castemen the following day. A bachelor wishing to marry a widow is first married to a *ru* (*colotrapis gigantea*) bush. The remarried

widow, however does not enjoy the same social status as that of an unwidowed woman. She is not eligible to participate in the performance of certain rituals and ceremonies of marriage. But her offspring do not suffer from such disabilities.

Divorce is allowed and practised. The divorced or separated woman is free to marry again as the widow. Divorce (*sod-chiti*) is sanctioned by the caste *panchayat* on the grounds of the wife's unchastity, the husband's ill-treatment of the wife or on the contraction of some incurable disease by any one of the partners. The caste *panchayat* is summoned on the request of either of them to settle the divorce. After the divorce is sanctioned the wife has to return the *mangalasutra* (marriage badge) and all the other ornaments given by her husband. Even the bride price (*thera*) is paid back by her parents. The divorce deed is executed on a paper by both the husband and the wife after breaking a straw into two before the caste *Panchayat*.

(c) Death Customs

The Mangs firmly believe in the mortality of the physical body and the immortality of the soul. They also believe in the existence of heaven and hell. The age of all living-beings, it is believed, is pre-ordained. Death may be due to, apart from physical causes, malice of spirits, ghosts or magicians.

The Mangs bury their dead. The pregnant women and the lepers who die are cremated. Deceased children and the unmarried dead are buried in lying posture. When the patient is about to die, a little water or milk is put in the mouth by the close kin. The dying person is brought outside the residence and seated against a wall. After life is extinct the women of the house raise a loud cry and all the castemen arrive soon. The news of death is also sent through some of their own castemen to all the relations who arrive to participate in the funeral procession. The dead body is washed in warm or cold water after anointing it with a little oil. The corpse is covered with a new or old waist cloth and a cord is passed several times round the body. Strings of flowers are put round the neck, the forehead is marked with *Vibhuthi* (sacred ash) and vermilion, and a basil leaf is put in the mouth. Betel-leaves and *gulal* (red powder) are sprinkled over it. The dead body is carried on a bier (made of two poles with three or more small cross pieces) or in a woollen blanket by four or five persons in sitting posture. If they can afford it the funeral procession is headed by music from their castemen. The eldest son of the deceased, in case of the death of the father or youngest son in case of mother's

death acts as the chief mourner and heads the funeral procession carrying on earthen jar with fire (*Korive*) burning incense sticks and some cooked food. His headgear (*rumal*) is held under his arm. On reaching half way they halt and the corpse is lowered on the ground but the fire pot is not allowed to touch the ground lest it should become impure.

Then the bearers change their positions. On reaching the burying ground, which is generally to the east of their settlement, the corpse is lowered into the grave. The pit measures about 5 feet $\times$ 3 feet. The corpse is seated cross-legged facing east. "The chief mourner dips the end of his turban in water, squeezes a little water into the mouth of the deceased and strikes his own mouth with his open hand....." (Enthoven, 1922 II.P-440). Some elderly man of the caste puts *Vibhuthi* marks on legs and a piece of gold is also put in the mouth before water is poured. Then, the neem leaves are put into the grave. First the chief mourner scatters a handful of earth on the body followed by others and the grave is filled and three stones are placed on it. Then the chief mourner sets on his shoulder a pot filled with water (*kuli*) and goes five times round the grave. At the end of the fifth turn he pours water from the pot on the grave and dashes the pot to pieces on the ground. Then all the members of the funeral party sprinkle *Bilpatre* leaves and place some coins over the grave. They go to a stream or some water-course nearby, have a wash or bath and return to the house of the deceased each carrying *garike* (a kind of grass) blades or neem branches. At the house a vessel full of water is placed on the spot where the deceased breathed his last. Then they dip the *garike* blades or neem leaves in the pot and sprinkle drops of water over their persons. The mourners return to their homes. At the house of the deceased on the day of death, they neither light the hearth nor prepare any food. Food for them is offered by some agnates. On the third day they perform a rite called *Muru Kulu*. The chief mourner with bearers and some kinsmen go to the grave taking jowar rotis, cooked rice and curds or milk. They place a leaf containing these items of food at the resting place and food items on two leaves and leaf-cups (*drons*) are placed on the grave. They return home after a cow or crow has partaken of the food offered to the deceased. On reaching home they are sprinkled with cow's urine. The Pall-bearers are seated in a line and their shoulders are touched with blades of *garike* grass dipped in sweet oil to signify their being relieved of the burden (*Hegalu ilisuvadu*). They are also fed on roti, sweet molasses etc. On the 9th day, the funeral feast is held. The chief mourner is held

songs) during night time in the premises of their temple. At Chikodi town in Belgaum district, the Mangs do not perform Bhajanas independent of others. But they do participate in Bhajanas organised by the Mahars, Chalvadis etc.

The literates among them in towns spend their leisure time in free reading rooms and occasionally visit cinemas and dramas. Even the villagers do visit movies in towns once in a way. They make themselves free on occasions when a *Jatra* is held in nearby pilgrim centres, towns and villages. *Jatras* also happen to be the meeting place of their relations and friends. The Mangs participate as musicians, beating tabors and drums in front of the procession of deities organised by caste Hindus. In none of the places where the field study was made have the Mangs been reported as participating in staging *Bailatas* (open air dramas) and dramas. In some places (Ranebennur, Dharwar District) they perform *Kolata* or *Sangrama* (A group of males singing songs with time kept with sticks knocked together) on festive occasions of Yugadi and Navaratri. With the lifting of prohibition liquor booths attract quite a good number during the evenings. The present generation fall an easy prey to the liquor. On shandy days and during *Jatra* times ram-fights and cock fights which involve betting are very attractive items of entertainment. The games played by children are *Chilli Dandu*, *Uttutu*, *Buguri*, *Chendata*, *Kanna Muchuhale*, *Achchangai*, *Maragoti*, *Kabadi* etc.

Men and women entertain themselves by group singing at the time of threshing grains, weeding paddy fields and also while grinding jowar and dehussing paddy and jowar.

XIV. INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Mangs, as already observed, are served by Brahmin and Lingayat priest to a limited extent. Their marriages are fixed by these priests who marry them from a distance. However they do not participate in their birth and death ceremonies. In this respect we do not see any perceptible change or trends of change from the past. They are also not served traditionally by the village washermen and barbers. In recent times, the community receives these services in towns. The high caste Hindus in villages still consider their touch and proximity as polluting, though such feeling is not publicly expressed. Excepting Bhangi and during recent times Holers, Hindus and even Muslims do not take water and food from their hands. Now-a-days separate drinking water wells

are constructed for the scheduled castes so as to avoid conflicts and tension that might be created by the possible attempts on the part of Scheduled Castes to draw water from the public wells meant for high caste Hindus. The Mangs have not yet made organised efforts to gain admission inside temples used by high caste Hindus. Separate temples also exist for them in their settlements.

Living at the fringes of villages, however, does not come in the way of contact with various sections of the community. The services of Mangs are essential in economic and social spheres. Mangs serve as casual and attached agricultural labourers. They carry death messages of high caste Hindus and also prepare graves. They supply leather and coir ropes, foot wear, etc., to the cultivators who in turn have a sense of responsibility for their well-being.

The Mangs consider themselves inferior to high caste Hindus, and some scheduled castes like Mahar, Dhor, Chalvadi, Samagar, Bhoi etc. They claim higher social status than Bhangi and Dombars.

XV. INTRA-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Mangs as a broad caste consists of many sub-groups or endogamous sub-divisions based on functional characteristics. For example, Mini-Madigs or Mangs are traditional rope makers, Mochi Mangs are leather workers, Vajantri Mangs are musicians and Mang Garudis are snake charmers. Many of these sub-castes, however, do not confine themselves to a single pursuit. We may see a Mang (for e.g., at Karoshi) engaged in making ropes and also working on leather. The Mochi Mangs, Pheds and Sanadis eat together. The rest neither eat together nor intermarry. During the course of the field study it was reported that Mini Madigs and Asal Mangs eat together but do not intermarry. Dakkaligars though considered a section among the Mangs are considered inferior and live on alms given by the other Mangs. The remaining sub-castes enjoy almost equal social status with each other.

XVI. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The existence and the effective working of the traditional socio-political organisation (caste Panchayat) is not uniform in all the places where the Mangs are found. According to the Bombay Gazetteer "They have no headman and settle disputes at meetings of the caste" (Bombay: 1884, XXI). According to

Enthoven "Mangs have two kinds of leaders, Mehetrias and Sarnaiks. The former are religious and social heads, the latter leaders in crimes. The Mehetrias settle caste disputes in consultation with the adult male members of the caste". (Bombay: 1922, II, P-437). The head of the caste at the village level is called *Metri* or *Hiriya* or *Sarpancha* or *Ganachari*. At Chikodi, the *Yajamana* (head) called *Sarpancha*, is chosen each year from the elderly men of the caste. In other places the office of the head of the caste panchayat is hereditary. Above the village level there is Kasbeyava who is the head 6 to 10 villages. Above him there will be a *Kattemane* at the regional level. At Karoshi in Belgaum district it is reported that they do not have caste panchayat which has become defunct since 25 years. Their disputes are settled by the recognised leaders of the village. In the past the caste council used to play an effective role in guiding the caste members to act corporately and to control their behaviour socially and economically. These caste councils generally deal with matters regarding marriage, separation and divorce, inheritance of property and other disputes among the caste members. However the influence of these traditional caste panchayats has fast declined during the last 25 years. Now the disputes are taken to the courts or adjudicated by the recognised local leaders. At Chikodi it is said the caste council did not meet since 5 years, as the disputes are never referred to it. The formal sanction of the caste council is necessary for separation, divorce and also widow remarriage. The caste panchayat's punishments vary from levying of fines to excommunication. The fine varies from Re. 1 to Rs. 10. The caste council also prescribes methods of purification for offences like shoe beatings, dining with forbidden members of other lower castes, adultery etc. The fines collected are utilised for feeding castemen, performing special puja to their Goddess, etc.

The headman of the caste is respected and his presence is necessary on occasions such as betrothal, marriage, death ceremony, etc. In the matter of dress and food habits the headman is not different from other caste members.

XVII. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

There is no any conspicuous voluntary attempt on their part towards the revival of the traditional pattern of the community. Revivalist movement does not exist on account of lack of leadership and elite from

among the members of the community. With the emergence of new leadership outside the caste group enjoying new sources of influence, the traditional leaders of the community have ceased to command and exercise control over the community. The system of dedicating girls has almost disappeared. This has very much put an end to the evil of prostitution under the guise of *Devadasi*. Early marriages widely prevalent in the past are not so frequent under the changed social condition. Though there is no organised move for adopting traditional norms of the caste Hindus of the region the memebres of the caste have given up to a very great extent animal sacrifice as a form of worship. There is a latent urge to get their children educated and train them for non-traditional economic pursuits. During the course of our field study no voluntary agency engaged in social welfare of the community was encountered. Regarding economic betterment it was reported at Chikodi that none of them was granted agricultural lands. None of them as also reported to have received any grant or subsidy for house construction. Grant of livestock, tools, agricultural implements etc., under the National Extension Scheme would only touch the fringe of the problem. To improve the housing condition, the Government has been taking vigorous steps to start scheduled castes' housing co-operative societies. The response from the caste to become shareholders of these Societies is poor as observed at Chikodi and other place of study. In villages only a few land owners have become members of the service and credit co-operative societies. The State Social Welfare Department have started hostels for students studying in High Schools and colleges in almost all the taluk headquarters and towns. Community centres are also being provided for the enlightenment of the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes. Artisans' Training centres have also been started for the benefit of scheduled castes. At Chikodi town 4 girls belonging to Mangs were undergoing training in tailoring. None of the Mangs is reported to have come forward to undergo training in making sandals, which happens to be one of their principal traditional occupations. As agricultural labourers and as workers at household industry Mangs are poor and illiterate but hard working. Their economic backwardness prevents them from competing successfully with organised sectors of their trade and their possession of lands is also too meagre to ensure a steady livelihood. With increasing ameliorative measures and education, they should, over times be able to improve their lot.

10. MOGER OR MUGGERA

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order 1956, in Mysore, the Mogers constitute a Scheduled Caste in the district of South Kanara and also in Kollegal taluk of Mysore district. Prior to the reorganisation of States in 1956, the above-mentioned tracts formed part of Madras State, where, in accordance with the Constitution (Sch. Castes and Sch. Tribes) Order 1950, the Mogers were considered as a Scheduled Caste 'throughout the State except Kanyakumari district and Shencottah Taluk of Tirunelveli district'. During the 1931 Census, in the then Madras Presidency, Mogers were reckoned as a 'Depressed Class' and the 'Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order 1936', proclaimed them as a Scheduled Caste in Madras Province except in Kanyakumari district and Shencottah Taluk of Tirunelveli district. Prior to its merger with Mysore in 1953, Bellary district belonged to Madras and as a result, the Mogers were considered as Scheduled in Bellary district also. [Mitra, 1966 (a) I. Part V-B (ii)]. According to the Modification Order, 1956, the Mogers are a Scheduled Caste in Malabar district of Kerala and throughout Madras State except in Kanyakumari district and Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district. It is beyond the scope of this present report to establish the relationship or identity that might or may have been subsisting among Mogers encountered in these different tracts. The note that follows refers to Mogers (or more appropriately, to Mугers) of South Kanara and is based on a brief field study conducted during October-November, 1968.

Anyone familiar with the district of South Kanara, on hearing the term 'Moger' is inclined at once to think of the numerous fishermen inhabiting its coastal plains. As early as in 1801, Buchanan, during his travels noted down several details about this fishermen community under the caste-name 'Mogayer'. He considered them to be of Tuluva origin and points out their resemblance to the "Mukuas of Malayala". He, further, describes them as "boatmen, fishermen and palanquin bearers" (Buchanan, 1870, II P. 217). Baines (1883, I.P. 315) makes a reference to Mogers as fishermen. So also Stuart (1893, XIII) observes that "The Mogers are a class of fishermen found chiefly in South Kanara and appear to be immigrants. They are

taller, fairer, and more enterprising than other fishermen of the district . . ." (p. 294). In the neighbouring coastal district of North Kanara (which, till November 1956, formed part of Bombay State) also, they were found in considerable numbers during the 1880s. Campbell speaks of them as "numbering about 3500 in the district" and remarks, "They seem to be foreigners, as they are taller, fairer and more enterprising than other fishermen of the district. It is worthy of note that there is a Central Indian Caste of the same name" (Campbell, 1883, XV, I PP. 312-3). Similarly, Francis (1902, XV, P. 168), Thurston (1909 V) and also Mead and Macgregor (1912, VII, I) refer to Mogers as fishermen. These evidences lead to the conclusion that Mogers are traditional fishermen.

At this juncture it is pertinent to point out that this fishermen community has always enjoyed a higher social status, in that it was never treated as 'untouchable' but on the contrary, was accorded a place in the hierarchy of local Caste-Hindu groups. Buchanan has noted this fact while stating that "they pretend to be Sudras of pure descent, which is doubtful: and assume superiority over Halepecas, one of the most common castes of cultivators in the Tuluva; but they acknowledge themselves greatly inferior to the Bunts." The local people—both laymen and officials—are aware of the fact that the fishermen community of Mogers has never been subjected to such treatment as would relegate it to the status of a Scheduled Caste. Moreover, they term themselves as *Moga Veeras* and are also popularly known as *Marakkalas* (cf. Francis 1902, XV, I p. 167) especially, in tracts where Tulu is predominant. There is another indigenous caste-group locally known as *Mugera*, *Muggera* or its synonym *Mera* which has been suffering social disabilities (such as denial of services of barbers and washermen, of access to public places, and temples etc.), for generations. Stuart (1893, XIII) writes about *Mera* as being one of the major sub-divisions among the Holeyas of South Kanara (cf. Thurston, 1909, V, 62). But later publications do not contain any information on the *Meras*. The term 'Mugger' has appeared in the volumes of Indian Antiquary and the details have been discussed at the end of this section. It is this community of Mугers that has been deemed as a Scheduled Caste ever since 1936, though, perhaps due to a spelling mistake, the term 'Moger' has been adopted

in the various orders. With a view to avoid any ambiguity that may be associated with the term 'Moger', the subject of our study will henceforth be referred as Mera or as Muggera.

The members of the community refer to themselves as *Mera* or *Mereru* (plural form of *Mera* in Tulu), while speaking about their caste to outsiders and also among themselves. The synonym *Muggera* or *Muggerlu* is also equally popular in the areas of their concentration. *Mera* and *Muggera* are supposed to be Tulu and Kannada versions, respectively of their caste-name. *Mera* (or *Mere*) in Tulu connotes 'rabbit' and in days goneby, they were, it is said adepts at hunting rabbits and also in preparing nets of sisal-hemp fibre for catching rabbits, locally called *Meretha* or *Meruputhunaku bale*. Such nets (large nets are called *Maribale* and the smaller ones *Koori bale*) are being manufactured (though on a very small scale and that too only in certain tracts) for sale by a few Meras even now. Their association with the bow and the arrow and their statements indicate that hunting was one of their main occupations (if not their sole occupation) in former days. They regarded, it is said, dogs as indispensable aids in their hunting expeditions. *Muggera*—supposed to be the Kannada equivalent for *Mera*—does not however imply rabbits. A local version is that because of the use of bows and arrows they are leaders or *mukhyaru* (or chiefs) and it is suggested that the term *Muggera* is a derivative of the word *Mukhyaru*. Also, the plural form of *Muggeru* viz., *Muggerlu* (popularly known as *Gadi Muggerlu*) refers to their Guardian devils or spirits—propitiated periodically not only by members of their own caste but also by some of the other local caste groups.

Seasonal out-migration of field-labourers to plantation areas in western and northern tracts of Chikmagalur and Coorg district has been a characteristic feature of South Kanara, and the Meras who are now chiefly field-labourers also follow this pattern. In Coorg district, they are popularly known as *Pale*, while in parts of Chikmagalur they are called *Hasalaru*. Soon after crossing the district borders, the members of the community admit, they change their nomenclature to suit the regional requirements. It may be noted in passing that *Pale* is a scheduled caste in Coorg district while *Hasalaru* is a scheduled tribe in the districts of former Mysore State.

The Meras consider themselves to be one of the indigenous groups of South Kanara and cherish no memory of any place, other than South Kanara, as

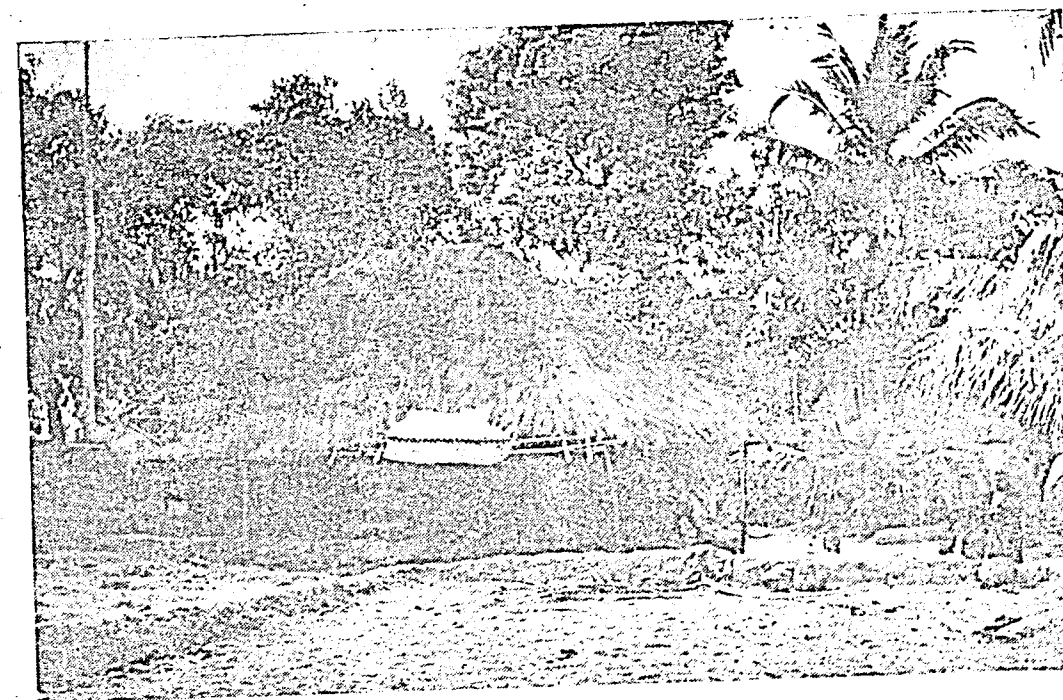
their home-country. Tulu, which has no script of its own, has been their mother-tongue and they have no recorded history. Nor do they seem to have been mentioned in any of the historical accounts of the region. For the most part, they appear to have confined themselves to the hilly and heavy-rainfall tracts of the district, subsisting in the forgotten past, mainly as 'hunters and food gatherers'. The possibility that they might have been a group of fighting tribesmen cannot be ruled out because of their traditional association with the bow and arrow. Of all the Scheduled Castes (i.e. the erstwhile untouchables) of South Kanara only the Meras wield this weapon, while a mere touch by a member of any other exterior caste was thought sufficient to defile it. Thus in the social hierarchy among Scheduled Castes, the Meras lay claim to the top-most place.

Regarding the origin of their caste, they do not have any legends to narrate. However, legendary twin brothers called *Mudda* and *Kalala* are regarded reverentially as their own culture-heroes (if not their progenitors), and the legends about their life and exploits are known to a few leading men of the Mera community. The versions of the legend vary from place to place and all of them appear to be spun around the legendary tale depicting the life and exploits of two brothers—*Koti* and *Channayya*—(popularly known as *Beiderukalu*) of Billava origin. According to one old informant—a Gurikara (headman) of Kemmunja in Puttur taluk the real names of *Mudda* and *Kalala* are *Malleswara* and *Mayyeswara*, the names of their parents being *Palleswar* and *Deyyaru*. They were residing in the Southern-most parts of the present South Kanara District quite close to the habitat of the *Kodavas* or *Coorgis* who were then known as *Mukhyeru* or chiefs. The twins learnt the craft of archery and warfare at the hands of *Kodava* foster parents, but later joined service under a Bunt chieftain of the southern parts of South Kanara. On one occasion their territory was attacked by the *Bangeras* of the north and in the battle that ensued the twins fought valiantly killing thousands of foes and achieved victory for their master. As days went by, two *Baidyas*, evidently spies from the *Bangera* kingdom, gained confidence and rendered the twins unconscious by drugging and offering toddy and attempted to kidnap them. However, the brothers made good their escape and reached a place called *Panja* near *Subramanya*. While they were hunting some boars an encounter with the local tribesmen took place. The valiant brothers killed them all and moved north ultimately reaching the place where *Koti* and *Channayya* (the legendary heroes of Billava origin immortalised in the form of *Bhootas*



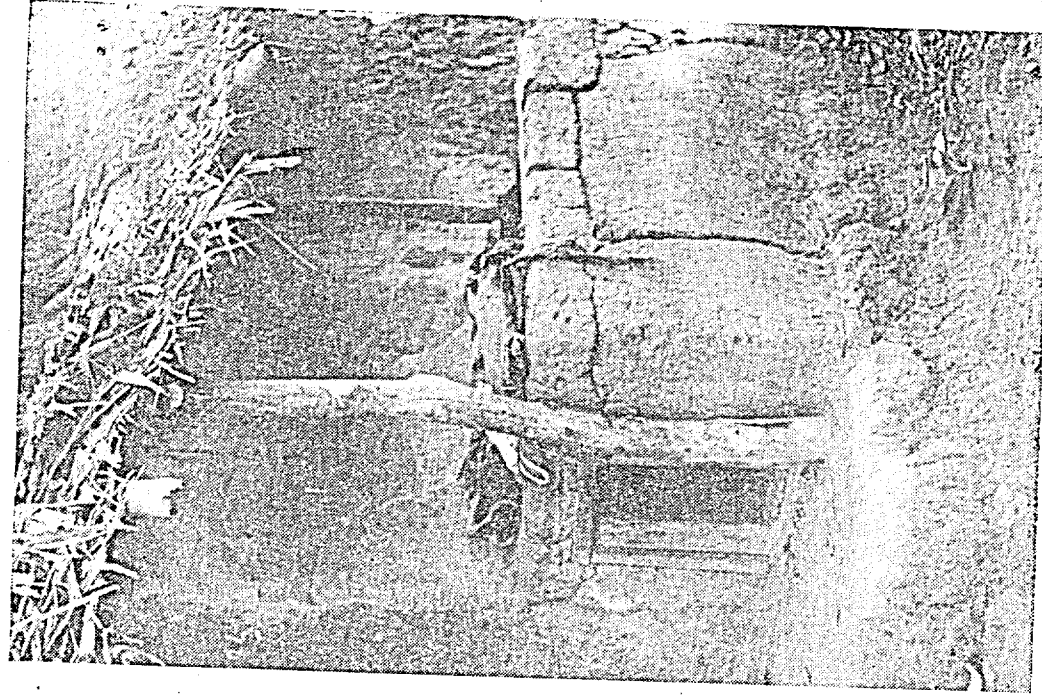
1. An adolescent Muger discharging an arrow. It is their traditional weapon.

8. MUGER

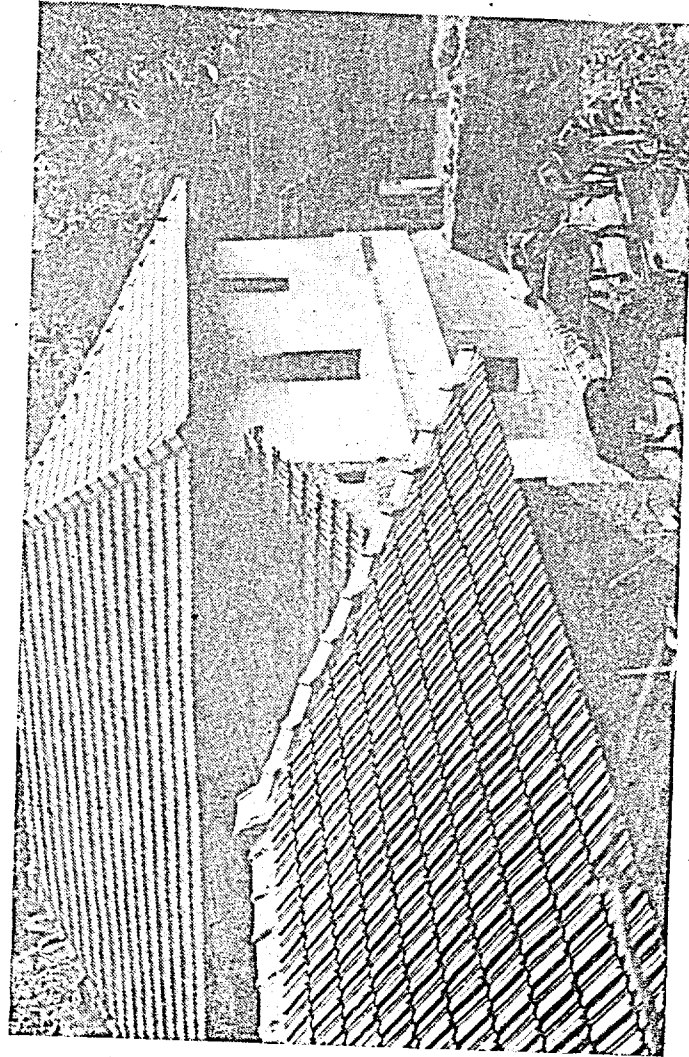


2. Thatched hut of a Muger. Notice the fallow paddy field in the fore

MOGER
OR
MUGGERA



4. *Koligoodu*. In the pial of the house/hut a low roofed enclosure is built for the poultry



3. House of a wealthy person belonging to a socially advanced caste-group



5. An oldman displaying the net used for catching rabbits

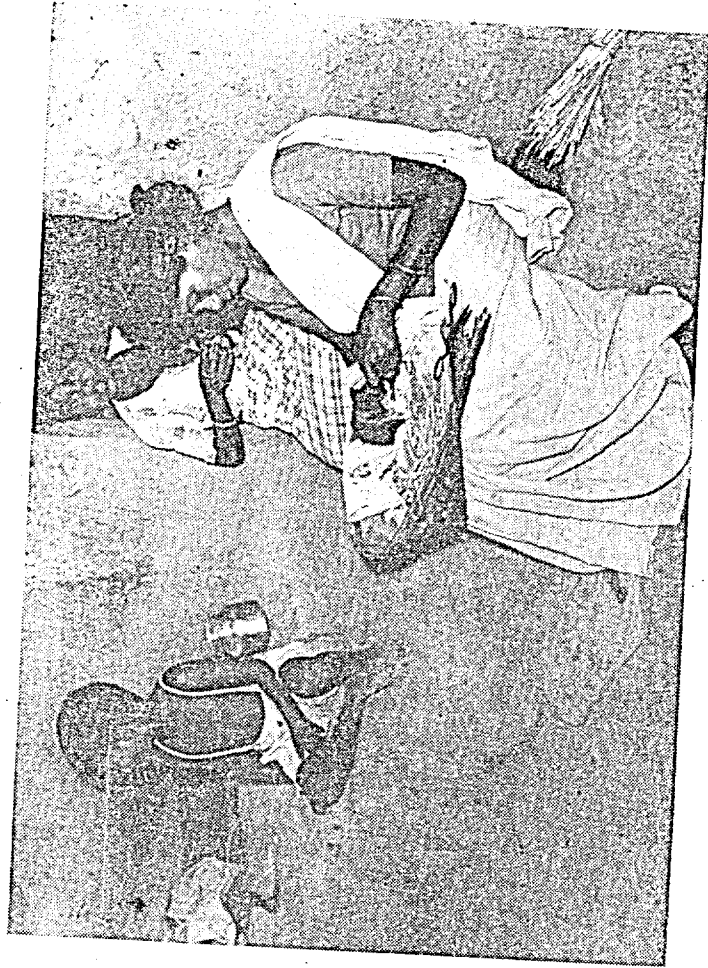


6. *Dudli*. the common percussion instrument—held under the left arm

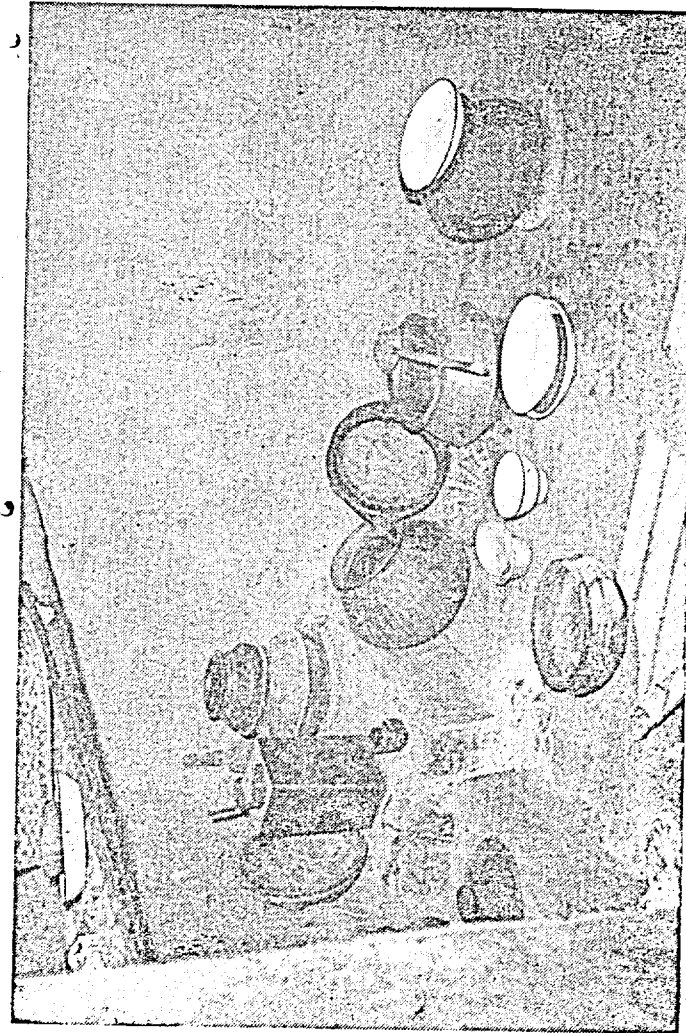


7. Muger couple and their daughter

208 (d)



8. Rolling beedies is an important household industry in which mostly women are engaged



9. A peep into the kitchen

208 (e)



10 (a). Full-length portrait of a Muger



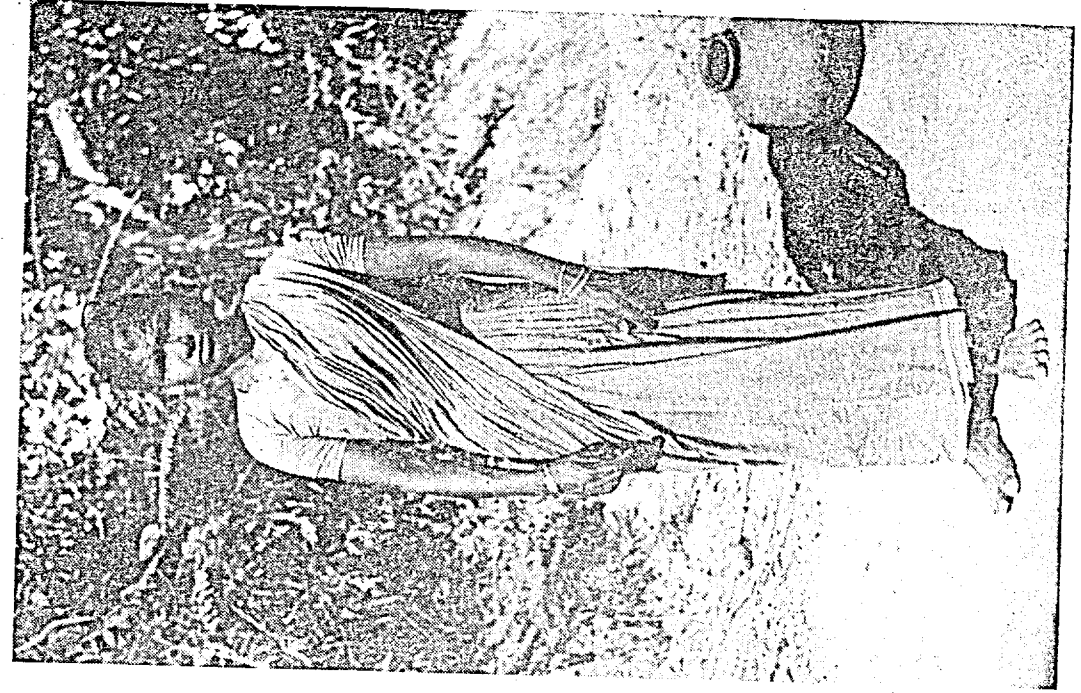
10 (b). Front view (close up)



10 (c). Profile



10 (d). As viewed from behind



11 (a). Full length portrait of a Muger female

(devils) and popularly worshipped) were being brought up. They joined the services of Kantha Baidya the foster parent of Koti and Channayya and lived with them. They had a sister by name Thanni maniga (or Thannaniga) and sometime later she also joined them. Thus Mudda, Kalala, Koti and Channayya, became associates for life and remained together during their later exploits. On one occasion when all the four had been on a hunting expedition, Thannimaniga carried food and drink for them. They all sat on a huge rock to partake of the food brought to them. Suddenly they heard the cry of a cock from below the rock. The attempts of the four men to move the rock aside failed and when she stood on the rock Thannimaniga heard a voice from below imploring that the rock be moved aside. Then she swore an oath stating that if she had been truly a pious, chaste and devout lady the rock should split at the places she marked with her *Gejjakathi* (small knife). Thereupon she drew sixteen parallel lines and the stone gave way accordingly. There, in the deep well was a man, who had already promised to consider her as his sister. So she took out her saree which was 16 cubits long and asking him not to have a look at her, helped him to reach the ground. This act of hers, it is said, enraged her brothers who immediately made her an outcaste. The person she so saved was no other than *Kordabbu* (also called *Kotada Babbu*) a great hero of the Mundala Caste and consequently, the Meras claim superiority over the Mundalas. The informant was unable to narrate the story further in any coherent form. The main theme seems to be the life long attachment of brothers and their heroic, sometimes amounting to, miraculous deeds and their expertise in archery.

The legend narrated by the Gurikara of Meras at Aladangady (also called Aruva) of Belthangady taluk is somewhat different in that, it refers to heroes named Deyyu and Perna and also varies in details. According to him, during the reign of Bhairavarasa of Karkala, there lived some sixty-one families (*Vokkalu*) of their community. On one occasion, the king was besieged from all the four corners and becoming helpless, requisitioned these Meras also to fight the enemy under their own leader, by name *Odi*. He also promised half his kingdom if they succeeded in driving away his foes. They fought valiantly in the battles using their bows and arrows and pursued the foes deep into the enemy's territory. Soon after reaching home all of them succumbed to some deadly disease. Of the sixty-one families only an infant named Deyyu was alive whereupon the Bhairavarasa took pity and ordered *Ballala* of Enmur to bring up the child. Deyyu grew up into a man well-versed in archery and at

a proper age his marriage also took place. He and his wife's brother Perna, became inseparable friends and they always moved together. During one of their hunting expeditions they met a Billava woman trading *Kallu* (toddy). On learning about their histories, she entreated them to join her household which already consisted of Koti and Channayya—two famous Billava heroes. This, they did and gradually the four men became greatly attached to each other. While Koti and Channayya were master swordsmen, Deyyu and Perna were among the best marksmen. Time passed eventless until the brothers were summoned by the King of Padumalai to join his hunting expedition. This they did and requested the King to extend his invitation to Deyyu and Perna also. So, they too joined the team. The King, half amused by their mien questioned their usefulness in his venture. They retorted, "*Nayijjani Nata Atthu, Muggerarijandi Bonte Atthu* (search (for game) without dogs is no search at all and likewise hunting without Muggeras is no hunting at all), and demanded that dogs must also accompany them. Their wishes were soon fulfilled but the king again questioned their knowledge about bows and dogs. Back came the answer describing the four types of bows and four types of dogs as follows:

"Kangada biru Kanada;

Thariya biru Sarpa;

Bidirda biru Bedavi;

Eandina biru Eshwara;

Kadai Kattuna Kalu;

Bonteda Bollu;

Kadamudanke;

Panjina Gujare."

(Bows made from areca-palm strips are for *Kanada* castemen; Bows made from strips of *Borassus Flabelliformis* are like serpents; Bows made from strips of Bamboo are for *Beda*-castemen; Bows made from strips of date-palm are like *Eswara* the Lord of destruction.

The four types of dogs are respectively those which surround; those which scare and follow the game; deer hounds and lastly those which fight the wild boars).

The king was very much pleased and all of them set out on the expedition. To their utter disappointment, these four men who always kept together sighted no game at all. At this juncture they came across the priest of *Brahma* (Bharmer) temple who, when

threatened, directed them to a place called Kemplaje *malai*. On reaching it, the advancing Chanayya killed the boars without giving any chance for either Perna or Deyyu. They took it as an insult and to bring down their anger, Channayya miraculously brought back to life a few boars asking them to persue the animals. The brothers kept back while Deyyu and Perna pressed ahead and by killing the boars in a neighbouring territory got entangled in a minor clash. Soon Koti and Channayya reached the spot and after vanquishing their enemies they sat down to share the food. Once again Deyyu sensed discrimination and dissatisfied with the food he received which he threw away to the dogs, he parted company of Channayya and Koti. Perna followed him and both of them reached Heraje the place of their foster mother. Here, they set out for fishing and despite their mother's warnings, they reached *Brahmara gundi* and threw baits in its water. Soon a very large fish came afloat and Deyyu pierced it with an arrow. But the fish sank and in order to catch hold of it Deyyu jumped into the water. To assist Deyyu, Perna also dived and both of them died in this attempt. When their corpses were later being burnt their spirits removed from the fetters of their human bodies reached the Brahma shrine at Kemplaje *malai* and henceforth began to roam about the country performing miraculous deeds. Soon people began to propitiate the spirits, singing their glories they sought protection from evil and sickness.

The same informant also narrated the tale about Thannimaniga who saved *Kordabbu* (Babbu)—the Mundala hero and asserted superiority over the Mundalas. According to him, Mudda and Kalala—the twins—and tutelary spirits of the Mera are *Dhootas* or messengers of *Mammayi* (Maha Mayi) Goddess. At Aladangady, every year during *Suggi hunnime* (March-April) the resident Jain land-lord arranges *Kola* (devil-dance) worship to propitiate Deyyu and Perna through the priestly services of the Muggeras.

Regarding the distinction made out earlier about the Moger fishermen and Muggers, it would be of interest to know that at several places in the note on "The Devil worship of the Tuluvas" (based on (manuscripts) Burnell's collections of Tulu incantations used at the ceremonies of Bhuta worship"—published during 1894-5 in Indian Antiquary, Volumes XXIII and XXIV) there are references to Muggers [P. 41, P. 85 (the bowmen of the tribe called Muggers), P. 192 etc. of Vol. XXIII 1894 and P. 146 of Vol. XXIV 1895] and Muggernad (P. 94, 183 etc., of Vol. XXIII 1894). It may thus be inferred that the indigenous Muggers though later relegated to a low social status have

some place in the folklore of the region. References to Mugernad point out the probable one-time existence of a certain territory in the district exclusively or predominantly inhabited by the Muggeras.

Historical accounts of South Kanara disclose that one Bhairavaraya son of Jinadatharaya brought an army from Hombucha in Shimoga district and defeated Kapittu Heggade during the 13th century. He established the Dynasty of "Bhairasa Wodeyars" which ruled from Karkala over a major portion of the present South Kanara district up to the end of the 17th century. These Wodeyars were, however, only feudatories during the supremacy of the Vijayanagar empire. The legends and tales narrated by the Mугers mostly relate to the period when the Bhairasa Wodeyars were reigning supreme.

II. DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TREND

The Mogers, as indicated earlier, are included in the list of Scheduled Castes in Madras and Kerala States. During the 1961 Census, 5383 Mogers were enumerated in Malabar district of Kerala while only 13 of them—all female—were returned as being found in Madras State [Mitra, 1966 (b) IV—A(i)].

In Mysore, they numbered 7880 during the 1961 Census. Though scheduled in Kollegal taluk of Mysore district also, it is significant that all of them have been enumerated only in South Kanara district. It is likely that some of them could be found in the districts of Coorg, Hassan and Chikmagalur. However, authentic data regarding their numbers are not available as they do not constitute a scheduled caste in these areas of enumeration. Within South Kanara district, their chief centres of concentration are Puttur taluk (2428 persons—rural), Belthangady taluk (1719 persons—rural) and Mangalore taluk (1022 persons—rural). They are also found in the Taluks of Karkala (949), Bantwal (827) and Coondapur (90).

The Meras mostly dwell in small groups in the interior parts of the above mentioned taluks. In no village can they be found in large numbers, say 100 persons. Even within a village the regional settlement pattern prevents any clustering of a large number of households in any particular area. During the field study, Bannur, Ragikumeri (also called Bappalige) and Kemmunja all within three miles from Puttur; and Karaya, Guruvayankere and Aladangady of Belthangady taluk were visited. A few other places where Meras can be found in recognisable numbers are:

MOGER OR MUGGERA

Malebettu, Kiriyadi, Laila, Kuchiyad, Pilya, Balanja and Navura of Belthangady taluk; and Kukkar, Shantikodi, Haradi, Sulya, Sampaje etc., of Puttur taluk.

The major portion of the area where Meras are concentrated viz., the taluks of Belthangady, Karkal, Bantwal and Puttur, is situated in the mid-eastern and the southern belts of the district which lie immediately below the western ghats. This tract may be characterised as a dissected hill country because of the presence of a series of estuarine low lands separated by numerous hill ranges projecting from the western ghats. With its hills and dales, the terrain is rugged and difficult. The valleys are fertile and known for gardens producing areca and cocoanuts. Patches of fertile paddy fields yielding 2 or 3 crops (*Enil*, *Suggi* and *Kolake*) annually, mark this entire tract. The climate is equable and in fact, being a little distant from the Arabian sea, it is much cooler when compared to the coastal strip of the district. In this zone, included as it is in Malnad region, Malaria was rampant till the disease was brought under control in recent years by spraying of D.D.T. and other measures under the National Malaria Eradication Programme. Rainfall is heavy, ranging between 4000 and 5000 mms. per annum. A considerable portion of the tract under reference is covered by lofty forests covered with dense even-green vegetation. For instance, in Belthangady taluk which extends over 509 sq. miles, as much as 175 sq. miles are covered by forests. Likewise in Puttur, which has an area of 695 square miles, 267 square miles are under forest (Balasubramanyam, 1967, District Census Handbook, South Kanara). Thus evidently, the Meras inhabit the hilly, Malnad tracts of the district which abounds in forest wealth as did their forbears to lead a life of hunters and food gatherers. Even now, in many interior areas, they are accustomed to gather roots and tubers such as *nare*, *uyyeru* etc., during the months of May, June, July and August. Dharmasthala, Subramanya and Moodabidri are the three places of religious and cultural importance in this tract. In Puttur taluk *Makha* festival at Uppinangady (during February) *Shasti* festival and Kalkunda cattle fair at Subramanya (during November); and in Belthangady taluk, car festival during

April and *Laksha Deepotsava* during November at Dnarmasthala and illumination festival at Venoor during November are important occasions which attract large number of devotees from different parts of the district.

Absence of data regarding their population renders any study of their decennial growth or decay almost impossible. In 1891, (Stuart 1893, XIII P. 250) the Meras in South Kanara numbered 40,302 but no information is available for any later period. The 1961 Census gives the population of *Mogers* as 7880—all of them being found only in South Kanara. Proceeding with the assumption that all the Meras of the district have been enumerated in 1961 as 'Mogers' and comparing their population for the periods 1891 and 1961, it is at once evident that there has been a very heavy fall in their numbers.

According to the 1961 Census, the Meras (*i.e.* Moger) constitute only 0.25 per cent of the total scheduled caste population in the State. But considering only the area where they are found and are deemed to be a scheduled caste (*i.e.* South Kanara district only) it is observed that they account for 10.18 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population of the district. Of the 7880 Meras (Mogers) as many as 4424 are males and the remaining 3456 females. Thus, among them, the sex ratio works out to 781 which is very much below the State average of 958. Moreover, South Kanara district is known for its preponderance of females over males and according to 1961 Census, the district shows a surplus of 82 females for every thousand males. The Scheduled Castes of the district also, when taken together, disclose a slight surplus of females over males in urban areas (4397 males and 4438 females) and also in rural areas (34,056 males and 34,473 females). Very low sex ratio among the Mogers (*i.e.*, Mera) cannot be explained adequately. It may, however, be pointed out that a few other Scheduled Castes of the district (Adikarnataka, Adi Dravida, Godda, Madiga, Nalakadaya, Thoti etc.) also exhibit sex ratios very much lower than the district average.

A distribution of their 1961 population by sex and age-groups is presented below:—

TABLE I
Population by Sex and Age-groups.

Age groups	All ages	0—14	15—44	45+	Age not stated
Persons	7880	3716	2816	1345	3
Males	4424	2157	1493	772	2
Females	3456	1559	1323	573	1

In terms of percentages, the three age-groups contribute 47.2 per cent, 35.7 per cent and 17.1 per cent to the total population. The population in the age group 0-14 is composed of 58 per cent males, that in the age-group 15-44 is composed of 53 per cent males and the population in 45+ age group is composed of 57 per cent males. Thus in each age-group the males outnumber the females. Among the males, 48.8 per cent are below 14 years of age, 33.8 per cent are between 15 and 44 and 17.4 per cent are aged 45 or above. Likewise, among females 45.1 per cent are below 14; 38.3 per cent are between 15 and 44 while the remaining 16.6 per cent are aged 45 and upwards.

The rural-urban break up of their 1961 population indicates a heavy concentration in rural areas. It is observed that 7616 persons, constituting 96.6 per cent of their total population, dwell in rural areas. It is interesting to know that the entire Bantwal and Belthangady taluks are classified as rural and in Puttur taluk, Puttur is the only urban area. Thus two of their chief centres of concentration are wholly rural while the third has only one town.

III. FAMILY, CLAN, KINSHIP AND OTHER ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

Among Meras, simple type of family comprising a man, his wife and their unmarried children, seems to find much favour. Subsequent to her marriage, the woman moves to her husband's abode—usually his parents' household. Sometime later as his family enlarges and his younger brothers get married, the man sets up an independent simple family. Thus, temporarily at least, there would be joint families of a *patri-local* type. In later years, such simple families become 'complex' by the addition of aged and/or widowed parents, widowed siblings of the man and sometimes even some more distant kinsmen. Published data about type and size of families among them are sadly lacking. Even during the present study any extensive information could not be gathered on this aspect. Of the 13 households enumerated, as many as 8 are simple; one is a joint family, 2 consisted of a widowed parent in addition to the simple unit; one consisted of the unmarried daughter of the brother of the head of the household while the remaining household provided accommodation to a paying guest. The total number of persons enumerated being 79, the average size works out to slightly more than 6 per family. Though the norm with regard to residence after marriage among them is *patri-local* (or more appropriately *virilocal*) there are, it is said, instances of the man moving

to his wife's natal village and there, setting up a separate household of his own. Two such instances—one at Bannur and the other at Ragikumeri or Bappalige near Puttur—came to light during the study. As the Meras follow *bali* (also pronounced as *bari*) system, descent among them is traced through the female line for both males and females. Thus a man belongs to his mother's *bali*, to which also his uterine siblings and relatives on the mother's side belong. His children are affiliated to the natal *bali* of his wife and her siblings. However, in the matter of inheritance and succession they subscribe to *Makkala Kattu*, according to which property and rank are transmitted to sons only. Thus, a close association between *patri-local* residence and patriarchal rule of inheritance may be observed among them despite their adherence to *matri-lineal* form of reckoning descent.

Bali (or *Bari* in Tulu) is an exogamous division analogous to the clan. All those belonging to any particular *bali* consider themselves as descendants of a common female ancestor. The relationship between (so also rights and duties) any two persons of a *bali* is well defined for, they are either actual or classificatory siblings or mother and child or uncle or aunt and nephew or niece. Marriage or sexual union of persons affiliated to a common *bali* is strictly tabooed. Their custom of *patri-local* residence and *matri-lineal* descent permits a wide spatial distribution of members belonging to any particular *bali*. According to the informants, there are sixteen *bali* divisions among them but the number appears to be conventional. The names of a few *balis* enumerated during the study are: *Kurmer bali*, *Bangeran bali*, *Kiniyadani bali*, *Kalinger bali*, *Arther bali*, *Hunderchar bali*, *Sonder bali*, *Nader bali*, *Erade bali* and *Kinnigera bali*. Neither the etymological significance of these names nor their origin is known to the Meras. However, it is commonly held that *Kurmer* is derived from *Kurma* of Sanskrit meaning 'tortoise' and the members of this *bali* do not harm the tortoise species. Those of *Hunderchar bali* refrain from doing any harm to squirrels. Although these *balis* are not ranked in a rigid hierarchical order *Kurmer bali* is supposed to be the most superior. The members of any particular *bali* in a given region recognise certain particular places as their *moolasthan* i.e., the place of original residence. In former days, it is said each *bali* had its own headman called *Gurikara* and any offerings to clan spirits were to be routed through him. This institution has now become obsolete. The function of *bali* in regulating marriages is very clear in that, their custom forbids the union of any two members of a *bali* and also of parallel cousins. The relationship between a man and his elder

brother's wife is one of cordiality and is free from restraint. Among them a man may remarry his elder brother's widow. In contrast, the relationship that subsists between a man and his younger brother's wife is characterised by strict avoidance. Let alone any bodily contact, the two are forbidden even to hold in common any article such as a vessel, a mat or a head load. They may converse indirectly and may not remain alone in any enclosure even by chance. She may not serve him food and even the mere touch of the plate in which her husband's elder brother has eaten food is taboo. So also, the relationship as defined by custom, between a man and his wife's mother is one of avoidance. If, due to inadvertence any contact does occur, the two should bathe immediately and undertake to pay some fine or offering to their respective family deities.

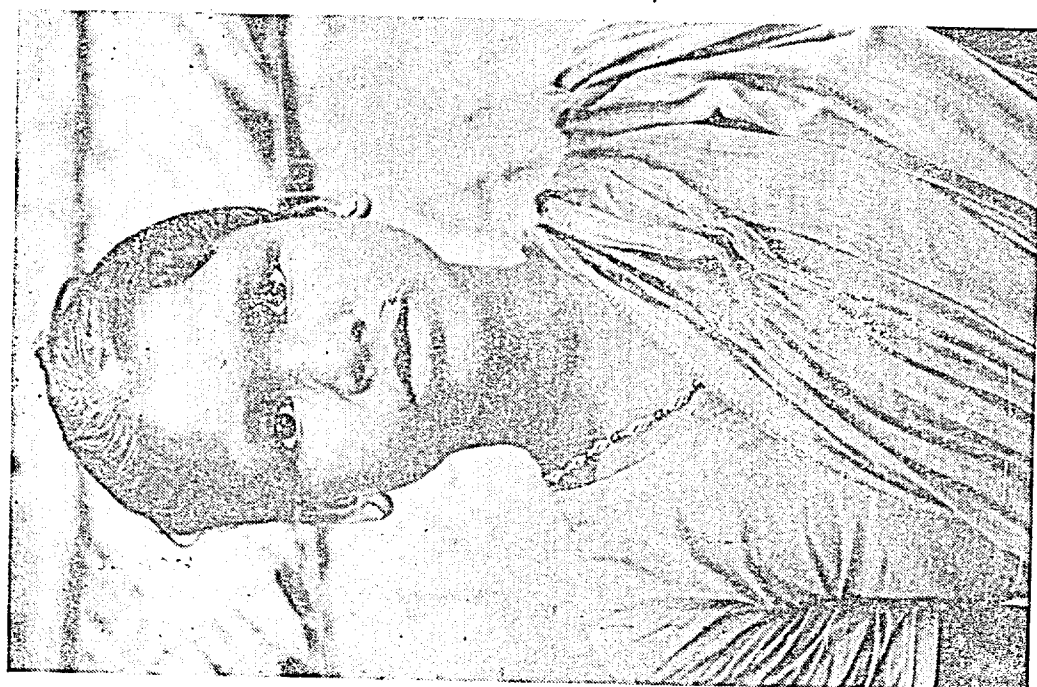
IV. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD HABIT AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

Dwelling

South Kanara district, especially its hilly and forest belts, is characterised by isolated homesteads interspersed here and there, with a few nucleated settlements. Linear alignment of dwellings can be perceived on either side of major and a few minor roads cutting through the settled villages and towns. Barring these exceptions, the settlement pattern in the region may best be classified as amorphous. Those of Meras are also in conformity with the regional pattern. In settled villages, the dwellings will be spread over the entire village area and more often than not each small settlement has a name of its own. The Meras have been agricultural labourers for generations past, and have built huts in the lands owned by their masters. Generally, members of no other caste (either Caste-Hindu or of the erstwhile untouchable group) live in houses that adjoin the dwellings of Meras. Besides the Meras, a number of Hindu Caste groups, Jains, Muslims and Christians were found inhabiting the villages visited for study. Their neighbourhood is complex no doubt, but their economic and social position as well as the terrain have combined to make the Meras live in comparative isolation. Social interaction does take place between Meras and members of the other communities, but it chiefly pertains to the sphere of economic activities.

Most of the dwellings of Meras are small huts without any compound wall or fence all round. These

may be situated on hill slopes, valleys or on plain surfaces—their preference being circumscribed by circumstances. Each hut usually has a few square yards of front courtyard and in some instances two or three huts may share a common courtyard. The yard is swept clean everyday and cowdunged often to keep it firm and tidy. If, some more space were to surround the hut, and be suitable, a few fruit trees (banana, jack, coconut, arecanut etc.) and vegetables are raised. The cattle, if any, possessed by the household are usually housed in a separate hut, while provision for keeping poultry is made in the living hut itself. Their huts are usually built on a plinth, which is a foot or two above the ground level. The ground plan is either square or rectangular. *Jagali*, the roofed veranda and *kone*, the kitchen are the two common elements of a hut. A few larger huts with an additional room termed *Nadu kone* may also be seen occupied by Meras at some of the places. The walls of these huts are of mud which can be procured locally free of cost. The thickness of the wall varies from 12 inches to 18 inches depending upon the height. Because of their extreme poverty, they use wood very sparingly and cannot afford even to think of any embellishments or decorations. The roof of thatching grass (called *mulihullu*) is supported on a frame of bamboo reeds overlaid with plaited coconut palm leaves. As the rainfall is heavy in this region, these roofs are steeply inclined on all sides and appear like pyramids from a distance. The doors of these huts are usually of plaited bamboo or twigs. Their huts are seldom provided with windows. Enclosed bathrooms and latrines are also conspicuous by their absence. Generally, in a corner of the courtyard may be seen a large earthen pot set up on a hearth for heating water for bathing purpose. It is also common to find by its side some tree or plant which provides privacy to bathing women. Both men and women of all ages resort to nearby fields for answering the calls of nature. Infants and the very young children often commit nuisance around the hut itself. They fetch drinking water from private draw wells or from streams running nearby or from public wells if there be any in the vicinity of their settlement. Their private wells are crude, being devoid of masonry parapet walls and pulley arrangement. Five out of the seven huts enumerated at Ragikumeri of Puttur, are situated on a hill-slope and have been built on gratuitous grants of house sites each measuring about 20 cents. The few Meras who have in recent years secured house building grants or have settled in colonies sponsored by the Social Welfare Department are living in somewhat better and spacious houses. These houses are built on a raised plinth of laterite stones using mud for walls and Mangalore tiles for roofing.



11 (b). Front view (close up)



11 (c). Profile



11 (d). As viewed from behind

besides, wooden doors and windows are also provided. The number of such houses at present is rather small and better standards of housing may perhaps be achieved only when their economic condition improves considerably.

Dress and Ornaments

Men usually wear *thundu panje* (also called *mundu*) short dhoti as the lower garment for covering the body between the waist and the knees. The upper part of the body is covered by a banian—(either of hosiery or of sewn cloth)—or a shirt with a collar. Sometimes both are used. *Mundasa* (head scarf) is a sheet of cloth which when wound round the head offers protection against the elements. While at work and especially during the rainy season it is more common among them as also among the workers of other castes too, to put on caps made out of sheaths of arecanut bunch called *hale toppi*. They also use *lungis* of size 75 inches by 48 or 50 inches (which may be either plain white cloth or multi coloured ones with squares or check pattern designs) on festive and other occasions. They also accept and use, if any used clothes (such as shirts and coats) are given to them by their landlords and employers. A few youngmen, particularly those living in towns and with some education, occasionally put on trousers, pyjamas, slacks and the like in imitation of modern trends. In former days, use of leather footwear was taboo and they would not even permit any person with his footwear on, to tread their courtyard. Now-a-days this taboo seems to have totally disappeared and many men among them use leather or more commonly, tyre-chappals.

Sarees and blouses are the clothes used by their womenfolk to cover their bodies from shoulders down to the ankles. Their style of wearing the same conforms to the prevailing regional pattern. But due to their poverty, they buy cheaper and coarser sarees. During the pre-independence days, their women were not allowed to put on blouses. Such a restriction—a relic of the old feudal order since it was, according to local informants, imposed by their landlords—no longer exists. During monsoons, the women-workers use *gorabu* i.e. a covering made out of reeds and leaves, for protection against rains. Use of foot-wear among women is rather rare.

With regard to the use of gold ornaments, the one-time restrictions imposed on them by their masters has now disappeared and now they too feel free to acquire all types of ornaments that their finances permit. Men put on gold earstuds and silver finger rings.

On the occasion of a man's marriage he is decorated with a black-bead necklace, a gold chain if available, silver finger rings and a pair of silver (or brass or aluminium) chains passed over his shoulders like cross belts. Women use gold earstuds, gold nose-screws, bead necklaces, occasionally gold or silver necklaces, glass and also brass or silver bangles, finger-rings and toe-rings of either silver or brass. Young girls usually wear tawdry pieces for earstuds and, glass bangles. Widows are not permitted to put on glass bangles, black-bead necklaces, and toe-rings. It is the privilege of a married woman to adorn her neck with a black-bead necklace to which is attached *tali* a gold pendant.

Personal Decoration

Men of the older generation usually wear long hairs which they comb and gather into a knot at the back of the head. In keeping with the changing times, the youngmen and boys have closely cropped hair. The services of the traditional barbers are denied to the Meras especially in rural areas. Thus, they are accustomed to assist each other for having a haircut or a face-shave. Women comb and gather their hair into a knot at the back of the head. It is also a common practice to plait the hair into a pigtail. They also adorn their braided hair with wreaths of flowers.

Some of the women who frequently visit the plantation areas in the outlying districts of Shimoga and Chikmagalur have taken a fancy to get themselves tattooed with floral and geometrical designs. Tattooing is thus known to them as a form of enhancing one's beauty but, barring a few exceptions they do not exhibit any craving for such a decoration. In the matter of dress, ornaments and bodily decorations no particular features that distinguish the Meras from their neighbouring caste-groups of a similar rank, are noticeable.

Food and Drink

The staple cereal consumed by the Meras, as also other communities found in the region, is rice. They are non-vegetarians and also consume fish either bought locally or caught in nearby streamlets. Hunting expeditions are, it is said, less frequent now-a-days and so it is only occasionally that they get some flesh of animals or birds. They may consume the flesh of deers, wild boars, pigs, rabbits, porcupine, sheep and goats besides poultry and a variety of birds. They keep poultry on a small scale. Beef is eschewed, because, the Meras assert, there has always been a taboo on its consumption among them.

Generally, they take food thrice a day. The morning breakfast as also their mid-day meal consists of gruel prepared out of parboiled rice, and some pickles or spiced side-dish such as *chutney*. The menu for their night-meal would usually be some cooked rice, gruel and fish or vegetable curry or some soup. Occasionally, they prepare and consume dishes with the flesh of fowl or any other animal. Fish and also limpets, oysters, crabs and mussels are consumed more often. During July and August Meras go catching fish in river-water-channels, streamlets and in water-logged areas. Wild roots and tubers are also gathered occasionally and when cleaned and cooked with salt, these form delicious food. Special items such as *payasa* (a semi liquid preparation, main ingredients: rice, gram dhal and jaggery) *dose* (pan cakes), *iddli* and *Kotte* (steam baked cakes; main ingredients are rice and urd dhal) are also prepared. They gather dry twigs and tree branches to meet their fuel requirements and have some firewood in stock for use during the monsoons.

The Meras are fond of toddy—the intoxicating country-liquor. Such indulgence has been permitted by their customs and traditions as well. Thus, even during the period when prohibition was in force in the region, several of them, it is said, used to consume liquor surreptitiously. In towns and large villages having tea shops, some of the Meras are in recent years, accustomed to take tea or coffee. The habit of preparing this beverage at home for all the members of the household is rather rare among them. Chewing of betel leaves and arecanut with or without leaf-tobacco is common especially among the middle-aged and old men and women. A considerable proportion of youngmen smoke beedis.

Household Goods

Secluded habitation, economic subjugation and social lowliness have combined to render Meras a poor community. Their earthly possessions consist of a few pots and pans besides mats, clothing and some cheap articles. They use earthenware pots of different sizes and shapes for cooking food and also for storing food articles and water. A small proportion of them also possess a few aluminium or brass vessels such as pitchers, tumblers, plates and large mouthed vessels. Bottles and tins are also used for storage. They have mats made of date-palm leaves, for spreading on the floor and many have small rectangular wooden planks used as seats while sitting. Furniture is a luxury beyond their reach. Consumer articles such as wrist-watches, battery torch-lights, hurricane lanterns, clocks, bicycles etc., are also luxuries which few can afford. Almost all the households possess a few wicker baskets, one or

two sickles, pick-axe, crow bar, felling axe and fishing traps made of reeds. The few tenant or exceptionally, the owner cultivators among them have wooden ploughs, yokes and such other essential agricultural equipment also. Bows and arrows are kept only by a few and so also the snares for use during hunting expeditions. Umbrellas (either of palmyra leaves or of cloth) and one or two *Gorabus* for female workers, may be found in most of the households. *Dhudi* is a percussion instrument which an inquisitive visitor may find in some Mera households. Except perhaps the bow and arrows (which of course are not possessed by all the contemporary Mera households) none of the household articles enumerated above is distinctly associated with the Meras or Mugerars.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

Most of their houses have some open space around. The interior of the house and also the front yard are swept clean everyday by the female members of the household and about once a week the floor surface is cow dunged. The dirt so removed is not disposed of at a distance but is only shoved to the borders of the yard. The nuisance often committed by the young children (and also poultry birds) and the indiscriminate spitting of pan juice by elders, often render their immediate surroundings most unhygienic. Their houses are seldom provided with proper drainage as a result of which collection and stagnation of sullage water is common especially during the dry months and around huts situated on plain surfaces. If the households were to possess some cattle, the litter is also dumped not far from the hut.

The Meras are not very scrupulous about the cleanliness of their persons or their clothes. Bathing habit is of course common both among men and women but few use soap. During the wet months their conditions get worse on account of the incessant rains. The clothes are washed once a week or more often using soapnut berries or some cheap brand of washing soap. They clean their teeth daily with ash, charcoal powder or earth. The vessels used in cooking and partaking of food are cleaned daily and so are the pots and pitchers in which water is brought and stored.

The ailments (such as colds, cough, fevers, headache, abdominal disorders, general weakness, scabies, cuts etc.) to which the Meras are susceptible are common in the region. Under-nourishment and the consequent anaemic conditions among them may also be noticed. During the past two decades, malaria—the most common disease that afflicted the Malnad region—

has been brought under control bringing relief to the Meras. Their faith in the efficacy of indigenous herbal drugs has generally diminished except in interior tracts. However, certain decoctions such as those of pepper, cummin, coriander, etc., are regarded as useful for treating women during post-natal stage. If there be any reputed *pundits* or *vidyas* i.e. (indigenous medicinemen) in the neighbourhood, the Meras usually seek their help. Inadequacy of medical facilities rather than their reluctance or lack of faith, accounts for their continued dependence on folk-medicine. In serious ailments, they take the patient to the nearest dispensary for treatment and it is also common to resort to divination. Either a Brahmin astrologer or a *patri* (i.e. medium) of their or any other caste may be consulted. The spirits responsible for the illness are identified by the *patri* and these are propitiated by the sacrifice of fowls. In spite of all these survivals of their traditional outlook and practices, it may be observed that their response to modern medicine is quite favourable.

VI. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The Meras speak Tulu both among themselves and also with outsiders. It is their mother-tongue. With a few exceptions, most of them are unilingual. Some men who have been frequently visiting the plantation areas of the adjacent districts and have otherwise developed contact with local Kannada-speaking communities are conversant with Kannada. Though many others are able to follow when spoken to in Kannada they are unable to answer back. In the area where Meras are heavily concentrated, Tulu is the language spoken predominantly. Those Meras who have received some school education are familiar with Kannada, for it is the medium of education in the region. Hindi and English are also known to a few educated individuals.

According to the 1961 Census, 435 out of 7880 Meras (i.e. Mogers) or 5.5 per cent are literate. Among males and females the percentages of literary are 7.28 and 3.27 respectively. The rural-urban break-up shows that 22.72 per cent of the urban dwellers and 4.92 per cent of the rural inhabitants among Meras are literate. In urban areas, 27 per cent males and 17 per cent females are literate, whereas in rural areas the respective percentages work out to 6.7 and 2.7 only. This sharp contrast between the urban and rural sectors may be due to (i) migration of literate and educated persons to urban areas, (ii) easy access to educational institutions and the influence of a new outlook. The habit of sending children to schools is not pronounced in interior rural tracts mainly because even children around 10 years can add to the family earnings and may be

entrusted with the care of younger ones while the adults are away at work. Thus, poverty forbids many of the Mera parents sending their children to schools.

Literacy among the total scheduled caste population in the State is 9.06 per cent and sexwise it is 14.87 per cent for males and 3.04 per cent for females. The rural-urban break up indicates that 6.65 per cent (11.44 per cent for males and 1.7 per cent for females) and 21.44 per cent (32.23 for males and 10.01 for females) respectively are literate in rural and urban areas. The position prevailing among the Meras (i.e. Mogers) falls short of the average except perhaps in female literacy. Considering the Scheduled Caste population in South Kanara district only (for Mogers or Meras are found only in this district) it is observed that the literate constitute 9.52 per cent of the total and also that 13.74 per cent of the males and 5.35 per cent of the females are literate. The literacy achievement of Meras thus bears a poor comparison to the district average for Scheduled Castes.

The table below shows the educational standards attained by the literate Meras (Mogers) as enumerated during the 1961 Census:

TABLE 2. Literacy and Education

	Sex	Total Literate	Literate without any educational level	Primary or Junior Basic	Matriculation and above
Total	M	322	273	40	9
	F	113	89	21	3
Urban	M	39	26	12	1
	F	21	12	7	2
Rural	M	283	247	28	8
	F	92	77	14	1

The proportion of literates without educational level is high both in urban and rural tracts. Keeping in view the fact that there are 2157 boys and 1559 girls below 14 years of age in the community it may be inferred that a considerable number of children in the school-going age-group do not attend school.

VII. ECONOMIC LIFE

The tradition of Meras suggests that their forebears must have been hunters (armed with bows) and food gatherers mainly inhabiting the dense forest regions of South Kanara District. The bow worship, occasional hunting expeditions and seasonal quest for edible roots are perhaps survivals of their well-nigh forgotten tradition. With the advent of more powerful and cultural-

ly advanced communities, they seem to have taken kindly to settled life as agricultural labourers. In earlier Censuses the Meras were grouped under Holeya whose main occupation was agricultural labour. Those who preferred to work permanently for a *Dhani* or *ullaya* land-lord—locally called *Moolada Alugalu*—usually dwelt in their master's land and received adequate supply of rice, clothes and certain other essentials such as oil etc. In turn, they were loyal servants, depending on their masters for work and livelihood. The labourer and other members of his household could seek work elsewhere only with the permission of their master. The labourer and his family were considered almost as a part of their master's family. For defraying the cost of marriages, funerals, etc., in his household, the labourer sought financial and material assistance from his master, thus binding his progeny also to servitude. In case of desertions, the customary law permitted the master to even forcibly secure the return of his bonded labourers. It is also said that these labourers entertained a staunch belief that they would not flourish (or even survive) if they were to desert their homes. Such a system of bondage between the landlord and the labourer has largely become obsolete over the last two or three decades rendering the labourers free to choose work wherever it is available. Thus, most of them are casual labourers but there are a few who work on seasonal or annual contracts also.

They are mainly landless labourers with a sprinkling of tenant cultivators here and there. At Guruvayankere (two miles west of Belthangady) of the seven Mera households living in Shetlapente hamlet, two were tenants and the rest, labourers. Three out of the four households enumerated at Aladangady were tenants and the other, annual contract-labourer. Most of these tenants are *Chalgenidars* (tenants-at-will) but more often than not the tenancy goes unrecorded in the official documents. In recent years several Meras have taken advantage of the liberal policy of the Government in assigning, on application, lands to the landless. However, the study revealed that in some places (Aladangady and Ragikumeri for instance), though lands have been earmarked for Mera households years ago, certificates of occupancy rights have not been issued and possession given formally. The lands they thus have are only name-sake possessions and none has brought such grants under cultivation.

None of the seven Mera households found at Karaya (Belthangady taluk) owns lands. Four are of casual labourers while the heads of three households are reported to be attached agricultural servants. They borrowed money for marriages from their hereditary

master, and in lieu of the interest, render service to him. On the days they work on their master's fields they are fed and also wages (though at somewhat lower rates than those given to casual workers) given. When the master has no work to offer, the labourer may seek work elsewhere. In the month of *Mayi* (February) the labourer receives a *mundu*, *angi* (shirt) and *shalu* (upper cloth) and if his wife also owes similar allegiance to the master, she gets a saree and a blouse. On the occasion of Deepavali festival, the master gives some coconut oil and also some special dishes prepared for the day, to his labourers. In all such cases the labourer deems it his duty to split firewood and arrange the pyre for cremation of a deceased person belonging to his master's family. On the fifth day after cremation, it is his task to plant a bundle of *Sarali* twigs at the place of cremation. Thus in a few places the custom of 'care of permanent labourer' of the bygone days seem to be persisting.

As an occupation livestock rearing, fishing and hunting are of lesser importance. Following heavy rains some among them go fishing in streamlets but the catch is not sold. Occasionally their women gather oysters and that too, is consumed at home. For fishing they use traps of bamboo reeds or else the rod and line. The practice of throwing bits of a tuber (*ayrol gadde*) in water and then catching the fish that die on eating these, is also prevalent in some areas. Occasional hunting for gain, by men armed with spears, cutting knives, stout sticks and sometimes bows and arrows, is prevalent among the Meras of several settlements in interior tracts. These small groups of men also carry snares of hemp and are accompanied by dogs. The group may consist of men belonging to different caste groups. Occasionally a man with a gun may also participate in these expeditions. The day's catch is shared equally among the participants including the gunmen. The dogs are also fed from the catch. As distinct from these, the Meras exclusively organise ceremonial hunting once or twice a year during February and October. At Aladangady, it was reported, on an appointed day in the Tulu month of *Jarde*, their men assemble at the Gadimugger shrine for prayers before embarking on the expedition. The *Gurikara* (headman) takes the lead on these occasions also. A coconut is passed on among the men so that everyone touches it and then, the headman places it, as also their weapons, at the foot of the deity. They fold hands and offer prayers. Thereupon, the headman lightly tosses the coconut aside so that it settles a distance away. The orientation of the tail end of the coconut indicates the direction in which the party should proceed. Thereupon one of them shoots the

cocoanut with an arrow and the party starts moving. The catch—usually rabbits—with which they return to the shrine by afternoon, is cleaned, cooked and placed before the deity as an offering. The food thus consecrated is distributed and taken home by the participants. The man who shot the cocoanut will be the first receipiant of this food as a mark of honour. On this occasion it is also customary to offer parched rice mixed with cocoanut kernel to Gadimuggers. A somewhat different account of ceremonial hunting was narrated at Ragikumeri of Puttur. In the Tulu month of *Punne* (January-February) men embark on an hunting expedition after a preliminary worship of their deities. The catch is carried to the side of a stream and cooked. This is then spread equally on five plaintain leaves placed in front of the shrine, and little quantities of parched rice mixed with cocoanut kernel are also strewn above the flesh. On either side of each leaf are placed two earthen pots containing *kallu* (toddy) and the weapons and snares used during the hunt are also placed adjacent to (or leaning on) these pots. Then the headman performs *puja*, offers prayers, lights some incense sticks and all offer prayers. Immature girls and boys may also witness the worship. After the *puja*, the weapons are purified by the sprinkling of *Kurtneeru*—a mixture are turmeric dust, chunam and vermilion powder in water—and placed inside the shrine. The consecrated food is consumed on the spot itself in the form of a community meal. On the following day also they indulge in hunting and on the third day again, they meet at the shrine before and also after hunting and partake of a communal meal. This formally concludes their annual ceremonial hunting. The community weapons for use during this ceremony are always placed in the shrine and on other days they use their personal possessions only.

The results of the 1961 Census reveal that 54.48 per cent of the total population of Mogers (*i.e.* Meras) (*viz*

7880) are workers. This figure is slightly higher than the State average for Scheduled Castes which works out to 51.9 per cent only. However, as compared to the average for Scheduled Caste population of South Kanara district (which is 57.06 per cent), the Mogers appear to contain a lesser proportion of workers among them.

The sex composition of workers among them shows that 57 per cent are males. The male component among the total Scheduled Castes' workers in South Kanara District, which is only 50.4 per cent is indicative of the lesser participation of Moger (Mera) women in economic activities. Perhaps it is an outcome of the lower sex ratio among them. However, the female component of 43 per cent among Mogers (Meras) is above the average (*viz.*, 39.6 per cent) prevailing amongst the Scheduled Castes in the State.

In rural areas, the workers among Mogers (Mera) constitute 54.8 per cent while the percentage of workers in urban areas is only 44.3. Similar rural-urban differences in the proportion of workers may also be noticed amongst the Scheduled Castes' population of the State (54.3 rural and 39.3 urban) and also of the South Kanara district (58.56 per cent rural and 45.51 per cent urban). In rural areas among Mogers (Mera) 55.4 per cent of the males and 54 per cent of the females are workers. But, in urban areas only 48 per cent of males and 40 per cent of their females are workers. This disparity, indicates that women in urban areas are less eager to be economically active and also suggests the capacity of their men to earn enough to provide for their dependent and non-gainfully engaged women-folk as well.

The following statement presents the industrial classification of workers among Mogers (or Meras) according to the 1961 Census:

TABLE 3
Industrial Classification of Workers
(Source: Census of India, 1961, Volume XI—Mysore Part V-A Tables Sct-I and Sct-II)

	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total Workers	4293	2544	1849	4176	2376	1800	117	78	49
Workers as									
I Cultivators	490	263	227	490	263	227	..	..	..
II Agricultural labourers	2808	1506	1302	2787	1506	1281	21	..	21

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
III In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, hunting, plantations and allied activities		226	196	30	225	195	30	1	1	..
IV At Household Industry		75	35	40	74	35	39	1	..	1
V In Manufacturing—other than household Industry		120	93	27	89	69	20	31	24	7
VI In Construction		55	48	7	41	38	3	14	10	4
VII In Trade & Commerce		1	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	1
VIII In Transport, Storage and Communications		4	2	2	2	..	2	2	2	..
IX In Other Services		514	301	213	468	270	198	46	31	15

Agricultural labourers, it may be observed, constitute 65.4 per cent of the total working population. Further, cultivators account for only 11.4 per cent while those engaged in other services contribute 12.0 per cent of the workers. Only a negligible percentage are engaged in trade and transport categories while 1.3 per cent and 1.7 per cent of workers are engaged in construction and household industry respectively. The percentage of workers in mining, quarrying, livestock rearing etc., works out to 5.3 while that of workers in manufacture—other than household industry is 2.8. From this discussion it is evident that agriculture offers work to more than three-fourths of their workers. In rural areas some of them are engaged in quarrying and dressing laterite stones and also occasionally as masons or labourers in construction of buildings. Beedi manufacture is an important industry in the region and this offers work to a few men and also women who usually receive the supply of tobacco powder and leaves from agents and roll the beedies sitting in their homes. Before the onset of monsoons, their womenfolk prepare and sell *gorabu* (the monsoon coverings) at several places. A few mats from date palm leaves, and baskets from creepers may also be made and sold by them. Apart from these they do not pursue any household industries.

Rural—urban comparison highlights the absence of cultivators in urban areas and significantly enough, shows the absence of male agricultural labourers. 45.6 per cent of the urban male workers are engaged in other services and another 35.3 per cent are in manufacturing—other than household industry. But, among female workers 42.8 per cent are agricultural labourers and 30.6 per cent are in other services. Thus urban residence seems to imply an occupational shift from agriculture to other services and industrial labour besides 'construction'. In Ragikumeri of Puttur, to illustrate, there were an extra departmental postman,

a clerk in government office and a kitchen servant of backward class hostel run by the Social Welfare Department.

In the 1961 Census, information on workers among Scheduled Castes engaged in tanning and currying of hides & skins and in Scavenging have been separately tabulated. According to this, it is noticed that a solitary male among the urban-dwelling Meras is a scavenger. This appears to be a case of misreporting for the Meras (*i.e.* Mogeras consider scavenging as a degrading occupation. In villages and towns also, they do not undertake to remove the carcase of dead cattle even if it be in their own or master's household. Usually Karadi Holeyas or Mari Mansas are called in for service on such occasions.

Generally, wages are paid in kind to the agricultural labourers. The rates are not uniform either all through the year or all over the district. A day's labour fetches a man usually two *seers* (1.75 Kg.) of rice or four *seers* of paddy, a midday meal and 6 betel leaves with a couple of arecanuts. Women and children get a *seer* and a half of rice besides food and *pan*. However, during the peak transplanting season when labourers are scarce, they too get 2 *seers* of rice at several places. During harvest of paddy, the workers form themselves into small groups and work on contract. According to the prevailing practice, one-eleventh of the harvested (threshed and cleaned) paddy goes to the labourers. Generally, an average worker can earn 8 *seers* (4 to 4.5 Kg.) of paddy per day during this season. Men engaged for harvesting of arecanuts are paid Rs. 5 besides a meal, coffee and betel-nuts and leaves. The rates are high because of the skill required and also the risk involved. Non-agricultural work fetches a male labourer Rs. 2 to Rs. 2.50 and a female labourer may get Re. 1.00 to Rs. 1.50 depending upon local conditions.

Those who are accustomed to migrate seasonally usually spend the periods mid-July to September and again mid-December to mid-February in the plantation areas of the outlying districts. There are *mestris* for recruiting labourers from these rural tracts but several men also go about in twos or threes independently. Such seasonal movement is said to be very much less among women as compared to that among men. After meeting his personal expenses, an independent migrant labour can save Rs. 30 to Rs. 40 per month. But this sum gets reduced to Rs. 20 or Rs. 25 if one chooses to accompany a *mestri* or labour contractor.

In summary, the Meras are continuing mainly as agricultural labourers but devoid of the restrictions that were imposed on them, until recently, by their land-lords. Most of them are free casual labourers while a few cultivate small areas of land on lease and fewer still possess and operate lands acquired by way of *Darkast*. Seasonal migration of men is prevalent among them also. Now-a-days, as a result of education and urban residence, they too are taking up non-agricultural occupations. They are, in general, leading a hand-to-mouth existence. A major portion of their income is spent over food and drinks. In order to meet the expenses over marriages, several of them borrow from local land-lords and try to work off the loan or else hold themselves ready to work for the moneylender (at lower rates) at his command in lieu of the interest. Thus, it may be observed that some of them are still on the verge of being reckoned as bonded labourers.

VIII. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Beliefs and practices connected with birth:

The present day Meras are well aware of the physiological causation of conception and do not admit of any interference in it of some supernatural agent. Nonetheless, they do have their faith in the subtle manipulations of fate and consider children as gifts of God, men and women being merely His tools. They explain confirmed barrenness and still births as acts of fate. Mis-carriage and still births are treated with indigenous medicines prescribed by locally reputed medicinemen. Propitiation of spirits and Gods and sometimes, recourse to drugs suggested by quacks are the only remedies known to overcome barrenness and still births.

Symptoms of pregnancy such as nausea, cessation of menstrual flow etc., are well-known to them and

pregnancy is recognised in the third month. Greater recognition and care are bestowed on a woman during her first pregnancy. Their custom prescribes that she should reside at her husband's place subsequent to marriage and it also enjoins that she be taken to her natal home for giving birth to her first child and subsequent confinement. On an auspicious day during the seventh month *bayake* or *sammama* (a feast comprising dishes she desires most) is arranged at her husband's residence. Her own parents and siblings arrive with her choice dishes and a live-hen to participate in the feast. She is given an oil-bath and decked with ornaments and flowers. It is also customary for her parents-in-law to give her a new saree on the occasion. In the afternoon or evening according to convenience, the pregnant woman and her husband are seated side by side on planks and before them are laid several dishes on separate leaves or dining plates. The live-hen held in the hands of her mother is then waved thrice round her (i.e. pregnant woman's) head and, to absolve herself of all sins (*papa parihara*) the pregnant woman then puts a few grains of rice into the hen's mouth (This hen is thenceforth reared at her husband's home while she herself is away for delivery. The belief is that, evil would befall them if this hen were to die before she delivers the child. Hence extreme care is taken to avert any such event.) After the couple partake of some of the dishes, the remnants are distributed to the children. The invitees are feted. On the following day she ceremonially leaves for her natal home and is accompanied by her husband also who spends a couple of days with his in-law's.

Among Meras, when a man's wife is in the family way their custom forbids him to carry dead bodies or even participate in funeral feasts; to pluck flowers of areca palm; to kill any living creatures and, in the past, even to take a face shave or haircut. The restrictions on haircut and shave have been greatly relaxed during the past two decades but those on other acts continue to be observed in general. During the advanced stages of pregnancy, the woman refrains from consuming certain food articles referred to as *nanjaguvu padartha* (i.e. those which may turn out to be injurious to her health)—such as brinjals, pappaya, Basale (a leafy vegetable) raw mango, jack fruit etc. As it is considered good for her health to be active even during the advanced stages, usually she attends to her routine work till almost the day of delivery.

Delivery takes place in a secluded corner of the dwelling hut itself or sometimes, in a separate shed if there be one. Elderly women of the caste assist the woman in her travail. If there be any *dai*

(professional untrained midwife) of their caste in the neighbourhood her help is also secured for which a payment of Rs. 2 to Rs. 4 besides some food articles and a piece of cloth, is made later. In serious cases, they take vows and also try to secure medical assistance from trained midwives or doctors found in the neighbourhood. The umbilical cord is severed by her mother or any other elderly woman attending on her or by the *dai* with a sharp knife called *amekathi* or *Gijjakathi*. This knife is thenceforth placed besides the woman and her child with the belief that it wards off evil forces. The placenta is gathered in an earthen pot or in a *hale* (areca sheath) and later buried by her mother or the *dai* at some distant spot not to be visited again (as reported at Karaya) or at close quarters where it would be convenient for the woman to take bath (as reported at Ragikumeri). After the child birth the woman and also those attending on her bathe. Thereafter some arrack is given to the woman to warm her up. On the following three days also, a decoction of pepper and cumin (*kala jeerige kashaya*) is administered to her. The child is breast-fed from the third day onwards. For the first ten or twelve days the mother will be on restricted diet during which period she also takes *khara*, an indigenous preparation, for recouping her health. She reverts to her normal food habits when the infant is 4 to 6 weeks old. The suckling period for the child extends from twelve to eighteen months or sometimes much more. In case of deficiency of breast-milk, the child is fed on cow's milk and also on light rice-gruel. Solid foods such as rice, are given to the child when it is about an year old and items prepared with fish, chicken etc., are given when it is around three years of age.

The Meras observe ritual pollution. The mother and the child are impure for 16 days while other members in the household are so only for 5 or 7 days. If the new-born is a male, *ame*, the purificatory rite, is performed on the seventh day. But if it is a female, *ame* is held on the fifth day itself. On the sixteenth day another rite called *agelu* marks the termination of the pollution of the mother and the child.

The naming ceremony as well as putting-the-infant in the cradle usually takes place on the day of *ame*. The house and the household articles including clothes are cleaned and all the members take bath. Thereafter *theertha* or consecrated water is brought from some temple or Brahman household and it is sprinkled all over. All the members also sip a few drops of *theertha*. (*Kurtinceru* given by their own headman is also an effective purificant). During the forenoon, some quantity of cooked rice (placed in a wicker plate)

is taken by the woman and kept at the spot which, she has been using all along for bathing. *Amekathi*, the knife, is also purified by the sprinkling of *theertha* on it. Then the child is cradled by some elderly married woman and a name conferred on it by an elderly female relative. To avert the effects of evil eye, it is their practice to fasten a black string round the infant's waist on this occasion. The father of the infant and a few others of his kin usually attend and partake of the feast got up on this occasion.

The custom of naming the children after the day they are born, is widely in vogue among the Meras. Such names as Ayta (Sunday), Choma or Soma (Monday), Angara (Tuesday), Guruva (Thursday), Thukra (Friday), Thaniya (Saturday) are common among their men, while Ayte, Chome, Angare, Budaru, Hukru, Aniyar etc., are common among females. It twins are born the boys are named after Mudda and Kalala. Swayed by the recent influences, they too are now-a-days resorting to modern names and are also naming their children after well known Gods of the Hindu pantheon, rivers, flowers etc. This recent trend is quickly catching up in urban centres and larger villages.

On the sixteenth evening a feast is held in which the caste fellows of the settlement participate. Once again the mother and the infant take *theertha*. Food (usually *dose* and *karipu* or curry prepared out of fowl's flesh) is served on sixteen plantain leaves in small quantities as an offering to ancestral spirits. The head of the family prays seeking their blessings for the infant. This food is later consumed by members of the family and also the father of the infant. The invitees are feasted. It is customary among them, for each participant to present some rice and oil to their host, thus indicating their wish to lessen his burden.

The period of confinement is usually a month and a half though it may be extended upto three months in the case of a woman's first child-birth. She returns to her husband's home on an auspicious day. As they cannot afford to do without her earnings, she starts to work in the agricultural fields during or immediately after the third month. The earlobes of the children are bored during the third year and so also the first hair-cutting ceremony is gone through without ado on a convenient day.

(b) Puberty

Meras, as also many other communities of the region, observe puberty rites for girls by ceremonial bathings and segregation. When a girl menstruates

for the first time, their headman's wife assisted by four other married women, bathes her ceremonially. The girl spends her days of impurity—3, 6 or 8 as the case may be according to local practices—in a nearby cattleshed or else in a secluded corner of the outer veranda of their dwelling. During this period she is given *avalakki* (beaten rice) jaggery, copra and other nutrients, and she refrains from doing any work whatsoever. Womenfolk of the neighbourhood entertain her through folk songs, gossip etc. The ritual impurity is removed on the fourth, seventh or the ninth day by another ceremonial bath and administering to her of *theertha* (consecrated water) obtained from a Brahmin or a temple. Her father (or her father-in-law, if she is already married) presents a saree and blouse on this occasion. She is decked in new clothes and decorated with *hingara* (flowers of areca palm) and ornaments. Married women wave *arathi* and thereafter she formally touches a few pots and winnows, this part of the rite being known as *kara bathavune*. Henceforth she may attend to her normal routine of domestic chores but, for another 30 or 45 days she does not take up work in fields. If already married, on an auspicious and convenient day she goes to live with her husband. Pre-marital sexual liberties both among boys and girls are despised and severely punished if detected.

(c) Marriage

Marriage has been an essential sacrament besides being a biological and social need among the Meras. Their custom prescribes pre-puberty marriage for girls. But now-a-days, they too, in keeping with the general trends, marry their girls at the age of 14 or slightly beyond. Men get married at the age of 25 or above. The statistics collected during the 1961 Census, reveal that a boy less than 14 years old and 9 girls in the age group 0-14 are ever-married. This is perhaps an indication of their lingering tradition. Another significant factor revealed by the census count has been the very low sex ratio among them besides, an excess of married men over married women.

The Meras are generally monogamous, resorting to bigamy under exceptional situations such as confirmed barrenness of the first wife or some chronic ailment. Polyandry is unknown among them. Their custom permits a man to marry his elder brother's widow, but he does not inherit her as a matter of right. She now-a-days exercises free choice while selecting a new spouse and she may even prefer to remain a widow forever. The custom of marrying one's wife's sisters is not in vogue among them. Marriage of persons

belonging to the same *bali* as also that of persons begotten by men of common *bali* is strictly forbidden. They prefer cross-cousin marriages but despise the union of parallel-cousins which is taboo. Marriages are generally arranged through negotiations by elders and it is usually the parents of the boy who take the initiative. Alliances with known families are preferred and the field for selection extends over a radius of 10 to 15 miles only. Marriage by exchange is said to be quite common among them—perhaps, a result of paucity of girls in the community. Their terms of settlement of marriage includes payment of *Theru* (bride price). Formerly, the amount so transferred from the parents of the bridegroom was only Rs. 25 if in cash and 8 *kalasiges* of rice (about one quintal) besides 8 *panas* or 8 silver coins of 25 paise each. Now-a-days this has risen and when paid in cash it may amount to Rs. 100 or thereabouts, or Rs. 50 and about half a quintal of rice. Out of this sum, a 25 paise coin is usually set apart for *binu pagari* i.e. the bow and arrow, representing their deities and handed over to the priest or caste headman.

Marriages usually take place in the months of *Jarde* (December), *Suggi*, *Paggu* and *Besha* (i.e. from mid-March to Mid-June). The first step is a preliminary selection of a suitable girl with due care and consideration with regard to *bali* affiliation, past connections with and reputation of her family etc. Then, the boy's father or elder brother, usually accompanied by their local caste headman (called *Gurikara* or *kaapa*) call on the girl's parents and seek her hand formally. Enquiries regarding *bali* etc., are made once again and if satisfied, they invite the girl's parents to have a look at the boy. The Meras do not consult Brahmin priests either to find out the compatibility of the proposed union or to select auspicious days. Among them, while the preliminaries are going on, the boy may also call on his future in-laws and have a look at his bride-to-be. After consultations the amount of *Theru* is settled and on a convenient day, *Nigantu* or *Nischaya maduvudu* (betrothal) is arranged at the girl's residence. On this occasion their caste headman (of their respective settlements) and also close relatives participate and a feast is held. Before the assembled guests and relations, the parents of both the girl and the boy announce their willingness to the alliance. Then, on their behalf, their respective headmen exchange *veelyas* (betel-leaves and arecanuts)—an act which signifies their (headman's) acceptance of responsibility for the smooth conduct of the marriage.

The duration of gap between betrothal and the wedding-day is usually short. On an appointed day

soon after betrothal, the girl's relatives and their headman call on the boy's parents, the purpose being to fix the day for marriage and distribute *veelya*. On this occasion, the *theru* is ceremonially handed over to them. In the evening, a light, a pot full of water, betel leaves, arecanut and rice to be handed over, are arranged at the centre of a hall and on all the four sides mats are spread. The mat lying to the west is occupied by the girl's kin while the other three are for relatives and guests of the boy. After offering prayers to their respective family deities all sit down. The headman then starts distributing *Veelya* (2 betel-leaves and 2 pieces of arecanut) the first five being disbursed to family deity, *mava* (mother's brother of the girl), girl's mother, girl's father and the headman of her settlement. Then *Veelyas* are disbursed to the invitees. The headman of the boy's settlement measures a *seer* of rice and hands it over to his counterpart, who again pours it on the heap. The amount as agreed upon is also handed over. The headman representing the girl, then hands over a *veelya* and requests them to arrive at the bride's residence on a specific day for the celebration of the marriage. Their marriages are generally conducted on Saturdays and Sundays.

Three or four days preceding the day of marriage, the headmen of their respective settlements plant *muhurtha kamba*—a pillar of jack or atti (Indian fig.) tree and with the help of a few men erect pandals in front of the residence of the boy and also that of the girl. To this central pillar are fastened twigs of mango, a cucumber and a coconut. Simultaneously, small sheds, to serve as kitchen, are also erected and two hearths are set up in the kitchen after due prayers. Their marriage celebrations last for two days, viz., Saturday and Sunday. The boy gets his nails pared and face shaved on Saturday morning, his *bave*—sister's husband or mother's brother's son—rendering the required services. Then, he approaches the *mudi*—(a foot long bundle of rice tied securely in hay) placed at the centre of a large rectangle the four corners of which are marked by pots full of water, and with his right foot on the bundle he stands facing the east. Thereupon, the headman applies coconut oil on his head thrice and also pours water from a pot thrice. All along, the boy's *bave* (now called *pasadi bave*) keeps behind the boy and prevents oil and water dripping over the eyes and forehead of the boy. Other relatives of the boy—both men and women—except the widows apply oil and pour water on his head one after the other. Meanwhile, five elderly persons will have been fed and soon after the bath, the guests are feasted. The bridegroom dons his bridal dress—a dhoti, shirt, white headgear over a *muttale*

or cap of areca sheath and an upper cloth—and puts on finger rings (and also bangles of silver in some places e.g. Karaya) and 2 silver chains in a cross-belt fashion. The headman fastens a black bead necklace round his neck and marks his forehead black with *kadige* (black pigment) to avert the effects of any evil-eye. The bridegroom, with a *kavalige* (20 or 25 leaves) of betel leaves and a small knife kept concealed in a red handkerchief in his hands embarks on his journey to his bride's residence. Excepting his mother and a few others such as the aged and the widows, the rest of his kin accompany him. This journey is termed *dibbana* and all along the route their women sing while their men play on *Dhutti*—a percussion instrument. Now-a-days, there is a tendency among them also to obtain the services of bandsets maintained by Naikes, Mundalas and such other exterior castes against cash payment.

On arrival, they are met outside the pandal in front of the bride's home by her parents and are served with jaggery, water and *pan* to chew. The headman representing the bride formally invites them all. A younger brother of the bride then washes the feet of the bridegroom and for this act of his he is given *inamu*—a rupee in return. The bridegroom sets his right foot first and enters the pandal, followed by his kin. Then mutual exchange of *veelyas* takes place among the assembled guests and all are seated. Five married women from the bridegroom's side then present the *dhare seere* (marriage saree) and ornaments to the bride. In some places the saree and ornaments are placed on heap of rice contained in a *adape* (winnow) and presented to the girl's kin who then take it in and dress her up. By then, the bride will also have had her ceremonial bath. She is dressed and decorated with flowers and ornaments and led to the marriage booth (i.e. the plank or bench placed adjacent to *muhurtha kamba*) by her own or classificatory brother's wife. Then, the bridegroom and behind him his *pasadi bave* (i.e. his aide) and the bride followed by her sister-in-law (bride's maid) (in some places the bridegroom's sister herself may lead the bride instead of the bride's brother's wife) circulate the milk post or *muhurtha kamba* thrice or five times. Others may also go round the post chanting prayers. Then the couple are seated on the bench or the plank, the bride sitting to the right of the bridegroom and both facing the east. In front of them are then placed a tray of rice, on oil lamp and a *kunchi* (metallic vessel) all these arranged on a wooden plank. The two headmen in turn throw a few grains of rice on the heads of the couple and put some cash in the vessel. This placing of rice grains on the

heads of the couple is called *Sese* (in Kannada) or *Deshe* (in Tulu). The relatives of the bride then come up to the couple one by one and put rice grains on the heads of the couple and also drop a few coins in the vessel. All along, the bride's maid and also the bridegroom's aide will be holding a betel-leaf each, covering the foreheads of the bridal couple ever since their entry into the marriage booth. These betel leaves are now placed in the tray of rice and the couple bow down to the assembly. Their feet are washed by a brother of the bride who gets a 25 paise coin in return. Then follows the marriage feast consisting of rice, payasa and curries. (Thereupon the couple are presented to the Dhani—landlord or employer of the bride's parents at his home. The headman representing the bride formally questions as to who would take the responsibility of the welfare of the girl in her new home and in turn is reassured by the headman representing the bridegroom.

The bridegroom accompanied by his own kin and his wife in addition to one or two of her relatives, soon starts his return journey which is called *maru-dibhana*. On reaching home his mother meets them and waves coloured water before the couple (*arthi*) which later she pours beyond the thresh-hold. The couple go round the *muhurtha kamba* followed by their aides and again the ceremony of sprinkling of rice grains on their heads is gone through. This time it is the turn of the bridegroom's relatives to do so and drop following day i.e. Sunday the girl's relatives arrive following day i.e. Sunday the girl's relatives arrive to take her back. They are feasted well and they start after extending an invitation to the boy's parents to call on them about 5 or 8 days hence. This feast

is called *Sammanna* or *mamisike oota* and non-vegetarian dishes are invariably prepared. It is only after this feast, that the marriage pandals are formally dismantled. The bridegroom unties the black bead necklace that had so far adorned his neck and fastens it round the neck of his wife.

Their marriages are solemnised by their headmen only who get a few measures of rice, a couple of cocoanuts and small cash. They are not served by Brahmin priests, traditional barbers and traditional musicians. This has been so for the past several centuries and no change in the tradition seems to be in the offing. Expenses over the marriage of a boy comes to about Rs. 500 while that of a girl will be about Rs. 200. Considering their economic plight even this sum seems to be fairly high forcing many of them to borrow from their landlords and employers.

Remarriages of widows is called *Kaipathu* and it is a simple affair in which the bride is given a new saree, blouse and some ornament in the presence of their respective headmen and a few close relations. It takes place usually after dusk unlike the regular marriage which is always conducted during day time. Divorce is permitted by custom but it is resorted to under exceptional circumstances only. Infidelity and ill-treatment are the usual causes for seeking divorce. If a woman seeks a divorce, she or her parents or paramour if any, has to repay the amount of *Theru* that had been paid during her marriage. A divorced woman is free to marry again.

The following table presents the data pertaining to marital status among them, as revealed by the 1961 Census.

TABLE 4: Marital Status by Sex and Age group.

Marital Status Age groups	Total		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced		Unspecified	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	M	F
All ages	4424	3456	2740	1720	1518	1325	147	378	18	33	1	—
0—14	2157	1559	2156	1550	1	7	—	1	—	—	—	—
15—14	1493	1323	558	166	886	1082	38	51	11	24	—	—
45+	772	573	26	4	629	236	109	325	7	8	1	—
Age not stated	2	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—

Among males, the never-married constitute 61.93 per cent of their total population; the married account for 34.31 per cent; while the widowed and the divorced form only 3.32 per cent and 0.41 per cent respectively.

The marital status of a solitary individual has not been specified. Likewise among the females, 49.77 per cent are never married; 38.34 per cent are married; 10.94 per cent are widowed and 0.95 per cent are

divorcees. The percentage of the over-married in the 0-14 age group is negligible in the case of males while it is 0.58 among girls. This fact indicates the occasional incidence of child-marriages among them. The revelation that, 12.54 per cent of the 1323 females in the 15-44 age group are never-married provides a basis for the inference that the age-at-marriage has risen considerably among them. It is significant that nearly 3.37 per cent of men aged 45 and upwards have remained never married. This may perhaps be due to the relative scarcity of women among them or the physical or mental disabilities of these individuals or a combination of both. Though remarriages of widows and divorcees are allowed among them, the above table reveals that 56.72 per cent of the women aged 45 and upwards and 3.85 per cent in 15—44 age-group are widows. The chances of remarriage diminishes as women grow old and perhaps, this factor accounts for continued widowhood despite the custom. Among widowers, those in the 45+ age group account for 74 per cent. Within this particular age group, it is observed, that 14.12 per cent of the 772 men are widowers. These are also suggestive of diminishing chances for remarriage as one grows old.

The pronounced preponderance of males in the lower age-group of 0—14 (sex ratio 722) leads to the apprehension regarding the scarcity of brides among them becoming an acute problem in the years to come.

(d) Death

When a person is seriously ill, they take recourse to both mundane medicines and magico-religious cures such as propitiation of spirits as suggested by diviners. They too regard death as a natural event which overtakes everyone. At the same time they believe in the existence of *kule*—spirit or soul essence devoid of the mortal frame—and take particular care to make periodical offerings most reverentially. An important element of their obsequial rites consists in incorporating the *kule* of the deceased, with the already existing group of its ancestral *kules*.

The dead among them are usually buried, though disposal by cremation is also allowed and resorted to occasionally. Corpses of pregnant women are also buried and in some places, a live-hen is also interned with it. At certain other places, for instance Ragikumeri near Puttur, it is customary to plant a sapling of banana at the grave of a pregnant woman and guard it carefully till it yields fruits. These fruits are consumed by members of the family only. The corpse is laid on its back in the grave—its head

oriented to the South and the feet pointed to the North. They are not accustomed to erect any tombs or shrines to commemorate their dead.

During the final moments, drops of *tulsi*-water (rendered holy by putting leaves of Tulsi—sweetbasil in the container) are poured into the mouth of the dying person by all those present. On behalf of the absentee members of the family, someone present on the spot pours water. Their headman is sent for and he makes further arrangements for digging the grave, sending word to the kin of the deceased and preparing the bamboo bier. Each one of the sons and paternal cousins of the deceased place a new cloth on the corpse, which is already washed by the agnatic kinsmen and shrouded in a white sheet of cloth. Womenfolk attend to bathing the corpse if it is of a female and cover it with a new saree. Immediately after the death, an oil lamp and the vessel with *Tulsi*-water are placed at the head-side of the corpse and so also half-a-measure each of paddy and rice are placed at the headside and near the feet. When all the anticipated kinsmen of the deceased from the neighbourhood have arrived, the corpse is placed on the bier and carried non-stop to the grave. With the bier borne by four menesons, sons-in-law or any others of the caste—the headman walks along with a pot full of water. So also, the rice and the paddy that were placed by the side of the corpse are tied in a piece of cloth and along with betel leaves and betelnuts, taken to the grave. If survived by a widow, the headman's wife strips her of the auspicious ornaments (*viz.*, bangles, nose screw, toe-rings and black-bead necklace) before the corpse is removed. The funeral party usually consists of men. At the grave, the bearers go round the pit thrice and then lower it on the ground. Once again all the persons pour drops of water into the mouth of the corpse. The pit is purified by sprinkling coloured water called *kurtineeru* (water mixed with turmeric dust, chunam and vermilion powder) and the corpse lowered into it carefully. Old clothes if any on the person of the corpse including the waist string are removed and the headman throws three handfuls of earth on the corpse. Others join and the grave is soon filled up. Some prickly bushes are placed on the grave and upon this a large stone boulder or slab is also laid. The participants return, bathing at some way-side stream or pond, to the house of the deceased. In the mean while, the spot of death will have been cleaned and purified by sprinkling *kurtineeru* and those who remained at home will also have bathed. The headman sprinkles *kurtineeru* on all the members in order to remove their impurity. Those who had prepared the grave get some money called *Guritha*

panavu which is then spent on coffee or country liquor.

On the third day, the headman is accompanied by the sons or agnates of the deceased to the grave where they move aside the stone boulder and offer water from a tender coconut to the *kule* of the deceased. This rite is called "*Kallu jarisuvudu*" or '*Thigaleda kallu jaruvunu*' (Tulu). The eleventh day rite is known as *bojja* or *Savu*. The house where death occurred is cleaned and purified by the sprinkling of *Kurtineeru*. So also all the household articles are purified. The headman sets up a *Kopparige* (cauldron) on a purified hearth and makes arrangements for preparation of food. Persons not closely related to the deceased act as cooks on this occasion. Meanwhile, either the widow of the deceased or some other elderly woman of the house takes a measure of rice in a pot to a nearby well or pond and after washing it returns. While she is so entering the courtyard, a male member slays a fowl and passes it over the vessel containing the rice. The same woman then cooks that rice while a man prepares some dish with that fowl. Three handfuls of rice are put into the non-vegetarian dish. By then, the eldest (or the youngest) son of the deceased will have had a shave and a bath. He takes hold of the food so cooked and accompanied by his own brothers, paternal cousins, uncles, and headman reaches the grave in the forenoon. Water, tender coconuts, *payasa* and incense sticks, are also brought along with. All of them go round the grave thrice and then serve the food on a plaintain leaf. (In Karaya, it was reported that, a grass mannikin is burnt at the grave and the ashes formed into a heap. A fence of *Sarali* twigs is put up all round and then each one of the participant takes out a leaf from these twigs and spreading it on the floor serves the food. This, however, seems to be a regional variation). All of them fold hands and offer prayers imploring the *kule* of the deceased to accept their offerings. They wait there until some insects (ant etc.) find their way to the food and thereupon return home. An elderly male of the family after moving 10 paces from the grave, turns back and tosses three pebbles of stone consecutively. The *kule* is told that it has now been purified and may henceforth roam about the places (*viz.*, fields, houses of the master, its own former home etc.) where it used to move about in the mortal form and is asked to protect the livestock possessions of the family. On reaching home all of them bathe again and the headman sprinkles *kurtineeru* on their persons. The invitees are then feted, the important items of food being *Sajjige* (preparation from Soji and gur), rice and *payasa* (sweet preparation). All of them, then sit chatting on a mat and in a plate placed closeby, their

headman drops a few coins. Other members also do likewise and the money so accrued is taken over by the heir of the deceased. This concludes the funerary feast but another rite known as *vulaya leppunu* is scheduled for the evening. There seems to be some regional variations in the performance of this rite also though the symbolism is same. As ascertained at Ragikumeri of Puttur Taluk, late in the evening, a figure of a human being is drawn on the rice grains spread uniformly in a winnow and on that are placed a new white cloth (also ornaments in case of females) and a coconut oil lamp. The chief mourner (*i.e.* eldest or the youngest son) stands one or two paces beyond the threshold of the hut, with his back to front door of the house and holds the winnow. He addresses the *kule* stating that for the past 10 days it had remained outside the home, and now it may come in and have food. So saying, he moves backwards and places the winnow on the spot where the death occurred. On a plantain leaf spread in front of it, rice, fish curry, *kadubu* liquor etc., are served and the *kule* is implored to partake of these. They wait anxiously till some insect finds its way to the leaf and then they can have their food. This sort of feeding the spirits is termed *mechalda vonasu* and food so offered is consumed by close relatives of the deceased only.

According to practices prevailing at Karaya of Belthangady Taluk, on the eleventh night, at the spot where the corpse was washed a pot full of warm water, a piece of cloth and an oil lamp are placed. So also another light is placed on the threshold of the hut. The *kule* is requested to bathe, dress in dry clothes and enter the home and while doing so to extinguish the flame in the lamp placed on the threshold. Inside the hut before a pot of water placed on a wooden plank food is served in the plantain leaves spread side by side. On extinction of the flame, the cloth is brought in and placed on the plank and then food is served in a separate (eleventh) plantain leaf spread a little distance away from the others. The chief mourner and others offer prayers requesting the *kule* to merge with the group of its ancestral *kules* and remain happy. The eleventh leaf is then dragged on the floor to be united with the other ten. On the sixteenth day after death, food especially *dose* (pan cakes) is served on sixteen leaves and offered to ancestral spirits. This is subsequently consumed by members of the family only. The Meras do not perform death anniversaries. However, during the Tulu month of *Kartel* as also on important festive occasions, it is customary to offer food to ancestral spirits in each family.

Pollution caused by death is believed to last till the performance of *bojja* on the eleventh day. When a man dies, it is his widow, sons and son's sons, children of his siblings and his brothers that are rendered impure. Married daughters are not affected, but they too come home and remain in the household where death has occurred. During this period of pollution, they should abstain from eating fish or flesh of any animals and also from liquor. Generally, they do not go out of their village. Other unrelated members of the caste do not accept food or water at their hands till they get formally purified. Their headman is the main functionary during the obsequies and it is he who removes the impurity by the sprinkling of *Kurtineeru*. Death occurring on a Monday is believed to be good while that on a Friday or Tuesday is regarded as unlucky. In any case, they do not consult astrologers to find out the effects of death.

It may be observed that during the performances of their rites-de-passage the Meras do not depend on any other local caste groups for services. Their own headman and his wife are the chief functionaries and they are assisted by other members of the caste, particularly those in the immediate neighbourhood. These factors promote a corporate community feeling among them and everyone feels obliged to uphold the tradition which has been providing them a mechanism for fulfilling their social needs. Their outlook continues to be conservative and caste and kinship feelings form the pivot of their social life.

IX. RELIGION

The Meras are Hindus by religion. Though they do not utilise the services of Brahmin priests they have great respect for Brahmins. Despite the persisting social bar against their entry to Hindu shrines, the Meras revere the local Brahmanical deities such as Eswara, Vishnu, Ganapathi etc., and occasionally appease them with fruits and nuts offered through caste Hindu priests. However, they subscribe more devoutly to *bhootha aradhane* *i.e.* the cult of devil worship. So also, they believe in the existence of formless spirits of ancestors which roam about the earth credited with powers to harm human beings if dissatisfied. These are propitiated by periodical offerings of food and prayers. The *Bhoothas* (devils) are somewhat distinct from the ancestral spirits and need formal propitiation through priests and traditional devil dancers.

Enmura Deyyu and *Kelada Perna* and *Gadi muggerlu* (Mudda and Kalala) are the Bhootas (Devils

or sprits) especially associated with the Meras. Besides, they also revere and propitiate the *Panjurli*, *Kallurti*, *Guliga*, *Vishnumoorthy* and *Amma* (Mariamma). The propitiation of Bhootas through songs, dance and offerings is called *kola* and members of Nalike-caste render the requisite services. The *Patri* (priest) of their own caste (Mera) officiates on such occasions and usually he would be a soothsayer too. *Kola* is more or less, a community festival involving heavy expenditure and formerly people of other castes in the village also used to subscribe. Thus at Aladangady the resident family of Jain Landlord organises an annual fair in honour of Deyyu and Perna while the priests of Mera caste and dancers of Nalike caste are the other functionaries. This tradition according to the informants is being continued unbroken. But, both at Ragikumeri and Karaya, no such *kola* has been organised to propitiate Gadi-muggerlu or Deyyu and Perna during the past 15 years. It is said, that during the past 15—20 years, the practice of devil-worship through colourful festivals has gradually dwindled.

It may be mentioned in passing that Nalikes occupy the lowest position among the South Kanara castes of Devil-Dancers *viz.*, Pombada, Paravan and Nalike. All these three are scheduled castes; but all the same, it is only the Nalikes who serve the Meras and other erstwhile untouchable caste groups of the locality. The *Paddhanas* (prayers in the form of songs) depicting the life history and deeds of the different Bhootas are known and perpetuated only among these devil dancers. The *Patri* or priests may be from any of the castes and usually they also act as mediums, often becoming possessed by specific spirits.

The Meras offer worship to bows and arrows which are the symbols representing Gadi-muggerlu. These are arranged in small shrines along with the symbols representing other *Bhoothas* that are revered by the community. The *Bhoothasthan* at Kudidala-bettu hamlet of Aladangady village noticed during the field study is a small mud walled hut with a thatched roof. In it were seen 2 canes about 3½ feet long, a trident formed out of cane (*nirakattu* representing Kallurti); 4 pairs of bow and arrow [the 4 bows are made respectively from the strips of areca, *thari* (*Borassus Flabelli formis* or *Corypha umbra culifera*), bamboo and date-palm] besides two arrows with silver heads; two swords in erect position placed on either side of a metallic image of pig representing the Panjurli; a human figure of brass riding a horse—representing Kodamanthaya; and lastly a pair of *Gantemani* or bells—all these placed on a oblong mud altar. The

no caste meetings held to discuss serious cases of transgression of customs or caste rules) the social and ceremonial functions of their headmen continue to be of great importance in their lives. They are mainly an inward-looking group with little eagerness or opportunity for rapid change. The general tendency is to follow as far as practicable the caste-rules and minor deviations such as the use of footwear have come to be overlooked, particularly among the men of younger generation. Education is slowly gaining a place of pride amongst them. The educated few among them are recognised and also respected. The inhabitants of urban areas, of large roadside villages, and the educated youngmen are more susceptible to modern influences and are less conservative in their outlook.

XIV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

The Meras do not have any voluntary organisations (other than their traditional caste-councils at settlement or village level) to voice their grievances or to carry out any movements for reform or Welfare. Their emancipation from serfdom came about mainly as a concomitant of the Independence Movement and the propagation of the Gandhian ideals regarding eradication of untouchability. Most of them are now vaguely aware of the rights and privileges conferred on them by the Constitution and consider the Government as their sole welfare-agency. During the study no movements—either organised and directed from within the Caste or from the outside—such as revivalism, or for improvement of social status etc., could be discerned among them.

As a result of the measures taken by the Government for the social, educational and economic uplift of the scheduled castes, some of the Meras have

obtained housing grants, lands for cultivation, sites for house-construction, scholarships and a few among them have taken up residence in sponsored colonies. It was ascertained during the study that regularisation of many such land-grants were pending for years and that in a few instance such lands were not suited for agriculture. The problem of amelioration of the conditions of this caste is part of the larger one of improvement of the condition of the Scheduled Castes.

XV. CONCLUSION

The community Scheduled under the nomenclature 'Moger' (in South Kanara district and Kollegal Taluk) is not that of fishermen but comprises a people—more backward economically and socially—who in the past were agrestic serfs. Hunting and gathering might have been their chief pursuits in the forgotten past. But even its vestiges, now seen occasionally in their ceremonial hunting expeditions, are gradually vanishing. Among them, tenant-cultivation, as also free labour might have prevailed to some extent in the past too. In recent years they have slowly started acquiring lands and with Independence the system of *Moolada Alu* (bonded labour) seems to have vanished. Slowly they too are showing some interest in providing school-education to their children. By and large they continue to be field-labourers, young men among whom are also want to spells of seasonal migration. Education and urban residence have, in recent years been responsible for some of them taking to non-agricultural occupations. Their general economic conditions are unenviable. The severity associated with the practice of untouchability having become obsolete, there appears to be some improvement both in the treatment and attitude towards them as exhibited by the Caste-Hindus.

MUKRIS

shrine is maintained by the Mera headman and his brothers. At Aladangady they have the *Bhoothastana* for Deyyu and Perna—now in dilapidated condition—the symbols representing the spirits and the ornaments are placed elsewhere in safe custody—and it is here that the two-day fair is held every year during *Suggi* (March). At Karaya, the Meras do not have any separate shrine, their headman has the bows and arrows and the swords—the symbols of the spirits—in his own dwelling unit. On occasions these are brought out and worshipped. The shrine of Mudda and Kalala at Ragikumeri is also said to be unfit for use due to disrepairs since the past 2 decades. The objects of their worship, are now said to be in the possession of their traditional priestly family (*patri*) living at Arabi village. Their daily form of worship consists in lighting an oil-lamp at dusk and bowing.

Dharmasthala of Belthangady Taluk and Subramanya of Puttur Taluk are their main centres of pilgrimage. They also attend fairs and car festivals conducted by other communities in their neighbourhood.

The Meras (and many other castes in South Kanara) follow the solar year consisting of twelve months *viz.*, Paggu, Beshu, Kartel, Ati, Sona, Nirnal, Bonthel, Jarde, Pararde, Punne (or Puyinthe), Mayi and Suggi. Their New Year day coincides with the Tamil New Year day which comes on or around April 14. Their 30 day month commences following the *Sankramana* (apparent movement of the sun from one constellation of the Zodiac to the next one). The important festivals observed by them are *Ugadi* (New Year), *Chouti* (the fourth) *Huddaru* (eating the new crop), *Deepavali* and *Bhimashtami*. On the occasion of *Ugadi* and *Deepavali*, the spirits of one's ancestors are offered *Kotte*, *iddli*, *Dose* (cakes) and *Payasa* (sweet); and on *Chouti* (in the month of Sona or Nirnal) they offer parched rice, fruits of *Geri* (*Semecarpus Anacardium* or marking nut tree) and coconut kernel to their tutelary deities *viz.*, *Gadimuggers*, at the local shrines and partake of the consecrated food near the shrine itself. *Huddaru* is held during October-November and consists in preparing rice dishes (from newly harvested crop) and fish curry which are consumed after offering to ancestral spirits at home. At the time of *Bhimashtami* which comes off in February, in several villages, the Meras have the tradition of organising hunting expeditions. These ceremonial hunts can be organised during the month of Bonthel or Jarde also according to local traditions. Besides these festivals many of the Meras are also accustomed to sacrifice a fowl during the month of Beshu to

appease the spirits. Occasionally, they may also offer worship to serpent stones and ant-hills through Brahmin priests.

X. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Meras, both men and women, spend much of their waking hours in fields working for a wage. They enjoy no spells of leisure but keep on being economically active all through the year. Many of their children around 10 years of age also work for wages. What little time of leisure they snatch in their daily routine is usually spent in gossip in small groups. They occasionally witness fairs and festivals that are held in their immediate neighbourhood. So too, they periodically call on their kinsmen; attend social functions performed amongst their kingroup or in the settlement; their men go on hunting expeditions and their children play indigenous games among themselves. Women weave mats from date-palm (and also make *gorabu* during pre-monsoon days) during their spare hours. They attend to domestic chores besides working for a wage in the fields. Thus they have very little leisure.

XI. RELATION AMONG DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Meras or Muggeras are a homogeneous group without any well-defined segments among them. In former days, it was revealed during the study, there were two groups among them named Ani mugger and Gadimuggar with bar on inter-marriage. But now only the names are known and no distinction is made among them. The *bali* or clan system divides them into several exogamous divisions all of which enjoy practically equal status. The kinship and caste-neighbourhood feelings are quite strong, tending towards formation of territorial groups. Formerly they had *Seeme* (or territorial divisions of the district) such as Puttur Seeme, Ullala Seeme, Vitla Seeme etc. each comprising a known territory. However, kinship bonds would cut through the *seeme* affiliation blending the entire community. The folklore of South Kanara district, as revealed by the collections of *Paddhana's* by Dr. Burnell (Indian Antiquary 1894) indicates that a certain territory of the District was known in former days as *Mugger nad*—the country of the Muggeras.

XII. INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Meras occupy the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy. They have been treated for generations as untouchables and it is only very recently that the attitude of other Caste-Hindus is registering some

change. They were not and are not served by Brahmin priests during their rites-de-passage or worship of deities in their homes. So also the services of traditional barbers and washermen have been denied to them. Now-a-days in towns this restriction has almost disappeared and they feel free to have a haircut or shave at the saloons run by the barbers. They respect Brahmins and also revere the Brahmanical deities. Occasionally, because of the persisting bar to their entry into the Hindu shrines, they stand outside and make offerings of cocoanuts to deities of the Hindu pantheon through Caste-Hindu priests. Their religion consists mainly worship of *Bhoothas* which is done through their own priests and *Nalike* devil-dancers. There has been little or no change in respect of the assistance rendered by the Nalikes.

Those among the Meras engaged as *Moolada Alu* or bonded labourers, were in the past required to render services during the disposal of the dead in their master's households. This custom is still prevailing in interior villages. So also they are associated with the custom of planting a sapling of plantain or a twig of *Sarali* plant in the middle of certain paddy fields called *Kambalada gadde* or *Birumera gadde* during *Suggi* month. Members of other castes occasionally take vows to propitiate the *Gadimuggeras* seeking protection for their cattle. On such occasions, the Mera headman assisted by *Patri* and 4 others, offers worship to the symbols of *Gadimuggera* which are temporarily placed besides the cattle shed of the hosting party. It is then common for the *patri* to act as medium and answer several queries put to him. For all such services, the Meras are paid in kind (rice, fish, toddy etc.) besides sumptuous meals.

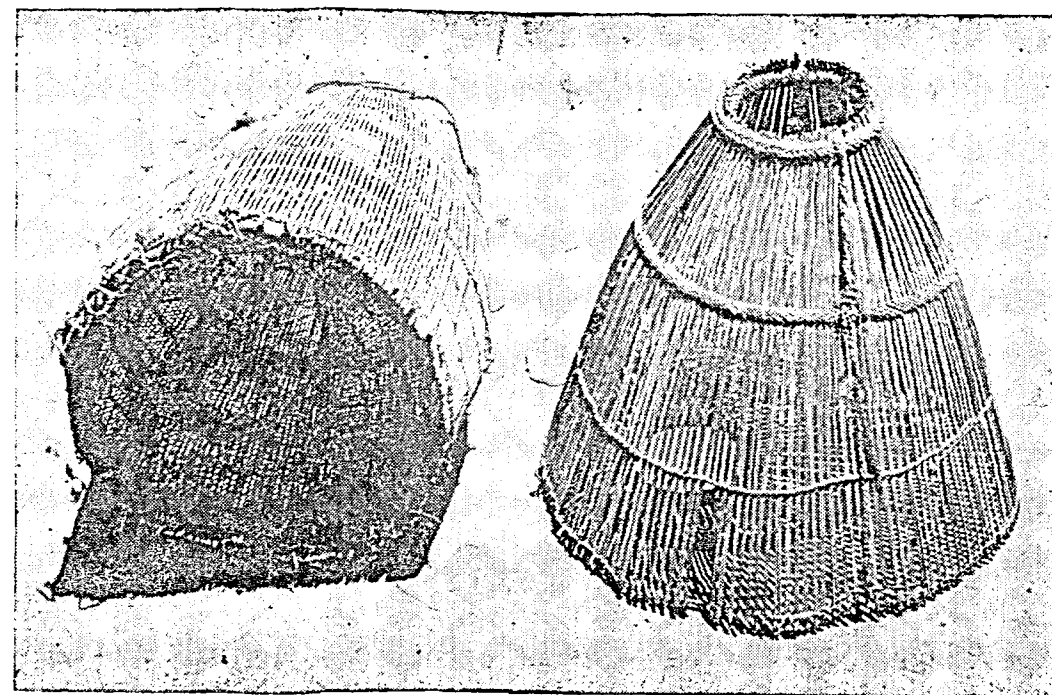
They have free access to public wells, but they are not allowed the use of any private wells of Caste-Hindus. They may not enter the *chavadi* or open veranda of a Brahmin household whereas they may do so in the case of Billava households. In villages, they are not allowed entry into teashops on equal rights; but they are served in *garate* or cup-like coconut rind which they themselves have to wash and keep aside. The traditional musicians (*Devadigas*) do not render services to the Mera. In a few places band sets organised by *Mundala* and such other erstwhile untouchable castes have sprung up in recent years to serve the needs of these so called inferior castes. Another trend noticed in a few places, has been the practice of obtaining *Theertha* (holy water) from Brahmin priests to remove pollution and also to consult them for finding out auspicious days.

They are a minor group having access to scanty economic resources coupled with no political influence. They lay claims to the top most place in the hierarchy of social status amongst the erstwhile untouchable caste groups. The basis for such a claim is their traditional taboo on beef-consumption and on handling dead cattle. Their superiority over the Mundalas, is due to the fact that a legendary Mera woman saved the life of Koradabbu—the legendary hero and tutelary spirit of the Mundalas.

XIII. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

Each settlement of the Meras generally has a headman (called *Gurikara* or *Kaapa* or *Jammani*) and all the adult males form the *Koota* or council. In certain places they also have *patri* or a priest who acts as a medium and an assistant to the headman called variously *Vattukaapa*, *Budvanta* etc. The headman does not have any insignia of office. The office is hereditary (in the male line) and when a man assumes it, he gives a feast to his caste fellows. The main function being judicial, the headman's council adjudicates over disputes referred to it and concerning the local caste group only. It upholds the tradition and chastises the deviants. Thus, persons involved in exchange of blows with leather footwear are cast away till they undergo the ritual purification rite and submit to the penalty. Cases of adultery and divorce are also heard and settled. So also the days for holding feasts and festivals are decided in consultation with each other. The landlords and other reputed leaders of superior castes are invited for arbitration, when the decisions of the council are not acceptable to the disputants. They do not have any contemporary pan-village caste-organisation. Inter village disputes among them are settled through negotiations carried out by leaders of the villages concerned. The practice of reckoning *Seeme* (territorial divisions) among them points to the one time existence of regional councils.

Their headman (and sometimes his wife or any other representative from his family) officiates during the rites and ceremonies connected with life-cycle. He is their accepted leader both in the ceremonial and secular matters. His is a position of prestige within the community. In return for his services he receives respect and recognition besides certain food articles occasionally. Though the function of the caste-council has greatly diminished during the past two decades (for, at the place of study it was reported that there were



2. Traps used for fishing 'Ere Kuli' and 'Kuli'

11. MUKRIS

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The Mukris* have been notified as a Scheduled Caste in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara of Mysore State according to the "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order", 1956. By the same order the caste is Scheduled throughout the erstwhile Bombay State excepting the districts of Buldhana, Akola, Amravati, Yeotmal, Wardha, Nagpur, Bhandara Chanda, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Nanded, Bhir, Osmanabad, Halar, Madhya Sourashtra, Zalawad, Ghailwad, Sorath and Kutch.

There appears to be another community by name 'Mukari' in South Kanara District. In a footnote at page 374 of the Kanara Gazetteer (Vol. XV—Part—I, 1883), it is stated as follows: "in the list of the people of South Kanara in 1800 Mokaris or boatmen are returned as 687."

In the Census of India, 1901, Madras Vol. XV, Part—I—Report, the two fishing communities viz., Mukayan or Mukari have been described. Mukari is said to be a sub-division of Mukkavan, a Malabar fishing caste. But the Mukris now under study are the residents of North Kanara district only and are primarily engaged in earth-digging for road work besides working in arecanut gardens and as agricultural labourers. None of them has taken to fishing as an independent occupation. Hence, it would be incorrect to link Mukaris of Malabar region with the Mukris of North Kanara. The Mukris it is reported, have no connection with the Mukaris of South Kanara district. Most of the Mukris are not even aware of the existence of castes such as Mukaris and Mukkavan.

There are different versions regarding their origin. It is said that in the hoary past they happened to be hill dwellers without any language as they never lived amidst people in settled villages. It is further said that some ancient *rishis* (Sages) brought them to the settled villages from the forests. The word 'Mukri' is said to be derived from the two words *Mooka* and *Kri* which in Sanskrit mean 'a dumb person' and 'to work' respectively. So 'Mukri' means a dumb worker. It is likely that the language of these erstwhile forest-dwellers was not intelligible to the people of the

settled villages and this forced the Mukris to be silent workers. As a consequence the caste name 'Mukri' might have come into vogue.

According to another legend, it is said that along with Mukris, Halavakki Vakkals (who are also, found only in the district of North Kanara), also used to reside in forests in the past and that both these castes constituted one single endogamous group without the stigma of untouchability attached to them. Later on, a group of people among them started drinking toddy and eating flour of *tali* palm. Some of the Halavakki Vakkals ex-communicated those who had indulged in these habits which violated their traditional customs and practices. This ex-communicated section later developed into an independent caste called Mukris.

According to another account Halavakki Vakkals once went to a forest with Mukris, to fetch the pitch of the *tali* palm. When they were felling trees in two groups separately the Halavakki Vakkals thought that the heavy thud with which the tree would fall on the ground would cause the pith to splinter and a lot of the pith would go waste. So they thought of supporting the tree on their shoulders when it was falling. True to this decision the Halavakki Vakkals tried to support the falling tree and in the attempt got crushed. The Mukris on the other hand allowed the tree to fall on the ground and used its pith for food. This, according to some of the Mukris, has been the reason for the Halavakki Vakkals not using *tali* pith for food. Interesting though they are, these legends have little to support them. However they help us to infer that both these castes come from a common stock of a forest tribe. These two groups are said to have separated and formed distinct castes about 10 generations ago.

Enthoven (1922 Vol. III, P65) mentions that the Mukris are sometimes called Habbegoundas which is a synonym of Halavakki Vakkals. Even now Mukris consider themselves as the younger brothers of Halavakki Vakkals. However they are not aware of the significance of the term 'Habbegoundaru' or 'Hebbli gaudaru'. Even the contemporary Mukris admit that whenever their people go to the villages in up-ghat taluks like Sirsi and Siddapur they call themselves

*In the notification the name of the caste has been misspelt as *Murkis* which is obviously a printing mistake.

'Habbegoundas'. Actually it is reported that 'Karevakkal' found in Bandal and a few other villages of Kumta taluk are the real Habbegoudas. This caste, however, is quite different from Halavakki Vakkals. Some of the local people belonging to Brahmin and other high castes call the Mukris as Halleers which is quite a different caste. Some of the Halavakki Vakkals refer to Mukris as 'Ganti Gandaru' the significance of which is also not known to either of the groups. Unlike Halavakki Vakkals and Karevakkals, Mukris are considered untouchables and hence constitute a distinct caste.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TRENDS

Mukris are found mainly in Kumta, Honavar, Sirsi and Siddapur taluks of North Kanara district. The residents of Sirsi and Siddapur taluks are said to have migrated in quest of labour in arecanut gardens. Hence they are original residents of Kumta and Honavar taluks. Their settlements are generally found in the region to the South of the Gangavali river and to the north of the Sharavathi river. An insignificant number of them are found in Ankola and Haliyal taluks. In Gadag Taluk (Rural) (Dharwar district) Six Mukri women were returned during the 1961 census.

The distribution of their population in 1961 by sex and age-groups and by rural and urban areas is as follows:—

Age Group	Males	Females	Total
0—14	984	938	1922
15—44	1235	1157	2392
45+	439	507	946
Total	2658	2602	5260
Rural	2487	2472	4959
Urban	171	130	301

It is observed that, 36.53% of the population is in the broad age-group of 0-14; 45.47% is in the age-group of 15—44 and 18% is in the age-group of 45 and above. The percentages of population distributed in rural and urban areas are 94.27% and 5.73% respectively. Males constitute 50.53% and females 49.47% of the total population. Data in respect of distribution of population in different age-groups for rural and urban areas are not separately compiled.

The distribution of their rural population in various taluks of North Kanara district according to the 1961 Census is given below:

Name of Taluk	Males	Females
Ankola	10	7
Haliyal	2	10
Kumta	1062	1173
Sirsi	290	171
Siddapur	257	158
Honavar	866	947
Total	2487	2466

Considered taluk wise, Mukris are found in large number in the taluks of Kumta and Honavar. The number of their households is considerable in the villages of Hologadde, Dharieswar, Chitrangi, Kujalli, Valgalli, Harvatta, Baad, Hegde, Manaki, Gokarn and Mirjan in Kumta taluk and in Karki, Haldipur, Kadthoka, Navalgaon, Kekkar, Chandawar and Hebbankeri in Honavar taluk.

Their settlements are arranged into forty groups and the groups into four divisions or *simes*. The four divisions or *Simes* with constituent villages are as follows:—

(1) Chandawar sime.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Hegde | 10. Kadtoke |
| 2. Dharieswar | 11. Navilgaon |
| 3. Chandawar | 12. Nekkar |
| 4. Hebbankeri | 13. Salkod |
| 5. Karki | 14. Harneer |
| 6. Hosakuli | 15. Talgod |
| 7. Kugwe | 16. Duggoor |
| 8. Mavinkurre | 17. Vandur |
| 9. Haldipura | 18. Madgeri |

(2) Kumta sime

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Harigone | 4. Kujalli |
| 2. Baggone | 5. Urkeri |
| 3. Chitrangi | 6. Walgalli |
| | 7. Hervatta |

(3) Hegde sime

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Hegde | 4. Masoor |
| 2. Baad | 5. Halkar |
| 3. Gudeangadi (Holangadde) | 6. Masaki |

(4) Gokarn sime

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. Mirjan | 5. Gokarn (including hamlets sanikatta and Belean) |
| 2. Kodkna | 6. Hanehalli |
| 3. Uppinapattana | 7. Devgi |
| 4. Bankikodla | 8. Agragone |

The District of North Kanara is divided into two main regions viz., the coastal region, and the interior upghat region. Some times the district is divided into three belts, with an additional central belt, in addition to these two regions. This district lies between 13°55' and 15°10' North latitude and 74°9' and 75°10' East longitude. The Coastal belt (Kumta and Honavar Taluks) in which the Mukris live, is characterised by sandy beaches, towering palm trees and green paddy fields. The coastal strip is very narrow, sandwiched between the mountains on the east and the Arabian sea on the West. The scenic beauty of this tract is thus described by Mr. Ford "Nothing more beautiful is to be seen anywhere in Europe and Asia than the coast of Canara. Mountain spurs from the main range of the Western ghats run down to the coast and sometimes extend far out to sea, wooded to the water's edge and mapping out broad bays or landlocked covers; in other places they plank the estuaries of navigable rivers which come winding among the hills from the east as the valleys open out and admit of cultivation by plains of brilliant green. All this wealth of picturesque outline is bathed in the soft brilliancy of tropical atmosphere and the effect, to the eyes unfamiliar with the scene, is a happy stupor of admiration" (Wild Life in Canara, London, 1885 P 8).

The seasonal condition of the region may be broadly divided into (1) the three hot months of March to May (2) the four wet months from June to September (3) the two hot and damp months of October and November and (4) the three cool months from December to February. The average annual rainfall is about 130 inches and the major precipitation is in the months of June and July.

The coastal belt is narrow and studded with denuded hills and, thick forests close in on the eastern border. Paddy and cocoanut form the important agricultural produce. The whole coastline is ideal for fishing. The important centres of social and cultural activities where Mukris are found are Gokarn, Sanikatta and Kumta.

According to the 1961 Census the population of Mukris is 5260 consisting of 2658 males and 2602 females. Almost all of them reside in the district of North Kanara. In 1881 their population was 4984 (Gazetteer of the Bombay presidency Vol. XV, Part I Kanara 1883, P 374). In 1911 the population of Mukris was 4946 (Census of India 1911, Vol. III, Part II, Bombay). In 1921 their population was 4722 consisting of 2241 males and 2481 females (Census of

India 1921 Vol VIII. Bombay presidency Bombay 1922). These figures indicate a gradual decline in their population. The reason attributed to this decline which was also true of the district population as a whole is ".....Kanara district entered a period of decline from 1901 when the population was 4,54,490. The lowest point was reached in 1921. Even in 1941, the population was less than in 1901. The decline was principally due to malaria" (Census of India 1951, Vol. IV, Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch, Part I; Bombay: 1953 P. 7). Their population figure for 1941 and 1951 Censuses are not separately available as they do not appear to have been compiled during these periods. However, the increase of population between 1881 and 1961 is only 296 which is low. This may also be attributed to the fact that in some regions like Gokarn the Mukris are occasionally known as Halleers which might have confused the enumerators. Another interesting feature about the general population of the district is that a large percentage of its population consists of immigrants. Between 1951 and 1961 the population of the district has recorded an increase of 33.2% from 5,17,780 in 1951 to 6,89,549 in 1961. During this period the number of immigrants is 1,83,121. Thus nearly 26.5% of the present population consists of immigrants.

III. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Mukris are short and dark with slightly projecting jaws. The features of the women more or less resemble those of the men, but they are a bit slimmer and fairer. Women are as hardy as the men.

IV. FAMILY, CLAN, KINSHIP AND OTHER ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

There are no endogamous groups or sub-castes among the Mukris. However, there appear to be several exogamous divisions known as *balis*. According to Enthoven (1922, III-P65) their exogamous divisions are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. Kanne bali | • • Kanne= virgin |
| 2. Tolana „ | • • Tola= Wolf |
| 3. Shendi „ | • • Shendi= Palm toddy |
| 4. Kavdechi „ | • • a tree= <i>Acacia speciosa</i> |
| 5. Ane „ | • • Ane= Elephant |
| 6. Shetli „ | • • Shetli= A fish |
| 7. Shirin „ | • • a tree = <i>Gynandropsis pentaphylla</i> |
| 8. Handi „ | • • Handi= Pig |
| 9. Dyavana „ | • • Dyava= A tortoise |
| 10. Hebbali „ | • • A tree= <i>Artocarpus hirsata</i> |

9. MUKRIS



1. A Mukri youth

The above *Balis* indicate that the sub-divisions are more or less of a totemistic nature and this is a common feature with almost all other non-Brahminical castes of the district. The Halavakki Vakkals are also similarly divided into several exogamous divisions. "The members of the *shendi bali* will not touch toddy nor go beneath the shade of the toddy tree, and similarly with the *Shirin bali*, the tree is avoided and never injured. Members of the elephant division will not wear ivory ornaments." (1922 III P65). It was reported that the members of *Dyavan bali* do not eat tortoise.

In the course of field study it was noticed that most of the Mukris are not aware of the *balis* to which they belong and some of them do not even admit of the existence of *balis* among them. The existence of *balis* was denied by the informants of the caste in Manaki, Mavinkurve and Karki villages of Honavar taluk. Only the Mukris of Haldipur village in Honavar taluk mentioned a few *balis* viz., *Kannebali*, *Tolana bali*, *Dyavana Bali*, *Kallanda bali*, and *Ajji bali*. According to them persons coming within the *Kanne bali* invite five virgins to their homes during the *Devikan* festival, annually held on the full moon day in the month of May. These girls are decorated with flowers, *Kumkum* (Vermilion dust) etc. and are fed sumptuously. Persons of the *Tolanabali* are said to be the off-spring of Mukri widows ex-communicated from their fold. As a consequence to it, in some villages other Mukris do not inter-dine with the persons belonging to *Tolanabali* and sarcastically refer to them as *Doddajana* (big-people) or *Sannajana* (small people). Mukris of this *bali* were found in Haldipur and Manaki villages of Honavar Taluk. *Kallanda bali* which is not listed by Enthoven is said to be an alternative name for *Shendi bali*. It is said that in the past persons of this *bali* used to keep a bottle of toddy called *Kilu* (evil spirit) while threshing paddy. It is a well known fact in North Kanara that Mukris have a strong craving for toddy. But, persons of *Kallanda* or *Shendi bali* do not consume toddy. They even desist from going below a tree to which a pot is tied for tapping toddy. A few families of the *Ajji bali* are found in Haldipur. But they do not know how the name of this *bali* was derived. According to the prevailing custom among the members of this *bali* one can marry the daughter of one's father's younger sister which is forbidden among the members belonging to other *balis*. Among Mukris the marrying of one's sister's daughter and one's father's sister's daughter is not permitted. But one can marry one's mother's brother's daughter.

Many of the Mukris while accepting the existence of *balis* said that they have forgotten the names of their own *balis* and that they do not attach much importance to them. The only occasion on which they attach any importance to such *balis* is at the time of marriage. Many of them who are unaware of their *balis* take care to see that their men marry women from families other than those of their father's clan.

The Mukris have no stocknames or surnames. The common names among men are, Jatti, Gidda, Naga, Narayana, Kuppu, Kariya, Devu etc. and among women Masti, Shivi, Kuppi, Biri, Subbi etc.

The Mukris are patriarchal and their affinities and leanings are traced through the male line.

The eldest member, usually, the father or the widowed mother of the family is the head of the family. Parents are revered and respected. The kinship terms in vogue among them are *Appa* (father) *Anna* (brother) *Amma* (mother) *Atte* (father's sister) *Chikkavvi* (mother's sister) *Mama* (mother's brother) and *Sove* (sister's daughter). By usage men cannot marry their own sister's daughters.

Simple families are more common among them and the normal size of the family ranges from 3 and 5. In Mavinkurve village of Honavar taluk out of 13 families interviewed, 9 were simple families consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children and the others were joint families.

V. DWELLING, DRESS, ORNAMENTS, FOOD ETC.

(a) Dwelling

The Mukris live in separate settlements locally known as *Keris* which are more or less treated as hamlets. Each settlement consists of a group of houses surrounded by a thorny hedge or low stone wall. Round about each house there would be a few coconut and arecanut palms most of which are held under lease called *Geni*. A few mango and jack fruit trees are sometimes found amidst these habitations. Generally the settlement is situated on an elevated land which is surrounded by paddy fields. The Gramvakkals, Halavakki vakkals and Halleers, are also found near their *Keris* but at a little distance. They have their own drinking water wells as they are denied the use of the common village well. The Mukris live in thatched huts having rectangular ground plans and sloping roofs. The height of the plinth

is about one foot, built of mud and stones. The walls are generally of mud with low roofs of bamboo obtainable from the nearby jungles. The roofs have either two or four sides sloping downwards to allow rain water to run off easily.

The houses are small, varying between 100 and 200 sq. ft. in area. The residence generally consists of one room with a narrow *Jagli* or open verandha in the front with a poultry pen in a corner. At the opposite end is kept (*Areyuva kallu*) a curry grinding stone. Generally they build their own houses. Services of local carpenters are sought only at the time of fixing wooden doors and windows. The wood required, though small in quantity, is purchased at nearby private timber depots. The doors are about 5 feet to 5 feet and 6 inches in height. Doors may face the east, the west and the north but never the south. The size of a single roomed house is about 7' to 9' wide and 10' to 20' long.

The other materials like, stones, earth, thatching material etc. are obtained locally. Thatching material consists of paddy hay, dry coconut leaves or a kind of grass called *kachi* obtained from the forests. The bamboos are obtained on permits from the Forest Department.

Construction of a new house starts with the fixing of 4 pegs at the four corners of the intended site which is selected by consulting a Brahmin priest who refers to the almanac to determine its suitability. The time of starting house construction and its size are also indicated by the priest, who, of course, does not personally officiate at any of the ceremonies of the Mukris. At the time of starting the actual construction a coconut is broken on the foundation stone after worshipping it. Then they fix two poles in the middle of the site, the distance between the two poles being 5 to 6 feet. Then a cross beam is fixed on these poles followed by tying bamboos to support the roof. If the roof is to be four-sided they tie horizontal poles of bamboo or other wooden material at the ends of the cross beam and the open ends of these poles would rest on the four corners of the walls. The entire roof is covered with paddy grass on a framework made of pieces of split bamboo in a criss-cross manner. Occasionally coconut palm leaves are also used for covering the roofs. The walls are usually provided with a round beam and smaller poles, usually 6 to 8 in number, which serve as buttresses to the wall. The height of the wall varies between 5' and 7'. A few houses have roofs covered with country tiles or Mangalore tiles. The flooring is of plastered earth

which is smeared over with cow-dung from time to time. A house with one room costs about Rs. 100 and a two roomed structure costs about Rs. 150.

After the house is completed a housewarming ceremony called *Mane Hokkuvu Sastra* is observed. For this ceremony, a cow is tethered in the house, worshipped and fed. As Brahmins do not officiate at any of their ceremonies, their *Budvanis* (Caste leaders) conduct such ceremonies. In some villages, particularly near urban areas, Brahmins sometimes perform these housewarming ceremonies. If a Brahmin is invited and he is willing to come, they perform a *Homa* the previous day and on the following day they worship a cow and arrange a feast for their relations and friends. The custom of offering some cooked food called *Ede* to a crow before serving the guests is also prevalent.

The houses of the Mukris are dark and ill-ventilated. They do not decorate their houses. Only once or twice a year their houses are white-washed. The floors are plastered with cow-dung twice a week. The houses lack privacy. None of them have latrines. The garbage and other refuse is just thrown by the sides of their houses. They do not provide separate space in their houses for bathing. They bathe in the open near a well or a stream. Those owning cattle construct a separate small cattle shed.

(b) Dress

Formerly, the dress of their men consisted of a loin-cloth a blanket to be thrown on the shoulder and red *rumal* or headscarf which is now replaced by white turban. Men use shirts and *dhoties*, but quite a few even now use only a loin-cloth as the lower garment. Many use a small piece of loose cloth as an upper garment which is locally called *todapa*. Very few of them wear *Chappals* (footwear).

Their women wear sarees in the conventional manner but tie the free end of the *pallavi* to round the neck. They do not wear any headgear. The use of a blouse is still uncommon. Of late, a few ladies have taken to the use of blouses like urban dwellers. The Mukri women do not usually wear bodice and so, one end of the saree covers their bosom. Generally, women do not wear any footwear. Even on special occasions their dress is not different except that it is either new or washed. Young boys use shirts and knickers and young girls use frocks. The young children usually move about naked till the age of 5 or 6. School-going boys use shirts, pyjamas and slacks.

They wash their clothes once a week in rivers and small streams. The use of soap for washing is becoming popular. Their poor economic conditions do not allow them to keep more than one or two sets of dresses.

(c) *Ornaments*

Mukri women are fond of necklaces made of glass beads. In fact, like the Halavakki Vakkals, they carry a heavy bunch of necklaces of glass beads weighing several pounds round their necks. Generally the ornaments of woman consist of ear-rings (*Kudike*) the cost of which is about Rs. 35 nose-ring (*mugute*, costing about Rs. 10) *tal gundu* and a string of golden and glass beads costing of Rs. 50. The bead necklace for married women will have five rows with more of red and yellow beads. The married women can be differentiated easily from the un-married and widows by the type of ornaments worn. A married woman wears ear-rings, nose-ring, glass bangles, strings of black beads, toe-rings, brass armlets, and silver wristlets (*mungadaga*). A virgin wears all the above ornaments except for the strings of black beads (*Karimanisara*) and toe-rings. A widow is precluded from wearing ear and nose-rings, bangles and strings of black beads. Kumkum (vermilion powder) and flowers are also not used by widows. Like the Gadabas and Halavakki Vakkals, the Mukri women use mainly brass ornaments and a silver neck ornament called *Korala bandi*. They also carry silver tooth-pick (*hallukaddi*) suspended by a string in their neck; a silver ear pick (*kivikaddi*) to remove wax from the ears; a silver needle and a miniature tongs called *chimatige* used for removal of thorns. It is interesting to see these simple and unsophisticated ladies carrying on themselves a heavy burden of beads and yet moving about with ease and working gracefully. Tattooing was quite a favourite with them, but as women of up-country Karnataka who are adepts in this art are reportedly not coming to them now-a-days this practice has diminished.

The men wear ear-rings called *muravu* and *melmura*. The former is worn on the lower lobe of the ear and the latter in the upper lobe. Those who can afford, wear silver waist girdles, silver or gold rings but their number is very few.

(d) *Food and Drink*

Their staple diet mainly consists of parboiled rice locally called *kachgi akki*. It is said that in the past

the Mukris used to grow ragi in *Kumri* (shifting cultivation) lands in the forests but now-a-days they have ceased to raise any crops in the forests and their consumption of *ragi* gruel is also very much reduced. About their dietary habits, Campbell writes, "Their food is ragi gruel eaten with dried fish, and boiled rice saturated with cheap fish curry. Both men and women drink liquor and eat flesh except that they do not touch beef or pork. Their special dishes are beaten rice or *payas* with molasses and plantains, and rice cooked with coconut milk and molasses called *paise*, and fowl made into curry. (Gazetteer of Bombay presidency, Vol. XV—Part 1—P. 375). They generally take three meals a day and the menu for all these meals is the same. The menu consists of rice gruel (*conjee*) with some vegetable or fish curry and some *channi* made of chillies and tamarind. They take all kinds of fish both scaled and unscaled. They eat both domesticated and wild animals. They refrain from eating beef, the flesh of bison and pork. Rice *rotti* (bread) *idiles* (rice pudding) *avalakki* (beaten rice) are relished by them occasionally. They cannot afford to store provisions and hence they have to make daily purchases.

They are fond of liquor, particularly toddy. Most of their religious and festive ceremonies are invariably associated with the drinking of toddy. Since about 10 to 15 years, tea is invariably taken in the morning by males in tea shops. Many of them also prepare tea in their houses. Both men and women are fond of chewing *pan supari* with tobacco. Males are also addicts to the habit of smoking bidies.

(e) *Other material objects*

Mukris being poor possess very few household goods. Their utensils consists mainly of earthen pots. They have one or two metal plates called '*gangala*' which is used for taking food. However, the use of aluminium plates or brass plates is on the increase. One or two copper pitchers and smale water containers called '*thambige*' may be found in a few houses. The only furniture found in their houses consists of low wooden stools (*manes*) on which they sit while taking food. One or two coarse woollen blankets (*kambals*) are found in almost all the households. These *kambals* are used as beds in summer and as blankets during winter and rainy seasons. They use mats made of grass, palm-leaves or *mundiga* (wild plant) leaves for sitting purposes. Only a few have lanterns while most of the house-holds use tin lamps burning Kerosene for lighting purposes. Their agricultural implements are the traditional wooden plough, spade, *halike*

(wooden wecders), axes, bill hooks, pick-axes, *chooli* (rattan containers) and baskets made of rattan or jungle creepers.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABIT
DISEASE AND TREATMENT

Generally both men and women bathe daily, and occasionally in warm water. If they stay away from work they only wash their hands and feet. They keep their houses clean by sweeping daily and smearing the floor-space with cowdung once or twice a week. They clean their teeth daily by using ash or stems of some plants.

They apply coconut oil for trimming their hair. The women knot their hair at the back. The men assist themselves in haircutting as the village barbers do not serve them. They use soapnut powder while bathing. The use of toilet soaps is also slowly becoming popular among them.

Like all other castes of their social status in the District they have faith in soothsaying and witchcraft. Diseases, hardships etc. are normally attributed to the wrath of some malign spirits and other forces. Whenever they have any ailments they first seek the assistance of a sooth-sayer who is expected to drive away the evil effects of such spirits. They take vows to sacrifice fowls to some deities like *Jataka*, *Masti amma* etc. They obtain *thirtha* (sacred water) and *Vibhuti* (sacred ash) from Brahmin priests. The ailments to

which they are generally susceptible are influenza, cough, stomach disorders, etc. The ailing persons are initially treated with local herbs and roots. Only in grave cases they consult a medical practitioner or get themselves treated in government dispensaries.

VII. LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND EDUCATION

The Mukris speak Kannada which is their mother tongue. The only other language of the tract in which they live is Konkani which is spoken by a few communities such as Gowda Saraswath—Brahmins, Christians etc. Only a few of them can understand or speak Konkani. The Kannada they speak has some peculiar words and also differs in accent from the Kannada spoken by others. A casual observer will not find much difference between the Kannada the Mukris speak and that spoken by the Halavakki Vakkals. But there are some differences. The use of the suffix 'tru' to verbs is peculiar to Mukris. For the expression *we go* they would say *Navu Hogtru* and not *Navu Hogutheve* as spoken by others. They say *Naan Baththe* (I will come) and not *Nanu Baruthene* as is more common. *Nee Barri* instead of *Neevu Barri* (you come) is another example.

The percentage of literacy among Mukris is very low and works out to a little over 7 per cent. The following table gives the educational standards among Mukris according to the 1961 census:—

Area	Population			Illiterate		Literate without educational level		Primary or Junior Basic		Matric or Higher Secondary	
	P	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Total	5260	2658	2602	2305	2473	310	27	42	1	1	1
Rural	4959	2487	2472	2158	2444	291	27	38	1	..	..
Urban	301	171	130	147	129	19	..	4	..	1	1

In a population of 5260, the literates number only 382 of whom 353 are males and 29 are females. Even among the literates only 43, consisting of 42 males and one female, have completed the primary educational standard. Only 2 urban dwellers consisting of one male and one female have completed matriculation or higher secondary. The solitary instance of a boy from Karki village attending Kanara College at Kumta has become a matter of pride for the whole community. Of late, there is a perceptible change in their outlook towards sending their children to schools, in Haldipur

village where there are about 200 house-holds of Mukris, as on date of enquiry, 4 of their boys attend high school, 55 children attend primary schools and 40 children attend a *Balavaai* run by the Social Welfare Department. About 20 years ago it is said that only about 10 students in all were attending schools. But on account of their low-economic standard they soon withdraw children from schools. The main reason for the high rate of illiteracy is the fact that they work as coolies and find that children are more useful for tending cattle or keeping house than at school.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
II As agricultural labourers		1176	23.71	640	25.73	536	21.68	51	16.94	33	19.30	18	13.85
III In mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry etc.		271	5.46	181	7.28	90	3.64	1	0.33	1	0.59	..	..
IV Household industry,		9	0.18	6	0.24	3	0.12	..	..	..	..	..	..
V In manufacturing other than household industry		36	0.73	14	0.56	22	0.89	9	2.99	9	5.26	..	..
VI In construction		66	1.33	28	1.13	38	1.54	30	9.97	30	17.54	..	..
VII In trade and commerce		3	0.06	1	0.04	2	0.08	1	0.33	1	0.59	..	..
VIII In transport, storage and communication		2	0.04	2	0.08	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
IX In other services		515	10.39	273	10.48	242	9.79	61	20.27	35	20.47	26	20.00
B. NON-WORKERS		2027	40.88	912	36.67	115	45.11	129	42.86	55	32.16	74	56.92

In terms of percentages, the workers among Mukris constitute 59% of the total Mukri population of which males constitute 32.14% and females 26.86%. Sexwise, the workers account for 63.61% among males and 54.30% among females. In the rural areas 63.33% of the males and 54.89% of the females are workers, whereas in urban areas 67.84% of the males and 43.08% of the females are workers. Among workers 39.40% are agricultural labourers and 28.12% are cultivators. Most of the agricultural labourers and cultivators are found in rural areas. The percentage of agricultural labourers among the scheduled castes of the State as a whole is 29.10. The other important livelihood classes are workers in 'other services' which accounts for 18.55% and workers in mining, quarrying, forestry, etc. accounts for 8.76%. A small proportion (3.09%) of workers are engaged in construction. An insignificant proportion of workers pursue manufacturing other than household industry (1.44%).

Non-working population constitutes 41% of the total Mukri population. Most of the non-working population consists of young children aged less than 14 years since nearly 36% of the total population is in the age group 0-14.

Regarding inter-community comparison of levels of income or standard of living, it is observed that the conditions of Mukris are deplorable compared to other caste Hindus and some of the scheduled castes like Halleers, Holers and Channayas. Within the community there is no perceptible difference in the economic conditions of people pursuing different occupations.

Analysis of rough estimates of income and expenditure statement of a few households collected during field study indicates that a simple family of an agricultural labourer earning about 900 Rupees a year by way of wages spends about 75% of its income on cereal and non-cereal items of food, 11% on clothing, 3% on beverages and 3% on pan supari, bidies etc. A cultivating tenant's household spends about 60% of its income of food, 13% on clothing, 5% on cultivation expenses, 3% on drinks and about 3% on bidi, pan supari etc.

IX. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

Like most traditional Hindus, Mukris consider pregnancy as a divine boon. Still birth, abortion and barrenness are considered as due to some malign spirits or some gods and goddesses. Pregnancy is recognised by the familiar signs. Traditionally, the first delivery takes place in the parent's house. Before leaving her husband's house for delivery her parents give her a basketful of sweets (*Kajjaya*) and a new saree and perform a ceremony called *udi thumbuvadu* when rice and a coconut are presented along with the saree. This ceremony is usually performed in the 7th month. The following day her husband's family also perform a similar ceremony and it is only after this ceremony that she leaves for her parental home. In the past, a person whose wife was pregnant was forbidden to slaughter animals, carry a bier and shave his beard. But now-a-days, they do not observe such restrictions rigidly. Particularly, they do not mind

shaving their beards during the pregnancy of their wives. Pregnant women are forbidden from eating fish such as mackare land shark, and vegetables such as sweet-gourd, pumpkin and papaya. These taboos continue even during the post-natal period. During the pre-natal period the expectant mother is fed on rice, curry and sweet gruel made of rice. During the post-natal period a decoction (*kashaya*) extracted from cummin seeds, pepper, fresh bark of some trees, ginger, coconut kernel, jaggery etc., is administered from the 3rd day after delivery for two months.

The delivery takes place mostly in their own residences and is attended by some experienced elderly ladies (*bezaditi* or *sulagitti*) who work as midwives. This is generally a hereditary avocation for women of certain families belonging to Harkantra, Bandari, Namadhari and Gram Wakkal castes. It is only occasionally that deliveries are arranged at maternity hospitals at Honavar, Kumta and Gokarn. In some villages which are nearer to the towns dais or midwives are called in. During a protracted and difficult delivery, they consult a sooth-sayer and if he should say that it was due to the influence of any evil spirit or deity they call upon his services to ward off the evil effects. They also approach a priest for *Vibuti* (sacred ash) or an amulet. *Vibhuti* is applied to the body in pain and the amulet is tied on her body. They also observe vows to their caste deities and sacrifice fowls.

The pollution after the birth is for 11 days and the house is purified on the 12th day. There are some slight regional variations regarding the number of such days of pollution. At Haldipur the confined woman is considered impure for 10 days and she becomes pure after the ritual bath on the 11th day. On the third day after delivery, the mother and the child are bathed and the mother worships the pit where the placenta is buried near the bathing place. The placenta is collected in a sheath-made out of arecanut leaves and on the third day this pit is completely filled up and a sapling called *tirukalli* is planted at the spot. After worship at this spot, the *yejamana* or *bejaditi* supplies some soda ash (*Kshara*). Thereafter the pollution is confined only to the mother and the baby and others are considered purified. On the 12th day the mother and the child are again given a bath and they are administered some water in which soda ash is mixed and it is only after this ceremony that they become pure of pollution.

The cradling and naming ceremony takes place on the twelfth day. The first born child, if male, is given its grand-father's name and if female its grand-mother's

name. *Pooja* is offered by the mother to Ganga (goddess of water) at a well or at some water course. Suckling of the child begins on the third day after birth and for the first two days the child is administered, *conjee* water or sweet cummin decoction. Suckling of the child continues for a year or two unless pregnancy intervenes. At the time of weaning, they feed the child with rice softened into paste. If the mother's milk is insufficient it is supplemented by cow's or buffalo's milk up to 6 to 8 months when rice *conjee* is given. After one year, rice is given and fish curry is also gradually offered. The child is taken out only after the first month but this is usually done after four months. Generally, the child is carried in the arms and on the waist. When returning to her husband's place with the child after the first delivery the wife keeps with her a leaf of the *Nux-Vomica* tree and a pebble presumably as a protection from evil spirits and evil eyes. If there is a temple or a shrine of some important deity or a river, they worship it by breaking a coconut. No ceremonies are performed on taking the child out of the house for the first time.

The Mukris do not practise any methods of birth control. Even though they may not admit it, it is known that they use some herbs and roots which are said to be effective in controlling births. They are said to have their own medicines made of some roots, herbs and decoctions to induce abortion in case of illegitimate pregnancy.

Mukris prefer birth of males though there might be no acute disappointment at the birth of a daughter. The tonsure ceremony is called *cholangi* which is performed at the age of 5 to 7 and sometimes at the age of 12. The boy's maternal uncle is important on the occasion as he has to perform the hair removing ceremony. He presents the child with *mura* (ear ornament) and a shirt. The traditional village barber does not attend this ceremony. In the case of a female child the ear lobes and nose are pierced by the maternal uncle of the child.

A girl attaining puberty (*Dindu*) is considered impure for three days. On the fourth day all her clothes are washed, cowdung and cow's urine sprinkled over her and a little of it is also administered to her with *Tulsi* leaf after her bath. In some families the bath on the fourth day permits her to move about all over the house excepting the kitchen and, only after the fifth day can she enter the kitchen and attend to usual domestic duties. For some families pollution lasts for 5 days. When a girl attaining puberty is already married, her sister gives her a bath on the fifth day

The percentage of literacy among Mukris compares very unfavourably with that of other Scheduled Castes of the same region such as Agers. (15.1%) and Halleers (11.3%). Their educational backwardness is still more apparent when compared with the average for North Kanara District which is 33.44%. This deplorably low percentage of literacy might be due to the non-existence of educational facilities in rural areas in the past and traditional apathy towards education on account of the prevalence of unfavourable social conditions. Being treated as untouchables the children of Scheduled Castes were not freely admitted to educational institutions.

The study of the table further shows that 92.80% of the Mukris in the rural areas and 91.69% in urban areas are illiterate. 86.78% of the male population and 98.87% of the female population in the rural areas are illiterate. In the urban areas, 85.97% of the male population and 99.23% of the female population are illiterate.

VIII. ECONOMIC LIFE

The Mukris are principally agricultural labourers like the other Scheduled Castes of the North Kanara District such as the Halleers, Haslar and Channayyas. Many of them work in arecanut gardens while others take up any petty work available. A few of them own and cultivate lands while many take land on lease for cultivation. Some of them work in the laterite quarries or as forest labourers. The women besides attending to their domestic chores also earn wages as agricultural labourers. The important agricultural operations which need larger female labour are weeding, transplanting, and harvesting. They also work in the gardens and in road construction.

In the Bombay Gazetteer of Kanara District (1883) they are described as "hard working and well behaved and thriftless. They are field labourers and makers of shell lime. Most of them are employed by Havik Brahmins in the spice gardens and are bound to labour for a term of years, for life, or for several generations in return for money advanced to meet marriage expenses...." (Vol. XV, Part I, P375). Enthoven writes "they are field labourers and makers of lime. Most of them are employed by Havik Brahmins in the spice gardens and are bound together for a term of years, for life, or for several generations" (1922, Vol. III, P68).

Even now most of them work as general and field labourers but at present, none of them is engaged in making lime. It is reported that the custom of their

services with Havik Brahmins for a term of years, for life or for generations has disappeared, since about three decades. Most of them now work on daily wages paid in cash. They no doubt often find themselves working under Havik Brahmins even now but this is due to the fact that most of the arecanut gardens in Sirsi, Siddapur and other upghat taluks are owned by Havik Brahmins. Frequently they get loans from them or from other persons for meeting marriage expenses, ordinary wants etc. But these debts are repaid from wages which they are free to earn anywhere. The practice of working off the loans continues only if there is a specific clause for repayment by this mode. However in such cases, the rates of wages do not differ from the rates prevailing elsewhere.

The Mukris are known to be experts at plucking arecanuts from the arecapalms. For this purpose they tie a rope to the top of the arecapalm, hold the loose end at some distance and allow the bunches of arecanuts plucked to slide down the rope with much skill so that the loose nuts do not fall out and also the bunch which moves at great speed does not hit the person holding the rope. It is on account of this skill that the Mukris have no difficulty in finding employment in arecanut gardens. Generally they move out to the taluks of Sirsi, Siddapur and Yellapur, which are prominent arecanut growing areas, in groups headed by a leader of their own caste. This leader is known as *Sherogar* or *Yejamana* or *Gowda*. This kind of collective working is a special feature to be found only among the Mukris in this area. The *Yejamana*, who is selected by the group considering his influence, honesty and financial soundness, first moves out of the village to contact the arecanut growers. They go out between July and September and in December and April soon after the harvesting of paddy is completed in the month of November. The size of a group varies between 20 and 40 members under each leader. They generally move with their families. They live during this period in temporary huts constructed near their place of work. Normally, the leader of the group meets the expenses on food and other wants during this period. Generally they work on a contract basis. The leader of the group does not receive any fixed percentage or share of the wages. The usual practice regarding the share of *Yejamana* is that his share should work out to double the wages earned by each member of the group. The wages are settled after the completion of contracted work. The works generally undertaken are manuring, weeding and intercultural operations in arecanut gardens. Their earnings per day range between Rs. 2-50 and Rs. 3-00 for males and Rs. 2-00 to 2-25 for females.

Normally the hours of work are between 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. with an interval of two hours between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. When they are working in their villages as agricultural labourers the wage rate is Rs. 3 for males and Rs. 1.50 for females. Wages are normally paid at the end of the day. Wages are paid both in cash and in kind. Since about 20 years, wages in cash has come into vogue. The system of '*Jeetha*' (labourer employed on annual basis) has almost disappeared.

Only a few of the Mukris own lands and some are tenant cultivators. In the village Hegde of Kumta taluk out of 25 households of Mukris interviewed only 7 households were tenant cultivators of whom only two were protected tenants. The size of holdings taken on lease ranged between 10 *guntas* to 2 acres. The rent on land on an average worked out to 10 bags (approximately 700 kgs) per acre. In Haldipur village of Honavar taluk out of 200 households of Mukris there were only 35 tenants. The lands held on lease ranged between 10 *guntas* to one acre and a half. In Haldipur village only 3 households owned lands. Almost all their houses are built on the lands held on lease.

The Mukris often hunt wild animals for personal consumption. They have special contrivances for fishing, one of them consists of split bamboo strips, about 5 to 6 feet long tied together with coir strings so as to look like a mat. The place selected for fishing is barricaded by these mats fixed vertically to bamboo poles at intervals. The fish are driven to the spot. Then a trap called '*kudi*' is laid. This appliance is conical in shape measuring about 3 feet to 4 feet long and 12 inches wide and this is also made of split bamboos. The trap is placed horizontally on the bed. The broader end of the trap has an involuted lip with a small aperture through which the fish are forced by the water but they are unable to move back again. The other end is closed. During low tide the trap is taken out and the catch removed. Sometimes 2 to 3

people join in these operations and share the catch equally.

Another contrivance used for trapping fish also consists of split bamboos, tied so as to form a cone with a narrow opening at one end. This is locally called *Erkuli*. They move in water with torches called *panju* (made of wooden sticks) or *Soodi* (of cocopalmlaves). At times they use petromax lights also. In the shallow waters the fish are attracted by the light. When the fish come within reach the *Erkuli* is swiftly lowered into the water so that the fish are trapped. The fish are removed from the top opening. The fish so collected are kept in containers made of wild jungle creepers or cocopalmlaves.

Very often the Mukris go out hunting for hogs, wild boars, stags, rabbits and such other wild animals with the help of big nets called *doddabete bale*. Such nets are about 8 feet in width and about 15 feet to 20 feet in length. They move into the forests with such nets, spears (*Barchi*), sickles etc. At a selected spot, the net is fixed so as to form an acute angle. A group of people spread out with a few hiding close behind the net. Then they slowly converge towards the net making noise. The wild animal is then driven towards the net and entrapped. The persons hiding behind the net attack the entrapped animal with spears, sickles, billhooks and cudgels. Their caste leader distributes the spoil. One portion goes to the owner of the net and the remaining portion is distributed equally among the participants in hunting. Poaching is forbidden under the Forest Laws and therefore this sort of hunt is rarely resorted to nowadays. They also do not engage themselves in gathering forest fruits and roots for food.

Special tables regarding industrial classification of workers and non-workers by sex has been prepared for the scheduled castes in the 1961 Census. The data pertaining to Mukris presents the following picture regarding their occupational pattern.

	RURAL						URBAN					
	PERSONS		MALES		FEMALES		PERSONS		MALES		FEMALES	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Total Population	4959	100.00	2487	100.00	2472	100.00	301	100.00	171	100.00	130	100.00
A. TOTAL WORKERS	2932	59.12	1575	63.33	1357	54.89	172	57.14	116	67.84	56	43.08
Workers												
I As cultivators	854	17.22	430	17.29	424	17.15	19	6.31	7	4.09	12	9.23

The marital status of Mukris according to the 1961 Census is that out of 5260 persons 2579 persons or 49.03% are never married; 2053 or 39.03% married; 590 or 11.22% widowed; 30 or 0.72% divorced or separated. In the 0—14, age-group, 99.22% are not married which is an indication that child marriages or pre-puberty marriages are rare.

Out of 2392 persons in the 15—44, age-group 624 (26.09%) persons which include 500 males (20.91%) and 124 (5.18%) females are never married. Among the total 1596 (66.72%) married, 694 (29.01%) are males and 902 (37.71%) are females. 149 or 6.23% are widowed including 29 males (1.21%) and 120 (5.02%) females. There are 23 persons returned as deserted or separated of whom 12 are males and 11 are females. Cases of divorce or separation are not very significant and this indicates the sanctity attached to marriage by the members of the caste. The number of widows (120) in the age-group 15—44 is rather high, in spite of the permissibility of widow remarriage among them. It might be that many widows having children prefer to continue to stay with their husbands' families to ensure care of their children.

(c) Death

Like other Hindus Mukris believe in the mortality of the physical body and immortality of the soul. They believe that death may be due to evil spirits and diseases.

The Mukris generally bury the dead as, it is said, they cannot afford cremation. Only those who can afford it cremate the dead. When a person is about to die the inmates of the house shift him to the *Jagali* (Verandah in front of the house) and pour a few drops of coconut water into his mouth or place a *tulsi* (sweet basil or *osimum sanctum*) leaf. After life is gone the hands are folded on the chest and tied together with grass or some creeper. This is called *sankole* (hand cuffing). On hearing of the death the castemen of the village and close relations assemble. Then coconut oil and turmeric paste are applied to the dead body and the corpse is washed with warm water. After the bath, *Kavala* (crushed betel leaves and nuts) is put in the mouth. Covered with a shroud, the body is carried to the burial ground on a bier made of bamboo. Before burial all the clothes are removed and the corpse is laid naked in the grave with its head towards the north. Then a potful of water in which holes are made is taken by the chief mourner and he goes round the grave thrice and

breaks the pot near the head of the corpse. Then one *sidde* (about 500 grms) of rice, some coins and a coconut are kept near the grave. If a married woman dies and is survived by her husband the body is decked with flowers, with *kum-kum* on the forehead and a little rice placed in the folds of her saree by *Muththaides* (unwidowed women). A coconut is also broken. If a *Dasa* i.e. a person who has made a pilgrimage dies, the body is anointed and bathed as usual and a *Nama* mark (traditional three lines) put on the forehead with Gopichandan or China clay. Generally a *Dasa* is buried in a sitting posture and some salt is also put into the grave as a preservative. After the disposal of the body they observe a peculiar custom of returning from the burial ground with a piece of cashewnut bark in their hands. It is said that the cashewnut bark purifies them. The bark appears to symbolise the toddy or liquor which was used in the past for purifying their pollution and in the preparation of which cashew fruits were widely used.

On the third day, three balls of cooked rice, three *rottis* (bread prepared of rice flour) and rice gruel (*Conjee*) of the previous day—a little fermented—are carried to the burial ground and kept at the grave or cremation spot. It is reported that fermented *conjee* has replaced the toddy of former days. There is also a custom among some Mukris of taking some betel leaves and nuts in the *Chanchi* (pouch) used by the deceased and leaving it at the grave. If a person is cremated, the ash is collected on the third day after a pot full of water is placed nearby and after planting a sapling of *tulsi* near the place of cremation. The ashes collected are either buried in the ground or consigned to a nearby stream. On returning home they take bath and swallow a little *Kshara* (Fuller's earth) as a purificatory measure. The *Budvant* (headman) officiates at their death ceremonies. The principal person who performs the obsequies is the son and in his absence the nearest agnatic kin. This person has his head shaved completely on the third day.

On the 11th day they seek the assistance of a sooth-sayer (locally called *Gadiga*) after the night fall for locating the spirit of the dead. They believe that the sooth-sayer invokes the dead person to speak through him and he is expected to assist in keeping the spirit of the dead happy and contented so that it would not cause any harm to others. This rite is locally called *daiva Kadisuvudu*. On the 11th day they clean their houses and their clothes. They bring *Pancha-gavya* from the Bhat (priest) which is taken by all the members of the house hold. On this day

the relatives of the dead prepare eatables which were relished most by the deceased and offer them to crows. A living person of the same age and sex as the deceased is chosen to represent the deceased and he is offered a sumptuous meal followed by the presentation of a white cloth and some coins. Some of these ceremonies are observed on twelfth day in some places like Gokarn and Karki. There is also a custom among some of worshipping *Kajjayas* (sweet dish) brought by the agnatic kins placed on a plantain leaf and an unhusked coconut placed on a *Mane* (low stool) on the twelfth day. The spirits of the deceased and other predeceased ancestors are supposed to be contained in this coconut which is worshipped by all the relatives.

They observe pollution for 11 or 12 days depending on the day of performance of death obsequies. In the case of the death of children, pollution is observed by the parents only for three days and other agnatic kin for only one day.

On every Amavayse (New Moon day) they offer some cooked rice with curry and sweet gruel to crows to appease their dead ancestors. Some Mukris also perform annual death ceremony when they arrange a feast in memory of their deceased ancestors.

X. RELIGION

The Mukris are Hindus and are highly conservative in their outlook. In Hegde village their chief deity is Sri Veerabhadra and for those residing in Chandavar *sime* the chief deity is Sri Hanuman whose shrine at Chandavar is famous in this region. The other deities which are worshipped as household deities are Jataka, Masti, Amma etc. They consider Hanumantha deva of Chandavar as their *gurudev*. They also owe allegiance to Venkataramana of Tirupati. They have no spiritual leaders. However, Mukris of Gokarn *sime* recognise the *Aigals* (the priests of Venkataramana-deva temple at Ankola) as their *Guru* (spiritual head). The *Aigals* are also considered as the spiritual leaders of Ager, Namdharis and some other castes of this district.

Every Mukri household worships an unhusked coconut which symbolises their family deity (*mane devu*). They keep a *gindi* (metal container made of copper, bronze or brass) near this coconut. They also keep a *kalasa* (a metal container bigger than *gindi* with a narrow neck) near this. The coconut and the *gindi* are usually kept near the *tulsi* (sweet basil) plant raised on a platform in the front court-yard. In the

absence of such a platform they are kept in a *niche* inside the residence. An elderly male member of the family worships the *tulsi* plant and the coconut every day after his bath. He circumambulates the *tulsi* plant and bows to the sun. He sips a few drops of water from the metal container and eats a *tulsi* leaf before taking his food everyday. In villages coming under the Hegde *sime*, sandalwood images of Veerabhadra are also kept near the *tulsi katte*. Worship of a unhusked coconut is common among many castes like Halvakki Vakkals, Kunbi Marathas, Namdhari, Komarpant etc., of North Kanara district. Occasionally, wooden or stone images of Venkataramana are also kept near the *tulsi* plant. The images are bathed and daubed with *gopichandan* (yellow clay) everyday before meals.

Each family of Mukris contributes every-year 10 to 20 *paise* to Veerabhadra and Hanumanthadeva through their headman. Sometimes these contributions are paid when the respective deities are taken round in a palanquin to the villages. Mukris also take vows to offer fowls in times of difficult child birth, disease hardship etc. On the occasion of *Makara Sankranti* (January) the Mukris worship Jatakadeva by sacrificing a fowl. The goddess Masti is considered as a woman who died by performing *sati*. There are said to be many shrines dedicated to this goddess in North Kanara district. The worship of *Masti* is common among several Hindu castes of the district. They offer fruits, coconuts, sarees, blouse-cloth, *Kum-kum* (vermillion) bangles, turmeric powder, black bead necklaces, nose screws and toe-rings, which are considered as *Mangala dravyas* for Hindu women. During the outbreak of epidemics also they take vows to Masti, Jataka and Amma deities.

The important places of pilgrimage for them are Chandavar, Dharieswar of Kumta taluk for the worship of *pancha* (five) *lingas*, Gunavanti in Honavar taluk for the worship of Sri Gunavatheswara, Gokarn in Kumta taluk for the worship of Mahabaleswara and Idugunji in Honavar taluk for the worship of Ganapathi. They also undertake pilgrimages to Dharmasthala in South Kanara district and Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. Persons who go on pilgrimage to Tirupati are called *dasas* (servants of god). They are highly respected and revered by their castemen. On the occasion of Sankranti the Mukris visit Gokarn and on this day they have free access into the temple. It is true that this temple at Gokarn has been declared open to all castes, but several of the scheduled castes of the district do not enter the temple on other days fearing the wrath of the deity. At Gokarn they take a holy

dip at *Koti thirtha* (sacred tank) and witness the car festival. Pilgrimage to Dharmasthala is undertaken to fulfil vows taken to this deity. It is believed that persons after their pilgrimage to Dharmasthala dare not utter lies or make false promises. Many of the Mukri households regularly keep apart some cash called *kanike* for being taken or sent to Tirupati.

Since Mukris are considered as untouchables, they are not served by Brahmin priests village barbers and washermen. Their caste leaders called *Yejamana* or *Budvant* officiate at all their religious ceremonies. However the *Yejamana* need not be present at the ceremonies performed only within the family. It is stated that in some villages, some Brahmins have attended their marriages and house-warming ceremonies. At Manaki village in Kumta taluk it is reported that Brahmins were invited for cooking food on an occasion when the *dasas* who returned after pilgrimage to Tirupati arranged a feast for their castemen. This indicates trends of change in the rigid attitude towards untouchables. The Mukris consult Brahmins only to determine auspicious times for marriages, construction of houses etc.

Mukris are staunch believers in soothsaying, sorcery and witchcraft. Soothsaying is practised by some Mukris. Soothsayers are generally consulted on the 11th day after death to perform *daivakaadisuvudu* (laying to rest the deadman's spirit). The soothsayer calls upon the spirit of the dead to come back and the spirit is said to talk through a kinsman and say "I have come just now from the cremation ground; I have come to live in the house; do not get frightened." In case the soul of the departed does not respond in this manner they consult a Brahmin regarding other remedies.

The important festivals observed by the Mukris are *Makara Sankranti*, (January), *Holi* (in February) *Ugadi* (in April), *Aliyana Amavasye* (in August) *Vijaya Dashami* (in Sept.-Oct.) and *Deepavali* (in October).

During *Sankranti* the females decorate their houses with various designs and figures on the walls in China clay. *Holi* is a festival of merriment when several Mukris dance (*Kolata*) in groups and move from village to village and collect rice which is used for arranging a community feast on their return to their own village. On *Ugadi* day they offer special worship to the *Tulsi* plant and an unhusked coconut. *Rotti* and *payasa* (sweet gruel) are delicacies for the day. They also offer cooked food to the crows.

On *Aliyana Amavasye* day, the newly married son-in-law has to visit his father-in-law's house with his wife. *Bechina Sankranti* (during August) is a festival associated with agricultural operations. On that day they plant a branch of a wild bush called *Kedige* on the bund of the rice field and arrange a feast in the field. A branch of the plant so fixed is called *Bechchu*. On *Vijayadashami* day, they bring paddy from the fields in small sheaves. These sheaves are then worshipped and the rice gathered from these sheaves is cooked and eaten. On *Deepavali* day they take ceremonial baths. Water is heated in a new earthen pot or an old one which is cleaned on the morning of *Deepavali* for the ceremonial bath. They smear their body with coconut oil, massage their limbs and take a hot water bath. Then they have a sumptuous breakfast. Custom requires their having on that day a mixture of beaten rice, jaggery and coconut. A metal pot symbolising Balindra is worshipped on that day.

The important fairs for them are Bandi-Habbas (cart festivals) and the car-festivals held at Gokarn and other places. These fairs are usually held during the months of April-May every year in many villages of the coastal taluks of Karwar, Ankola, Kumta and Honavar. All Mukris generally attend them. During Bandi-habba a potter (Kumbara or Gungara) carries a *Kalas* (a pitcher of copper) with the deity placed on it, on his head. The person carrying a *kalas* is believed to be endowed with supernatural powers at the time and so Mukris and people from other castes gather on the occasion to consult him regarding their difficulties. If any one is suffering from serious ailment or possessed by evil spirits the potter is consulted for advice. The usual reply to a query of this nature is that the person concerned is possessed of some spirit and that some propitiatory steps are necessary by way of offering money to the deity. Offering of fowls is also suggested. Whenever a sheep or goat is sacrificed, a man of Halavakki vakkal caste performs the slaughter. He is offered the head of the animal for this service. The other leaders of the village (*Goankars*) get one hind leg and the other hind leg is taken by the person who has offered the sacrifice. The rest of the flesh is distributed amongst the musicians, the deity's wand bearers etc. These fairs last over 3 to 5 days. The car festival at Gokarn is held at the time of *Mahashivaratri* in February. It attracts a large number of people and Mukris of the neighbouring villages rarely fail to attend it. Similar fairs are also held at Kumta in February, at Gudeangudi (in Kumta taluk), in May and at Hegde in January. The fair at Hegde is held on *Pushya Bahula dwadasi* and it is particularly important. At this fair, animal sacrifice takes

place on a large scale on the day following the *Jatra*. An attractive feature at this fair is that six *Kalusas* are decorated with flowers so as to resemble pea-cocks with their tail feathers spread out. Three wooden horses representing Saranga Beerappa's horse, Holeyalu Deva's horse and Veerabhadra Deva's horse are brought to the temple. The six *Kalusas* represent Saranga Decradeva, Holeyaladeva, Bhandara Ammanavaru, Sime Bhandadeva, Veerabhadra Deva and Nagadevate.

XI. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Mukris being economically very poor have to work all day to eke out a living. Consequently, they have little leisure. Being socially and educationally very backward they do not have any organised recreational activities. The only recreation they have is the witnessing of *Bandi Habbas* and *Jatras* mentioned earlier. They are fond of witnessing open-air plays known as *Yakshaganas* or *Bailatas* enacted in villages. However none of them actually participates in these performances. At the time of Holi, they organise special dancing groups. This folk dance is called *Suggikunte* (Harvest Dance). This dance synchronises with the festival of *Shimga* which is a very important festival in North Kanara district and takes place during February-March. This is a period of relaxation for the agriculturists, the work in the fields being over. Their barns are full with the harvest just garnered and they are in a happy mood. *Kumta* (dancing) at this period is freely indulged in. The Halavakki Vakkals are the best exponents of this dance and almost all the non-Brahmin communities such as the Komarpants, Gungi or Ghadi, Bandi etc., are quite familiar with it. During these dances they usually wear pith flower strings covering their body up to the waist and a head-gear. They wear *dhoti* in the *Veera Kache* fashion (lower end passing between the legs and tucked behind) a turban and a crest made of pith. They tie a cloth to their waist wear a shirt and a long scarf taken beneath the armpits and tied behind. They hold two sticks one in each hand. They tie bells to their ankles. The accompanying instruments for the dance are the *Gumte* (drum) and *Tasmari* (cymbals). They dance in interlacing circles, one batch moving clockwise and the other anti clockwise. Whenever they take a step forward to the rhythm of the music, they strike each others' sticks. After dancing in this manner for sometime they stand in two rows facing one another and dance again. Many of the dancers also wear masks depicting animals like the lion, bear, monkey, deer etc. Some dancers also hold peacock feathers in their hands in addition to the small sticks. Their first dance is at the temple of their

caste deity and from there they move to the house of the *Budvant*. Thereafter, they move to the houses of their *Vodeyas* (land-lord). At each of these places they are offered a coconut and some cash. After visiting three or four villages they return home on the full moon day of the month. Before returning home they remove their garlands etc., at some deity's shrine. At Gokarn, the shrine where these garlands are removed and deposited is known as Kari Devaru. On return home, a dinner is arranged for their castemen out of the funds collected and the balance, if any, is equally shared by the participants.

Young boys play indigenous games like hide and seek, marbles, etc. They are also very much attracted by the dancing groups and they accompany the dancers as far as they can though they do not participate in these dances.

XII. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The Mukris have a strong and elaborate social organisation to preserve tenets of their caste, purity of morals and strict adherence to their traditional customs. They are a well-organised community under *Budvants* (village heads) and *Barkas* (regional heads). As already mentioned, the villages inhabited by Mukris in North Kanara district are grouped into four regional divisions (*simes*) viz., Chandawar *Sime* consisting of 18 villages, Kumta *sime* consisting of 7 villages, Hegde *sime* of 6 villages and Gokarn *sime* of 8 villages. Each of these regions has a regional head called *Sime Yejamana* or *Baraka*. For each village there is a head called *Budvant* or *Yejamana*. These village and regional leaders have assistants under them called *Kolkar* (a staff bearer). All these offices are hereditary. Whenever the *Budvant* calls for the meeting of the caste council (*Koota*) it is the duty of the *Kolkar* to inform the caste people of the date and place of this meeting. Whenever a casteman attends these meetings he has to say "Nanu Sabhege Barutte" (I have come to the sabha or caste council). The observance of this discipline appears to add to the dignity of the *Sabha*. The deliberations are conducted under the presidentship of the *Budvant*. Petty disputes between the members of the caste are decided at the village level councils and the persons found guilty are usually fined, the fine amount ranging up to Rs. 5. About 50 years ago it is said the offenders committing serious breach of the customs of the caste were excommunicated. But such punishment is not imposed now. If the disputes are not settled by the caste council at the village level, the matter is taken to the coun-

cil at the regional level. The meetings of the regional council are arranged by the *Barkas*. It was reported at Manaki village which comes under *Hegde sime* that there were two regional heads, viz., *Yeradan* *Yejamana* (second head, nominated by the *Barka* to conduct deliberations of the caste council in his absence) and *Modalane Yejamana* (first head).

Cases of shoe beating, adultery, divorce, separation etc., are usually dealt with by the regional councils. Should a widow get pregnant, she is often ex-communicated as also a Mukri woman cohabiting with any person of a lower caste like Holeyas, Haslar and Upparas. If an unmarried Mukri woman is found to have relations with a person of the same caste, the Council usually arranges for marriage between the two. If this is not accepted, they have to pay some fine and undergo some purification ceremonies. The purification ceremony consists of shaving the head and the face of the guilty person, his taking a bath in the sea at Gokarn or in some stream and then accepting some *Thirtha* (holy water) from the temple and paying some fine to the caste council. At Manaki village it is reported that the fines levied by the regional head varied from Rs. 2 to 3, half of which is given to the Regional Head. In cases of widow becoming pregnant the fine is said to be Rs. 16 which is spent on arranging a feast to the castemen.

At Hegde the fine ranges from Rs. 3 to 6 which is spent on tea to the *Koota* after keeping apart Rs. 2.25 in the name of Hanumantha Deva of Chandavar. Formerly the guilty persons in the course of the purification ceremonies had also to pass through seven temporary huts constructed for the purpose which would be burnt soon thereafter. But this practice has almost disappeared. Instead the offender is made to pass over seven fixed pebbles. If a married woman commits adultery, the initial punishment consists of beating by her husband. If she persists, the husband with the approval of the caste council abandons her. Such a woman cannot remarry during her husband's life time. It is said that the *Tolanabali* group consists of such ex-communicated individuals. Beating with shoes and abusing of village or regional caste heads are considered great social offences even now. In case the dispute is not settled at regional level also, the matter is taken before the Supreme Council of the caste. The Supreme Council of the caste is occasionally held near a stone platform called *Hanjikatta* at Chandavar in Honavar taluk. This meeting is attended by all the *Barakas*, *Budvant* and *Kolkars* besides representatives of other castes like Shirogas, Namdhari, Gramvakkals, etc. Years ago the Mukris

attending this Supreme Council used to take with them some rice, coconut and a *chakra* (old 4 annas coin). Now each of the Mukri's house-hold has to contribute 3 *seers* of rice and one rupee to defray the cost of this meeting. The decisions taken at this meeting are final and are universally accepted. The *Hanji Katta* meeting of the caste representatives at Chandavar constitutes the apex of the well developed caste organisation.

XIII. INTER AND INTRA COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

In the hierarchy of castes, the Mukris consider themselves superior to Agers, Uppars and Haslars, and they do not inter-dine with them. The food prepared by Mukris is accepted by the members of the above castes. However, Mukris also accept water from Agers and Halteers but not from Uppars. Haslars and Uppars in turn consider themselves superior to Mukris. Other caste people regard all these castes as of equal social status. One Haslar from Manaki village who happened to be working at Chandavar married a Mukri widow from Chandavar. When he returned to Manaki, his castemen refused to admit him into the caste and when he returned to Chandavar he was not admitted into the Mukris fold also. According to the Mukris, the Haslars are inferior to them as they flay cattle.

Brahmins and several other castes like Shirogars, Namdharis, Gramvakkals, Halavakki Vakkals etc., do not accept food or water touched by the Mukris. The Mukris are considered untouchables and generally have no access to common village wells, temple and other public places like tea shops. They are not served by village barbers and washermen. At many places they have their own wells.

XIV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

Apart from the welfare measures undertaken by the Government through the social Welfare Department there is little initiative on the part of Mukris themselves or any other voluntary organisation for undertaking welfare schemes for the upliftment of Mukris. Though the Mukri live in three contiguous taluks of North Kanara district they have not been able to organise themselves due to lack of leadership. The measures undertaken by the State have only touched the fringe of the problem. For example, in Honavar taluk which has a considerable population of Mukris, from 1957 to 1961 only 10 households of Mukris were granted subsidies amounting in all to Rs. 3,950 for construction of new houses. Only two drinking water wells (one at

Karki and another Mavinkurve) have been dug for them at the cost of Rs. 3,490. Financial grants amounting to Rs. 297 have been extended to Mukri agriculturists. It is reported at Hegde village that 15 of them have become members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Co-operative Housing Society which was started in 1966. Very few of the Mukris are members of the Agricultural Credit Co-operative Societies or Service Co-operative Societies. At Hegde it is reported that 15 of them were given Iron Ploughs through the N.E.S., 5 were given poultry birds and 3 of their girls have undergone training in tailoring. Hostels are being run for the benefit of children belonging to Scheduled Castes in general by the Social Welfare Department in almost all the taluk headquarters. During the course of the field study in 1969, only 8 boarders (5 boys and 3

girls) belonging to Mukri caste were found residing in the hostel meant for students belonging to scheduled castes. At Haldipur village in Honavar taluk a *Balavadi* run by the Social Welfare Department for Scheduled Castes children has been started. The Social Welfare Department also find it very difficult to open community centres for their exclusive use as their houses are scattered in small groups.

XV. CONCLUSION

The Mukris are poor economically and backward educationally and socially. They are mostly agricultural labourers, and have little economic strength to better their lot. Constant and extensive measures of economic help are vital and leadership in them has to be located and revitalised.

12. MUNDALA

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Stuart (1893, XIII P. 250) lists Mundala (numbering 18,023 during the 1891 Census) as a major subdivision of the Holeyas of South Kanara. Later writers such as Francis (1902, XV, I. P. 168) and Thurston (1909, V. 117) have also expressed a similar view. In recognition of their affinity with the other erstwhile untouchables of South Kanara, the Mundalas came to be grouped under the generic name "Holeya" and they seem to have always been an independent endogamous group. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists Modification Order, 1956, they are reckoned as a Scheduled Caste in the districts of South Kanara and Coorg and in Kollegal taluk of Mysore district. Neither the early references nor the Presidents' Order mentions any synonyms for the Mundala.

Field-study in Udipi and Mangalore taluks, during June and October 1968 respectively, revealed that at several places they have adopted the names 'Uppara' and 'Adi-Dravida' as synonymous with but more desirable than, their traditional caste name. It may be noted in passing that Upparas are a widespread community of superior social ranking found in the districts of former Mysore State. The term Adi Dravida came into vogue during the 1920s as a desirable and descriptive term for the then untouchable castes of Madras, and it points out the antiquity of their stock in the region. Of the two, Uppara is generally considered more dignified and hence desirable. However, as it is not a scheduled caste, the preference has shifted to Adi Dravida. Those who prefer the adoption of 'Uppara' put forth a theory of migration of their ancestors from Shimoga district to coastal belts and the subsequent degeneration due to forcible mingling with the aborigines of South Kanara. This perhaps is a mere reflection of their aspirations and suggests their efforts to find their origin in an acceptable milieu, for it is impossible to support this claim with any factual evidence. Their customs of matrilineal residence, matrilineal descent and *Aliya Kattu* indicate that Mundalas are an indigenous group. The less sophisticated and the rustic continue to use the term Mundala only while the urbanites and those with some education prefer either 'Adi Dravida' or 'Uppara'. Members of other local caste groups refer to them as Mundalas but

many are aware of the efforts of the Mundala elite for a change in nomenclature.

Etymological significance of the term 'Mundala' is not known. In recent years their leaders have started to speculate and provide an acceptable explanation. At first, a few educated leaders (for instance Sri Ramachandra, of Udyavara who has prepared a manuscript regarding the history, etc., of Mundalas and hopes to publish it shortly), derived it from the Kannada *Mundina alu* or *munchuniya sainika* i.e. 'Soldiers at the front of the army in the line of battle'. They claim their forbears to have been soldiers during the reign of Jain kings and chieftains, and recount that one of their men, Kolnad Thukra Mukhari, had even risen to the rank of a commander under a Jain king. Kamalaksha (1968) contends that during the days of the feudal order, Mundalas were agrestic serfs who were entrusted with the task of protecting the granaries and also the fields and territories of their masters. He also derives Mundala from *Mundina alu*—alluding to the once prevailing practice of despatching the Mundalas to guard the boundaries in case of disputes. However, of late, this derivation has been abandoned because of its grammatical unsoundness (e.g. Sri Ramachandra of Udyavara). An alternative explanation is that they are so called because of their *monduthana* i.e. obstinacy coupled with ignorance.

Agricultural labour—especially as *moolada alu* or serfs—seems to have been their chief occupation in the former days. In that capacity they were required to render certain essential services to upper caste landlords particularly at the time of disposal of the dead in return for some customary payment. Such services viz., arranging the pyre, turning the first sods for the preparation of the grave, etc., appear to be distinctly associated with serfdom not being characteristic of any particular caste. However, during the past 2 to 3 decades with the well-nigh extinction of *Moolada alu* system, most of the Mundalas have given up rendering services to upper castes for disposal of their dead. Many of them have now taken to quarrying and dressing of laterite stones, while a few are masons. So also they have found employment in Government and other institutions. Despite these changes, agricultural labour continues to be their

MUNDALA

mainstay. They are not identified with any specific occupation except perhaps 'agrestic serfdom.' Their claims to a one-time military life are not widely known either within their own caste or in the neighbourhood.

Little is known about the origin and history of caste. They have no legends in this regard. The leaders aspiring to adopt the name Uppara put forth theories of the migration to the coast of their ancestors from Ikkeri, their homeland in Shimoga district. The exodus was, it is said, caused by persecutions let loose by the Muslim conquerers. In Kanara also they were ill-treated and through a royal decree, forced to mingle with some aborigines, viz., Mundalas. Thus, their contention presupposes the existence of the Mundalas in South Kanara prior to the migration of Upparas but suggests hybridization. Evidently their aim is to regain 'their lost social status' and rise above the line of pollution.

Mundalas venerate Kote Babu (also called Kor-dabbu in its corrupt form)—a legendary hero of their caste—as their tutelary spirit. This Daiva or Spirit has been provided *Sthanas* or places (shrines) at several places all over the district. Sri Ramachandra of Udyavara (unpublished manuscripts) has attempted to provide a historical base by indicating that Babbu was born of Malathi and Bommu (of Mundala caste) at Kachur in 1713 A.D. Babbu, who soon became an orphan, was, it is said, brought up by Gramadhipathi (village chief) Bannayya, a Jain. As a young man, Babbu suffered ill-treatment and then, with great effort realised the Goddess Bhagavati and acquired occult powers. He planned and built the forts at Barkoor and Kodankur and thereby came to be called *Kote* (Fort) *Babbu*. At last he was again persecuted by the Jain Chieftains and was thrown in a deep well which was subsequently covered with stone slabs. At this juncture, Goddess Bhagavathi in the mortal form of Thanimaniga rescued him and both of them vanished at Kodankur near Udipi. However, authentic historical records have nothing to say about either Babbu or the Mundala community.

II. DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TRENDS

Prior to reorganisation of States in 1956, the South Kanara district and Kollegal taluk of Mysore district formed part of Madras State and Coorg enjoyed the status of a 'Part C' State. Likewise till 1953, Bellary district was included in Madras. In this entire tract Mundalas became a scheduled caste by the promulgation of the Government of India (Scheduled Castes)

Order, 1936, and before that during the 1931 Census they were reckoned as "Depressed Class". The 1950 Constitution Order reiterated the same position while the 1956 Modification Order notified them as Scheduled only in the districts of South Kanara, Coorg, and Mysore (only Kollegal taluk), but not in Bellary district.

The 1936 order, and also those of 1950 and 1956 lists Mundalas as scheduled throughout Madras State except Kanyakumari district and Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district. So also, in Malabar district of Kerala they are being reckoned as Scheduled Caste since 1936 [Mitra 1966 (a) I. IVB(i) and (ii)]. The 1961 Census count reveals that 10,669 Mundalas are found in Mysore State while there are only 217 in Malabar district, Kerala State and an insignificant four in Madras State. [Mitra, 1966(b) I. V—A(i)]. Evidently, the Mundalas are heavily concentrated in Mysore.

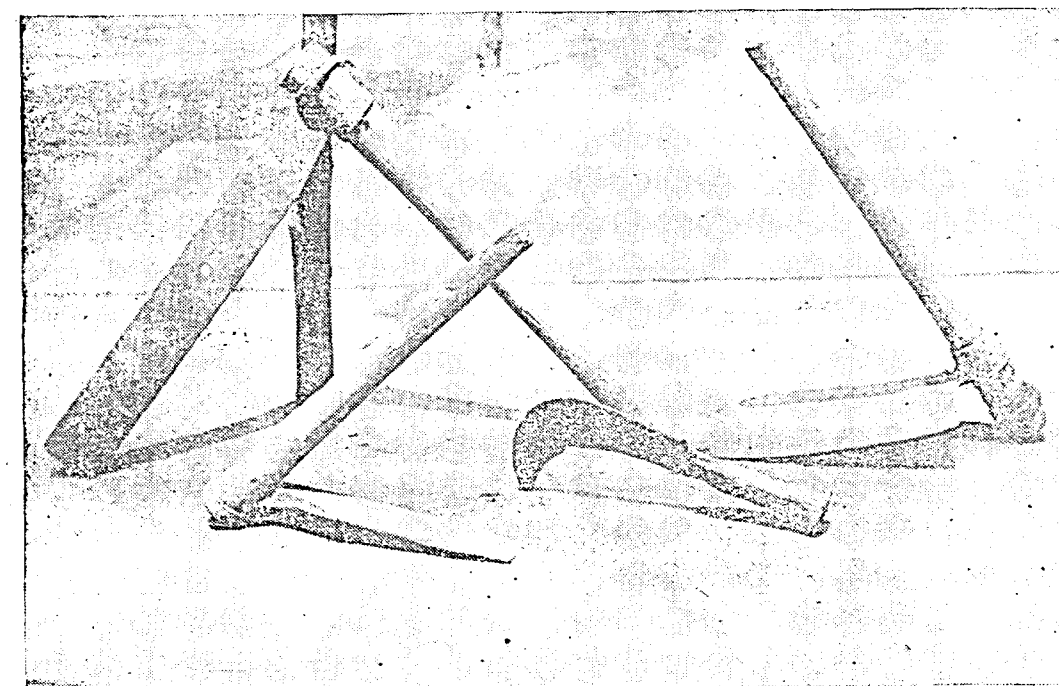
Within Mysore, all the Mundalas have been returned from the districts of South Kanara and Coorg. It is likely that some of them may be encountered in Coffee and Cardamom plantation areas of the adjacent districts of Shimoga and Chikmagalur. But their numerical strength in these tracts is not known. South Kanara which contains 10,420 (or 97.66 per cent) of the total 10,669 Mundalas happens to be their chief centre. Talukwise break-up of their rural population indicates their concentration mainly in the two coastal taluks of Mangalore and Udipi. In Coorg District they are found in the taluks of Virajpet and Somwarpet.

This report is based on data gathered from Mundalas of Udyavara and Puttur of Udipi taluk and Mulky and Adyapady of Mangalore taluk. According to informants, they are concentrated in the coastal strip of Udipi and Mangalore—the two Taluks starting from Barkoor in the North to Mangalore in the South. Those found in Malabar are a spill over from this southern tip. Besides Udipi proper, a few places of their concentration in its vicinity are Kapu, Katapady, Brahmavar, Tonse, Hireadka, Parkala, Uppooru, Kokkarne and Badaga Bettu. At Derebail near Mangalore and also at Mulky and at Adyapady near Bajpe aerodrome, they are found in large numbers and have built houses on lands granted to them as house sites. They are found at Ullala, Surathkal and many other places along the coast. In the inland villages they are found in small numbers. In the northern and eastern sectors of Udipi taluk, Koosas

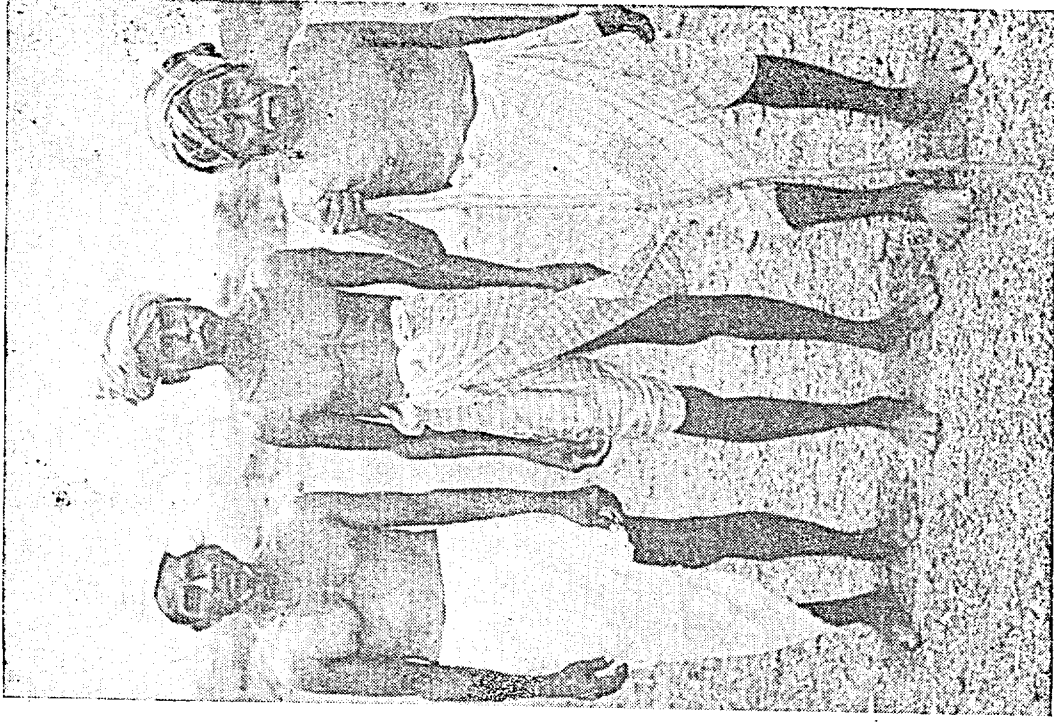
10. MUNDALA



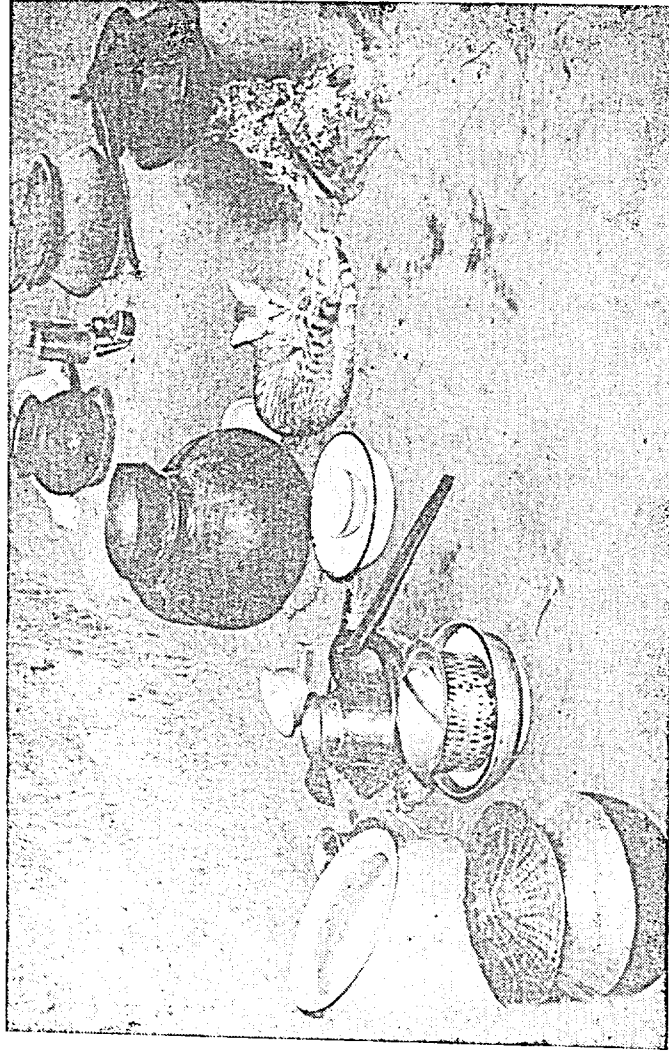
1. The thatched hut of a Mundala and its setting



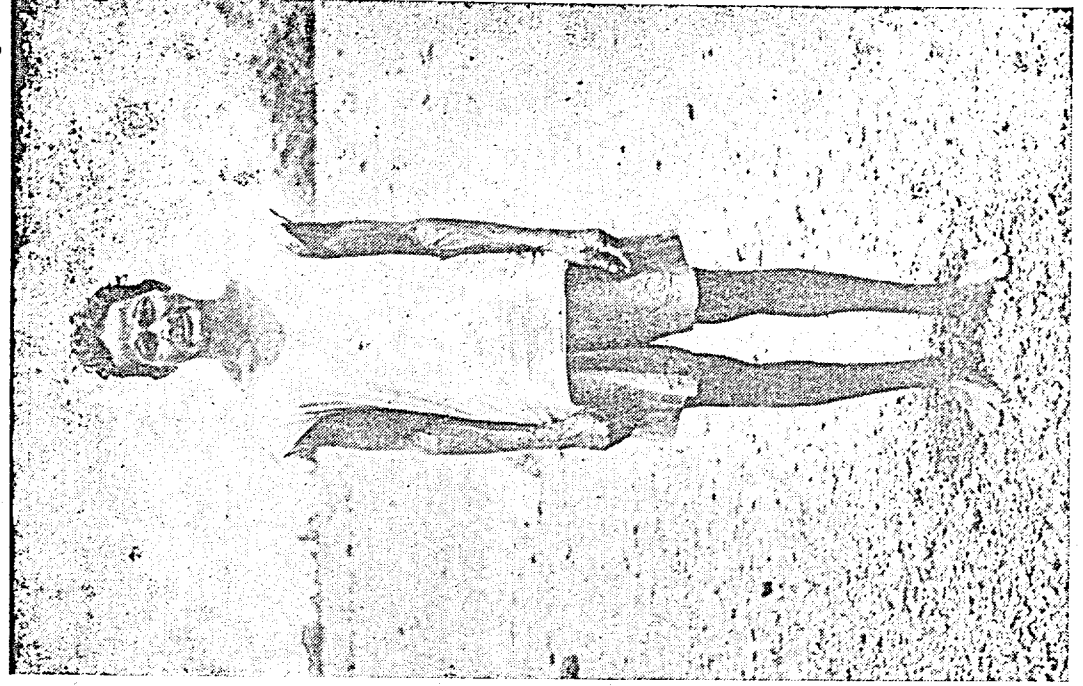
2. Implements for cutting and dressing laterite



4. Elderly men of the community



3. A view of the kitchen

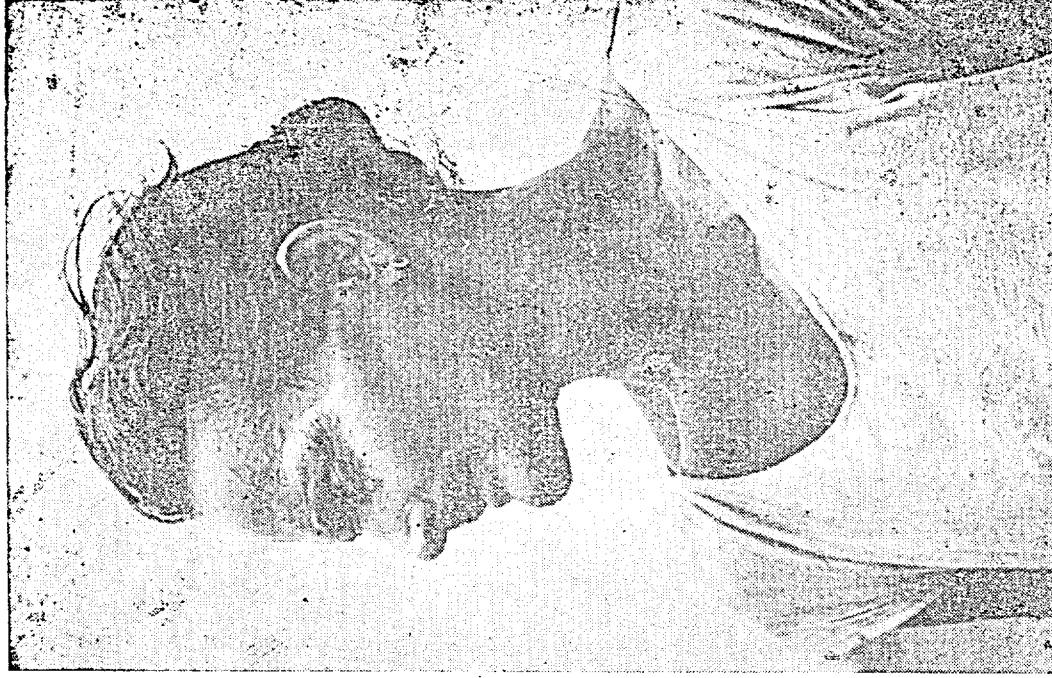


6 (a). Full-length portrait of a Mundala male



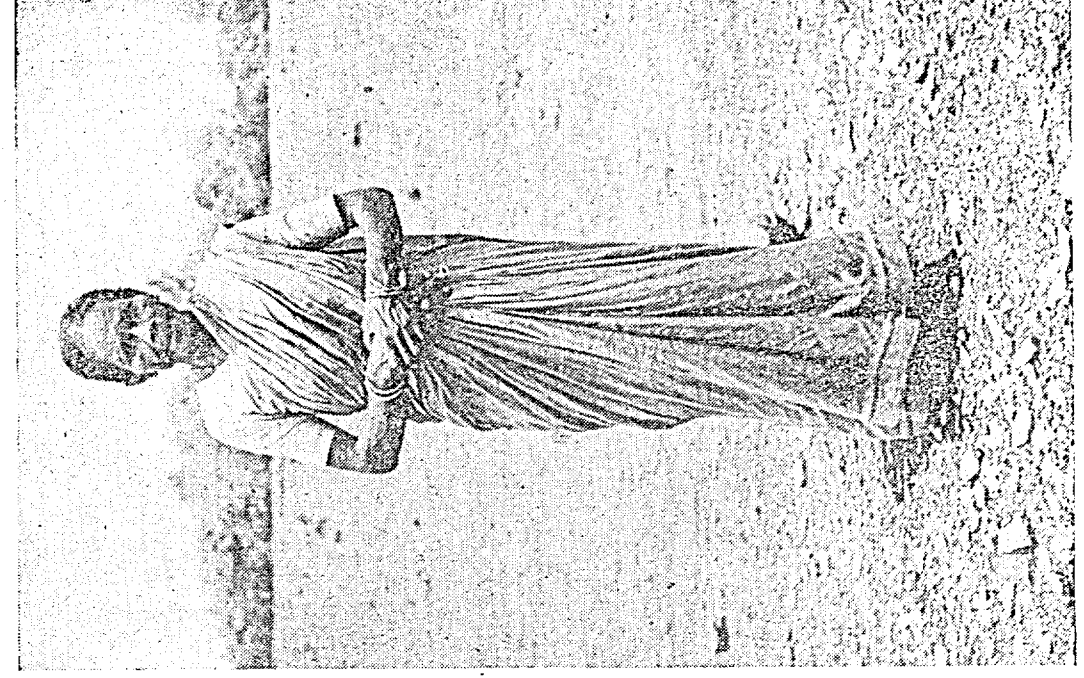
5. Elderly women

256 (d)

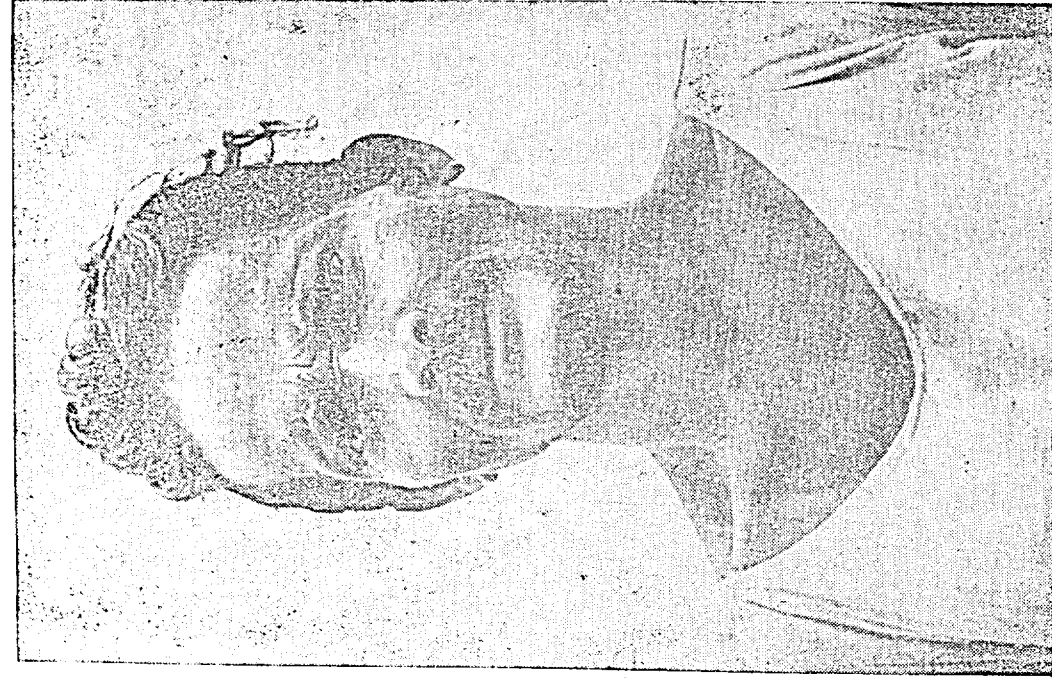


6 (c). Profile

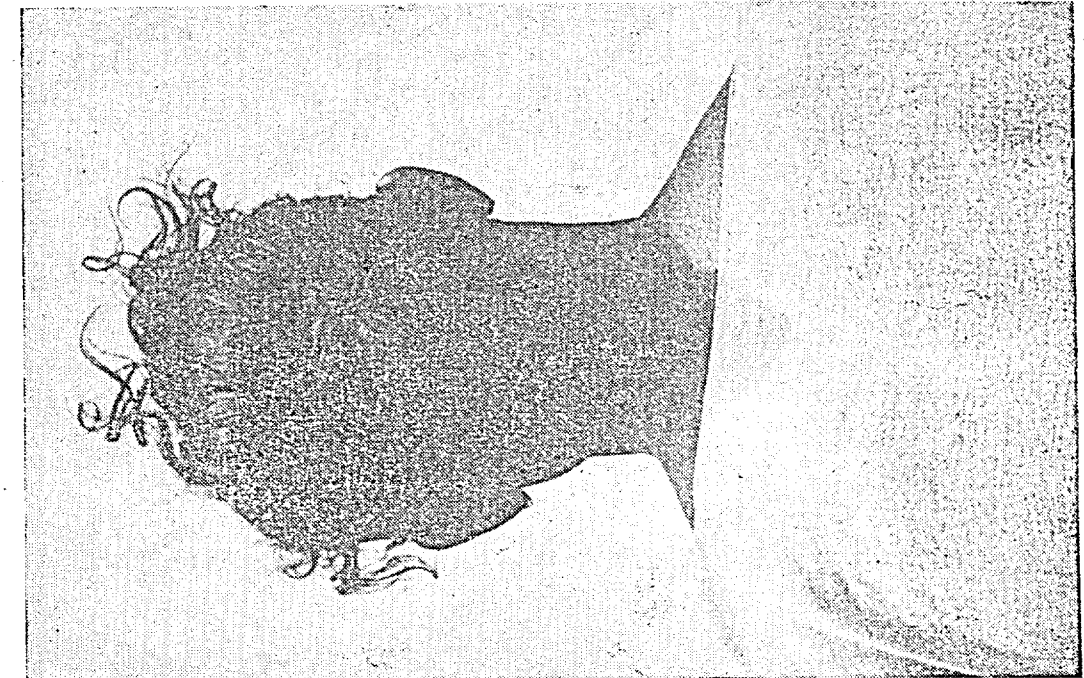
256 (e)



7 (a). Full-length portrait of a Mundala female



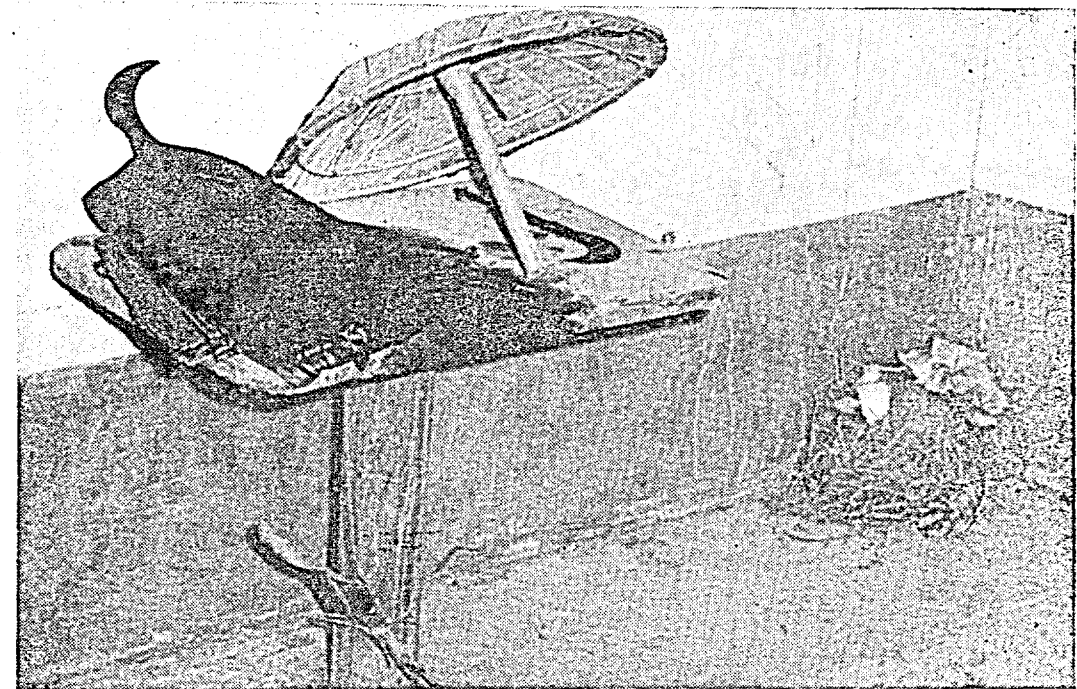
6 (b). Front-view (close up)



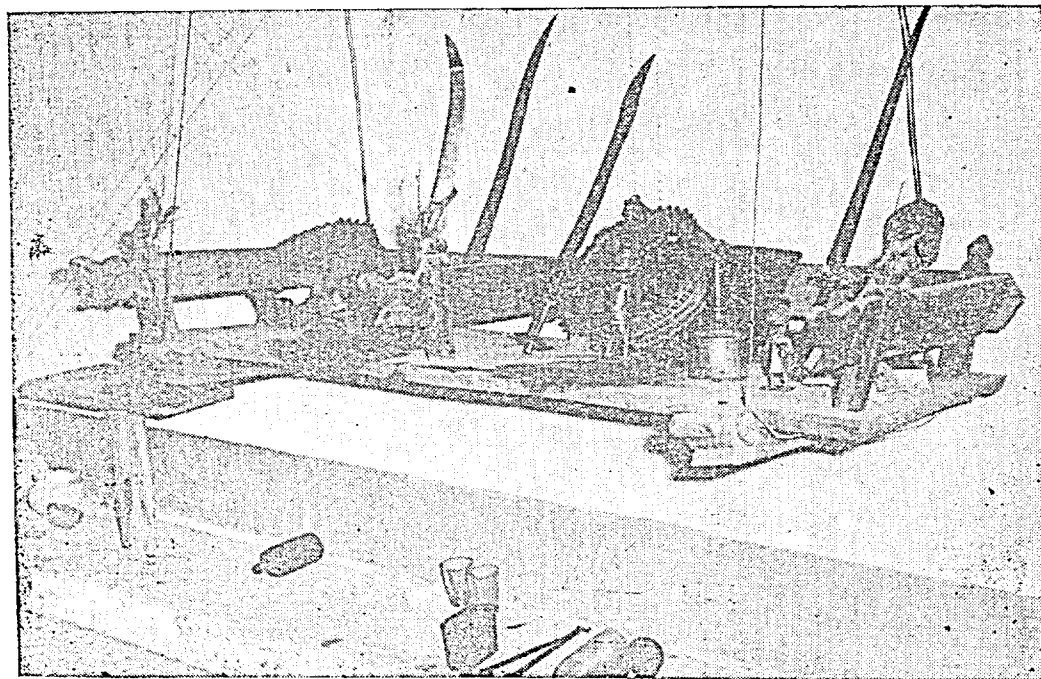
6 (d). As viewed from behind



9. The Sette (Seats) representing *Kambigara*
the tutelary spirit of Mundalas.



10 (b). The objects representing *Thanimaniga* are set by
the side of those representing *Kotebubbu*



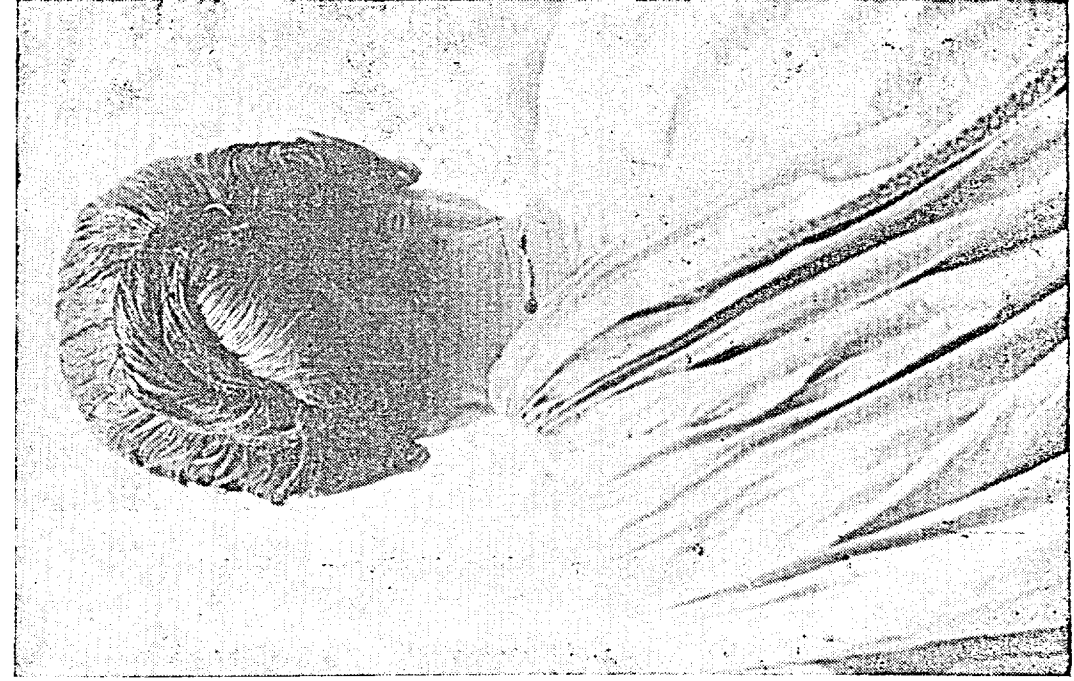
10 (a). The various objects worshipped in a Mundala's Shrine



7 (b). Front view (close-up)



7 (c). Profile



7 (d). As viewed from behind

256 (f)



8. Women weaving mats

256 (g)

(another scheduled caste) are found in considerable numbers and their mother-tongue is Kannada. They also describe themselves as Upparas and there are occupational similarities between them and the Mundalas. As indicated earlier the Mundalas of Udipi and its neighbourhood prefer to be called Upparas and though their mother-tongue is Tulu they have in recent years started to reckon the Kannada speaking Koosas, as of their own stock and there are instances, of late, of interdining and a few intermarriages between the two linguistic groups. With the exception of such fusion in the 'transition zone' the Mundalas and the Koosas form two separate, endogamous groups.

The Mundalas are mainly confined to the southern half of the coastal strip and slightly spread over in the middle-belt of the South Kanara district. This tract is not a plain but a series of estuarine low lands separated by numerous hill ranges. Another peculiar feature of this tract is the basins carved out by the parallel flowing streams which run from east to west. The coastal tract is the most densely populated part of the district because of its fertility as also, trading facilities. The soil is alluvial and yields a rich crop of paddy, cashew and cocoanut. Felspathic clayey rocks, known as laterite, having an appearance of more or less hardened ferruginous red clay with a perforated or cellular structure are found abundantly and these are commonly used as building material. As the quality of clay, climatic conditions and facilities for export are suitable for manufacture of tiles and bricks, a number of tile factories have come up in the coastal strip. Cashew industry is another important feature of the coastal tract. The Mundalas are quite alive to the situation and several of them are engaged in quarrying and dressing of laterite; in construction works and also in factories. The climate of the district is equable. The coastal belt is more sultry than the interior and the rainfall is also slightly lower. The monsoon sets in towards the end of May or early June and torrential rain lashes till the end of September. October and November mark the retreat of the monsoon and this period is warm and damp. December, January and February constitute the winter, while the period, March to May is one of scorching sun and rising temperature. Filaria is an endemic disease associated with this coastal tract and efforts are being made to curb its spread.

Demography

In 1891, the Mundalas in South Kanara numbered 18,023 whereas according to the 1961 census there are

only 10,669 of them spread over in South Kanara and Coorg. Addition of the few, found in Malabar, rises their numbers to only 10,886. Thus, an inference regarding their declining population seems to be inevitable. Statistics for the intervening censuses are not available castewise and during the past seven decades migration to adjacent districts where they are not scheduled might have taken place. So also, during the 1961 count some individuals or families among them might have adopted different caste names such as Uppara, Adidravida, Holeya, etc. Therefore, with so fragile a data no fruitful inference can be drawn.

The 1961 population of the Mundalas consists of 5361 males and 5308 females. The sex ratio works out to 990 which is higher than the State average both for the total population and the Scheduled Caste population. Considering by districts, it is observed that in Coorg there are 135 males and 114 females (sex ratio of 844) while in South Kanara there are 5226 males and 5194 females (sex ratio of 994). The scheduled caste population of Coorg shows a numerical predominance of men and Mundalas seem to reflect the general pattern. But in South Kanara district the sex ratio among the scheduled castes works out to 1015 indicating thereby, a relative shortage of women amongst the Mundalas. The tendency to seasonal migration in search of work, in the plantation areas of outlying districts is said to be less pronounced amongst the Mundalas and this factor perhaps explains the male preponderance. The sectorwise break up also shows that in the urban sector as also the Rural, the males outnumber the females. In urban areas, the sex ratio comes to 983 while in rural areas it is 994.

Considering their population by broad age groups, it is observed that 4150 persons (38.99 per cent) are below 14 years; 4623 persons (43.33 per cent) are in the 15-44 age group while 1896 (17.77 per cent) persons are aged 45 years and upwards. An analysis of the data by districts shows a heavier proportion of the youngsters (44.18 per cent in 0-14 age group) in Coorg district. In South Kanara—their chief centre of concentration—38.77 per cent of them are below 14; 43.41 per cent fall in the 15-44 age group and the rest viz. 17.82 per cent are aged 45 or more. The scheduled caste population of this district, however exhibits a higher percentage of persons below 14 (42.79 per cent) and an almost equal (i.e. 17.83) percentage of those aged 45 and more. The higher proportion of the middle aged amongst them lends support to the view that they have a lesser tendency towards inter-district seasonal migration.

Particulars regarding the age-group distribution of the Mundalas by sex is presented below:—

TABLE 1.—Distribution by Sex and Age-groups

	Males		Females	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
All ages	5361	100.00	5308	100.00
0—14	2121	39.57	2029	38.23
15—44	2210	41.22	2413	45.46
45+	1030	19.21	866	16.31

The sex-wise comparison brings to light the higher proportion of aged men and also the preponderance of females over males in the middle-age group. It is only amongst the aged persons that an acute shortage of females may be noticed.

The rural-urban break-up of their 1961 population reveals a high incidence of urban residence. The 3881 urban inhabitants constitute 36.4 per cent of their total population. In Coorg, all the Mundalas have been returned from rural areas only. As a result, amongst Mundalas of South Kanara 37.2 per cent are urban. Their high concentration in urban areas becomes significant when it is remembered that only 17.7 per cent of the general population and only 11.42 per cent of the scheduled castes' population in South Kanara dwell in urban areas. Their habitation in the coastal belt has been pointed out earlier and it is noteworthy that in this narrow tract, bounded by Udipi in the North and Mangalore in the South, as many as seven places (besides Udipi and Mangalore) were reckoned as urban for the 1961 census. This tract is densely populated and is also fast developing, commanding as it does, good transport and communication facilities and offers adequate job opportunities besides providing several modern amenities and services. Population statistics of Mundalas by towns are not available and even the information regarding their rural-urban distribution for some earlier period is unknown. Hence it is difficult to assess the extent of town-ward migration that might have occurred in recent years amongst them. It is likely that incorporation of rural areas into the urban fold for census purposes has contributed significantly towards inflating their numbers in the urban sector.

III. FAMILY, CLAN, KINSHIP AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

The institution of family among the Mundalas now appears to be in a state of flux. In former days they seem to have strongly favoured a matriarchal form of

social organisation. Property rights, if any, were vested in the hands of the senior woman and it was customary for her mother's brother (brother, son, or daughter's son) to look after the management of the family affairs. Descent was matrilineal and in the matter of inheritance and succession they followed the *Aliya Santhana*. Consanguineous family was, it is said, their accepted norm, even though a few conjugal families could be met with sporadically. Marriage among them did not normally involve change of residence for either spouse. Thus, even after marriage men and women were enabled to live amidst their maternal kin continuously. Husbands were entitled to privileged treatment at the houses of their respective wives. So also, a married woman could spend a few days now and then at her husband's place as a sojourner. In recent years, perhaps as a result of their occupational mobility, education and their eagerness to adopt the norms of the dominant Hindu castes, their traditional pattern of family life seems to have been greatly undermined. It is said that more and more simple conjugal family units of the patrilocal type are rapidly coming up amongst their educated and their urban resident sections. Even, in cases of adherence to matrilineal custom, the preference it is said is to set up a conjugal family whereby a man is enabled to live with his own children as distinct from the previous practice of caring for his sisters and their progeny. In a few places (e.g. Adyapady), patrilineal form of inheritance has already been ushered in. Change of residence after marriage is fast becoming an accepted norm. However, the traditional norms have not been totally abjured nor the new ways taken up uniformly by all. As their exogamous divisions are based on the *bali* system, descent is even now reckoned in the female line only.

Published statistics about the size and types of family among the Mundalas, are not available. Data presently gathered is also inadequate rendering it futile to attempt any generalisation. However, it would serve the purposes of illustration. Seventeen households—6 at Mulky and 11 at Udyavara—comprising 75 members were listed. Accordingly, the average size comes to 4.41, it being 4.67 at Mulky and 4.27 at Udyavara. Household size varied between one (one case) and seven (2 cases). One household had 6 members while another comprised only 2. Of the remaining 12 households, 2 households contained 3 members each while the other 10 were equally divided between those with 4 and 5 members respectively.

An analysis of the households by types of families reveals that 7 are simple consisting of a man, his wife

and unmarried children—while another is unimembered (comprising a never married female). In one household a married man has continued to live with his married sister and her 3 children while his own wife and 4 children—whom he frequently visits—are living in a village 10 miles away. His sister's husband who is residing in a village which is 14 miles away, occasionally spends a few days here as a guest. In another household a married woman has continued to reside with her elder, widowed sister who has two daughters. Her husband who lives in a distant village comes to her and spends a few days now and then. She too occasionally returns such visits by staying amidst her affinal kins. The other types of families noticed consist of either a couple besides such relatives as grand-children, and widowed parents or a widowed parent and unmarried children. The above discussion thus illustrates the tendencies towards formation of conjugal family units and also of smaller households.

The Mundalas are organised into sixteen exogamous units called *Bali* (Kannada) or *Bari* (Tulu). [In some places the belief is that they have 18 *baris* (e.g. Puttur colony—near Udipi).] Affiliation to *bari* is through the female line and its present function is mainly concerned with the regulation of marriages. Neither the origin of these divisions nor etymological significance of the various *bari* names is known to them. Most of the Tulu *bari* names have their corresponding Kannada equivalents which leads to some confusion regarding their total numbers. Sixteen stone slabs—each representing a *bari*—it is believed, have been struck upright at Doddanagudde field (of Shivalli village near Udipi town) which happened to be, in the past, their headquarters. At Udyavara, the following *baris* were returned.

1. Kotiannaya.
2. Chitina.
3. Parakadannaya.
4. Padakannaya (or Siriana).
5. Punichithaya (or Muncheradannaya).
6. Rakkalannaya.
7. Kombadannaya and
8. Neladanda bali.

The informant at Mulky was able to name only nine of the 16 *baris*. These are Kotiannaya (Kottar-

dannaya), Kunjiradannaya, Suggidannayya, Nalmar-dannaya, Parakadannaya, Anedannaya, Saliyannaya, (or Bakurdanaya), Kumeradannaya and Arivedannaya (or Uppennaya). Though the exact placing of each *bari* is not commonly known among them, the *baris* are said to be heirarchical with Kotiannaya at the top and Uppennaya (or Arivedannaya) at the bottom. The reason for ascribing the lowest rank to Uppennaya (Arivedannaya) is that their ancestress was observed fishing, oblivious of her nudity for it is alleged, she had prepared the net with seven pieces of cloth torn off the saree that had till then covered her person. A belief that marital alliance with the Uppennaya culminates in decay—just as *Uppu* (salt) gets dissolved in water due to contact—is current amongst most of the Mundalas of Mulky. The members of Uppennaya *bari* use old earthen pots during their puberty rites unlike the others who use only new pots. Whatever might have been the position in the past, these *bari* memberships at present do not impose any taboo either regarding work or food. However, it may be mentioned that members of Kumeradannaya *bari* do not harm tortoise species while those of Saliyannaya *bari* do not consume snake fish in several areas. Persons belonging to the same *bari* do not intermarry.

Tulu terms of kinship such as *Amme* (father), *Appe* (mother), *Anne* (elder brother), *Akke* (elder sister), *Megge* (younger brother), *Bodedi* (wife), *Gandane* (husband), *Bave* (wife's elder brother and also cross cousin) *Megdi* (wife's brother's wife), *Maramal* (a man's sister's daughter) (or daughter-in-law), *Aruvade* (a man's sister's sons and also son's-in-law), *Nanike* (wife's younger brother or younger cross cousin), *Mythigi* (wife's sister), etc. are in common use among the Mundalas. Most of them are also aware of the Kannada terms for such primary relationships. Parallel cousins are reckoned as classificatory siblings. Among them cross-cousin marriages are allowed and practised. Their custom enjoins their men to avoid any contact—either physical or social—with the wives of their respective younger brothers. The anticipated ill-effects as a result of contacts due to inadvertance are warded off by propitiating family deities through vows and offerings. Both men and women have great respect for their respective mother's brothers called *mame*. The family system, formerly in vogue, imposed on a man the duty of upbringing his sister's children and preparing them for a proper adult life in the community. In recent years, this system is being slowly undermined rendering a man responsible for his own progeny.

both fresh-water and marine fish. They also consume mollusc which are sometimes caught in streams and the sea by their women-folk. These are also available for sale in the local market by volume or numbers. Beef has always been taboo and a few Mundalas, it is said, abstain from pork also. Consumption of fish and molluso is more frequent. Mutton being costly is consumed on rare occasions.

Par-boiled rice is the staple cereal and *ganji* or gruel is the common dish in vogue amongst the Mundalas. In urban areas, use of wheat and jowar flour, soji, etc., are slowly coming into use especially for the preparation of light refreshments. Most of them are accustomed to three meals a day but in some places (Udyavara for example) as men and women go to distant places for work, they are said to consume only two meals. However, such workers too take some tea or other refreshments during the afternoon recess. As they usually take fresh food, women get up early in the morning and cook the gruel besides grinding the *chutney* for the morning breakfast. In the evening, cooking starts after return from the day's work around 7 and food is eaten at about 8-30 p.m. It is a common practice to have some cooked rice and fish curry besides gruel and *chutney* for the night meal. The food consumed in the afternoon is also *ganji* (gruel) and *chutney* only. On ordinary days they do not prepare dishes out of unripe banana, ash gourd and the central core of the stem of banana plant as these are prescribed for the occasion of funerary feast. They prepare and consume *payasa*, *paramanna* (sweet dishes), *iddli*, *kadubu* and *dose* which are common in the region—on their festival or ceremonial days. Jack-fruits are consumed either raw or used as an ingredient for *dose* (pancakes) along with rice flour. Occasionally, a few of them, it is said, gather roots and tubers (such as *Kesuvina gadde*, *Marasanagadde* etc) from jungles. These are washed and when cooked with salt form dainty dishes. Very few, if any, among the Mundalas consume milk and its products.

Drinking toddy liquor was common among the Mundalas of the past. Women and children, it is said were permitted by custom to indulge in drinks. Of late, it is reported that this habit has considerably declined especially amongst the educated and a few urbanised families. Tea is the common beverage but only a few house-holds can afford to prepare it at home every day. Men and some women too, are in the habit of visiting local tea-shops quite frequently. However, it may be observed that tea drinking is not a widespread habit especially in the rural tracts. Smoking beedi is common among men while a handful of their

men are accustomed to snuff. Both men and women—particularly of the older generation—are given to the habit of chewing betel leaves with arecanut.

(d) Household goods

Mundalas cook food in earthen vessels. They also use earthenware for storage of water and other food articles. Most of their households have a few metallic utensils each for daily use. These consist of plates, cups tumblers, pitchers (brass or copper), wide mouthed vessels etc. of either brass or alluminium. In rural areas some among them are accustomed to use earthen plates for dining purposes being too poor to afford metallic ones. The use of stainless steelware is slowly coming into vogue among a few of their urban brethren who are relatively well-to-do. In urban areas many of them are familier with the use of furniture, and other consumer articles such as wrist-watch, time piece, battery torch light, hurricane lantern, bicycle etc. and exhibit an inclination for acquiring such articles. At Mulky it was noticed that 3 out of the 6 households visited, possessed chairs. In rural areas also a few of them possess chairs and benches, besides small planks for use as seats. At Udyavara, for example, 2 out of the 11 household listed, had chairs and one of them had a table and stools. One of these households possessed a time-piece as well. It is, however, said that the majority of their rural-folk are too poor to afford furniture and other costly articles. Their household articles include some-cloth or palmyra (rare) leaf umbrellas, mats, a few wooden planks, wooden or metallic boxes, bedsheets, mattresses and the like. Those having cultivation possess wooden implements such as plough, yoke and harrow while the stone workers have pickaxe, crowbar, adze, axe, etc. Sickles and wicker baskets may be found in almost all the rural and most of the urban households. It may be mentioned that they do not have any household articles that distinguish them from the other caste-groups in the region, of a similar socio-economic status.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION HYGIENIC HABITS DISEASE AND TREATMENT

The settlements and dwellings of Mundalas are generally kept clean. Each house or hut has open space all round, wherein usually some useful plants are raised. The front-court-yard is swept daily and once a week the floorspace is laid with cowdung wash. The inner parts of the dwelling are also swept twice or thrice a day. As their kitchens are not provided with drains, they wash the vessels etc., in the open yard. So also, members usually bathe in the corner of the surrounding space usually under the shade of a

large tree. The sullage water is diverted to feed the plants nearby. Both men and women resort to open places in the neighbourhood for answering the calls of nature. Children sometimes, commit nuisance around the dwellings rendering the atmosphere unhygienic. Those who chew pan spit, indiscriminately in the court-yard and on the outer walls being oblivious to the cleanliness of the place. In urban places, they exert themselves to keep their surroundings clean.

The household utensils are cleaned daily and the dining plates are washed soon after the meals. Most of their men are in the habit of bathing once daily. Women and children bathe on alternate days or sometimes even less frequently. The rural folk use more of soapnut powder while in urban areas soaps are in vogue. The clothes are washed once or twice a week by the female members of the house. Men, while bathing at streams or wells, generally wash their own clothes. As soaps are sparingly used, their clothes continue to present an unclean appearance even after the wash. Every morning they clean their teeth and wash their limbs before breaking their fast.

The Mundalas like others in the region are susceptible to such common ailments as fevers, cough, diarrhoea, dysentery, indigestion, scabies, etc. Filaria (or Elephantiasis) is rampant in the congested urban centres of this coastal tract. However, the Mundalas claim that, barring solitary exceptions, as a community they are free from this ghastly disease. In urban areas and villages where allopathic hospitals or dispensaries are easy of access, they obtain medicines therefrom for all their ailments. The habit of taking medicines from *pandits* (indigenous medicine men practising herbal medicine based on Ayurveda system) is also in vogue both in the rural and the urban areas. The head one of their households, out of the six visited at Mulky, has been a practitioner of indigenous medicine. His parents from whom he received the training were also well-versed in the profession during their lifetime. Later, during his youth he supplemented and perfected his knowledge under the apprenticeship of a Moplah medicine man. He also claims to know several spells and charms which are said to cure his patients

of their obsessions and fears. The diseases which he usually treats are said to be (1) fevers (2) stomach disorders (3) diarrhoea, (4) dysentery (5) indigestion (6) *pitha* (or acidity) (7) *thuri* (scabies) (8) *Gandamale* (swelling of the thyroid) (9) *Balagraha*. He prescribes herbal drugs for overcoming barrenness but is also capable of causing abortions. He treats his knowledge as a closely guarded secret.

The response to modern medicine among them is quite favourable and the facilities (including the maternity facilities provided are made use of without any inhibitions especially in the urban areas. In cases of chronic illness and such diseases as *bedapu* (swelling of body : dropsy) *raktavanti* (Vomiting of blood), small pox etc., the Mundalas seek the assistance of mediums (*patris*) and offer fowl-sacrifice to propitiate the spirit responsible for such misery. The medium offers lamp-black mixed with coconut oil as *prasada* which is then administered to the patient with a few drops of water and a portion of it is smeared on his forehead also. Faith in such a magico-religious cure is said to diminishing among them in recent years.

VI. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Tulu is the mother-tongue of the Mundalas and it is also the language spoken predominantly in the region. Kannada is also in vogue and is understood by one and all especially in urban areas. It is the medium of education and the educated amongst the Mundalas can speak, read and write Kannada with fluency. Data on mother-tongue and multilingualism collected at 1961 census have not been separately tabulated for the different scheduled castes of the State. In urban areas most of the Mundalas, it is said, are bilingual being conversant with Tulu and Kannada, while a few educated know English and Hindi as well. In rural areas, their womenfolk are less conversant with Kannada. Though many of them are said to be able to understand when spoken to in Kannada, their replies are in Tulu only.

Information on literacy and education among Mundalas, as returned during the 1961 census is indicated in the table below.

TABLE 2—I Education in urban areas only Mundala.

Population			Illiterate		Literate without educational level		Educational level					
							Primary or Junior basic		Matriculation or Higher Secondary		University Degree or post graduate degree (non-tech)	
Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
3881	1957	1924	1096	1491	528	246	265	168	67	19	1	..

IV. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD HABITS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

Dwelling

In conformity with the regional pattern, the houses of Mundalas are also scattered over the towns and villages they inhabit. The dwellings are built to suit one's convenience and as such no specific pattern emerges from their settlement type. In villages they live in huts built in haphazard manner on lands owned by local landlords. Government has granted house-sites to several Mundalas, both in towns and villages, and in all such cases though separated by compound or fence, their houses tend to be closer and linear, rectangular or 'L' shaped alignments may sometimes be discerned in such "colonies" or settlements. Their neighbourhood consists of several Hindu caste groups such as Billava, Bunts, Mogaveeras, Brahmins, Moolyas, Devadigas, etc., besides, Christians, Jains and a few Muslims. Houses occupied by other scheduled castes and tribes such as Muger, Raneyar, Muchi, Samagara, Marathi, Koraga, etc., are sometimes found not far from their settlements. The sense of belonging to one's own caste being strong, social inter-course rarely cuts across caste barriers. At Udyavara houses of six Koraga families are located amidst the settlement occupied by the Mundalas. A number of Christian families are also found closeby. But, social contacts across caste boundaries are said to be infrequent.

The houses of Mundalas in urban areas and large coastal villages, present a much better appearance, when compared to those encountered in the interior tracts. Of these six houses enumerated at Mulky all except one have Mangalore tiled roofing. The walls are of mud strengthened by laterite stone pillars. Each house has enough open space round it wherein small kitchen gardens and useful plants are raised. Open veranda, hall, room and kitchen are the common elements of any dwelling unit and each unit accomodates only one household. Two of the houses were it was observed provided with separate enclosed bath rooms as well. One of the houses has been built in a privately owned plot while the others are located in individual Darkast plots granted some 20 years or so ago. Besides those enumerated, there are said to be another 50 houses that have come up in Darkast grants in this neighbourhood. Public wells form their chief source of drinking water.

All the houses enumerated at Udyavara have been built in house sites obtained as grants. However, as the

plot granted was taken away later for a road, three houses are now situated in Government land and the heads of these households are awaiting fresh grants of house sites. Here their settlement is provided with 4 latrines besides two public wells. These latrines are seldom used, as both men and women prefer to answer the calls of nature in open fields. The eleven houses listed are mud-walled with a rectangular ground plan and all are single storeyed. These are roofed with thatching grass spread on a frame work of bamboo overlaid with plaited cocoanut leaves. Some of these houses have pillars of laterite stones embedded at intervals in the mud walls. Here also, veranda, hall and kitchen are the main elements of a dwelling unit. Enclosed bath rooms are not provided to any of these houses. The 31 households found in Adyapady colony are also recipients of Government grants. It is said that plots ranging from 50 cents to 2 acres were assigned to Mundalas on application some 25 years ago and in recent years 5 of them received financial grants of Rs. 400 each and have built good houses. Here, they have two public (drinking water) wells to serve their needs. Their houses have rectangular ground plans and the roofs, either tiled or thatched are steeply inclined. Generally their houses are single storeyed. These are built on plinths raised some 12 to 24 (or more) inches above ground level and an all round foundation of laterite stones. The walls are usually of mud obtained free of cost and in some cases laterite stones (available locally at Rs. 20 or thereabouts per 100 plus an equal sum for transportation) are used to strengthen the walls. Bamboo, cocoanut palm leaves and *muli* grass are the materials used for thatching while Mangalore tiles and timber are used for a tiled roof. All these materials are locally available but only a few of them in the rural tracts can afford to pay for tiles and timber. The doors are usually of wood though it is not uncommon to find them contrived out of plaited twigs and bamboo reeds. The flooring is usually of mud laid with cowdung wash frequently and in urban areas cement flooring has come into vogue amongst a few well-to-do Mundalas. So also, the tiled houses and a few thatched ones too in urban areas, are provided with wooden windows. The walls are either plastered with a thin layer of fine earth or occasionally white washed. An open veranda, a hall and a kitchen are the essential elements of a house and it is only a few who can afford to have more rooms in addition. They prefer to have their houses face either the North or the East and their hearths, usually situated in *Tenkay moole* (South Eastern corner), face the west. Prior to starting the construction of a house they too consult a Brahmin priest or else seek the help of mediums to locate the

exact site and the plan of the house. When the actual work is about to commence, it is their practice to take vows with a view to propitiate their *Nambida daiva* (patron deities). The members of the household contribute their labour for the construction though masons and carpenters are also engaged when required. Many of the Mundalas are seasoned masons and demand Rs. 6 to 8 for a day's work. At the time of installing the doorframe, the carpenter offers *puja*. The new house is occupied only after performing house-warming ceremony. Puja is offered to the family deity at the nearby shrine and *thirtha* obtained therefrom is sprinkled all over the house as a purificant. Before the other members of the household enter, it is their practice to send a cocoanut rolling into the house followed by a cow and its calf. On the new hearth milk is first boiled and allowed to overflow and a few relatives and neighbours are feted. These are, however, in conformity with the regional practices.

(b) Dress and Ornaments

In the matter of dress, the Mundalas—both men and women—follow the regional ways. Dhoties or lungis are the lower garments for men. Of late, many of their youngmen and adolescents in towns have adopted trousers and pyjamas besides the regular use of underwear. Shirts and bush-shirts are the commonly used upper garments and many are accustomed to use underwear hosiery baniyans too. In rural areas men continue to use dhoties of smaller dimensions termed *mundu* and short sleeved or even sleeveless baniyans made out of rough cloth. The use of headscarf is more frequent among the elderly men, particularly of the rural tracts. Several men—in the employ of Government or other institutions, and some college students among them use shoes while most of the others use chappals (leather soled or rubber soled sandals). On the occasion of his marriage, the bridegroom is dressed in dhoti, shirt (coat is optional) an upper cloth called *shalu* and a turban besides the chappals. On festive occasions they put on clean or new clothes but the type does not change. *Patri* the priest-cum-medium on ceremonial occasions dresses himself in white *mundu* having red borders and a white headscarf or sometimes a red one.

Women's dress comprises of sarees and blouses besides the undergarments such as patticoats and bodices. The mode of their wearing the saree conforms to the pattern common in this region and there is little variation between the urban and the rural tracts except perhaps in the quality of the garments. Use of footwear viz., chappals is not very common particularly

among the rural folk. Their women do not have any headgear. The hair is combed and plaited into a pig-tail or as is common in rural areas and among the older women, it is braided into a knot at the back.

Finger rings of gold or silver, gold necklace (though rarely) and earstuds of gold are the ornaments in use among some of their men. Sometimes, their leaders (Gurikaras) are expected to put on gold bangles which are regarded as symbolic of their office. The priest too on ceremonial occasions wears a silver necklace. Their women as is common in the region put on earstuds of gold, gold or silver necklaces, a necklace of black-beads with a gold pendant called *Tali*, nose-ring, glass bangles and silver or brass toe-rings. With regard to the use of ornaments by widows their restrictions follow the practices found among several other castes of the region. Widows should not put on glass bangles, the *Tali*, the nose-rings and toe-rings besides refraining from adorning their heads with flowers of any kind. Some 40-50 years ago, it is said, Mundalas too were being prevented by the landlords and masters of upper castes from using gold ornaments and as a consequence their women used to satisfy their cravings by tawdry pieces and head necklaces. Both men and women, it is said were required to leave bare the upper parts of their bodies. But now all these restrictions have vanished and Mundalas feel free to imitate the latest of the fashions in the choice of their dress and ornaments.

Tattooing as a form of body decoration is not much in vogue among the Mundalas. Only a few women, who have been frequenting the Malnad regions of the State for work, have got their forearms and such other exposed parts of their bodies tattooed with floral and geometric designs.

With the exception of a few old men and some rural folk, their men have cropped hair. As traditional barbers do not serve them in rural areas, mutual assistance has always been for long an obliging feature of their community life. It is only recently that a few among them have cultivated the habit of taking shaves independently with the safety razor and other equipment. In towns, however, the barbers' services are available to the Mundalas without any discrimination.

(c) Food habits

The Mundalas are non-vegetarians and most of them do not have any qualms regarding the consumption of toddy liquor. They consume the flesh of goats, sheep, fowls, rabbits and a variety of birds besides

TABLE 2—II Education in Rural areas only

	Population			Illiterate		Literate without educational level		Educational level			
	Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Primary or Junior basic		Matriculation or Higher secondary & above	
								Males	Females	Males	Females
Total	6788	3404	3384	2711	3109	554	228	101	40	38	7
Coorg District	249	135	114	114	106	7	8	14	..	..	..
South Kanara Dt.	6539	3269	3270	2597	3003	547	220	87	40	38	7

Their community consists of 2262 (or 21.62 per cent) literate and educated persons. Sexwise, 28.99 per cent of the males and 13.34 percent of the females are literate. Their achievement seems to be impressive when compared with the 9.06 per cent of literacy prevailing among the scheduled castes' population of the State. The percentages of literacy among males and females (of the total scheduled castes' population) works out to only 14.87 and 3.04 respectively. The literacy rates among Mundalas for either sex are considerably high in comparison to the State average.

The percentage of literacy in urban areas comes to 33.34 while it works out to 14.11 in the rural tracts. Sex-wise, 44.00 per cent of the urban males and 22.51 per cent of the urban females are literate. Similarly in rural areas, 20.36 per cent of the males and 8.13 per cent of the females are literate. This rural-urban comparison is illuminating, especially because of the relatively higher concentration of Mundalas in urban areas. The high rate of literacy points to the eagerness with which the urban residents have taken to modern education and also suggests the provision of adequate educational facilities. They are now-a-days well aware of the fact that scholastic education is a means to an end viz., that of securing a salaried job. Such a realisation has come about in rural areas too, but, poverty, inadequate facilities in the immediate neighbourhood and such other factors have been deterring their progress.

The entire urban population of the Mundalas has been returned from South Kanara District which is known for a high rate of literacy. In the general urban population of the district, 49.85 per cent of the males and 44.29 per cent of the females are literate according to 1961 census. When the scheduled castes' population (urban) of the district alone is reckoned it is observed that 37.34 per cent of the males and 16.90 per cent of the females are literate. Thus, the achievement by the Mundalas falls short of the averages for

the general urban population of the District. It, however, appears remarkable when compared to the averages for the 'scheduled castes' population (urban) of the District. The leaders of the caste opine that the foundation for social work laid by late Kudmal Ranga Rao and followers during the early decades of the 1900s and later the work turned out by Depressed Classes Mission in and around Mangalore were mainly responsible for the greater interest evinced by them towards education. During the past two decades, their desire to acquire (and provide) higher education has greatly increased, particularly in the urban areas.

Considering their rural population by districts, it is observed that in Coorg, 15.46 per cent of the males and 7.02 per cent of the females are literate. In South Kanara, the percentage of literacy comes to 14.36, it being 20.56 among males and 8.17 among females. Amongst the scheduled castes' population in rural areas of South Kanara, it is found that only 7.25 are literate the rate of literacy being 10.69 for males and 3.86 for females. Thus in rural areas too, the progress in education achieved by the Mundalas is very much above the average. Their habitation in the coastal belt where communication is easy and their preference to non-agricultural pursuits seem to be major contributive factors for such a result.

Analysing their urban literate population, it becomes clear that one person is a graduate; 86 persons (or 6.64 percent of the literates) are matriculates; 432 persons (33.46 per cent) have completed only the primary standard while the remaining 774 persons (59.81 percent) have not attained any level. It is in this last group that the primary school students are included. In rural areas, 4.65 percent of their literate population are matriculates and above; 14.57 per cent have completed the primary standard while the other 80.78 per cent are mere literates without any educational level.

All the six households visited in Mulky contained students in them. One of the households had in it an arts graduate, an unemployed matriculate while two other households had a matriculate each. At Udyavara, one of their boys (out of the 11 households visited) was studying in P.U.C. while two other girls had discontinued after completing their Higher Secondary Education. Both these girls, it was learnt had received training in the craft of tailoring also.

VII. ECONOMIC LIFE

Traditionally, Mundalas have been agricultural servants of local landlords. Human labour has always been their chief economic resource and it continues to be so even now. In the past too, some of them, it is said, were cultivating paddy fields as share croppers or tenants-at-will. However, they do not seem to have had owned any agricultural lands either individually

or as a community. It is only in recent years that a few of them have acquired lands mostly by way of *darkast* grants—all of which, of course, has not been brought under the plough. Their present distribution points towards a high concentration in the coastal strip which is devoid of dense forests. Moreover, they have no tradition of having ever enjoyed special rights or concessions regarding the exploitation of forest wealth. Stray individuals occasionally indulge in hunting or gathering of wild edible roots and tubers, but only as a useful pastime. So also, fishing either with the rod or with traps prevails among a few, particularly in rural areas and during rainy season. Their interest in animal husbandry is rather superficial for only a few among them possess cows and fewer still own working bullocks or he-buffaloes.

The information, as revealed at the 1961 census, about the workers and also the distribution of workers by the nine industrial categories, is presented below:

TABLE 3—Industrial classification of workers

Category	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
Total population	10669	5361	5308	6788	3404	3384	3881	1957	1924
A. TOTAL WORKERS	5816	3142	2674	4033	2141	1892	1783	1001	782
Workers									
I As cultivators	215	106	109	208	102	106	7	4	3
II As Agricultural labourers	2497	1003	1494	2330	969	1361	167	34	133
III In Mining, quarrying, forestry, fishery, etc.	244	172	72	203	148	55	41	24	17
IV At household industry	72	22	50	46	15	31	26	7	19
V In manufacture other than household industry	689	479	210	413	330	83	276	149	127
VI In construction	599	470	129	259	218	41	340	252	88
VII In trade and commerce	123	17	106	37	11	26	86	6	80
VIII In transport, storage and communications	79	77	2	23	23	..	56	54	2
IX In other services	1298	796	502	514	325	189	784	471	313
B. NON-WORKERS	4853	2219	2634	2755	1263	1492	2098	956	1142

(Source: S.C.T.I. Tables. Census of India 1961. Volume XI-Mysore, Part V-A.)

54.51 per cent of the Mundalas are workers, the sex-wise percentages working out to 58.60 and 50.37 for males and females respectively. The total scheduled castes' population of the State comprises 51.92 per cent workers and 40.08 per cent non-workers. It is also found that amongst the scheduled castes' population of the State, 61.67 per cent of the males and 41.41 per

cent of the females are workers. Thus by comparison it may be inferred that among the Mundalas, female participation in economic activity is significantly high. The female component in their total working force comes to 43.86 per cent, while the working force of the scheduled castes' population in the State contains in it only 39.6 per cent of females.

In urban areas, 45.94 per cent of the Mundalas are economically active. The sex break up shows that 51.15 per cent among their males and 40.64 per cent among their females are workers. The State average (for urban population of scheduled castes) comes to 39.3 per cent, it being 52.78 per cent among males and 25.17 per cent among females. As the entire urban population of the Mundalas is found in South Kanara district, comparison with the District averages for the urban population of the scheduled castes, will be more relevant. It is observed that 45.51 per cent of the total urban population of scheduled castes in the District are workers and further, the sex-wise percentages work out to 49.21 and 41.84 respectively for males and females. Mundalas, evidently, do not show marked variations when viewed in the matrix of the urban population of scheduled castes of South Kanara.

The workers among Mundalas in the rural areas constitute 59.41 per cent. Among males 62.89 per cent are workers while among females, only 55.91 per cent are workers. Both in urban and rural areas, a higher proportion of males than females are economically active. The rural working force consists 53.08 percent of males while its urban counterpart consists of 56.14 per cent. Female participation is more in rural areas. The total rural population of the scheduled castes in the State comprises 54.3 per cent of workers, the percentages of workers among males and females being 63.4 and 45.0 respectively. In the rural sector also, a higher proportion of women, among the Mundalas are workers. However, in South Kanara (the chief centre of Mundalas) 58.04 per cent of the rural scheduled castes' population of females are workers and the conditions prevalent among the Mundalas more or less conforms to this general pattern.

Information about the activities of non-workers has not been tabulated, during the 1961 census, separately for each scheduled caste. This group is composed chiefly of the house-workers, (usually females), the too young and the too old besides students and a few disabled.

Analysis of the data on industrial classification of workers brings out clearly the importance of agricultural labour, which accounts for 42.93 per cent of their total workers, as a major occupation for the Mundalas. The cultivators form a meagre 3.7 per cent of the total working force and it is likely that several of them are meagre tenant-cultivators. Other services (which includes employment in Government offices and other institutions, general labour, etc.) happens to be their second major occupation and 22.32 per cent

of the workers are engaged in it. Manufacture, other than household industry and construction provide work to 11.84 per cent and 10.30 per cent of their workers. These industrial workers are employed in beedi manufactories, tile factories and cashewnut processing centres. As reported earlier, quarrying and dressing laterite stones are pursued by many Mundalas. Those engaged in category III which includes quarrying, account for 4.2 per cent. Contributions from household industries, trade, transport and allied activities do not seem to be very significant for this community. Many of the workers falling in category VIII *viz.*, transport and communication, it is said, are workers in the postal services there being very few in transport and storage sectors.

In the urban sector, agriculture gets relegated to a very minor position, for only 0.39 per cent of their workers are cultivators while another 9.36 per cent are agricultural labourers. It may further be seen that as many as 133, out of the 167 agricultural labourers, are females. Other services, construction and manufacture (other than household industry) which account for 44 per cent, 19 per cent and 15.5 per cent respectively, have assumed greater importance in the urban milieu. This appears to be true of the urban population of the scheduled castes' in South Kanara District also.

The agricultural bias continues to be strong in rural areas as is evidenced by the fact that 57.77 per cent of their workers are agricultural labourers and another 5.16 per cent are cultivators. However, it is significant that agricultural workers are more numerous among their female workers. Roughly, 58 per cent of the agricultural workers are females. For men, manufacture other than household industry, other services and construction are important occupations—all being of course secondary to the agricultural labour which has been their traditional occupation. It may thus be inferred that there is a shift in their occupation from agricultural labour to non-agricultural ones and that such tendencies are more pronounced in towns and larger villages where opportunities for such a choice exist. Those with education (either men or women) prefer salaried jobs, especially in government offices and institutions.

According to the 1961 Census, 12 persons—8 males and 4 females—amongst them are scavengers. It is further seen that 10 of them are from urban areas only 2 being rural. Local people including Mundalas make a distinction between the occupations of scavenging and sweeping and of the two, the former is considered as highly degrading. Thus, the Census returns

showing some scavengers among the Mundalas may really represent those who are employed by Municipalities or Panchayats only as sweepers.

Agricultural serfdom was the main traditional occupation of the Mundalas. However, during the past 3 to 4 decades, they have gradually relinquished it and now they are free in their choice of occupation. They appreciate the value of education as a means of securing salaried jobs. Most of them have secured grants of house-sites and have later moved out of the lands owned by their erstwhile masters or landlords. Their leaders opine that the traditional form of patron-client relationship between landlord and labourer no longer exists among them. With it, the obligatory custom of rendering services to upper castes for disposal of their dead has also been given up.

Ten out of the 28 persons listed at Mulky (6 households) were economically active while two more were actively seeking employment. None owned any agricultural land nor were there any tenants among them. Two households owned a cow each on the date of enquiry. Six of the 10 workers returned general labour (including work as stone-dresser) as their chief occupation. The other workers comprised an auditor (State Accounts Department), a Supervisor (Road Transport Corporation), a conductress (in the Nursery-cum-Women Welfare Centre) and a mason. In one of the households it was reported that one of its earning members was working as a nurse in the hospital at Udipi while in another, an earning member was reported to be working in the Telephone Exchange at Mangalore. Apart from the 10 workers mentioned above, another person, was a practising *pandit* (medicine-man). Of the 47 members contained in the eleven households of Udyavara, 18 were workers. With the exception of primary school teacher, and a cook in the hostel, the remaining workers were mainly general labourers who worked in stone quarries, in stone dressing and in construction depending on the availability of work. Besides, one out of the 47 members who is a retired school master reported himself as a social worker and two educated (S.S.L.C. completed) girls were seeking employment. None of these eleven households either owned or possessed any agricultural lands. In the Adyapady settlement several households, it was reported, were doing petty cultivation. However, general labour, including stone work, formed their mainstay. Three men—one a postman and two others, clerks—were in Government service. It is noteworthy that in none of these places, visited for field-study, permanent agricultural servants of Mundala caste were found.

The wage-rate varies according to local conditions. An agricultural labourer—either male or female—usually gets two kilogrammes of rice besides a meal (and a cup of coffee is also given in some places) for his day's toil. When paid in cash it amounts to Rs. 2 or Rs. 2-50 with meals or Rs. 3-00 without it. The male general labourers as well as the stone-workers usually earn Rs. 4 to 6 a day in urban areas and between Rs. 3 and 5 in rural areas. The female labourers and adolescents earn between Rs. 2-50 and Rs. 3-50. The daily wage of a skilled mason comes to Rs. 6 or Rs. 8 while that of an apprentice would be Rs. 5 or somewhat less. Most of the Mundala men have developed an ability to secure non-agricultural work which fetches better wages. Seasonal emigration to plantation areas of adjoining districts is said to be of minor significance for this community.

The educated young men and women aspire to secure some salaried jobs in Government offices and institutions. They are aware of the constitutional privileges conferred on the scheduled castes and a feeling that the rapid increase of the educated youth amongst the scheduled castes has led to severe internal competition is already manifest among them. Many of them are already facing the problem of unemployment. The general tendency is to discontinue education on completing secondary education and start job-hunting. But the realisation that their immediate absorption is getting increasingly difficult, has been inducing many of them to pursue further studies in colleges and universities.

VIII. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth:

Subsequent to her marriage, the woman usually moves over to her husband's place of residence. However, she is usually invited to her parental home for the first as well as subsequent child-births and confinement. The symptoms of pregnancy are widely known and the first one receives greater recognition. It is marked by holding a feast called *Bayake* on a convenient day either during the fifth or the seventh or sometimes the ninth month of her pregnancy. Her mother takes this opportunity to visit her, in her new abode and brings along dainty dishes and also a live-hen. It is customary for her to present some cloth to her daughter's husband on this occasion. The couple are seated side by side and in accordance with the custom prevalent in certain areas, the husband serves food thrice from out of his dining leaf to his pregnant wife and also offers drinking water to her. The pregnant woman gets a new saree from her in-laws and when well dressed and decorated *arathi* is

waved before her. She also puts a few grains of rice into the mouth of the hen that has been brought by her mother. Later, the pregnant woman moves to her natal home and the hen referred to above, is left behind. Safety of this hen ensures good luck and its' death before delivery forebodes the evil in store. When a man's wife is in the advanced stages of pregnancy, he should refrain from killing any animal, from plucking areca flowers and also from participating in funerals. These restrictions are noticeable among several other castes of this region too. There being no restrictions, even during the later stages of pregnancy, the woman may continue to take her normal food and to work in fields. However, her choice of food and work is guided by her health condition and ability.

Birth occurs in a corner of the usual residence. Sometimes, adjacent cow-sheds may be used as the laying-in room. The parturient woman is assisted by elderly women of the caste and, many a time, by a *dai* (untrained but experienced indigenous midwife). If complications set in, help of midwife or doctor is sought. However, such assistance would be a costly affair and they assert that such cases are rare in the community. They are more inclined to promise their tutelary spirits propitiation by sacrifice of fowls. Soon after birth, the umbilical cord is severed by the *dai* with a small knife. The placenta is gathered in a pot or in a large *adike hale* (sheath that covers the inflorescence of arecanuts) and is later buried close to the dwelling. The spot called *ame guri*, is marked by placing a stone slab and it is here that the woman and the infant are bathed daily on the ensuing 8 or 10 days.

Moorara ame—a simple purificatory rite, is held on the third day by cleaning the premises and household articles including clothes. Holy water got from the local shrines or from a Brahmin serves as the purificant. Breast-feeding starts on this day and the mother too begins to take some solid food. Some among Mundalas are accustomed to give her arrack frequently during post-natal period with a view to keep her system warm. The naming ceremony is performed on the ninth or the twelfth day and it is on this day that the infant is placed in the cradle. At *ame guri*, in the evening, the wife of or some other female relative of their headman lights a wick and after entering the house fastens a waist string to the infant and administers a few drops of *Ganji Thili* (light-gruel) to it. The infant is then cradled by married women and an elderly female relative pronounces loudly the name conferred on the infant. The custom of singing and then feasting prevails among the Mundalas as among others. In the selection of names, they too are changing

with the times, in that they have been, of late, adopting several modern names that are popular in the region.

Following the first delivery, the woman is confined to rest for a period of 45 days. Her ritual impurity formally ceases when on the 28th or on the 42nd day, after the birth, she offers *puja* at a well and makes offering to a cocoanut or arecanut plant and later visits some nearby shrine. Henceforth, she is free to work and to take her normal food. During the subsequent child-births, the period of confinement would be 20 to 30 days only depending upon her family circumstances and her health conditions. The Mundalas do not observe any elaborate ceremonies for boring the earlobes of the child or for its first hair cut. The infant subsists mainly on breast-milk for about a year. Then onwards, gruel and rice will be given to it, though in small quantities.

Barren women in Mundala society receive a contemptuous treatment. Women suffering miscarriages, death of infants successively and still-births are pitied. The known remedies to overcome these are prayers and vows besides drugs catered by some locally reputed medicine-men. As Mundalas mostly dwell in urban centres and large villages many among them are aware of the family planning propaganda. As regards the practice of family planning methods, their response is said to be poor. They too share the general belief that children are 'Gifts of God'.

(b) Puberty rites

The Mundalas do not have any initiation rites for their boys. But when their girls come of age, the event is celebrated by social recognition. The news of a girl's first menstruation brings in, to her home, fellow caste-women of the neighbourhood, who, headed by the wife of their headman give her a ritual bath. Henceforth for 5 or more commonly 9 days the girl is segregated, as any physical contact with her is supposed to be defiling. She lives in the cow-shed or in a corner of the *chavadi* or open veranda. Elderly women keep her company and help her while away the time in listening to folk-songs or their gossip. Their custom enjoins that the girl refrain from work during this period of segregation and that she should be fed on nutritious food. Then, on the fifth, ninth, or sometimes, on the thirteenth day, the final purificatory rite is performed. After a ceremonial bath, the girl sips a few drops of *thirtha* given to her by their headman. She puts on new clothes, presented by her parents (or if married, by her in-laws) and decorates herself with flowers and ornaments. Married women wave *arathi* and bless the girl

by sprinkling grains of coloured rice on her head. In the feast that follows a few close relatives and friends participate. Puberty rite is locally called *Tale neeru maduve*. The expenses are borne by her in-laws if she is already married and on the same day, she proceeds to her husband's home. Pre-marital sexual licence is forbidden among their boys and girls, and the deviants when caught are severely punished.

(c) Marriage

Generally girls are married at the age of 15 and of late, post-puberty marriages are becoming very common. Men get married while they are in the age-group of 24 to 30 and usually the man would be senior to his wife by eight to ten years. Except those who are forced by circumstances to remain celibates for life, all others get married at the proper age. Mundalas favour cross-cousin marriages but disallow the union of parallel-cousins. However, in recent years, it is said that consanguineous marriages are not being favoured. They are strictly endogamous and the region for selection of spouses comprises villages within a radius of 8 to 10 miles only. In the neighbourhood of Udiipi where Koosas—who also call themselves Upparas—are found, some of the Mundalas consider it permissible to intermarry with the Koosas. A few such marriages, it is said, have taken place in recent years. Among Mundalas as also among others, the *baris* (exogamous clans) of the would-be couple and also those of their respective fathers should be different. Remarriage of widows and divorcees is permitted by custom and is practised. Such women, however, incur some loss of face in their society and it is usually the young widows with no grown-up children that prefer remarriage to a life of solitude. According to their custom, she may remarry her deceased husband's younger brother. Though polygyny is allowed, the Mundalas are monogamous barring a few exceptional cases of bigamy. Polyandry is unknown. Several among them are now aware that bigamy is an offence and an instance where redress was sought, by the aggrieved, in a Court of Law was narrated at Udiipi. In another instance, revealed at Mulky, consequent upon her husband's union with another woman, his former wife deserted him and having left her children at her father's home, has secured a job at Udiipi where she lives alone. Both marriages and remarriages are almost always arranged by negotiations and it is the parents and elders of a man that take the initiative in the selection of a bride. The terms of settlement include payment of *Thera* (also called *Lekkachara*) or bride price ranging between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100. Marriage by exchange occurs sometimes but that by service, elopement, intrusion, etc., is not known. Among

a few educated men, there is of late a tendency to expect some dowry from their in-laws instead of they themselves paying a bride-price for procuring a wife.

Preliminary talks initiated by the boy's elders with their headman as the intermediary, culminate in a settlement regarding bride-price, etc., after mutual exchange of visits. Formerly, the would-be-couple, were not provided any opportunity to see each other and voice their consent or otherwise. However, of late, in the urban areas especially among those with some education the opinion of the boys and girls carries due weight in the matter of selection of a partner. Betrothal, locally known as *Nischaya* or *Ungura hakuvudu* (i.e., putting a finger-ring to the bride) is held at the girl's residence and is attended largely by her close kin and fellow castemen of the settlement. It is an occasion for handing over the bride-price and also for choosing the day for the wedding (with prior consultation with local Brahmin priest). In imitation of other advanced castes of the region, some of the Mundalas distribute printed wedding invitations, in addition to their custom of extending invitation by personal visits to their close kith and kin. Generally, the preliminary talks, the betrothal and the wedding take place in a quick sequence, with a gap of 8 to 10 days between each other. The period, March to June happens to be the season for marriages and the marriage is celebrated in the pandal put up in front of the bride's residence. As in the past, the services of the Brahmin priest, the traditional barber, washermen and the musicians (of Devadiga caste) are denied to the Mundalas. Their own headmen or priests called *Mukhari* or *patri* solemnize their marriages and the best man (usually sister's husband) provides barbers' services to the bridegroom. At several places some among them have learnt to manipulate musical instruments and have formed their own troupes to provide music on ceremonial occasions for a fee.

Pandals are put up in front of the houses of the bride and the bridegroom separately on the day previous to the one chosen for celebrating the wedding. Their headmen take a leading role and are assisted by fellow castemen of the settlement all through these marriage deliberations. The headman ceremonially installs large couldrons on new hearths put up for the occasion. The bridegroom will have his face shaved by his sister's husband, either real or classificatory and bathes. Late, in the evening, the bridal couple are anointed with turmeric paste (turmeric powder mixed with cocoanut oil and juice of cocoanut kernel) separately at their residences by their own elder sisters or by some married women. The following morning

bristles with hectic activities at the bridegroom's home. He is given a ceremonial bath by five married women and his sister too bathes similarly. Then, dressed in new clothes, viz., Dhoti, shirt, *shawl* (Upper cloth), turban, etc., and adorned with ornaments such as finger rings, *Bhashinga* (marriage coronet) and necklaces (including the one of black-beads fastened round his neck by the headman) he sits by the side of the new hearth and receives the blessings of his people who shower grains of rice on his head. This is called *muhurtha seshe* and is followed by a feast after which the *dibbana* (journey of the bridegroom and relatives to bride's home) starts. The bridegroom's mother (and also a few other relatives) usually stays back home. *Dibbana*, headed by musicians of their own caste (in interior areas, among the poorer sections, their own women sing folk-songs along the route instead of engaging a paid troupe) which reaches the bride's residence by afternoon (or even earlier) is received with due pomp and ceremony. The bride's younger brother washes the feet of the bridegroom (and he gets a rupee in return) after which all of them enter the marriage pandal. To quench their thirst, water and gur are offered to each one of them and betel leaves and arecanuts are distributed. Meanwhile, the bridegroom's sister, who has been all along holding the dress and ornaments for the bride, hands them over to female relatives of the bride and moments later, the bride, dressed in new garments and adorned with ornaments and flowers is brought into the marriage booth lead by her mother's brother. The bridegroom is lead to the booth by his sister's husband and the bridal couple stand facing each other. Their cupped hands are joined and in it are placed *veelya* (betel leaves and arecanut) and a silver coin. Over this, the priest (*Mukhari*, *Baida* or *patri*), the *Gurikara* (headman) of the bride's settlement and her parents and elder brothers pour little quantities of water taken from a *kalasha* one by one. This water, which drips from the hands of the couple is collected in a vessel and later touched by all and is emptied at a coconut tree or else, applied to the bride's head. This rite is called *Dhare*. Then the couple are seated side by side on a plank, (or on chairs or on a bag of rice) and before them is placed an oil lamp, a cup full of rice grains and an empty vessel. The relatives of the bride and also her neighbours and the *Gurikara* of her settlement approach the couple one by one and bless them by showering grains of rice on them and also give some cash by way of presents. This showering of rice is called *sheshe* or *Deshe* and is followed by a good feast. Shortly afterwards, *maru dibbana*—the homeward journey of the bridegroom and his relatives accompanied by the bride and her aide—starts and soon

reaches the bridegroom's house. Here an *arathi* is waved before the couple as they enter the pandal. Here, again the couple are seated side-by-side and the *gurikara* and other relatives of the bridegroom shower grains of rice one by one on the couple and give some cash by way of presents. This ceremony is called *maru seshe* or *maru deshe*. A feast is held the same night, (if it is not already very late) or on the following day and the relatives of bride also reach well in time, to participate in it. The bride gets back home with her relatives. A few days later both the families treat each other to a fine dinner called *Sammanada oota* which includes non-vegetarian dishes and also liquor.

Generally, the headmen of their settlements preside over the marriage and married men and women—*muthaides*—conduct the various ceremonies. These persons get in return small cash and also a measure or two of rice and some jaggery, copra, betel leaves and arecanut etc. Among Mundalas, there are a few priests (called *Baida*, *Mukhari* or *patri*) who have received some training in priesthood from their priests at Ermal where they have a temple of their own. Such priests get rupees four to five besides some perquisites. Marriage of a boy in the family involves an expenditure of Rs. 600 to Rs. 800 or even more while that of a girl requires Rs. 300 or more in accordance with the economic standards of the families concerned.

Remarriages of widows and divorcees are very simple and involve a get-together of the contracting families at the bride's residence and a feast in which the *gurikaras* (headmen) and a few fellow castemen participate. The *thera* is usually Rs. 20 only and the bridegroom presents a saree and blouse besides some ornaments to the bride. Their *Gurikara* joins their hands before the audience symbolising their union and the two exchange garlands. Then follows the feast. Such women may put on all sorts of ornaments but are barred from participation in auspicious ceremonies such as carrying *kalasa* etc.

Though permitted by custom, divorcees are said to be rare. Desertions are more common and after the lapse of a few years these are reckoned as divorce. It is easy for a man to divorce his wife for he has simply to take her to her parents or brothers and after detailing her faults or shortcomings, leave her there and return home. On the other hand, if a woman seeks divorce, she has to face the caste council of their settlement and then strike thrice with a felling axe at a log of mango wood (or mango tree) stating at each blow that so and so has ceased to be her husband. This latter form of divorce is called *Bara Heli*

Biduvudu. Of late, it is claimed, divorces have become less frequent. Adultery, it is said, used to be the main reason in the past for seeking divorce.

Statistical data, as per the 1961 Census about the marital status among the Mundalas are presented below.

TABLE 4—Marital Status by sex and age groups

Age Groups	Population		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced separated		Not specified	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
All ages	5361	5308	3114	2576	1979	2118	222	558	44	53	2	3
0—14	2121	2029	2121	2020	..	8	..	..	..	..	..	1
15-44	2210	2413	985	553	1147	1719	55	103	22	36	1	2
45 +	1030	866	8	3	832	391	167	455	22	17	1	..
Age not stated	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

It may be inferred from this table that child-marriages are very rare among the Mundalas, for all the boys and 99.59 per cent of the girls below 14, are never married. Among males in the age-group 15 to 44, 50.19 per cent are in de facto married status while 2.49 per cent are widowers and one per cent are divorcees. The never married account for 44.57 per cent. Likewise, among the females in this age-group the never married constitute only 22.92 per cent, those in de facto married status account for as much as 71.24 per cent; the widows form 4.27 per cent and the divorcees, only 1.49 per cent. As has been pointed out earlier, the difference in age between a man and his wife will be about 10 years and whereas girls reach the marriageable age at 15 or 16, the appropriate age for marriage of their boys is about 25. In the age group 45+, it is noticed that 8 males and 3 females are never married. Generally, it is only the few that suffer some bodily deformity, chronic illness or mental derangement that remain never married for life in the Mundala community. In this age-group 52.54 per cent of the females are widowed while another 1.96 per cent are divorcees or separated. Though remarriages are allowed and practised, the chances for such events get reduced in cases of women rendered widows at an advanced age and moreover, they will usually have grown up children with whom they prefer to spend the rest of their life. Among men in this age group viz., 45+, as much as 80.77 per cent are in married status and another 16.2 percent are widowers and 2.1 per cent are divorcees. The tendency to remarry diminishes among men also as they grow old.

(d) Death

When a person is seriously ill, medicines are obtained from locally reputed indigenous medicine men and of late, the Mundalas approach with ease allopathic medical practitioners and also hospitals. Their faith in magico—religious cures such as sacrifices, it is said, has diminished though not totally extinct. The general tendency is to explain away the deaths by rational causes such as disease, old age or accident. However, they have some faith in sorcery and also in malevolent spirits which need occasional propitiation. They perform elaborate rites for their ever-married and elderly dead. The corpses of children and the unmarried young are disposed of without much ado and a simple purificatory rite is gone through subsequently. The dead are buried. Though cremation is not forbidden, it is resorted to by only a few who can afford the requisite expenses.

The person on his death-bed is surrounded by his close relatives and family members, who, during the final moments pour drops of water (in which *Tulsi* (sweet basil) leaves are immersed) one by one into his mouth. The message of death is soon conveyed to their caste-fellows of the settlement and their immediate neighbourhood and men are sent to convey the same to the relatives of the deceased living in distant places. The corpse is retained till the arrival of all the important relatives. The headman of their settlement initiates action for the digging of the grave and also other preparatory processes. As soon as death occurs, a cocoanut is broken and in the two cup-like halves

wick oil lights are lit and the two are placed one at the headside and the other at the feet of the corpse on grains of rice and paddy strewn on the ground. The big toes of the corpse are fastened together with a string of hay, and the corpse is washed in warm water by close relatives such as sons, brothers, sister's sons, etc. (female members attend to corpses of women). The old clothes including the waist-string are removed and the corpse is shrouded in new white clothes. Among Mundalas, it is customary for the families standing in close relation to the deceased to present the corpse a new piece of cloth on this occasion: The corpse is transferred to a bamboo bier and at that moment, the auspicious ornaments worn by the surviving widow of the deceased, are removed by the wife (or any other woman) of their headman. It is carried by four persons—usually close relatives of the deceased such as sons, sister's sons, brothers, etc.—nonstop to the grave and along with it, the packet containing rice and paddy strewn on ground and the cocoanut halves (after extinguishing the lights). On reaching, the corpse is taken round the grave pit thrice and then slowly laid to rest on its back, its head pointing to the South. It is customary at several places, to bury with the corpse, the cloth packet of rice, paddy and the two cocoanut halves besides, each one of the participants in the funeral, dropping in the pit a betel leaf and a small piece of arecanut. The glass bangles, the black-bead necklace and the nose-screw of the widow are also buried with the corpse. The pit is covered with earth and on the grave some thorny bushes are spread over. These are secured by stone boulders placed at the head, the middle and the feet of the grave. Participants bathe at a streamlet, pond or a well and reach the home of the deceased. Meanwhile, all those—women and children—who remained home will have bathed and the spot of death purified by smearing it with cowdung-wash. An informal chit-chat ensues and the participants are served *dukhada ganji*, the 'gruel of sorrow' or some tea. Those engaged for digging the grave are given *guritha panam*—a rupee or two as fees, which they spend on liquor.

The eldest son (or sister's son) of the deceased accompanied by their headman visits the grave on the third day and after moving aside the stone boulders scratches the earth with a sickle and sprinkles *thirtha* (or holy water). The same evening, fish curry served in a leaf-plate is offered to the spirit of the deceased and it is later consumed by family members. The final obsequial rite called *bojja* may be held according to convenience on the 13th, 25th or the 49th day. (One *mandala* or cycle consists of 48 days and if a few

perform *bojja* on completion of one *mandala* many prefer to have it done on completion of either a quarter or a half *mandala*). Till such time, wife and children of the deceased as also his own siblings and parents are ritually impure. On this occasion, male relatives visit the grave and each one of them removes bits of earth from three dents made at the grave on to a piece of cloth. This earth is bundled along with some turmeric dust and cocoanut oil, and carried by the eldest son to a place where three roads meet. Here, it is burnt to ashes using mango wood. (At some places *eg.*, Udyavara of Udipi, a grass manikin is burnt likewise instead of the earth from the grave). The ashes, mixed with water, are formed into an altar and surrounding it, four strips of bamboo are arranged in the shape of a cone called *Dhoope*. The party returns home after bathing at a wayside stream or pond. Meanwhile, rice; curry of banana pith, unripe banana and ash gourd; and *kadubu* will have been prepared for offering. The female kin of the deceased transfer this food to a small pot, (each one serving thrice from a spoon or a ladle) which is then placed on a cocoanut leaf mat at the courtyard. All the relatives circumambulate the pot thrice and offer obeisance. The chief mourner carries this pot to the *Dhoope* accompanied by headman and a few others. Headman breaks a cocoanut and lights two wicks in the two halves. The participants then, one by one serve the food from the pot on three plantain leaves spread in front of the altar. At last, the chief mourner carrying the pot goes round these leaves thrice, and placing it on the ground top-down, he prostrates. They wait a few moments for the arrival of crows and then get back home. Enroute, *Bajelda Mukhari* or priest or an assistant of their headman, purifies them by sprinkling water from mango leaves dipped in water. There upon, the headman distributes ribbons (small bits of cloth) to each one of them and these are later discarded. The relatives and fellow castemen of the settlement are then feted. Later, one or two men visit the place of offering of the food and on dismantling the bamboo cone, burn it to ashes and bring back home the cloth that enclosed it formerly. In the evening, non-vegetarian dishes are prepared afresh and offered at home to the *Kule* or *Taithuna* (spirit) of the deceased. The spirit is implored to desist from harming any members of the family and the settlement and promised offerings of food on all important occasions. The widow of the deceased receives a saree on this occasion from the sister's son of her deceased husband. The expenses for funerals will be about Rs. 75 to Rs. 100 or sometimes more and it is incurred either by the sons or the sister's sons of the deceased depending on their claims to his property.

The Mundalas do not erect tombs or shrines in memory of their dead. Though no death anniversaries are performed, their custom enjoins offering of food to the spirits of the dead on all important occasions and festivals celebrated by the family. During the month of *Paggu* (March-April), a feast is held especially for the propitiation of the spirits of the ancestors, in many families. *Patri* (priest cum medium) is invited to officiate and the belief is that, the priest becomes possessed by the spirits and will be able to answer several queries put to the ancestors about welfare of the family, the diseases and troubles afflicting it, etc.

IX. RELIGION

Mundalas are primarily *bootharadhakas* or demolators. Nevertheless, they come under the purview of Hindu religion and many among them consider Lord Ishwara, of the Hindu Triad, as their Supreme deity. Most of them have been, for generations, accustomed to offer prayers at local shrines for Gods of Hindu Pantheon. Their pilgrim centres are mainly Dharmasthala (Lord Manjunatha), Thirupathi (Lord Venkataramana), Subramanya (Ishwara, Shanmuka and also Serpent God) and Kolluru (Mookambika Goddess). They have great reverence for *Kote Babbu* (also called Koradabbu, Jataraya, etc.)—their tutelary spirit. It is popularly believed that Babbu—an incarnation of the Almighty was born of Mundala parents at Kachur near Barkoor of Udipi Taluk and after accomplishing several miraculous deeds (details not known). Vanished at Kodankur near Udipi. A place called Doddana gudde near Shivalli or Udipi Taluk is also associated with Kote Babbu. This *bhootha* (demon) is propitiated annually during *paggu* (March-April) by holding *Kola* ceremonies (devil dance and offerings). Persons of Nalike caste perform the dances to the accompaniment of music provided by men or women of their own caste and for such services, they receive a fee of Rs. 15 or thereabouts. *Kola* is a community festival and most of the families of the village—Mundalas and also others—contribute to make it a success. Several villages in Udipi and Mangalore Taluks have *Bhoothasthanas* (shrines) for *Babbu* and the demon is represented by a sword and a shield placed on an earthen altar. Mundalas and also agriculturists of other Hindu Caste-groups of the region, revere *Kamberlu*—(Kambigara and *Punya-dika*)—The spirits which preside over cultivation. These are represented in shrines by (*Katte*) two earthen seats with back rests and are propitiated through periodical *Kola* ceremonies. Maniga (also called Thanimaniga, Thannianiga) is a female

spirit reckoned as standing in the relationship of sister to Babbu. She is said to represent an aspect of *Adishakti* and according to popular belief took birth in the Muggera caste. When Babbu was buried by his persecutors in a deep well and covered with stone slabs, Maniga rescued him and both of them on reaching Kodankur, vanished. Neecha (also called *Keelu & Koraga*) is the spirit which torments cattle to extract propitiation by way of sacrificial offer of fowls. Rahu, Guliga, jumadi, Banta, Panjurli, and Varahi are a few other spirits to which the Mundalas (and many other local caste groups in the region) offer worship periodically. They also worship serpent stones at *Nagabanas* and usually every family has its own *Nagabana* (grove where serpent stones have been planted). Of late, many among them have taken to worship of *Tulsi* (sweet basil) plant.

At Udyavara, the Mundalas have a shrine for Babbu and other spirits which they revere. In the shrine—a mud walled structure with Mangalore tiled roofing—are housed the symbols representing *Babbu*, Dhoomavathi (Jumadi), Guliga, Varahi and Maniga. In the open space to the right of the shrine, a raised earthen platform with two seats and back-rest represents the place for Kamberlu and before this seat is a small pillar of stone called *Brahmapita*. On the otherside of the shrine a *Tulsi* (sweet basil) *Katte* (altar) could be noticed. The daily worship consists in lighting an oil lamp at dusk and burning a few joss sticks before the spirits. On every *Sankramana* cocoanuts are offered and a number of men gather together to sing devotional songs. The Mundalas of Mulky have shrines of Babbu at Bappanad and also at Chitrap which are constituent parts of the town area. So also at Adyapady, they have a small altar over which a canopy of leaves and twigs will be put up on occasions. It was reported at Adyapady that their efforts to build a permanent shrine for Babbu has not been successful so far. The most recent *kola* organised here for the propitiation of *Babbu* was during 1966.

The Mundalas follow the Solar year. The important festivals observed by them are the Solar New Year, Krishna Janmastami, Deepavali and Navarathri. These are mainly occasions for feasting only as they do not perform any *pujas* and may be said to have come into vogue among some of them due to imitation of other local caste groups. Offering food to the spirits of their dead, observed in every family during March-April (or July) and worship of serpent stones at their *nagabanas* are their important festivals. During September-October (*Kanya masam*), they also per-

form *Hosathu*—the festival when new rice is cooked for the first time and consumed after dedication to God and spirits.

X. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Mundalas are chiefly manual labourers and usually their womenfolk and children too lend their arms to earn a living. As they do not have any off seasons, their leisure hours are mainly those during which they are not engaged in economic activity. These hours are spent in attending to domestic chores and in chitchatting with neighbours. Some men, occasionally indulge in witnessing (and also betting on) cock fights that are arranged in their neighbourhood. During the months of February and March at several places in this region *Kambalas* (buffalo race in puddle paddy fields), fairs and car festivals are organised by landlords and villagers. Mundalas too enjoy witnessing such events. So also, some among them witness *Yakshagana* (open-air dance-drama) performances. In urban areas where there are cinema theatres, the Mundalas too appear to be fond of cinemas. Young boys and adolescents play indigenous games such as hide and seek, marbles, kites and games with ball. Women learn to sing but these songs are mainly sung on occasions such as marriage, puberty, naming, etc. In many villages, the Mundalas by tradition, are required to participate in folk singing and dancing on the occasion of *Suggi* festival. This dance called *Kangalada kutha* requires 8 men, of whom one, called *Kidiganna*, with a gong in his hand is encircled by the rest. All are dressed in palmyra leaves and they also put on facial masks. Singing in chorus to the beats of *dolu* (or *karanda*) (percussion instrument) and dancing, the group visits every household in the village and receives rice, cocoanuts and some cash. On the following day, the Mundalas revel in drinks and feasting. (Several other castes such as Nalike, Pombada, Kudubi Marathi, etc., of this region also have this tradition of group singing and receiving charity). At present, the attitude of Mundalas to this tradition is ambivalent. The educated and the sophisticated resent this practice of begging while men of older generation in rural areas have no such qualms. It is, however, claimed that it has been given up in several villages during the past decade. In Bailur near Udipi *Kangala* dance which was abandoned in about 1962, it is reported, was again revived because of the pressure exerted on Mundalas by the Landlords. It may be inferred that they have, of late, been seeing in this dance something other than recreation viz., their subjugation—both economic and social—and the progressive among them are anxious of totally abandoning it.

XI. RELATION AMONG DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Mundalas do not have any recognised segments among them. Those in Coorg district are said to be seasonal migrants who form part and parcel of the community found in South Kanara district. They are divided into *baris* or exogamous clans which are for all practical purposes, at present, enjoying equal status. In Udipi Taluk many among them, particularly the urban dwellers and those with some education have a tendency to assume the caste name Uppara for their caste and at the same time, to equate their community with the Kannada speaking Koosas north of Udipi. Inter-dining has become common at several places in the transitional zone and inter-marriages are it is reported, being encouraged.

The educated and the urban dwelling Mundalas, it is reported, entertain a sense of superiority over the illiterate rural masses. Some of their educated young men, it is said, shun their own, but illclad, illiterate and rustic kith and kin in public places such as bazaars etc. In the community the educated urban group constitutes a progressive section willing to give up many of the traditional customs and practices while the others are more conservative and resist such changes. However, there is no open conflict or groupism and an outward unity is maintained in the community. An informant (an educated young man in service) from Bannanje near Udipi recounted how, his desire to give up elaborate ceremonies on the occasion of his own marriage was resisted by fellow castemen of the village by complete social withdrawal (of co-operation). He was, of course, willing to meet his financial obligations in spite of dropping the cumbersome rituals. Under such circumstances with great efforts, he could muster the assistance of a few families, only with the influence of a leader from Udipi and that too when he acceded to face the Caste Council immediately after the marriage was over. However, no such meeting took place and the dispute between him and the fellow-villagers has not been formally settled so far. This event illustrates the urge for change manifest among the educated young men and also the existence of a much more powerful conservative group in the community.

XII. INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Mundalas have been for generations denied the services of Brahmin priests, the traditional village functionaries such as the barbers, the washermen and the musicians. Likewise, they did not have free access

to public places such as tea-shops, temples and village wells. Even in the matter of offering worship to demons (Bhootas), they can have only the services of Nalikes (another scheduled caste) but not of Paravans. These restrictions are persisting in rural areas while in urban areas and large villages things have been changing for better during the past 15-20 years. They avail themselves of the services of barbers and washermen (though not on ceremonial occasions in their families) and also have free access to teashops and hotels. They consult Brahmin priests for finding out auspicious days to hold marriage and such other ceremonies. However, in accordance to their customs, their own headmen or priests continue to officiate during life cycle ceremonies. They have access to public wells but such wells are generally not used by high caste Hindus. In many places, caste Hindus, it is said, do not put up any resistance to the entry of Mundalas to their temples. The Mundalas have shrines for Babbu their tutelary spirit and offer prayers and *pujas* periodically. They were in the past required to render services during disposal of dead among the high-caste-Hindus. This custom has been given up during the past 15-20 years at almost all places. So also, by and large, they have abjured the agrestic serfdom and have become free labourers not having any patron-client relationship with any of the local caste-groups.

As the services of barbers are not easily accessible in rural areas, their men continue to depend on mutual assistance for having haircuts and shaves. A few among them are accustomed to cut their hairs themselves. One such person (the informant from Bannanje near Udipi) incidentally a Central Government employee—related how a few years ago when he was working in a small town, his feelings were wounded by the comments made by his caste-Hindu colleagues regarding his haircut. To please them, he went to Mangalore city on the following day for the only purpose of having a haircut, for the local barbers, who knew about his caste affiliation would not serve him. The Devadiga musicians do not provide music on ceremonial occasions to the Mundalas. In about 1960 the informant referred to above, managed to strike a contract with Devadiga musicians of a particular place to provide services during the marriage of one of his friends. He, however, did not disclose the caste to which he or his friend belonged. On arriving at the place of marriage, the Devadigas found that they were to provide music to Mundalas contrary to their tradition. They claimed to have been willfully deceived and, refusing to provide music demanded that the payment as agreed upon must be

made forthwith. The persuasive efforts of the informant and his supporters were of no avail and a *panchayat* (Council) was held in the village. It was decided that the Devadigas must be paid, at least in instalments, the money as agreed upon earlier, through the informant. This incident aroused a sense of challenge in him and he at once began to organise the youth of his community to have a band set of their own and prove to others that they can also acquire the required skill in handling instruments. Now among Mundalas, there are, it is claimed, several band sets and their services are requisitioned by other castes such as, the Mugeru, Holeya, Koosa, etc.

Amongst the scheduled castes of South Kanara District, the Mundalas are educationally forward and economically too (because of their preference to work as masons and stone-cutters) especially in large villages and twons, their conditions are somewhat better. They may be reckoned as one of the dominant groups amongst the scheduled castes of South Kanara district.

XIII. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

Mundalas are a well-knit community, having a *Gurikara* (Gowda or *Koodige Mukhanda*) in each one of their settlements. His office is hereditary and following their affiliation to matrilineal customs, a man succeeds to the rank of his mother's brother. However, with the growth of patrilocal family units among them and the urban-dwellers in particular, this custom is being undermined in recent years. When a proper heir is not readily available, the heads of all the households of the hamlet or village hold a council and select a man by popular consent to be their headman. When a headman assumes office, it is incumbent on him to propitiate *Babbu* their tutelary spirit and entertain his fellow castemen to a feast or tea party. They have the institution of priesthood as well. Most of their settlements have *patri* (*Mukhari* or *Baida*), the priest-cum-medium. Some of these priests, it is said, have been trained at Eral by the priests of their own caste. The functions of their headman is chiefly to render essential services as a manager during marriage and death ceremonies occurring in his hamlet, collecting contributions when required for community purposes; holding caste councils periodically and to settle disputes arising within his hamlet. The headman in council may impose fines, command the culprits to bear the cost of propitiating their spirits viz., *Babbu*, *Kambigara*, etc; and with draw social support as a last resort to force the deviant to mend his ways. The priest officiates during

marriages and also at the time of holding *Kola* (devil dance) ceremonies besides being a diviner.

Several settlements constitute a *hobli* or *Magane*, having a *Hobli gowda* as its headman and exercising control over the constituent settlements. Inter-*Koodige* disputes used to be brought up before him for adjudication and he was empowered to impose fines. Of late, this pan-village organisation has become ineffective and exists only as a namesake. According to convention the Mundalas of Udipi are distributed in 367 *Koodiges* (settlements) which are organised into five *hoblis* viz., Barkoor, Balisavira, Mudanidambu, Shivalli and Chitpadi. These were political divisions (in former days) each having specific boundaries. Bappanadu a constituent part of Mulky town, was the headquarters of a *Magane* having jurisdiction over their *Koodiges* of panja, Halangadi, Thoku, Bollur, Kuruvel, Koland, Paduthota, Muduthota, Chitrap, Karnad, Santhrot, Churchipete, Koyyar, Kilpady, Kuberu, Manadi, Kakka and Kolakadi. Annual meetings called *koota* were in the past being held on the third day following the fair at Bappanad. At least four men from each of the constituent settlements of their *Maganes* (besides Bappanad there were 8 other *maganas* in this region) would participate in the deliberations. In Udipi Taluk, the venue for such meetings (viz., *Koota*) was Doddanagudde about 3 miles distant from the town. They have here a shrine for Babbu and Kamberlu and in the past (20 years ago) the lands that surrounded it were public property. Though the temple is reportedly intact the lands have been now converted into private property and held by a number of Brahmin families now. The informant, an influential leader of the caste who claims to be their chief (because of his descent in the line of Barkoor Hobli Gowdas) has in recent years been eager to revive the pan-village organisation of the former days, for, it is said that since more than 2 decades meetings of Mundalas at pan-village level have not been held. According to him, in 1968, he organised the meetings of several *Koodige* headmen on five occasions to consider the problems facing their community, to organise their people in a proper manner, to inculcate in them a sense of unity and strength. With a view to construct a community hall, they have sought the assistance of Government requesting for the grant of a suitable site and also financial help.

The leaders of the traditional set-up viz., the *Gurikara*, *Patri Mukhari* etc., are respected and their opinions and advice are rated high. The educated youngmen—especially those in salaried jobs and the

urban residents also carry some prestige in the community. They try to initiate change in the social as well as technological aspects of life of their community and being conscious of this fact, the traditional set of leaders (whose primacy has not been seriously questioned so far) follow the middle path avoiding open conflicts between the conservative old and rustic masses and the emergent educated youth. The headman in council is still the important agent of social control at the village level. It is opined by a few leaders of the community that their people too, now-a-days, are becoming more and more individualistic and that the occasions for caste councils and for common action are fast diminishing.

XIV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

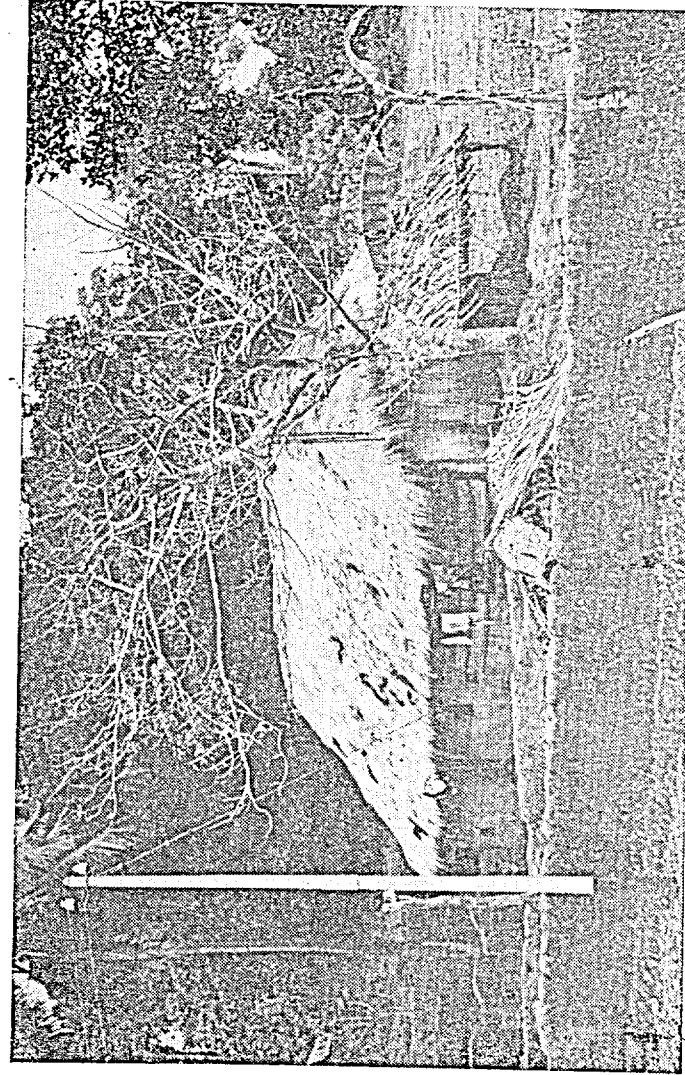
Most of the Mundalas prefer to honour their traditional usages, especially the customs connected with life-cycle-ceremonies and worship, while a small section comprising the educated youth favour abandoning of cumbersome rituals. Organised movements, either for or against radical changes, are however lacking and whenever perchance conflicts flare up, the two sections reach an amicable settlement because of their flexible attitudes. By and large, they have given up their traditional occupation of agricultural serfdom having taken to masonry, stone work and casual miscellaneous labour besides service in institutions. With this, an eagerness to adopt a new name viz., Uppara is also perceptible. Many among them claim to be Shaivites (worshippers of Lord Shiva) and try to explain that Babbu was no other than an incarnation of Virupaksha. So also the tendency to observe, in imitation of caste-Hindus such festivals as *Chowti*, *Krishnashtami*, *Shivarathri*, etc., besides offering worship to *Tulsi* (Sweet basil) is manifest among the urban resident, educated families. They revere Brahmin priests and Hindu Gods and their faith in propitiation of demons through sacrifice of fowls has considerably waned. They are cleaner in their habits and in recent years, many among them, it is claimed, abstain from liquor and also favour vegetarianism. At several places voluntary organisations (for example, Shivasamaja of Udyavara, Guruvaidyanatheswara Bhajan Sangha of Adyapady and Vombathu Maganeya Shivasamaja Sangha of Mulky) have come up among the Mundalas, these however being more or less complimentary to the headman's council. The Shivasamaja of Udipi and also that of Mulky are registered under the Societies Registration Act and the latter has financial transactions also. The aims of the Sangha of Udipi, which was founded in the year 1932, are to put forth efforts for the spread of education by opening hostels and

schools; to revive the traditional form of caste pan-chayat; to reform the customs associated with life-cycle-ceremonies; to preach abstinence to the liquor addicts and to prevent the future generation from the evil of liquor addiction and to assist their men to secure jobs in Government and other institutions. This Sangha has now become defunct. The one at Mulky has been operating mainly as a cooperative society besides rendering some financial assistance to poor and deserving students by way of scholarships. Guru Vaidyanatheswara Bhajana Mandali of Adyapadi is mainly a devotional group. Men of the settlement assemble in the community hall to sing devotional songs on Saturday evenings and once a year they perform *Bhajan* and offer *Pujas* to Lord Vaidyanatheswara all through the night. It is an occasion for Mundalas of the neighbourhood to participate in communal worship. The expenses for daily *pūja* and annual function are met by public contributions. This apart, the *mandali* has no financial transactions.

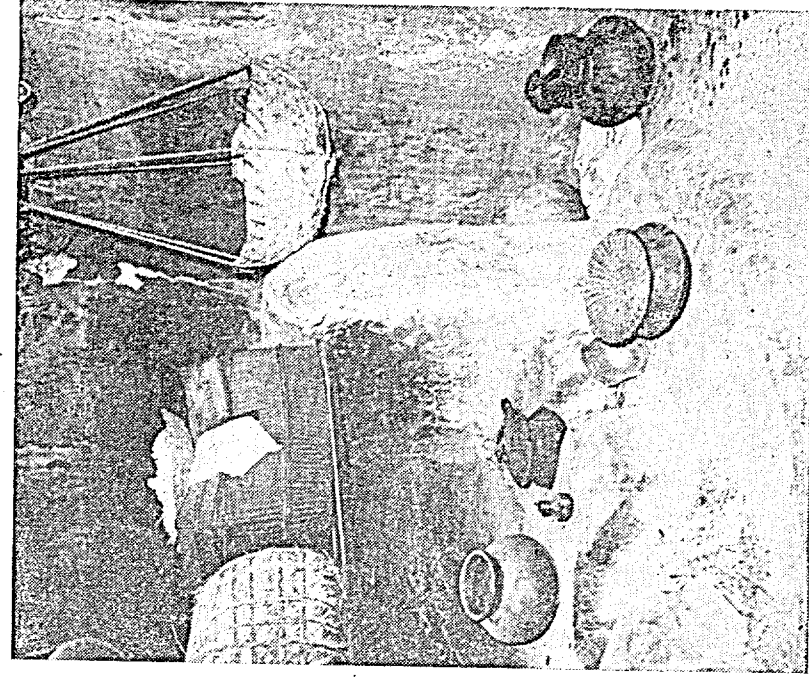
The problems of Mundalas are mainly the preponderance of landless labourers in the community; lack of finance and also opportunities to enter other fields of economic activities such as trade and manufacture;

the financial impediments to acquire higher education; the recently perceived but fast growing problem of unemployment among their educated (Matriculate) youth and the persistence of the painful and discriminating practices of caste Hindus in rural areas. At present, except the Government, no other organisation is functioning for the amelioration of their conditions. During the pre-independence days, the Depressed Class Mission, it is said, was active at Mangalore and a few other places including Udipi. So also Christian Missionaries were working for the uplift of the people through spreading education among the illiterate and rendering medical services besides proselytization. Several Mundalas came under the influence of Depressed Class Mission and utilised the opportunity for getting themselves educated. The few who might have embraced Christianity were cut off from social intercourse with the main community of Mundalas. During the past 2 to 3 decades, several families of Mundalas have acquired house-sites (and a few, agricultural lands) given them by way of grants by the Government and local bodies. So also, many of their presently educated men have received scholarships during their studies and they have been benefitted to some extent by the constitutional provisions regarding reservation of vacancies for scheduled castes.

11. PARAVAN

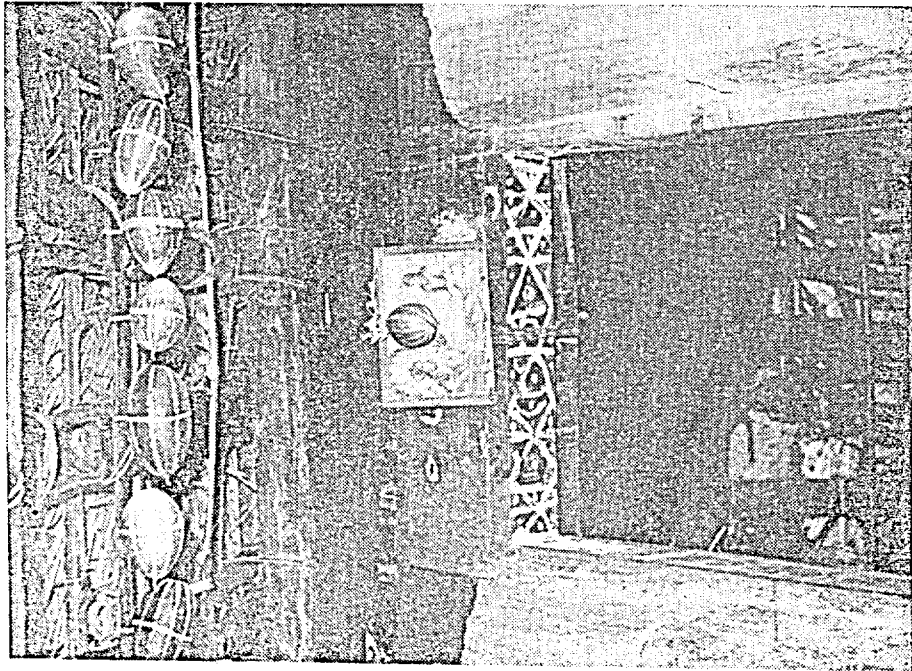


1. The dwelling of a Paravan



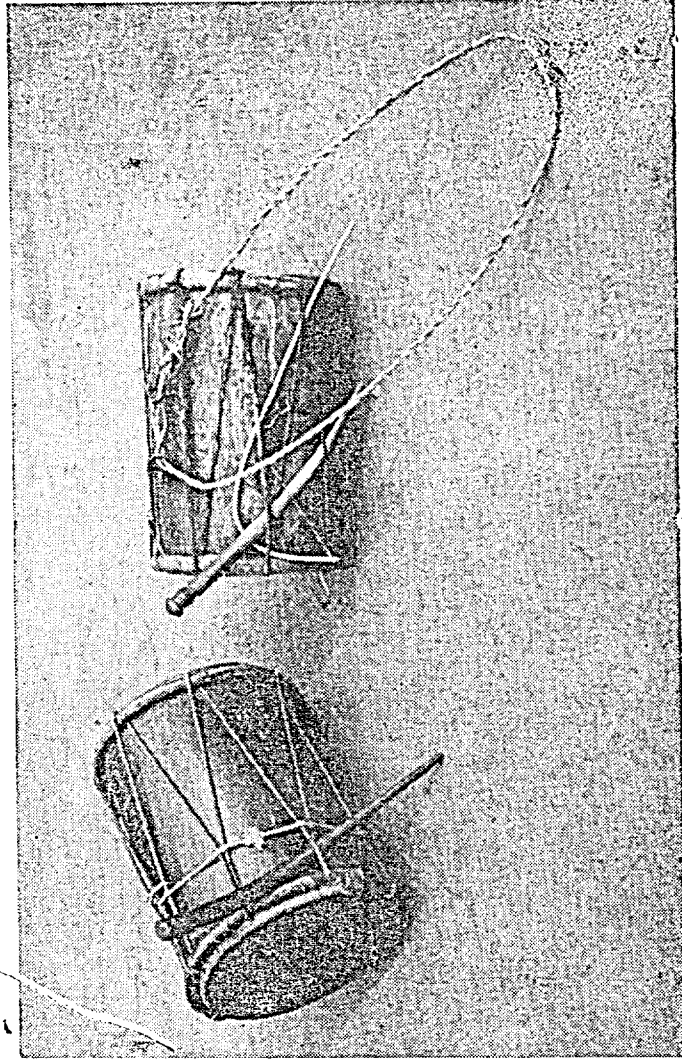
2. Portion of the Kitchen. *Mudi* the bundle of rice and a cane basket are placed on a plank, right above the hearth

PARAVAN



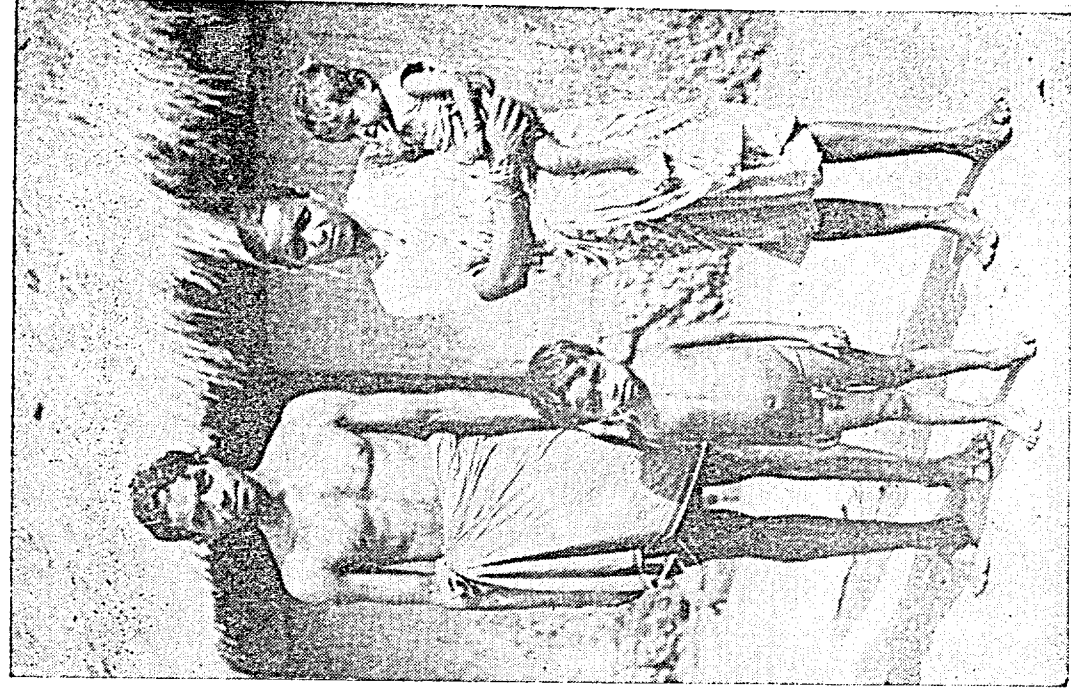
3. Photo depicting the manner in which vegetables are stored. Cucumbers are here seen fastened along a raffier

281 (b)

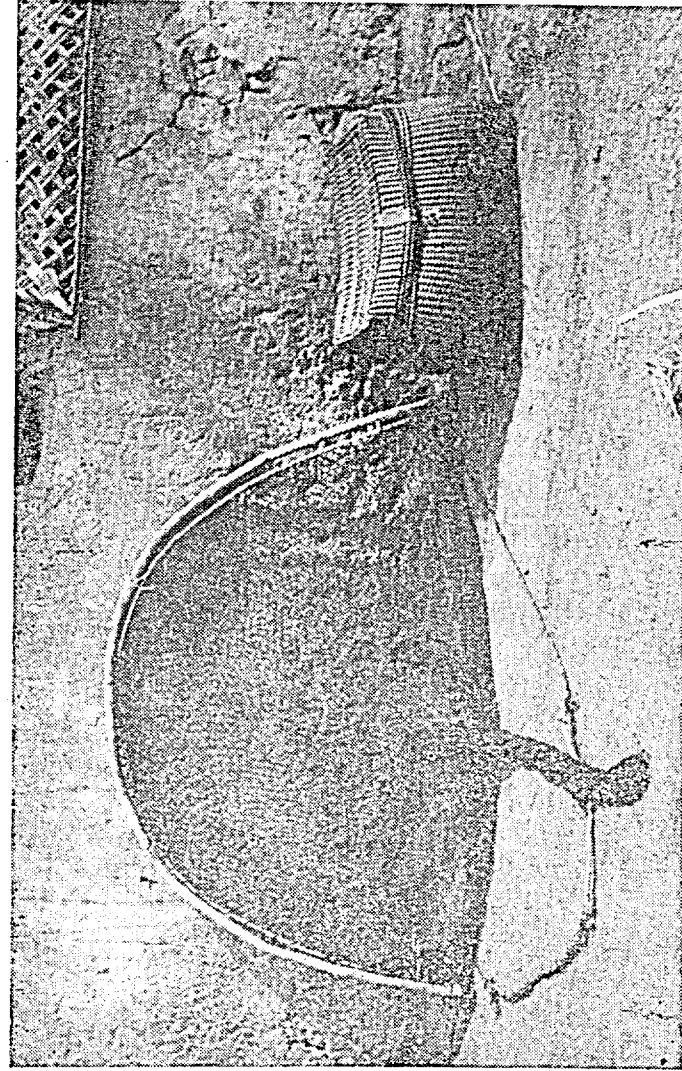


4. *Chande*—the percussion instrument

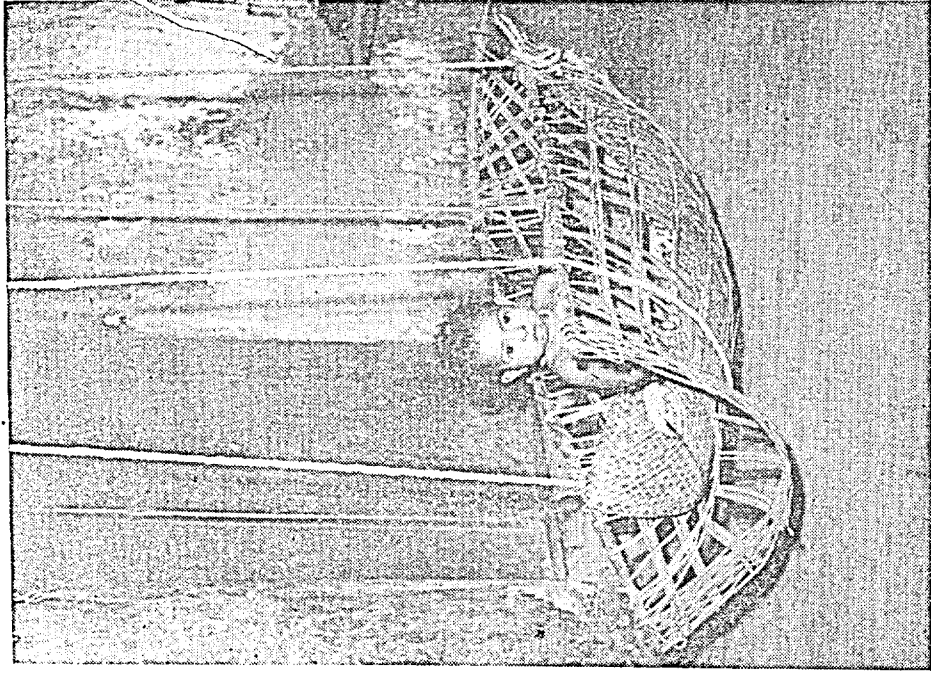
281 (c)



6. Paravan with his wife and children

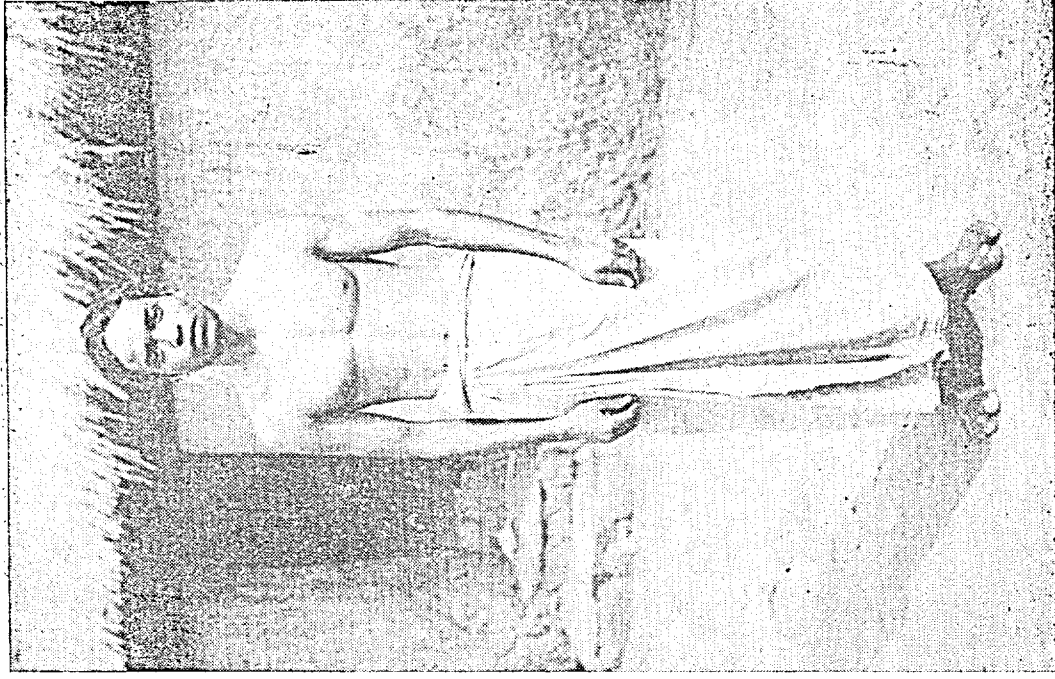


5. Rattan box for the articles required in the worship of *Bhuats* (demons). The semi-circular object is the *bale* (net) used for trapping rabbits.



7. Baby in the cradle. When covered with dry leaves on its outer surface, the cradle becomes a *gorabu* the monsoon covering

281 (d)



8 (a). Full-length portrait of a Parayan male



8 (b) Front view (close-up)

281 (e)



8 (c). Profile



9 (d). As viewed from behind

13. PARAVAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Paravan is a scheduled caste in the South Kanara District of the Mysore State according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists Modification Order of 1956. Though the caste is notified as 'Paravan' in the Order, in South Kanara a member of this caste is called 'Parava' and the plural form of this name is 'Paravaru'. 'Paravan' is only a Tamil nomenclature for 'Parava' as 'Paravans' are known to be migrants to the South Kanara District from a Tamil region.

In the entire district they are called 'Parava' and other Harijans (erstwhile untouchable castes) call them 'Ujala' even though *Ujala* is not considered to be a synonym of 'Parava'. This reference to them as 'Ujals' may probably be due to the fact that they are considered as pure among the impure. 'Ujala' means 'white' in Konkani. However, this does not have any relation with the colour of their skin because most of the Paravas are dark tanned.

The Paravas are among the lowest order of society in the south of India, and in fact they are deemed to be outside the pale of the four *varnas* of the Hindus. But among the communities which were considered untouchables, Paravas have a special position in that they are ranked higher. One reason for it is that they are allowed to take part in the community ceremony of Devil-dancing and another reason is that they have abjured the use of beef as an article of food. Paravas are not among those whose very shadow was believed to cause pollution. Caste-Hindus however, believe, that their touch pollutes them.

II. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

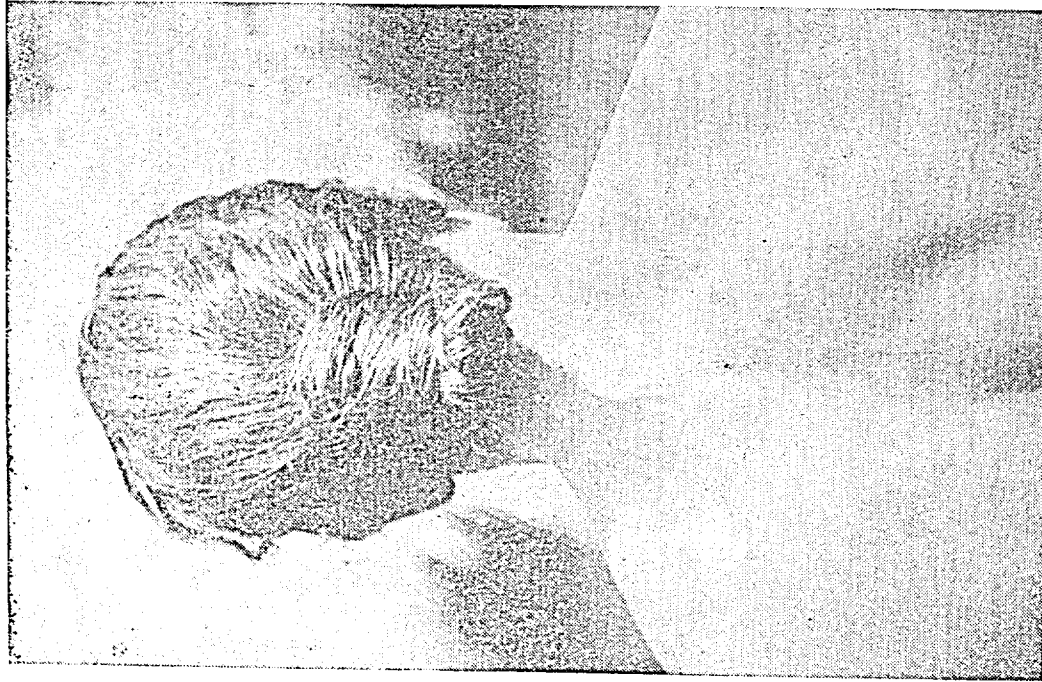
In Mysore, Paravas are found only in the district of South Kanara. They are also found in the neighbouring States of Madras and Kerala. They are a Scheduled Caste in Kanyakumari district and in Shencottah Taluk of Tirunelveli district of Madras and throughout Kerala except Malabar district (excluding Kasargod taluk). According to the 1961 Census, Paravans numbered 18,819 in Kerala while in the two districts of Madras viz., Kanyakumari and Shencottah Taluk of Tirunelveli, their population stood at 1550 [Mitra, 1966—I Part V—A(i)].

About Paravans, Francis (1902, Vol. XV) writes "though all the Paravans are shown in the Malayalam section of Table XIII, there are in reality three castes which answer to this name and which speak Tamil, Malayalam and Kanarese respectively. Probably, all the three are descended from the Tamil Paravans or Paratavans. The Tamil Paravans are fishermen on the sea coast. Their headquarters is Tuticorin and their headman is called Talavan. They are mostly native Christians. They claim to be Kshatriyas of the Pandya line of Kings, and they will eat only in the houses of Brahmans. The Malayalam Paravans are shell collectors, lime-burners and gymnasts, and their women act as mid-wives...The Canarese Paravas are umbrella makers and devil-dancers".

Though the traditional occupation of Paravas is devil dancing, now they work as agricultural labourers in their respective villages. They have settled in the rural areas of South Kanara and no Parava has been returned from any of the urban centres in the 1961 Census. In the South Kanara they are found in the villages of Karkal, Belthangadi, Puttur and Mangalore taluks.

The historic name of South Kanara is *Tuluva*. This region was given the name Kanara by the Portuguese pirates, who visited the region in the seventeenth century. They called it Kanara, as they found the people of the region speaking Kannada language. The climate of this region is equable throughout the year with no extremes either in winter or in summer. The maximum temperature ranges between 91°F in May and 84°F in December and the minimum temperature between 71°F in December and 79°F in May. The whole annual range of 20°F is comparatively less than the daily range of temperature in most of the places in the north. However, the afternoon in summer is sultry and it is to a certain extent mitigated by the cool sea breeze which normally sets in by afternoon and blows till early night. The sea, the ghats, the monsoon and the tropics all combine to maintain the temperature of the region within a narrow range varying between 70°F and 90°F.

Mangalore is the district headquarters of South Kanara. This coastal town is picturesque and charming. Mangalore is studded with tile factories and the



8 (d). As viewed from behind

281 (f)



9 (a) Full length portrait of a Paravan female



9 (b). Front view (close-up)

281 (g)



9 (c). Profile

tiles produced here are exported to many important countries in the world. Cashewnut is another important commodity cured and exported from this town. Mangalore is also known for dry fish. It is a fast growing town and its importance will further increase with the development of an all-weather port and its linking with Hassan by the railway line now under construction. It has a rich hinterland known for ores, and several types of forest produce. It is also an important educational centre.

Other places of interest in the South Kanara District are Udipi, Coondapur, Dharmasthala, Subramanya, Moodbidri and Karkal. Udipi, Dharmasthala and Subramanya are sacred pilgrim centres for the Hindus and the important temples in these centres are dedicated to Lord Krishna, Manjunatha and Subramanya respectively. Moodabidri and Karkal are of historical importance with Jain *Basdis* (temples), and both the places are Jain pilgrim centres. Three miles away from Udipi is a place called Manipal which is developing as an educational and industrial centre. An Engineering college and a Medical college besides several other colleges to teach in arts, science etc. are located here. Malpe is an important port near Udipi.

III. ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Paravas are migrants to the South Kanara District from the Tirunelveli district of the Madras State. Prior to its transfer to Mysore in 1956 as a result of the reorganisation of States, South Kanara was a district of Madras State.

In the district manual of South Kanara, Sturrock (1894, I) has recorded, "Paravas are another caste of umbrella makers and devil-dancers. They take rank above Nalkes and are somewhat numerous. It has been suggested that they are descendants of those Paravas who fled to the west coast from Tinnavelly in order to avoid the oppression of the Musalmans" (P. 179). While referring to Paravas Thurston (1909, VI P. 139) states, "The Tulu-speaking Paravas of South Canara are like the Nalkes and Pambadas—devil-dancers and are further employed in the manufacture of baskets and umbrellas. Socially they occupy a higher position than the Nalkes but rank below the Pambadas. The *Bhutas* (devils) whose disguise they assume are *Kodamanitaya* and the *Baidrukala*, who may not be represented by Nalkes, and they have no objection to putting on the disguise of other *bhutas*. Paravas are engaged for all kinds of devil dances when Nalkes are not available".

Thurston has made a distinction between Parava and Paravan—the former referring to the Tulu-speaking group and the latter to the Tamil and Malayalam-speaking groups—of what is apparently a single community. About the history and origin of Paravan Thurston writes, "The author of *Historia Ecclesiastica* (published in Tamil at Tranquebar in 1735) identifies them with the Parvaim of the scriptures, and adds that in the time of Solomon, they were famous among those who made voyages by sea; but it does not appear that there is any solid foundation for this hypothesis. It is the general belief among the Paravas that their original country was Ayodhya, or Oudh; and it appears that previously to the war of Mahabharatha, they inhabited the territory bordering on the river Yamuna or Jamuna. At present they are chiefly found in the seaport towns of Tinnevely district in the South of India, and also in some of the provinces on the North-west coast of Ceylon. With regard to their origin, there is a variety as well as discordancy of opinions But the Paravas have among themselves quite a different tradition concerning their origin, which is founded on a mythological fable. They relate that their progenitors were of the race of Varuna (God of Sea), and on the occasion when Shiva had called Kartikeya (God of Arms) into existence, for destroying the overwhelming power of the Asuras (evil spirits), they sprang up with him from the sacred lake Sarawana, and were like him nursed by the constellation Kartika. At the close of the last *Kalpa*, when the whole earth was covered with a deluge, they constructed a *dhoni* or boat and by it, escaped the general destruction; and when dry land appeared, they settled on the spot where the *dhoni* rested; hence it is called *dhonipura* or the city of boat. The Paravas were once a very powerful people and no doubt derived much of their ascendancy over other tribes from their knowledge of navigation. They had a succession of kings among them, distinguished by the title of Adiyarasen, some of whom seem to have resided at Uttara Kosamangay In the *Purana* entitled *Valevisu Puranam* we meet with the following fable. Parvati, the consort of Siva, and her son Kartikeya, having offended the deity by revealing some ineffable mystery, were condemned to quit their celestial mansions, and pass through an infinite number of mortal forms, before they could be readmitted to the divine presence. On the entreaty of Parvati, however, they were allowed as a mitigation of the punishment, each to undergo but one transmigration. And as about this time, Triambaka, king of Paravas, and Varuna Valli, his consort were making *tapas* (acts of devotion) to obtain issue, Parvati condescended to be incarnated as their daughter under the name of

Tiryser Madente. Her son Kartikeya transforming himself to a fish, was roaming for some time in the north sea. It appears, however, that he left the north and made his way into the south sea, where, growing into an immense size, he attacked the vessels employed by the Paravas in their fisheries, and threatened to destroy their trade. Whereupon the king Triambaka made a public declaration that whoever would catch the fish should have his daughter to wife. Siva, now assuming the character of a Parava, caught the fish and became reunited to his consort. In that section of the Mahabharatha entitled Adiparva it is said that the king of the Paravas, who resided on the banks of the Jamuna, having found an infant girl in the belly of a fish adopted her as his own daughter, giving her the name of Machchakindi, and that when she grew up, she was employed, as was customary with the females of the parava tribe to ferry passengers over the river. On a certain day, the sage Parasara having chanced to meet her at the ferry, she became with child by him, and was subsequently delivered of a son, the famous Vyasa who composed the *puranas*. Her great personal charms afterwards induced king Santanu of the Lunar race to admit her to his royal bed, and by him she became the mother of Vichitra Virya, the grandsire of the Pandavas and Kauravas, whose contentions for the throne of Hastinapura form the subject of the Mahabharatha. Hence the Paravas boast of being allied to the Lunar race and call themselves accordingly. . . ." (Thurston, 1909, VI).

Field-study in Karkala Taluk of South Kanara, reveals their ignorance about the legends of origin cited by Thurston. They are unaware of any tradition linking them to Ayodhya or to king Santanu of the Lunar race. They do not entertain any claims of relationship to the Pandavas of the yore. On the other hand "Nalkeyavaru",—another caste of devil dancers—it is said are in some places called Panderu or Paneru. So also, they have no stories to relate regarding the incarnation of Siva, Parvathi and Kartikeya as members of their caste. The folk-songs which they sing during their devil dance performances deal mainly with the life history and deeds of the Bhutas that are being propitiated. The informants were unable to recall any folk-song or story specially associated with their particular caste. Moreover, they believe that they must also be one among the indigenous people of South Kanara as they speak Tulu and are engaged as the chief agents in devil worship.

Pombada and Nalke are the two other castes which share the tradition of devil dancing in South Kanara. While Pombadas and Paravas are equal in social status the Nalkes are inferior. Accordingly, Paravas

and Pombadas represent the *Bhutas* (spirits) of a higher order and serve the caste-Hindus and Jains while the Nalkes represent spirits of an inferior order such as Guliga, Neecha, Kallurthi etc., and mainly serve the erstwhile untouchable caste-groups of the region. A legend current among the Paravas states that, in the past all devil-dancers were on an equal footing. On one occasion, being engaged in a war with a neighbour, their king ordered the performance of a particular devil dance to secure the blessings of the spirit. When the dancers adorned themselves with the masks and other traditional attire, a sudden scare created by the unforeseen attack by the enemy resulted in the people running helter-skelter. The Paravas and Pombadas entered the *Chavadi* (Veranda) of nearby houses for protection. The stupefied Nalkes remained in the open. After the commotion was over, the king ordered that thenceforth the Parava and Pombada may represent those spirits which are of a higher order and may thus be enshrined in the family houses while the Nalkes should restrict themselves to the inferior spirits which are kept enshrined outside one's abode. Thus the former two caste-groups perform dances for the appeasement of Annapanjurli, Kodamantaya, Kukkinantaya, Jumadi or Dhooma Bhagavati, Kotichannayya, Satyadevathe etc., while the Nalkes represent Guliga, Neecha, Kallurthi, Chaundi, Bhairava, Mantra devathe, etc. This distinction in spirit worship is observable even now.

IV. DEMOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The population of scheduled castes in Mysore as per 1961 census is 3,117,232 and they form 13.22 per cent of the total population. Paravas form a low percentage of 0.03 of the scheduled caste population of the State and an insignificant percentage of 0.004 of the total population. The population of Parava according to 1961 census is 1,051 consisting of 537 males and 514 females. Further, the caste is declared as scheduled caste in South Kanara only and as such their particulars in respect of any other centre is not available. This caste has not been enumerated separately during the previous censuses and hence it has not been possible to make a study of the decennial variation of their population. The distribution of Parava population as per 1961 census with the break up in sex and broad age groups is as shown below:

TABLE I					
Age-group/sex	All ages	0—14	15—44	45 and above	
Persons	1,051	449	395	207	
Males	537	247	188	102	
Females	514	202	207	105	

The sex ratio of Paravas works out to 957 females per 1,000 males and the sex ratio among the scheduled castes of the Mysore State is 965 females per 1,000 males.

V. FAMILY, CLAN AND OTHER ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

Among Paravas the predominant type of family is a simple one composed of husband, wife and children. However, this is not the only type of family. Apart from husband, wife and children it may also consist of aged parents of the head of the household, or his unmarried brothers and sisters and such other members. Their way of living after marriage is patrilocal. According to Mr. Casie Chitty, the Paravas are divided into thirteen classes viz.,

- Headman.
- Dealers in cloth.
- Divers for corals.
- Sailors.
- Divers for pearl oysters.
- Divers for Chanks.
- Packers of cloth.
- Fishers who catch turtles.
- Fishers who catch porpoises.
- Fishers who catch sharks and other fish.
- Palanquin bearers.
- Peons who wait about the person of the chief.
- Fishers who catch crabs.

(Thurston, 1909, Vol. VI P-155)

Perhaps the above classification relates to Paravans of Kerala. The Paravans of South Kanara do not seem to have had any tradition of fishing or seafaring life. Their traditional occupation has been given as "devil-dancers and umbrella-makers". In South Kanara, they constitute a single endogamous group. They have exogamous clans called *bali*. *Bangeran*, *Saliyan*, *Pullettan*, *Bagettan* are some of the *balis* of Paravas. Marriage alliances are contracted between families belonging to different *balis* and marriage within the same *bali* is not permitted. The children belong to the *bali* of their mother as descent for both series is reckoned in the female line. But all the same, they follow the *Makkala Kattu* Law in the matter of inheritance and succession. Paravas neither inter-dine nor intermarry with members of any other caste.

VI. DWELLING, FOOD, DRESS, ORNAMENTS AND OTHER HABITS

Dwelling

Paravas are backward, socially as also economically. Their dwellings consist of mud-walled huts with thatched roofing. On account of their poor economic conditions they are unable to live in *pucca* well-built houses. Following the regional residential pattern, Paravas dwell in isolated homesteads. The houses are scattered, and usually a single independent structure stands encircled by a fence or a dwarf-mud-compound wall. Sometimes, two or more households of the same caste (eg : two households of Paravas at Mudu Konaje village and two at Yerlapady village) may be found side by side in a single enclosure. In the villages where Paravas were contacted, Jains, Bunts, Brahmins, Mooliyas, Billavas, Shervegaras, Marathi speaking Nayaks, Bhandaris, Smiths etc., were also found in varying proportions. The main patrons of Paravas are the Bunts, Billavas and Jains. It is perhaps, more the regional pattern of housing that precludes members of various caste-groups residing side by side, than social inhibitions.

Paravas have their dwellings built in lands owned by others, the lands generally belonging to the families under whom they work as agricultural labourers.

The ground plan of their dwellings is rectangular and most of them are single roomed. Only a few of the houses have separate kitchens and for a majority of the houses, a part of the living room serves as a kitchen. The plinth area of their dwellings ranges from 12 feet to 20 feet long and 10 feet to 15 feet wide. Their houses generally have mud walls. The roofs—usually of thatching grass—are low and the dwellings are ill-ventilated and dark. They periodically clean their dwellings. They sweep them every day and the flooring is smeared with cowdung once a way. No house of Parava is provided with latrine and they use the nearby fields. Though no separate bathroom is provided to the house, they have a cauldron fixed to a hearth close to the house, for bathing purposes.

Before laying the foundation of a dwelling, Paravas consult a Brahmin priest for an auspicious day. They perform 'Ganapathi pooja' (worship of Lord Ganesha) and propitiate the deity by offering coconut, banana and flowers. They build the house with household labour and at times seek the assistance of some of their castemen as well. On the day of house-warming they bring holy-water from a Brahmin and sprinkle in the new house. They invite their caste people to the function and give them a treat, which of course, is humble.

Food

Parboiled rice is the staple cereal consumed by Paravas. This is the staple cereal for most of the people in this region irrespective of caste, creed or religion. They take food thrice a day. In the morning and at noon they take *Ganji* or gruel prepared from parboiled rice. Gruel is believed to quench their thirst in the warm climate and as only a little quantity of rice is needed to prepare a large quantity of gruel, it also proves to be economical. Only at night they take a square meal of rice. For side-dishes they prepare curry out of vegetables like brinjal, gourds and greens available in the locality. They consume milk and milk products only occasionally. On festive occasions it is customary for them to prepare some sweet dishes from rice, wheat, gram dal etc.

Paravas are non-vegetarians. They eat chicken, meat, mutton, pork and flesh of many wild animals. However, they do not eat beef. They consume both scaled and unscaled fish. Non-vegetarian food is prepared by them only occasionally. During *kola* period they offer fowls in sacrifice and so almost every Parava house in the village prepares chicken curry during the festival.

Paravas accept food and water from all the castes excepting Nalke, Holey, Koraga and non-Hindus.

They cook their food in earthenware pots. Their possession of metallicwares is limited to a few pieces only.

Dress

The dress of Paravas is simple and it has to be so on account of their poor economic condition.

The adult males wear *mundu* a short width of dothi, which covers their body from the waist to the knee. A banian or half-sleeved shirt made of coarse cloth is the upper garment. They tie a towel or a similar length of cloth around their head when they visit the nearby towns or weekly markets.

The dress of the women is a handloom sari of coarse variety which measures about 6 yards in length. Only young women put on a blouse. Normally they possess only one set of clothes and that too in a tattered condition.

The common dress for boys is a shirt and a knicker and the common wear for girls is a frock. Paravas buy clothes in the nearby towns. Only a few among them use footwear.

Ornaments

It needs mentioning at the outset that there are no ornaments or special features of personal decorations which are peculiar or characteristic of the Paravas as a caste.

The ornaments used by Parava women include *bendole*, *onti*, (ear-rings), *muguthi* (nose-ring) and chains. All these ornaments are of brass. *Thali* adorns the neck of married women. They also wear glass bangles. *Thali*, bangles, nose-ring, ear-ring and toe-ring are ornaments necessarily to be worn by a married woman. Unmarried girls may put on all these ornaments except *thali* and *toe-rings* as these ornaments signify the married status of a woman. If a woman is widowed she has to remove the *thali*, toe-rings and the black beads. Unmarried girls usually have glass bangles on their wrists. Their menfolk do not have any ornaments.

Tattooing is not a taboo among them. However, very rarely Paravas get tattooed.

As regards the coiffure the style is uniform and the usual style is braiding of hair. Occasionally they apply oil before combing the hair.

Other habits

Parava males are addicts to intoxicants and they take illicit liquor though in this region preparation and consumption of intoxicating drinks is prohibited by law. Field enquiry relates to 1968 when prohibition was in force. It has since been relaxed. They also smoke beedis. Chewing of betel leaves is common both among the males and the females. The male members particularly those who take part in 'kola' take bath on all evenings. The women take bath once a week. Washing of clothes is done once a week or a fortnight.

They clean their dwelling by sweeping the dirt every day. They smear the floor of the dwellings once a week with cow-dung. However their habitations usually do not have a clean appearance. They do not also attach much importance to personal hygiene.

VII. EDUCATION, LITERACY AND LANGUAGE

The South Kanara District is known for its high percentage of literacy as compared with several other Districts of the State. There are also a large number of educational institutions both private and Government. Even then the literacy among Paravas is quite

relations. On the marriage day the function commences with the exchanging of betel leaves and betel nuts kept in metallic plates, between the two parties. The bridegroom's sister applies *madarangi* to the bride. Then the bride has to take a bath. After dressing in a new sari the bride moves round the *Dhare mane* (a plank) thrice and sits on it. The bridegroom ties a *tali* strung with black beads around the neck of the bride. The bridegroom's father pours a little quantity of water into the hands of the bride. The persons attending the marriage are then served with a feast. The bride is served with milk and then she has to serve her husband with cooked rice and with this function the marriage ceremony comes to an end. After a week the girl makes a visit to her parents' house.

Paravas follow the system of monogamy and, under exceptional situations only, a person marries again during the lifetime of his first wife. In the case of death of a wife the widower normally does not marry his deceased wife's sister. Widow remarriage is not taboo, and marrying of elder brother's widow is also

in practice. However, a member cannot marry his younger brother's widow. A widow without encumbrances can marry for the second time. The widow remarriage is called *kaipathu*.

Paravas have exogamous clans called *bali* and marriage within the same clan is not permitted. These *balis* are called Bangeran, Salian, Pullettan, Bagettan, etc.

Divorce is allowed among them on the approval of the *Gurikar* and a council of caste elders.

If a woman commits adultery with a person of higher caste, after a hearing the *Gurikar* and the council of elders decide about the fine to be paid by her which ranges from Rs. 25 to Rs. 100. In case she commits adultery with a person of Parava caste, the paramour has to marry her. However, if she commits with a member of lower caste she is excommunicated.

The following statement reproduces the marital statistics among Paravas, as found in 1961:

Marital Status				0-14		15-44		45 and above	
		Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Population		537	514	247	202	188	207	102	105
1. Never married		330	223	247	201	82	19	1	3
2. Married		185	221	..	1	101	173	84	47
3. Widowed		16	58	..	..	3	6	13	52
4. Divorced or Separated		6	11	..	..	2	8	4	3
5. Unspecified		..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..

Death

They dispose of the dead by cremation excepting when the deceased is a child or a person suffering from diseases like small-pox, leprosy etc. They mourn the death of a person and observe pollution for a period of ten days. The purification of the house takes place on the eleventh day and the *Gurikar* officiates in the purification ceremonies. He sprinkles holy-water brought from a Brahmin in the locality.

After death they consult a Brahmin to know the cause of death, particularly to know if the death is due to natural causes, or due to the wrath of some malevolent spirit. And if the Brahmin advises them that it is due to some evil spirit, they perform certain ceremonies to propitiate the spirit.

When a person is about to die, they pour a few drops of water into his mouth. After death the dead body is placed on the ground and it is covered with a white cloth. Then the body is washed with warm water, placed on a full length banana leaf and covered with a new white cloth. In the case of a woman all her ornaments excepting the nose-ring are removed.

At the crematorium the dead body is placed on the pyre and it is set on fire by the eldest son. On the eleventh day the son who sets fire to the pyre gets his head and face shaved and others have only their faces shaved. All the members of the family have bath. On the twelfth day they invite their relatives in the neighbourhood and serve them with meals and the menu consists of some sweets prepared from rice.

The sixteenth day is the day of *Hiriyaralli Kudisu-vidu* that is the dead person joining their pre-deceased ancestors. Sixteen *vades* are prepared on that day and offered to each of the 16 fore-fathers including the one for whom the ceremony is held. The person who performs the ceremony makes an announcement to be heard by the spirit of the dead uttering "I have done my best to satisfy you. You please join our dead fore-fathers".

X. RELIGION

Paravas follow Hinduism. They worship Iswara as their Supreme God, besides offering *pujas* to Venkataramana of Thirupathi, Manjunatha of Dharmasthala and the Mari Goddess. They also consider Panjurli as their tutelary spirit and at the family level sacrifice fowls every year, during summer, as a propitiatory measure. They also worship serpent stones at Naganabanas. The deities of their worship are those which enjoy general patronage and devotion in the locality. Their important centre of pilgrimage is Dharmasthala in South Kanara. The Dodda Garadi of Koti-Channayya at Sanur is another place of pilgrimage for them.

Worship of devils which is a widely practised cult in this region, has a hoary past. Its present form, wherever it is seen, undoubtedly is a fusion of the evolutionary process of the twin beliefs of ancestor worship and spirit worship. Though it is popular among both the Hindus and the Jains alike, its original devotees appear to have been the various classes of untouchables. The chief impersonators of the devils belong to the untouchable stock of Nalke, Parava, and Pambada which were classed as 'untouchable'. Their facial make up for demonical roles is very intricate. When organised on a big scale, the make up has some resemblance to Kathakkali technique. The make up creates a rich element of fantasy. It is said that in the past, there were several different ways of painting such demonical make up. This was really a tedious work and so, is now being slowly discarded or carried out in a haphazard manner. The dancers perform their dances to the accompaniment of the music provided by drums called *Maddale* and *Chande*. Paravas take part in devil-dancing at *kola* and naturally they are ardent believers in the worship of *Bhutas*. The *Bhutas* which they worship are Panjurli, Annappa, Neleswami and Rahu.

The late Rev. A. Manner states, "According to the imagination of the people, in the Kanara district, the

Tulu country is especially fitted for Demons, which they say, are partly created by God, like the Panjurli and partly sprung from man, like the Beiderlu...while some are family *Bhutas*, others are village *Bhutas* and others, again are only to be found in connection with certain temples.

"The family *Bhutas* are worshipped by the families among whom they reside. In every Shudra house a room, sometimes only a corner, is set apart, for the *Bhutas* and called the *Bhuta Kotya*.

"The village *Bhutas* are said to reside in *sanas* or *sthanas* and are worshipped by all the Shudras of the village. These *sthanas* are temples, built in solitary places, and are large and substantial, or small and dilapidated buildings, according as the *Bhutas* residing in them are considered to be powerful or otherwise.

"The Beiderlu are the departed spirits of two Billawa heroes named Koti Baidya and Channaya Baidya. It is also believed that a Bant of the name of Kugumbakange died and has since become a demon of the class to which the Beiderlu belong and is therefore, now included among them. The temple set apart for the Beiderlu to reside in, is called a *garadi*.

"The *Bhutas* who reside in *Sthanas*, and the Beiderlu who reside in the Garadi, receive homage and worship from all Shudras of the village where the *Sthana* is. The worship offered to these demons is of four kinds viz., *kola*, *bandi*, *nema* and *agelu-tombila*.

"*Kola* is offered to the *Bhutas* in the *Sthanas* of the village, in which they are supposed to reside. The Shudras of the village and those adjacent to it, assemble near the *Sthana*, and witness the *kola* ceremony in the public, sharing the cost of it by subscriptions, raised among all the shudra families, in the village in which the ceremony is held. *Bandi*, is a *kola*, with the addition of dragging about a clumsy kind of car, on which the Pambada or priest representing the *Bhuta* is seated.

"*Nema* is a private ceremony in honour of the *Bhutas* held in the house of any one who is so inclined. It is performed once in ten, fifteen or twenty years by well-to-do Billavas or Bants.

low as is indicated by the following statistics collected in 1961:

	Total	Illiterate	Literate without Educational standards	Literates by Primary or basic standards
Persons . . .	1051	993	53	5
Males . . .	537	492	42	3
Females . . .	514	501	11	2

From the above statistics it is seen that only 6% of their total population are literates. Considering sexwise, only 3% of the female population and 9% of the male population consist of literates. And majority of them are literates without any educational standards. Hardly 5 persons consisting of 3 males and 2 females have reached the primary or basic standards and none has gone beyond that. These figures speak for themselves in showing that so far they have not attached practically any value to education. They speak Tulu at home and majority of them can converse well in Kannada with others.

VIII. ECONOMIC LIFE

Paravas constitute a very poor community. They are traditionally devil-dancers. However, they are engaged in cultivation also mostly as agricultural labourers. Information regarding the economic activity of Paravas in South Kanara district has been collected and furnished in the volume on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes viz., Part V-A, for the 1961 census. In the following statement information contained therein, in SCT I-A is presented with regard to the industrial classification of the workers and non-workers among the Paravas.

	Persons	Males	Females
Population . . .	1051	537	514
Total workers . . .	637	317	320
Cultivators . . .	156	77	79
Agricultural labourers . . .	349	158	191
Mining, quarrying, livestock rearing, forestry, etc. . .	8	6	2
Household industry . . .	49	27	22
Manufacture other than household industry . . .	2	..	2
Construction . . .	2	1	1
Trade and Commerce . . .	1	1	..
Transport, Storage etc., and communication . . .	..	..	..
Other Services . . .	70	47	23
Non-workers . . .	414	220	194

It is seen from the above table that 59 per cent of the total males and 62 per cent of the females are workers. Primary means of livelihood for 49 per cent of the male workers and 59 per cent of the female workers is agricultural labour. Twenty four per cent of the workers are cultivators and many of them are tenants cultivating land owned by others on crop-share basis. Forty nine persons, returned under household industry are persons engaged in basket making. They turn out baskets and bags from rattan and also from the stems and leaves of various other creepers. Formerly they also used to prepare umbrellas from palm leaves. These umbrellas were very popular in the past. But now-a-days the cloth umbrellas have replaced them with the result that palm umbrellas have lost the market. So the Paravas, as also some other castes which prepared such umbrellas, have given up this industry. As a consequence their number turning to agricultural labour has very much increased. The Paravas are reputed to be hardy and good workers in the field.

Many of them also have given up their traditional occupation of devil-dancing. It is now only on festive occasions, that a few of them entertain the crowds by their dances. These dances were formerly being arranged more as rituals. The art of dancing and also of learning the relevant songs requires skill and agility, and can be mastered only after a long and strenuous training and practice. Among Paravas this skill is a treasure passing from father to son, and, they do not condescend to train persons belonging to other castes. Of late, it is alleged, there has been a general decline in devil-worship and consequently their traditional calling has ceased to be any more lucrative. Thus many among them have been giving up their traditional occupation in preference to more remunerative jobs. But yet a few reputed devil-dancers even now do get calls even from distant places in the district between November and May which give them a living for six months. Participation in a dance fetches the dancer rupees five to ten, depending upon the spirit that is being worshipped, distance, skill of the dancer etc. besides, two or three kilograms of rice, two or more coconuts and a slain cock. He will be fed in the household of his patron on that day and also receives some money towards travelling expenses. About 15 years ago, it is said that cash payments amounted to less than half the current rates but perquisites were more generous.

IX. LIFE CYCLE

Birth

It is a matter of common knowledge that women aspire to be mothers in the early years of their

marriage. It is also normal that the first pregnancy of a woman receives special attention. In the seventh month of the pregnancy, on an auspicious day they celebrate a function for which the relatives are invited and served with a dinner. After this function in the husband's house, the expectant mother moves to her parent's house as according to their custom the first delivery has to take place in her parents' house.

The woman in the family way is not subjected to any medical check up. If there is a separate room they have it clean and set it apart for parturition. As most of the Parava houses are not having extra rooms, the living room itself is utilised, privacy being ensured by an improvised curtain.

A Parava lady attends on the expectant mother at the time of delivery. The lady so attending is to be remunerated in kind and it is a sari of coarse variety that is presented to her. The placenta is usually disposed of by throwing it into a tank or river. However, this is not very rigidly observed and they also dispose it off by burying deep into the ground. If the lady experiences difficulty at the time of delivery they observe vows to the *Mani Bhuta* which has to be propitiated by offering some pepper or a sari. It is only in a few complicated cases that they seek assistance of a trained midwife. After removal of placenta the baby and mother are given a bath in luke warm water.

After delivery the mother is considered to be polluted for 15 days. On the 16th day they bring *Devaraniri* (holy-water) from a temple and sprinkle it in the house for purification. And on this day the baby christened.

In her pre-natal period, the lady is not served with fish, chicken or pork.

During the first month after delivery the mother is given cooked rice and pickles. After a month she is served fish. She can take chicken and pork only after 3 months.

In the strict sense the period of confinement lasts only for 16 days. She may start attending to her household duties after 16 days. She can go for outdoor work only after 3 months.

The suckling of the baby begins from the third day after birth. Till then it is given *Hongarada chakke* (a shrub) water in little quantities. The suckling period of the baby lasts for about a year or more. From the

second month onwards the baby is given *mudde* (a) (dough like stuff prepared out of rice flour). After completion of a year they give cooked rice to the baby. It is only on completion of two years of age the baby is allowed to take non-vegetarian food. The ears of the baby are bored irrespective of the sex, after it completes the first year.

In case of barrenness, still-births and infant deaths they observe vows to Mani Bhuta.

The rites connected with puberty are called *Madi-mala Madme*. On the fifth day after a girl attains puberty she is made to sit on a *mudi* and at the four corners of the *mudi* are placed four pots containing water. Four women bathe her in the water from these pots. Then she dresses in a new sari. If they cannot afford to buy a new sari she wears a washed sari. She is given *Avalakki* (beaten rice), jaggery and pieces of cocoanut and banana. This happens to be her food during the first four days of puberty. On the fifth day after bath she can have her usual meal.

Marriage

Among Paravas, pre-puberty marriages which were very common in the days goneby, are now extinct and marriages take place only after attainment of puberty. Post-puberty marriages were formerly considered a sin. The normal age at marriage for a girl is about 15 years and that for a boy is above 20 years. Pre-marital sex relationship is not permitted among them. They generally contract consanguineous marriages. A member can marry his father's sister's daughter or his mother's brother's daughter. Marriage between parallel cousins is taboo.

Marriage alliances are contracted between households within the village or at the most in the neighbouring villages. As the concentration of Paravas is limited to a few regions in South Kanara district their seeking alliances with persons from other districts is out of question. The marriage negotiations are initiated by the parents of the bride-groom. When they find a suitable girl they start negotiations.

The marriage takes place in the bridegroom's house. A bride-price of Rs. 34 has to be paid to the bride by the bridegroom on the day they negotiate and fix up the day for marriage.

The bride's party arrives at the bridegroom's place on the previous evening. The bridegroom's sister or his aunt (father's sister) in the absence of a sister, extends a warm welcome to the bride and her

".....During the *nema*, the *Bhutas*, i.e., the things representing them are brought from *sthana* to the house of the man giving the feast and remain there till it is over.

"The rites and ceremonies, etc., in all the three kinds of worship, known as *kola*, *nema* and *bandi* are similar.

"*Agelu-tambila* is a kind of worship offered only to the Beiderlu and that too annually by the Billavas only". (Rev. A. Manner, 1894, Vol-XXII-P-5-7).

In case of ailments and difficulties they observe vows to *Bhutas* and fulfil them by offerings of grains, fruit or fowl. They also observe vows to Lord Manjunath of Dharmasthala. There is a strong belief not only among the Paravas but also several other castes in the region that nobody can tell a lie in this shrine and so they often seek the assistance from this shrine to resolve their differences and settle their disputes.

XI. IMPORTANT FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

The important festivals observed by Paravas are the same as those observed by upper caste Hindus, viz., Yugadi, Dipavali, Shivarathri, Naga Panchami, and Ganesha Chouti. Yugadi is the first day of Chaitra which marks the beginning of the new year (comes of during March-April of the year). They prepare sweets on this day and the menu includes *kadubu*, and *payasa*. On the other festival days too they prepare sweets. Being economically very poor, all their celebrations are more or less simple affairs.

Besides the several feasts they arrange in honour of their own deities, they at times attend the fairs held at Karkala, Dharmasthala, Udipi and Subramanya. In South Kanara almost every village has a fair of its own and the Paravas attend many of them.

XII. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Being economically very poor, the Paravas cannot afford to have any organised recreational facilities. There is a story of hard toil from morning till evening and as such they find very little leisure. Whatever leisure they find, is spent in gossip. At times they organise dancing groups and dance to the tune of music provided by *Maddale* and *Chande* (Drums). Particularly during "holi" festival, they move around to a few villages in dancing groups and collect some cash and gifts in kind. This is shared by the persons who participate in this dancing. Young children play

some indigenous games like Kho-Kho, marbles etc. Women folk sometimes join in singing folk songs.

XIII. INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Paravas take part in devil-dances arranged by caste-Hindus for appeasing the *Bhutas*. They also serve them as agricultural labourers. Though they do not occupy the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy, yet they suffer from social disabilities like untouchability. They are allowed to come up to threshold of the main entrance of the houses of upper caste Hindus. Brahmin priests do not officiate in any of their functions except by supplying them with *Tirtha* (sacred water). They cannot have the services of the barber as also the washerman in the village. Only a few lower castes such as Holeya, Koraga etc., accept food and water from a Parava. They have no free access to temple, though they take part as dancers in the *kola* at *Bhutasthanas*. They cannot take water from the common well. In the villages they do not find a free access into the hotels and eating houses though it is not very strictly observed in urban areas. The upper caste Hindus consider that a touch by a Parava pollutes them. It is obligatory on the part of Paravas to dance in the *Kola* arranged by the villagers and on no grounds can they refuse to participate in such activities.

XIV. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

Paravas have a *Gurikara* or headman of their caste in each village where they reside. *Gurikara* solemnises their marriages and also attends to all their religious and social ceremonies. They have an informal caste Panchayat which is headed by the Gurikar and a council of elders of the caste. The Panchayat members adjudicate over social disputes and offences. After a hearing they award punishment to the guilty by imposing a fine, the range of which depends on the type of crime. If a member of the caste beats another with a shoe the person who beats has to pay a fine ranging from Rs. 2 to Rs. 20. Adultery is considered as a heinous crime among Paravas and the punishment in this case also depends upon the type of adultery committed. If the adulterer is also a Parava usually, he is forced to marry her. If a lady commits adultery with a person of higher caste she has to pay a fine ranging from Rs. 25 to Rs. 100. In case she becomes pregnant the paramour has to meet her post-natal expenses. A lady is ex-communicated if she commits adultery with a member of a caste which is considered lower than the Parava caste. Such lower castes are Nalke, Karadi, Mera etc.

In case any dispute is not settled at the informal caste panchayat level, they seek redress from the patel of the village.

CONCLUSION

The Paravas are educationally, economically, and socially very backward. Devil dancing is their traditional occupation. But nowadays more and more are turn-

ing to agricultural labour. They continue to suffer the disabilities arising from untouchability. In the social hierarchy, they are almost at the lowest rung of the social order. Some of the untouchables who are at a lower level still, consider them as 'pure' among the 'impure' because they consider devil dancing as a sacred privilege of this caste and also because they have abjured eating of beef. But all said and done, they continue to constitute one of the very backward communities in the State.

14. SILLEKYATHAS

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order 1956, Sillekhyathas constitute a Scheduled Caste in the area which formed the former State of Mysore. This consists of the districts of Bangalore, Bellary, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore (except Kollegal Taluk) Shimoga and Tumkur. The Order does not mention any synonym or sub-caste under Sillekhyathas. A reference to the "Consolidated Statement showing Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Denotified Communities and other Communities of similar status in different Statutes and Censuses starting from 1921" (Mitra, 1966 I, V B(ii) P. 470) indicates that 'Sillekyathas' were included in the list of Scheduled Castes for the first time in 1956.

Ananda Row (1903, Vol. XXIV, Pt. I, P. 544) mentions that the name of the caste viz. 'Sillekyata' is the same in all languages and describes them as "mendicants nearly allied to the Jogis whom they resemble in every respect..... These are generally puppet-show exhibitors and are found in large numbers in the Shimoga and Chitaldrug Districts". It may therefore be inferred that the association with puppet show was the characteristic cultural trait that distinguished a Sillekhyatha from a Jogi and provided him a separate identity. The 1911 Census Report (V. R. T. Aiyar, 1913, XXI Part I. P 175) recognises two sections amongst the Sillekhyathas on the basis of occupational differences. One section known as *Burude Besthas* comprised river-water fishermen while the other—"a wandering tribe of picture showmen"—was known as *Bombe Atadavaru*. The publication of the Preliminary Issue, in 1911, of the monograph on Killekyatas (Nanjundayya. H. V. The Ethnographical Survey of Mysore XXII) evidently furnished enough information (acknowledged in the Census Report) on the caste to warrant such a recognition of sections within the caste group of Sillekhyathas. However, the data regarding the synonyms—that Killekyata and Sillekhyata are synonymous and also that they are called *Bommalatavallu* in Telugu and *Togalu Bombe-yavaru* in Kannada (Nanjundayya H. V. 1911)—were not included in the brief note on Sillekhyathas published in the 1911 Census report. Nanjundayya (Ibid) also states, that, "In the adjoining districts of the (then) Bombay Presidency they are known by the name Katbus".

Assuming that Killekyata and Katbus are synonyms of Sillekhyatha, references about the community can be traced in certain publications pertaining to the adjoining States as well. Francis (1902 XV Pt. I P. 161) giving the population of Killekyatas as 337, according to the 1901 Census, in the then Province of Madras, speaks of them as "a small caste of Canarese beggars allied to the Jogis or Helavas". According to Thurston (1909 Volume III. P. 293 ff) the Killehyatas "are a Marathi speaking people who amuse villagers with their marionette shows in the Telugu and Canarese countries". Quoting the Gazetteer of Ananthapur district and an article by Natesh Sastry in Indian Review VII—1906, Thurston writes, "They travel round the villages and give a performance wherever they can secure sufficient patronage. Contributions take the form of money, or oil for the foot-lights ... Their profession is enacting religious dramas before the village public (whence their name, meaning baffoon). The black kambli (blanket) is their screen and any mandapa or village chavadi, or open house is their stage. Night is the time for giving the performance. They carry with them pictures painted in colours on deer skins, which are well tanned and made fine like parchment....." At the end Thurston states that "some of the women are engaged as professional tattooers".

Campbell (1884, XXII) notes the presence of Killekyatas (spelt as Killikiatars) all over the then Dharwar district and furnishes Chhatra as an alternative name of the community. He also speaks of the two sub-divisions viz., Minahidiyo and Gombiadiso. "The *Minahidiyos* make their living by catching and selling fish, and the *Gombiadisos* by playing with leather dolls behind a curtain. They do not eat together or intermarry." (p. 152—153). In Belgaum District (Campbell, 1884, XXI) "Killiketars or Katabus are a class of cattle keepers and picture showmen..... They seem to have come from the north, either from Kolhapur or Satara. They have no sub-divisions. Their chief occupation is showing pictures of Pandavs and Kauravs..... Their women are expert tattooers....." (Pp 185-6). In the Bijapur district Gazetteer, (Campbell, 1884, XXIII, Pp 196-201) the note on Killekyatas (spelt as Kilikets or Katbus) is much more elaborate and it seems to have been used as source material by the later ethnographers such as Enthoven, Nanjundayya and Iyer L. K. A. Kille-

kyatas have been considered under "Wanderers", and the author writes, "They are the four wandering tribes of the Bombay Karnatak who freely intermarry. Bagdis, Budbudkers, Gondhlis and Kilikets. The last three are found in Bijapur but the Bagdis hardly ever go so far east. The Kilikets are locally called Katbus.....Their calling is peculiar. The men fish with nets, and in the evening show, before a light, transparent pictures painted in brilliant colours on skin..... The women's chief occupation is tattooing....." The foregoing quotations make it clear that while in Bijapur district, the same set of persons pursued both fishing and showing of leather-puppets, in other areas—notably Dharwar—two endogamous sections, based on occupational differences had already been formed.

Besides the two major sections or sub-castes, viz., 'the doll-exhibiting and the fishing Killekyatas', Nanjundayya (1911, XXII later revised and edited by Iyer L. K. A. 1930 Volume III), mentions that, "the former are distinguished either as major or minor showmen (*Dodda bombe atadavaru* and *chikka bombe atadavaru*) and these two sections are at present showing a tendency to become separated not only in the matter of marriages but also in food" (p 518-9).

In brief, Sillekyathas (known variously as Killekyatas, Killikiatars, Kilikets, Katbus, Chatris, Bommalatavallu etc.) are known to have been found since many decades not only in the districts of the former Mysore State region—where they are now a Scheduled Caste—but also in the former Bombay-Karnatak and Madras-Karnatak regions. Under the caste name Bunde-Besta (Killeket, Katbu) they have also been included in the lists of Nomadic/Semi-nomadic Tribes for Mysore State. The peculiar profession of exhibition of leather puppets and fishing in rivers using gourds as aids in swimming of their men and tattooing by their women and their nomadic way of live clearly characterise the community. The report that follows is based on field-data gathered from Sillekyathas (Killekyatas) in the taluks of Tarikere, Channagiri and Hiriyur during November 1969. Material relating to Bunde Bestas (fishing section) of Penjahally Colony (Hunsur Taluk) collected in August 1966, has also been utilised.

According to the Bunde-Bestas of Penjahally and the Killekyatas of Basavarajapura Colony (Channagiri Taluk), these two terms are synonymous and refer to the fishing section. Those at Basavarajapura claimed themselves to be Kshatriyas and also mentioned Katbu as the name by which they are known

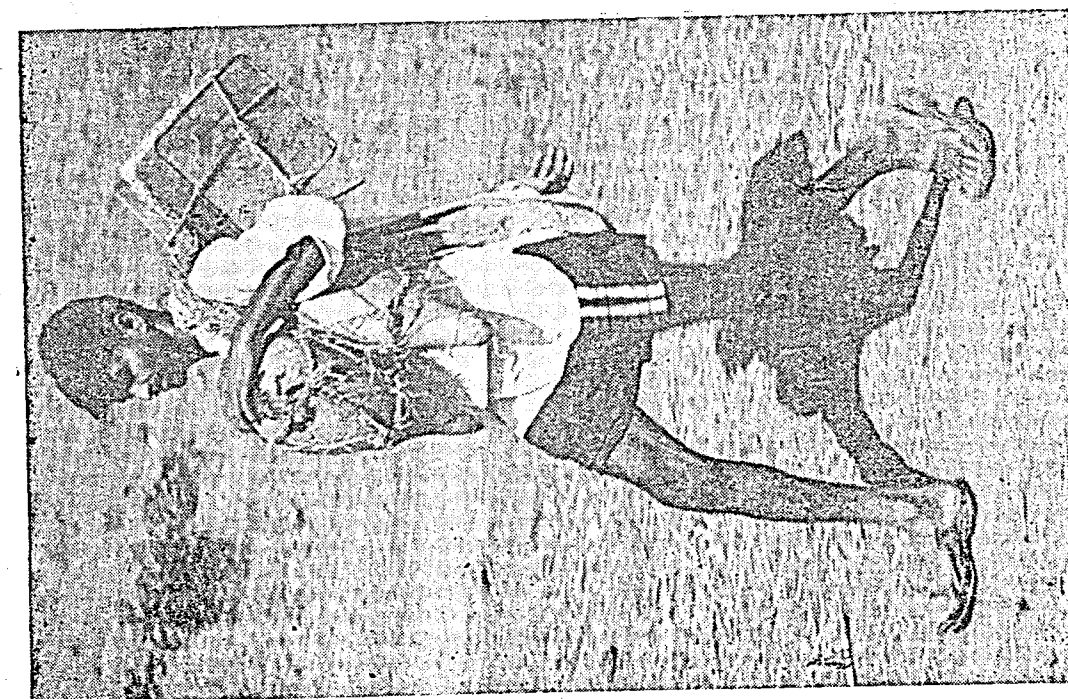
in the northern parts of the State. Their belief is that their ancestors were proficient in the art of leather-puppet-shadow play too, and at some unknown point of time there occurred a fission after which one group specialised in fishing only while the other, forsaking it altogether, perfected the art of shadow play and came to be called *Uru-Sillekyatharu*. Despite their common ancestry these two groups do not eat together or intermarry. They rarely associate, for, the fishermen section, being mostly nomadic, prefers to exist independent of the settled village communities while the other prefers a somewhat settled life within the fold of village communities.

The Sillekyathas of Bhaktankatte (Tarikere Taluk) belong to the shadowplay section and, though they have had little to do with the fishing section, consider the latter to be of inferior status. Seven of their households here are leading a settled life having entirely given up their traditional art, while two others are semi-nomadic and are pursuing the traditional profession. Of late, they despise the term Killekyata and regard *Marathayavaru* (plural for Marathe) as the proper nomenclature of their caste. About the two sub-divisions within the caste they have merely heard of a section which styles itself *Dodda bombeyavaru*—and has, in recent years taken up the profession of enacting dramas—as being found in the eastern fringe of the State. In Hiriyur Taluk, Sillekyatha is the term more in vogue than Killekyata. All the Sillekyathas contacted during the study in this Taluk belong to the Leather-puppet-shadow-play section and have nothing to do with the fishing section. According to the informants, the one-time distinction within the caste as major and minor showmen (i.e. *Doddabombe* and *Chikkabombe*) has now been obliterated. The distinction arose, they opine, as a sequence to the sophistication of the art of shadow-play—the smaller and cruder puppets were replaced by human-size figures with well defined limbs; Vulgarities were eschewed and instead of providing mere fun or frolic to the public they began to enact the great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata; the crude sounding instrument was replaced by harmonium, *tabala* (percussion instrument) and cymbals. This change, believed to have originated around 1900 in Ananthapur district, soon influenced their caste-fellows in Bellary and Chitradurga districts, who are now in Mysore State. Those who welcomed the change styled themselves *Dodda bombeyavaru*, claiming superiority over their more conservative brethren. (According to the informants at Hiriyur, those at Kadur and its vicinity are very conservative and are even now giving performances with the smaller and cruder puppets only). A sub-

12. SILLEKYATHA

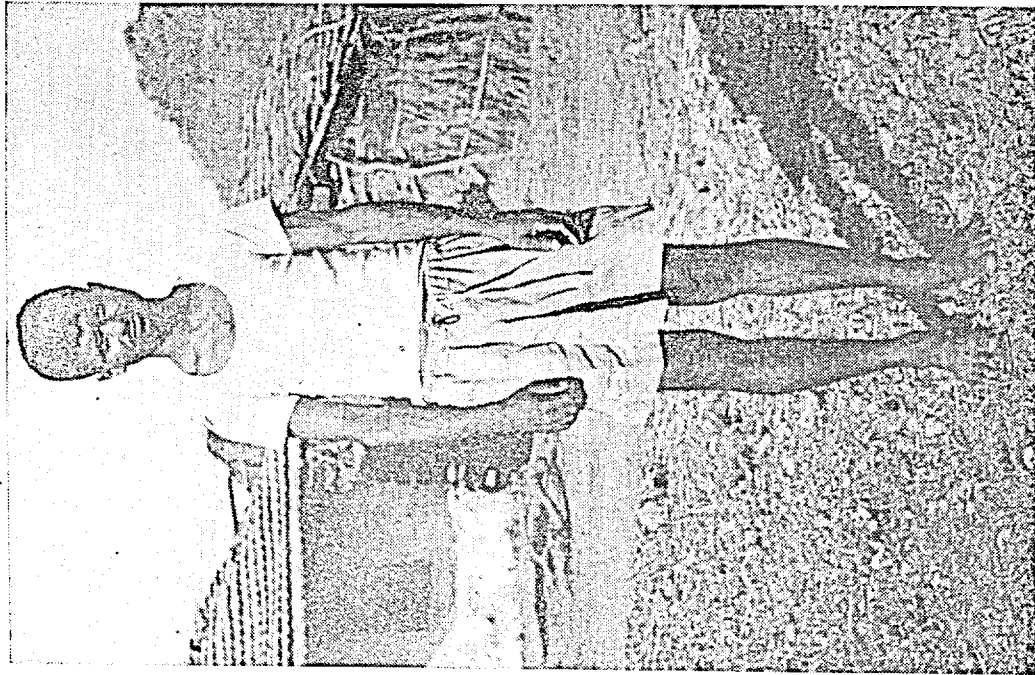


2. Fishermen in action



1. Equipped with the floats, a Sillekyatha is on his way to a tank

SILLEKYATHAS



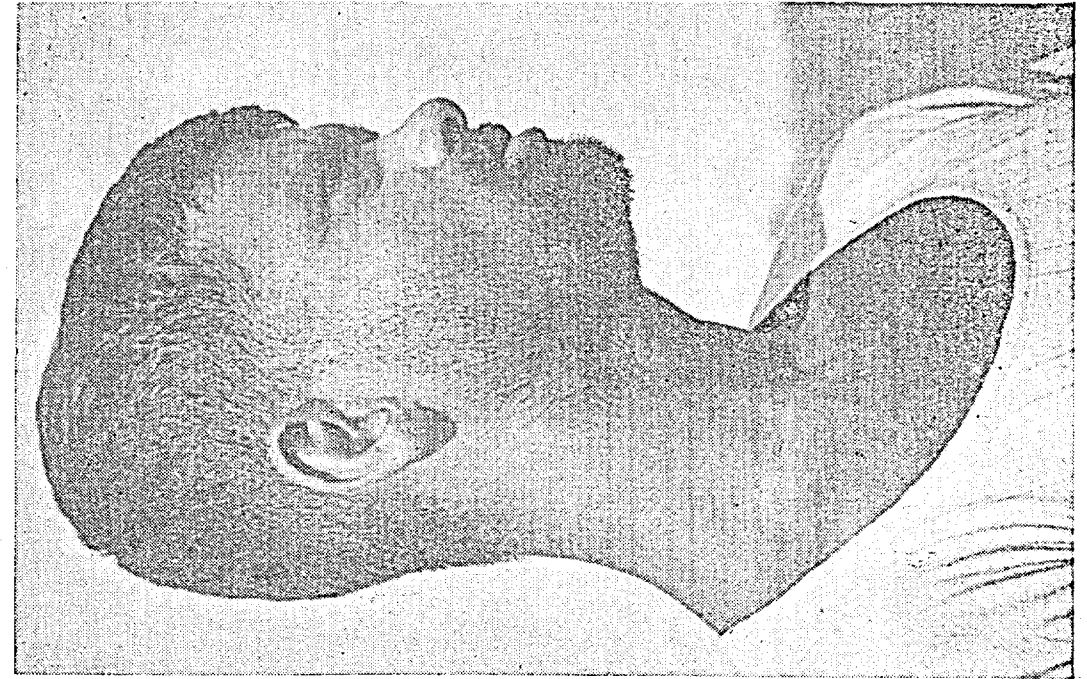
3 (a). Full-length portrait of a Sillekyatha fisherman

296 (b)

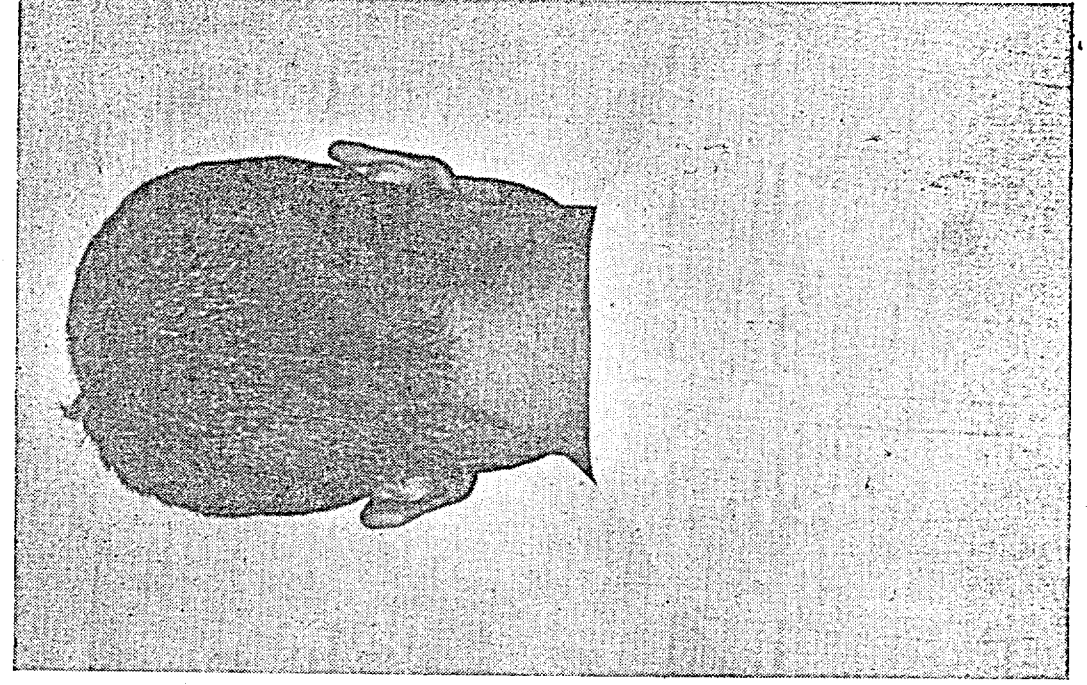


3 (b). Front view (close-up)

296 (c)



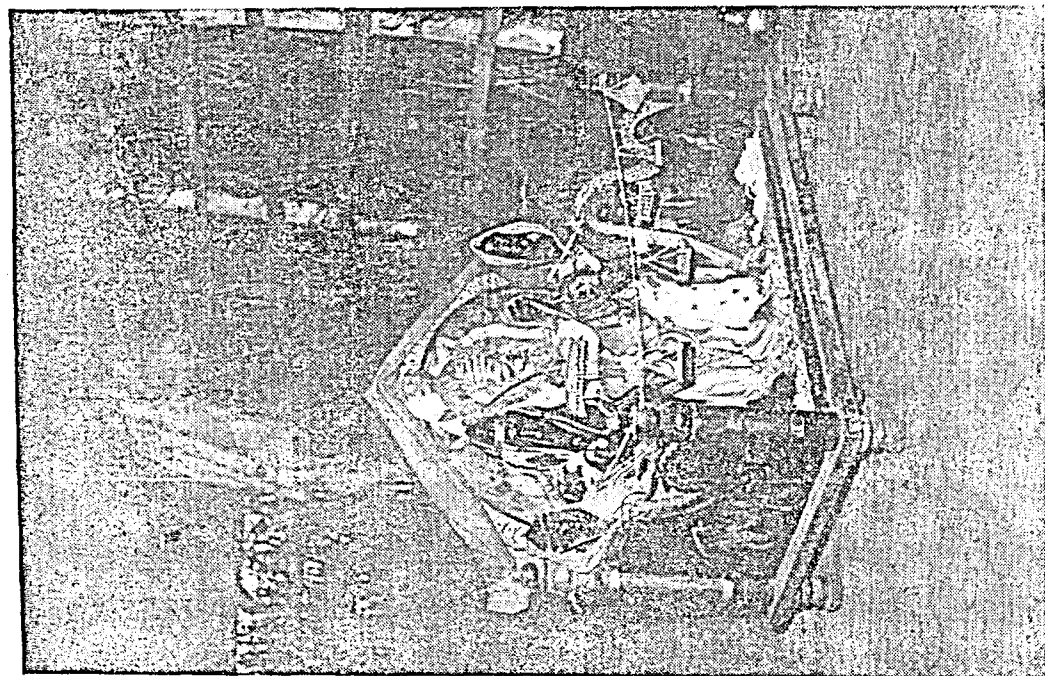
3 (c). Profile



3 (d). As viewed from behind



6. A view of the Sillekyatha colony at Gavaspura



5. Image of Goddess Durgamma riding on horse back

sequent development led the artists of the *Doddabombe* section to choose open-air-plays and dramas for exhibiting their talents in preference to the cumbersome puppet-shows.

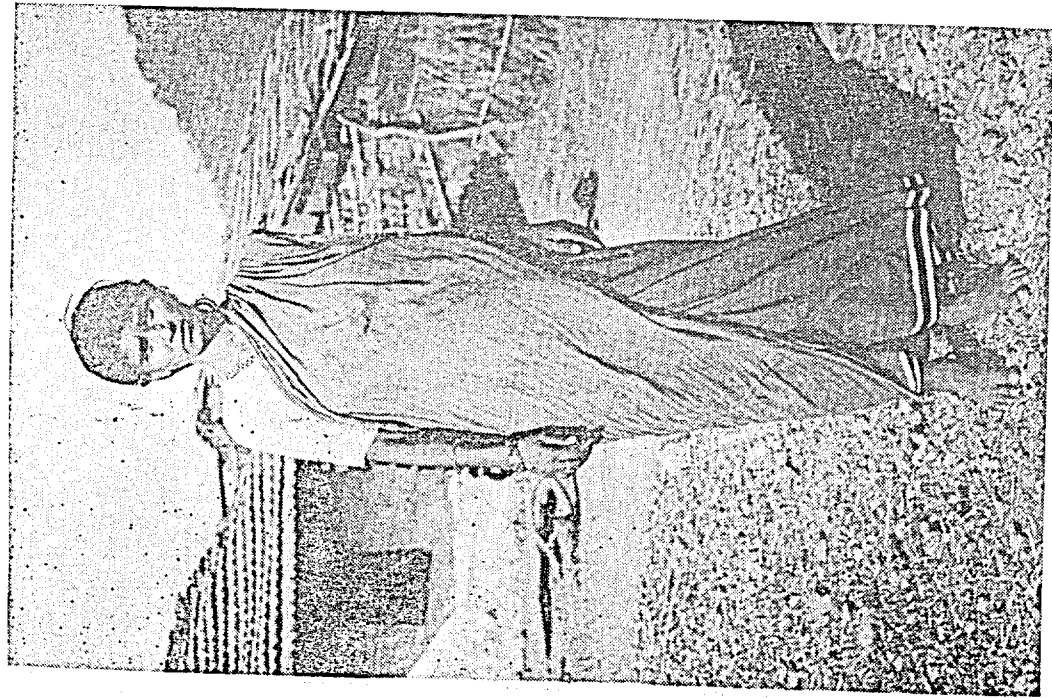
Around Hiriya, though the community is known as Sillekyathas to outsiders, members of the caste consider it demeaning and refer to themselves as *Marathayavaru* by virtue of their acknowledged mother-tongue which is Marathi. Some among them consider Dayithakar (दायिथकार) as their real name (it is a Marathi term said to mean 'drama artists'), and in 1959 an effort was made by the local leaders to found a caste association named "Dayithakar Seva Sangha". A reference to this name, (perhaps a corrupt form of the same name), has also been made by Nanjundayya (Ibid) (cf. Iyer L. K. A. III, 1930, P. 517) who states, "They style themselves *Datyaru*, but the origin of this term cannot be traced".

As noted by Campbell and later ethnographers, Sillekyathas are immigrants to Mysore territory from Maharashtra and this inference is borne out by the fact that they regard Marathi as their mother-tongue even now. In Bijapur district the possession of a *Sannad* deed by the community prompted Campbell to remark, "They appear to have long belonged to the district, as they have no tradition of having moved from any other country" (1884, Vol. XXIII P. 197). The contemporary Sillekyathas also acknowledge Maharashtra as the original home of their ancestors. However, their connections with this area have long been forgotten perhaps for centuries, and now they (i.e. individuals and families) have come to regard the very places (villages/towns) where their fathers or grandfathers resided—either permanently or for most part of their lives—as their own. Thus, one of the families at Hiriya town migrated from Parashurampura of Challakere Taluk about a decade back, and has no memory of any other original home. Some of those at Basavarjapura colony spoke about Jamakhandi and its vicinity as their former place and attributed the southward migration of their forefathers to a severe famine lasting for three years in succession.

According to Campbell and Enthoven, the Sillekyathas (Sillekyathas) are a heterogeneous group—consisting of people recruited from different castes—notably Budbuckers (Bijapur Dt. Gaz. P. 197). The manner in which the caste (termed tribe in the original text) came into being as a homogeneous group is explained by Campbell, in the following terms, "The tribe is divided into thirteen clans out of which the

first ten hold tribal offices. The clans are the Ganacharis, the Shivacharis, the Neknars or Kattimanis, the Panchangis or Bhandaris, the Shindyas or Halmanis, the Salvass or Hogaluvikes, the Sasniks, the Mohrias, the Shingans or Harkaris, the Dhruvs or Mattimanis, the Vakudas, the Dorkars, and the Dhumalkars. These clan names or office names are their surnames. This tribe organisation is said to have been the work of one Hanmantrav Narsing of Haveli in Poona. He became the headman of the tribe and called himself Sar-Ganachari; the office of Ganachari is hereditary in his family. He was joined by one Shivachari who brought with him one Neknar Patil, who was given the office of Kattimani. The Patil was joined by Gondhli of Mahergad who was given the title of Panchangi or Bhandari. The Gondhli brought over to their side one Shindya, who was made Malmani. He was joined by one Salva, who afterwards became Hogaluvike. Lastly the Sasniks and Mohrias joined them. Shingan and Dhruvs have joined them within the last ten or twenty years and have been made Harkaris or Mattimanis. The Vakudas, Dorkars and Dhumalkars have joined within the last ten years. The tribe is being largely recruited from Budbuckers" (P. 197 Campbell 1884, XXIII. cf. Enthoven 1922, II, 231-2). This bringing together or amalgamation of thirteen clans, each of which is exogamous, resulted in the formation of a caste.

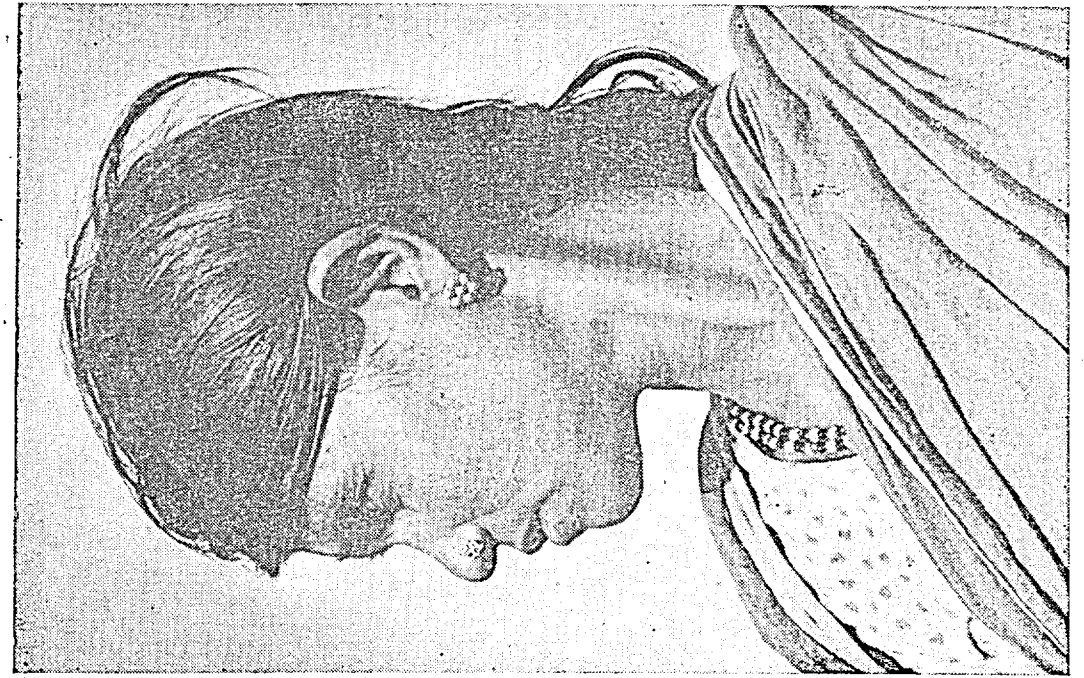
About their origin, Nanjundayya (1911, XXII. p. 2 also Nanjundayya and Iyer. 1930 III. 517—8) writes, "They were originally Mahratta Okkaligas following the profession of agriculture. It is said that one of their women became intimate with a man of the goldsmith caste named Kattare Kalachari and had seven sons by him. They were, of course, put out of caste, and the smith taught his sons to cut out dolls out of mats, leaves and pieces of leather, and earn their living by exhibiting marionettes before village audiences. The brothers of the woman, who were poor, were induced to join their nephews subsequently, and they formed a separate caste by themselves, reinforced by other accessions. It was after this that they migrated from the Mahratta country into different parts of Southern India. They must have come into Mysore in different gangs as indicated by the number of their exogamous divisions...In token of this connection, these showmen extol the caste of the goldsmiths, soon after their invocations to the Gods at the commencement of their play, and say in explanation that the credit of the performance would be theirs (the goldsmiths') while only the doles collected would belong to themselves." In this regard, during the present study no corroborative information could be gathered. On the other hand, the



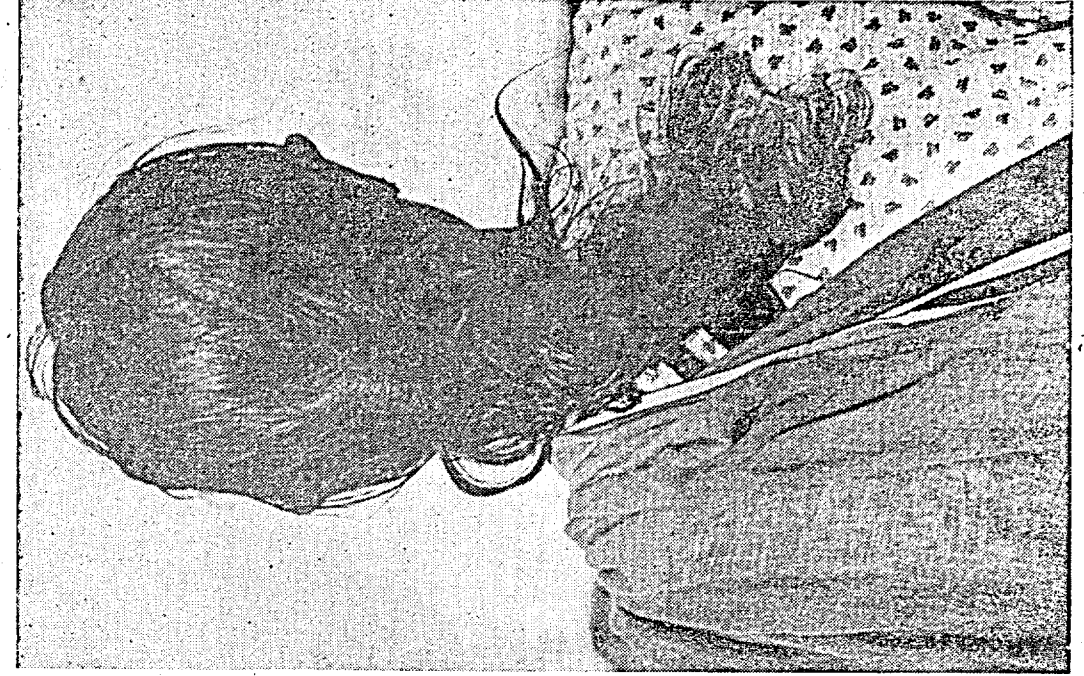
4 (a). Full-length portrait of a Sillekyatha Female of fishing section



4 (b). Front-view (close-up)



4 (c). Profile



4 (d). As viewed from behind

296 (d)

296 (e)

Sillekyathas of Bhattankatte (Tarikere Taluk) believe themselves (i.e. their caste) to be the progeny of a Lingayat headmen's daughter who conceived before marriage. She was put out of caste and also put to shame and she had to give birth to her children in the open courtyard that adjoins the *Katte* (pial) of a house. Such a portion of the ground is to be called *Keelu* (ಕೇಳು) and the informants tried to explain that Killekyatha—their caste name—is a derivative of the term *keelu*. Those at and around Hiriyr consider themselves to be the progeny of Lingayat mothers and Okkaliga fathers. According to the story narrated by an old man at Hiriyr, once upon a time, an itinerant Brahmin came across six Okkaliga boys in a grove engaged in child play with dolls made out of leaves and twigs and enacting scenes from the great epics. This evoked great interest in him and he persuaded the parents of the boys to give them away as gifts to himself. He also narrated to the villagers about the child play he witnessed and induced the boys to give a performance of the scenes from Ramayana with the aid of dolls made of leaves and twigs. This Brahmin taught his disciples the art of shadow play and also the entire texts of the great epics and Puranas. Later, during their tours in the countryside, these six men came across an old Lingayat who had with him six young women. The acquaintance developed into friendship and the Lingayat old man offered the girls in marriage to these six men and requested all of them to be with him as he was expecting his death any moment. When the old man died he was buried in the true Lingayat fashion i.e. in a sitting posture, and in accordance with his earlier directive the Sillekyathas (progeny of the six men referred above) even to this day bury their dead in the same manner. The crude leaf and twig dolls were later replaced by dolls painted on leather rendered fine and transparent. These stories evidently point out the fact that Sillekyatha caste came into being as a result of irregular unions.

According to Nanjundayya and Iyer (Ibid P. 516) Killekyata means a mischievous imp or a crooked fellow and in particular, it is the name of a leather puppet of fantastic appearance which would invariably be presented at the beginning of the shadow plays. This figure which is accompanied by its female counter part Bangarakka, equally hideous in appearance, helps to keep the audience amused with rude jests and indecent jokes. As a result, the shadow-plays came to be popularly known as *Killekyatara ata*—play of Killekyata—and the name gradually passed on to the caste composed of the artists themselves*. Field information also confirms the view that the caste has

been named after the grotesque buffoon character included in the shadow-play performances since times immemorial. *Burude Besta* (Burde, Bulde and Bunde are corrupt forms of Burude which are in use in certain areas) is the name by which the fishing Killekyatas are known to the Kannadigas. *Butude*, in this context implies dry gourd [usually *Visha Kumbala* (poison gourd)]—and refers to its use as floats, while fishing, by these *bestas* or fishermen.

In his note on Killekyata, Luiz (A. A. D. Luiz. 1963) mentions three legends regarding their origin. All these, however, appear to have been adopted from the ethnographic monograph on Bestas (Preliminary: Nanjundayya, 1911 and later, Nanjundayya and Iyer L. K. A. 1928 Vol. II. PP. 239-40) and pertain to the origin of Bestas proper.

*Reference about Leather puppet dolls play (Tholubommalata in Telugu Encyclopedia—translated and published in Census of India, 1961 Vol. II. Part VII-A(1) is reproduced below:

A translated extract from the Telugu Encyclopedia "Vijnanasarvasvamu"

LEATHER PUPPET DOLLS PLAY
(THOLUBOMMALATA)

The leather puppet doll shows in the western parts of Andhra are staged mostly by Marathas. In Kannada areas they are referred to as *Ki (shi)llekya (kha) ta* tribe and in the north-western Tamilnad they are called *Killekyata* people. In Andhra Pradesh they are known as *Bomma-latavaru* (i.e. those staging puppet shows) or *Charmanatakulu* (i.e. those staging leather dolls plays). Among the rural folk, the characters Bangarakka and Kethigadu in the puppet dolls plays are very popular. In Rayalaseema, the latter character, i.e., Kethigadu is called Killegithirigadu. This in the Dravidan language is commonly understood to be a "mischievous or quarrelsome fellow". The importance and popularity which this character Killegithiri (Kethi) gadu assumes in the puppet plays must have been the origin for the performers themselves being called by that name. Those who stage stories from Bhagavata are referred to as Bhagavatas; and those who put on the show Yakshaganas (story of Jakkus) as Jakkus. On this analogy, it is reasonable and appropriate to suppose that those who play the (Kille) Kethigadu doll have derived their name from this character. Their mother-tongue is a regional corrupted form of Marathi. They had migrated to the neighbouring areas of the country from Belgaum, Satara, Kolhapur, Poona and Bijapur. The reasons for their migration must have been either the expeditions of conquest by rulers or political upheavals in their own country, or the favourable reception they had in the neighbouring areas. The relationships that had thrived between these two parts of the country from the times of Satavahanas (1st to 3rd century A.D.) were inseparable. The

epic Panditaradya Charitra gives sufficient evidence to prove that in the festival proceedings (Parasanadakas) of Srisaillam, the Aare tribe also participated along with other Dravidians and Telugu people. Wooden and leather puppet doll shows were staged on the occasion of the festival of Sivaratri. The names of the performers had not been mentioned. However, it is probably not far from the truth to say that the people who thronged from neighbouring areas to see Lord Mallaya of Srisaillam were quite familiar with the puppet doll plays.

The supporting factors available are not sufficient to decide whether Telugu people and others had learnt the art from the Aare tribe or whether they themselves knew it. It is not possible to say who imbibed the art from whom. Moreover, all those who stage the puppet dolls plays in South India are not Marathas. Uru Jangams in the Mysore State; Katubus in the border areas of Bombay and Mysore; Kuthadis in the Madurai Tanjore region, Balijas in some parts of Bellary District; Ite Bondilies in Visakhapatnam district; Telugu Gollas, Gumpus and Jangamas in Godavari District; etc., are the other communities who perform puppet doll plays and are different from the Aare sect of people. In the Andhra area, puppet doll players are found mostly in the following places, viz., Sarvasidhi, Srungavarapukota, Kallepalli Agraharam (Visakhapatnam); Mandapeta, Angara, Yelamanchili, Tanuku (Godavari); Singarayakonda (Nellore); Ramadurg, Belgal (Kurnool); Kadamalakunta, Oddepalli (near Lepakshi), Avulenna, Jarutlaramapuram (Anantapur) Sondur, Thoranagal (Bellary). They have Inam (gift) lands also in the some places."

II. DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TRENDS

As a Scheduled Caste, the Sillekyathas are found only in Mysore State—that too, in the nine districts which together formed the State prior to 1953 and

also in Bellary district. Their presence in the erstwhile Bombay and Madras Presidencies have already been alluded to. In the Madras Province in 1901 A.D., 337 Killekyathas were enumerated (Francis 1902 Vol. XV P. 161) and in Bombay Province in 1920 or earlier, Enthoven estimates the population of Killekets to be about 900 stating that they were "not recorded separately at the Census of 1901" (1922, II. P. 231) However, because of the territorial changes that occurred in the country during 1953 and 1956, it would now be difficult either to assert or deny the presence of Sillekyathas within the limits of States that adjoin Mysore—viz. Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra. Not being a Scheduled Community in these States they have not been enumerated separately during the 1961 Census. The illuminating monograph on "Leather Puppet Dolls" (Tholubommalata) of Andhra Pradesh may be referred to in this context (See Chandrasekhar, A. II. Part VII—A(i) 1964 New Delhi).

In Mysore State, though they may be encountered in the Bombay-Karnatak and the Hyderabad-Karnatak regions, their population details are not available either for 1961 or any earlier period. Confining the discussion to the tract where they are a Scheduled Caste, it is observed that according to the 1961 Census, they have been returned in large numbers from the districts of Shimoga, Bellary, Chitradurga and Tumkur. Distribution of their population, in 1961, by districts is furnished below (the taluks of their chief concentration are also mentioned).

TABLE 1 Population of Sillekyathas by Districts

District	Population			Taluks of relatively high concentration
	P	M	F	
1. Shimoga	676	352	324	Channagiri and Tirthahalli
2. Bellary	670	303	367	Hadagalli and Hospet
3. Chitradurga	474	219	255	Hiriyr and Challakere
4. Tumkur	442	216	226	Sira and Pavagada
5. Chikmagalur	233	122	111	Tarikere
6. Hassan	120	61	59	Alur
7. Bangalore	107	59	48	Ramanagaram
8. Mandya	67	37	30	..
9. Mysore	15	8	7	..
10. Kolar	3	2	1	..
State	2807	1379	1428	

are unrelated to the head of the household and hence excluded for calculating the average; Hariyabbe (Hiriyur Taluk)—2 households consisting 17 persons (13 males & 4 females); Ambalagere (Hiriyur Taluk)—4 households with 16 persons (7 males and 9 females); and Bhaktanakatte (Tarikere Taluk)—9 households with 45 persons (17 males and 28 females)]. The average size comes to 4.2 persons per household. On examining the relationship between the head of each of these households and its members, it is found that 12 are simple family households while another 5 are patrilineal joint-family households. Of the remaining, 7 are of an intermediate type consisting of widowed parent or sibling in addition to a simple family unit; 3 consist of a parent and children; 2 consist of only single-members while one consists of two unmarried brothers living together.

The 32 fishing-Killekyatha households listed at Basavarajapura Colony (Channagiri Taluk) contain 179 persons of whom 88 are males. The average size works out to 5.6 persons per household. Of these, 19 are simple-family households; 3 are joint-family (patrilineal) households; 2 are of the intermediate type; 6 comprise of a parent and child while the other two consist of a parent, child, with some other related person also.

The households of the puppet-shadow-play section appear smaller than those of the fishing-section. Simple family households are common among both and joint-family type also prevails to some extent. Among the fishermen-Killekyathas the incidence of bigamy is said to be more and in all such cases usually there would be two households headed by women and the husband lives at both the houses according to his whims. Sometimes bigamy may culminate in severance of connection between the man and his former wife leading thereby to the formation of a household consisting of a mother and her children. Four of the 32 households at Basavarajapura colony belong to this category. Among both the sections of Sillekhyathas, after the marriage, the wife usually moves to her husband's normal place of residence (i.e. his parental home) and continues to live there atleast for a year or two. Later, the couple may set up a separate household. They are patrilocal. Descent is reckoned in the male line for children of either sex. However, kinship ties extend on the mother's side as well as on the father's. Classificatory kinship system is in vogue among them and they also use the kinship terms popular in the region of their habitation.

The names of the thirteen clans into which the Sillekhyathas are divided, as reported by Campbell, in

the Bijapur District Gazetteer have already been mentioned. The etymological meaning of these terms are not known. Campbell (Ibid. P. 197; also see Enthoven, 1922 II P. 232) further states that "A representative from each of these clans must attend at every Killeket marriage, and each has certain functions assigned to him in the ceremony. The Dhruv or Mattimani brings all the wheat, rice and other stores that may be required; the Shingan or Harkari bids the guests to the wedding; the Ganachari must give the order for the marriage and throw the rice on the happy pair; the Shivachari draws the cross called *nandi* on the curtain and holds it between the bride and bridegroom; the Salva proclaims aloud the names of the God and the ancestry of the bride and bridegroom; the Shindya or Halmani spreads a blanket for the couple; the Sasnik strews rice on it; the Neknar or Kattimani ties the hems of the married couple's clothes into a knot; and the Panchangi does five things, he makes a serpent of each on *Nag-panchmi* in July-August, distributes provisions equally among his castemen, takes 18S (Rs. 9) from the bridegroom, spends 2S (Re. 1) in betel leaves and nuts, and distributes the remaining sum equally among his caste people, and lastly prepares fire for smoking tobacco at caste meetings.

"If any of these office-bearers refuse to attend, the Killekets are put to grave inconvenience. Many years ago the Mohrias, whose business it was to wave peacock feathers at the marriage, refused to perform their office. They were put out of caste and marriages have since been performed without the help of peacock feathers.....The Neknars are called Patils or Kattimanis, but the Ganacharis seem to be the leading clan. Their name comes first in the list, it is they who perform the *diksh* or purifying ceremony for persons readmitted into caste, they play the leading part at marriages, and are presented with a turban and coat." The foregoing makes it clear that at some point of time, the community was well-knit and interdependent, each clan enjoying specific rights and duties.

According to Nanjundayya (1911, XXII P. 4 cf. Nanjundayya and Iyer L.K.A. 1930, III P. 519), "The Bombe Section have the following exogamous divisions each carrying certain definite tribal functions, with it—Ganachari or Vanarasi, Shivachari or Avet, Nekhnar (corrupted into Lekhandev), Panchangis or Ataka or Bhandari and Sindhya.

"The fishing section have in addition to these five divisions, returned four more, viz. Salavya, Sasanik, Moharga and Sinagana in the taluk of Shikaripur and an additional one, namely, Dhuravya in Channagiri.

Those found near Harihar have all the thirteen divisions, the three names besides those given above being Vakudas, Dodkars and Dhamalkars." He proceeds to add, "It will thus be seen that the caste found in the Mysore State (*Prior to reorganisation and accession of Bellary*) is the same as that of the Bombay Presidency, with this difference, that the Bombe Adiso section appear to have separated themselves when the caste contained only five divisions, while the other divisions appear to have lost touch with the main group at different periods in recent times".

The Burude Besta (Fishing section) informants at Penjahally Colony (Hunsur Taluk) mentioned the names of twelve clans (viz. Shaskeen, Pashingya, Dhurvairai, Dhupal, Nekhnar, Atock, Aveit, Sindhya, Moharya, Dorkar, Vakodi and Salvyia) and expressed their inability to recount, offhand, the names of the remaining four clans (for according to them their caste consists of 16 exogamous clans). In the colony, however, only Shaskeens, Pashingyas, Dhurvairs and Dhupals are found. The fishermen section of Killekyathas at Basavarajapura colony (Channagiri Taluk) also considered their caste as consisting of sixteen exogamous clans and furnished the names of three clans (viz. Bagade, Shingan and Kathivala) in addition to the twelve already stated. In this colony the Dhurvayas and Moharyas are in larger numbers there being only a few Neknars and Atocks. According to the informants, the Vakade, Bagade and Shaskeen clans are not entitled to the privileges of receiving *Veelya* (betel-leaves and nuts) on the occasion of marriages in the caste. According to their belief it is the Bagades who introduced fishing as a profession and caused its adoption as the main source of living; and it is the Shaskeen women who first mastered the art of tattooing and later trained their fellow-caste women. The Atock clan is regarded as the clan of their *Guru* (perceptor) and hence superior. As far as marital alliances are concerned, all these clans are supposed to be of equal status. The Neknar is also called Kattemani or *Gowda* while Pashinga is called Sivachari. The Dhurvayas and Moharyas of this settlement consider Subhane Amma and Masoba as their respective clan deities and these are kept in the house of the *Pujari* or religious leader of their clan. All the members of the clan (of the settlement) submit their offerings only at these shrines and when a person of this clan is getting married, the pendal is to be erected only in front of the house of the *Pujari* (which also enshrines their clan deity).

As far as the Bombe section (puppet-shadow-play) is concerned, at Hiriyur, only two clans viz. Vanarase and Avet or Aivat, were returned. According to an old

informant of this town, their caste consists of the following five *bedugu* (exogamous clans) (i) Vanarase, (ii) Avet or Aivat, (iii) Atock, (iv) Lekhander or Rekhandler and (v) Sindhya. The Atocks and the Sindhyas, it was reported, are in the relationship of father and son, while the Vanarase and the Rekhandlers are brothers. Thus, Atock and Sindhya together constitute a single exogamous group and so also the Vanarase and Rekhandler. In essence, therefore, there are only 3 clans and 2 sub-clans in their caste. The Gowda or headman for the caste is always a Vanarase while the accountant cum adviser is an Aivat. The Atock (and in his absence the Sindhya) performs the task of spreading the *Kambli* (mat) on all important occasions. Thus in the hierarchy of clans Vanarase occupies the top-most place. In Hariyabbe village and also in Ambalagere (both of Hiriyur Taluk) the informants made a mention of *Pashingya* also as one of the clans of their caste but left out Atock. In view of the fact that Nanjundayya (Ibid) mentions Panchangi, Ataka and Bhandari as being synonymous, it may be surmised that Pashingya is a corrupt form of the term Panchangi and hence a synonym for Atock or Ataka. The Sillekhyathas of Bhaktanakatte (Tarikere) belong to three clans viz: Sindhyavararu, Pashingyanavararu and Shettelloru. The informants could not recall the names of any more clans of their caste but vaguely recalled a division called Vanarase as being found near Bellary. The etymological meaning of these clan names are not known to the members of the caste and at present the chief function of the clan-organisation is merely the regulation of marriages. Marriage of persons belonging to the same clan is taboo as they stand in a brother-sister or father-daughter relationship.

V. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD HABITS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

(a) Dwelling

The Bombe section of the Sillekhyathas is distributed in small numbers (number of households ranging from one to ten in any particular village) over a wide area. In villages their houses are situated at the fringe of the inhabited area and are somewhat closer to those of the socially backward caste-groups. Thus, the three households at Ambalagere are living in houses close to those of Begars (Adikarnatakas) and Muslim labourers. At Hiriyur, the Sillekhyathas who were formerly residing well within the town were advised some 10 years ago to build their huts on the outskirts so that they may pursue their occupation of pig-rearing without hindrance to others.

They are found dispersed in all the tracts where they are scheduled and appear to be evenly distributed in the Malnad and Maidan regions of the State. Talukwise break-up of their district population totals (rural) reveals that Channagiri with 234 Sillekyathas, tops the list and is followed by Hadagalli (164 persons) Hospet (161 persons) and Harapanahalli (157 persons). In these taluks too they seem to be dispersed in small numbers in numerous villages. In certain taluks, however, (e.g. Channagiri, Hunsur) the fishing section of the community may be encountered in larger numbers in colonies sponsored by the Government for their caste.

During August 1966 there were about one hundred households of Burude Bestas (fishing section) at Penjahally colony in Hunsur Taluk, Mysore District. According to the informants they have been residing in the same place ever since 1956 or so with occasional movement of men in quest of fish within the district. Since the founding of the colony in 1963 and the assistance given to them by the Government, most of them, it is said, have given up their nomadic life. Further, according to them, their caste-fellows are found in the vicinity of Kannambadi (Krishnarajasagar) and also in Shimoga district.

Both the major sections of Sillekyathas (i.e. the fishing and the Leather-puppet-shadow-play) may be come across in Tarikere Taluk. The fishermen are found in a village near the Bhadra (Lakkavally) Project area while the other group is residing in a village viz. Bhaktankatte, on the eastern border of the Taluk. Those at Bhaktankatte mentioned names of about a dozen villages where in a few families of their own caste are known to be residing.

There are two colonies—viz. Basavarajapura and Hosahalli—of Killekyata fishermen in Channagiri Taluk, Shimoga District. Both these are located very close to Shantisagara (formerly known as Sulekere) lake and they have been able to pursue their traditional occupation without break. In Basavarajapura colony 32 households were enumerated during the field visit in November, 1969 but according to informants—Hosahalli is more populous with 50 and odd households. They are also aware of the presence of their fellow castemen in certain parts of Mysore district, near Marikanive (Vanivilasa Sagar) in Chitradurga district and a few more places (such as Lakkavalli, Narasimharajapura, Mesur, Hulgi). They have no social intercourse with the Leather-puppet-shadow-

play group and are not aware of the places where the latter can be encountered.

Field study revealed the presence of Sillekyathas in relatively large numbers (16 households) in Hiriyr Town (Chitradurga District). One to three households of their caste are said to be found in the villages of Ambalagere, Somenahalli, Hartikote, Kalavarahalli, Hariyabbe, Jongonahalli, Hoovinahole, Enachakal gudda, Jondakere, Bedarahalli, Chowiur, Belagere, Huliya, Hosahalli (near Bukkapatna) Dodda aghara and Adlur—all these places being within a radius of about 20 miles from Hiriyr. All of them belong to the Leather-puppet-shadow-play group and have no notion about the relationship that might have subsisted between their own ancestors and those of the contemporary fishing Killekyatas.

During the 1961 Census, 2807 Sillekyathas were enumerated separately as a Scheduled Caste in the 10 districts of the State already referred to. Information about their numbers in the other regions of the State is not available as they have not been enumerated separately. According to Narasimmiyengar (1893, Vol. XXV Pt-II) there were 93 Sillekyatas (55 males and 48 females) of whom 79 were from Shimoga district and the rest from Chitradurga district (vide Table XVI). In 1901, they numbered 997 (337 males and 624 females) and were returned from the districts of Bangalore, Mysore, Mandya, Hassan, Kolar, Kadur (now Chikmagalur), Shimoga, Tumkur and Chitradurga—their centres of concentration being Shimoga and Chitradurga districts. (Ananda Row 1903, XXIV P. 544). However, Nanjundayya (1911, XXII. P. 1) remarks "there is reason to believe that this (population of about 1,000 made up of 373 males and twice as many females) is a result of faulty enumeration, and they form a larger section, and the disparity between the sexes cannot be so great". During the 1911 Census, 982 Sillekyathas were returned (Census of India, 1911, Volume XXI Part I. Report P. 175). Population details in respect of this caste are not available for the subsequent Censuses (except 1961) and it would therefore be futile to attempt a study of the variation of their numbers over a period of time. If, inspite of the doubt cast on the reliability of the 1901 returns, it is reckoned as the base, then, their population may be said to have increased 2.81 times during the past 60 years. It must be recalled that between 1901 and 1961 several territorial changes have occurred in the areas of enumeration, the most important of which is the inclusion of Bellary district in Mysore. Information about the factors affecting the population

growth (such as birth rate, death rate and migration) are also not available.

The table below furnishes the 1961 population of Sillekyathas by age and sex.

TABLE 2 Population by age and sex.

Sex Age Groups	Males		Females		Persons	
	No.	percent	No.	percent	No.	percent
All ages	1379	100.0	1428	100.0	2807	100.0
0—14	606	43.9	679	47.6	1235	45.8
15—44	503	36.5	559	39.1	1062	37.8
45 and above	268	19.5	187	13.1	455	16.2
Age not stated	2	0.1	3	0.2	5	0.2

The sex ratio among the sillekyathas comes to 1035 females for every 1000 males. Comparison of sex ratio by age groups reveals the preponderance of men in the 45 and above age group (ratio 700 females per 1,000 males). In the other two age groups of 0-14 and 15-44, the sex ratio is 1120 and 1111. However, as Sillekyathas practice polygyny to a considerable extent, over-population of females among them does not constitute a serious problem.

The higher proportion of young men and women as revealed by the age data indicates the growth potential of the caste in the years to come.

During the 1961 Census, 2773 Sillekyathas (98.8%) were returned from the rural areas while only 34 (1.2 per cent) were from the urban areas. Even this meagre urban population, it may be observed, was scattered over five districts [viz. Chitradurga (16), Bellary (8), Shimoga (7), Hassan (2) and Bangalore (1)]. The high proportion in the rural areas may perhaps be attributed to their profession of leather-puppet-shadow-play which secured for them the patronage of villagers and also of the Government to some extent.* It was reported at Hiriyr, that in recent years many of their caste-fellows, who rear pigs, are migrating to towns (or else reverting to a nomadic life) because of the difficulties they encounter in villages. It is significant that 10 out of the 16 households enumerated at Hiriyr town in 1969 are of recent immigrants. One of the factors which bound them to the village appears to be the exclusive rights enjoyed by specific families in respect of giving puppet-shadow-play performances (also tattooing) whenever called upon to do so by the villagers of not only in that particular village but also in a number of adjacent ones. Thus, the family

at Hariyabbe enjoys even to-day such rights in Hariyabbe, Goolya, Mungusuvalli, Marenahalli and Malappannahalli, while that at Ambalagere village has rights over Yeraballi, Hartikote, Kotigi, Malapanahalli, Salabommanahalli, Devara Koppa, Eshwara-gere, Abbinahole, Kambathalli, Bidirakere and Maranahalli.

III. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

About the physical characteristics of the Sillekyathas of Bijapur district, Campbell observes as follows "As a rule they are tall and well-built; and though not so fair as Gujarat Bhats are much fairer than Dhangars or Bedars. The moustache is worn, but the beard or whiskers apparently never. The hair is short; but in fulfilment of a vow persons may occasionally be seen whose hair has never been cut. Even when worn long the hair is not coiled like a Bairagi's but gathered under a turban. The Killekyata never have the wild look of a Kathkari or a Garodi" (1934, XXIII, P. 198). In the case of the Sillekyathas found in the areas where they are now a Scheduled Caste a similar description would be apt.

IV. FAMILY, CLAN, KINSHIP AND OTHER ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

Published data regarding size and composition of family among Sillekyathas are not available for any particular period. During the field-visit in November 1969, in all 30 households (with 126 persons) of Sillekyathas belonging to leather-puppet-shadow-play section were enumerated. [Hiriyr town—15 households with 48 persons (25 males and 23 females) besides one large household with 30 members some of whom

*Please see P.518 Iyer, I.K.A. and Nanjundayya H.V. (1930, III) "Killekyatas have occasionally been given *inams* for their profession of which some exist in this State, though the condition of service has been removed (Mysore Revenue Manual P. 248)".

In Huchchanahatti hamlet of Bhaktanakatte village, Sillekhyathas, Gollas, Bhovis and Banajaras are living together in close proximity. Here too, a caste-wise grouping of households is clearly discernible. The houses have come up according to convenience and therefore no definable pattern has emerged.

Most of the fishing Killekyathas, it is said, have been rehabilitated in colonies. Their settlements are generally larger consisting of scores of households. There is one such colony at Penjahally (Hunsur Taluk) containing about one hundred households. Most of them were nomadic till about 1955, when they secured lands for cultivation and built temporary huts in Penjahally Kaval village. The colony proper was founded in about 1963 when a drinking water well was sunk and housing grants were released. In 1965 an Ashram School was started. Close to this colony three more new settlements (Jenukurubas, Gowdas and Harijans) have also come up in recent years. In the colony, streets have been laid and houses have been built on either side in rows, facing each other. The Basavarajapura Colony contains thirty-two households and apart from the Killekyathas, there are a few Banajaras and a Lingayat household. As an irrigation channel has been laid adjacent to the settlement, it appears that a proposal to shift their houses to a suitable place is under consideration. At present, their houses are in rows facing each other across mud roads diverging from the State road linking Channagiri and Shantisagara. Prior to the founding of this colony, these people were accustomed to spend the rainy season at a place called Doddadibba (very near the present colony).

Their houses have rectangular plans and are usually single-storeyed. In Malnad regions they live in tiled houses with sloping roofs while in the Maidan region they too dwell in houses with flat mud terraces. Huts, however, have sloping roofs irrespective of the region of their location. The houses are usually small and contain, a *jagali*, or open veranda, a hall or living room and a kitchen. These are seldom provided with bath rooms and no latrines are provided as their use is not common at all. Those who rear pigs have a separate pigsty while those having cattle, sometimes, accommodate these animals also within their dwelling unit. Of the nine households of Sillekhyathas at Bhaktanakatte, 8 are living in houses with mud walls and thatched roof. The other house has stone walls plastered with mud, and Mangalore-tiled roofing. Bamboo strips, cocoanut leaves with or without thatching grass (locally called *mede hullu* or *bade hullu*) are the materials used for the roof of these huts. At Ambalagere, one of their houses is mud walled with a flat

mud terrace, while the other two are thatched huts. All the three houses of Sillekhyathas at Hariyabbe are mud terraced and mud walled. At Hiriyur town, of the sixteen households located on the outskirts, 15 are thatched huts and one has a tiled roof. All these are in a row and each hut is separated from the adjacent ones by a few feet of vacant space. In the same row, the hut of reeds which enshrines *Gowrasendrada* Maramma (their tutelary deity) may also be seen. In the Government sponsored colonies their houses are better and more spacious. The walls are generally of brick and the roof of Mangalore tiles. Besides, wooden doors and windows are also provided. However, due to subsequent migrations and splitting of households, thatched huts may be found in such colonies too. Thus, at Basavarajapura, during the field study, six households were found residing in thatched huts. Besides, their deities Honnathamma and Maramma, are enshrined in a hut of reeds.

In former times, when the community was mainly nomadic, huts of reeds were in common use. Reeds (called *Apina Kaddi* or *Jhodu*) about 4 feet long fastened together like a mat by passing strong hemp twine through them (with the aid of *Dabbala* or needles) and with knots tied at either end formed the chief material of their huts. When not in use these mats could be rolled up and carried along. Three (or sometimes five) such mats—each about 6 cubits long—would be required for erecting a hut and the edges of the roof mats would be supported on two or three strong bamboo or wooden posts. Though a few are said to be leading a nomadic or seminomadic life even now, the use of such huts, it is said, has been given up. Such persons usually reside in the verandas of village temples or some respectable villagers. They no longer feel the necessity for carrying their huts of mats with them.

(b) Dress and ornaments

Men usually dress themselves with dhotis or lungis and shirts. The Dhoti may be worn with a *kache* (one end of it is passed between the thighs and tucked at the back) or without—in which case it covers the waist and below down to the ankles like a petticoat. Lungis, which cannot be worn in *kache* style, are also in common use. Several among them, both young and middle aged men, ordinarily put on knickers and preserve dhotis and lungis for special occasions. Underwear and vests are also used by many young men. Barring a few men who prefer to remain bareheaded most of the men of this caste use a headscarf. Coats

are occasionally used by a few. Boys and adolescents put on knickers and shirts. Use of foot wear is not very common.

Women's apparel consists of sarees and blouses. Generally the saree is worn without a *kache* and in the fashion that is common in the region. Only a few, it is said, are in the habit of using undergarments. They do not use any headgear. Only a few use footwear. Girls between 9 and 14 also use sarees of smaller dimensions, called *kirge*. The itinerant woman who pursue tattooing carry with them a cloth bag (*jholige*) suspended from the left shoulder.

Gold earstuds and finger rings either of gold or silver are ornaments in use among some of their men. Young boys are adorned with silver anklets, silver waist-strings and gold ear-rings. Their women too are very fond of ornaments of gold and silver. Two of the female informants at Bhaktanakatte had on their persons the following ornaments—*Chidi* (earstuds) of gold, *bavuli* (crescent shaped gold piece worn on the upper rim of the ears), *bugudi* and *eidara gadaga* (both of gold)—both, ear-ornaments; black bead necklace with *Tali* the gold pendant; *moogabattu* nose-screw of gold; *sontapatti* waist-band of silver, *bandi* or silver armlet; *sarige* or silver wristlet; glass bangles and silver toe-rings. As among others, among them too all married women wear ear-studs, nose-screw, black-bead necklace with a *Tali* (gold pendant) or with a *bile mani* (white bead), bangles and toe-rings. These ornaments are taboo for widows who may however continue to use silver waist bands and metal bangles. Unmarried girls may use all the above mentioned ornaments except the blackbead-necklace with *Tali*, the *bugudi*, *eidara gadaga*, *Sarige* and *bandi*. The one time popularity of tattooing as a form of personal decoration has declined over the past two decades. It appeals most to women, though occasionally some men too—especially those having rheumatic pains—resort to it in view of its supposed curative value. Most of their women, particularly of the older generation, are themselves expert tattooers. The forehead, the temples, the chin, the forearms, the upper arms and the back of the palms are the parts of the body suitable for such tattoo ornamentation. While young (i.e. below 10 years) the girls undergo the first course of this painful form of decoration by getting their foreheads (at the place where their eyebrows meet) and chins tattooed with circular patches. Again,

after attaining womanhood, and according to their whims, they have their forearms, back of palms or upper arms decorated with tattoo-designs of their choice. Now-a-days it is reported, the art of tattooing is being pursued by only a handful of their women. These women prepare at home the pigment (called *Gondan Kaliz* in Marathi and *hache kappu* in Kannada) required and store it in small-mouthed bottles or *hooji kudike* (earthen containers). According to some of the informants, the pigment is nothing but the thick layer of lampblack obtained by placing an earthen lid (preferably the bottom half of a broken earthen pot, called *boki*, placed upside down) on top of a burning kerosene oil wick-lamp for a few hours*. This is later scraped and collected in the container and whenever required, stirred with a little water added to it. With a reed (*soge kaddi*, reed of cocoanut leaf or any other) which is frequently dipped in this liquid the design is drawn clearly on the body and then the skin is pierced with a set of three sharp needles fastened together and held firmly by the tattooer. It is believed that the green pigmentation occurs later as a result of the reaction of the blood with the lamp black solution. To divert the attention of the person being tattooed, from the pain she is inflicting, the tattooer sings simultaneously. The tattooer gets in turn a few small coins or a measure of grain or some old clothes for her services. The tattooers emphasise that it is the tattoo marks that keep company of a woman even when she is buried in the grave and thus persuade even the most unwilling woman to undergo the painful feat of getting tattooed.

Women generally plait their hair into a pigtail or gather it into a knot at the back. To keep the hair smooth, cocoanut oil is frequently applied and the hair is combed with wooden, plastic or rubber combs. Their young men and some of the aged too have short cropped hair and it is only a few who wear long uncut hair which they gather into a knot at the back. The village barbers do not appear to have had any objections to offering their services to the Sillekhyathas even in the past (cf Iyer L.K.A. and Nanjundayya 1930 III P. 535).

(c) Food habits

Both the sections of Sillekhyathas are non-vegetarians. They, occasionally, consume the meat of sheep, goats and poultry. Among them beef is taboo and it

*Note. According to some others, betel-leaf juice is first smeared on the inner side of the lid and then used as the receptacle for the lampblack. Formerly, it is said, castor-oil wick-lights were in use. Also according to a few other informants the juice of neem-leaves or leaves of *hagalakayi* plant or of *chapparadavare*—simply called *Hache soppu*—was being used instead of betel-leaf juice. It is further stated the pigment so obtained could be used for painting the puppet dolls too. For a detailed note on tattooing in Mysore the reader may consult Ananda Row, 1903 C. of I. 1901 XVI MYS.

has been so for generations. According to Nanjundayya (1911 P. 12 and Iyer L.K.A. 1930 P. 535) they eschew beef and pork. However, field investigation indicates that their aversion to pork is not universal. The fishing Killekyathas of Basavarajapura colony are reported to have given up pork only during the past 10 to 15 years. Several Sillekhyathas of the puppet-shadow-play section especially in Chitradurga district rear pigs and some among them are accustomed to eat pork. In the past too consumption of pork is said to have been in vogue among them. The Sillekhyathas of Hiriur town, Ambalagere and Hariyabbe reported that no restriction on pork consumption has been imposed in their caste but in recent years some among them have voluntarily given it up. At Bhaktanakatte, the Sillekhyathas expressed their strong aversion to pork and also to the occupation of pig-rearing. Formerly, 40 to 50 years ago they too had no such inhibitions and investigation revealed that as a consequence of their settlement, a generation ago, in this hamlet where-in there is a shrine of Junjappa Swamy they had to eschew pork. The other residents of this hamlet too (viz. Gollas, Bhovis and Banajaras) do not eat pork. The fishing section consume fresh-water fish more frequently than their shadow-play counterparts. The reason is obvious—while the former catch fish to earn a living the latter have to buy either fresh or dry fish in the market. Because of poverty, mutton is consumed only on special occasions.

Ragi, jowar and recently, maize are the staple cereals consumed. A few, who can afford to do so eat cooked rice every day, atleast in small quantities. For most of them rice and wheat preparations are dainties meant for festive or certain social occasions. *Mudde* and *Saru* or *Rotti* and *chutney* are the items of their everyday food. *Mudde* is the round lump of cooked ragi or jowar meal (or a combination of both) while *Saru* is a soup of pulses or vegetables or both. *Rotti* is the unleavened cake made out of ragi, jowar or maize flour and *chutney* is the paste-like spiced side-dish. When the cereals are in short supply they prepare gruel instead of *mudde* which needs a relatively larger quantity of cereals. They use leafy vegetables such as *sabbasige*, *honagone*, *pundi*, etc., which they collect free in fields and also occasionally buy such vegetables as brinjals, gourds, beans and onions. Generally, they take food thrice a day.

They cook food in earthen-vessels using dry twigs and faggots for fuel. Sometimes, dried cowdung cakes and split firewood are used as fuel. The cooking vessels are cleaned often and the fireplace is kept tidy by smearing it with cow-dung wash frequently.

Both the sections of Sillekhyathas seem to have been very fond of liquor since generations. In 1911, Nanjundayya remarks that "Both the sexes indulge in liquor". In recent decades, however, their addiction to liquor is said to have subsided—one of the reasons being the prevalence of prohibition for more than a decade in the Ex-Mysore State region and also in Bombay-Karnatak area. Now-a-days, women rarely take toddy. In view of its invigorating effect, arrack is administered, in small quantities, to women during their post-natal periods. The fishing Sillekhyathas appear to be more fond of liquor than their shadow-play brethren. Moreover, among both the sections, it is claimed that most of their youngmen are not at all addicted to liquor. Of late, among them too, the habit of drinking coffee or tea is gaining popularity. For this purpose they usually visit the teashops of the village. Most of their men smoke bidis. Chewing of betel-leaves and arecanut with *chunam* (lime) is a habit common to both men and women of the community.

(d) Material objects distinctive of the community

Their household goods chiefly consist of some earthen pots of different shapes and various sizes used for cooking and for storing water and articles of food, besides a few metal vessels (brass, bronze and aluminium). Most of them also possess mats of date-palm leaves or of reeds which they use while sleeping. *Kambli*s (coarse woollen rugs) and quilts (patch work coverlets) are also common. Furniture (such as chairs, sofas, benches, tables etc.) is a rare luxury which only a few of them can afford (one household possessing chairs and sofas was come across at Hiriur during the study). Most of the households belonging to the fishing section possess fishing nets and also floats (dry gourds or empty tins) which they require to earn their living. Even those households which do not contain fishermen (e.g. a widow with or without dependent children) generally have the fishing nets so that these can be hired out. A fisherman who catches fish with a hired net has to share the catch equally with the owner of the net. The households of fishermen also possess *Takalis* (spindles for spinning the yarn), hemp twine, nylon yarn, needles, ropes, small weights and floats.

Most of the households belonging to the *Bombe* section do not possess the leather puppets which are so essential for the shadow-plays. One of the reasons is that in recent years many have given up the profession. Yet another reason is said to be that even in the past, the set of puppets was not individually owned, atleast

as far as the settled section was concerned. A group of households, usually of brothers or agnatic cousins, owned a full set and kept it as a mobile unit fulfilling the sporadic needs of each household concerned. Probably, when *sanna bombes* (single piece puppets) were popular each household owned a set but there is apparently no evidence to this effect. The puppets are piled one upon the other in large, rectangular wicker boxes with lids. A complete set of leather puppets consists of about 200 or 300 different characters. Of the 16 households enumerated at Hiriur none possessed the set of puppets. At Bhaktanakatte, only one household (which was away on the day of field visit) is said to possess a set of small puppets. It was learnt that two other households which gave up the profession only during the past 20 years or so, handed over their puppets sometime back to one of their fellow-castemen who called on them from Bellary. At Hariyabbe, between them, the three households have a set of *dodda bombes* (large puppets) which are occasionally lent out to their agnatic kinsmen residing at Ambalagere also. At present such sets of puppets are said to be available with the Sillekhyathas of Hoovina-hole, Enachakalgudda, Gottikere and Somenahalli—all round about Hiriur town. During the study it was reported by a few that some unscrupulous youngmen of the community have in recent years been eagerly collecting the puppets from their unsuspecting caste fellows either free or for a very low price and disposing them off in cities like Bangalore at considerable gain.

Some among them, who have taken to begging as a means of livelihood possess a harmonium and *dolu* (percussion instrument) which are used as accompaniment to their songs. The cultivators in the caste own agricultural implements such as the plough, harrow, interculturator, sickles, spades etc. Formerly, as nomads, they used to have large wicker baskets, large cloth bags called *Kantle chila*, ropes, bamboo or wooden staffs and the like.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

Their settlements are generally clean. Their huts or houses are not provided with baths or latrines. They are careful not to spill excess of water inside their dwellings and some of their kitchens are provided with holes to drain out waste water and at times the women of the household use this corner of the kitchen for bathing purposes. Generally, both men and women bathe outside the house and divert the waste water away from their dwelling. They use open fields for

answering the calls of nature. The house and the yard are swept clean everyday and the rubbish is thrown away at some distance. The floor-space is frequently covered with cow-dung-wash and kept tidy. Their men and women wash their limbs outside the house and so also the vessels in use are cleaned outside. Thus, sometimes, the waste water collects in cess pools and stagnates. Most of them are accustomed to clean their teeth every morning. While the fishermen who perforce dip their bodies in water while fishing may be reckoned as accustomed to bathing everyday, the rest of the Sillekhyathas generally bathe once or twice a week. The clothes too are washed once a week by the women of the house, at some nearby stream, tank or well.

The Sillekhyathas are susceptible to all the common diseases that afflict the general population. Normally they neglect treatment at the initial stages of attack of any disease. When the illness continues over a long period they take medicines from some *pundit* (a practitioner of herbal medicines) or an allopathic medical practitioner. Most of them are familiar with mixtures, pills and injections. They also believe in the effects of evil eye and in ghosts and spirits. In cases when the ailments are suspected to be due to causes other than physiological, they consult a medium-*cum*-medicine-man irrespective of his caste affiliations. Among themselves the Killekyathas of Penjahally colony have three such medium-*cum*-medicine-men. The fishing section resort more frequently to animal sacrifice to appease their deities and spirits in fulfilment of vows undertaken during prolonged illness of its members.

VII. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Marathi is accepted as their mother-tongue by both the sections of Sillekhyathas, Francis (1902 XV Pt. I P. 161) speaks of Killekyata as a caste of Canarese beggars. But then, the allusion seems to be to their habitation in Kannada-speaking areas and not to the language spoken by them. All the other earlier references to the caste have stated Marathi as their language and on that basis have pointed out that their original home must have been well within the Maharashtra territory. About their language Campbell (1884 XXIII, P. 198) observes, "though all speak Kanarese, the home tongue is a dialect of Marathi mixed with many Kanarese words as *bislo* for *baslo* I eat; *vartun dila* for *Lihun dila* gave in writing; and *apni* for *hukum* order: *engyani* and *gandgyani* are their peculiar terms for bride's and bridegroom's parties". (c.f. Enthoven 1922. Vol. P. 233). Obviously since the 1880s, (i.e. during the past

6 or 7 decades) their home-speech has gradually undergone numerous changes, for many of their contemporary youngmen are now unable to either speak or follow Marathi. This is particularly true in case of the Sillekyaathas who have settled in villages one or more generations ago. Corrupt Marathi is even now understood and spoken among the fishing Killekyaathas (e.g. at Basavarajpura and also Penjahally. In pursuit of their profession of puppet-shadow-plays the Sillekyaathas appear to have acquired fluency in Telugu and Kannada which are the languages predominantly spoken in their neighbourhood. Some among them, it is said, were able to read the epics and also to write down excerpts from Ramayana, Mahabharata etc., as material for their plays. Now, most of the Sillekyaathas speak Kannada both at home and outside. Some are

conversant with spoken Marathi and a few can speak Telugu as well.

According to the 1961 Census, amongst the 2807 Sillekyaathas only 257 (roughly 9.15 per cent) are literate. Sexwise, 16.67 per cent of the males (230 out of 1379) and 2.52 per cent of the females (37 out of 1412) are literate. It may be observed that these rates of literacy are fairly close to those returned by the Scheduled Caste population of the State (9.06 per cent; 14.87 per cent male and 3.04 per cent female). This conclusion is significant when it is remembered that the Sillekyaathas were formerly a nomadic people.

The following table furnishes details regarding education, by sex, according to the 1961 Census:

TABLE 3—Education among the Sillekyaathas

Sector	Population by sex		Illiterate		Literate without educational level		Educational level			
	Males	Females	M	F	M	F	Primary or Junior Basic		Matric or Higher Secondary & above	
							M	F	M	F
Rural	1361	1412	1146	1377	204	35	7	..	4	..
Urban	18	16	13	14	4	2	1	..	..	..
State	1379	1428	1159	1391	208	37	8	..	4	..

In their urban population, it is seen, 27.78 per cent of the males and 12.5 per cent of the females are literates. They are, however, overwhelmingly rural and in the rural sector the percentage of literacy comes to only 15.8 and 2.5 for males and females respectively. The districtwise data indicates that the rates of literacy are relatively higher among the Sillekyaathas of Chitradurga and Tumkur districts (vide Tables SCT III Part A(i); Census of India 1961. Vol. XI. Part V-A).

The table shows that of the 257 literate persons, as many as 245 (95.32 per cent approx.) are literate without any level of education; 8 (3.12 per cent) have attained only Primary or Junior Basic and the rest (viz. 1.56 per cent) have completed matriculation. The fact that most of them were formerly wanderers and that during the past 10-15 years efforts have been made to rehabilitate them in Colonies (particularly in the case of the fishing section) lends support to the view that the literate among them belong to the lower age-groups. At Penjahally Colony and also at Basavarajapura it was reported that none of the adults could read or write any language. At both the places, schools have been provided and sending children to schools is a new

experience to them. Kannada, the regional language is the medium of instruction.

As regards the shadow-play Sillekyaathas, several among them have been leading a settled life for over a generation and to some of them at least formal schooling is familiar. Those with a relatively higher level of education appear to belong to this group. At Bhaktanakatte, Ambalagere, Hiriyr and Hariyabbe, the informants could recount the names of a few persons known to them as having studied at least upto Matriculation. Some of the middle-aged men met with during the field study at these places reported their ability to read and write Kannada. Besides, several among them including some women, it is said, have learnt by rote the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata either in full or in part. This is necessary for all those who practise their traditional art of puppet-shadow-plays.

VIII. ECONOMIC LIFE

The ancestors of Sillekyaathas, it seems, were Mah-ratta Okkaligas following the profession of agriculture (Nanjundayya, Iyer, Campbell & Enthoven). Subsequent to their exodus from Maharashtra, they seem

to have exhibited a pronounced preference for a nomadic life and to have earnestly practised the profession of fishing or leather-puppet-shadow-play or both. Owing to this change in their way of life they lost interest in land, at least for a short period. In the course of their nomadic movement they, especially the Bombe section, soon developed good relations with the village communities and with the passage of time a few of them took to a settled life or became semi-nomadic with a more or less fixed residence. Under these conditions, their interest in land seems to have revived. The belief held by village-communities that the performance of shadow-plays depicting as they did the stories from great epics, appeased the supernatural powers and ensured timely rains and good yields led their patrons to be very generous. In several villages, it appears, rent-free lands were granted to the Sillekyaathas by the Government. Some of the big landlords too appear to have generously gifted away some lands to the Sillekyaathas. (For instance, the Sillekyaatha household which settled at Hariyabbe about 50 years ago, (now split up into three households) received a gift of nine acres of dry-land from a private land-lord). Subsequent to their settling down in villages, many among such families seem to have acquired lands by purchase also. Thus, a household settled at Ambalagere about 60 or 70 years ago (now split up into two units) acquired 14 acres of land by purchase some 30 years ago. So also, the Sillekyaathas of Bhaktanakatte have been purchasing lands during the past 20 or 25 years. Three of their households at Hiriyr town have purchased lands after 1960. Amongst the Sillekyaathas too, land has been held as individual property and it is usually the sons who inherit the property equally among themselves.

Since Independence, as a result of the ameliorative measures undertaken by the Government, many of them—particularly the fishing section—have acquired lands for cultivation by way of grants. Thus, it was reported at Penjahally Colony that in 1955 and in 1959 lands were granted to some 50 and 30 households respectively, of the fishing Killekyaathas at the rate of about 4 acres per household. Those settled in colonies at Basavarajapura and Hosahalli too, have received such land grants. A few of them, it is said, have since then acquired lands by purchase also. Thus, for the contemporary Sillekyaathas, land is an important economic resource.

Fishing has been the chief source of livelihood for one section of the community and continues to be so even now. They fish in large tanks and also in rivers. Every fisherman has to obtain a license (issued by the

Government on payment of the stipulated fee of Rs. 20) renewable every year, in respect of each of the water resources in which he wishes to operate. One peculiar feature that distinguishes a fisherman of this community is that he sits astride the rope with which the three floats are fastened together, and by the movement of his limbs goes ahead in water. The floats in use are generally one large and two smaller dry gourds (called *visha kumbala* or poisonous gourd). As there is a likelihood of these being broken or punctured, in recent years many seem to prefer the use of empty sealed tins.

The fisherman operates alone. He spreads his nets (called *Bidubale*) at suitable places and after a few hours draws these nets on to the land. These nets were formerly of hemp-twine and were about 20" wide and 200' to 400' long. At the lower edge of these nets earthen beads were fastened as weights while the upper edge was tied to innumerable hollow pieces of wood serving as floats. Soon after a net was woven it used to be boiled in lime-water before being used. Such nets lasted from 6 to 8 months only. These were replaced by cotton nets of more or less similar size and now nylon nets have become common. The nylon nets have larger eyelets (2" wide as against $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide) and measure about 10' by 300'. Weights at the lower edge are not necessary and for floats a few dry gourds tied at suitable distances are sufficient. At Penjahally colony a Fishermen's Co-operative Society was started in 1961 and nylon yarn worth about Rs. 10,000 it is said, was distributed. The fishermen of this Colony fish in the rivers of Lakshmanathirtha, Kabini, Cauvery, Hemavathi and in the Krishnarajasagar Lake and a few other large tanks in their neighbourhood. The fishermen at Basavarajapura Colony are also members of the Fishermen's Co-operative Society at Shantisagara. They fish mainly in the Shantisagar lake and also visit during the summer months the large tanks in the taluks of Shimoga, Honnali and Chitradurga. *Aval, Bale, Godali, Nevepaise, Katla, Murgul, Gowri* etc., are the local names of the fish they catch. The fish so caught are sold fresh to the villagers. Some of their women buy fish at cheaper rates and sell them in distant villages. During the season, it is said, the Muslim traders from Davangere and also other important towns visit the settlements of fishing Killekyaathas near Shantisagar Lake every morning and buy the fresh fish outright. Generally, the fishermen do not find it difficult to dispose of their catch.

When a fisherman uses a borrowed net, the catch is shared equally between himself and owner of the net. This custom provides a source of earning to women

In terms percentages, their 1961 population consists of 44.28 per cent workers and 55.72 per cent non-workers. Sexwise, 54.53 per cent of their males and 34.38 per cent of their females have been returned as economically active. As against their 54.74 per cent and 34.28 per cent of workers amongst the males and females of the rural areas, it is observed that 38.88 per cent of the urban males and 43.75 per cent of the urban females are workers. In view of the fact that the urban component in their total population is very meagre, such a rural urban comparison may not be of much significance. The proportions of workers in the Sillekyaatha population are very much lower than the averages for the total Scheduled Caste population in the State, which are 51.92 per cent (total), 61.67 per cent and 41.82 per cent among males and females respectively. The total working force of the Scheduled Caste population comprises 60.4 per cent males and 39.6 per cent females. Amongst Sillekyaathas also, the male component in their working force comes to 60.49 per cent.

Non-workers are usually the children (among whom a few are students), the housewives, and the old. Perhaps, included among them are a few persons who live by begging. Sixty per cent of the non-workers are females.

As their urban population is meagre, only the industrial classification of rural workers is discussed below. The table indicates that 499 of the total 1229 workers (40.60 per cent) are cultivators while another 193 (15.70 per cent) are agricultural labourers. It is significant to notice that 56.30 per cent of their workers are agricultural since they were formerly a nomadic people. The reasons for the revival of their interest in land and also the manner in which many of them have acquired lands, especially during the past 2 decades, have been indicated earlier. Most of the Sillekyaathas are now leading a settled life, while a few may be termed as semi-nomadic, and both the groups evince keener interest in agriculture. The proportion of agricultural workers is relatively larger among the female workers. While 65 per cent of the female-workers are engaged in agriculture only 50 per cent of the male-workers are so engaged. In keeping with the common tradition of reporting oneself as a cultivator if one owns lands, the Sillekyaathas also report themselves as cultivators even though such lands have been leased out to others for cultivation.

Next in importance is the III industrial group viz., "mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing etc.,", which accounts for 18.39 per cent of the workers. The

importance of fishing in the economy of the Sillekyaathas is evident. It has been the traditional and characteristic profession of one of their major groups. Fishing in inland waters has been regulated and the State Government have also been taking earnest measures to improve pisciculture. Amongst the male workers 27.92 per cent come under this category. Their (particularly of the Bombe section) association with and interest in pig-rearing has already been referred to. Some among them who may have returned their occupation as trading in pigs even though they actually reared pigs and sold them might have been classified under "trade" rather than under "live-stock". It is usually women, children and the old that tend cattle and goats owned by the family. Workers have been returned under household industry too. Perhaps men and women of the fishing section who produce and mend fishing nets have been included in this category. During the field study it was reported that a few men among them also work as tailors. So also there may be a few who are engaged in producing leather-puppets. The fact that 2 male workers have been returned as being engaged in tanning and curing of hides lends support to this view. Some of their women are engaged in buying and selling of fish in villages. A few may even be shopkeepers (one such instance was noticed at Ambalagere during the field study). The workers coming under the category "other services" account for 11.15 per cent with 9.93 per cent among males and 13.02 per cent among females. This is a residuary group and perhaps those engaged in leather-puppet shadow-plays and in tattooing, the two traditional profession of the Sillekyaathas, have also been included under this category. During the field study, it was observed that the profession of leather puppet shadow play was being pursued by one household at Bhaktanakatte (semi nomadic) and two households (settled families) each at Hariyabbe and Ambalagere. A few more persons at Bhatanakatte spoke of their proficiency in the art, which they have however given up during the past decade or more. So also, none of the households enumerated at Hiriyyur are pursuing the profession. Tattooing has lost its attraction and only a few women now practise the art to augment the meagre incomes of their families.

IX. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

Despite their awareness of physiological causes of conception and child-birth, the Sillekyaathas share the common belief that children are gifts of God. When a woman fails to bear children even after the lapse of a reasonable period of conjugal life, the couple undertake vows to seek divine blessing. Barrenness, is attribu-

ted to the sins committed by the woman during her previous life. The feelings of other women to such barren women are ambivalent ranging from real sympathy to contempt. A man whose wife is sterile may readily take a second wife to perpetuate his family line. In case of miscarriages and continued still-births, they take medicines prescribed by reputed quacks. At Bhaktanakatte 2 cases of barrenness in women were reported and on enquiry it was reported that as their efforts to invoke divine blessings too had failed they were contemplating adoption of a son.

Subsequent to her marriage, the woman moves to her husband's home and it is usually here that she gives birth to her children. Their former nomadic habits in fact rendered it difficult for the woman even to visit her parents frequently. The custom of inviting the woman, during her first pregnancy, to her parental home was not customary among them (c.f. Nanjundayya 1911 and Iyer 1930, III, P. 525). However, amongst the families of Bombe section such a practice is slowly becoming popular. Pregnancy is recognised during the fourth or fifth month when its usual symptoms become apparent. Most of the caste groups in villages and towns felicitate the woman during the fifth or seventh month of her first pregnancy. But such a custom is not in vogue amongst the Sillekyaathas. During the advanced stages of pregnancy the woman refrains from exhausting and strenuous work and she is also careful about the food she takes.

Child-birth occurs in a corner of the usual place of residence. Privacy is secured by putting up *thatikes* (bamboo-strip mats) or cloth screens. The former practice of erecting a separate shed for her (cf. Nanjundayya 1911 and Nanjundayya and Iyer 1930 III P. 526) seems to have been abandoned during the past three or four decades. At Bhaktanakatte (i.e. Huchchanahatti hamlet) however, the Sillekyaathas (and as reported the other resident caste groups too) erect a thatched hut, called *janana kalada gudisalu*, a short distance away from the inhabited area, for her use during her travail and for the subsequent five days. Their adoption of this practice is attributed to the presence of the Junjappa Swamy shrine near their hamlet. They are aware of the uniqueness of this practice. The fishing Killekyathas of Basavarajapura colony mentioned their practice of securing privacy by erecting temporary *thatike* on two sides of the outer verandha of their residence. At the time of birth, the woman is assisted by a *Soolagithi* (untrained midwife) of their own caste or of some caste other than Adikarnataka, besides one or two of her elderly female kin. She rests on a thick mattress of hay spread on the floor

covered with cow-dung wash. It is only when serious complications arise that they procure the services of trained midwives (The informants at Bhaktanakatte recounted of two such events during the past decade). Soon after the birth the umbilical cord is severed by the Soolagithi or by the mother herself, using a sharp sickle or knife. This instrument is then placed by the mother's bedside for five days to ward off evil spirits. The after-birth is gathered in an earthen pot and buried at a spot suitable for bathing the infant and the mother on the following days. The pit is known as *Sootha-kada gundi* and being loosely filled with earth, a stone slab is placed on it. On five days she is bathed regularly and on the fifth evening the pit is completely filled and worshipped by burning some incense and joss sticks and offering plantains. Inside the lying-in room too Satvai (or *Shatte*) is worshipped by the mother. On the winnowing-basket that was being used to hold the infant, the design of a human being is drawn in charcoal and before it are placed some pulses and cereals in leaf cups. Among some of the Sillekyaathas the custom of offering of hen in sacrifice is also prevalent. A cocoanut is split and offered to the spirit. The dishes prepared for the day are served on a plantain leaf and later handed over to the Soolagithi who is also given a piece of cloth, some cash and cereals for her services. The same evening the child is placed in the cradle and simultaneously an elderly female relative or the maternal uncle of the infant confers a name.

They observe pollution due to a birth in the family for five days. Bathing and then sipping a few drops of *thirtha* (holy water) obtained from a temple removes their impurity. At Bhaktanakatte, on the fifth day after the washerman purifies the isolation hut by sprinkling cow-dung water, the hut is dismantled. Thereafter, the infant and the mother move over to the usual place of residence. The period of confinement varies between four to twelve weeks depending upon the economic condition of the family. Before the expiry of one month, the mother worships water in a well by dropping some milk and ghee and fetches a pitcherful of water to her home. During the period of confinement, the mother has good food—usually rice, ghee (clarified butter), copra, gur—and also such spices as ginger, garlic and pepper. On the day after the delivery she subsists only on a liquid diet and she is also given some arrack. After the ninth day she also takes some indigenous home-made recuperative preparations. By the end of the first month she gradually reverts to her normal diet. Breast-feeding of the infant starts on the third day and suckling continues till the child is about 18 months old. The child is given

who cannot themselves go fishing but at the same time can sit at home and weave the nets. As already mentioned, fishing is not a group activity among them. During their nomadic spells, the fishermen move about in twos or threes from place to place and camp in the outer verandas of temples, schools or of some big houses, for a week or less depending upon the catch and availability of other facilities. Sometimes, they move in small family groups taking with them their wives and children too. These people carry their household articles in wicker baskets and a few carry their reed huts too. When the distances to be covered is long and the places are connected by bus they prefer travelling by bus. As their visits to the large tanks and rivers have been regular over the decades, the people of those villages which they frequent are familiar with these fishermen.

Livestock rearing is a subsidiary occupation for the Sillekyathas. In fact, Campbell (1884, XXI) speaks of Killekyatas of Belgaum as a class of cattle-keepers. Acquisition of land in the recent decades, by many of them has enhanced the importance of livestock rearing. Moreover, some of them have also received aid for the purchase of bullocks during the past 10 or 15 years. During the field study it was noticed that 5 of their 9 households at Bhaktanakatte owned bullocks, one of them 2 pairs. So also, at Ambalagere, one of the three households owned a pair of bullocks but none did so at Hariyabbe. In Hiriya town only one of the households owned bullocks and incidentally this was the only household which had cultivation as an occupation. Of the fishing Killekyatas, none at Basavarajapura Colony owned bullocks while at Penjahally Colony it was reported that 27 households had by 1966 received grants and purchased a pair of bullocks each. Most of their households possess one or two cows while only a few rear buffaloes. Both the groups of Sillekyathas rear goats in small numbers besides some poultry birds. On the other hand, several amongst the *Bombe* section rear pigs and, it is said, they have been doing so for generations past at least in certain tracts (Chitradurga District). The Sillekyathas of Hariyabbe and of Hiriya town have pig-rearing as an important and profitable occupation. Pigs are sold through intermediaries or directly to butchers in big cities such as Bangalore, Mangalore etc. The more affluent pig-breeders keep on moving from place to place and one of the reasons offered is that, in certain villages, the residents do not allow pig-rearers to stay on for longer periods. The Sillekyathas of Ambalagere village gave up pig-rearing recently while those at

Bhakanakatte have even forgotten their association with pig-breeding. In the case of the latter, the reason is that they have been living with Gollas and also there is the shrine of Junjappaswamy in their hamlet. Junjappa Swamy is the patron deity of the local Golla community and is regarded to be very sacred and powerful, desecration of either the temple or the settlement over which his influence is high, results in severe punishment. Hence, the Sillekyathas of this village do not rear pigs.

As regards the other animals they rear, mention may be made of donkeys and ponies. Formerly, these were being used as pack animals while, as nomads these people covered long distances on foot. Two households possessing one and three donkeys respectively were come across during the study. They also keep poultry in small numbers.

Presenting puppet-shadow-plays to rural audiences has been the most characteristic occupation of the Sillekyathas*. At the initial stages of the introduction of this art they seem to have employed small and crude puppets cut out from a single piece of leather. Their musical instrument too was very simple. A reed (*Apina kaddi*) smeared with wax and fixed at the centre of a *gangala* (dining plate of bell-metal) placed on the lap, usually of a woman operator, produced shrill notes by its constant vibration. This was in addition to the drum beaten by a man or woman. The stage consisted of white sheets of cloth behind which the artist sat with all his paraphernalia. A castor-oil wick light (usually in a soapstone receptacle) placed about 3 or 4 feet above ground level and behind the screen provided the necessary light. Some 60 years ago it seems the technique of shadow-play underwent significant changes. The smaller and cruder puppets were replaced by multi-piece human-size puppets with well defined and moveable limbs. Musical instruments such as harmonium and *Mridanga* (drum) came into vogue and the stage too, was greatly improved. As Nanjundayya observes, (1911, see also Nanjundayya and Iyer III. 1930) "The stage of the Dodda Bombe Atadavaru, on the other hand, is built on a raised platform and is decorated with plantain and mango leaves. It is spacious enough to accommodate within its curtains the whole troupe furnished with fiddle, drum, cymbals etc. The text is taken from recognised books on the epics, and players including women are all literate. The women do the singing while the men show the pictures over the curtain. The play begins at about 10 p.m. and continues the whole night.

*For details of technique of production of the leather-puppets and also of presenting the plays, (Chandrasekhar, A., Census of India 1961, Volume II—Andhra Pradesh). Part VII-A(i) Selected Crafts of Andhra Pradesh may be consulted.

The performance is enlivened by the appearance, on the scene at intervals, of the buffoons, a Killekyata and his wife in fantastic garb, whose part sometimes borders on indecency. When the performance is over, the whole party go to every house in the village and get presents in kind, in addition to the lumpsum collected by the whole village. Besides, during the enactment of the play they demand for and obtain presents of cloths and other articles from the spectators. It is considered auspicious for rains and crops to have these shows about the harvest time, and in certain places, Killekyathas are entitled to customary annual fees for their services. Agriculturists draw with charcoal powder rude figures of a man on each of the corners of a field when there is a crop on it. The various agricultural implements are said to be the limbs of this demon who is known as Karebhanta or Killekyata. His brother known by the name of Jokumara is invoked to bring about rains in seasons of drought" pp 14 and 15; pp. 532-533 of Iyer). Some of the informants recounted their former habit of demanding grains from farmers as the share of Karebhanta. Of

late, however, most of the Sillekyathas have given up this profession. A few have now become beggars and keep about moving from place to place in small family units. They play on the harmonium and on drums while singing during their mendicancy. Amongst those of the *Bombe* section encountered during the study, 10 households reported subsisting mainly on alms (6 at Hiriya, 2 at Bhaktanakatte and one each at Ambalagere and Hariyabbe).

Tattooing, the characteristic profession of their women, has it is said, been experiencing a severe setback during the past 20 or 30 years. As a result, many of their younger women have not even learnt their traditional art, let alone earning a living by it.

Statistical data, according to the 1961 Census, about industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers in respect of the Sillekyathas are furnished in the following table:

TABLE 4—Industrial Classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
Total Population of Sillekyathas	34	18	16	2773	1361	1412	2807	1379	1428
Total workers	14	7	7	1229	745	484	1243	752	491
A. Workers									
I. As Cultivators	..	..	..	499	298	201	499	298	201
II. As Agricultural Labourers	1	1	..	193	79	114	194	80	114
III. In Mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing etc.	5	2	3	226	208	18	231	210	21
IV. At Household Industry	1	..	1	119	75	44	120	75	45
V. In Manufacture other than Household Industry	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
VI. In Construction	3	2	1	1	..	1	4	2	2
VII. In trade and commerce	..	..	..	54	11	43	54	11	43
VIII. In transport, storage and communications	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
IX. In Other Services	4	2	2	137	74	63	141	76	65
B. Non-Workers	20	11	9	1544	616	928	1564	627	937
C. Workers in special occupations									
(i) Tanning and currying of hides and skins	..	..	..	2	2	..	2	2	..
(ii) Scavenging	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

(Source: Tables SCT-1. Industrial Classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex for Scheduled Castes. Census of India, 1961—Volume XI, Mysore, Part V-A.)

solid food gradually after it is about 9 or 10 months old.

Of the childhood ceremonies, mention may be made of the first haircutting ceremony. This is performed for both boys and girls during either the ninth or the eleventh month or else during the third or fifth year. In fulfilment of a vow, it is customary among them also to take the child to a temple for the purpose. The mother's brother or mother's father of the child or else their local headman cuts the hair. Among them too, the earlobes are pierced and adorned with ear-rings.

(b) Puberty

During her first menstruation the girl is regarded as impure and segregated for five days. The Sillekhyathas at Bhaktanakatte erect isolation huts for use by such a woman and it is usually the duty of her mother's brother (actual or classificatory) to do so. The hut (or more appropriately the screen) is usually of twigs and leaves of *honge* (*Pongamia glabra*). For the first three days, each day the hut is burnt and a new one is erected in its place. Before the girl enters, a coconut is rolled into the hut. At Ambalagere it was reported that the isolation hut is called *Hasiru gudisalu* (green hut) and may be of twigs of *atti* (Indian fig), *honge* (*pongamia glabra*) or *bevu* or neem. Here too the hut is erected by her mother's brother but the custom of renewing it everyday is not prevalent. The fishing Killekyathas of Basavarajapura Colony stated that they now have given up their former habit of putting up isolation huts. Instead, the outer varanda (or *katte*) of the normal residence is itself used by the woman during these five days. Soon after the menstruation occurs for the first time, the girl is ceremonially bathed by the women of the caste. This is called *balagada neeru* and is repeated on the following days too. She is given nutritious food and elderly women help her while away her time by clustering round her during spare hours and singing or by gossiping. On the fifth day around 5 p.m. the girl is bathed this being called *Soothakada neeru*, and dressed in new clothes and allowed to enter the house, where her lap is filled with fruits and nuts. An *arathi* is also performed by the women-folk and her relatives may give her some presents. If she is already married, she is entitled to receive a saree from her parents' in law on this occasion. If unmarried, this is given by her father. (At Ambalagere, the custom of sacrificing a fowl and marking the girl's forehead with its blood after her bath was also reported). The girl offers *puja* to some green plant such as *jali* (*Acacia Arabica*) or *tangadi* (*Cassia ariculata*), places a pair of betel leaves and an arecanut and engirdles the plant with raw cotton yarn.

This ceremonial rite is termed *hasiru muttisikondubaru vudu*. During her subsequent monthly periods also the woman stays outside the usual dwelling for three nights and enters the home only after a purificatory bath on the fourth evening.

(c) Marriage

The Sillekhyathas are divided into two major endogamous communities on the basis of their association with the two characteristic professions of fishing and leather-puppet-shadow-play. For generations they have lost social contacts with each other and their knowledge about the supposed unity of the two groups in the remote past is based on hearsay. Each group is self-contained as the people in it are sub-divided into numerous exogamous clans bearing distinct names. Among both the groups, cross-cousin marriages are allowed and practised while the union of parallel-cousins is taboo. A man may marry his own sister's daughter. Elder brother's wife is termed *attige* and is regarded as equivalent in status to one's own mother. Hence, levirate is taboo among them. Under certain circumstances (such as sterility of former wife) a man may marry his wife's younger sister. Both the sections permit polygyny but not polyandry. It was considered advantageous for a man to have two wives. The formal marriage ceremony is termed *lagna* and a woman may be married in this form only once during her lifetime whereas there exists no such limit in case of a man. The remarriage of widows (or deserted women) is termed *Seereudike* and is said to be in practice among both the sections. According to the group at Bhaktanakatte—who view such a practice with disfavour—that custom is limited only to some of the families of their caste-group and is not universal. At Hiriyur was reported the case of an young girl who was deserted (her husband—a cross cousin incidentally—has already taken another wife) but who along with her parents was unwilling to marry again even though a few *seereudikes* have in the past taken place in the family. This is a recent trend in their attitude towards remarriages. The rigidity regarding caste endogamy seems to have been relaxed in recent years and some degree of inter-caste marriages are now allowed. At Hiriyur, one person married a girl of Rajput caste during 1968 (His former wife having already deserted him it was a second marriage for him and the girl's parents it seems, were too poor to pay heavy sums as dowry to a bridegroom of their own caste). Two other instances of inter-caste marriages, one with an Ediga female and another with a Darji (Tailor caste) female that have occurred within their kinsmen were reported. As regards their women, according to the infor-

ants, there are a few instances of elopement with men of different castes but not even one of a regular marriage contracted with the consent of the parents or caste fellows.

Marriage is generally by negotiation set in motion by the parents or other persons related to the boy. The custom of paying *Tera* (also called *Deej* or bride price) is also in vogue and varies from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 or more. Besides, the parents of the bridegroom have to give some ornaments and clothes to the bride. Formerly, their marriages used to take place during the rainy season but now they too conform to the practices of their area and mostly celebrate the marriages during April, May and June. On reaching an agreement, *veelya sasira* or distributing of betel leaves and arecanut to caste fellows, is held at the residence of the girl and this seals the contract.

The fishing Sillekhyathas do not consult a Brahmin priest for selection of an auspicious day. Nor do they solicit his presence to solemnise the union. Their marriages usually begin on a Monday and last for five days till Friday. Pandals are erected before the houses in which the clan Gods of the bride and bridegroom are usually housed. Close to the pandal new hearths are also set up. By Monday night the bridegroom and his relatives reach the house of the bride where they are received with honour and suitably lodged. On Tuesday, the couple are ceremoniously bathed and decked with marriage coronets and new garments. They, along with their kin groups, meet at their temple. The hems of the garments of the couple are tied together after the Pashingya recites some verses. The Atock (priest) first sprinkles some grains of rice on the couple. He is then followed by the

others in the gathering who also throw rice grains and bless the couple. Then the boy receives the *Tali* from the Atock and fastens it round the neck of his bride. The subsequent two days are spent in feasting on meat and in drinking toddy to excess. The parents of the bridegroom and the bride are together expected to provide money for liquor and also feed their kinsmen sumptuously. On Friday the couple eat food from a common dish and this is the concluding part of the marriage ceremony. The pandal is dismantled just before the bridegroom, and his kin accompanied by the bride, depart for their respective homes. Their marriages are full of noisy scenes and drunken brawls.

Formerly amongst the Bombe section also marriages were celebrated in a similar manner. During the past two or three decades most of them have reformed themselves gradually. *Pujari* or priest of their own caste used to solemnise their marriages in contrast to the present practice of procuring the services of a Brahmin or Lingayat priest for the purpose. They have by and large, eschewed the habit of revelling in liquor and non-vegetarian food during the marriage ceremonies. At several places (e.g. Bhaktanakatte) like other Hindu caste groups they too obtain the services of the village barber and the washerman. Unlike their former practice of celebrating marriages for 5 days, at present, their marriages are completed in a day and a half. They have imbibed the customs and practices prevalent among the dominant Hindu caste groups of their neighbourhood.

1961 Census data on marital status are furnished in the following table. Among males, it may be observed 55.98 per cent are never married: 39.16 per cent are married and 4.35 per cent are widowed.

TABLE 5 Marital status by sex and age group

Age group	Total Population		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced/separated		Unspecified status	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
All ages	1379	1428	772	676	540	581	60	164	4	4	3	3
0—14	606	679	604	644	1	32	..	1	..	..	1	2
15—44	503	559	151	27	329	481	20	47	2	4	1	..
45 & above	268	187	17	5	209	68	39	114	2	..	1	..
Age not stated	2	3	..	..	1	..	1	2	..	..	..	1

(Source: SCT II Part-A, Census of India, 1961 Vol. XI, Part V-A)

Among females, 47.34 per cent are never married; 40.68 per cent are married and 11.48 per cent are widowed. The age group break-up suggests that child marriages are now-a-days very few. For, as may be seen, only one boy and 33 girls below 14 (one girl already widowed) are ever-married. Formerly amongst the *Bombe* Sillekhyathas, the custom of dedicating girls as Basavis was in vogue (c.f. Nanjundayya 1911 P. 9 and Iyer, 1930, III P. 525). The table shows that only 4.83 per cent of the females aged 15 to 44 and 2.67 per cent of the females aged 45 and upwards are never-married. The former may be assumed to be due to a rise in marriageable age and the latter is probably due to the few surviving Basavis in the community. Widows outnumber widowers and among both it is observed that the incidence of widowhood is high in the age group 45 and above—66 per cent of widowers and 69.5 per cent of widows. As remarriage of widows is permitted and also practised to some extent, the existence of a large number of widows implies that all widows do not remarry and that even if they want to, the chances get reduced as one grows older. It is only the young and the childless widows that are likely to marry again. Divorce is easy, for if the husband and wife cannot get on together, either party may put an end to the union by leaving the other. It is usually the woman who deserts her husband and moves to her parental home or elopes with her paramour. Now-a-days, such cases are said to be very few. At Hiriya and also at Basavarajapura, two such recent incidents were reported.

(d) Death

Among Sillekhyathas of both the sections, the dead are usually buried. Corpses of lepers as also those of pregnant women are, however, cremated. In the case of natural deaths, as the final moment approaches, the person on the death-bed is moved to the outer verandah of the house and one by one, the members of the household pour drops of water into his mouth. The corpse is washed in warm water and dressed in new clothes, and if it is of a *muthaide* (married woman whose husband is alive) the hair is braided and decked with flowers and the forehead is marked with *Kunkuma* (vermilion powder). It is shrouded in a piece of newly bought white sheet of cloth and then placed in a *Kambli* (coarse woollen rug) or a quilt and carried to the grave by four persons taking hold of the four corners while another person holds up its head in position. Now-a-days as reported at Basavarajapura the custom of carrying the corpse on a bamboo bier has also come into vogue. All along the journey to the grave, some cereal grains or puffed rice are strewn

and before reaching it, the corpse is lowered at some point when the bearers exchange places (This practice of lowering the corpse midway is said to be not in vogue amongst the fishermen of Basavarajapura colony). Simultaneously, the chief mourner (eldest or youngest son of the deceased) breaks a pot full of cooked rice. The grave pit is usually prepared by the Adikarnatakas for a fee or by the members of their own caste. After going round the pit thrice the corpse is carefully lowered. The married dead are buried in a sitting posture while the bodies of the never-married are laid full-length resting on the back. The sons and other members of the family start to fill up the grave and others also join them. The body is buried nude and sometimes to overcome the evil effects associated with certain days of death, a cocoanut is also laid by its side. After the grave is filled, thorny bushes and a stone slab are placed on the grave. The participants in the funeral return home bathing at some wayside water source, and take a look at a lamp kept burning at the place of death. After removal of the corpse the spot is purified by washing it with cowdung paste. Drinking toddy on this occasion by the mourners and participants in the funeral is said to be in vogue among the fishermen Sillekhyathas, while this custom is said to have been abandoned by most of the Sillekhyathas of the *Bombe* section.

On the third or on the fifth day after death, the house is cleansed and rendered pure by the sprinkling of *Gomuthra* (cow's urine) or *Thirtha* (holy water) obtained from their temple. At some places (e.g. Ambalagere, Bhaktanakatte) it is the Madiyala (washer-man) who purifies the premises by sprinkling water or cow's urine. The mourners visit the burial ground and offer two *cades* (food served on plantain leaves) one at the spot where the corpse was lowered on the way to the grave-yard and the other on the grave. As soon as crows arrive to consume the offerings, they return home and purify themselves by bathing and sipping a few drops of *thirtha*. On the ninth (or eleventh) day a sheep or goat is slain in the late afternoon. An earthen pot (*Gadige*) full of water is placed on a plank or, more usually on a *Kambli* (black woollen blanket) in the house. A set of clothes used by the deceased while he was alive and another set of new clothes are placed by the side of the pot. The chief mourner offers *pūja*, lights oil lamps and lays food served on plantain leaves before it. The members of the family invoke the spirit of the deceased and request it to merge its identity with the *hindu* or group of its own ancestral spirits and also implore it to desist from doing harm to the bereaved survivors. Fellow castemen are fed and it is

customary for each of the participants to donate some cash (25 paise to one or two rupees) to the chief mourner. It is generally on this day that a *hiriyara mukha* (face of the elder i.e., of the dead person) which is usually a disc of silver or alloy or gold on which is embossed the caricature of a human face is consecrated by *pūjas* and later placed along side the household Gods. Ritual pollution due to a death in the family lasts for eleven days. A preliminary purification rite is held on the third day when crows are fed. However, it is only after the eleventh day rite is performed (called *Tithi* or *Karma*) when the cooking pots in use till then are discarded, that the impurity is finally removed. They do not perform *Shraddhas* (annual death ceremonies) but on the eve of the Lunar New Year or Deepavali, the spirits of the ancestors, represented by an earthen pot full of water and the metal images, are worshipped by offerings of food and clothes.

X. RELIGION

The Sillekhyathas are Hindus by religion. Nanjundayya (1911 and Iyer 1930 III, P. 529) remarks, "There is no doubt that in this caste real ancestor worship is practised. They say that the dead are not to be consigned wholly to the grave. They believe that their deceased ancestors, especially the married ones among them, always remain with them." As already mentioned, they keep images of their deceased ancestors to which offerings of food and clothes are made periodically. Besides, they also worship certain Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. Hanuman appears to be the favourite household deity amongst the *Bombe* Sillekhyathas. Masoba was stated to be the clan God of the Mohares of Basavarajapura Colony. The Shindhyas, Pashingyas and Shettelore of Bhaktanakatte have Hanumantha, in common besides having Moodlagiri Thimmappa, Neerabatheppa and Gonibasappa separately as their family Gods respectively. Durgamma, Maramma of Gowrasandra, Yallamma, Plagueamma, Chamundi, Honnathamma etc., are the Goddesses which they worship. The fishing section at Penjahally colony also mentioned Maramma of Periyapatna, Chikkadevi and Kannambadiyamma as important Goddesses which they propitiate annually through sacrifice of a goat or sheep. The fishermen in particular propitiate *Hole Gangavva* or Goddess of water, whenever a fishing net is used for the first time. Similarly, the *Bombe* Sillekhyathas offer their respects to the leather-puppet dolls contained in their *bombe pettige* (box for the dolls) on all important occasions. They also worship Nagappa, the Serpent God.

At several places where their numbers are relatively large they have shrines for their Gods and Goddesses. Such is the case, for example, at Basavarajapura, Hiriya Town and Penjahally Colony. Honnathamma, Maramma, Chamundi and Gadi Durgamma (all silver images) are the Goddesses enshrined in the reed-hut which is the temple at Basavarajapura. An old man of the caste is the *Pujari* (priest) and once a year these are propitiated through animal sacrifice. The temple on the outskirts of Hiriya town enshrines the silver image of Maramma of Gowrasandra and here also an aged man is the priest. At Penjahally colony, each of the four clans has its own shrine dedicated to Plagueamma, Periyapattanada Maramma, Chikkadevi and Kannambadiyamma. At these places they do not generally visit the other local Hindu temples.

Because of their prolonged contact with the caste Hindus, many of them have recently been observing most of the common Hindu festivals. Important among them are the Ugadi (Lunar New Year), Nagarapanchami, Dasara and Deepavali. On the occasion of Ugadi (March-April) the plough and the yoke are worshipped and tilling operations are formally commenced (e.g. reported at Basavarajapura). The ancestral spirits are also propitiated by offering food, water and clothes. On the occasion of Nagarapanchami (August) the Cobra God is worshipped by pouring fresh cow's milk on images of serpents or into the ant-hills. On the last day of Dasara, they too carry their deities from their temples to a nearby *Banni* tree (*Prosopis Spicigera*) and after *Pūjas* to it, cut a branch of the tree this being called *hambu kadiyuvudu* in some areas. In case they have no temples of their own, they join with the rest of the villagers. The custom of worshipping agricultural implements and the *bombe pettige* during either Dasara or Deepavali is in vogue among them. However, at most of the places, the annual occasion on which they jointly propitiate their Goddesses through sacrifice continues to be the most important festival (in November at Basavarajapura and in September at Penjahally colony).

At Bhaktanakatte, a fair is held annually in honour of Junappa Swamy during the middle of Kartika. (November—full moon day) and the resident Sillekhyathas participate in it.

XI. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Since the past several decades, the Sillekhyathas of the *Bombe* section have provided recreation to the

rural-folk by their leather-puppet-doll-shadow-plays. Men manipulated the dolls from behind the screen and simultaneously recited in verse the stories, while the women playing some musical instrument explained in turn the story to the audience. In the case of *Doddabombe ata*, however, a troupe of artistes of about eight or ten, engaged the audience and the characters presented on the screen were also more and the performance resembled an open-air-drama. The Sillekyaatha and his spouse Bangarakka the two buffoon characters were freely employed on the screen to amuse and entertain the rustic audience. Now-a-days, it is said, such plays have lost their appeal and the patronage of the villagers has diminished. As a result, some of the Sillekyaathas have been participating in both formal and informal drama troupes and a few of them have equipped themselves with various sceneries and accessories which they hire out to others for use.

Now most of the Sillekyaathas are said to be leading more or less a settled life. Their interest in agriculture and associated activities such as cattle-rearing has become keener. They also work as labourers in fields. But as reported, a few have chosen the profession of begging during which they sing and play on some musical instrument. In their daily routine, the Sillekyaathas resemble the other villagers of their own socio-economic level and the moments of leisure they get during the day are spent in gossip. They join with local castes (or else exclusively) at times to enact some dramas (e.g. Krishnaleela was enacted at Penjahally colony by the fishing Killekyathas during 1962). Some of their men are known for their talent in acting and archestral music. For instance, an informant at Ambalagere is a drama-coach besides being proficient in presenting shadow plays. Boys play indigenous games such as marbles, with cloth balls, kabbadi, *chinni kolu* etc. Men occasionally go to cinemas for entertainment. Some among them visit the fairs and car festivals of local importance that are held in the neighbourhood.

XII. RELATION AMONG DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

The segmentation of the caste has been the result of grouping its members on the basis of their association, in the known past, with the two specific occupations of fishing and presenting puppet-doll-shadow-plays. This is recognised both within and outside the caste group. In fact, according to informants, the two groups rarely meet. Both are self contained endogamous units. This apart, the clans in each group are

organised in an hierarchical order. Now-a-days, however, all clans are regarded as equal for all purposes and functions which were formerly assigned to specific clansmen may be performed by other men. The urban residents amongst the Sillekyaathas are mostly recent migrants and they identify themselves with their rural brethren. The educated are few in numbers and they too form an integral part of the community. Their population is scattered over a wide geographical area. In any particular settlement they would be able to mention a few places wherein their caste fellows may be found. But though aware of the presence of their fellow castemen in distant parts of the State, their impressions about them are usually vague. No effort seems to have been made to bring together the Sillekyaathas of different districts or even of different taluks within the district. According to informants, attempts have been made to unify and organise the caste at taluk level in a few places in recent years.

XIII. INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Formerly the Sillekyaathas did not require the services of Brahmins either to solemnize their marriages or for offering worship to their deities. Even now, this is true of the fishing section which has their own priests. The *Bombe* Sillekyaathas also have their priests and it is usually through them that their caste Gods are propitiated. However, in recent times they consult Brahmin or Lingayat priests of their villages to select auspicious days for marriages etc., and it is reported that these *purohits* (priests) attend their marriages. The *Bombe* Sillekyaathas are served by village barbers and washermen without any restriction of such services to only special occasions. Like other resident villagers some among them enter into *jajmani* (patron-client) relationship with these functionaries. The fishing section too does not suffer any disability with regard to the services of barbers and washermen. However, having been a nomadic group till recently, they do not yet require the services of these functionaries on ceremonial occasions.

According to the informants the proximity or touch of a Sillekyaatha of either section has never been regarded as defiling by the caste Hindus. However, because of their association with pig-breeding, they are considered impure and are accorded a lowly status. Further, they are required to dwell at the outskirts of villages. It may be of some interest to note that Francis (1902 XV) has listed the Killekyata under the heading "Sudras who do not employ Brahmins as purohits and whose touch pollutes" (p. 138). According to Campbell, "they rank below Kabligers (Fishermen)

and above Vodars and Korvis from whom they do not eat" (1884 XXIII, P. 199); and in the former Mysore State region according to Nanjundayya and Iyer (*ibid* P. 535) "They eat in the houses of Kurubas, Upparas and Bestas. Madigas and Holeyas are the only castes that eat in the houses of Killekyatas". They are admitted to caste-Hindu temples and other public places. They may freely draw water from the village wells that are being used by caste-Hindus. They are admitted into the houses of high caste Hindus.

XIV. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

About their caste organisation it has been stated (Nanjundayya H. V. 1911, P. 12-13; Nanjundayya and Iyer L. K. A. 1930 III P. 527-8) "They have a strong caste ('tribal' has been used in the 1930 edition) constitution, and in some matters such as marriage, excommunication and admission of strangers into the caste, the concurrence of the caste tribunal is indispensable. The head of the caste is styled Ganachari, and there is also a chief over all the Ganacharis known as Sar Ganachari. The Ganachari presides over all meetings, directs marriage and other ceremonials and performs the purifying ceremony. He acts also as the *purohit* in marriages and throws the rice on the married pair. Next to him comes the Sivachari, whose duty is to apply sacred ashes to the head of the person subjected to any *prayaschitta* (purification). He belongs to Avet division. The Neknar also called Patel, is the head of a Kattemane, that is, a seat of subordinate jurisdiction. In marriages, he has to unite the knot, tied by the Sivachari, of the hem of the bridal pair's garments. Pachangya who (the *Pachangya* according to 1930 edition) is of the Atka [or Atock] division, has to distribute betel leaves and nuts in an assembly and when the next functionary Sindhya is absent, he has to spread the blanket for the caste people to sit on. Sindhya spreads the blankets on occasions of marriage and does the office of drummer. Salavya has to bring materials for erecting the marriage booth. Sasanika puts *sase* (pouring handfuls of rice on their heads) to the bridal couple and Sinagana who is called the (Kolkar of the caste, carries a baton in his hand, collects people of the caste and seats them in the regular order. He has also to attend the caste Panchayati and execute the orders of the Ganachari, Sivachari and Neknar. Dhuravya is another officer who buys provisions for a marriage. Each of these offices is hereditary and belongs to a family in a particular exogamous division. The quantity of pan-supari and the fee to be given to each of them on ceremonial occasions are fixed definitely. The Bombe section have

only five office-bearers stopping with the Sindhya who acts as the Kolkar or servant of the caste. Whenever there is a caste dispute, all the office-holders of the caste, especially the first five of them, must join. If, however, on account of unavoidable reason any one does not appear, his function has to be carried out by the next lower; a representative of the Sindhya division, however, cannot preside at any caste deliberation. The matters of dispute that come up for settlement are such as adultery, divorce, abusing caste people and striking some one with a shoe. In such cases the accused person has to answer the charge against him. When the charge is proved or admitted, the second official (Sivachari) who is specially invested with secular authority settles the amount of fine which has to be paid by the culprit. After paying the fine, the latter passes round a hookah to all the members of the assembly, each of whom smokes it as a sign that the fault has been expiated. The business is finished with an entertainment of drink and dinner."

The Sillekyaathas are scattered over a wide area and now such an elaborate caste organization no longer exists. Their larger settlements have a recognised headman whose office is hereditary. So also there is a priest and an assistant. It has become a social necessity that any one available at hand should perform the various functions, without regard to the one-time clan regulations, so that their marriages, meetings or other ceremonies are conducted smoothly. All the adult male members of the settlement attend their caste meetings. It is said that now-a-days caste Panchayats are rare. The fishermen of Basavarajapura remembered two such recent Panchayats both concerned about seduction of married women by the members of their own caste. The culprits were traced and according to the informants, severely chastised. The fines collected were, however, spent on liquor as most of them are very fond of toddy. Yet another incident which started from a drunken brawl was also reported. The Sillekyaathas of Bhaktanakatte spoke of a caste meeting held during 1966 in which their fellow castemen from a few distant villages also took part. They were interested in arriving at a decision to discontinue their custom of entertaining guests by liquor and meat on the occasion of their marriages.

The villages in which Sillekyaathas have been living are grouped into viable units under Kattemane Gowdas. Thus, Kadur, Bellary, Bukkapattana, Sira, Hiriyur, Chitradurga, Parashurampura and many other places have their Kattemanes. They have no other organisation at regional level. In 1959 an attempt was

made to bring together fellow castemen beyond the level of Kattemane or taluk. People from Challakere, Sira, Hiriya and Tumkur, besides a few from Ananthapur district of Andhra Pradesh are stated to have participated in the meeting. It is said the discussions mainly centred on the issue of changing their caste-name from Sillekya to Dayithaker and to found a *Seva Sangha* (caste organisation). Further, resolutions regarding reforms such as abstention from liquor, abjuring pork, curtailing the amount of bride-price etc., are said to have been mooted. Nothing, however, came out of these discussions since response was poor.

XV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

In view of their being listed as a scheduled caste, a few of the Sillekya have received housing grants, finance for purchase of livestock etc. The fishing group having been included amongst the nomadic and semi nomadic tribes have, during the post Independence period, greatly benefitted by the ameliorative measures introduced by the Government. Colonies have come up for them at various places in the State and the settled families have been granted lands for

cultivation. Besides, some among them have received finance for the purchase of cattle and some of them have become members of Co-operative Societies.

XVI. CONCLUSION

The study indicates how the Sillekya, a set of nomadic people, some of whom were proficient in the art of leather-puppet-shadow-play and others expert fishermen, has adapted itself to changing circumstances. Most of them now lead a settled life. The traditional art of shadow play is on the verge of extinction and the former artists have taken to cultivation, labour, rearing livestock and such other more remunerative ways of making a living. The profession of fishing is still profitable but nevertheless the fishermen families have also been evincing keen interest in agriculture and field-labour. Their economic condition is showing signs of improvement. With prolonged contact with settled villagers, their habits too are changing for the better. Now-a-days, they are eager to send their children to schools and their standard of education is improving. In towns and villages they do not suffer any social disabilities.

SCHEDULED TRIBES

1. HASALARU

I. NAME AND IDENTITY

The scheduled tribe population in Mysore as per the 1961 Census works out to a little less than 0.81 per cent of the State's population to which result a total of 44 different tribes including the "unclassified" have contributed. Arranged in a numerically descending order, Hasalaru who have a population of 8905 representing 4.6 per cent of total Scheduled Tribes population occupy the sixth place. By the "Constitution Order Scheduled Tribes 1950" and also the "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order 1956", they are listed as a Scheduled Tribe in the districts of Bangalore, Bellary, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore, Shimoga and Tumkur. The Presidential Order does not mention any synonyms for Hasalaru.

According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order 1956, *Hasla* is a Scheduled Caste in South Kanara district and *Haslar* or *Halsar*, *Hulasvar* or *Halasvar* is a Scheduled Caste in the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara. There is reason to infer that the *Hasla* of South Kanara, *Hasalaru* of the former Mysore State and *Halsar* etc., of the Bombay Karnatak region are one and the same. Campbell (1883, XV, Pt. I. Gazetteer of Bombay-Kanara) states that "Haslars according to the 1881 Census numbered 2629 of whom 1414 were males and 1215 females. They are found in isolated settlements in Sirsi and Honavar..... They seem to have come from Shimoga in North-West Maisur....." (P. 367). (See also Enthoven, 1922 II PP. 67-68). The Dharwar District Gazetteer (Campbell, 1884, XXII Gazetteer of Bombay-Karnatak) states that Haslars "are returned as numbering thirty-six and as found in Hangal. . . . and their spiritual leader is also a Lingayat who lives at Togs in Maisur. . . . (P 135)". It may be observed that Honavar of North Kanara and Sagar Taluk of Shimoga District are contiguous. So also Sirsi (North Kanara), Hangal (Dharwar) and Sorab (Taluk of Shimoga district) are adjacent to each other. As regards the 'Hasalaru' of Mysore, Sherring M.A. (1881 Vol. III) while dealing with the tribes inhabiting the jungles in Mysore describes them as "fellers of timber" and inhabitants of the "ghats on the north-west of Mysore". Lewis Rice (1897, I) observes as follows:

"The tribes of Hasulas and Maleyas, who somewhat resemble them (*i.e. the Soligas*), are met with along the ghats on the Western frontier. But these appear to be immigrants from South Kanara and speak Tulu". The 1891 Mysore Census Report, which provides basic data to Lewis Rice, Thurston and subsequent writers records that the "Hasalaru are confined to the wild regions of the Western Malnad. . . Their mother-tongue is Tulu. Their numbers are so insignificantly small as not to be separately defined. They are immigrants from South Kanara. . . ." and that, "The Hasalaru are confined to Tirthahalli and Mudigere."

Among themselves, as also to other communities of their neighbourhood, they are popularly known as Haslars. L. K. A. Iyer and H. V. Nanjundayya (1930 III) record that they call themselves "Bhil Kshatriyas" and "Agni Honnappana Matadavaru". This appears true especially in the taluks of Sorab, Hosnagar, Shiralkoppa and Sagar which were visited during the course of investigation. In Mudigere taluk neither of these two synonyms is in vogue, while in Thirthahalli taluk the community knows that 'Bhil Kshatriya' is a synonym. The Hasalars of Mudigere who have their relations in parts of Belur and Thirthahalli taluks, maintain that they are known as *Mera* (in Tulu) in their homeland of South Kanara district. They say that they are also called *Mugerlu* in South Kanara District with two sub-divisions *viz.*, *Belli* or *Animuggerlu* and *Karemuggerlu*. In Thirthahalli taluk Bellimuggerlu are considered identical with Hasalars while Karemuggerlu who are identified with *Meras* are held inferior. But the version got in Mudigere is that *Mera*, *i.e.* both the divisions of *Mugerlu*, are identical with Hasalars and all three interdine and intermarry. Earlier records do not throw any light on this point. But Stuart (1893, Vol. XIII, P. 250) sets down *Mera* as a major sub-division of the Holeya community of the South Kanara district, but makes no mention of the Hasala. Francis (1902 XV P. 156) while inviting reference to the 1891 Mysore Census. Report and Mysore Gazetteer, states "Hasala (population 552)—Canarese agricultural labourers, originally a hill tribe." In this report nothing has been said about the *Mera*. Therefore the statement of the Hasalars of Mudigere and Thirthahalli taluks with regard to the synonyms *Mugerlu* and *Mera* will have

to be taken with reserve until further probe is made for ascertaining the correct position. Thurston (1909 II) who has drawn heavily from the 1891 Mysore Census Report also makes no mention of Mera or Mugerlu in his note on Hasala.

Hasalars were being grouped under "Animists" in the Census returns up to the 1931 Census. Owing to smallness of their number in Mysore, they were not shown separately in the 1891 and 1901 Census reports and tables. By then their remarkable resemblance to the Soliga and Iruliga had been established and it is therefore probable that in the 1901 Census they were counted with "Iraliga". The enormous increase in the number of "Iraligas" especially in the districts of Kadur (present day Chikmagalur) and Shimoga during the decade 1891-1901 (*vide* Mysore Census Report 1901 P. 498) appears to lend support to this view. But the subsequent Censuses disclose a reverse trend leading to no Iruliga being returned in the 1961 Census count, and the Soligas dwindling down to:—

1. Shimoga district . 19 persons
2. Chickmagalur „ . 11 „
3. Hassan „ . 17 „
4. South Kanara „ . 2 „

In 1901, Hasalars seem to have been enumerated separately in the Madras State, their population being 552. In Mysore they have been counted separately in the 1911 Census and their number is a meagre 114. Aiyer (1912, XXI, I) gives a description of them in the following terms:

"These (*Hasalaru*) live by cultivation and begging. The tribe is met with in the north-west frontier of the Mysore district. They resemble the Soligar" (P. 178). The Mysore Census reports and tables pertaining to 1921, 1931 and 1941 do not throw any light either on their population or their social and economic conditions. A somewhat detailed account has, however, been presented by Iyer and Nanjundayya (1930, III). Though castewise presentation of Census data was eschewed during the 1951 Census, Hasalars have come to be mentioned as being responsible for a sudden spurt of the tribal population in the State. To quote it from the report itself, "The Scheduled Tribes who have all along been showing a decline have unexpectedly registered a gain this time..... it was found that a large number of the Hasalaru tribe had crossed over from the adjoining North and South Canara forest regions into Mysore, during the decade." (Mallaradhya, 1954 XIV, I, 159-60.

According to Iyer and Nanjundayya (1930 III) the word Hasalar is derived from the Canarese word *Hasule* meaning 'child' in the sense of a servant. The rationale underlying this derivation is obviously their traditional association with agrestic serfdom. Most of the Hasalars are unaware of any etymological significance of their caste-name and could give no answer when questioned about it. The derivation and import of even the so called synonyms *viz.*, Mera and Mugerlu they were not able to give. Their carrying bows and arrows while going on hunting has earned for them the name of 'Bil Kshatriya'—*Bil*, meaning the bow and *Kshatriya*—warriors. Even now, the Tulu speaking section of Hasalar in Mudigere taluk may be seen using bows and arrows in their hunting expeditions, and also offering periodical worship to them. But Hasalars of Hosanagar and Sorab taluks have become completely oblivious of this tradition. However, these Kannada speaking Hasalaru prefer being called 'Bil Kshatriyas' only because of its implying a higher status. The synonym "Agni Honnappana Matadavaru" is popular among them and it has its origin in one Honnayya of their community supposed to be a *Sharana* (Veerashaiva Saint) and a contemporary of Basaveshwara, Cheluvadi Channayya, Madara Haralayya, Madivala Machayya, Kumbara Gundayya etc. It is likely that his influence and personality impressed the public and particularly his caste fellows so profoundly that they preferred being known after this great man and thus perpetuate his memory.

At one time, Hasalars possessed distinct tribal characteristics, living in forests and gathering food. They were of an extremely timid nature and escaped into the jungle "at the merest suspicion of danger" (Lewis Rice 1897 I). They used to "Collect cardamoms and other wild products for their employers, whose agrestic slaves they virtually had become." Considerable changes have occurred during the past 3 or 4 decades and most of the Hasalars are now devoid of the above characteristics. They reside in settled villages and coffee estates, and lead a life similar to other low caste Hindus of the region.

About their origin and status, Iyer and Nanjundayya, state that "They claim relationship with Medars, and call the latter their cousins. They say that Honnayya and Channayya were two brothers, and that they are the descendants of the former, and Medars of the latter. They also state that Holeyas are the Halemakkalu of the caste, and the sons of Bannayya. That Channayya was a brother of Honnayya is not clearly made out. If Channayya and the progenitor of Medar caste are identical persons, then it must be

presumed that the Hasalars are unnecessarily dragging the Medars to their own degraded level. Medars do not admit Hasalars as their cousins; nor have they acknowledged Channayya as their progenitor. To show their connection with Medars, the following story is recounted. In times of yore, a Hasalar made a single article out of a bamboo. Then a Meda undid his work and prepared two articles out of the same material. A quarrel ensued and in this quarrel the Medar (the younger brother *i.e.*, belonging to the younger branch) ran away with the knife. The Hasalar pursued him and in the struggle wrested the handle from the Medar, while the knife was retained by the latter. . . . During the course of the investigations no evidence supporting the above account could be procured. Nor did the Hasalars recount any such relationship with the Medars. According to a current legend as could be ascertained in the Taluks of Sorab, Sagar, Hosanagar, Sirsi etc., Honnayya—their cultural hero successfully hoisted the *Garuda Gamba* (stone pillar bearing the image of *Garuda* the vehicle of Lord Vishnu) in the village Balligamvi of Shikaripur taluk which till then had defied the efforts of all others. Greatly impressed by this heroic deed, people offered him gold and implored its acceptance in the words "*Honna hidi Honnayya*" *i.e.* Honnayya accept this gold. He, on the other hand, suspected this a 'clever ruse for his capture and made good his escape into the jungle. This is perhaps a parable for explaining the ascetic life led by Honnayya as a *Sharana*, and his avowed detestation of material wealth.

Historically, the Hasalars have no tradition of warfare. However, the Tulu section contacted in Mudigere taluk and Thirthahalli have legends concerning the military exploits of two heroes named *Bala Mudda* and *Bala Kalala*. According to one such legend, Tulu country was once being ruled by *Bale arasa* and *Bhairarasa*. On one occasion there was an attack by some powerful enemies and the Kings felt certain of their impending defeat. At this juncture, *Mudda* and *Kalala*—the two brothers of the Hasalars tribe—offered forth to drive back the invading forces and requested for the supply of bows and arrows and other necessities. The Kings then sent these brothers with their associates with royal honour to the battle field. This attack, lead by the brothers, was so severe that the invaders incurred very heavy losses and retreated with defeat. While returning from the wars, the brothers halted for the night in a temple. Next morning to the horror of all, the head of *Kalala* was found severed from its body as if by magic. Learning this, the King ordered the head to be covered in a gold sheet and placed at *rana kumba* (post facing the temple). Then

the spirit of the hero was propitiated with sacrifices. Sometime later *Mudda* was gored to death by a he-buffalo, while he was witnessing *Kambala* (buffalo race). Thus both died an unnatural death and in the typical South Kanara fashion, they have been immortalised in the form of *Bhootas* *i.e.*, devils. These *Bhootas* are propitiated periodically with the aid of *Nalakeyavaru* (caste of devil dancers) who, it is said, are the custodians of the songs which depict the exploits of the great heroes.

Data available so far indicate that South Kanara is the homeland of Hasalars. Probably they migrated in batches eastwards and north, and some of the earliest batches ventured to go a long way off from their place of origin. Gradually they gave up their tribal characteristics and adapted themselves to the new social milieu. One finds today Hasalaru who do not know Tulu and have totally forgotten their tradition of devil-worship and the use of bows and arrows. Those who kept close to their natal villages in South Kanara did not, however, lose their moorings with their parent stock. Those of Mudigere, Chikmagalur and Belur taluk are reported to be engaged mostly as labourers in coffee plantations, though of late quite few families have been endeavouring to acquire land and settle down to an agricultural life. Tulu is their mother-tongue and many of these Hasalaru are maintaining social contacts with their ancestral villages by periodical visits, and occasionally they also resort to devil-worship.

II. DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TRENDS

Hasalars, as already stated, have been enumerated as a Scheduled Tribe in the districts of the old Mysore State, and as a Scheduled Caste in the districts of South Kanara, North Kanara, Belgaum, Dharwar and Bijapur. The Hasalars of these several regions are also of the same ethnic stock, originating from the district of South Kanara. Their regionwise distribution is as follows:

1. Former Mysore State Region	Sch. Tribe	8905
2. South Kanara District	Sch. Caste	1392
3. Bombay Karnatak Region	Sch. Caste	4563
Total		14860

In South Kanara, Karkal taluk (rural) with 1053 Haslas happens to be their chief centre. The rural district of

HASALARU

North Kanara contains roughly 75 per cent of the Hasalars of the Bombay-Karnatak region. In this district they are found in all the talukas except Bhatkal. Dharwar taluk (rural) returned 209 Haslars and Rai-bag—further north—of Belgaum district reported only 48.

Hasla is a Scheduled Caste in the Kasargod taluk of Kerala State and during the 1961 Census, 64 Has-las were enumerated from this tract. It may be noticed that Kasargod is bounded by the district of South Kanara both on the North and the East. Under the name “Haslar, Halsar, Hulasvar or Halasvar” they are found in Gujarat, Maharashtra and also Rajas-than. Throughout the State of Gujarat (except Rajkot division and the district of Kutch) they constitute a Scheduled Caste but as per the 1961 Census returns there are only 8 of them. They are Scheduled in Abu Road taluk of Sirohi district, Rajasthan, but the 1961 Census shows a nil return. There are 68 Hasalars in Maharashtra State, where they are a scheduled caste, except in the districts of Buldhana, Akola, Amravati, Yeotmal, Wardha, Nagpur, Bhandra, Chanda, Auran-gabad, Prabhani, Nanded, Bhir, Osmanabad and Rajura [Mitra, 1966 I V-A(i)]. Perhaps a northward migration of Hasalas in small numbers from South Kanara seems to explain their presence in such far off places. Anyway, outside Mysore State they are nume-rically insignificant.

Reverting our attention to the group deemed as a Scheduled Tribe in this State, it is observed that they are found only in four districts as given below:

Name of District	Population (Total)	Percentage to the total
1. Shimoga	4567	51.29
2. Chickmagalur	3685	41.39
3. Hassan	645	7.24
4. Mysore	8	0.08
Total	8905	100.00

Hasalars dwell predominantly in rural areas, there being only 21 urban dwellers.

In the urban areas of Shimoga district there are 13 Hasalars (10 males and 3 females) while in Mysore district (urban) there are only 7 (3 males and 4

females) and in Chikmagalur district (urban) the tribe has been represented by a solitary individual (male).

The centres of their concentration in Chikmagalur district are Mudigere and Koppa. They are also found in lesser numbers in Chikmagalur, Sringeri and Nara-simharajapura, Sagar, Sorab and Thirthahalli are the centres of their concentration in Shimoga district. The Hasalars of Hassan district are found mainly in the Taluks of Belur and Manjarabad. To permit a com-parative idea, details of their population in a few taluks are presented below:

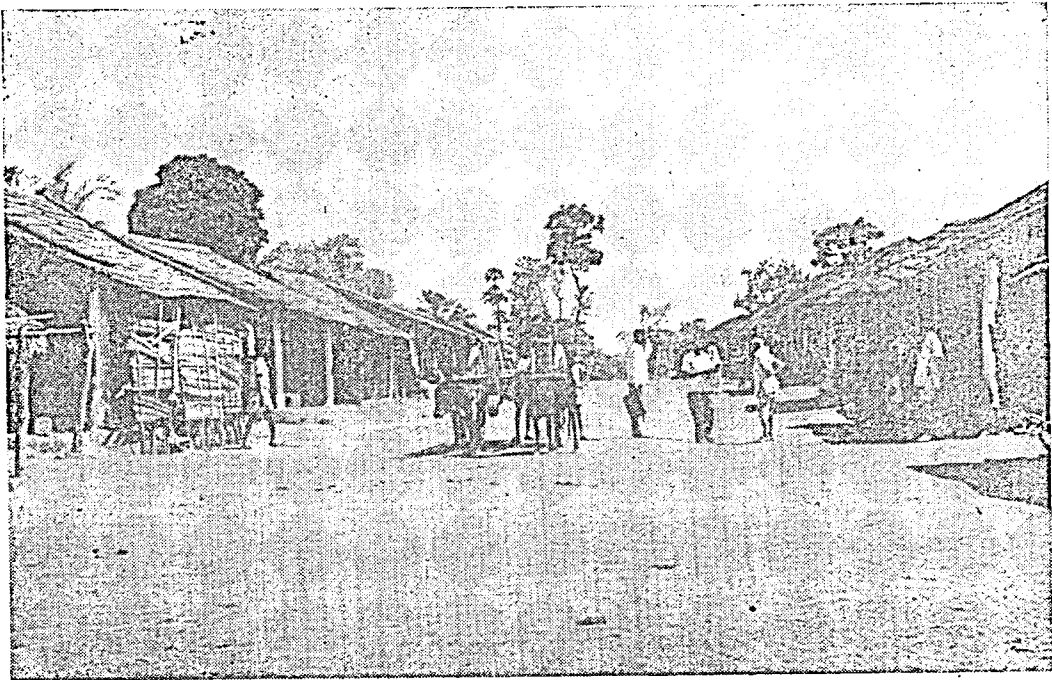
Name of Taluk (Rural)	Total	Male	Female
1. Mudigere	1861	955	906
2. Sagar	1258	675	583
3. Sorab	1168	404	764
4. Koppa	978	523	455
5. Thirthahalli	977	528	449
6. Hosnagar	871	479	392

In Sorab taluk out of a total tribal population of 1172 in rural areas, all except 4 are Hasalaru. In all the other taluks tribals other than Hasalaru such as Gow-dalu, Maleru etc., are also found in sufficient num-bers.

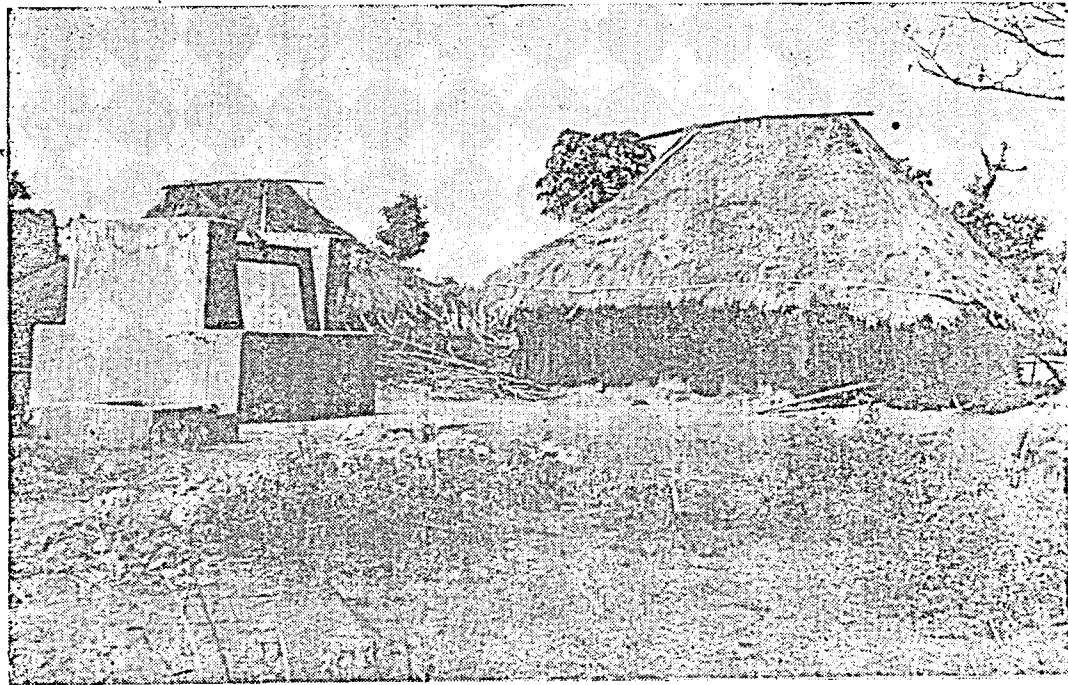
Particulars about them in such smaller units as *hoblis* or villages are not available. However, during the field study it was ascertained that they are in size-able numbers in the villages of Samse, Malleswara, Bettadamane, Kammargode, Guthi, Kundur, Balur, Hoysala etc., of Mudigere Taluk; Aramane Koppa, Nittur, Olakatte etc., of Hosanagar taluk; Hirekasavi, Kumsli, Kavadi, Nisrani, Kolgunsi, Hirekavli, Chik-kavli, Bilivane etc., of Sorab taluk; Hiremane colony Ulloor etc., of Sagar taluk; Chikkanahalli, Begya, Thondekeri etc., of Belur taluk; Kelagoor of Chikma-galur taluk and many more villages. The places visit-ed for gathering data during 1967 December include Kammargode, Bettadamane and Hoysala of Mudi-gere taluk; Olakatte of Hosnagar taluk; Hirekasavi of Sorab taluk, besides Halasinahalli of Thirthahalli taluk and Kumsi of Sorab visited in March 1964.

The tract where the Hasalars are predominantly found falls in the Malnad region and is characterised by a rugged terrain, rising hills and valleys and abun-dant natural vegetation. Nearer the 77th parallel the

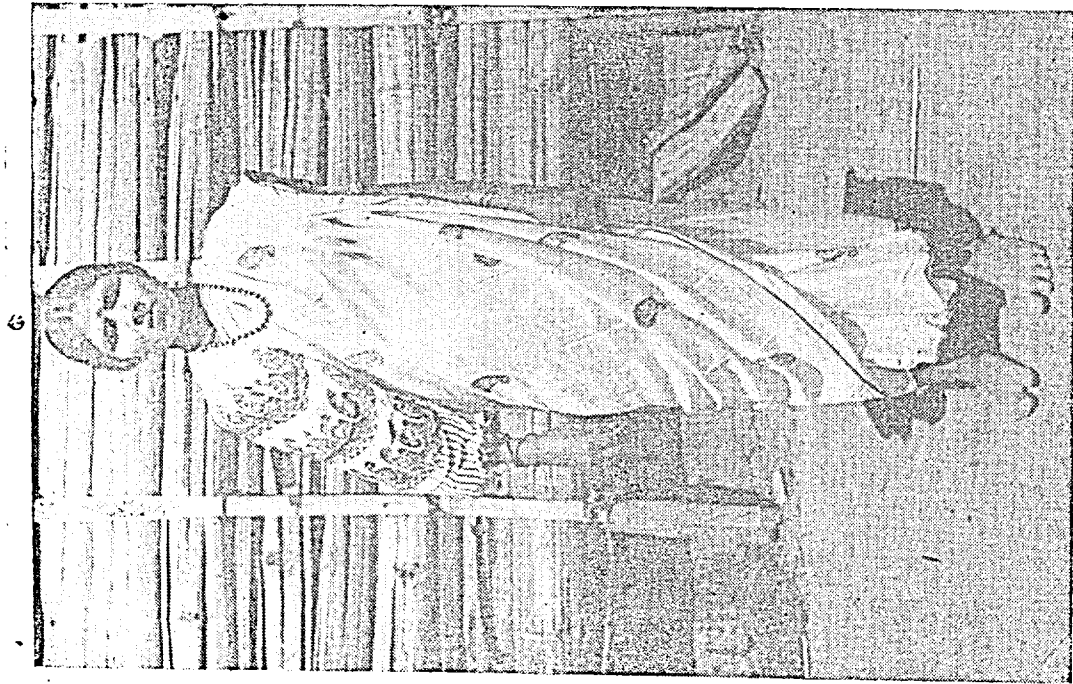
13. HASALARU



1. View of the main street in the Hasalar's colony at Hirekasavi Village — Sorab Taluk



2. The draw-well and the cement, water cistern in the colony



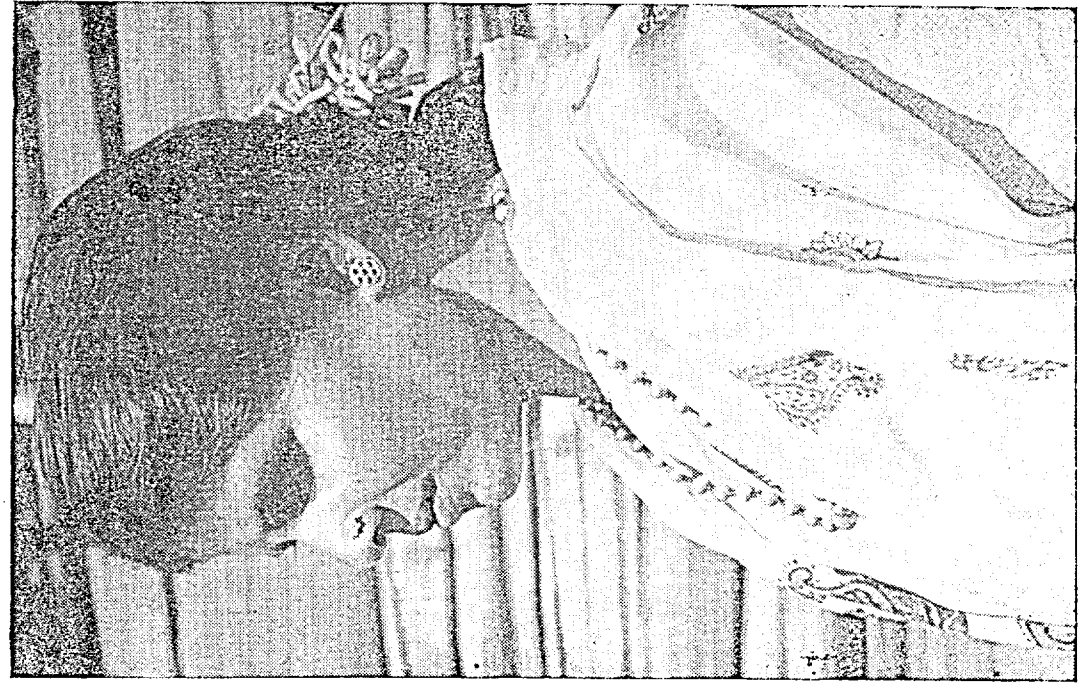
3 (a). Full length portrait of a Hasalar Female at Hirekasavi

328 (b).



3 (b). Front view (close-up)

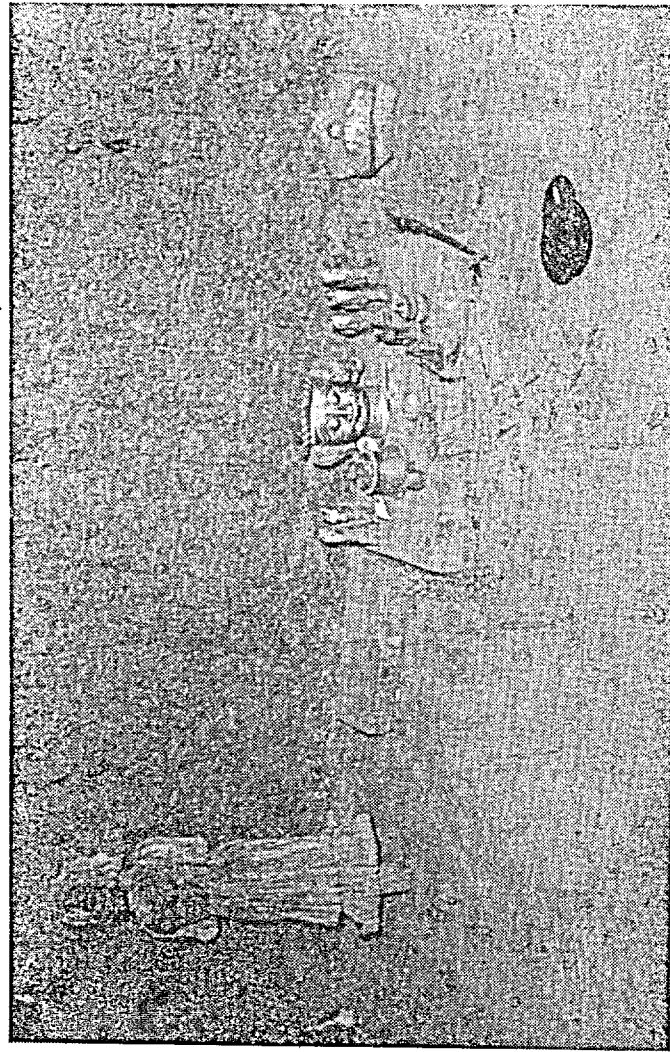
328 (c)



3 (c). Profile



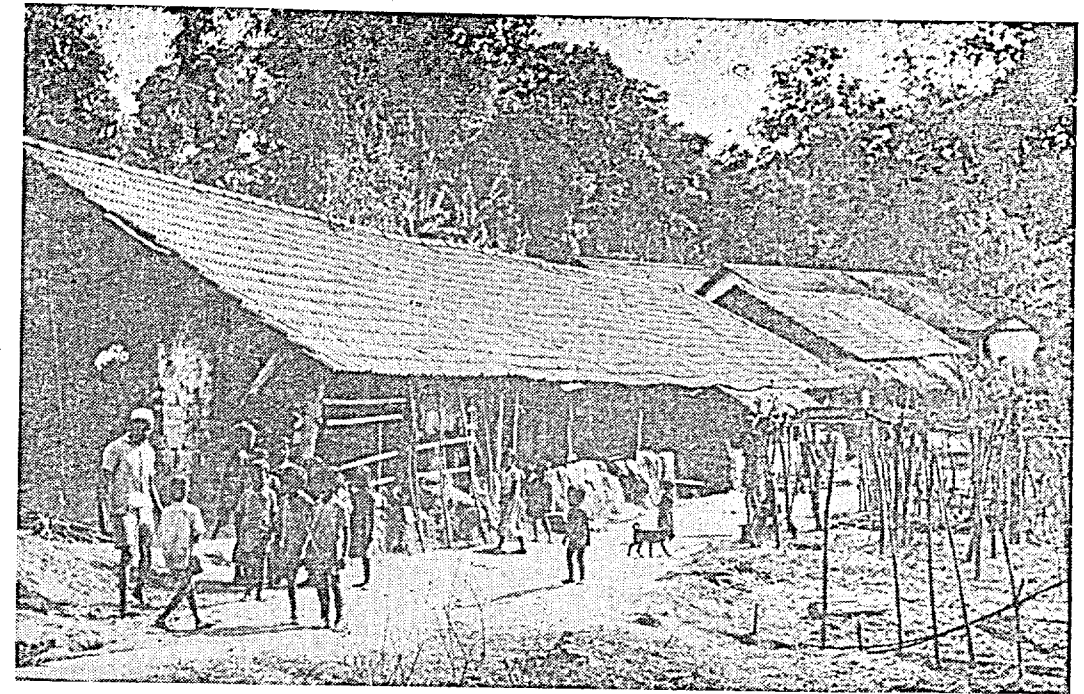
3 (d). As viewed from behind



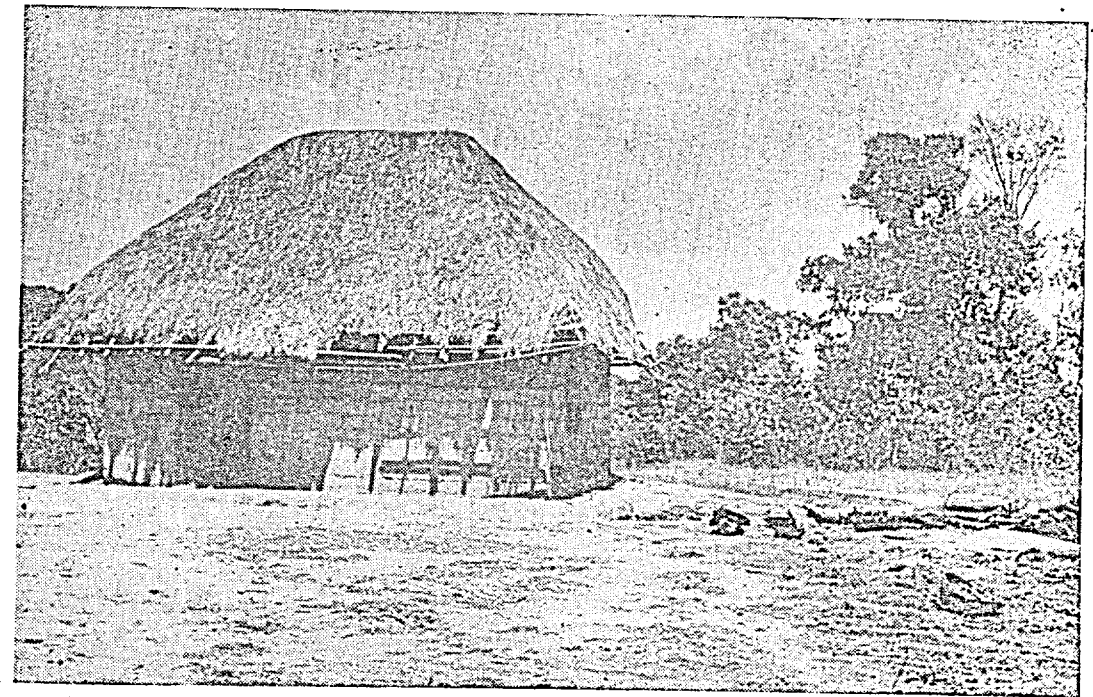
5. Objects representing Neeramuthavva in the mud walled shrine at Hirekasavi



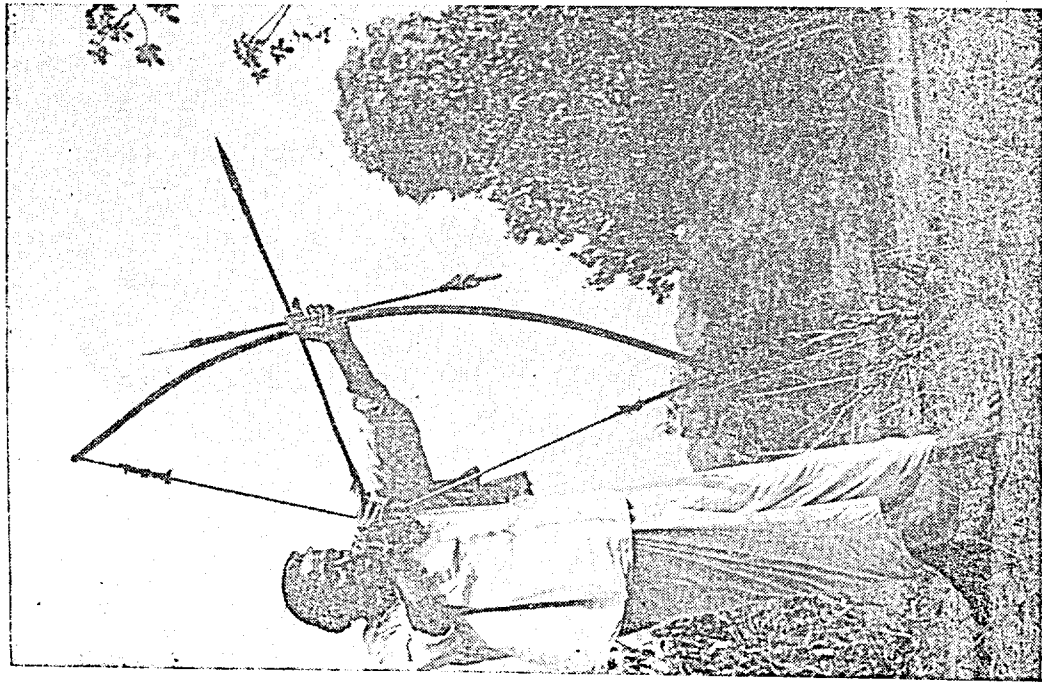
4. Full length view of a Hasalar male at Hirekasavi



6. Row of houses at Bettadamane (Mudigere Taluk) inhabited by Hasalars



7. Hut of a labourer

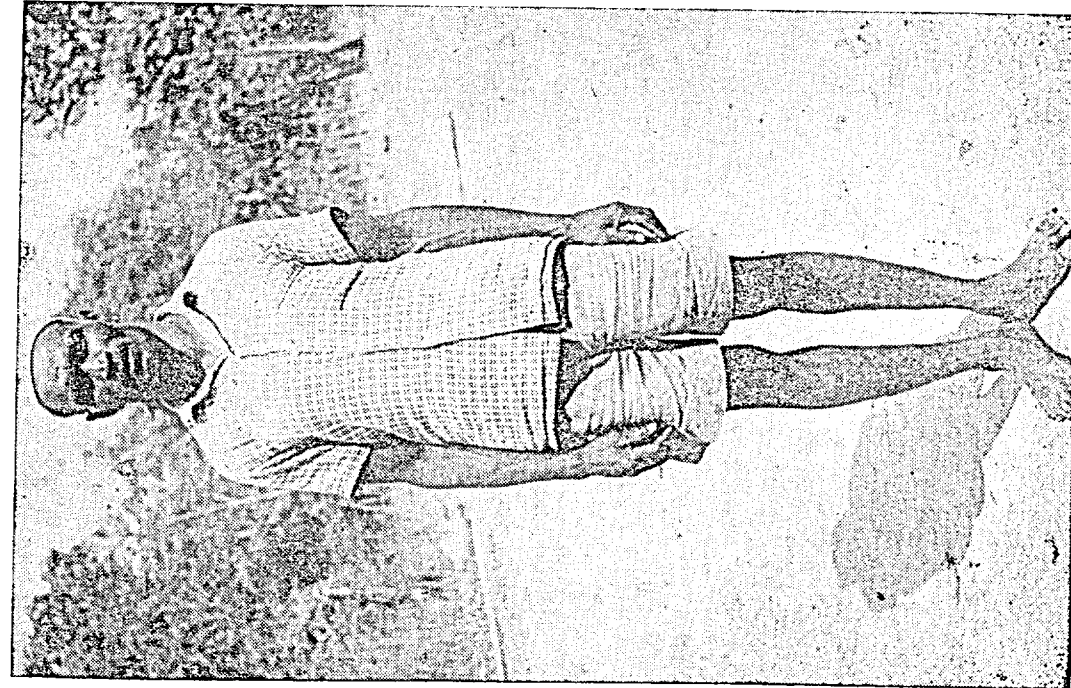


8. Bows and arrows are their traditional weapons—
Hasalar about to discharge an arrow

328 (f)



9. Adults train their boys in the skilful handling of
lathi as a weapon

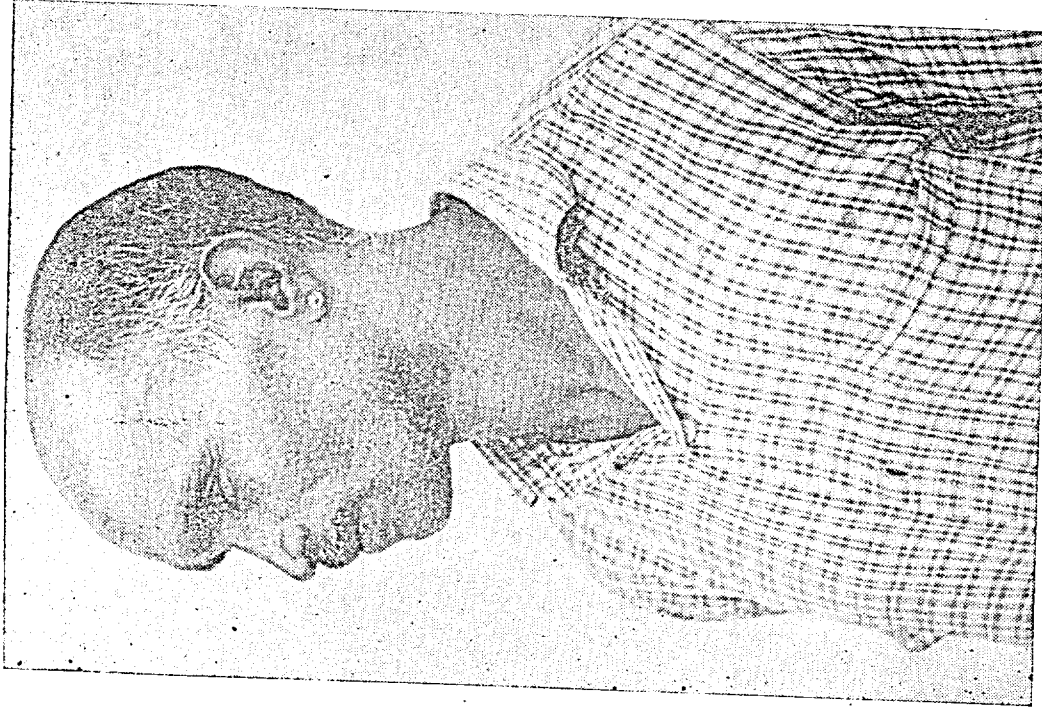


10 (a). Full-length portrait of a Hasalar male
at Bettadamane

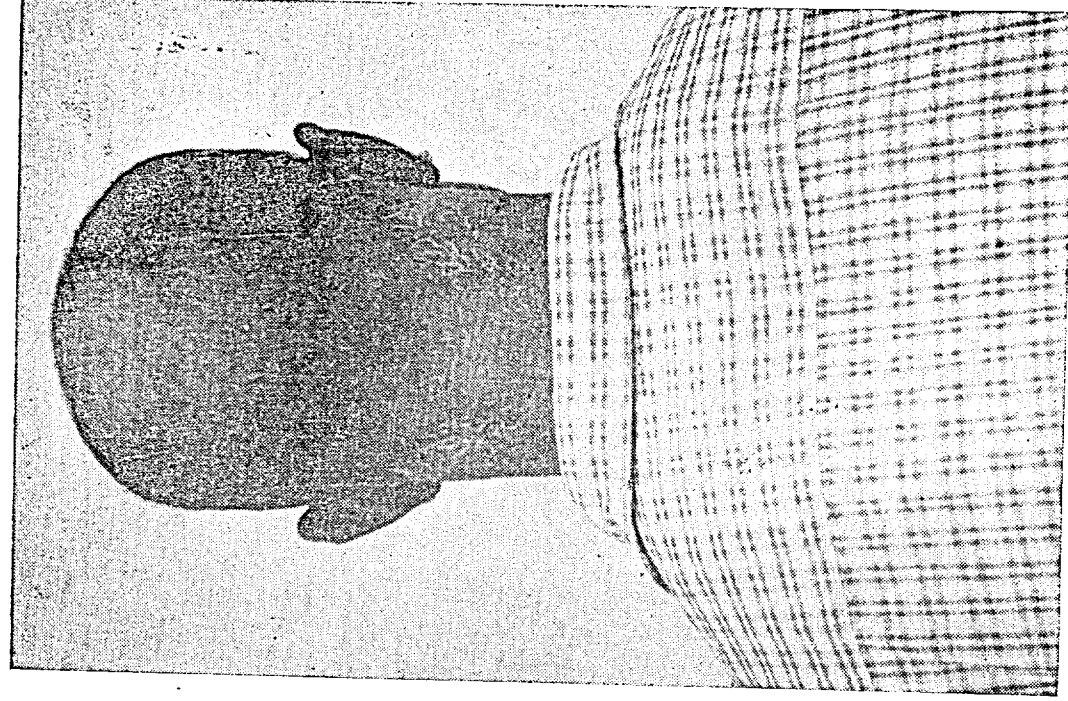
328 (g)



10 (b). Front view (close-up)



10 (c). Profile



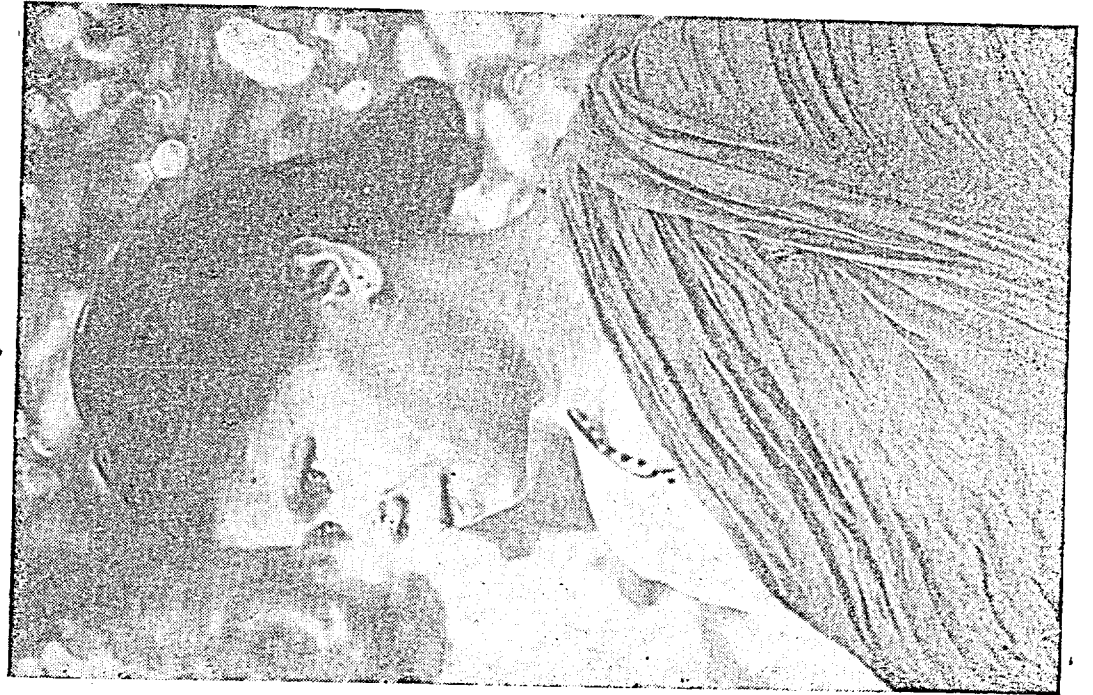
10 (d). As viewed from behind



11 (a). Full-length portrait of a Hasalar female
at Bettadamane



11 (b). Front view (close-up)



11 (c). Profile



11 (d). As viewed from behind

TABLE 2
Households and number of members

Village and Taluk	No. of house- holds	No. of members			Average size
		Male	Female	Total	
1. Hirekasavi (Sorab)	31	76	62	138	4.45
2. Kammargode (Mudigere)	6	18	19	37	6.17
3. Bettadmane (Mudigere)	5	18	11	29	5.80
4. Hoysala (Mudigere)	4	12	12	24	6.00
5. Olakatte (Hosnagar)	4	12	11	23	5.75
	50	136	115	251	5.00

The average size of the family varies from 6.17 in Kammargode to 4.45 in Hirekasavi, the average being 5.

Classification of the 50 households by size groups reveals that 2 households are unimembered; 11 have 2 or 3 members each; 26 have 4 to 6 members each; 9 have 7 to 9 members each and the remaining 2 have 10 or more members.

Among Hasalars simple type of family is more common though joint and other intermediary types occur here and there. Among the 50 households observed, 27 come under the simple type (married couple with unmarried children); 3 are joint families of a patrilocal type; 13 are of intermediary types consisting of unmarried or widowed siblings, widowed parent etc., in addition to the simple family. The remaining seven are single member households, or else, households with no married couples.

Though patrilocal residence is the rule among them, a few stray instances of the husband moving into his wife's household either immediately after marriage or sometime later have also been come across. At Hirekasavi three such instances were reported and at Kammargode colony, one. Five persons of Hirekasavi have also migrated to their conjugal or affinal villages either in search of better economic opportunities or for social support.

Iyer L. K. A. and Nanjundayya (1930 III) mention the five endogamous groups among them viz. *Belli Hasalaru*, *Baggalina Hasalaru*, *Nad Hasalaru*, *Male Hasalaru* and *Kara Yeleyuva Hasalaru*. During the present enquiries, nobody spoke of the caste being divided into any such groups. Instead, the polarisation

now appears to be on the basis of language—one group being Tulu speaking Hasalars, and the other, Kannada speaking Hasalars. Tulu speaking Hasalars are largely concentrated in Chikmagalur district while the Kannada speaking Hasalaru are found mostly in Shimoga district. Tulu speaking Hasalars are reportedly divided into *Bellimuger* and *Karemuger*.

The Kannada speaking section is patrilineal and descent for both male and female children is reckoned on the father's line. There seems to be some confusion in this regard among the Tulu Hasalars. The information gathered at Kammargode is patrilineal descent and it is said to be the mother's natal clan that counts most for reckoning descent in Hoysala and Bettadamane. It is the latter version that agrees with the observation made by Iyer L. K. A. (1930 III). At Olakatte in Hosnagar Taluk descent for boys, as could be ascertained is in the father's line while for girls it is through the mother. The exogamous clan is called *bali*. The following *balis* were returned during the field study:

1. Chalyera bali (Hoysala and Bettadmane)
2. Kinniger bali (Hoysala)
3. Kanne bali (Hoysala)
4. Kumudena bali (Bettadmane)
5. Gangarabali (Olakatte)
6. Shivana bali (Olakatte)
7. Setti bali (Olakatte)
8. Madhumeran bali (Kammargode)
9. Nader bali (Kammargode)

At Halasinahalli, the informants showed awareness of the existence of *Gangara bali*, *Bangerana bali*, *Bale bali* and a few others. In Sorab Taluk, most of the

Hasalars are completely oblivious of these *balis* except for a faint impression of such an institution having been in existence more than a generation ago. Hasalars in general do not have any lineage or clan-group organisations of any ritual, economic or political significance. The main function of clan seems to be the regulating of the marital alliances. Endo-clan marriages are taboo. Though the name of one's clan is not known it is possible to determine, by tracing kinship, whether a particular person falls within the prohibited degree of relationship for marriage. One's kinship circle encompasses the agnatic, maternal as well as affinal ties. Hasalars permit cross-cousin marriages and in certain areas (Sorab Taluk) marrying one's own or classificatory elder sister's daughter is also allowed. The kinship system and terminology prevalent among them is in no way different from those of the neighbouring Hindu Castes. Levirate is taboo and one's elder brother's wife is revered as one's own mother. An elder brother is required to observe strict avoidance of his younger brother's wife. Sometimes, a man may marry his wife's younger sister even during her life-time but sororate is not a custom among them. Polygyny is practiced under exceptional circumstances when the wife does not bear children and the like. Only one instance of bigamy came to light at Olakatte.

Hasalars follow "Makkala Kattu" law of inheritance under which it is only the sons of the family that inherit the parental property. Hereditary offices such as headmanship descend to the eldest son of the senior lineage.

V. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, PERSONAL DECORATIONS, FOOD AND DRINK AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS

(a) *Dwellings* :

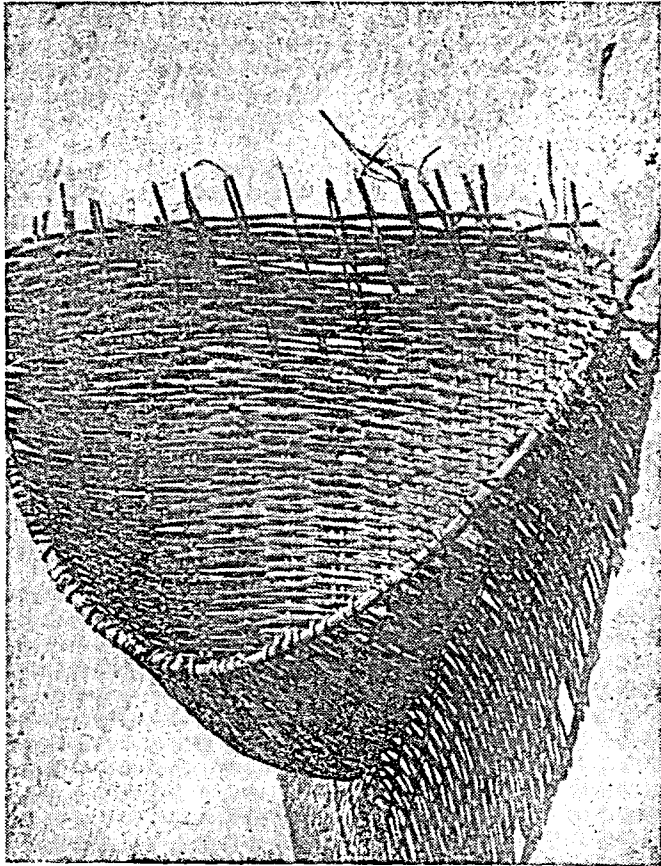
Hasalars have the tradition of having once been jungle dwellers. The 1891 Mysore Census Report (reproduced by Lewis Rice, Thurston and also Iyer L. K. A.; see also Enthoven, 1922 II; and Bombay Gaz. Vol. XV Kanara, Pt 1. P. 367) describes them as living in small isolated huts "which are, however, provided not only with the usual principal entrance through which one has to crawl in, but also with a half concealed hole in the rear, a kind of portern through which the shy inmates steal out into the jungle....." In the entire Malnad region, even the settled agricultural villages are composed mainly of isolated settlements dispersed at vantage points all over the revenue village. The major change then

among Hasalars is that they have relinquished their forest abode and have moved into settled villages and the plantation areas. In estates on which they labour, they live in hutments which their employers provide. In villages of interior Malnad they continue to live in isolated settlements a little removed from the other communities. For instance the four houses of Hasalars of Olakatte are situated at a distance of about a furlong from the house of their Brahmin land-lord.

After independence, colonies have been formed at several villages to ameliorate the conditions of the Tribals. In Mudigere Taluk, Kammargode colony consisting of eight houses came into existence during 1960 while at Hirekasavi of Sorab Taluk the colony with 26 houses was founded during 1958-59. There are colonies at Kumsi (Sorab Taluk), Hiremane (Sagar Taluk), Halasinahalli (Thirthahalli Taluk) etc. In these colonies, Hasalars try to live exclusively. Though Gowdalu and Maleru—the other two important scheduled tribes—are found in large numbers in this tract, the tribals do not live intermingled. Their neighbourhood comprises of such castes as the Vokkaliga (*Namdhari*, *Madi* or *Shervegara*), Adikarnatakas, Brahmin, Lingayats, Kuruba, Muslims and Christians. Of the eight houses in Kammargode colony only 6 are occupied by Hasalars, the remaining two being taken up by Mundala and Karadi Holey castes. All the houses at Kumshi and Hirekasavi colonies belong to Hasalars only.

The houses in the colony and also in the estates are in a linear cluster while settlements in villages tend to be an ill-defined cluster built around the house of their headman. In Hoysala, the house of their *mestri* the headman, is surrounded by the other four houses. So also at Bettadamane. The eight houses at Kammargode are in a row separated some 20 to 30 yards from each other, while the 26 houses at Hirekasavi colony are in two rows facing each other across a wide mud road.

Houses in estate lines and colonies are permanent structures built with mud and brick walls and roofed with Mangalore or sometimes country tiles. The ground plans of their houses are usually rectangular. A veranda (pial), a living room and a kitchen are the three main elements of their houses. Small thatched huts erected a few paces away from the house sometimes serve as bath rooms and also cattle sheds. In villages, they continue to live in rectangular huts thatched with grass, twigs or leaves. Their huts have only the principal entrance which is now large enough to allow a man to enter with his head bent. Both



13. Trap used for catching fish



12. A view of the kitchen

rainfall gradually decreases and the countryside tends to merge with the plains, forming what may be termed a "transitional zone". The climatic condition in Malnad is most favourable for cultivation of paddy, either irrigated or rainfed. Large extents of land have been brought under coffee plantation, during the past more than a hundred years, in the taluks of Mudigere, Chikmagalur and parts of Manjarabad and Belur. It looks probable that the immigration of Hasalar labourers is closely linked with the development of coffee estates in these taluks. The taluks of Sagar, Hosnagar Thirthahalli and parts of Sorab abound in arecanut plantations. In fact Iyer and Nanjundayya (1930 III) speak of a division of Hasalars known as *Baggalina Hasalaru* "whose legs have become bent by their constant practice of climbing areca trees with cross legs." Thus the demand for skilled labourers in the arecanut plantations seems to have attracted the Hasalars deep into the Malnad and even reaching upto the plains.

The lack of data about the population of Hasalars for the earlier Censuses has already been pointed out. Even the data available for the 1911 Census does not provide a proper base for comparison because, of the 114 Hasalars enumerated then, as many as 109 were returned from Mysore district in contra distinction to their previous and present concentration in north-western Malnad—particularly the taluks of Mudigere and Thirthahalli. This circumstance eludes a study of decennial variation in population.

According to the 1961 Census their population is 8905, out of whom 8884 are rural dwellers and 21 urban dwellers. The subjoined table presents the distribution of their population by sex and broad age-groups.

TABLE I
Distribution of Hasalars by sex and age-groups
[Source of India 1961 Census—Vol. XI Part V(A)]

Age-Group	Persons		
	Total	Male	Female
0—14	3976	1949	2027
15—44	3744	1899	1845
45+	1182	683	499
Age not stated	3	2	1
All ages	8905	4553	4372

The above table reveals that children constitute 44.6%, middle group 42.1% and aged 13.3%. Sche-

duled Tribes' percentages for the State as a whole are correspondingly 43.46, 41.62 and 14.88.

The sex ratio among them is 964. The sex ratio for the State's tribal population is only 953. By age-groups, among Hasalars, girls out-number boys (1040:1000) and this position is countenanced by a predominance of men over women in the age-group 45 and above (1000:730). The latter phenomenon is perhaps accountable to the presence of temporary male labourers in estates. Districtwise, the sex ratio is 1043 in Shimoga, 913 in Chikmagalur and 748 in Hassan. Chikmagalur and parts of Hassan District are the coffee producing areas and are also nearer to South Kanara.

III. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

While referring to a remarkable resemblance between Hasalars and Soligas, Lewis Rice (Mysore Gaz. First Edition: quoted by Rev. Sherring 1881, Vol. III P. 163 and also by Thurston 1909 Volume II P. 324) describes them as "a short, thick set race very dark in colour and with curled hair." Later, the Mysore Census Report 1891 states that Hasalars "are a diminutive but muscular race, with curly hair and dolichocephalic head" (Thurston 1909, II). Data based on anthropometric measurements are not, however, available.

Somatoscopic observations of a crude type were carried out on fifteen men during the field study. The data collected are obviously inadequate for any generalisation. However, it may be stated that the Hasalars are short of stature (mean height 155 cms) with a muscular build. The complexion of their skin tends to be brown and hair form is of either low or medium waves. Deep wavy forms are noticeable more among Hasalars of Mudigere than among those domiciled in Sorab. Their faces are oval and a few tend towards being round. Their eye-slits are straight and their eyes do not have epicanthic folds. They have medium lips and prognathism is generally absent. Noses with a deep root and flared wings occur sporadically both in Sorab taluk and also in Mudigere Taluk. It may, however, be noted that Hasalars are not in any way radically different in their appearance from other low castes of this region.

IV. FAMILY, CLAN, KINSHIP AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

Family among Hasalars is parti-local. After marriage the woman moves into her husband's house where she lives amidst her in-laws until her husband sets up an independent family. Their families tend to be small. Data obtained during field study regarding family size and composition are presented below:

houses and huts have inclined roofs only. Normally, the houses or huts are erected with sufficient inter-space and each house has some frontage as well as a backyard in which some vegetables and flowers are grown during rainy season. In colonies also the houses command enough space for raising small kitchen gardens. They draw drinking water, which they use without boiling, from closeby wells meant for their exclusive use. For answering the calls of nature both young and old go to open fields, as in their colonies and villages no latrines are provided.

The houses and huts of Hasalars do not differ much from those of other caste groups of equally low economic and social level in the region. These have rectangular groundplans and are single storeyed. The rainfall in the region being moderate to heavy, all houses have inclined roofs and the huts are thatched with grass and bamboo. Many a time, these houses and huts are to be built on raised plinths to protect the structures against water-logging. The floor is usually of gravel and is given cowdung wash at frequent intervals. Little attention is paid to wall decorations and other types of embellishments. In Hirekasavi colony, the occupant of a house who happens to be a carpenter has made a carved door frame for his main door. But this is only an exception. Some of the land-owning Hasalars aspire for better houses. In Mudigere Taluk, 4 Hasalars have become members of the "House Building Co-operative Society for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" to qualify for the house building advance from the Society of Rs. 3000 at a reasonable rate of interest, which is repayable in 20 equal annual instalments.

(b) Dress

In dress the Hasalars do not differ much from other similar caste groups and tribes of the region. The men's dress consists of a *mundu*, the lower unsewn garment, a *baniyan* or a shirt and a cap or a head scarf. About a decade ago, *bhairasa* (similar to *mundu* but smaller) was more popular, particularly among aged men. *Bhairasa* worn with a *kache* covers the body from waist to the knees whereas a *mundu* wound round the waist covers upto calf muscles. Those using *mundu* generally wear *langoti* or underwear. Some use dhoties now-a-days. Shirts and baniyans are also in common use and it is rare that men leave the upper parts of their body bare. In the interior Malnad, where areca plantations are raised they use caps of 'Adike hale' and in other areas cloth caps are worn. Young men in Hirekasavi colony and its neighbourhood have, of late, taken to the use of

pants, slacks, knickers and pyjamas swayed by external influences.

According to Hasalars of Mudigere Taluk, the use of leather chappals or shoes was formerly taboo and breach of this rule involved a fine upto Rs. 50. But this is denied by those of Sorab Taluk who are accustomed to using chappals. The younger and better educated even aspire to have full shoes. Hasalars in coffee estates generally use rubber and tyre sole chappals which are not only cheaper but also better suited to that terrain and climate.

Women wear sarces and blouses. The sarce they wear is coarse and cheap and measures 8 yards. As agrestic serfs in interior Malnad, they used to be provided with *thadapu* of 8 yards or *palu kattu*, a long black robe very much cheaper, by their masters. Custom did not allow their covering the bosom with the upper end of the sarce, nor could they wear blouses. These primitive customs have changed during the past 3 to 4 decades and their present-day customs closely follows what is common to the region. Women generally do not use foot wear.

(c) Ornaments

Men wear gold earstuds called *Onti* or *Kuduku* and finger rings of silver or copper. Ornaments worn by women are varied, the commonest being earstuds, nose screw, necklaces, bangles, wristlets etc. It was reported by the Hasalars of Mudigere that they were formerly prevented from using gold and silver ornaments in their home-land of South Kanara. It now remains a mere memory. No such inhibitions are known to Hasalars of Sorab taluk. In material culture the Hasalars of Sorab Taluk are better off than those in the hilly tracts adjacent to South Kanara.

Piercing the nose which was not popular among Hasalars of Mudigere in the past is now almost universal, and all married women wear nose-screws. Silver *Kadaga* has replaced the former brass wristlet called *himbale*, and the silver *dabu* has replaced the brass waist belt. All women, whose first husbands are alive and are not divorced, have to wear earstuds, nose-screw, a black bead necklace with *tali*—a gold pendant, bangles and toe-rings. To a widow or a divorcee, glass bangles, silver *kadagas*, tall toe rings and nose-screw are forbidden. She may, however, use silver wristlets called *belli dundu*. Never married women and girls are permitted to wear all ornaments except the *tali* and *Kadaga*.

(d) Personal Decorations

Hasalars consider tattooing as a form of body decoration and this is particularly fancied by women. This is done by the Korama or Sillekyaatha women whose services are rewarded with grains or cash. Almost all women have atleast a circular patch tattooed on their forehead. L. K. A. Iyer's (1930) findings that "Bodice is not worn by their womenfolk nor do they get themselves tattooed" no longer holds water.

Formerly men wore tuft but now the hair is mostly cropped. In rural areas, as in the past, they are even now denied the services of barbers. This makes mutual assistance obligatory. Women comb their hair daily and gather it into a knot at the back. Younger women prefer pigtails. Both men and women use cocoanut oil for the hair.

Stray instances of men having one or more of their front teeth filled with a speck of gold may also be seen. Four such instances were noticed during the present field study.

(e) Food and Drink

Hasalars eat flesh but not beef and carrion. They also consume the flesh of rabbits, wild cats, *barka*, tortoise, porcupine, jungle fowl, mungoose etc. Now-a-days, they rarely indulge in hunting and therefore they seldom consume wild game. They consume all varieties of fishes. In several places e.g. Kumsi and Hirekasavi of Sorab Taluk, they have given up eating domestic pork. They particularly abjure the flesh of pea-fowls.

Their staple food consists of rice, ragi or jowar and some pulses supplemented occasionally with vegetables and flesh of animals. In the villages of Mudigere Taluk and also at Olakatte, they take two meals a day—once around 8 A.M. and again around 7.30 P.M. Rice gruel with fish curry or *chutney* as side-dish constitutes their meal. During mid-day, some of those who can afford, take some cooked rice and soup. The Hasalars of Sorab Taluk are accustomed to three meals a day, morning, noon and night. Their breakfast consists of fresh *rotti* (cakes of jowar or rice) and *chutney* while their lunch and dinner consists of cooked rice and soup (either of pulses or vegetables or both). They prepare pickles and salted green chillies which keep for long and which constitute a delicious side-dish. Salted chillies need to be fried before use. Their holiday dishes are *holige*, *huggi*, *dose*, *kadabu*, *payasa*, etc., which are common to the region. They gather and consume honey, jack fruits, mangoes and

a variety of edible roots and leaves whenever available in the neighbourhood. *Nare*, *Uyyera*, *Mulgenasu* and *Nore genasu* are the common roots and tubers available to them during the period of Shravana (mid August) to Kartika (mid November). The womenfolk and the youngsters usually go for collecting them. Besides Hasalars the other tribes known to be skilled in gathering roots are the Maleru and the Gowdalu (also called Kumri Gowda). Cooked with a pinch of salt they make dainty dishes.

Hasalars entertain no restrictions regarding the consumption of *Sendi* (of palmyra) or *Kallu* (of *Baine caryota urens*) the intoxicating drinks. Their partiality to toddy appears to have been well known in the past. During marriages and when their objects of worship were propitiated the offer of drink was an imperative and there was no objection to womenfolk also taking it. In fact the *adike-hale* cap they used, served them for a drinking bowl also. But their love for liquor declined after the introduction of prohibition.

Now-a-days their men also take tea in local tea-shops. Stray instances of preparing tea at home are also met with. Chewing is a widespread habit both among males and females and men smoke.

(f) Household Goods

Hasalars do not have any household goods distinctive of their community. As among others of a similar status, they possess large numbers of earthenware and a few pieces of brass and copper. They cook food in mud pots. Water and foodgrains etc., are stored in earthen vessels. Some bedsheets, mats, wooden planks, baskets, sickles, felling axe, crow bar etc., are the common things they possess. Households practising agriculture own wooden plough, harrow and hoes besides equipments such as spade, axe etc. Bullock-carts are also owned by a few (e.g. at Hirekasavi 3 out of the 31 households possessed bullock-carts as on date of enquiry). It was reported at Kammargode and Bettadamane, that several of the Hasalars' households of the region possess bows and arrows which are occasionally used in hunting. Snares, fishing traps and nets are also possessed by Hasalars at many places.

They are well aware of the uses of several consumer goods such as battery torch lights, cloth umbrellas, bicycles, wrist watches, radio etc. A few relatively well-to-do possess one or two pieces of wooden chairs, rope cots, stools etc. Very few are seen to use wrist-watches and bicycles.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASES AND TREATMENT

Hasalars are not very particular about environmental cleanliness. The houses and front yards are swept clean daily but the dust and litter collected is dumped at close quarters. Nearness of the manurial pit to the house would emit stink and breed flies. The houses are without drains. The sullage soaks into the soil or stagnates. In Government built colonies conditions are better. Both young and old go to the open for answering calls of nature.

They take bath twice or thrice a week. At several places men reported that they are in the habit of taking bath after every day's toil. Toilet soap is a luxury. The first thing in the morning, they clean their teeth and have a wash. Less care is bestowed on educating children in cleanly habits. Clothes are washed by the female members of the house once or twice a week and washing soap is also used, though not quite regularly. It was observed at Hirekasavi that each house has in the front yard a small, slightly raised square. This is smeared with cowdung every morning. On it is placed a small conical lump of cowdung with a flower stuck at its apex. This is called Byanappa, a feature said to be common in the neighbourhood.

For ordinary ailments herbal preparations are taken. Continued illness arouses the suspicion of some evil spirit becoming active. They have specialist mediums called *Gadigas* among them who are credited with the power of divining the cause of serious illness, misfortunes, run of ill-luck, etc., and to suggest remedies. Of late, there is reportedly some decline in the numbers approaching such quacks. Allopathic treatment is taken in hospitals and from private practitioners. In several places allopathic medicines are procured for post-natal treatment of women. The age old herbal decoctions indigenously prepared are still in

vogue. They now co-operate with the authorities during the outbreak of epidemics in getting themselves vaccinated and inoculated.

VII. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Though known to be forest dwellers of the bygone days, Hasalars do not have any distinctive language of their own. They hail from South Kanara, the land of Tulu, and in consequence their mother-tongue is Tulu. However, there is some confusion in this regard. The 1891 Mysore Census Report, Lewis Rice (1897) and Iyer L. K. A. (1930) mention Tulu as the mother-tongue of Hasalars. On the other hand, Thurston (1909) quotes a para from Lewis Rice's Mysore Gazetteer (First Edition) wherein it is said that Hasalars "speak a dialect of Canarese". The 1901 Madras Census Report also describes Hasalars as "Canarese agricultural labourers". So also, the district Gazetteers of Bombay [Volume XV (1883) and Volume XXII (1884)], indicate Kannada as being the language spoken by Hasalars.

Perhaps the early immigrants to Shimoga District settled amidst Kanarese landlords, picked up the new language quickly and gradually adapted it as their home tongue also. Thus, the Hasalars of Hirekasavi, Kumsi and its neighbourhood in the taluks of Sorab, Shikaripur and Sagar have now, no notion of Tulu having ever been their mother tongue. They speak in Kannada both among themselves and with outsiders. Hasalars of Mudigere and Thirthahalli Taluks consider Tulu as their mother-tongue and almost all of them are conversant with Kannada as well.

Statistics regarding mother-tongue and bilingualism for Hasalars according to the 1961 Census (*vide*: Table ST-1, Cen. of I. 1961 Vol. XI, Mys. Part V-A. Spl. Tables on S.C. and S.T.) are presented in the table below:—

TABLE 3

Mother-tongue and Bilingualism

Sl. No.	Mother tongue	Total speakers		Persons returned as speaking a language subsidiary to mother tongue		Subsidiary language
		3	4	5	6	
1	2	M	F	M	F	7
1.	Kannada	2346	2424	62	30	Tulu (Males, 58, Females 29) English (Males 2) Telugu (Males 1, Females 1) Hindi (Males 1)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Tulu	2171	1926	1095	721	Kannada (Males 1092, Females 719) Tamil (Males 1, Females 1) Telugu (Females 1) Marathi (Males 1) Sanskrit (Males 1)
3.	Konkani	..	1	..	1	Kannada (Females 1)
4.	Tamil	9	9	3	1	Kannada (Males 3, Females 1)
5.	Telugu	6	8	..	5	Kannada (Females 5)
6.	Malayalam	..	4	..	..	..
7.	Urdu	1	..	..	..	..
	All languages	4533	4372	1160	758	

Roughly 98 per cent of Hasalars returning Kannada as their mother tongue are unilingual, while bilingualism characterises roughly 44 per cent of those whose mother tongue is Tulu. Bilingualism prevails to a greater extent among males than females. A district-wise analysis of the data (*vide* S. T. 1 already referred to) shows that in Shimoga District the number returning Kannada as the mother tongue is 2041 males and 2158 females, and Tulu 194 males and 173 females. In Chikmagalur District it is the reverse with 3100 (1617 males and 1483 females) speaking Tulu as mother tongue and 566 (302 males and 264 females)

Kannada. Tulu speaking Hasalars are more in number in Hassan District also. Probably these are temporary immigrants not familiar with the regional language.

Tulu language has no script of its own. Thus literacy could permeate Hasalars with felicity through Kannada only. According to the 1961 Census only 457 persons (5.1 per cent) are literate. In the urban sector all the 21 Hasalars (14 males and 7 females) are illiterate. Statistics pertaining to the rural areas are as shown below:

TABLE 4
Literacy and education among Hasalars in Rural areas only

Population	Illiterate	Literate (without any educational level)	Educational level	
			Primary or Jr. Basic	Matriculation and above
Males	4519	4132	380	4
Females	4365	4295	70	..
Persons	8884	8427	450	4

Illiteracy is widespread and it is more so among the females. It is only after Independence that they have begun to appreciate the value of education, and have started sending their children to schools. Much leeway has yet to be made.

In Government sponsored colonies and villages, situated nearer towns and large villages most of the Hasalars, children attend schools at least for a couple of years. In their view, economic instability is a major obstacle to their providing higher (*i.e.* upto matriculation) education to their children. At Hirekasavi

four specific instances wherein studies were discontinued beyond VI or VII Standard, for want of finance were reported. As on the date of enquiry only one Hasalar boy from Hirekasavi was attending High School at Shiralakoppa. As in the case of other communities similarly circumstanced, Hasalars' children also need to work for augmenting the family income.

Considering the Scheduled Tribe population in the State as a whole, literates in urban areas constitute 20.24 per cent (2010 out of 9935 persons) and in rural areas, roughly 7.5 per cent (13,641 out of 1,82,161

persons). The percentage of literacy among females viz. 2.5 is too low. As regards Hasalars, all those returned from urban areas are illiterate and the percentage of literacy in rural areas is only 5.14 which is much below the State average for Scheduled Tribes.

VIII. ECONOMIC LIFE

In the bygone past Hasalars dwelt in forests and subsisted solely by food gathering, supplemented occasionally by hunting with the bow and arrow. A survival of this tradition is even now to be noticed in a few places wherein roots are occasionally gathered by these people with considerable ease and dexterity and hunting also indulged in. They later became agrestic serfs or day labourers in plantation areas and are exhibiting a trend now towards acquiring agricultural lands. These lands are held individually under *ryatwari* tenure and following the regional pattern, pass on to sons in equal share. There are also several instances of land grants on *Darkast* to Hasalars.

According to the present survey, at Hirekasavi 23 out of the 31 Hasalar households own land. The total extent owned (inclusive of Darkast grants) is 68 acres and the per capita average is a little less than 3 acres. Among the land-owning households 19 have 2 to 4 acres, 2 have one acre each, one household has 9 acres and one 5 acres. A major extent of the land held by them is dry and most of the Darkast lands are said to be uncultivable. None of the households found at Kammargode owns land. Three have, however, taken 8 acres of paddy fields on lease for cultivation. One household at Hoysala owns about ten acres and similarly another at Bettadamane owns about 2 acres. At Olakatte, Hasalars are all landless labourers.

But for some stray exceptions, gathering of roots, tubers and other edible fruits and trapping or shooting of small game etc is now not pursued by Hasalars. Lewis Rice (1897 I) records that they collected cardamoms and other wild products for their employers and that they had virtually become slaves already. Thurston (1909 II) also notes "felling timber as their chief occupation besides working in areca gardens, collection of cardamom and pepper". There is, however, no evidence of Hasalars having ever exercised control, or enjoyed any special rights, over the forest wealth. The earlier accounts do not shed any light on the practice of shifting cultivation among them. On the other hand, they have been known more as agricultural labourers comparable with the agrestic

serfs of Malabar (Iyer L. K. A. 1930 III) than as peasants.

The process of denudation of forests that is continually going on, coupled with the severe restrictions that have come to be imposed by the Forest authorities tend to militate against any large scale hunting. However, Hasalars living in the interior and remote regions of the Malnad amidst rich natural vegetation frequently go on hunting rabbits, wild cats, wild sheep, *barka*, wild hogs, porcupine etc. They move out in groups of 5 or 6, oftentimes accompanied by dogs. They are familiar with the use of snares and some can wield the bow with accuracy. It is said that two types of bows—one for driving arrows and the other for stones—were in common use among them. All members of the hunting party including the dogs, share the game equally. Persons of other neighbouring castes may also join these hunting groups. It is said that in Hoysala, Kammargode etc., the bow and the arrow are considered to be objects of worship (representing their cultural heroes Mudda and Kalala) and need to be propitiated periodically. Womenfolk, after they come of age, are not free to touch the bow as also members of inferior castes such as Karadi, Mundala, Holeya etc.

Fishing as an occupation is not important for Hasalars. However, a few may join fishing expeditions organised by the village communities when the tanks and ponds go dry, for personal consumption. At Kumsi in Sorab Taluk, some are said to use fishing nets.

Like other rural communities they also rear cattle and sheep and keep poultry. Inferior breed cows of a diminutive size are more common among them than bullocks or buffaloes. It is only some cultivators of owned or leased lands that maintain oxen. On the date of enquiry, at Hirekasavi 14 out of the 31 households owned some livestock. In this colony as also in Kumshi Colony at the time of its founding, the Government granted a pair of bullocks to each household. 30 bullocks were held amongst 13 households and it was observed that three households each had four bullocks while 2 had one each. Cows and calves numbered 39 in all and these were owned by nine households, one of which held as many as 16 heads. Only four households possessed sheep and goats numbering eight only. All the six households contacted in Kammargode were found to own livestock. Two households owned a pair of he-buffaloes each while another had a pair of bullocks. None possessed sheep or goats.

Their main source of livelihood is labour: either plantation or agricultural. Forestry, fishing, handicrafts, trade and service provide them a nominal source of income.

According to the 1961 Census, 4933 Hasalars out of a total 8905 or 55.3 per cent are workers. Among males the workers constitute nearly 61.5 per cent (2782 out of 4533) and among females, a little less

than 50 per cent (2151 out of 4372). In the urban area, 6 out of the 14 males and one out of the 7 females have been returned as workers. The industrial classification reveals that 3 workers (2 m and 1 f) are agricultural labourers, 3 are engaged in trade and another in construction. Particulars relating to classification of workers belonging to Hasalar Tribe in rural areas under the nine livelihood classes based on their work are furnished below:

TABLE 6
Industrial Classification of Workers among Hasalaru by districts Rural
(Source—Census of India, 1961 Vol. XI-Mysore, Part V-A)

Workers	State		Chikmagalur district		Shimoga district		Hassan district		Mysore district	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total workers	2776	2150	1188	933	1371	1068	217	149	..	..
I. As Cultivator	650	340	98	55	539	281	13	4	..	..
II. As Agricultural labourer	714	517	298	210	415	307	1	..	..	..
III. In Mining, Quarrying, plantation, orchards, forestry etc.	1034	794	621	573	218	80	195	141	..	..
IV. At Household Industry	32	41	14	3	14	38	4	..	..	..
V. In Manufacturing other than Household Industry	10	15	10	1	..	14	..	..	..	..
VI. In Construction	11	1	9	1	2	..	..	..	..	..
VII. In Trade & Commerce	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
VIII. In Transport, Storage and Communication	3	..	1	..	2	..	..	..	..	..
IX. In Other Services	322	442	137	90	181	348	4	4	..	..

The above figures reveal that 37 per cent are workers in plantations, orchards, livestock, forestry etc.; 25 per cent are agricultural labourers and 20 per cent are cultivators. Districtwise analysis shows that plantation workers are preponderant in Chikmagalur and Hassan Districts while there is a concentration of cultivators in Shimoga district. The percentage of workers in plantations to the total workers among Hasalars in Hassan district (rural) is seen to be as high as 89.86 among males and 94.6 among females. In Chikmagalur district (rural), 52.28 per cent of the total male workers and 61.4 per cent of the total female workers are engaged in plantation work. On the other hand, in Shimoga district (rural), the male and female workers engaged as cultivators constitute 39.3 per cent and 26.3 per cent of the total male and female workers respectively. The agricultural labourers form 30 per cent and 28.7 per cent among the total male and female workers (in Shimoga district) respectively. In Hassan

district (rural) only one individual has reported agricultural labour as his main occupation. In Chikmagalur district (rural) 25 per cent of the male workers and 22.5 per cent of the female workers are engaged in agricultural labour.

At several places they still work as *jeetadalu* or bond servants. They do not, however, have any patron-client relationship with any particular land-holding caste of the region. The Malnad system of *Mannalu* and *Huttalu* is not existing now and the landlord labour relationship is purely monetary. Out of 50 households contacted only one (at Olakatte, Hosnagar Taluk) belonged to the *Huttalu* category (i.e. his forefathers were also bonded labourers or serfs of the same land-lord). On the other hand, five persons were working as *Jeethadalu* at Hirekasavi under Lingayat and Muslim land lords. The labourer under this system is fed and clothed throughout the year and

*The solitary female returned from this district is a non-worker.
43--1 Census/Mysore/71

paid cash of about Rs. 150 to 200. Young men occasionally borrow and work off the loan under this system. It may be mentioned that *Jeetha* labourers are found even among other castes. Under the earlier system of serfdom, the landlord not only provided the workers with a house-site and a couple of areca and coconut trees, but also looked after their family as if they were a part of his own household. He thus satisfied their basic needs regarding both food and clothing and expected of them in return exclusive service on his fields. According to the informants in Mudigere Taluk, the landlord could by force, secure the return of a deserter. Such a situation is now non-existent.

They generally grow rice. In a few places in Mudigere taluk, a few among them have in recent years taken upto coffee and cardamom cultivation also on small plots. According to the regional custom, the share to be given by the tenant to the landlord is either half the produce or a fixed quantity of grain as may be agreed upon. Till about a couple of years ago, in large coffee estates the management, it is said, leased out land suitable for paddy cultivation to its trusted and influential labourers. Diversification of occupation was thus permitted even among estate labourers.

In South Kanara (according to the Hasalars in Bettadamane, Kammargode and Hoysala) they used to serve Brahmins, Jain and Bunt landlords as serfs. It was their duty to dig graves, procure firewood for cremation. These duties are, however, not being attended to any more in their present settlements.

IX. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Birth

Pregnancy is recognised by cessation of the monthly periods. The first pregnancy warrants special care and attention. The desire of the lady for a variety of dishes are fulfilled on an auspicious day during the seventh month and new clothes are presented to her by relations. This ceremony is called *Bayake Sammana* in Mudigere Taluk and *Hoovu Mudisuva Sastra* in Sorab Taluk. Invariably a few days after this ceremony or during the ninth month, she is taken to her parental home for delivery. The subsequent births take place mostly in the husband's household.

A pregnant woman attends to her normal work without restrictions. During the advanced stages she does only light work, and takes adequate rest.

She is prevented from eating gourds, raw tamarind, bamboo shoots, papaya, brinjals, jack fruits etc.

Delivery takes place in a corner of the house and improvised curtains serve to secure privacy. Elderly women of the family or the tribe attend on her in her travail. However, it is a common practice to enlist the attendance of a local *dai* or *soolagithi*. Soon after the birth, the *soolagithi*, severs the umbilical cord using a sharp knife or sickle and then, gathers the placenta in a *adike hale* or else in an earthen pot. Later, she buries this either at a marshy place a little distance away from the house or at the place where usually the members of the household take bath. The *Soolagithi* gets one or two rupees in addition to some grains, gur, blouse cloth etc. The services of trained midwives are obtained only when abnormal conditions are suspected. She is paid a fee of Rs. 5 to 10. In a few places, as for instance in Olakatte, at the spot where the placenta is buried, an areca or banana sapling is planted after some offering is made on the third day.

In some places pollution is supposed to last till the fifth day while in some other places e.g. Olakatte, Hirekasavi, etc., it lasts till the eleventh day. During this period, all the members of the household are considered impure. On the 5th or 11th day as the case may be the premises is cleaned, smeared with cow-dung, and *Thirtha* or sanctified water obtained from a Brahmin priest or a Lingayat Jangama is sprinkled all over. All the members after a bath take a sip of *Thirtha*. The impurity in the case of the mother lasts till she performs *Gange puje* either at a well or to a pot within the house on the 16th or on the 27th day. The child is named and put to cradle either on the eleventh or on the sixteenth day. Till then, the baby is laid in a winnowing basket or more often in a *adike hale*.

There are significant differences in common names in use among Tulu Hasalars and Kannada Hasalars. For instance, in Kammargode, Bettadamane, Hoysala etc., such names as Kodiya, Guruva, Modenkila, Koraga, Maila, Sinkara are common for men and Seethu, Lakshmi, Karupu, Enku, Mechu, etc., are common for women. All these names have a distinct South Kanara ring about them. On the other hand in Hirekasavi and Kumsi of Sorab Taluk the common names for men are: Mallappa, Shivappa, Earappa, Basappa, Siddappa, Hanumantha, Jettappa, Durgappa, Revappa, Mariyappa, etc., while Seethavva, Guthyavva, Mahadevi, Chowdavva, Bangaravva, Eravva, Phakeeravva etc., are common among females. These are quite common among other Kannada speaking castes of this region. The difference in common names also, in a way, emphasises the fact that Kannada

Hasalars are very early immigrants and have in consequence lost moorings of their original traditions and have assimilated to a considerable extent the local culture.

Soon after birth, the baby and the mother, as also the *Soolagithi*, will have a wash and change. A little quantity of honey or castor-oil is administered to the baby. The suckling starts from the third day and lasts normally for 12 to 18 months. The giving of food is started when the baby is about six months old, but simultaneous breast-feeding continues. The mother will be on restricted diet for 10 to 30 days following the child-birth. She is given cooked rice and pepper powder or soup in little quantities during the first ten days. A mixture (called *Khara*) of wheat, pepper, copra, cummin, *Menthe*, almond etc., is given to her for a fortnight as a recuperative. After the tenth day she may take chicken soup and then gradually reverts to her normal food. The confinement lasts for a minimum period of 27 days and in several cases it extends upto 45 days. Thereafter she returns to her husband's household.

Tonsure, piercing of earlobes and nose (for females) are not marked by any special ceremonies.

Sons are rated higher than daughters though daughters are not scorned. They are not aware of any methods for limiting the family. Barrenness in women is considered a curse the remedy for which appears to lie in taking vows. A man often remarries when the first wife fails to bear children. Still-births and infant deaths cause anxiety and vows are taken to prevent such mishaps. Some women take indigenous drugs from dispensers of such medicines. Occasionally a *Gadiga* i.e. a diviner belonging to their own community, is called upon to find the spirit which torments the person and to suggest appropriate remedies.

(b) Puberty

The girl menstruating for the first time is considered impure for four or eight days. She is segregated and stays in a cattleshed, or a separate hut or else in an outer corner of the dwelling. Everyday married women bathe her and during spare hours sing folk-songs to entertain her. During this period she is not permitted to do any work and to mingle with others. On the fifth or ninth day she performs *puja* to water contained in a well or an earthen pot after the purificatory bath given to her by married women. A few members of the tribe are treated to a feast on this occasion. If

already married, she moves into her husband's household, on some auspicious and convenient day.

(c) Marriage

Hasalars regard premarital sex relations as sinful. Adultery among married women is also highly deprecated. Girls are generally married a little before or after attaining puberty generally between the ages of 14 and 18. The marriageable age for boys varies between 24 and 28. Poverty drives some to marry late. The boy's relatives should take the initiative in selecting a suitable bride and starting the negotiations. As connections with unknown families are avoided, the field for selection is limited to a few well-known villages or regions in the neighbourhood. Thus the Hasalars of Soraba Taluk do not wish to have alliances with those in Thirthahalli and Mudigere Taluks and *vice-versa*. Marriage of persons belonging to the same *bali* is taboo. Parallel cousins either on the father's side, or on the mother's side, are equal in status to one's own brothers and sisters. On the other hand, they permit and even favour, cross-cousin marriages. As regards marrying one's own elder sister's daughter the customs are conflicting. The Tulu speaking Hasalars consider it an incest while the Kannada speakers in Sorab Taluk see no objection to such marriages. It is possible that this development in Sorab Taluk has taken place during the past 2 to 3 decades as Iyer, L. K. A. (1930 III) categorically states "they do not marry their sister's daughter". (P. 299). Though polygyny is permissible, monogamy is the rule. Polyandry is unknown among Hasalars. So also, it is taboo for a man to marry his elder brother's widow. In fact, if a widow or a divorcee should prefer to remarry, she should totally avoid any member of her deceased husband's family. Divorce and separation are recognised forms to express one's unwillingness to maintain the marital bond intact. Remarriage is allowed and it involves no loss of face. Young widows, specially those without issues remarry early. The middle-aged and the old live in their conjugal villages with their children. Sometimes, a widow may return to her parental village and live separately or with her father. Widow remarriage is known as *Seereudike* in Kannada and it is a simple ceremony. The husband-to-be offers his bride a new saree and a blouse at her residence. About a dozen or more close relatives attend.

If a woman elopes with a paramour, she is rejected by her former husband. The paramour, if found living in the immediate neighbourhood, is brought before the elders of the tribe who impose on him a

heavy fine. If the wife refuses to live with her husband and seeks a divorce, her relatives will have to repay the expenses incurred by her husband for the marriage. On the other hand, if the man rejects his wife, she is simply taken to her parents to whom her follies and shortcomings which have provoked this extreme step are narrated. After this rejection she is free to remarry. The customs of "tearing the end of her cloth" and "observing funeral ceremonies for her" (Iyer L. K. A. 1930 III) are now not in vogue.

The only socially approved method of acquiring a mate is arranged marriage. Rarely, elopements occur and the eloper usually deserts both the husband's and the parents village of the lady. It is customary to pay *Thera* (bride-price) to the bride's parents. It is now Rs. 50 in cash and 2 to 4 bags of paddy not to speak of the ornaments and cloth given to the bride. Among Tulu Hasalars, the bride-price in the past consisted of Rs. 12 in cash, 1 *mudi* rice and 1 *mudi* paddy, a pair of brass bangles, brass *tali* and black bead necklace, one brass finger-ring and some clothes. In Sorab Taluk among Kannada Hasalars, the bride price consisted of 6 *varaha* (i.e. 24 rupees) in cash, and six bags (about 3 quintals) of paddy besides ornaments and clothes while it was Rs. 100 in cash and 10 bags of paddy at Kumshi and a few other places.

As a prelude to the marriage an astrologer is consulted to ascertain if the results of the proposed union will be lucky. They even occasionally visit village Gods and if in answer to their prayers *prasad* is granted they construe that it is a signal for their proceeding further unhesitatingly. Then a few relatives of the boy call on the bride's parents and seek her hand in marriage. If both parties agree, betrothal ceremony called *oppanda* takes place. Kannada Hasalars and many Tulu Hasalars consult Brahmin astrologers or sometimes Lingayat Jangams to fix up an auspicious day for marriage. Some Tulu Hasalars do not consult Bhats but choose any convenient Sunday for the celebrations. According to a legend, once their elders sought the assistance of an astrologer for suggesting an auspicious day but the marriage proved a miserable disappointment. They, therefore, chose to celebrate the marriage on a Sunday which resulted in remarkable success. Sunday is thus considered as a very auspicious day for marriages. They, however, avoid the full moon day, the new moon day and the *Sankramana*.

Mostly marriages take place during March, April and May. Except those who are indigent others prefer celebration of the marriage at the girl's residence.

A *pandal* with either nine or twelve posts is erected on the day prior to the marriage. The main post which is generally of jack-fruit tree is called *Dhare Kamba*. On the next morning the bridegroom gets a shave from one of his sister's husbands and receives a ceremonial bath. The relatives of the bridegroom escort him to the bride's residence where also a *pandal* is erected. His mother however stays back. A new dhoti worn in *kachche* style, a shirt and a head scarf will be his dress and he holds in his right hand a dagger or knife. The procession is headed by drummers. At the girl's place they are received and presents brought by them for the bride are handed over. To the *Dhare Kamba* is tied a cocoanut and a cucumber. The bride decked with ornaments and in the new saree is lead to this post and the couple circumambulate the post thrice. The boy is lead by his sister's husband while his own sister leads the bride. Then some elderly male relative of the groom ties the *tali*, and elders shower grains of rice. Girl's relatives then make presents—mostly in cash—and this money, her parents appropriate. The cupped hands of the couple are then joined together and in it are placed some rice grains and a few blades of *garike* grass. The elders then pour water on the grass and this ceremony is known as *Dhare*. The *balis* of the couple are loudly announced. No priest officiates. Then follows a feast which includes non-vegetarian dishes also. In the past they used to revel in toddy also.

The couple accompanied by their relatives (Girl's mother however stays back) proceed to the boy's place. Here, the couple are first seated on a plank besides the main post (*Dhare Kamba*) and the relatives of the boy offer presents in cash ranging from one rupee to ten rupees. The couple then distribute *veelya* to the assembly. After a ceremony in which the newly weds partake of food from a common dish, others are feasted. The girl and her aide stay back while all her other kin leave for their respective places according to their convenience. On the seventh day the boy's parents accompanied by a few relations and the couple visit the girl's parents and give some food articles as presents. All return on the following day after the marriage *pandal* is formally dismantled.

The customs vary greatly among Hasalars of different regions. Among Hasalars who are recent immigrants from the South Kanara and are labourers in areas adjacent to their native Taluk (e.g. Kammar-gode etc.) the customs prevails of inviting *Nalakeyavaru* (devil dancers of the South Kanara) on the day prior to the marriage and of arranging *puja* to their

Kuladaiya in the *Kola* devil dance fashion. The bridegroom touches the sword held by these dancers and representing the *Kuladaiva* for the first time on this occasion. This over, a feast follows. But in Halasina-halli though they are Tulu Hasalars, the custom of propitiating their *Kuladaiya* through devil dance is not reported. Further, at this place it is the bridegroom that ties the *Tali* and also the services of a Brahmin priest are invariably obtained.

The Kannada-Hasalars of Olakatte and its neighbourhood (Hosanagar Taluk) also requisition the services of a Brahmin priest, the one who serves all the other caste groups in the village. The milk post of the *pandal*, according to the locally prevailing custom, should be of banyan tree. Besides the custom of bringing *airani* pots and giving the would-be-couple a ceremonial bath is also noticed. Here also it is the boy who ties the *tali*. Preparing non-vegetarian dishes on marriage occasions has been given up.

In Sorab Taluk, either a Brahmin priest of a Lingayat Jangam may solemnize the union. The customs prevailing among these Hasalars do not differ much from those prevailing among other Hindu caste groups of the region of a similar social standing. The main elements viz. the erection of the marriage *pandal*

on the day prior to the day of marriage; fetching of *airani* pots and a twig of banyan or *atti* tree representing the milk-pots; *Harineeru*, the ceremonial or ritual bath given by the *muttaides* to the couple; tying of *tali*; *Dhare* i.e. pouring water on a cocoanut held in the cupped hands of the couple, offering of presents etc., are all common features. Here also they have abjured the preparation of non-vegetarian dishes for marriage feasts. They also perform the *Bhooma* and *Nagoli* ceremonies besides taking out the newly weds in a procession around the village and to the village temple.

Marriages are now-a-days costly due to the soaring prices and also the changing tastes. A few silver ornaments such as bracelets, waistbelt, toe-rings besides the *tali* of gold and a couple of medium variety sarees for the bride have become essential. Many are therefore compelled to borrow heavily on marriages and later some male member of the family has to work off the loan by serving the money-lending landlord as an attached agricultural labourer.

The statistical data as per the 1961 Census, relating to marital status among Hasalars by sex and age-groups are reproduced below:

TABLE 6
Marital Status by Sex and Age-groups
(Source : Table SCTI II-Part (B) Census of India 1961—Vol. XI Mys. Part V-A)

Age-groups	Persons		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced/ Separated		Un-specified status	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
All ages	4533	4372	2633	2160	1695	1790	185	402	16	17	4	3
0—14	1949	2027	1947	2016	2	7	..	1	..	..	..	3
15—44	1899	1845	668	143	1140	1590	75	97	12	15	4	..
45+	683	499	18	1	551	192	110	304	4	2	..	..
Age not stated	2	1	..	..	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..

Child marriages though found to exist are indeed rare. In the age-group 45+ only 18 out of the 683 men (2.63%) and one out of the 499 women (0.2%) have never married and this is generally accounted for by the mentally deranged and physically handicapped. One such instance of forced bachelorhood due to unsoundness of mind was reported from Hirekasavi during the field study. Widows outnumber widowers and this appears to be the outcome of men having lesser qualms regarding remarriage after the death of the first wife. This characteristic is also to be universally found among all the Scheduled Tribes

and Castes. The lower proportion of widows in the lower age-groups 15-44 is perhaps attributable mainly to the existence of the institution of widow remarriage.

(d) Death

Both burial and cremation are approved forms of disposal of the dead among Hasalars the former being more common. The aged and the pregnant as also the lepers are preferably burnt. Everywhere children are invariably buried and practically no obsequial ceremonies are observed for them. It is only for the

married that various rituals are observed. Even in the matter of carrying the corpse, while the never-married are tied to a single bamboo-pole (laid in a sheet of coarse woollen rug the ends of which are then tied to a long and stout bamboo pole like a hammock), in the case of married the bier consists of two bamboo pieces with a number of split cross-sticks. In Sorab Taluk, the married are buried inside a niche in a sitting posture while the never married are laid flat in the grave. This kind of difference has not been reported by Hasalars in Mudigere and Thirthahalli Taluks, where all are reportedly buried in a lying posture.

When a person is about to die, sons and other close relatives pour water into his mouth. The news of death is sent immediately to all kinsmen and caste fellows, through messengers, either voluntary or paid. The corpse is washed by any relative and clad in clean clothes. If it is a female, the corpse is covered by a new saree. A piece of new white cloth about three cubits long shrouds the face. Disposal of the dead takes place mostly during day-time within 6 to 8 hours after death, the exception being only when death occurs either in the evening or night, they being loath to keep the dead body long in the house. When all the important relatives have assembled the corpse is honoured by the offer of flowers and the burning of incense. A cocoanut is also broken. If survived by wife, she is seated by the side of the corpse and her lap is filled whereafter she is made to hand over a *veelya* (betel leaves) to the corpse. On this occasion, her father or brother presents her with a new saree.

Meanwhile, the bier and the grave-pit are got ready. People of their own community attend to these tasks. If the body is to be cremated, the pyre would have been arranged. The part played by Holeyá in the funeral ceremonies (L. K. A. Iyer 1930 III) is now very little. He is no longer considered essential to dig the grave or supply fuel. He need not also head the procession carrying fire in an earthen pot. These changes seem to have come about gradually over the past 2-3 decades. These functions are now performed by members of their own community.

In bearing the bier, sons also participate. In certain places e.g. Kammargode, women and children are not allowed to follow the dead to the cemetery. But there is no such prohibition for women in Sorab and Hosnagar taluks. Enroute the corpse is lowered and water or gruel called *bayi ganji* is poured into the mouth of the corpse. The pot containing water or gruel is then broken and the journey resumed. This

custom has not, however, been reported from Kammargode, where it is said the corpse is taken straight to grave-yard, laid on the ground, worshipped with flowers and incense and then lowered into the grave with its head towards the South. The corpse is buried entirely naked. The eldest son goes round the corpse thrice and breaks an earthen pot containing water by dropping it from his left shoulder. This ritual is performed both in burial and cremation. In the case of cremation, generally the eldest son lits the pyre. He likewise throws the first handful of mud in case of burial. On the grave three stones are laid—one at the head, one at the feet and the third in the middle. Near the head a cup full of water and some betel leaves and nut are placed and incense sticks burnt.

The participants of the funeral then return home after taking a bath at a wayside stream or well. The spot where death occurred would, by then, have been cleaned and on it a lamp and a pot full of water placed. On return the participants will have a look at this lamp and then go home. In the house in which death has occurred the food prepared is called *huli koola* (Sour food) and it is consumed only by its normal members. In the night, a layer of ash is spread uniformly over the spot at which death has occurred and a lamp and vessel full of water are kept nearby. It is believed that the spirit of the dead indicates the form of life it is destined to assume in its next birth by causing certain marks on the layer of ash. The following morning the ash layer is critically examined for lines which could be interpreted as being nearest to the foot marks of birds, cattle, etc.

On the third day, the eldest son accompanied by a caste-mate visits the burial ground and makes an offering of food both at the grave and also at the spot where the corpse had been laid for a short duration on its way to the burial ground. The stones which were laid on the grave are removed. In the case of cremation, the ashes are collected in a heap and a sapling of sweet basil or any other flower is planted. The eldest son gets his head and face shaved.

The period of pollution varies from 9 to 11 days or more until the purificatory ceremony is performed. On this day the house is cleaned, smeared with cowdung and *thirtha* obtained from a Brahmin or from Ishwara temple (in some places the *padodaka* i.e. the water with which the feet of a Lingayat priest are washed) is sprinkled all over. All the members, soon after bathing, sip a few drops of the *thirtha* or the *padodaka*. Food is separately cooked for offering so the spirit of the dead at the grave and the food so

consecrated is consumed by members of the family. In the evening, a feast is held at which at least one representative from every family belonging to their community in the village and its neighbourhood will participate. The feast is preceded by the symbolic function of coercing the spirit of the dead to join its ancestral cluster. One (or two) pot full of water is placed close to the God's altar at home. New clothes (dhoti, saree etc.) are kept by the side of these pots. *Puja* is then performed by the sons of the dead. Each visitor lights some *lobana* (incense). Then two *yedes* (food spread out on plantain leaves) are placed in front of each pot. Then in an earthen oil lamp, full of castor oil, two lighted wicks are so arranged as to leave an interspace of about one inch between the flames. The relatives then implore the spirit of the dead to join the bunch of their ancestral spirits and to give indication of having done so by causing a merger of the two flames into one. Until this is achieved, there can be no feasting. All the members of the family will also be fasting that day for which reason the event appears to assume added significance. This rite as performed at Kammargode and its vicinity in Mudigere Taluk is somewhat different in form though of similar symbolism. Here, (as also in Olakatte of Hosanagar Taluk) a *Gadiga* (diviner) officiates. A fowl is sacrificed. An oil lamp is placed at the threshold of the house, and then the spirit of the dead is implored to enter the house and merge with its ancestral spirits. The spirit is implored to put off, while entering, the burning flame of the lamp. If the lamp is extinguished, compliance is assumed. If not, efforts are made to further propitiate the spirit by more sacrifices.

It would be appropriate to share with the readers in this context an interesting quotation of Thurston (as also Iyer L. K. A.) from the 1891 Mysore Census Report about a very curious obsequial custom prevailing among Hasalars. They point out that "when anyone among them dies, somebody's devil is credited with the mishap, and the astrologer or the magician is consulted to ascertain its identity. The latter throws cowries or rice for divination, and mentions the name of some neighbour as the owner of the devil-thief. Thereupon the dead is redeemed by the heir or relative by means of a pig, fowl or other reward. The spirit is then considered released, and thence forward domiciled in a pot which is supplied periodically with water and nourishment" (Thurston, 1909, II). With some variations, this custom is still found to prevail. During the evening rites of the eleventh day a *Gadiga* or diviner of their own tribe performs an exactly

similar function of releasing the spirit from a temporary abode making it merge with the ancestral spirits of the family. In Sorab Taluk, though no *Gadiga* officiates, invoking the spirit for union with the family ancestral herd and thus be ensured of protection, has a place of great importance in the obsequial rites. If certain misfortunes were to follow the event of death, the spirit of the dead is believed to be dissatisfied. A magician is then consulted and through him the spirit is propitiated. If time of death is inauspicious they vacate the house for a stipulated period to ascertain which they consult an astrologer. At least once a year the spirits of the ancestors are fed and this ceremony consists of offering *puja* to a pot full of water by the side of which is placed some new clothes and a *yede* (food served in dining leaf). They do not raise memorials to their dead nor is a tomb erected.

X. RELIGION

According to the 1961 Census, Hasalars are Hindus. They were once animists, but the process of Hinduization, intensively at work for some generations now, has virtually brought them within the fold of Hindu religion. The Kannada speaking Hasalars in Sorab, Sagar, Hosnagar taluks of Shimoga District worship Hindu Gods namely Ishwara, Parvathi, Vishnu, Lakshmi etc., and their various manifestations. The residents of Hirekasavi for instance, worship Malle-swara, Bheemaraya (of Manchagi), Basavanna (Nandi of Honnathi), Huchcharayaswamy (of Shikaripur), Veerabhadra, Guthyamma (of Chandraguthi), Kereyamma and Bangareswara (of Gudnapur), Neeramuthamma and a few more. They also worship maleficent deities Chowdamma and Bhoothappa, which thirst for blood and animal sacrifices.

Tulu Hasalars in Mudigere Taluk and also in Thirthahalli Taluk still practice the cult of the worshipping of ancestral spirits which are symbolised by a stone installed in the name of their deceased ancestors beneath a tree and called *muggerlu* the *kula daiyam*. This is propitiated once or twice a year by every household. Failure to do so is believed to bring sickness and misfortune (see Iyer L. K. A. 1930 III). They besides worship the bow and the arrow and also their culture heroes Mudda and Kalala. Devil-worship, especially for the propitiation of *Panjurli* and *Guliga*, in the true South Kanara tradition still prevails among several of these Tulu Hasalars. Occasionally, they invite the devil-dancers of the Nalke or Pom-bada castes of South Kanara and arrange *Kola* (devil

dances). In Halasinahalli, their most important deity is reported to be Bharmas besides *Muggerlu*, their *Kuladaiyam*. Here also bow and arrow worship prevails.

Hasalars offer worship at the local temples on festivals and other occasions. It is said that in the past they were not admitted into the Hindu shrines but now-a-days this restriction seems to have been relaxed specially in Sorab Taluk. In a few places, small shrines are erected for accommodating their tribal deities Chowdavva, Bhoothappa, Neeramuthavva etc. In Hirekasavi colony the Neeramuthavva temple is a mud walled and Mangalore-tiled structure built by contributions. Most of them visit fairs and car festivals in the neighbourhood. Dharmasthala is an important centre of pilgrimage for them and visits are also made whenever convenient for worshipping Sri Rama at Thirthahalli, Mahalingeswara at Puttur and the Goddess of Marnakatte in Coondapur etc. The worship of cobra-stones and *Tulsi*—sweet basil plant is not uncommon.

Hasalars in Sorab Taluk observe the Hindu festivals of *Ugadi* (Lunar New Year), *Nagarpanchami* (cobra-fifth), *Gowri*, *Mhala* (*Mahalaya Amavasya*) (when offerings are made to the manes of one's ancestors), *Mahanavami*, *Bhumi Humine*, *Deepavali*, *Sankranti* and *Sivarathri* in the manner of other lower castes in the villages. In Halasinahalli of Thirthahalli Taluk, the important festivals are the *Ugadi*, *Nagarpanchami*, *Gowri*, *Mhala* and *Deepavali*. On *Gowri* festival day they offer *puja* to *Bhoothappa*. The Tulu Hasalars consider *Ugadi* and *Deepavali* as the most important festivals and on both the occasions they worship their tribal deities. Many of them even now offer fowls to appease the deities. They worship serpent God on the occasion of *Subrahmanya Shrasti*.

They have the institution of priests or medicine-men among them and the powers of the world beyond are believed to voice their demands through the person of these priests. The Tulu Hasalars particularly believe that on the occasion of the annual worship of the ancestral spirits by the head of the household, the spirits "descend" on him and give guidance for successfully handling his personal and difficult affairs. In Olakatte, it is believed that the spirit of the *Chowdi* takes possession of a Hasalar whenever invoked. So also at Kammargode, Hoysala and Bettadmane there are a few individual mediums called *Gadigas* ready with their services whenever the evil influence of malevolent spirits is suspected. In Sorab Taluk the Hasalars consult mediums belonging to other caste-groups in the absence of their own. Both Tulu and

Kannada sections respect Brahmins and the Kannadigas revere Lingayat Jangamas also.

XI. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Hasalars being mostly labourers and petty cultivators are required to toil from dawn to dusk for even a marginal existence. Their poor economic conditions compel even their women and children to work particularly during the peak agricultural seasons, when work is plenty. Leisure is scarce for casual labourers. Those employed in large estates are entitled to leave facilities when many visit their native villages in South Kanara. Whenever they have some spare time they indulge in gossip. They are busily occupied during the summer months in attending marriages, fairs and car festivals. Children and adolescent males play indigenous games with tops, marbles and balls. For games they generally do not mix with other castes. A few interested persons learn folk-songs and even film songs, and also participate in the staging of open air dramas. Several women are said to sing well these folk songs and cinema songs.

They attend cinemas and open air dramas. In a few places, some adults congregate at regular intervals for *Bhajan*.

XII. RELATION AMONG DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

There are no recognised segments among Hasalars. The distinction drawn on the basis of mother tongue is purely arbitrary. In any village or town, the Hasalars are found to have adequate knowledge about the nearby places wherein their tribesmen live and their matrimonial alliances are confined to these families only. For want of mobility their knowledge about Hasalars who have taken up residence in distant places is vague. Thus each region tends to be an endogamous group. Within this, they are divided into several exogamous units. But clan or lineage organisation among them is very loose. The elders are respected and so are the educated. The relatively well-to-do and those endowed with talents enjoy a privileged position in their society. Women are considered inferior and more so in matters pertaining to ritual and social aspects.

XIII. INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Hasalars have been accorded a low status in the Hindu hierarchy of castes. The earlier records place them above the Holeyas and Madiga castes but below

the Halepaika toddy-tappers. In the past, and even now in remote villages, they are not served by the traditional village barbers and washermen. In the towns and a few villages of Sorab Taluk there appears to have been a slight change. In several places they have their own drinking water well. Though they have worked as agrestic serfs of Brahmin and other higher castes, they are permitted to enter only the cattleshed and the courtyard of their masters' houses. Upper caste Hindus, especially in Mudigere and other interior Malnad region, do not touch a Hasalar. But in Sorab Taluk no such practice exists. In some places (e.g. Hosnagar taluk) Brahmin priests officiate at Hasalar's marriage. For removal of pollution caused by birth or death, *Thirtha* or holy water is often obtained from Brahmin priests. In Sorab Taluk, Jangama (priestly group among Lingayats) serve the Hasalars during marriage and their *Padodaka* is used as a purificant for pollution. The Hasalars have not entered into *Jajmani* relationship with any of the village servants. The village musicians, if any, are employed on payment during their marriages. In the past they were not admitted to the temples. They also appear to have avoided visiting Hindu temples being given to the worship of tribal deities. Now in Hirekasavi, and Kumsi of Sorab taluk there is no ban to their entering Hindu temples and they in fact invariably pay a visit particularly on festive occasions.

Their inferior social status appears to arise from their tribal origin and agricultural serfdom. They strictly abjure beef and carrion and make a claim that if there is death of a cattle in the house they do not take food till it is removed. They normally refrain from removing carcasses even from their employers' house. They have never engaged themselves in degrading occupations.

XIV. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Formerly, Tribal Panchayat seems to have been an active organ of social control among the Hasalars. Its vestiges may now be seen in the existing institution of *Yajaman*, particularly among Tulu Hasalars of Mudigere and Thirthahalli, functioning at the village or settlement level. *Pujari* or *Gadiga* who is supposed to be of the priestly class is also an important functionary possessing occult powers and dealing with supernatural elements. In several places, the priest tends to be the *Yajaman* or headman also. In the plantation areas of Mudigere taluk one village may have more than one priest or *Yejaman*, and this is ascribable to Hasalars hailing from different regions of their

original home of South Kanara district preferring different settlements even within the same village, with a pronounced tendency for regional solidarity. If the original headman migrates, he continues to exercise powers over his own followers. Thus in Kammargode it is said, there are three such priest-cum-headmen. In Hoysala which has only 4 households, the founder of the settlement, who is a priest is also the headman. Both the offices of priest and *Yajaman* are hereditary and the eldest son usually succeeds the father. In this region inter village tribal organisation does not exist. Disputes involving persons of different villages are settled by an informal council of tribal elders including the *Yajamans* of the villages to which the disputants belong. Such occasions are rare. The *Yajaman* will be the spokesman of his adherents, mediates in petty quarrels and renders assistance when his fellowmen are in difficulties. Because he also combines in him the function of the priest, he wields considerable influence.

Among the Kannada-Hasalars the tribal Panchayat is dislodged by the Caste Panchayat whose structure closely conforms to other similar institutions functioning in the region. Thus any village having a reasonable concentration of Hasalars will have a *Gowda* (chief), *Buddivanta* (wiseman) and *Kolkara* (an executive who serves the summons of the Panchayat). These offices are also nominally hereditary but for reasons of inefficiency or desertion they may even be filled by election. The *Gowda* of Hirekasavi Hasalars is reportedly residing, since about 1962, in a different village, Kavadi. None is chosen so far in his place and he nominally continues in office. In some places (e.g. Kumshi) there are now no *Gowdas* at all. The main function of this organisation is to settle disputes within the local community, organise communal festivals, assist their fellowmen during marriage and such other ceremonies, impose fines on those who transgress caste rules etc. Shoe-beating necessitates purification by way of taking *Thirtha* and involves payment of a fine of Rupees five or more. Seven villages constitute a unit termed *Thopu-katte* over which also, the *Gowda* happens to be the chief. Generally, the disputes are settled at the village level and influence of local leaders belonging to dominant caste groups is brought to bear to mend those who may try to defy the decision of the *Yajaman*. According to the informants no large inter village gathering of their tribesmen has taken place during 20 years or more.

Hasalars have now secured representation on statutory local bodies such as the Village Panchayat and

the Taluk Development Board. A Hasalar resident of Bettadmane is a member of the Mudigere Taluk Board. In Hirekasavi, the Buddivantha of their community is a member of the Village Panchayat.

XV. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

Hasalars found in the different regions of the State are not an unified group except perhaps in name. In the predominantly agricultural villages, due to the influence of Hinduism over generations they have lost much of their tribal characteristics. But the same cannot be said of those who work in coffee and cardamom plantations in whom some of the primitive traits are still to be seen. But the impact of the process of Hinduisation is considerable. No organised movements are afoot for revival of their old traditions but there is a slow and steady trend towards assimilating more and more of Hindu way of life.

In the post-independence period, the Government has been the main welfare agency. In a few places tribal colonies have been started under developmental plans and Welfare Schemes. Several families have derived benefits by way of grant of lands under *darkhast*, oxen for ploughing or funds in lieu, and assistance for putting up houses. No voluntary agencies are so far established on their own for improving their economic and social status.

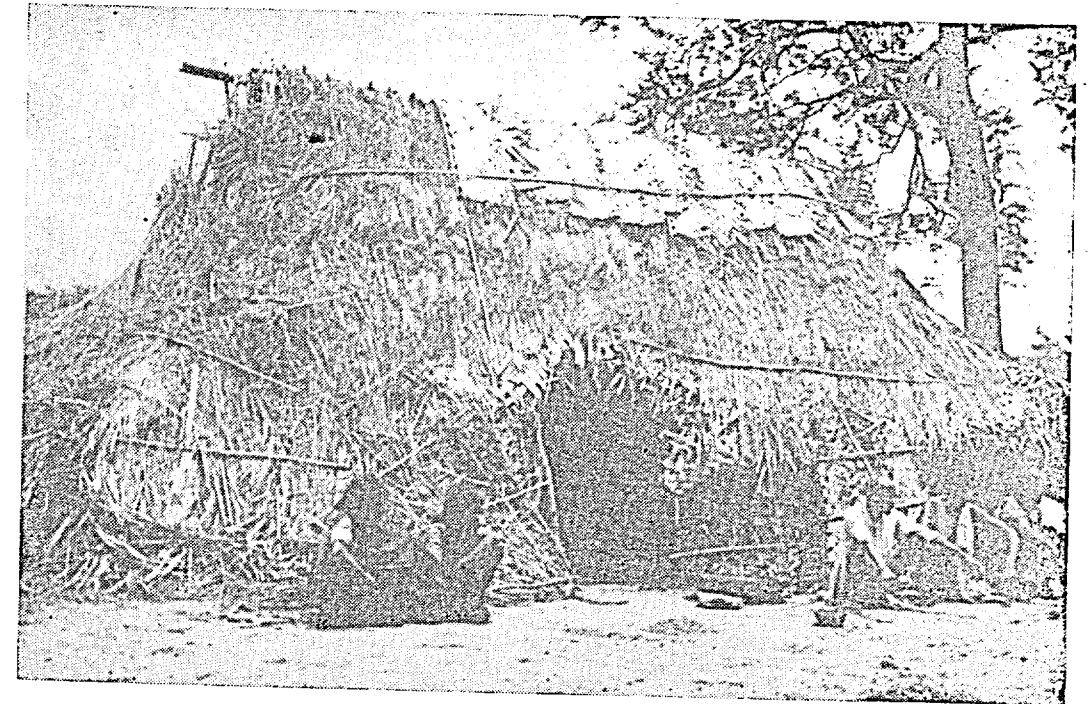
XVI. CONCLUSION

Hasalars who have been classified as a Scheduled Tribe in the districts of the former Mysore State, have affinity with the Hasla and Halsar or Haslar of the Madras-Karnatak and Bombay-Karnatak regions where they are treated as a scheduled caste. Even the group designated a tribe, is not unified but is split, the Kannada-speakers forming one group and the Tulu another. The former are converted greatly to local ways. But the latter who are seemingly recent immigrants continue to maintain social contacts with their villages of origin and therefore they still display distinct mannerisms of South Kanara people. There are groups in between also.

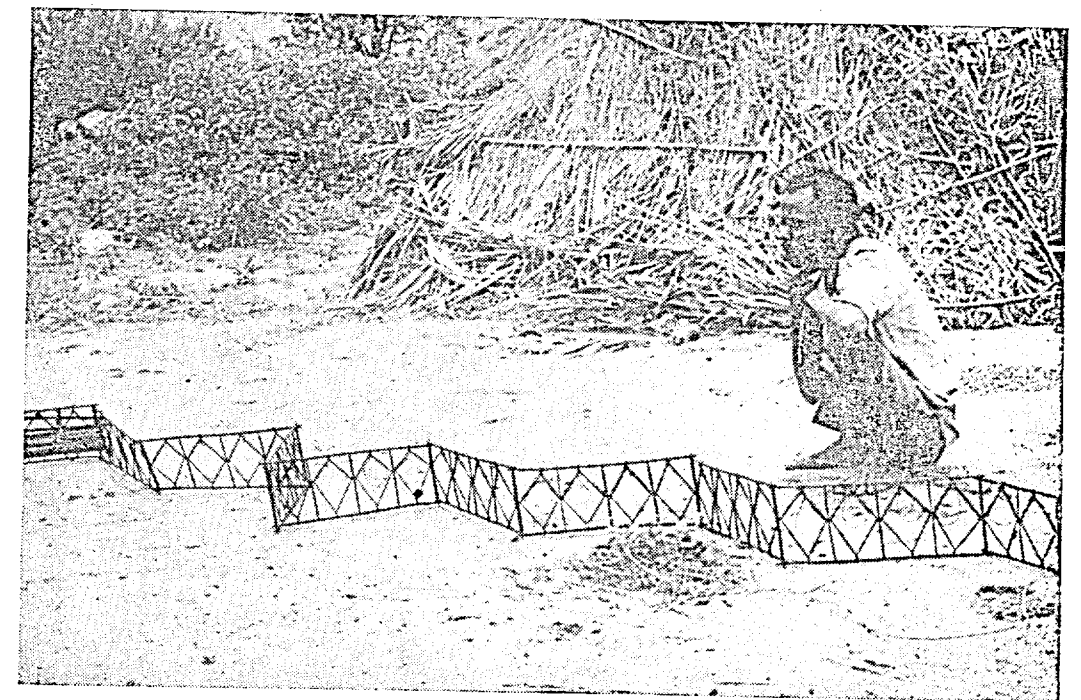
By and large, Hasalars are labourers with a sprinkling of agriculturists working on owned lands. Now-a-days, as the Government has been granting Darkhast lands, a desire has grown amongst them to possess land. Hunting and gathering forest-products have almost been given up and in a few places even the tradition is forgotten. Several of the social disabilities they suffered are slowly disappearing. Though some among them work as attached labourers they are no longer serfs of any land-owning group. Their interest in education has greatly increased during the past decade. They feel that they need proper encouragement and more Governmental or institutional assistance for their economic and educational advancement.

IRULIGA

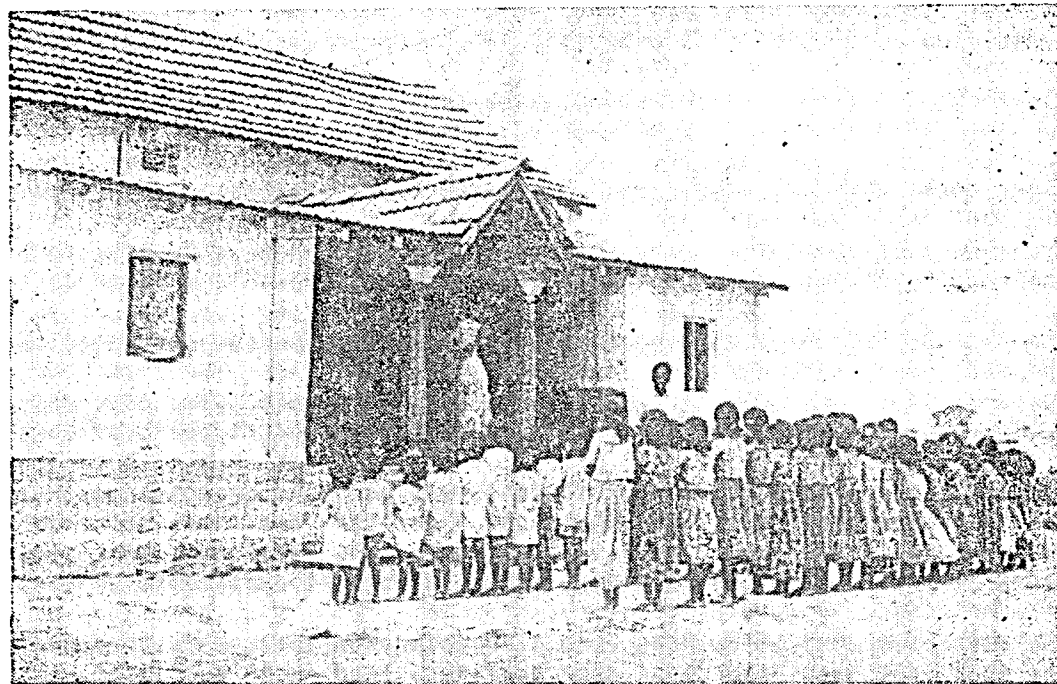
14. IRULIGA



1. The hut of a Iruliga at Hõnganidoddi, Kanakapura Taluk



2. The trap is set for catching birds. In answer to the imitation calls by the Iruliga, the birds rush towards him and get entangled



3. Prayer hour at the Ashram School for the tribals
(Sathnur of Kanakapura Taluk)



4. A boy and a girl of the Iruliga tribe enrolled in the
Ashram School—Looking forward to a better future

2. IRULIGA

I. NAME AND IDENTITY

Iruligas numbering 2,242 according to the 1961 Census, constitute roughly 1.17 per cent of the total population of the Scheduled Tribes in the State. For centuries they are known to have been one among the few tribes inhabiting the forests and hilly ranges, mostly leading a very primitive way of life. Being conservative in outlook and apprehensive in nature, avoidance of contact with the more advanced and settled communities of the neighbourhood developed into a characteristic trait of these tribes. Dr. Buchanan who in 1800 came across Iruligas in Bangalore district records in his travelogue that:—

“Here (*Channapatna*) they live in little huts near the villages and have a small piece of blanket or other cloth to cover their nakedness. They are reconciled to the other natives and pay a trifling capitation tax to the Government. Where the woods are more extensive they are terrified at the sight of any civilized being and live absolutely without any clothing, but cover their nakedness with a few leaves. In these forests they dwell in caves or under bushes, which they make a better shelter from the weather, by adding small branches from other trees. When the civilized part of this tribe go into the woods to visit their relations or to trade with them, they must throw off their rags. . . .” (Buchanan, 1870, Vol. I PP 115-6) But now, more than a century and half has elapsed and there have been numerous changes in the way of life of these people. Despite their conservatism, the forest tribes have also been subjected to the over-powering influence of change. The present note based on a brief field study of Iruligas in Bangalore district aims at a description of the various aspects of the contemporary life of the Iruligas.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order 1956 designates Iruliga as a Scheduled Tribe in all the districts of the former Mysore State (*i.e.* Bangalore, Chikmagalur, Chitradurga, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore (except Kollegal taluk), Shimoga and Tumkur) and also in Bellary district. This order refers to no other caste as synonymous with Iruliga. However, according to the same order Part VIII (4)-3, Irula or Irrular is a scheduled tribe in the Madras Karnatak region (*i.e.* the district

of South Kanara and taluk of Kollegal in Mysore district). L. K. A. Iyer (Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. 1930, Vol. III P. 378) in his note on ‘Iruliga’ or ‘Iraliga’ has considered Irula, Iruliga and Iraliga as one and the same community, the difference in name being only a regional variation. Thurston, Aiyappan and the Census Reports etc., have not expressed the view that Irula and Iruliga are one and the same.

Iruligas are also locally called *Illigaru*—a corrupt form of Iruligaru which is the plural of Iruliga. *Kadu Pujari* is another popular term applied to them as well as to the Soligas. These two are the only synonyms now in common usage. Of late the prefix *Kadu* is also being given up and merely *pujari* is becoming a more popular synonym.

According to Buchanan (*Ibid*), these people then preferred to call themselves ‘*Cat chensu*’ while the others called them ‘*Cad Eriligaru*’. Both these terms are now obsolete. The District Manuals of the North and the South Arcot districts records the following comments about the Iruligas.

“... On the Mysore plateau they (Irula) are sometimes called Chenchus and Arva Yenadis. . . . the Mysore Irulas are distinct from any of these others being far less civilized than any of them.” (Foot note on page 378 Nanjundayya H. V. and L. K. A. Iyer, 1930, Vol. III). Further, Dr. Aiyappan in his Report on the Socio Economic conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of Madras Presidency states, “The Irula has been identified with Enadi of the Telugu country who in his turn has been shown as the cousin of the Chenchu.” (P 101. Part II Chapter VII). In Bangalore district, the Iruligas are neither known as ‘Chenchus’ nor as ‘Arva Yenadis’ either among themselves or to other communities. May be, these synonyms were in use some generations back but at present these terms appear very strange even to the Iruligas and thus they have lost their one time significance.

Iruligas constitute a single endogamous group and do not have any sub tribes. However, they claim some affinity with the Soligas and believe that the founders of the two tribes [*viz.*, Billayya (Iruliga) and Karayya (Soliga)] were brothers. In fact, at one time (Census of India 1901-Vol. XXIV Mysore Part 1, Report—P.

552) it was stated that "Iruliga contins two sub-divisions viz Soliga and Iruliga proper." But the two are distinct and Independent tribes. Inter-marriage is strictly prohibited while interdining is permissible only in the case of male members.

In the earlier censuses up to and inclusive of 1911, the Iruligas have been shown separately under the category "Animistic." Later, in 1931, the word Animistic was dropped in favour of "Tribals" but then, as the Iruligas did not constitute a numerically important community statistics regarding their population, civil condition, geographical distribution etc., have not been recorded separately. So also in 1941 and in 1951 separate statistics are not available in respect of the Iruligas.

The term Iruliga or Iraliga is supposed to have been derived from *Irul* (night) and is taken to connote the extreme darkness of their skin. The Irulas are considered to be the darkest of the hill tribes of Southern India (Nanjundayya H.V. and Iyer L.K.A. 1930 Vol. III P. 392). It is interesting to note that during the present field study the Iruligas gave a different version of the derivation of their tribal name and its significance. According to them, many of their men are gifted with oracular powers and have the traditon of *kani heluvudu* i.e. sooth-saying and that, they do so only after dusk unlike the soothsayers of other communities. They contend that the name has been derived from *Iralu kani heluvava* i.e. one who resorts to soothsaying only during night.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Early references to Irula or Iruliga in southern India indicate their spread in the adjoining states of Kerala and Madras. If we consider Enadi as identical with Irula, then they are found in Andhra Pradesh also. Outside Mysore State, their centres of concentration are reported to be North Arcot, Chinglepet, South Arcot, Trichinopoly, Coimbatore and the Nilagari districts. Under the name Enadi they are said to be found "abundantly in Chittoor, Nellore and Guntur districts" (Dr. Aiyappan). At present in the State of both Kerala and Madras, Irular or Irulan is a Scheduled Tribe. Yenadi is a Scheduled Tribe in Andhra Pradesh.

Within the State, the Iruligas are known to be living in the districts of Bangalore and Mysore. The earliest reference to the geographical distribution of Iruligas may be found in the Census of India 1901 Vol-XXIV Part I Report on page 697 under the table heading

"Distribution of 1000 persons of each principal caste by district of enumeration." According to this, Shimoga district with a proportion of 496 out of 1000 persons appears to be their chief centre of concentration. Shimoga district is followed by Mysore (189 out of 1000), Bangalore (147 out of 1000) and Kadur (now Chikmagalur) (144 out of 1000). Similar figures for Iruligas are not available in the subsequent censuses. The second reference to the distribution of Iruligas (though not in quantitative terms) is to be found in "The Mysore Castes and Tribes." It is stated [Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L.K.A. 1930 Vol. III Page 378] "They are found in the districts of Mysore and Bangalore as also in the slopes of the Mysore side of the Nilagiris." Again, A. A. D. Luiz (1963 P. 69) observes "Iruligas are seen in Magadi and Kanakapura taluks of Bangalore district, and Gundlupet and Kollegal taluks of Mysore districts."

The 1961 Census presents a some what different picture. It reveals that the Iruligas are to be found only in the districts of Bangalore and Kolar. None has been returned under the name Irular or Irulan from either the South Kanara district or the Kollegal taluk of Mysore district. Further, the rural population of the Iruligas is seen to be distributed mainly in the taluks of Kanakapura (1165 persons), Magadi (416 persons) and Ramanagara (231 persons) of Bangalore district. From the rural parts of Kolar district only 55 Iruligas have been returned. The urban population which is only nine-consisting of 2 males and 7 females is very insignificant. During the field study in Kanakapura taluk, the Iruligas named about a dozen villages of the Taluk as containing Iruligas in varying numbers. The names of some of the important villages are Hoolya, Honganidoddi, Halasinamaradoddi, Bommasandra, Uragondanahalli, Koothagondanahalli and Dinnepalaya. In all these villages they constitute a minority community both economically and socially. In Magadi taluk they are found in Bhantarakuppe (or Gollarapalya) colony, Jodi Kempagondanahalli, Managallu, Maththa, Mare Gowdanadoddi, Jodugatta. Huliurdurga of Ramanagara taluk is also considered to be one of their centres. So also Ragihalli of Anekal taluk is reported to have a few Iruliga households.

Some explanation regarding the geographical distribution of Iruligas as found in the early references and at present seems to be necessary at this juncture. The most striking disparity is that the Shimoga district which in 1901 contained the largest population of the Iruliga, does not have even a single individual returning himself as an Iruliga for the 1961 census. Of

course, the Report (Census of India 1901, Vol. XXIV-Mysore) indicates that Soliga was then considered as a sub-division of the 'Iraliga' and leads one to surmise that the then 'Iraliga' may now have been enumerated as Soliga. But, according to the 1961 Census there are only six Soligas in the rural parts of Shimoga district. Alternative explanation would be to assume that certain other forest and hill tribes were also broadly grouped under the name 'Iraliga' for the 1901 Census. Otherwise, there might have been an unprecedented and large scale outmigration of the "Iraligas of Shimoga district" subsequent to 1901 Census. Absence of districtwise population figures for Iruligas in the subsequent censuses renders a correct explanation almost impossible. Similar explanation holds good in respect of "Iraligas of Kadur (Chikmagalur) district." It may, however, be pointed out that, significantly enough, Shimoga and Kadur districts registered a fall in population (15,000 and 21,000 respectively) during the 1901-1911 intercensal period. Regarding the presence or absence of Iruligas in the other districts, particularly Mysore district, explanation would be easy when it is known that in the past both Iruliga and Soliga were reckoned as sub-divisions of a single tribe. A.A.D. Luiz (1963, P. 180) also while writing about the Sholaga or Soliga states that, in early years they were known as *Kad Eraligarus* and *cad chenchus* in certain tracts. According to 1961 Census there are numerous Soligas in Mysore district even though there are no Iruligas.

The taluks of Kanakapura, Magadi and Ramanagara are hilly talukas containing a fairly good proportion of forests. In these forests and jungles a large variety of trees and bushes grow abundantly—especially in the ravines between the heights. The mean annual rainfall in this tract is about 30 inches. Though there may be a few sporadic showers during the months of April and May, it is only the period mid-June to mid-October that may be considered as rainy season. The climate on the whole, is very agreeable and salubrious. The temperature during day rarely exceeds 100°F during the hottest part of the year and the thermometer seldom registers less than 50°F during the winter nights.

The villages where the Iruligas are found to be now living are generally close to forest areas and hilly ranges. To substantiate this a few examples may be cited. Hoolya and Honganidoddi (both in Kanakapura taluk) are situated on the hilly (range also a reserve forest) locally called Basavanabetta and Achalubetta (or Achalu forest) respectively. Likewise in Magadi taluk mention may be made of Kempagondanahalli,

Bhantarakuppe and Eligehalli. In Ramanagara taluk also they are said to be living in settlements close to forests and hills.

The region comprising Kanakapura, Ramanagaram and Magadi taluk may be classified as mainly dry. Irrigation by tanks and wells helps the cultivators to produce paddy and other irrigated crops over an appreciable extent of arable land. Apart from ragi and paddy, mulberry is an important crop and silkworm rearing is carried on extensively in this region. There are numerous small scale establishments for reeling silk and also for weaving sarees. Fairs (*Jatra*) are held annually at Kabbal, Hanumantharayanagudi and Magadi. Though these are primarily of a religious nature, these are cattle fairs too. Madeswara hills, though situated outside Bangalore district, attracts a large number of devotees including the Iruligas, on the occasion of the periodical fairs held in honour of Madeswara. In the region there are numerous shrines of lesser importance and the Iruligas frequent the temples of Muthathraya, Kambadaraya, Sakiraya, Muneswara, Maramma and Huliyyamma. In this region Government appears to be the only agency working for the uplift of the socially and economically backward communities.

III. ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Regarding the origin of Iruligas, the following account has been given by Iyer L.K.A. [Nanjundayya H.V. and Iyer L.K.A. 1930 Vol. III P. 379] "The story of theirs as given by them is that no one could be found to collect honey on account of the stinging bees. The Goddess was then prevailed upon to come to the rescue; and she created a man out of the sweat of her body. This man who was provided with a crowbar, a flint and a scythe succeeded in the task allotted to him as the bees flew away from every hive as he approached. The Iraligas who are his descendants say, that the smell of their bodies drives away the insects. If the bees persist in remaining in a hive when approached by a Iraliga, he has simply to pass his hand over his sweated brow to drive them away. It has been said that even wild beasts will scent Iraligas and fly before his aroma* (*Mackinze oriental Manuscripts)."

Apart from the above account, the Iruligas offered another legend regarding their origin. According to this, they are the descendants of a certain Billayya an ardent devotee of Madeswara swamy who also acted as priest in the temple of Madeswara swamy. Most probably this person represents a culture-hero of the tribe. They also state that he was the brother of Karayya the progenitor of the Soligas.

measure 13 feet by 19 feet but such huts are rare. The walls are of either bamboo or twigs and the height of the wall is usually around three feet. Though there are a number of instances to the contrary, plastering the walls on both sides with mud may be said to be the common practice. The Iruligas use either bamboo or any other wood which is readily available for pillars and beams. The plinth is not raised and consists of ordinary mud and gravel. The floor is frequently cow-dunged. The inclined roof consists of a bamboo frame work over which is spread a coconut leaf-matting and upon that, a thick and even layer of thatching grass. The variety of thatching grass available in the neighbourhood of Honganidoddi is locally called *Betta nale hullu* and this is gathered free. The doors, which are very insecure are made of either twigs or bamboo strips. Inside, the kitchen is partitioned off by a dwarf twig-wall and thus it provides some sort of privacy to the inmates. Bath rooms are totally absent and as both men and women go out to the open fields for answering the calls of nature they do not feel any necessity for latrines. A few households have built separate cattle sheds but many have not. The animals, if any, share the accommodation with other members of the family. The Iruliga huts do not have either courtyards or compounds or fences all round. The front yard of the hut is swept clean and used for squatting purposes. They do not have any preference regarding the direction in which their hut may face and do not generally perform any ceremonies connected with house-construction. The hearth is always placed in the south-east corner of the kitchen. In the past their huts used to face either the East or the North.

In Kanakapura taluk some of the Iruligas have secured housing grants from the Government and as they were already in possession of house plots in villages *pucca* houses have been built by them. Three such houses may also be seen in Honganidoddi village. The cost of each house is said to be around Rs. 750 and it is built of bricks and Mangalore tiles. In the colonies set up by the Government the housing conditions are much better. At Kempagondanahalli there are 10 blocks of houses and each block has two census houses.* Each block measures 50' × 15' of built area. The house measures 25' × 15' and consists of two apartments partitioned by a dwarf wall, of which the smaller one is the kitchen. The walls are of bricks and the roof is of Mangalore tiles set over a wooden framework. The houses are provided with wooden doors and a pair of windows. Facilities for drinking

water are available in these colonies as also in other villages. As the Iruligas are allowed to draw water from the village wells or the ponds for drinking water, they do not face any problem. In Honganidoddi the Iruligas use water from a nearby pond for all purposes. Vokkaligas and Lingayats are the dominant communities of the neighbourhood and Kurubas are also found in moderate numbers in several villages.

Dress and Ornaments

The popular dress type of the Iruligas differs in no way from the prevailing regional pattern. The men use knickers and banyans or shirts. The use of *dhoti* or *lungi* is also quite popular particularly among the elderly men. They have no separate headgear but, while at work, use a towel or a *Chowka* as a turban. The dress of a bridegroom on the occasion of his marriage consists of a *dhoti* worn either with a *kache* or in the usual *datti* style, a shirt, an upper cloth called *chowka* and a *peta* or turban. The dress of their womenfolk is now in-keeping with the regional pattern. They use handloom sarees measuring a length of seven to eight yards and blouses. Owing to their poverty a few women use sarees of lesser dimensions and also at times wear tattered pieces. The saree is worn without a *kache* in the manner popular in the region. The dress of a bride is said to be in no way different from their day-to-day dress except that the saree worn by her on the occasion is a new one. The colour of this saree, called *dhare seere*, is generally red. The dress of Iruliga women about 3 decades back was "The ordinary dress of the Iruliga women is a body cloth of striped cotton worn straight, across the breasts and reaching below the knees with a print cotton cloth over their shoulders and tied into a knot in front" [Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. 1930 Vol. III P. 392]. A marked change has taken place since then and now it is rather rare to come across Iruliga women dressed in the fashion described above.

Boys among the Iruligas wear knickers and banyans or shirts while the girls, till they are about 10 years old, wear skirts called *langa*, and blouses. Infants are wrapped in any piece of cloth or at times they go about naked.

The Iruligas do not have any ornaments distinctive of their community. Those who can afford imitate the regional pattern and buy popular ornaments made of either gold or silver while the poorer sections occasionally buy tawdry ornaments. Men commonly use

ear-rings or earstuds made of gold and finger-rings of silver while women are accustomed to the use of a variety of ornaments. The commonly used ornaments by the womenfolk are (1) *Thali* a gold pendant, in a black bead necklace (2) bead necklaces (3) ear-rings or ear-studs of gold or silver (4) nose-screws of gold (5) waist-band of silver locally called *Dabu* (6) wristlet of silver called *kadaga* (7) glass bangles and (8) toe-rings. Women decorate their bodies with tattoo marks. The women-folk of the Korama or Koracha community do the tattooing with needles, a broom stick (the broomstick helps marking the design as a preliminary to tattooing) and a mixture of soot and milk. The designs are either floral or geometric and the forearm, the chin, temples and the central portion of the forehead are the parts of the body on which tattoo decorations are to be found. A circular patch of vermilion powder adorns the forehead of Iruliga women. Some Iruliga women blacken their teeth by constantly using *hallakappi* (the belief is that such a practice strengthens the teeth). Now-a-days the women apply castor-oil to their hair frequently and comb the hair with wooden combs. They part the hair in the middle and knot the gathered long hair into a bunch at the back of the head. A few young women plait it into a pig-tail. Older women and those who are very poor do not care much for oiling or combing their hair. Men of the younger generation prefer to have short, cropped hair while the elderly persons have long tufts of hair gathered into a knot at the back. Men, both young and old, shave their faces at intervals of a fortnight. The traditional village barber serves the Iruligas without any reservations. Generally there exists no *Jajmani* relationship between the Iruliga and the barber as the former pay-off in cash or kind whenever they need the services of a barber.

Food and Drinks

The Iruligas are non-vegetarians and eat the flesh of *kadave*, *saraga*, wild as well as domesticated pig, rabbit, *mongoose*, *uda*, porcupine, jungle cat, sheep goat and a variety of birds. But they consider beef as a taboo and in addition, abstain from the flesh of monkeys and buffaloes. Hunting provides them with these non-vegetarian dishes but occasionally they buy meat or mutton in the village market. They gather wild roots (yams) and other edibles from the nearby forests and jungles and consume them duly processed. They eat mushrooms locally called *anabe* and also tender shootings of bamboo. The edible roots generally gathered are *bettagenasu*, *ambali genasu* and *mullagenasu*. In addition to *Kadu seege soppu*, their favourite leafy vegetable, they also gather a variety of

leaves for preparing soup. Now-a-days, the roots gathered and the game available provides them with food only occasionally. They complain that due to deforestation neither roots nor game is available in sufficient quantities. Moreover there is an obvious shift in their food habits and they resort to roots only when they have no other alternative.

By and large, their staple food consists of cereals such as ragi, jowar and *samai*, and pulses such as arhar, field beans and horsegram. Occasionally they consume rice. From ragi flour they prepare *mudde*, *ambali* (gruel) and *roti* (cakes). *Saru* (soup) of pulses and leafy vegetables, and *chutney* are their side-dishes. They are now familiar with the use of onions, garlic, chillies, pepper, turmeric, coriander, tamarind, salt and groundnut oil. They take food thrice a day; the breakfast usually consisting of *rotti* at about 7.30 a.m. taken before departing for the day's work; the second meal consumed between one and three p.m. consisting of *mudde* and *saru*; and the third between seven p.m. and nine p.m. consisting of either *ambali* or *mudde*. Their food habits and staple food are now in conformity with the regional pattern. The special dishes prepared on festival days are *anna* and *payasa*.

Iruligas assert that they have been and even now, are teetotallers by tradition. They consider liquor as a taboo but attribute no particular reason for this custom. Of late, they say, there are a few deviates from this traditional norm. Most of their men are now accustomed to the habit of taking coffee or tea. As they cannot afford to have it prepared in their homes they generally visit a nearby tea-shop. Most of their men are habitual smokers while a few chew pan and tobacco to. Even youngsters are no exception to this smoking habit. Women chew betel leaves with arecanut and tobacco leaf or tobacco stalk powder locally called *kaddipudi*.

Household equipments

The material possessions of the Iruligas generally consist of a few cooking and storing utensils in addition to some implements required for their economic pursuits. Items like furniture, torchlight, cycle, wrist watch, clock and even warm clothing are altogether absent. Economically they constitute a very backward section. Moreover, even their close contact with the other more advanced communities of the neighbourhood is only a recent development dating back to a decade or a little more. They cook food in earthen vessels, called *chattis* in their terminology and store water in earthen vessels called *Thanni bane* or *Thanni*

*A census House has been defined as a structure or part of a structure, a dwelling, a shop, a workshop, factory or place of business, or shop-cum-dwelling giving on the road or a common staircase or a common courtyard leading to a main gate or enjoying a separate entrance.

Another legend dealing with their origin, contends that they are the descendants of *Mala rishi* or sage of the hills. After the *Yugapralayam* the rishi under the influence of a malignant curse is said to have lived among the aboriginals and then mixed freely with their women. Seeing how these people were being bothered by the wild beasts he advised them to worship 'Kaniyamma.' "Several other rishis were also believed to have lived freely in their midst and as a result, several new castes arose among which Irulans belonged to one" [Nanjundayya H.V. and Iyer L.K.A. 1930 Vol. III P. 379].

Little is known about the history of Iruligas in general. The "Census of India 1891—Vol. XIII Madras—Report (P. 258) suggests that the Irulas are the representatives of the Kurubas who fled to the jungles 'immediately after the overthrow of Kurumba supremacy'. Regarding their tradition "... At all events, there is no reason to suppose that they were ever anything but a jungle tribe, and it is needless to say that they have no tradition of their own." [Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. 1930, Vol. III P. 380]. So far as the Iruligas of Bangalore district are concerned, some of them are said to be immigrants from Nilagiri hills (Ootacamund) while some others are from Annamalai forests in Coimbatore district of the Madras State. The Iruligas of the present day have nothing to say in this regard and are unable to identify their actual place of origin. Buchanan remarks in 1800 "The language of the Chensu (Cad Eruligaru) is a dialect of Tamil with occasionally a few Karnata or Telinga words intermixed, but their accent is so different from that of Madras that my servants did not first understand what they said. Their original country, they say, is the Anamalai forest below the Ghats which is confirmed by their dialect" [Buchanan, 1870 Vol. I.P. 116]. In the absence of any other authenticated data the original place of Iruligas may be taken as Annamalai forests.

IV. DEMOGRAPHY

According to the 1961 Census the numerical strength of Iruligas is 2242. Except for the 1901 and 1911 censuses, till 1961, the population figures for Iruligas are not separately available. Thus a discussion on the decennial variation of population is not possible. Moreover, if the 1901 Census records a population of 8338 the subsequent census (viz. 1911) shows only 1889 "Iraligas" under 'Animistic' and another 154 Iruligas under 'Hindu'. The reason for such a sudden fall of 6295 persons over a short duration of a decade may perhaps be found in that during 1901, the Soliga was

considered as "a sub-division of Iraliga." Unfortunately in 1911, Soliga has not been enumerated separately and their numerical strength is not known. The other alternative explanation may be interstate emigration of the Iruligas subsequent to 1901 Census. However, in the absence of authoritative data, it has to remain only as a conjecture. If the Iruliga population of 1911 is considered as representing a true picture, then over the past five decades the growth of their population is seen to be 9.74 per cent. In other words the annual rate of growth of the Iruligas is only 0.02 per cent. High death rate and out-migration are perhaps the two important factors for such a retarded growth.

During 1911, "Iraliga" (Iruliga), population of 2043 was made up of 1073 males and 970 females. The sex ratio stood at 907 females per 1000 males. The age-wise distribution of the then population reveals that 39.3 per cent were below 15 years of age; 39.0 per cent were in the broad age-group 15 to 40; while the remaining 21.7 per cent were aged 40 years or more. Corresponding figures for 1931 are not available. According to 1961 Census there are 1129 males and 1113 females belonging to the Iruliga Tribe. This gives a sex ratio of 985 females for 1000 males. Considering the population by age-groups it may be observed that 43.2 per cent are aged 14-years or below; 40.8 per cent are in the age group 15 to 44; and 16.0 per cent are in the age-group of 45 years and more. The sub-joined table shows the distribution of population by sex and age-groups.

Population by Sex and Age-Groups

Age-group	Male		Female	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
0—14	483	42	485	44
14—44	445	40	470	42
45+	201	18	158	14

Among the persons aged above 45 years the females constitute only 44 per cent and in the other two groups females exceed the number of males.

As already pointed out, only 9 out of the 2242 Iruligas are returned from the urban sector. Of them, 2 are males and 7 are females. It is not known whether even this urban population represents permanent immigrants to urban areas or only a few sojourners in the passing.

V. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Iruligas or Irulas are reported to be the 'darkest of the hill tribes of Southern India.' They are said to "possess negroid traits viz., short stature, flat nose and prominent cheek bones, curly or wavy hair, and a narrow forehead" [Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. 1930, Vol. III P. 392]. Systematic anthropometric study has not been carried out so far in respect of the Iruligas of Bangalore district. Thurston noted the following details of a Irula aged 30 years. "Skin very dark, moustache and slight beard, haircut—short in front, long and tied in a knot behind. Hair freely developed on body and limbs; bushy eye brows, small twinkling eyes, ears outstanding, prominent cheek-bones, lips thin not overated. height=158.6 cms; weight=100 lbs; chest=79.5 cms; handlength 16.6 cms; foot length = 23.7 cms; cephalic length 18 cms; cephalic breadth=13.5 cms; nasal height=4.4 cms; nasal breadth=3.2 cms; nasal index 72.7." [Thurston, 1897, Vol. II PP. 12-13].

VI. FAMILY, CLAN AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

The Iruligas are generally found to favour simple types of family consisting of a married couple and their unmarried children. The proportion of families of joint and intermediate types is said to be very low. Of the 10 families contacted at Kempagondanahalli 7 are simple; 2 are intermediary consisting of a married couple, unmarried children and widowed mother; and one is joint. After the marriage, the wife moves to her husband's village and shortly afterwards the couple starts to live independently in a separate hut. In case there are old and infirm parents the eldest son looks after them. Sometimes the widowed women—especially from the lower age-bracket—return to their parent's village and live with parents or brothers or independently. The size of a family generally varies between 2 and 9 and the average size is around 5. The size varied between 3 and 7 and the average stood at 4.7 per family at Kempagondanahalli contacted during the field study. The Iruligas reckon descent in the father's line for both sexes. They follow the patriarchal rule of the descent and inheritance. The eldest son of the house inherits the idols of the family deities, the hut and is also invested with the care of his minor siblings. If there is anything else to be inherited viz., land, ornaments etc., it is shared equally by all the sons. The position of caste headman is also hereditary and is inherited by the eldest son.

Clan system which might have been prevalent in the past is now in a state of decadance. The present day

Iruligas have very little knowledge about their clan organisation. As endo-clan marriages are taboo the questions relating to clan, or lineage generally come up only when marriages are being negotiated. The family deities of the different lineages are generally different and this is taken as analogous to 'clan'. Thus inter-marriage between persons from households having a common family deity is taboo. The family deities are Halagamma, Dharmaraya, Bettahalli Hanumantha, Chunchangiri Bhairava, and so on. Names of inanimate objects or plants and animals are not in use as identification marks of clans. There are no taboos associated with clans either in economic pursuits or in food and other habits. Apart from the clue provided by the names of the family deity, almost all the Iruligas keep in touch with their agnatic kinsmen. Such kin groups are called *Manethana* and are similar to 'lineages'. Marriage of persons from the same *Manethana* or between two *manethanas* considered as having brotherly relationship (*Anna paranduvuru* or *Annathammi*) is taboo. Marital alliances are contracted with families standing in *beegara salu*.

VII. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD HABITS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

Dwelling

The Iruligas are found scattered in a number of villages and in no village or settlement (except the colonies set up recently by the Government) can they be found exclusively or in large numbers. Their dwellings generally form part of a larger village unit and they live amidst the Vokkaligas and other caste—Hindus of the village. They live in *doddis* or hamlets or in the village proper but invariably keep their huts at a distance from those of the Holey and Madiga sections (Scheduled Castes). The present day Iruligas assert that there are no Iruligas living now in jungles as was their custom some decades back. In Honganidoddi, of Kanakapura taluk, it was observed that 10 households of Iruligas were living alongside the Vokkaligas while another ten households were living in huts located about 3 furlongs away from the village proper. These huts are surrounded by forest plantations and are close to the fields cultivated by the Iruligas. The huts are in a linear alignment—two rows of huts facing each other. In the colonies set up by the Government, the houses are generally in linear alignment consisting of two rows of houses facing each other. In Magadi taluk there are four such Iruliga colonies.

The huts of Iruligas are generally small, measuring 9 feet by 13 feet or even less. A large-sized hut may

maduvu. Foodgrains and other food articles if any, are kept in earthen pots of varying dimensions. As many are too poor to afford a copper or a brass pitcher they generally use earthen pitchers called *Gadige* (*Kudu* in their language) for drawing water from the wells. Some of them use ten to twelve inches long bamboo cylinders sealed at one end called *ande*, for keeping salt. Generally the Iruligas do not use earthen dishes for taking food and therefore dining plates are either of bell-metal, called *Gangala* or *Kalavo* in their language or *Thatte*—plates of alluminium. *Soppu* in their terminology means a small earthen container used for drinking water. The metallic vessels possessed by some of the Iruligas consist of a few aluminium wide mouthed vessels and one or two copper or brass tumblers. Among other things, the households generally possess *Odu* or frying pan of hemi-spherical shape and one or two ladles. Many households possess *Arikallu* or grinding stone and *Manjokallu* for grinding a mixture of chillies, coriander etc., that goes into the preparation of curry or soup. Wicker baskets, ropes, sickle, wood cutting knife called *Mochchu*, axe, crowbar and agricultural implements like wooden plough, *halube* or rake and *kunte* or harrow are the other materials to be found in Iruliga households. They use either gunny bags or mats of date-palm leaves for sitting and sleeping purposes. For covering their bodies they use cotton bedsheets.

VIII. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

The dwellings of Iruligas are generally surrounded by a open space all around and it is particularly so in the case of colonies set up by the Government. There being only a few houses or huts in a cluster, the settlement may be considered as clean. The huts or houses as well as the front yards are swept clean every day and once a week generally on Mondays, the floor, the hearth and the front yard are smeared with cowdung wash. Drainage system is absent but then, there is very little refuse water as there are no bath rooms. What little quantity of water is used for washing of hands and feet before taking food by the inmates of the hut, gets either absorbed into the soil or evaporates. Those households which possess some cattle gather the litter and dump it in a heap, a few yards away from the dwelling. Both young and old of either sex resort to the open fields for answering the calls of nature. Most of the Iruligas clean their teeth daily with ash, charcoal or even mere earth. Before and also immediately after taking food, they wash their hands and mouth. Spitting inside the hut or even in the front yard is considered bad manners. If

men and boys prefer to bathe in streams running closeby, the women, children and also old men bathe in warm water in or near their huts. But the bathing habit among them is very irregular and if a few take bath once a week many bathe once in 2 or 3 weeks. Toilet soap is a luxury occasionally indulged in by a few young men. The clothes are washed once a week or even at longer intervals and the use of washing soap is not much known. Therefore, the clothes put on by the Iruligas always appear to be unclean. Though the services of the village washermen are not denied to them, the Iruligas are too poor to afford his services not because it is costly but because they do not have enough clothes with them.

Brought up as they are in a hardy way, the Iruligas pay scant heed to minor ailments. It is only when the illness grows more serious that they resort to medicines and if they feel that it is due to some evil spirit they resort to divination. The common diseases to which the Iruligas are susceptible are fever, stomachache, cuts, colds and cough, and headache. Some of their men dispense herbal medicines for these ailments and it is said that people of other communities are also served with such medicines. For headache, a small nut locally known as *Talenovinakai* available in the jungles is brought, tied in a thread dipped in turmeric paste and fastened to the ears of the patient. For colds and cough *Menasina kashaya* or pepper decoction is the medicine prescribed. Stomachache may be cured by administering a decoction of *Kadamenasina soppu* and *Kolake беру* (root of a plant called Kolake). *Chujalipatte*, *Marangala chakke*, *Bevina chakke* and *Kathadi chakke* are ground well into a mixture and then mixed with red earth with adequate quantity of water so as to form a paste. When this paste is smeared all over the body of a person suffering from fever it is supposed to give immediate relief. For cuts and wounds also they have a ready treatment. *Tapalu chakke* (wood of plant locally called Tapalu) when beaten well with a little quantity of water and applied to the wound is an effective cure for the cuts. There are a few among Iruligas who treat snake bites also. It is not a special section amongst them that has specialised in the dispensing of native medicines. One or two families have inherited the skill from their ancestors and this secret they do not easily divulge to others. The medicine-men generally pass on their knowledge to their sons and also to those who show an active interest besides possessing the necessary traits.

When the illness is prolonged and takes a serious turn they suspect some evil play (*Grahacharada shanke*)

and resort to what is locally known as *kani-hakodu* (Divination). Many of the Iruligas, their headmen in particular, are adepts in this art and are reputed soothsayers. Through his services the evil spirit is chastised and driven out and thereafter the ailing person starts recovering. People of other communities in the neighbourhood utilise the services of these soothsayers for similar purposes and reckon the Iruligas as very effective soothsayers. The Iruligas also observe vows and sacrifice fowls in order to lure their favourite deity to drive away the disease or the evil spirit causing trouble to them. It is only when all these methods fail to act effectively do they resort to outside medical aid.

IX. LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND EDUCATION

According to the 1961 Census (Vol. XI-Part V-A ST-1. Mother tongue and Bilingualism for Scheduled Tribes) the Iruligas have returned the languages of

Kannada (1904 persons), Tamil (254 persons), Telugu (59 persons) and Iruliga (25 persons) as their mother-tongue. This provides ample proof of their tendency to adopt the language spoken largely in the region as their mother tongue too. According to Buchanan, the language of the Iruligas of Bangalore district, is a dialect of Tamil intermixed with a few Kannada and Telugu words. [Buchanan, 1870, Vol. I, 115-6]. In 1930 Iruligas are described as speaking a mixture of Kannada (Canarese) and Tamil. [vide Nanjundayya H.V. and Iyer L.K.A. 1930 Vol. III]. Now, for all superficial enquiries, the Iruligas return Kannada as their mother-tongue in the predominantly Kannada speaking areas. During the field study also the Iruligas at first gave out Kannada (*Honganidoddi* in Kanakapura taluk; *Kempagondanahalli Magadi* taluk) as their language but, when interrogated further, conceded that they have a dialect of their own which consists of a mixture of Kannada and Tamil words. Examples of a few Iruliga words bearing resemblance to Tamil are set out below.

Iruliga dialect	Equivalents in other languages		
	Kannada	Tamil	English
1. Boodu	Mane	Veedu	House
2. Pulluboodu	Hullugudisalu	Pullu veedu	Thatched house
3. Peru	Hesaru	Peru	Name
4. Odava	Gangda	Kanavan	Husband
5. Penthi	Hendathi	Penjati	Wife
6. Appa	Appa/Thande	Appa	Father
7. Amma	Amma/Thayi Avva	Amma	Mother
8. Sheeya	Tata/Ajja	Patan	Grandfather
9. Pati	Ajji	Pati	Grandmother
10. Madani	Attige	Anni/manni	Sister-in-law
11. Eraðu	Éttu	Eraðu	Bullock
12. Pamu	Havu	Pambu	Snake
13. Poone	Bekku	Poone	Cat
14. Pashu	Hasu	Pasu	Cow
15. Thenu	Jenu	Then	Honey
16. Choru	Anna	Sadam	Cooked rice
17. Kali	Hittu/Mudde	Kali	Lumps of cooked ragi flour
18. Thanni	Nceru	Thanni	Water
19. Odu	Benale		Hemi spherical shaped frying pan
20. Neppu	Benki	Neruppu	Fire

As a result of their increased contact with the other village communities, particularly as compared to the position which prevailed some decades ago, the Iru-

ligas have now relegated their dialect to the background and use the regional language more both at home and outside.

According to the 1961 Census (Vol. XI—Part V-A *vide* Table SCT III), 29 Iruligas constituting 1.3 per cent of their total population are returned as literates. Among males, the percentage of literacy is 2.12 and among females 0.45. The literacy percentage of Scheduled Tribes for the State as a whole is 8.15 it being 13.23 per cent for males and 2.81 per cent for females. A comparison with the State average for Scheduled Tribes thus reveals a more depressed state for Iruligas.

The level of education among the few literates is low. Of the 9 persons returned from the urban sector, 3 females are literate, having completed their primary education. In the rural sector, there are only 26 literates of whom 2 are females. With the exception of 2 males who have attained the primary standard, the rest are without any educational level. Considering their socio-economic background, it is hard to expect a rapid change. However, of late, the Social Welfare Department has been establishing Ashram schools and also Women Welfare centres-cum-nurseries for the benefit of these tribals. The attitude of the Iruligas is also undergoing a perceptible change for the better. At the time of field investigation (July 1966) 12 Iruliga boys and 9 girls were staying in the Ashram school at Sathnur. This school has a sanctioned strength of 45 and the remaining boys and girls belonged to the Soliga tribe. In Kempagondanahalli, the Nursery section was started in 1962-63 and at the time of investigation (Dec. '66) 14 boys and 11 girls were attending regularly. Incentives by way of food, clothing and play things are provided to the children in these institutions. The attitude of the Iruligas towards these institutions and education as such, is favourable and a few of them cherish a fond hope of providing their boys education at least up to the Matriculation standard.

X. ECONOMIC LIFE

Agriculture, hunting and gathering of forest produce, and household industry are the main sources of livelihood of the Iruligas. Now almost all of them are settled in villages where they work either as cultivators or as agricultural labourers. They do not own any community land in any region but a few of them have acquired individually, small extents of land here and there. In the Government sponsored colonies the households settled there, have been granted *Darakast* land at the rate of about 2 acres per household. In certain other areas (Honganidoddi, Hoolya in Kanakapura taluk) where the Iruligas have not yet been granted lands, they have been permitted by the forest department to cultivate forest land close to their

dwelling. Most of the households contacted in Honganidoddi, Kanakapur taluk reported to be cultivating such forest lands since 1961-62, the extent cultivated by each varying between 2 and 4 acres. The plots occupied are small patches measuring 10 to 15 cents and all round the bunds of these plots are to be seen some *chogache* (plantation) trees. Till about 1961-62 the Iruligas reported that they were cultivating lands belonging to a landlord residing in Dodda Achalu village on cropshare basis. They are quite familiar with the use of agricultural implements, such as plough, *halube* (bullock driven rake) *kunte* (harrow) etc., commonly used in the region. Their agricultural produce consists of ragi, *samai*, horsegram, tur, til, groundnut, castor, jowar and field beans. At Kempagondanahalli colony in Magadi taluk the Iruliga households are placed in much better circumstances. It is a small village with an area of about 486 acres having forty-two households consisting of about 250 persons in all. In the past, it had been a *Jodi* village and most of the Iruligas of the village were cultivating tenants. As a result of the abolition of Inams in this area, the ownership of land was conferred on the erstwhile tenants and thus Iruligas also came to be benefitted. The extent of land owned by them ranges between 2.00 acres and 5.00 acres per household. In addition, at the time of settlement, the households were granted *Darkast* land at the rate of 2.00 acres. But now, the Iruligas complain that their *Darkast* lands are about a mile away from their dwellings and it is very difficult for them to move to and from the fields as there is a hill range (called *Daddikallu*) in between. Thus many have kept their *Darkast* lands fallow. These people also have the tradition of settled cultivation and are familiar with the agricultural implements commonly used in the region. Lands are rainfed and the crops raised are dry crops such as ragi and horsegram. In general, it may, however, be said that the lands held by this community are scanty and the income that these few land-owning households may derive is not sufficient to carry them through a year. In this respect they are very much similar to the other economically backward communities of the region and depend much more on labour for their livelihood. When famine conditions are threatened or when there are droughts many of the Iruliga malefolk temporarily migrate to other areas in search of work without attending to their cultivation. Such instances were noticed both at Honganidoddi and Hoolya and in Kempagondanahalli colony.

In some villages a few Iruligas are reported to be working as annual agricultural labourers. The annual wage ranges between Rs. 60 and Rs. 120 in cash in

addition to food and clothing. It may not be out of place here to point out that this custom is common in the region and persons from socially advanced communities also sometimes work under such agreements. But of late, probably because of the influence of the cash economy, this practice is losing its popularity. Commenting on this practice H. V. Nanjundayya and L. K. A. Iyer observe "The Iruligas who dwell in villages work as labourers or serfs under prosperous raiyats for food, dress and a small money payment. It is their usual custom to take advances from their masters which are rarely discharged and continues for generations. The debt with the labourer is sometimes transferred to new masters. In this respect they are like the agrestic serfs of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore." (1930, Vol. III PP 389-90). The custom of transferring the debt with the labourer has become totally outmoded now. When in need, the Iruligas, as also others who are economically very backward, borrow money from prosperous landlords of the village and at times, undertake to work off the loan by serving for a specified number of years. Some others prefer to borrow on terms of repayment by instalments and are free to work anywhere. Boys are at times seen employed by landlords for tending cattle. The wages paid in cash will be very low but they are fed and clothed all through the year. Many men and women of this tribe work as *Chenguli* (casual agricultural labourers). The wage rate ranges between Re. 1.00 and Rs. 1.50 for males and Re. 0.63 to Re. 1.00 for females and children. Non-agricultural labour is more remunerative and hence preferred. In some villages wages are paid in kind particularly during the weeding and harvesting seasons.

In the past livestock raising seems to have had no appeal to Iruligas. As an ameliorative measure, the Government has in recent years granted bullocks or cows to this needy lot. At Honganidoddi six households are reported to have received the animals in about 1963 while at Kempagondanahalli six out of the ten households contacted said that they received the animals in 1965. Some who got bullocks reported they sold them away and purchased cows. A few others own one or two cows and some goats. Poultry keeping is done only on a small scale and by a few. Occasionally livestock products such as eggs and butter are sold in the weekly markets.

Gathering of forest produce has been the traditional occupation of the Iruligas. In fact, they believe that they were created by Goddess Parvati for the very purpose of exploiting edible roots and honey available in the forests. In the past, edible roots, wild fruits and honey formed an important part of their diet and it

is said that they used to refuse cooked rice even when offered gratuitously (Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. 1930 Vol. III P. 379). But now there has been a marked shift in their dietary habits and the wild tubers and honey are gathered once in a way. One of their complaints is that such food is no longer available in the vicinity of their dwellings particularly due to the denudation of the adjacent forest areas. The inhabitants of Honganidoddi in Kanakapur said that they have to go to at least 3 miles to get some roots while those at Kempagondanahalli have to trudge about 7 miles and reach the Savanadurga forest where they say the tubers are available in good number even now. They use crowbars or long wooden sticks for digging out the tubers. They also collect leaves of certain plants and prepare either curry or soup for personal consumption. Honey is collected partly for consumption and partly for sale. Three varieties known as *hejjenu* or *Doddejjenu*, *Kirijenu* and *Thudube* are available in this tract and generally honey is gathered during May, June and July. The latter variety of bees are reckoned as harmless and are easily dealt with. Honey gathered from these hives is said to be superior in taste and quality to that of the large beehives. When *hejjenu* is to be attacked the expedition consists of 4 to 8 persons. They either erect a scaffold (*Malukattuvudu*) or use rope or cane ladders to reach the hives built on the precipitous rocks and smoke out the bees. This method is said to be identical with that of the Kadars of Cochin forests (Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. Vol. III P. 389). Honey and wax are sold to local consumers on shandy days or else to forest contractors. At Honganidoddi, the Iruligas reported that each one of them can earn about Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 during the honey gathering season.

Apart from the above edibles the Iruligas also gather, firewood, barks of certain plants, fruits of neem trees, dry leaves of *chujjulu* plants, bamboo, grass etc. Firewood consisting chiefly of dry twigs, is gathered by females and children and there is no particular season for this activity. The bundles are carried to the nearby large villages such as Sathnur near Honganidoddi and Tippagondanahalli [near Kempagondanahalli] and sold for cash, the rate varying between 50 to 75 paise. People of certain other communities also likewise gather fuel and sell in these areas. Dry leaves of *chujjulu* plant are powdered and this powder mixed with soapnut powder is used in villages and towns. *Seegakai* (soapnut powder) is also gathered during the season and sold locally. The bark of *ayavike*, *kakke*, and *popli* plants are gathered and sold to forest contractors. During the months of July and August they also gather the neem

fruits and sell at Sathnur at the rate of 20 to 25 paise per *seer*. *Hanchikaddi* a variety of grass is gathered and broomsticks prepared out of them are sold in the neighbourhood. *Mende hambu* is a creeper gathered by the Iruligas who prepare *mankari* (basket) for sale. They also bring bamboo from the nearby forests either with or without permission from the forest authorities and the articles, mainly *putti* and *mankari* (baskets) are sold in the adjacent villages lying within a radius of about 3 to 4 miles. These are many a times bartered for foodgrains. In spite of all these variegated activities in the forests they do not form the major source of their income. The reasons are not far to seek as there has been a considerable reduction in the forest areas, the demand for the articles gathered has also fallen and above all, the attention of the Iruligas has been diverted to other pursuits.

Iruligas are reported to be good hunters. Some of them have snares (made out of the yarn obtained from sisal hemp) for catching hares and jungle cats while some others spot the game in their habitats (caves) by studying the foot prints, fill the dwelling with smoke and cause death to the animal. A few Iruligas possess guns also. In search of game they frequent the nearby forests and at times cover 8 to 10 miles. Generally they go in groups of 8 or 10 persons and before setting out, offer worship to Byatarayaswami symbolised in a slab of stone. However such hunting expeditions are rare now-a-days. They trap wild fowls and birds such as *pittekoli*, *Sorakki*, *Goujula* and *Navundala* in snares called *Hakkibale* or in a device called *paji*.

The animals and birds so caught are usually consumed by themselves but a few sell them in the larger villages closeby. A hare fetches about Rs. 3 to 4; a porcupine fetches about Rs. 5 while the wild cat may fetch Rs. 2 or 3 only. Birds are also likewise sold for cash. Fishing is an occupation of minor significance. Once in a way the Iruligas join the fishing expeditions organised by the villagers to fish in ponds when the water level is very low or in *kodis*. They use *Koname*, a trap made of broomsticks of cocoa palm leaves. They are not, now, aware of the method of fishing by poisoning water in streams (Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. 1930, Vol. III P. 389).

Some of the Iruligas occasionally prepare wicker-baskets from bamboo or *mende hambu* creepers. The articles so prepared are sold for cash or kind in the neighbourhood. But for this, they know no other household industry. In recent years, a few of them have secured salaried jobs in some institutions but at present their number is too scanty to be taken notice of.

According to the 1961 Census, 1224 out of the 2242 Iruligas enumerated are workers. The workers constitute 54.6% of the total population. Among males, 63.6% are workers while among females the workers form only 44.5%. The following extract from Part V-A Vol. XI—Cen. of In. 1961. Mysore—"SCT-1 Part B—Industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex for Scheduled Tribes" provides details of the activities in which the Iruligas are engaged:

Iruliga	Rural		Urban	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Total population	1127	1106	2	7
A. Total workers	716	506	2	..
Workers				
I As cultivator	428	340	..	..
II As agricultural labourer	205	91	..	..
III In mining, Live-stock, Forestry etc.	7	5	..	..
IV At Household Industry	32	10	..	..
V In manufacturing other than Household Industry	1	..	1	..
VI In construction	..	..	1	..
VII In Trade & Commerce	8	10	..	..
VIII In Transport, Storage & Communication	..	..	..	..
IX In other Services	35	50	..	..
B. Non workers	411	600	..	7

It is evident from the above, that 59.8% of the male workers and 65.8% of the female workers are cultivators. Agricultural labour, which accounts for 28.6% of the male workers and 17.9% of the female workers is the second important occupation for the community. In the category "livestock raising, forestry, hunting etc" there are only 12 workers. Though no statistical data regarding the occupations followed by the Iruligas in the past are available, "The Mysore Tribes and castes (Nanjundayya H.V. and Iyer L.K.A. 1930 III)" throws some light on the occupational pattern and trends that prevailed some 3 to 4 decades ago. The Iruligas were then stated to have engaged themselves chiefly in gathering honey and collecting forest produce. They were good hunters too. Some of them served as day-labourers under the forest department in collecting timber and got daily wages. Very few were cultivators and fewer still owned lands. Some among them however had begun to take interest in *kumri* cultivation. The 1961 census returns are seen to dislose a marked change in the occupational pattern among the Iruligas. From the occupation of forestry such as gathering honey and other forest produce supplemented by hunting and forest labour which they mainly pursued in days of old a pronounced shift towards cultivation and agricultural labour is now discernible.

XI. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Beliefs and practices connected with birth

In keeping with the regional custom, the Iruligas also consider it obligatory to fetch a daughter to her parental home for confinement during her first pregnancy. The subsequent child-births take place at her husband's home. In the seventh month of the pregnancy on an auspicious day her parents-in-law provide her with some sweet and favourite dishes and also give her a green saree or at least a blouse piece. On this occasion she is adorned with new glass bangles and *arati* is waved before her in the evening. She may leave for her parents place any time after this ceremony is over. Normally she observes no restrictions in her diet or her work. The delivery takes place in a corner of the residential hut or house and is attended to by one or two elderly female relations. The services of a midwife or even a *dai* of some other community are seldom procured. At Honganidoddi, in two complicated cases the patients were taken to Sathnur for medical attendance. This is only a very recent development and may be taken as depicting the changing outlook of the Iruligas. As the Iruligas do not possess cots or any other contrivances of the type either, the woman in travail has to lie down on a mat

spread on the floor. Soon after the delivery, the umbilical cord is cut by one of the women attending on the woman, with a sickle. The placenta is gathered in a large earthen pot and this is later buried in a marshy place close to their settlement. The mother, the baby and the women who attended on the child birth take bath to cleanse their persons. For the subsequent two days, the mother is given very little food but she is given liberal dozes of cummin decoction. The suckling of the baby starts on the third day and it continues for a period of 12 to 18 months till the baby is weaned away.

The Iruligas observe pollution for eleven days including the day of birth. On the eleventh day all the clothings in the house are washed and the house is smeared with cowdung. The residents of Kempagondanahalli colony reported that they need the services of a Lingayat priest to purify themselves as well as the premises where the child birth occurred while those at Honganidoddi reported no such practice. This is probably a regional variation. The *padodaka* or the water used in washing the feet of the priest, is sprinkled over the house and a little of it is consumed by members of the household. The cooking pots in the house are also renewed on this occasion. The naming ceremony is performed either on this day or on the day following. While the inhabitants of Honganidoddi reported that the paternal grand parents of the new born name the child, those at Kempagondanahalli said that it is their Lingayat priest who utters the name of the child thrice. The common names among the Iruligas are:

Males	Females
Mada, Huleera,	Madi (or Madamma) Mari (or Maramma)
Byra, Muththa	Mutti (or Muththamma) Halagamma,
Kempa, Chakayya, Saki (or Sakamma)	Thimmi (or Thimmakka)
Putta, Dharuva	Kempi (or Venkatamma)
Era, Chikka Haida etc.	Akkamma etc. Muni (or Muniyamma)

During the first eleven days the baby is usually laid in a winnowing basket called *Mora* and on the 11th day it is put in the cradle. The period of confinement for the mother lasts for about 3 months during her first child-birth and for one or two fortnights during the subsequent child-births. For all children, male or female, the first hairs are cut without much ado on some convenient day utilising the services of the village

barber for this purpose. This is called *Huttu koodala Thegusuvudu*. Likewise the ear-boring ceremony is also gone through for both the sexes.

The Iruligas consider, barrenness as a curse and infant death, miscarriage, still-birth as a bad omen. But they do not perform any ceremonies in such cases besides offering prayers to their deities to absolve them of sins, if there be any. The practice of adopting children is also prevalent among them.

When a girl attains puberty she is segregated to an isolation hut for 9, 12 or 16 days. During this period she is considered impure and even her touch is avoided. But during nights one or two female members of the family keep her company and they purify themselves by bathing in the morning. The isolation hut is to be built by her maternal uncle. The hut is decorated with branches of *Ankole*, mango, *neem* and Indian fig trees. On the completion of this period of pollution, the Lingayat priest is invited and water obtained by washing his feet, viz., *Padodaka*, is administered to the girl as a purificant. (But this custom of accepting *padodaka* is liable to regional variations as no such custom was reported at Honganidoddi in Kanakapura taluk). A feast is arranged on this occasion for relatives and friends. If the girl is already married, the marriage is consummated on the sixteenth day.

(b) *Beliefs and practices connected with marriage*

Girls are generally married when they are aged between 12 and 16 years while boys are married when they are around 25 years of age. Even in the past, when marriage by elopement was very popular among them, post puberty marriages were common. Though they do not have clan-names, they do practice clan-exogamy. Sometimes the names of their chief family deity serve as clues to the relationship existing between any two families living in distant villages. But almost always they are aware of the blood-relationship existing between their families or *Manethana* with those of the other Iruligas in their neighbourhood. Thus certain *Manethanas* are reckoned as mutually exogamous while a few others are not. Of the ten households contacted in Kempagondanahalli, 7 belonged to one *manethana* represented by their caste headman (*Kattegowda*) cum priest, while the other three formed another (*Satavarthara*) *manethana*. Marriage alliances between these two are permitted. The households of the former lineage are said to be found in Ragihalli, Yerahalli, Aralikattibailu etc., while

those of the latter are found in Managallu, Huliurdurga, Akki Munipalya etc. The persons of *Kattegowda* lineage consider those belonging to *Jogi manethana* as their agnatic kin and hence marriage between the two is taboo. Likewise the persons of *Satavarthara manethana* consider *Nadagowda manethana* as their agnatic kin. But both of these lineages may contact marital alliances with another lineage known as "*khatari kuladavaru*. Thus before any marriage negotiations are initiated a thorough screening will be done regarding the relationship of the two families. Consanguineous marriages are quite common among the Iruligas. One may marry one's own elder sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. Marriage by exchange is also permitted and occasionally practised. Elder brother's wife, called *Madani* in their terminology, is considered as equal in status to one's own mother. A man may marry his wife's younger sister even during the life time of his former wife. Generally such instances occur only when the barrenness of the first wife is established. Iruligas allow remarriage of widows but as the very name *kudike* indicates it is considered inferior to a formal marriage. Thus such women are not allowed to carry *kalasa* and perform certain functions which are considered to be auspicious. Monogamy is the most predominant type of marriage among the Iruligas. Polygyny is permitted while polyandry is taboo. At Honganidoddi two instances of polygyny were noticed, while no such instances were reported at Kempagondanahalli.

The parents of a boy deem it their duty to select a suitable bride for him and in this task they are assisted by their relatives as well. Now for acquiring a mate, negotiation is the only approved method. Marriage by elopement is now practically unknown and some of the "civilized" Iruligas even deny that such a practice existed in their community. It is not possible to ascertain the period as to when exactly the change took place for in about 1930, H. V. Nanjundayya and L. K. A. Iyer observe "The marriage ceremonies of the Iruligas are very simple. They consist in eloping with an adult girl to jungle and remaining there for a day or some longer period. After their return to the village, a fowl or an animal is killed in honour of the event, and the caste people are fed." (1930, Vol. III P. 381). No such instances of marriage by elopement were reported either at Honganidoddi or Kempagondanahalli.

The custom of paying bride-price called *Thera* prevails among Iruligas as also in almost all other lower communities found in the region. The amount of

bride-price is Rs. 12 for virgin brides and Rs. 6 for widows. The bride-price may vary according to the economic status of the two contracting parties. Generally marriage takes place at the bridegroom's residence and the marriage expenses are borne by his parents. Iruligas spend about Rs. 200 to Rs. 400 for the marriage of a boy and Rs. 100 to Rs. 200 for the marriage of a girl.

The Iruligas follow all those ceremonies that are prevailing among the Vokkaligas of the region. Soon after a girl is chosen, the parents of the bridegroom call on the local astrologer who by referring to the almanac gives his opinion about the suitability of the match. This is locally known as *Prashne keli salavali noduvudu*. After this initial formality is over, a few relations of the bridegroom visit the girl's residence and in turn invite the relatives of the bride to call on the bridegroom's family. This exchange of visits is called *Mane sasira*. A few days later the betrothal ceremony called *veelya* is gone through at the bride's residence. Neither the bridegroom nor the bride is formally asked to see each other and their formal consent for marriage is also not obtained. Custom prevents the bridegroom from attending the betrothal ceremony and it is only on the day of the marriage that the couple see each other. An auspicious day is chosen for the *muhurtu* by the astrologer cum *purohit* this act being known as *lagna kattisuvudu*. The marriage celebrations last for three days. On the first day a pandal is erected in front of the bridegroom's residence. To the central post, a branch of cactus plant (*kaddi kalli* is the local name) and a branch of *Nerale* (Jambolana) tree are ceremonically brought and fastened by the maternal uncle of the bridegroom. By evening the bride with her close kin arrives at the bridegroom's village and arrangements for their lodging are made. Later, five *mutthaides* (married women) bring water in new pots from a well or river after offering worship to *Gange* (water at a well, river or pond). These pots are placed in the marriage booth and are adorned with necklaces. These represent their family deities and the brothers of the bride as well as the bridegroom offer worship and serve food on three plantain leaves as *neivedyam*. The maternal uncle later ties *kankana* (a cloth wristlet containing a turmeric root, betel leaves, nut etc.) to the couple. On the second day *Dhare* is the chief ceremony. It is held during day time only. This seems to be in contrast with the statement that "The marriages are generally celebrated during nights" (Nanjundayya H. V. and Iyer L. K. A. 1930, Vol. III P. 382). In this, the couple together hold a cocoanut placed on a few grains of rice spread on 2 betel leaves and the parents and

other relations pour milk on the cocoanut. The *Tali* (gold pendant in a black bead necklace) placed alongside a cube of jaggery and some rice is then touched by all the elders. It (*Tali*) is then tied by the bridegroom himself around the neck of the bride. They are then seated side by side in the marriage booth and two plates are placed before them. It is then that the bridegroom puts the 'bride price' in the plate placed before the bride. The guests may thereafter make presents to the newly married couple and this is known as *Muyyi maduvudu*. Generally 25 paise or 50 paise coins will be put into the plates placed before the couple by the heads of the families attending the marriage. The couple offer tender cocoanuts to some five elderly persons particularly to their caste headmen, and other village leaders like *patel*, *shanubog*, *purohit* etc. The headman of the caste spreads a black woollen blanket and places 24 *veelyas* (2 betel leaves and 2 pieces of arecanut make one *veelya*), as *Devara veelya*, *Gurugala veelya*, *kattemane veelya*, *Gadiveelya* etc., and distributes *veelyas* to the guests also. The dinner which follows consists of rice, *mudde*, vegetable curry, soup and *payasa*. On the following day the couple play with coloured water called *Oakali* (obtained by adding some turmeric dust and lime to water) and the marriage celebrations come to an end with a dinner for which some non-vegetarian dishes are prepared. The marriage pandal is formally dismantled and the wristlets are removed from the wrist of the couple. The bride's relations along with the newly wed couple and one or two male relatives of the bridegroom leave for their residence. The bridegroom stays with his in-laws for three days and on the fourth day he returns home with his wife. She departs after 9 days to return again soon after the consummation of the marriage, which is arranged in her parental place is over.

On the occasion of her marriage the bride receives 2 sarees, known as *Dhare seere* and *Dodda seere* while her mother is entitled to one saree known as *Tayiha-rake seere*. The bride also receives a few ornaments such as the *tali* silver waist belt called *dabu*, *kalmuri* (anklets), *kadaga* (wristlet) and *Kalungura* (toe-rings) from her parents-in-law. The bride's father is not in any way obliged to make presents to his son-in-law.

In recent years, with a view to minimise the expenses, the marriages are said to be arranged in nearby temples. In such cases, the marriage celebrations last for only a day and the ceremonies are simplified to a great extent. During their marriages the Iruligas utilise the services of priests belonging either to the Lingayat or Brahmin castes and in return for their

services pay them Rs. 2 or more in addition to rice, cocoanuts and jaggery. The village barber shaves the bridegroom on the first day of the marriage and also supplies the marriage coronets called *bashinga*. A rupee with a measure of grains and gur constitute the reward for his services. Washerman is also essential as he has to spread a sheet of clean cloth on which the *muthaides* bringing water have to walk. He also ties a canopy to the marriage booth. For his services he is paid a rupee or some grains with gur. The new pots required for the marriage are obtained on cash payment. At some places the Iruligas are said to engage the pipers and drummers of the village. These musicians, usually belonging to Holey caste, are paid Rs. 10 or Rs. 15.

Kuduvali or *kudike* is the name given for remarriage of widows or divorced women. It is a simple affair in which the woman is given a *tali*, a saree and a blouse by her husband. The bride price of Rs. 6 is paid by the bridegroom to her parents. Thursdays are considered to be auspicious for such remarriages which take place at the bridegroom's residence. The people of the caste are fed on the occasion.

Divorce is permitted by custom and it is known as *Bidugade*. The persons intending to have a divorce are required to report the matter to their caste headman who may then enquire into their matter. If his decision is not acceptable the aggrieved may appeal to the *Melpanchayat* which consists of the other village leaders and elders also. Nowadays it is customary to write out the particulars regarding the divorce on a sheet of paper as a document. Acute differences in

taste and behaviour are said to be the main causes for divorce though at times divorces are sought for on other grounds like adultery also. If the divorced woman has any children they go along with her and if she remarries the responsibility of rearing these kids rests on the newly wed husband. Four such instances of remarriages of divorced women, were noticed at Honganidoddi during the present field investigations.

Adultery is a crime for both males and females. When ever such cases are noticed the erring persons will be called upon by the caste panchayat to pay a heavy fine and to refrain from such activities thereafter. In 1962, an inhabitant of Honganidoddi deserted his wife and had amorous relationship with some other woman. A fine of Rs. 25 imposed by the panchayat was paid by him. Another instance of similar type came to light in 1963 and this time the erring man was fined Rs. 12. If the members of this caste have any sexual intimacies with the Adikarnataka or Adidravida or the Muslims, such persons are generally excommunicated. In 1964, a woman of the tribe at Honganidoddi is said to have had some affair with a Muslim and consequently she was asked to quit their settlement. Her whereabouts are not known but it is said that she is living with her Muslim paramour. In another case a man of the Iruliga tribe had a concubine belonging to Adikarnataka caste. The caste panchayat excommunicated him in 1962 or so. Instances of this type were not reported at the Kempagondanahalli colony.

Marital status, statistical data as per 1961 census:—

The subjoined table presents statistics relating to marital status by sex and broad age groups.

Age-groups	Persons		Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced or separated		Unspecified	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
All ages	1129	1113	645	489	465	511	14	101	5	12	..	..
0—14	483	485	483	471	..	14	..	..	..	..	..	..
15—44	445	470	162	18	278	428	3	17	2	7	..	..
45+	201	158	..	..	187	69	11	84	3	5	..	..
Age not stated	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

The never married persons constitute 49 per cent of the total population while the widowed or divorced persons account for 5 per cent. Considering sex wise it is seen that 57 per cent of the male population has never married. Further, in the age-group 15-44 out of the 445 males as many as 162 (or 36 per cent) have remained bachelors. Among females 14 girls below 14

years of age are in married status indicating the prevalence of child marriage in the society. The unmarried constitute only 44 per cent, the married constitute 46 per cent and of the remaining, 9 per cent are widows. By the fact that there are 511 females against 465 males in the de facto married status it is evident that polygyny is prevalent among the Iruligas.

(c) Beliefs and practices connected with death

The dead are generally buried. Very old persons or those who die due to chronic diseases or have had leukoderma, leprosy etc., are cremated. Another mode of disposal of the dead known as *kallu seve* is prevalent among the Iruligas. In this, the corpse is taken to a nearby hillock, placed on large boulder and covered with a heap of stones.

When a person is on the verge of death, the inmates of the house, move him to the outer verandah of the hut. Simultaneously messages are sent to intimate relations if they happen to be living in nearby villages. A few drops of water are poured into the mouth of the dying person. Later, the corpse is washed in hot water, and shrouded in a white long cloth measuring about 4 yards. The corpse is carried in a bamboo bier by four persons belonging to the same tribe. Certain articles which were being used by the dead man during his life-time such as dining plate, staff etc., and a few grains of til and rice kept in a plate are carried along with the corpse to the grave yard. The articles are later brought back, but grains of til and rice are thrown on the corpse at the time of its burial. As soon as the party crosses the village boundary, the corpse is lowered and the bearers exchange places. This spot is marked by placing a heap of stones which is called *Hindamundala gudda*. Among Iruligas even women and children may attend the funeral ceremonies.

By the time the corpse is brought to the burial ground, a pit measuring 6 feet × 3 feet × 4 feet (deep) is got ready. Any relatives of the deceased or even people of some other community may attend to this item of work there being no taboos or preferences. In the grave-pit a small niche is carved out and later a burning oil lamp is placed here and buried with the corpse. The corpse is laid with its back resting on the ground and the head oriented towards the South. If the deceased is survived by his wife (or *vice versa*) it is her duty to throw in the first handful of earth on the corpse. Then all others join in filling the grave. In case of cremation it is the eldest son who kindles the funeral pyre. Soon after covering the grave the funeral party places several stones in the form of a large heap. Thereafter they return to the hut of the deceased and glance at the lamp kept burning at the place where the person breathed his last. This spot of death will have been smeared with cowdung wash and an inverted wicker basket will have been placed and it is upon this that the lamp is kept. All the articles that were carried to the grave such as staff, dining plate etc., are brought back. In some areas the

custom of distributing puffed rice to the children present at the burial ground is prevalent.

Among Iruligas, pollution due to death lasts for 10 full days and on the eleventh day the purification ceremony is gone through. While in some areas mere bathing and smearing the hut with cowdung wash are considered sufficient to purify their persons and the premises in certain other areas *padodaka* (water obtained by washing the feet of a Lingayat priest) is felt essential. On this day the cooking pots are renewed. The eldest son who happens to be the chief mourner gets his head and face shaved by the village barber. It is customary to kill a goat or a sheep for the feast got up on this eleventh day ceremony but of late this practice is on a decline on account of economic considerations. The chief mourner accompanied by a few others, performs certain rites at the grave as well as at the *hindamundala gudda*. If the deceased is survived by his wife she has to remove, at the graveyard, her glass bangles the *tali* and also wipe out the *kumkum* (vermilion powder) and turmeric dust on her forehead. This is called *Arishina kumkuma Tholeyuvudu*. At the grave a *hombale* (flowers of areca plant) is planted and little quantities of milk and clarified butter are poured on it. The eldest son then goes round the *hombale* carrying on his shoulders a pot full of water. He circumambulates thrice and at the end of each round, a hole is made in the pot with the sickle and at the end of the third round he breaks the pot by dropping it on the ground. The food prepared for the occasion is then placed on a big plantain leaf before this *hombale* and it is allowed to be consumed by crows. Close relations and friends of the deceased are feasted and this concludes the death ceremonies. Later in the evening a soothsayer (*Pujari*) of the Iruliga tribe (who is generally their headman too) is engaged to trace the spirit of the deceased and hand it over to the group of their ancestral spirits. This is locally known as *bootha hindige serisuvudu*. For this services, the soothsayer receives foodgrains, betel leaves, arecanut, cocoanut, gur and a rupee or two.

In the past, death of a person, be it a child or an adult, was deemed as a sufficient cause for the Iruligas to vacate their erstwhile settlement and build a new one some hundred and odd yards away. The responsibility of choosing the location for the new settlement was vested in the *pujari*. But now this custom appears to have become obsolete and even the houses or huts where a death occurs are not vacated. Their life is now more of a settled type and their dwellings are also permanent structures particularly in the colonies sponsored by the Government.

dust and soapnut powder are added as purificants. He touches their out-stretched tongues with a hot silver rod and a hot piece of gold. The headman receives 25 paise as his *Dakshine* (fee) and a feast is got up on this occasion. The expenditure over such rites ranges between Rs. 25 and Rs. 50 or even more.

XVI. SOCIAL REFORMS AND WELFARE

Among the Iruligas there have not been any organised social reform movements. No doubt when compared to their way of life in the past there have been a few perceptible contacts with the settled and more advanced village communities. The process of assimilation is perhaps going on ever since the past 3 or 4 decades. Now they consider that their customs and practices are almost identical with those of the Vokkaligas. Establishments of colonies has in a way hastened this process during the past 10-15 years.

Government has been the chief agency working for the welfare of Iruligas who have been considered as a Scheduled Tribe since 1950. In some places colonisation schemes were undertaken during the latter half of the fifties. Built houses were provided to these tribals who were living in small clumsy huts on the fringes of the forests. They were given lands for cultivation and also livestock. In Magadi Taluk, almost all the Iruligas have been provided with houses or adequate housing grants. Colonies have been established at Bhantarakuppe, Jodugatta, Eligehalli and Kempagondanahalli for the rehabilitation of the Iruligas. Such measures appear to have been initiated in Kanakapura Taluk only recently. Here also several Iruliga families have been granted cows or bullocks and also housing grants. To arouse the consciousness

of the Iruliga and other Tribals and also with a view to infuse in them a longing for leading a better way of life the social welfare department occasionally organises Tribal conferences. These are largely attended and the participants are given food and clothing. They can voice their grievances through their leaders on such occasions and also hope for proper remedies. The Ashram schools and Nurseries run for the benefit of the Tribals are also receiving a favourable response and literacy among the Tribals is slowly increasing.

CONCLUSION

The Iruligas who used to dwell in jungles in the past, have now settled in villages. But wherever they are found, they constitute a minority community and are economically backward. Though a number of them cultivate lands either as owners or as tenants, many depend on agricultural labour to eke out their livelihood. Their love for gathering forest produce continues to be there but the opportunities are now very much restricted. Some of them have a tendency to temporarily migrate to distant places in search of work. Their way of life more or less conforms to the predominant regional pattern and they consider the Vokkaligas as their models in every sphere of life. They have slowly developed a sense of belonging to the village community at large and participate in the various village activities. They do not suffer any social disabilities. Having been the recipients of Government aid, almost all of them are conscious of the efforts put forth for their uplift. They are co-operative and are also hard working. In spite of all this they have still to go a long way to improve their economic condition and to lead a better way of life.

KANIYAN

They do not observe death anniversaries of the deceased persons separately. But on a particular day in the year sweet dishes are prepared and served in honour of the spirits of the ancestors.

XII. RELIGION

In the past census enumerations, the Iruligas were considered as "Animists". Thus in 1931 census, 1889 Iruligas were grouped in this category and another 154 Iruligas, probably those who were leading a settled life and imitating the customs and practices of the other village communities, were reckoned as Hindus. In 1961 census, all the Iruligas are returned as belonging to the Hindu religion.

The Iruligas offer worship to a number of deities but consider Lord Shiva as their supreme deity. They visit all the important shrines frequented by the Vokkaligas of the region. Their *guru* or preceptor belongs to Lingayat community and in several places they requisition the services of Lingayat priest during life-cycle ceremonies. The Iruligas of Kempagondanahalli consider a Lingayat *Ayyanavaru* of Gangappanahalli village as their *Guru* and those at Honganidoddi consider a Lingayat resident of Nalamaru village in Hosur taluk as their *Guru*. Some of the important and common deities worshipped by them are: Mutharaya, Kambadaraya, Sakiraya, Hanumantha, Madeswara, Madduramma, Madamma, Maramma, Yeliamma, Bairamma etc. Most of their deities are symbolised in stone slabs. They also worship and sacrifice fowls to appease Huliayamma, represented by three stone slabs, once a year during January. Ant-hill is also an object of worship for them just as it is so for other Hindus of the region. In several households images of their favourite deities (usually in the form of facsimile) are kept for personal worship. They make pilgrimages to Madeswara hills and also to Biligiriranganabetta where Lord Rangaswamy is enshrined. The Iruligas of Magadi taluk attend the annual car festival of Ranganathaswamy of Magadi and those of Kanakapura go to Madeswara hills more frequently. At these shrines, they offer cocoanuts and fruits through the temple priests. Fowls or goats are sacrificed occasionally to appease such deities as Maramma, Muneswara, Huliayamma etc.

Lunar New Year called Ugadi and Gowri festivals are the only festivals observed by the Iruligas. On the occasion of the New Year a pot full of water is adorned with a *tali* necklace and after *pujas* the dishes prepared for the day are placed on a plantain leaf (*Ede hakuwudu*) as *neivedyam*. The members of the house

consume a mixture of neem leaves and jaggery. On the occasion of Gowri festival, the Iruligas worship the ant hills by pouring milk and flowers and engirdling it with a piece of raw cotton yarn.

The Iruligas believe in the existence of ghosts and spirits (locally known as *devva*, *gali* etc.) and have immense faith in oracles and soothsaying. Many of their men are considered to be very effective soothsayers and as such they are very influential. People of other communities ask for the services of these soothsayers and pay them quite handsomely. The *pujari* at Kempagondanahalli is one such reputed soothsayer who is generally away from his village on such missions in the neighbourhood. At Hoolya, Koothgondanahalli etc., of Kanakapur taluk also there are said to be a few reputed soothsayers. The Iruligas in general, do not have any precise idea or notion regarding the meta-physical concepts such as soul, transmigration etc., but they do believe in rebirth, hell and heaven.

XIII. LEISURE AND RECREATION

Being economically very backward, the Iruligas spend much of their time in earning their livelihood. Be it in a field or in a forest they work hard and soon after returning from work seek solace in undisturbed sleep. Again, they are found in small numbers in their present day settlements and as such even seasonal organised recreational activities are difficult to be arranged. They generally join the rest of the village community at gossip and also share other recreational programmes arranged in the village. In many villages dramas and *bailatas* (open-air plays) are performed particularly between December and March. Iruligas enjoy these performances, but only as spectators. Occasionally a few also visit cinema shows in the nearby towns. *Jathira* or fairs held in the region provide a welcome diversion to the Iruligas. Both elderly people and the youngsters rejoice on these occasions as they mingle with the other joyous crowds. Narasimhaswamy *jathira* comes off during March at Sugganahalli (in Ramanagaram taluk) and in April the car festival of Tirumalai Ranganathaswamy is held. On both the occasions large number of cattle are also brought for trading purposes. At Kabbal, in Kanakapura taluk the cattle fair *cum* car festival of Kabbalamma is held during February-March and this too attracts a large gathering. A number of fairs of lesser importance are held in many large villages and the Iruligas generally attend them. The fairs become temporary market centres and there would be a lot of opportunities for recreation as touring talkies, drama companies, jugglers and acrobats etc., all flock in

these places. The children of the Iruligas mingle with the other children in the village and play some country games. However they have to assist their elders in their economic pursuits and so, find little leisure.

XIV. INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Iruligas irrespective of the location of their dwellings consider themselves to be belonging to one single tribe and do not have any well-defined segments. All are considered equal but the family of their caste headman has a superior status as well as ceremonial importance. Women are considered to be inferior in status to men. They do not have an all-pervasive tribal organisation and all the people of the tribe seldom join together for a common cause. Of late, the tribal conferences organised by the Social Welfare Department have become the venues where the people of the tribe from distant villages come into closer contacts.

In the villages where they live, the Iruligas form part of the village community and have no social disabilities. They do not suffer the stigma of untouchability but because of their economic backwardness and their heritage of jungle residence they are accorded a lower place in the village hierarchy. In some places they claim to be equal in status to the Vokkaligas. They are served by all the functional castes of the village but they have not so far entered into *jajmani* relationship with them. Though at times Iruligas consult Brahman *purohits* and astrologers, Lingayat priests officiate during their life-cycle ceremonies. They may draw water from the village well and enter the precincts of the village temple. In fact in Honganidoddi an Iruliga is the *pujari* of the village Maramma temple. In all these villages they are in a minority and economically they are backward. Therefore they do not hold any influential positions in the village organisations nor are they dominant in any sphere. Generally they try to follow the customs and practices prevailing among the Vokkaligas.

XV. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The Iruligas have their own organisation for maintaining effective control in their widely dispersed society. At the level of the village or settlement they have a headman who is popularly known as *Buddivantha*. The community does not select him. A domineering and competent member of the tribe assumes leadership and gradually he comes to be accepted as the *Buddivantha*. He has no specific functions and rights and his position is of a transitory nature. Any time he may be superseded by a more enterprising

and intelligent rival. He acts as a counsellor to the villagers and reconciles many minor differences in the settlement. For several (4 or 5) villages or settlements they have a *Kattemane Gowda* and he is the socially recognised authority. His office is hereditary and is generally inherited by the eldest son. His assumption of the charge of the post is marked by a community feast when the heads of several families in his jurisdiction jointly make out a document accepting him as their leader. This practice of documentation seems to be a recent development and the documents are called *Kattadagalu*. *Bethadakolu* (cane baton), *Kare Kambli* (black woollen blanket) and the document constitute the insignia of his position. Invariably he is a soothsayer too. He presides during the marriage and death ceremonies and also settles many of their petty disputes. *Nadagowda* exercises authority over several *Kattegowdas* and has a territorial division under his jurisdiction. In this, he is assisted by a *Kolkara*. The positions of *Nadagowda* and *Kolkara* are also hereditary. The residents of Kempagondanahalli have their *Kattegowda* in their own colony. Their *Nadagowda* lives at Huliurdurga in Ramanagaram Taluk while their *Kolkara* lives in Ramanagaram. Persons not satisfied by the adjudication of their *Kattegowda* may appeal to the *Nadagowda* who then calls a meeting of their council. His decision is final and binding on all. He exercises control in social matters and is empowered to impose fines and to excommunicate persons. As it is a bit difficult to approach *Nadagowda* some of the smaller disputes among them are settled by the local village leaders. The Panchayat so called upon to adjudicate is known as *Mel Panchayat*.

At Honganidoddi several cases of aberrations from social norms were reported but none at Kempagondanahalli. The cases reported have already been referred to under the heading of 'Marriage' as all these were concerning extra-marital affairs or affairs relating to sex. Another form of crime which frequently arises is that of exchanging of blows with chappals (leather foot wear). One such instance is said to have occurred at Honganidoddi in March 1966. Here both the persons are considered impure till they undergo the rite known as *Kula Chara maduvudu*. Till they are thus purified, they are not allowed to enter the huts and their touch is avoided by even their closest relations. The headman of the caste either *Nadagowda* or the *Kattegowda*, performs the purification rites. Thursday or Monday is considered auspicious. On this day, the impure persons take a purificatory bath whereupon the headman smears *Vibhoothi* (sacred ash) upon their foreheads and also administers to them a little quantity of water to which some turmeric

3. KANIYAN

I. NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Kollegal Taluk, situated in the far south-eastern corner of the Mysore State was formerly (i.e. prior to Reorganisation of States in 1956) included in the Coimbatore District of Madras State. It is only in this taluk of the present Mysore district that the 'Kaniyan' or 'Kanyan' community has been notified as a Scheduled Tribe by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists Modification Order 1956. The same Order also, declares the Kaniyan or Kanyan as a Scheduled Tribe in the districts of Coimbatore and Tirunelveli (except Shencottah Taluk) of Madras State. In Kollegal Taluk they are known as Kaniyan but not 'Kanyan'. They are found in other parts of Coimbatore district of Madras State also as a Scheduled Tribe and it is likely that they are known as Kaniyan or Kanyan in these areas.

The name Kaniyan is said to be a derivative of *Ganika* which means astrology (Census of India, 1931, Vol. XXVIII. Travancore, Part I. P. 383). The popular version offered by the Kaniyan of Kollegal at present is that their name has been derived from *Kani* which in Kannada means, fortune-telling. As elsewhere, the hereditary occupation of atleast some of the present day Kaniyans of Kollegal is astrology, fortune-telling in addition to exorcism and the practice of native medicine. There are no synonyms for this community but in the locality they are more popularly known as 'Kaniyaru' than as 'Kaniyan'. Their mother-tongue is Kannada which is also the predominant language of the region.

The earliest reference to the Kaniyans in Mysore is probably found in the travelogue of Dr. Francis Buchanan. He came across Kaniyans in the vicinity of T. Narasipur of Mysore district and writes about them as follows :

"In this country there is a class of men called *Cani* or *Shyacana*, who are generally *whalliaru* and always of some low caste who subsist by acting as sorceters and diviners. Some of them derive their knowledge from the stars and are considered as men of learning, but not inspired by the deity; others rattle an iron instrument and sing to invoke the God, until their voice almost fails. They then appear as if drunk and are considered as inspired. Concerning the causes and

events of the diseases of men or beasts, both kinds are consulted. The causes which they assign are wrath of different Gods; and at the same time they tell whether or not the God will be pacified and allow the object of his wrath to recover and also how this may be obtained..." (Buchanan, 1807, Vol. II. P. 152). The "Cani" are now the Kaniyaru and those found in Kollegal Taluk are related to the Kaniyars residing in the adjoining talukas of Yelandur, T. Narasipur and Chamarajanagar of Mysore District.

Dr. Buchanan also came across the Kaniyans during his travels in Malabar and South Canara and observes "The Cunian or Cunishun, are a caste of Malayala, whose profession is astrology. Besides this, however, they make umbrellas, and cultivate the earth" (Buchanan 1807. II P. 528). He, further states "in many other parts of India, an astrologer, or a wiseman, whatever his caste may be, is called a cunishun" and thereby suggests that the name Kaniyan might be a generic term given to a professional class of astrologers. The Census of India, 1891 Vol. XIII—Madras—Report also records "the Kanisan or Kaniyan is the name of the astrologer caste of Malabar. Tradition ascribes its origin to a Nambudri Brahman and Tiyyan woman. The name of this Brahman was Pazhur Bhattari, and it is a fact that the Pazhur family of Kanisans is still reputed to be the most skilful of all astrologers" (p. 272). Regarding the origin of Kaniyans, Thurston (Vol. III. 1909) writes "The Kaniyans, according to one tradition, are Brahman astrologers, who gradually lost their position, as their predictions became less and less accurate. Concerning their legendary history, Mr. Ananthakrishna Iyer writes as follows: ".....In ancient times, it is said, Panans, Velans and Kaniyans were practicing magic, but astrology as a profession was practiced exclusively by the Brahmans. There lived a famous astrologer, Thalakkaleth Bhattathiripad, who was the most renowned of the astrologers of the time. He had a son whose horoscope he cast, and from it he concluded that his son would live long. Unfortunately he proved to be mistaken, for his son died. Unable to find out the error in his calculation and prediction, he took the horoscope to an equally famous astrologer of the Chola kingdom, who, aware of the cause of his advent, directed him to adore some deity that might aid him in the working out of his predictions. Accordingly he came to the Trichur Temple, where, as directed, he spent some

days in devotion to the deity. Thereafter he worked wonders in astrology, and became so well-known in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, that he commanded the respect and admiration of the rulers, who invited him to cast horoscopes and make predictions. For so doing he was liberally rewarded. One day a Brahman hearing that his *Guru* at Benares was seriously ill, consulted the Bhattathiripad whether and how he would be able to see him before his death. The Brahman astrologer directed him to go to the southern side of the Trichur temple, where he would see two persons coming towards him, who might gratify his desire to see his preceptor. These persons were really the servants of Yama (the God of death). They asked him to touch them, and he at once found himself at the side of his teacher. The Brahman was asked who had directed him to them, and, when he told them that it was the renowned Brahman astrologer, they cursed him, saying that he would become an outcaste. This fate came as no surprise to the astrologer, for he had already perceived from an evil conjunction of the planets that disgrace and danger were impending. To try to avoid the sad fate which he foresaw, he left his home and friends, and set out on a boating excursion in a river close by Pazhur. The night was dark and it was midnight when he reached the middle of the stream. A severe storm, accompanied by rain, had come on, and the river was in flood. He was swept away to an unknown region and scrambled ashore in torrents of rain and in darkness, when he saw a light in a house near where he landed, and he made for it in an exhausted condition. On reaching it, he lay down in the verandah at the gate of the house, musing on the untoward events of the night, and on his affectionate family whom he had left. The hut belonged to the family of a Kaniyan (according to another version of the legend, it was the hut of a Tiyan), who, as it happened, had had a quarrel with his wife that day, and had left his hut. Anxiously expecting her husband's return, the wife opened the door about midnight and, seeing a man lying in the verandah, mistook him for her husband. The man was so wrapt in his thoughts of his home that he in turn mistook her for his wife. When the Brahman woke up from his slumber, he found her to be a Kaniya woman. On looking at the star in the heavens to calculate the precise time, he saw that the prediction that he would become an outcaste had been fulfilled. He accepted the degradation and lived the rest of his days with the Kaniya woman. She bore him several sons, whom in due course he educated in the lore of his profession, and for whom by his influence, he obtained an important place in the Hindu social system as astrologers (Ganikans).....".

[Thurston, 1909. Vol. III. P. 181-2] Thus one may conclude that the Kaniyan community had its origin in Malabar and in the course of centuries slowly spread into the adjoining Kannada and Tamil countries. Now the Kaniyans of Kollegal who have adopted *in toto*, the regional way of life have no myth or legend to offer regarding their origin.

In Mysore State Kaniyars were being grouped under the "Depressed Classes" category till the 1941 Census. In about 1926 a movement took shape among the Kaniyars to urge the Government to reconsider the classification of their community and change it over to "Backward Classes". The 1931 Census took note of the movement and the report states "A few words should now be said about a question that arose at this census. In parts of Mysore district there is a community of people known as Kaniyars. It would appear that these people are also called Tirukula people. They are apparently Vaishnava by faith and are somewhat different from the usual Adikarnataka in manner of life and social custom. They are, however, not allowed to enter temples used by caste people and they generally live in separate quarters though not in Adikarnataka quarters. Leaders of this community on this occasion requested that they should be treated as separate from the Adikarnatakas. In 1921 they were treated as part of the Holeya Community. Reports from officers acquainted with local customs showed that though these people are not exactly Adikarnatakas they are yet not treated as people of any other caste. For both these reasons they have at this census been continued in the category of Depressed Classes". (P 329).

The 1941 Census report also took note of the persevering movement of the leaders of the Kaniyar community and remarks "The Kaniyars have been included in the Depressed Classes.....even though they are agitating to be included in backward classes" (Census of India, 1941, Vol. XXIII part I. Report P. 20). In the year 1942 Kaniyara Samaja, Bangalore was formed to intensify the struggle and within a short span of time the objective was achieved and a Government Order was passed in the year 1942. But for this movement, 'Kaniyar' would have probably been notified by the President's Order 1950 as a Scheduled Caste in certain parts of former Mysore State also.

The Census Reports (Madras 1891 and Travancore 1931) indicate the existence of seven and two sub divisions respectively among the Kaniyan. However, all the 'Kaniyaru' of Kollegal and its adjoining taluks

of Mysore district constitute a single endogamous group and do not generally have and social inter course with the Kaniyan of either Madras or Malabar territory. They have several exogamous groups called *Kula* and consider a marital union of persons belonging to the same *Kula* as taboo. They do not have any tradition of their own nor do they have any historical background. There is no record of their immigration to Kannada-speaking areas either. In the past some stray individuals or families might have come over in pursuance of their profession as astrologers, native pundits or exorcists to some of the villages and towns and might have preferred to settle down there permanently. Some of their descendants have kept alive their hereditary occupation of astrology, fortune-telling, exorcism and the practice of native medicines while many have taken to other occupations such as cultivation, silk-reeling etc. It is on account of the associated profession *viz.* astrology, fortune-telling, exorcism etc., that they are well-known in their neighbourhood. The services of these specialists are utilised by people of different castes to overcome physical ailments and also to obtain a psychological cure. The Kaniyan has his own devices to find out the cause of trouble of the consulting person and also proper counter measures.

II. DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TREND

The earlier references to Kaniyan indicate that they belong to Malabar and also a few adjacent districts of Kerala and Madras States. Now they are a Scheduled Tribe only in Coimbatore and Tirunelveli (except Shencotah) districts and it is rather hard to get an overall picture of their present day geographical distribution or even their total population. In 1891, their population in the then Madras Presidency was recorded as 14,922. According to Buchanan there were 668 Kanians in the 'Southern division of the province of Canara' *i.e.* (South Kanara district) during his visit in 1801. Travancore State returned a population of 15,652 during the 1931 Census. However, no population figures of Kaniyaru are available in respect of Mysore State. The population of 142 persons returned for the 1961 Census refers only to Kollegal Taluk where the community is now scheduled. This does not represent a true picture as they are to be found in the Taluks of Yalandur and Chamarajanagar of Mysore district, Channarayapatna Taluk of Hassan district, South Kanara district and also in the Cities of Mysore and Bangalore.

In Kollegal Taluk, Surapura hamlet of Kunagalli village and Hosamalangi in Kollegal Taluk are the chief places of concentration there being 20 and 15

households of Kaniyans in each. The other villages where a few Kaniyans may be found are Mudugunda, Gundaigala, Kamagere, Malapura, Uddanur, Ikdahalli, Tagarapura and Kollegal town. They are also seen outside Kollegal Taluk, in several villages such as Mamballi, Santhamaralli, Doddarayapete, Irachavadi, Deshavalli etc., and also Yelandur and Chamarajanagar. The Kaniyans of Kollegal have close association with the people of their community in these villages. They are said to be found in large number in Kesare locality in Mysore City, and also in *Kaniyara Colony*, Chamarajpet of Bangalore. The city dwellers are said to be mostly immigrants during the past 4 to 5 decades and many of the men said to be employed in the Textile Mills.

Kollegal, Chamarajanagar and Yelandur are well-known centres for the production of silkworm cocoons and also silk. Though there are silk filatures in this area, *charakas* (Spinning wheels) are very popular for silk reeling. Kaniyans are engaged in silk reeling industry in addition to cultivation. Yelandur is said to be the administrative centre of the community and their headman at Yelandur exercises control on Kaniyans spread all over the State. Biligirangana-betta, Mudukore, Melkote are the important nearby centres where annual fairs are held. The Ranganathaswamy car festival at Biligirangana-betta is of special significance to Kaniyaru as they consider it an occasion to have their tribal meetings and discuss various matters. Mahadeswara hill about 80 Kms. distant from Kollegal town is a place of religious importance and the influence of the principal diety Mahadeswara is widespread. Periodically fairs are held here and large number of devotees from several districts assemble to offer worship. Other nearby places of religious and cultural importance include Nanjangud, Talakad, T. Narasipura and Somanathapura.

According to the 1961 Census there are only 142 Kaniyans and all of them have been returned from rural areas only. As against 104 males there are only 38 females. This very low proportion of females is rather strange and it is hard to explain the difference except by assuming the possibility of some defective enumeration. The age-group composition shows that 56 persons or 39.4% are less than 14 years of age; 57 persons or 40.1% are in the age-group 15-44; and the rest *viz.* 29 persons or 20.5%, are in the 45 + age-group (Census of India, 1961 Vol. XI—Mysore, Part V-A).

During the course of the field study, seven households with a population of 27, were found at Kollegal town and of them 6 reported to have been in the town

for the last 3 generations. In Surapura hamlet of Kunigalli village 20 households having 115 persons in all were enumerated. Thus the field investigation covers 27 households with a population of 142 and according to the informed leaders of the community there are about 70 households consisting of about 300 persons of Kaniyans in Kollegal Taluk as a whole. It was also noticed that there was no marked variation between the number of males and females. These two factors indicate the possibility of the population of Kaniyans being much more than that returned during the 1961 Census.

In Madras State no Kaniyan has been returned under 'Scheduled Tribe' even though the community is scheduled in Tirunelveli district excepting Shencottah Taluk and Coimbatore district [Census of India—1961 Vol. IX—Madras Part V A(i).]

III. FAMILY, CLAN, KINSHIP AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS

In the course of the field studies, during December 1966, seven households in Kollegal town and 20 households in Surapura hamlet of Kunigalli village were enumerated. The 27 households returned a population of 142. Thus the average size of a household works out to 5.26. The size varied between one (in three instances) and twelve in the case of one household. Sixteen out of the 27 households consisted of 5 members or more. Examining the composition of these households for the 'type of family' it could be observed that 11 out of 27 were simple consisting of a couple and unmarried children (also includes single member households and the households having unmarried siblings with a widowed parent); 7 came under the category 'Intermediate' as they included some other relations such as a widowed parent in addition to a couple and their unmarried children; 5 were joint families and the remaining 4 fell under the category of 'others'. Simple type of family figures out to be the most popular. Soon after the marriage, the wife goes to live in her husband's house. Instances where a husband moves into his father-in-law's abode may be occasionally met with. Among the Kaniyars of Kollegal town one such instance though pertaining to the last generation, was reported. The Kaniyans follow the patriarchal system of inheritance and reckon the descent in the male line for both the male and female children. All the sons share the ancestral property equally among themselves. The responsibility of marrying off any unmarried daughters of the deceased and her maintenance till marriage rests equally on these sons. The eldest son inherits the status or office such as caste headmen, held by his deceased father.

All persons claiming descent from a common male ancestor are known as belonging to a *Vamsha* or *Manethana*. *Dayadaru* or *Onde budadavaru* ಎಂದೇ ಏಕವಂಶರು are also popular terms used for one's agnatic kin. At the level of lineage, the Kaniyans do not have any organisation, there being no headman etc., for a lineage. Several lineages constitute an exogamous division known as *Kula*. The *Kulas* found in Kollegal taluk and its neighbourhood are *Ganigara Kula*, *Malagara Kula*, *Bhumi Kula* and *Kaniyara Kula*. No taboos are associated with these *kulas* either with regard to food or occupation. Of late, a few educated persons have begun to substitute the term *Gotra* named after great sages such as Moudgalya, Kanva etc., for *Kula*. At the clan level also they do not have any institution of *Yajaman*. The several households belonging to the same *kula* may worship different household deities and follow any convenient occupation. Marriage of persons belonging to the same *Kula* is prohibited. The several *Kulas* found among the Kaniyans hold equal status. Inter or even intra-clan organisation appears to be non-existent in this community. References to one's clan or *Kula* will be made only when marital alliances are to be contracted in one's family. As a result many of the youngmen do not even know the name of the *Kula* to which they belong.

IV. DWELLING, DRESS AND ORNAMENTS, FOOD AND DRINKS, OTHER MATERIALS OBJECTS DISTINCTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY

The Kaniyans live in settled villages or towns amidst several other village communities. In Kollegal taluk, the Vokkaliga, Kuruba, Lingayat, Holey, Madiga, Muslim, Brahmin, Vaishya etc., communities live in their immediate neighbourhood. The locality where the Kaniyans have their dwellings are known as *Kaniyara Keri* or *Kaniyara beedi* and this sort of nomenclature of localities after the name of the community is very common in the region. The *Kaniyara Keri* will be well within the limits of caste Hindu locality even though a little demarcated from the rest, and usually keeps away from the locality of Holeyas or Madigas. The houses of Kaniyans tend to be of an agglomerated pattern. In a few places, the houses adjoin each other and constitute a single row while in a few other places the houses face each other and present a linear arrangement. The Kaniyans have free access to the village drinking water well.

Almost all the Kaniyans live in owned houses and in Kollegal two households reported to have even given out houses for rent to others. The houses are of two types viz., *Thotti mane* and *Harimane*. *Thotti mane*

is usually of larger dimensions with a central open courtyard. The ground plan is either a square or a rectangle. Generally a *thottimane* consists of a *jagali* or outer verandah, *Hajara* or inner verandah, and 2 or 3 rooms including a kitchen. The central open courtyard serves as a washing place as arrangements will have been made to drain out the sullage. A corner of the *Hajara* is partitioned off by a screen to form a bath room in some of the houses. As they rarely build a separate cattle shed, the cattle if any will be tethered in the *Hajara*. The walls of the house are of mud and some of the households have these mud walls whitewashed at frequent intervals. The roofing material consists of a framework of bamboo strips and semicylindrical country tiles. The beams and pillars are of jungle wood locally available and the doors are of thick wooden planks. The houses do not have windows but due to the open courtyard, the interior of the house is well-lit. The *Harimane* consists of a single ridge with two inclines. In this case also the ground plan is rectangular but the dimensions vary between 13' × 17' and 17' × 21'. The house consists of a *jagali* or outer verandah, a *hajara* or the hall and *kone* or kitchen. A few houses have a small room in addition. The building material consists of earth, country tiles and jungle wood in addition to bamboo. These houses are ill-ventilated besides being congested. In both the types of houses the plinth is of gravel and it is slightly elevated as compared to the street level. The houses are seldom decorated or embellished with carvings, paintings or drawings. The Kaniyans also perform several ceremonies commonly observed in the region such as *Guddali Puja*, *Payada Puje*, *Grihapravesha* etc., associated with house construction.

Dress and ornaments

The usual dress of Kaniyan men consists of a dhoti or a lungi and a shirt. The dhoti which measures 4 yards in length is worn with a *kache* by a few elderly men while many others prefer to fold it into double at the middle and use the dhoti in *datti* style without a *kache*. *Lungi* is smaller in dimension measuring about 2 yards in length by about 48 or 50 inches in width. It is also invariably white in colour. Many young men in rural areas wear knickers and banians particularly when they are at work. Otherwise knickers and banians serve as under-garments over which *lungi* or dhoti and shirt are used. For occasional use some of the Kaniyans have cotton coats and upper cloth called *valli*. They are not accustomed to put on any form of headgear. Sometimes a towel or a *valli* is wound round the head for protection against the sun. The clothings are usually of

coarser texture and are comparatively cheap. The garments made of cloths of finer texture are reserved for festivals and other important occasions. Locally made chappals constitute their popular footwear. In general it may be said that the Kaniyans have nothing special or peculiar in their type of dress when compared to the other lower middle class people of the region. In towns they follow the current fashions and the young men have taken to the use of trousers, shirts, bushshirts, coats, shoes etc.

Their women use sarees and blouses in the same fashion as the other womenfolk of the region. The handloom sarees generally measure between 7 and 8 yards by 45 to 48 inches. Younger women use mill made sarees measuring only 6 yards in length. The saree is worn without a *kache* and of late, the use of petticoat as an undergarment is said to be on the increase. Both the young and the old women constantly put on blouses with half sleeves. They have no headgear. A few women occasionally use chappals. Girls put on skirts and blouses or else frocks while the boys wear knickers and shirts or bushshirts.

Finger rings and earstuds of gold are the ornaments in use among their men. Only a few can afford to have these gold ornaments. Women use a larger number of ornaments and it is hard to find a woman devoid of any ornament whatsoever. The commonly seen ornaments are *vale* or gold earstuds, *moogabattu* or nose-screw, *Tali Kari mani Sara* or black bead necklace with a gold piece pendant, *dabu* or silver waist belt, glass bangles and *Kalungura* or toe-rings. *Kaddi Kolave* a gold ornament for the upper rim of the ear is said to have been popular about a decade ago but now-a-days it is seldom seen. The use of *dabu* is said to be on a steady decline as the use of petticoats as under garment for the lower part of the body is increasing. A few Kaniyans who are placed in relatively affluent conditions have gold necklaces and gold bangles which see the light of the day on festive and other important occasions. Married teenage girls are fond of silver anklets called *Kalchainu* in addition to the ornaments listed above. Boys have silver waist strings called *belli ududara* and star shaped earstuds called *Nakshatra*. Young girls have earstuds and bangles and a few have anklets.

Tattooing for body decoration is not popular among the Kaniyans. Nevertheless a few stray instances of women having simple floral designs tattooed on their forearms may be occasionally met with. Womenfolk

of Korama community are adept at tattooing and they move about in the villages in the neighbourhood providing their skillful services. Kaniyan women and girls mark their foreheads with a circular dot from vermilion powder. Custom forbids a widow from even handling the vermilion powder let alone applying it to her forehead. Men mark their foreheads with, *Namam* the vaishnavite symbol. Both men and women oil their hair at frequent intervals. In the region both cocoanut oil and castor oil (not perfumed) are equally popular as hair oils. They use wooden combs for combing their hair. Among the girls and younger women it is usual to plait the hair into a pigtail while among the older women it is common to gather the hair into a knot at the back. While the older men invariably have tufts of hair the younger prefer to have short cropped hair. In either case they apply castor oil or cocoanut oil at frequent intervals.

Household equipments :

The Kaniyans generally belong to low-income group of households and they cannot be classed as very poor. Their household equipment include some utensils, one or two items of furniture in a few instances and some tools and implements required in their economic pursuits. Normally they use earthenware for cooking food and also for storing some grains, salt, milk and buttermilk. Some of them make use of bamboo cylinders called *ande* for storing salt. Tins and bottles are also used as containers for storing food articles. The cooking pots are annually renewed. In case of pollution caused by either a birth or a death in the family, the cooking pots are to be renewed as otherwise the pollution will not cease. Almost all the households own some metallic utensils such as the *bindige* (Pitcher of brass or copper) *hande* (large vessel of copper or brass for storing water), *chembu* (small pitcher), *Thappale*, *lota*, (tumbler) *bosi* and a few plates of aluminium, brass or bell metal. For dining it is common to use bell metal plates while a few use aluminium plates and a smaller number use dining leaves. Ladles, spoons, frying pans, grinding stones, pestle and mortar, wicker baskets, winnowing baskets, mirror, comb, mats etc., constitute the other household goods in common use. Of late, the tendency to buy some cups and plates of stainless steel is also manifest especially among the educated and the townfolk. A small proportion of the Kaniyan households possess wooden or rope cots, benches and stools. In a few solitary instances one may come across a household possessing a wooden shelf, a wall clock, cycle, watch or some such costly article. Those house-

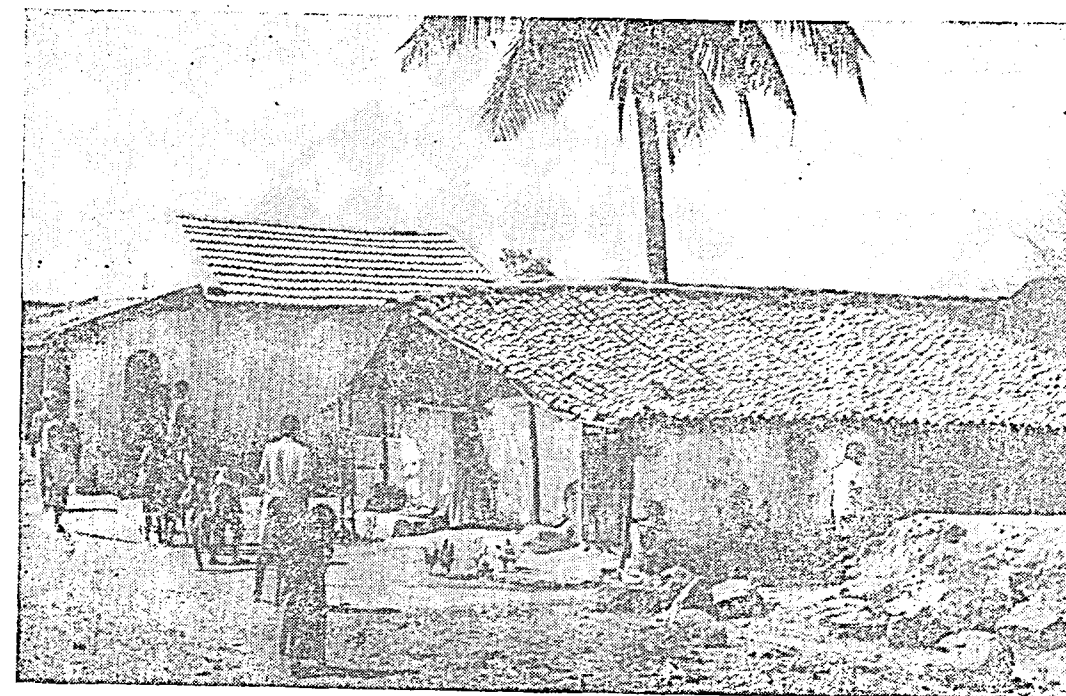
holds which have cultivation as their primary occupation possess ploughs, rake, harrow, hoe, sickles, axe, spades etc., while those which are engaged in silk reeling industry have *charakas*. Those who are engaged in the professions of fortune telling, *pundit* (medicine men) etc., possess some cowrie shells, almanacs, engraved copper plates, dols of different deities, a small stone mortar and a pestle, scissors, sharp pointed nails (for inscribing on metallic plates) etc.

Food and drinks :

The Kaniyans are non-vegetarians but some of them profess to be pure vegetarians by taste and habit. The non-vegetarians consume the flesh of goats, sheep or fowls only occasionally. They normally do not partake of flesh of any other animal and consider beef as a taboo. Their staple food consists of cereals such as ragi, jowar, rice and millets; and pulses such as the arhar, field beans, horsegram and cow pea. They, though infrequently, consume vegetables locally available such as the brinjals, gourds, lady's finger, greens etc. In their food habits they are akin to the other peasant communities such as the Vokkaligas of the region. The items of food normally prepared are *hittu*, *saru* and *anna*. *Hittu* is made out of either ragi or jowar flour while *saru* is the pulse or vegetable soup and *anna* is cooked rice. When ragi flour is felt insufficient for feeding all the members, then it is made into *ambli* or gruel. Generally all the members have a breakfast consisting of either *hittu* or *anna* kept overnight. Besides the morning breakfast which usually consists of the left overs of the previous night they take two principal meals, one at noon, and the other in the night. The menu for both the meals consists of *hittu*, *saru* and little quantity of rice. Some of them use buttermilk or milk almost regularly. Their festival dishes consist of *payasa*, *vobbittu*, *kadbu*, *sikkinunde* etc. (all sweet dishes).

Custom does not prevent a Kaniyan from drinking toddy and other intoxicating drinks. But due to prohibition it is scarcely available. Moreover, drinking itself is viewed with disfavour by a considerable number of the Kaniyans and a few who are fond of intoxicants consume it stealthily. Tea and coffee are the popular beverages. In many of the households coffee is prepared daily once in the morning. Men are accustomed to visit tea-shops whenever they go to the large villages or towns. While smoking of beedi is very common among the males, chewing betel leaves and arecanut is common among the females.

15. KANIYAN



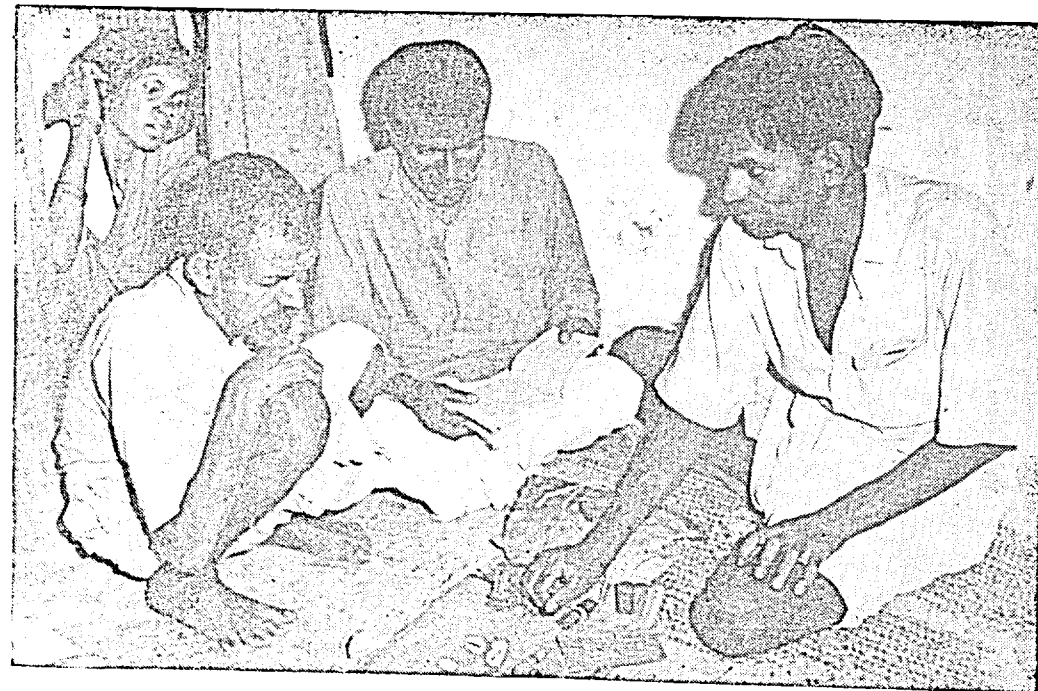
1. Main street in Surapura hamlet, Kunagalli Village, Kollegal taluk—A small lane from it leads to the houses of Kaniyans



2. Inside the kitchen, an old Kaniyan is having his food



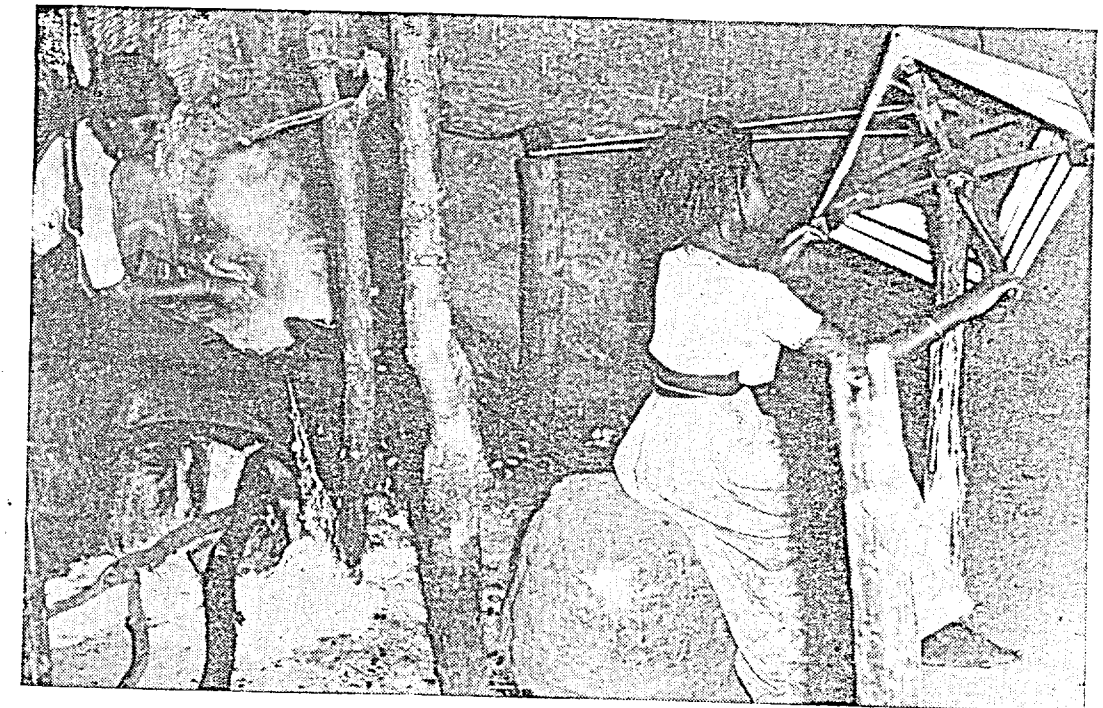
3. Kaniyan equipped with all the Paraphernalia is attending to a Customer—divining causes and forecasting future are their traditional professions



4. At Surapura : forecasting future on the basis of *Kavade Sastra*



5 (a). Silk reeling by cottage basin process is an important occupation for Kaniyans. Cocoons being boiled in a couldron



5 (b). Reeling the yarn on to a beam

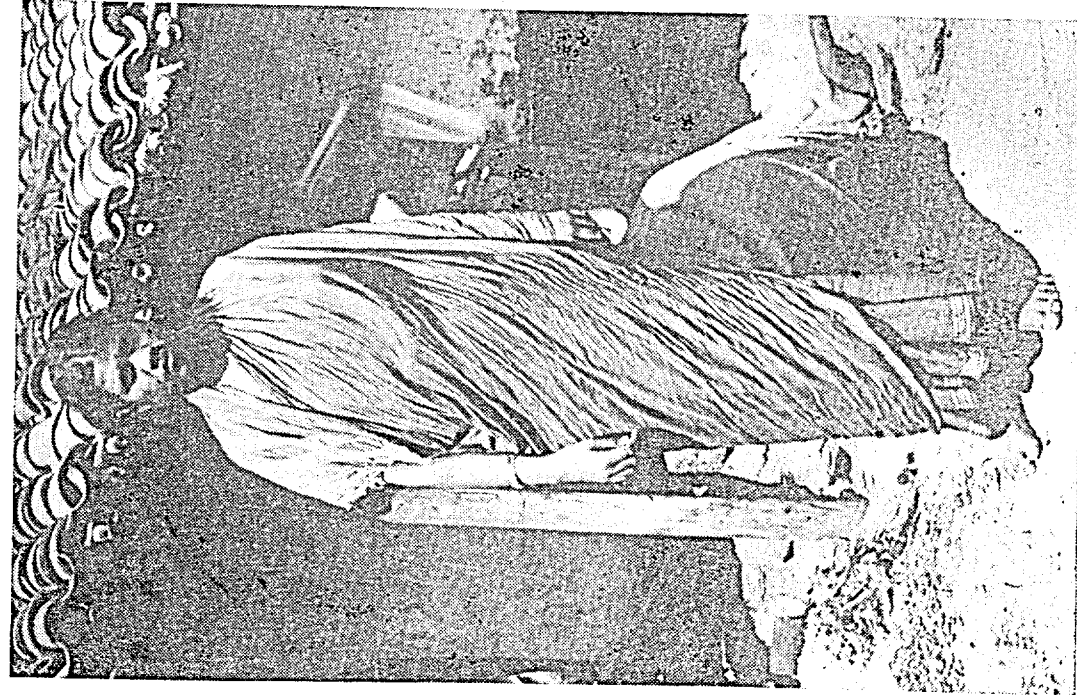


7 (c). Profile



7 (d). As viewed from behind

376 (f)

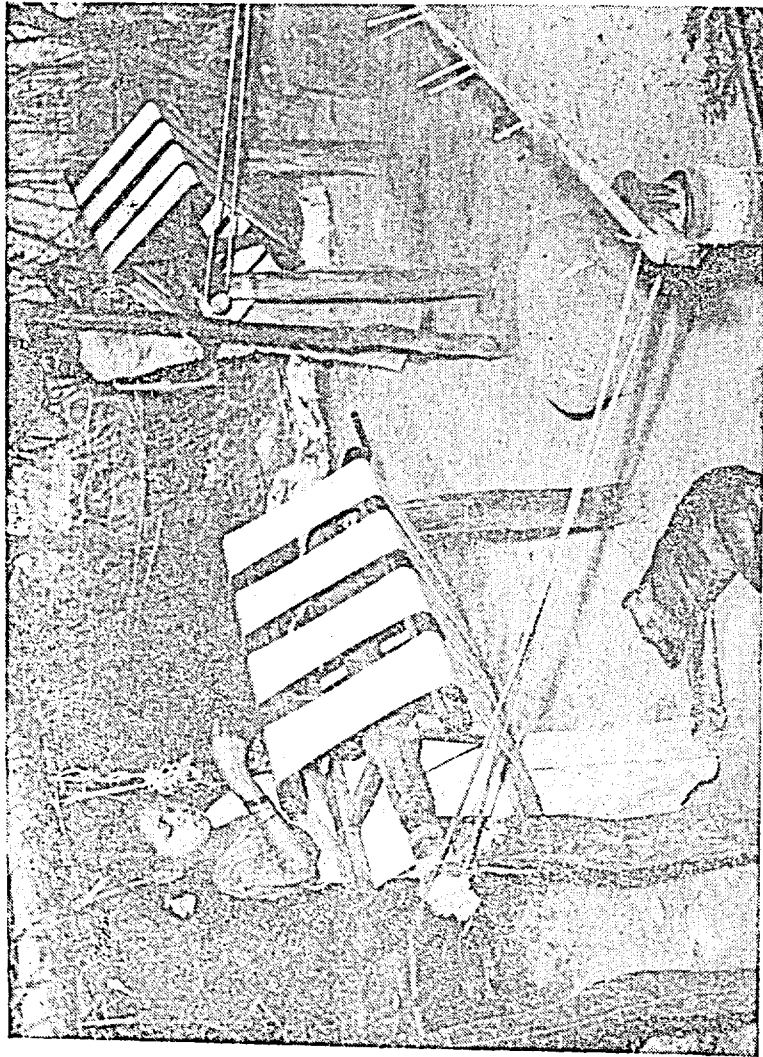


8 (a). Full-length portrait of a Kaniyan female

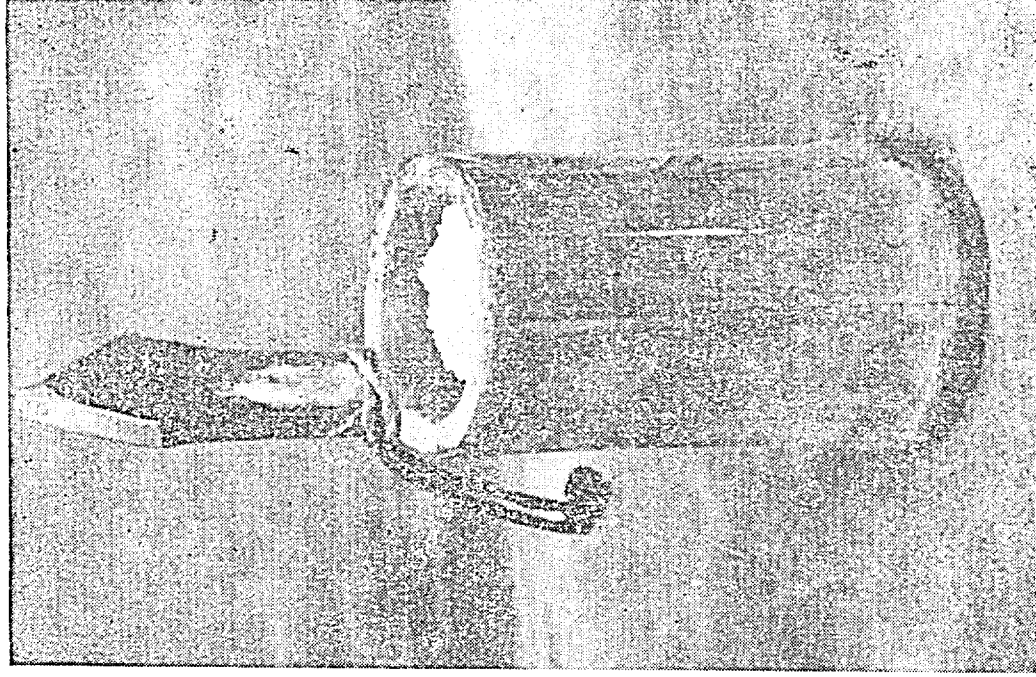


8 (b). Front-view (close-up)

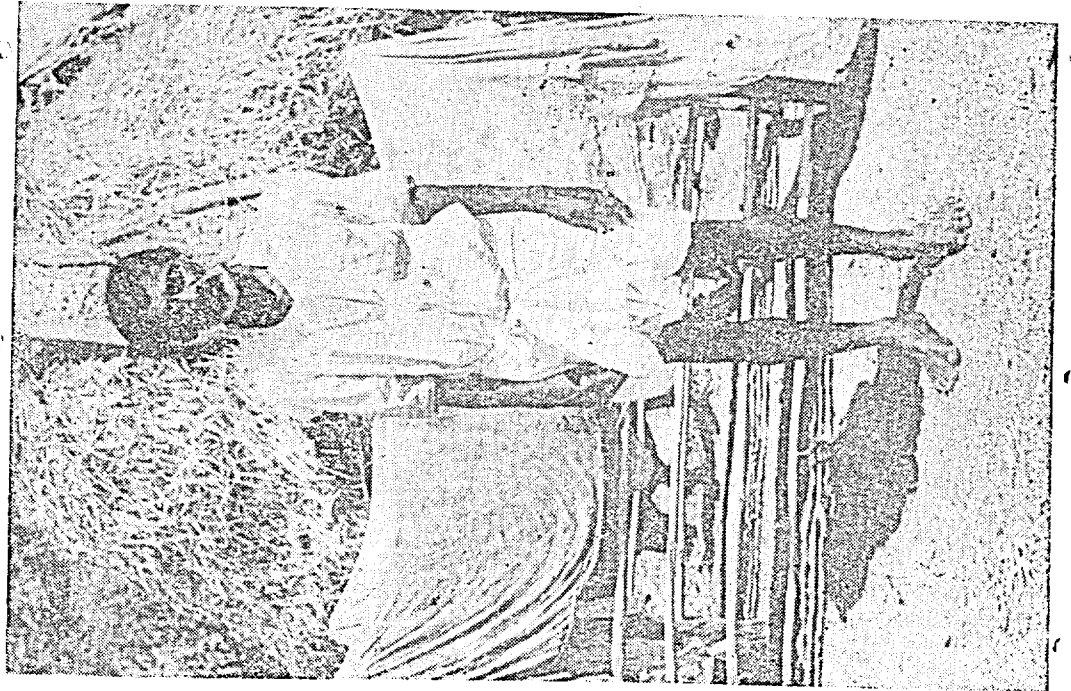
376 (g)



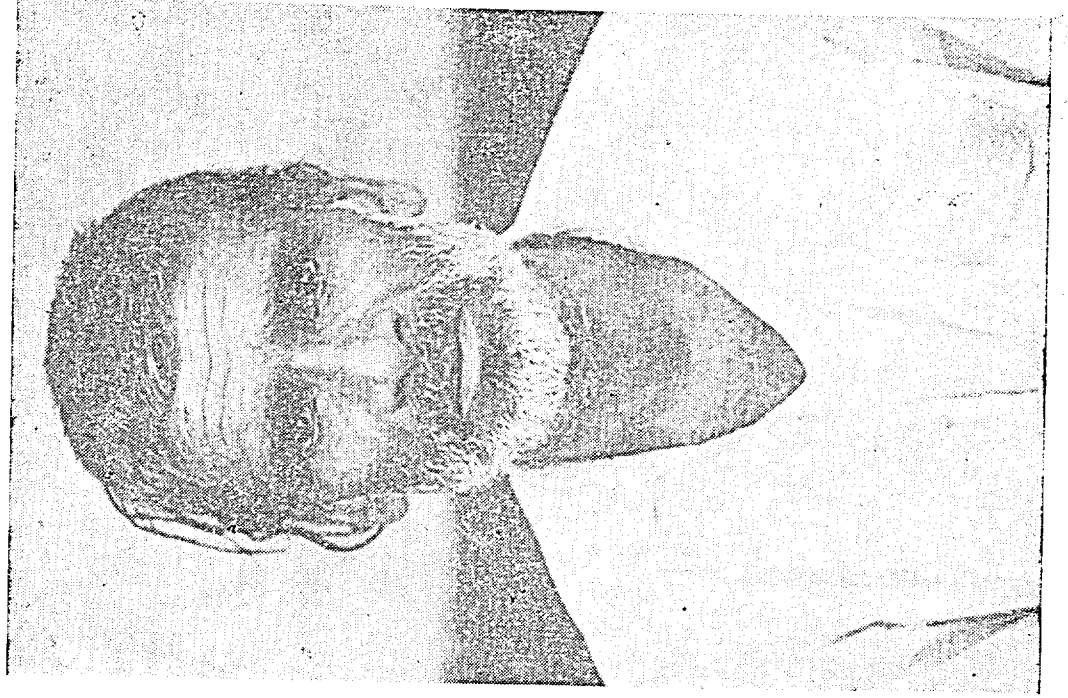
5 (c). Piecing together the broken strands



6. *Ande*: The bamboo container for salt



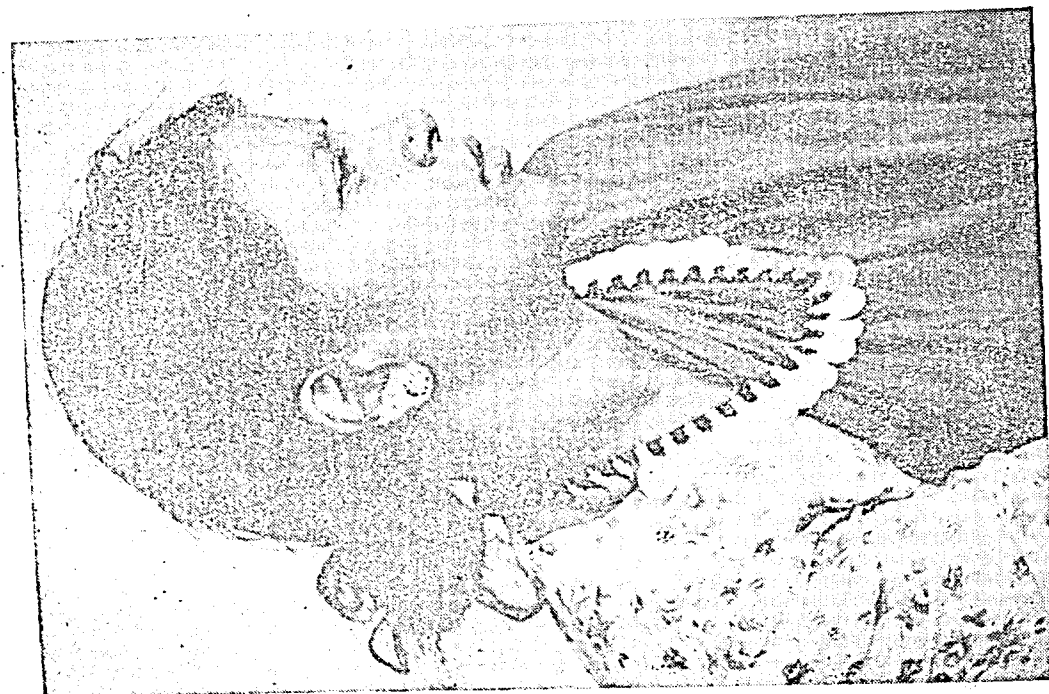
7 (a). Full-length portrait of a Kaniyan male



7 (b). Front-view (close up)



8 (d). As viewed from behind



8 (c). Profile

V. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

The surroundings of the dwellings of Kaniyan may be generally considered clean. The frontyards are swept everyday and the garbage thrown away at a distance. If there are any cattle in the house the litter is removed and collected in a manure pit a little distance away from the houses. The sullage from the house is allowed to drain off into a soak-pit or else to the street gutters. The houses are not provided with latrines and all the members irrespective of sex and age go out to the open fields for answering the calls of nature. The houses in which silk-reeling is carried on smell noxiously of boiled cocoons all the while, and it will be very intense during the rainy season. The Kaniyans bathe once a week on every Saturday and the clothes are usually washed on Fridays. It is only a few youngmen who bathe in cold water or in streams while the women, children and older men bathe in warm water. They use toilet and washing soaps occasionally. They clean their teeth with charcoal dust or ash and wash their faces, hands and feet everyday. The interior of the house is swept clean daily and all the cooking utensils and other vessels such as plates, cups etc., are also cleaned by the women of the house.

The common diseases to which the Kaniyans as well as the other people in the region are susceptible are fevers, abdominal disorders, colds, cough, dysentery, headache and such other minor ailments. *Meha* (venereal diseases), *Vayu*, *Parinama*, *Schoole*, and *Arishinagandha* are a few other diseases of occasional occurrence. The native pundits (medicine-men) of Kaniyan community dispense effective herbal medicines for all these ailments. Their knowledge is based on Ayurveda system and they learn about the symptoms of diseases and also of the composition of the medicines in their younger days at the initiation of a *guru* or their father. The text is usually in verse form and it is easier to remember when once it is learnt by heart. They are adept at feeling the *Nadi* or pulse of the patients. Their medicines are in the form of *choorna* or powder, *gulige* or pills *leha rasayana* and *Kashaya* or decoction. Of the 7 households of Kaniyan at Kollegal only 2 are practising the profession. In Surapura although only 2 households are practising it actively a few others are also said to be in touch with the profession to a small degree. In addition to the medicines they also provide psychological cure by resorting to exorcism or *Bhiti Chikitse*. Thus a number of people in the surrounding villages consult these *pundits* in case of ailments.

VI. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The Kaniyans of Kollegal and its neighbourhood speak Kannada both among themselves and with the outsiders. They consider Kannada as their mother-tongue. Among males a few can speak fluent Tamil also but none appears to know Malayalam. If Kaniyans are to be considered primarily as a caste of Malabar it would be rather difficult to explain their total ignorance of the Malayalam Language. It may be that the immigration took place some centuries back and that the individuals or the stray families severing all their connections with Malabar. The present-day Kaniyans have acquired the regional accent and also the local slang. The 1961 Census (Vol. XI Mysore Part V-A) reveals that all the 142 Kaniyans have returned Kannada as their mother tongue.

According to the 1961 Census [Vol. XI-Mysore—Part V-A] only 28 persons (all males) out of the 142 are literates. Of them, 3 have passed the primary standard while the remaining 25 are literates without any educational standard. All the 38 females are returned as illiterates.

During the field study it was observed that a few females in Kollegal town were literates and also that one girl was studying in S.S.L.C. Among boys also there was a student studying in the S.S.L.C. In Surapura hamlet, out of the 115 persons, 21 reported to be literate. The percentage of literacy among Kaniyans seems to be somewhat more than that recorded during the 1961 Census.

VII. ECONOMIC LIFE

The Kaniyans of Kollegal have no tradition of ever leading primitive life. They have been more or less, living in large villages, or towns leading a settled way of life. Their traditional calling is astrology, many a times in association with the practice of herbal medicines based on Ayurveda system or exorcism. Among the present day Kaniyans it is only a small proportion that are effectively practising their hereditary occupation. The remaining section has taken to cultivation, industry or any other suitable occupation for eking out a living. In many of the villages, the Kaniyans have acquired lands and while a few are cultivating-owners many have leased out their lands on crop-share basis. The land owned by them is generally small in extent varying between a minimum

of one acre per household to a maximum of about 10 acres. Of the 27 households contacted during the field investigation in Kollegal town and Surapura hamlet 14 households returned as owning lands. The maximum extent owned by any household is 10 acres, and two households own 10 acres each. Another household owns about 7 acres while the rest own between one acre and 5.00 acres. Except the three households, the other households with small holdings have leased out the land on temporary basis. In this region both wet and dry cultivation are popular, but the lands of Kaniyans are mainly rainfed. Ragi, horsegram and mulberry are the chief crops raised in the region. Livestock rearing is of secondary importance to the Kaniyans as only 6 out of the 27 households contacted are reported to be in possession of either bullocks or cows. In and around Kollegal, silkworm rearing as well as production of silk by reeling are very popular. The Kaniyans are engaged in the latter industry and some of them have 2 or 3 *charakas* each. They have obtained licences for running the *charakas*. The cocoons are bought from the local dealers either on credit or for cash. The cocoons are boiled in tank water in ordinary but big hearths using firewood as fuel. The resultant silk yarn has a ready local market and they do not have any difficulty in either procuring the raw material or disposing of their products. The prices are liable to sudden fluctuations and thus the industry is not always profitable. About 12 kilogrammes of cocoons yield an average of 800 grammes of silk yarn and about 450 grammes of *netti* or waste silk. The labourers engaged for reeling silk get Re. 1.25 for a day's labour. None of the households at Kollegal town is engaged in this while as many as eight out of the 20 households in Surapura hamlet own 2 or 3 *charakas* each. This hamlet is quite close to Mambally which is famous for silk and it is probably for this reason that it is popular among the Kaniyans of Surapura. The traditional occupations of astrology and dispensing herbal medicines are being practised by four out of the 27 households contacted during the field study. They possess almanacs, some books of manuscripts containing *mantrams* and verses in Kannada about the medicines for various diseases. They have images of certain deities like Ganapathi, Kali etc., and also designs inscribed on copper plates. *Mudi*—a crown shaped material said to be made out of 101 varieties of roots is also used by them in the *bhiti chikitse* or curing or fear complex. They use 9 (*Kavade*) cowrie shells which, when strewn on the floor, enable them to predict the good or evil associated with any query put forth by a consulting person. This is known as *Kavade Sastra*. If one shell remains open when all the nine are thrown on the floor, it

indicates the functioning of 'Sun planet' and the associated evil like loss, worry and anxiety is predicted. Similarly 2 indicates the 'Moon' and the failure of one's undertaking; 3 indicates the 'Mangala' or good; 4 open shells indicate 'Budha planet' and the consequent worry; 5 means 'Guru planet' and portends success; 6 and 7 are reckoned as *apashuba* or bad omens; 8 indicates a lot of hardship and all the nine open shells is a certain sign of success and portends good. Generally for every query there would be three throws and either the *pundit* himself or the consulting person may throw the shells. The *pundits* have charms or *Tayitha* (Talisman) for protecting the children from the evil effects of *Nelagraha*, *Balagraha* etc. They have also certain methods of driving out spirits which have taken possession of individuals. It is generally people of the lower castes and those in the lower income levels that frequently consult these *pundits*. A *pundit* may earn about Rs. 30 to Rs. 60 a month but it is not certain. Whenever there has been any trouble in the family, or continued sickness, or suspected evil play; whenever a house or land is to be bought, whenever marriages are to be contracted, and generally whenever some other important activity has to be undertaken the people turn to these *pundits* for consultation and pay a small fee. They have ample faith in the capacity of the *pundits* at predicting the future. The *pundits* worship either Maheswari or Kalikadevi and perform *Japam* and *puja* everyday to retain their occult power. The skill is transmitted from father to son or from *Guru* to his disciple. The symptoms and cures prescribed for various diseases are also taught to them in the form of verses which can be remembered perfectly for long. In any case apprenticeship for a few years is very essential. Of late their traditional occupation appears to be losing its charm and the Kaniyans are aspiring to take to better ways of living. The Kaniyans of Kollegal town, in particular, have imparted education to their children and they have consequently left the town in search of better employment.

The Kaniyans who do not either own lands or have the skill in their traditional profession eke out their livelihood by working as labourers. The daily wage ranges between Re. 1.00 and 1.50 in this locality.

According to 1961 Census, among the 142 Kaniyans as many as 105, (roughly 74%) are workers. Considering sexwise it is observed that while there are 37 non-workers out of the 104 males, all the 38 females are returned as workers. The distribution of workers by sex and industrial classification (Census of India

1961, Vol. XI Mysore Part V-A SCT-1 Part B) is presented below:

	Males	Females	Total
Total Workers	67	38	105
Workers:			
I As Cultivator	32	12	44
II As Agricultural Labourer	9	3	12
III In Mining, quarrying, livestock, fishing etc.	13	10	23
IV In Household Industry	13	8	21
V In Manufacturing other than household industry	..	..	..
VI In Construction	..	..	..
VII In Trade and Commerce	..	2	2
VIII In Transport and communication	..	..	..
IX Other occupations and miscellaneous services	..	3	3

It could be seen from the above that the majority are working in cultivation while only 12 are agricultural labourers. The 23 workers in livestock rearing, mining etc., appear to be children who are less than 14 years of age. The exact nature of the household industry cannot be found out from the above table. From the field study, it is evident that reeling of silk from cocoons is the household industry in which the Kaniyans are engaged.

VIII. LIFE CYCLE

(a) Beliefs and practices connected with birth

The Kaniyans consider fertility in their women as an essential feature of womanhood and despise the sterile women. Though they are amply aware of the physiological causes of conception and child-birth they hold the view that children are gifts conferred by God. Barrenness is a curse. It is sometimes attributed to sins committed during the past lives and some times to one's fate or *hanebaraha*. Some of the orthodox people do not wish to even see the face of a sterile woman. Observance of vows may absolve the woman of her sins and as a result she may conceive. Apart from this, they do not resort to any remedies to overcome barrenness. In cases of numerous still births,

miscarriages, etc., they take herbal medicines at the hands of some renowned native *pundits*. Forced abortion is a sinful act and none resorts to it. The Kaniyans do not appear to have any method for determining the sex of the baby in the womb of the mother. The state of pregnancy is recognised in the fifth month. In the case of first pregnancy, in the seventh month *basiru hosage* ceremony is performed. On this occasion she is given a new saree, a blouse, bangles and the dishes of her choice. *Arathi* is waved before her by *muthaides* (married women). She is then or on any other auspicious day brought to her parents' home for delivery and confinement. She attends to only light work and is given nutritive food as the pregnancy advances. A room in the dwelling house is set apart for the delivery and arrangements are made to keep the room dark and warm. Elderly women of the community assist the woman-in-labour. If there are any complications, the local trained *dais* or midwives from the nearest centre are called upon to attend. Soon after the birth, the umbilical cord is cut with a blade or a sharp knife. The placenta is gathered in a large pot and the woman who attends to the delivery or any other woman takes it to a distant manure pit. The actual burying of the pot containing the placenta is attended to by a male relative of the mother. Either her father, brother or her husband may perform this task there being no prescriptions. Soon after the birth, the baby and the mother are bathed in hot water. On the subsequent 10 days also, the mother and the baby take hot water-bath daily. On the day of birth and also on the second, castor oil extracted from parched castor seeds, is administered to the baby in little quantities. The suckling starts on the third day and may continue for 18 to 24 months. The child is weaned away from the habit of suckling by applying certain bitter materials to the teats. The mother receives no food on the day of delivery. She may be given cummin decoction or a cup of coffee. On the following day she subsists on a loaf of bread and coffee. From the third day onwards upto the tenth day she receives rice and jaggery in addition to little quantities of ginger and copra. She starts eating rice and milk from the eleventh day and on the expiry of about 40 days she starts eating ragi flour also. In the case of first delivery the period of confinement may extend upto 3 months or even more. During this period she abstains from cooking and doing any of the household duties and gets nutritive food.

The Kaniyans observe pollution for a period of 10 days. On the eleventh day, a Brahmin *pirohit* is

called in to perform *punyaha* ceremony to cleanse the house and the members, of pollution. On this day the cooking pots are renewed and unless this is done the pollution does not cease. The naming ceremony is also held on the same day. The *purohit* suggests the name for the new born and anyone of the elderly relations may confer the name on the child. The cradling ceremony is held on the evening of the thirteenth day when a few *muthaides* are feasted and given flowers and fruits. Soon after the period of confinement is over the mother partakes of *Namathirtha* given to her by a Brahmin *purohit* as a purificant. It is only after this that she may attend to cooking and other household duties.

The common names for males are Venkataramaniah, Rangiah, Chinniah, Cheluviah, Krishniah, Madiah and occasionally Basaviah. Lakshamma, Rangamma, Mallajamma, Vanajakshi, Krishnaveni, Jayamma etc., are the common names for females. It is customary to name the children after one's ancestors or household Gods. On an auspicious day after the naming ceremony, the maternal uncle of the new born cuts the hairs of the baby and dips them in milk. This is known *Huttukoodalu Thegesuvudu* i.e. removing the hairs with which the baby is born and has to be performed for both the males and females. The ear-boring is gone through sometime in the third month, and an elderly experienced woman of the community pierces the ears. The first outing of the baby is not marked by any ceremony. In the case of the first born, the maternal uncle considers it his right and obligation to ceremoniously take back the mother and her babe to her husband's home in the 5th or 7th month after the delivery. This is locally known as *Thottilu Thogondu hoguvudu* literally, carrying the cradle. The Kaniyans in general do not have any initiation ceremonies for their boys. But a few persons state that they do have the 'thread girdling' ceremony for their boys and that it would be celebrated either prior to one's marriage or on the occasion of the marriage itself. Those who are practising their traditional profession of astrology etc. generally take interest in one or two of their sons and start teaching them when they are still young.

When a girl attains puberty she is segregated for 7 or 9 days during which period she is considered to be impure. No isolation hut is built for her use but a secluded corner of the house is set apart. She is given varieties of sweet dishes on these seven or nine days. On the 10th day the house is whitewashed, a Brahmin *purohit* is invited to perform *punyaha* and she is given

Thirtha prasada after the *pujas* of household deities. Her parents give her a new saree and a blouse and in the evening *arathi* is waved before her. If she is already married, the marriage is consummated on the sixteenth day.

(b) Beliefs and practices connected with marriage

Among the Kaniyans, post-puberty marriages are common. The marriageable age for girls being 15 to 18 that for boys is usually 25 years. A decade back pre-puberty marriages were more common. Generally marriages are finalised by negotiations initiated by the parents of the boy. Consanguineous marriages are very common and the Kaniyans do not contract marital alliances with strange families even if they are of the same community. Thus the alliances between some two or three families tend to continue for generations. The *Kula* or clans of the contracting persons should always be different as *Swakula* or endoclan marriages are taboo. A man may marry his own elder sister's daughter or his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter. Monogamy is the rule among Kaniyans though a few exceptions of polygyny may be occasionally met with. In case the first wife of a person is sterile, he may marry her younger sister also. Generally in all cases of polygyny the consent of the first wife is obtained. Polyandry of any type is totally unknown to the Kaniyans. Levirate is taboo. Concubinage prevails to a little extent. Remarriage of widows and divorced persons is allowed but not viewed with much favour. The remarriage is known as *Kooduvali* and it is a very simple affair when garlands are exchanged in the presence of a few elders of the community. If a girl has the misfortune of losing her husband even before she attains puberty, their custom does not stand in the way of her marrying again in the usual fashion. Divorces are allowed but they are said to be very infrequent. Adultery, chronic diseases and incompatibility are the usual causes for divorce. A caste council of the *Katte Yajaman* is convened to hear the case and the decision of the council is accepted as final. Generally the erring party, in most of the cases the woman, has to pay a fine of Rs. 110. Divorce so obtained is known as *bidugade*. Separations or desertions without the sanction of the caste council are extremely rare.

According to the data gathered during the 1961 Census (Vol. XI—Mysore Part V-A, SCT II Part B)

of the 142 persons, 70 are never married; 49 are in married status; 20 are widowed while the remaining

3 are divorced or separated. The table below presents the details by sex and age groups:

Age-groups	Persons		Never Married		Married		Widowed		Divorced/separated	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0—14	49	7	49	4	..	1	..	1	..	1
15—44	38	19	17	..	20	15	1	3	..	1
45+	17	12	..	..	10	3	6	9	1	..
All ages	104	38	66	4	30	19	7	13	1	2

Marriages are generally contracted among one's own relations. The parents of the boy take the initiative and after ascertaining from a *purohit* or astrologer about the compatibility of the union of their son and any particular and suitable bride they set out on an auspicious day to ask for her hand. By then, the other party will have been alerted of the forthcoming visit and the proposal. In the bride's house a few elders of the community and of the village are also assembled and if the proposal is accepted *Voppanda Veelya Sastra* or *Eadu hakuvudu* is gone through. This finalises the contract of marriage alliance and the invitees are given betel leaves and nuts. Sometime later another ceremony known as *Manesastra* or *Veelya Sastra* is performed in the girl's house when her would be parents-in-law present her a new saree and a blouse. The amount of bride price, which is now Rs. 25 only, is also paid by the parents of the boy to the parents of the girl on this occasion. The marriages are generally performed during the months of *Magha*, *Phalguna*, *Chaitra*, *Vaishaka* and *Jyesta* i.e. February to June. The Kaniyans requisition the services of a Brahmin *purohit* to solemnise their marriages. The village barbar also renders his services; but the village washerman and other functionaries have no obligations. They engage the services of country musicians, who generally belong to the Holey community and pay Rs. 25 to Rs. 40 in cash. The marriage celebrations last for three days. On the first day the marriage pandal or *chappara* is erected in front of the bridegroom's house. There will be twelve pillars, the central post viz milk post being that of a cactus plant. The milk post planting ceremony is known as *Kamba muhurtha*. In the evening the bride and her relations arrive at the bridegroom's village. They are ceremonially received and suitably lodged for the night. On the next morning *Devaru Tharuvudu* i.e. bringing of the God is the first important function. Five married women—*muthaides*—go in a procession to the nearest water source (a river or a well) and

fetch water in copper pitchers. These pots and other household deities are worshipped. The bridegroom, then undertakes a fake pilgrimage to Kasi (Benares). Even before he reaches a large peepal tree or temple close-by, he is accosted by his parents-in-law who wash his feet and persuade him back to the marriage pandal. This entire ceremony is known as *Kashiyatra*. Later, the *purohit* ties *Kunkana* or wristles to the couple. Then certain *homas* or oblations of ghee to fire, are performed as part of the marriage rites. *Dhare* consists in pouring of milk by the elders on the *mangala sutra* or the lucky necklace held together in the cupped hands of the couple. *Dhare muhurtha* is usually held during day time between 12 noon and 3 P. M. the auspicious moment being suggested by the *purohit*. The *Mangala Sutra* is then tied by the bridegroom. In the evening the couple are seated on a plank and the relatives and friends of the couple give presents either in cash or in kind to them. This part of the ceremony is known as *Muyyi Maduvudu*. Later, they visit a temple and go round the village in a procession. This is known as *Sabhogastu* and a few who can afford engage a taxi for taking out the procession. The *Kunkana* is removed late in the evening and later immersed either in a river or a well. The marriage pandal is also formally dismantled on the same night. *Oakali* and *Nagoali sastra* are performed on the following day. Soon after a dinner, the bride and her kinfolk get back to their respective places. Consummation of the marriage takes place after the lapse of about 2 months or even more.

During the marriage the bride receives a *Dhare Seere* and a *Dodda Seere* i.e. two sarees in addition to blouses and also the *thali*, *dabu* (silver waist belt) and the silver toe-rings from her parents-in-law. On the other hand, the bridegroom is not entitled to get any gifts from his in-laws. The parents of the couple mutually exchange some gifts. Their marriage customs have much in common with those prevailing among

the Brahmins of the region whom they engage as priests and also try to imitate them in all respects.

(c) *Beliefs and practices connected with death*

The Kaniyans generally attribute death to natural causes. But when there are sudden and premature deaths particularly in a violent manner supernatural factors are brought in to explain such an unforeseen event. They also believe in black magic and wrath of spirits. When it is evident that death is imminent, the ailing person is brought out to the outer verandah. At the last moment water purified by the leaves of *Tulsi* (sweet basil) plant known as *Tulsi thirtha*, is slowly poured into the mouth of the dying person by his close relations. When all is over messages are sent to relations in the surrounding villages. The corpse is disposed of only during day time i.e. between sunrise and sunset. If a person dies in the night, the corpse is disposed of on the following day. Burial is the popular mode of disposal of a corpse. Sporadic instances of cremation are also reported. Burial is said to be more popular because it is very economical.

Soon after the death, the external orifices are closed and the legs are properly folded. The corpse is washed by any close male kin of the deceased. It is shrouded in white long cloth. If the deceased is survived by his wife, she puts a *veelya* (betel leaves and arecanut) into the hands of the corpse and in turn takes a *veelya* from the hands of the corpse. Incense is burnt before the corpse and a coconut is broken. Meanwhile a bamboo bier is prepared for transporting the corpse to the common burial ground. Generally four persons standing in close blood relationship with the deceased, carry the bier to the graveyard and soon after crossing the village, the corpse is lowered and the bearers exchange places. At this spot a few grains of puffed rice and betel leaves are strewn. Labourers are engaged to dig the grave. Otherwise, people of the community attend to this item of work. The interior is smeared with cowdung wash and besmeared with *Vaishnavite* emblems. At the bottom a large plantain leaf is spread and the body is lowered on this leaf. The head of the corpse will be lowered towards the South—the direction of *Yama's* abode, while the legs are towards the North which represents that of *Kubera*. The face will be turned towards the East. If the deceased is a learned man and commands great respect from his people, his corpse is buried in a sitting posture. A lighted oil lamp is placed in a niche in the grave and some other *puja* articles are also buried along with the corpse in such cases. The womenfolk may also attend the funeral ceremonies. If the

deceased is survived by his wife, it is obligatory on her part to throw in atleast the first three handfuls of earth. The eldest son of the deceased may also do likewise. Later, all the others assist them in filling the grave. At the four corners cuttings of *Thumbe* are planted. In the central portion of the grave, a piece of white cloth (a remnant of the shroud cloth) is spread and on it are placed a few grains of rice and a little quantity of gur in addition to a few coins. The funeral party go round the grave and return to the house where the death occurred. On their way, generally they bathe in a stream or a well. On returning they look at the oil lamp kept burning on a lump of cowdung at the spot of death and offer condolences and suitable advice to the bereaved. In the evening a little quantity of rice is cooked in the house and placed, along with a cup of water, as food for the departed. On the following morning the rice is consumed by the chief mourner and also other members of the household. The Kaniyans observe pollution caused by death for 10 full days and purify the premises and also their persons on the 11th day. During this period neither the males nor the females mark their foreheads with *Namam* or *Kumkum*. They do not perform any *pujas*, visit temples, enter the houses of others but they attend to their normal duties and observe no taboos regarding speech or food. Other people of the community do not accept food or water at the hands of persons considered to be in pollution. On the tenth night the eldest son of the deceased abstains from food and on the following morning he will have his head and face shaven by a barber. A Brahmin *purohit* is invited to perform *punyaha* and administer *Thirtha prasada* to all the members of the household. By noon the eldest son is dressed in new garments and goes with a few close relations to the graveyard where a *Tulsi* is planted. On this plant, milk and ghee are poured in little quantities by all these persons. A large plantain leaf is spread in front of the *Tulsi* plant. Rice cooked on the spot in a new earthen pot and a few other sweet dishes prepared for the occasion at home are served on this leaf by the eldest son. Later, he partakes of a little quantity of this food which is allowed to be eaten away by crows and birds. On this day, if the deceased is survived by his wife, all her auspicious ornaments are removed from her person and she is given a new saree locally termed as *Munde saree* or 'widow saree' by her brothers. In the evening a *Kalasha* is placed besides the idols or photos of the household deities and a *pundit* of the Kaniyan community offers worship to both. All the members of the household throw flowers and sprinkle water on the *kalasha*. They believe that by doing so, the soul of the departed will

reach *Vaikunta* the abode of Lord Vishnu. The same night a few people of the community are feasted. Food is also served in a plantain leaf for the departed. This food is kept overnight and consumed by the eldest son of the deceased and other members of the family. Death of a person on a Sunday or a Thursday is considered inauspicious. So also is the death during the influence *Dhanista Panchaka* and *Tripadi* lunar asterisms. The Kaniyans perform the death anniversaries of their deceased parents. On each occasion, a *Kalasha* placed beside the photo or the idol of a deity is worshipped and food is served for the departed souls. On the following morning the food so kept overnight is consumed by all the members of the family.

IX. RELIGION

All the Kaniyans are Hindus. They belong to the *Vaishnavite* sect and ardently follow the preachings of Ramanujacharya. Vishnu is their supreme deity and the men smear their foreheads and certain other parts of the body with *namam* the emblem of *Vaishnavas*. Many of them have the emblems of Vishnu branded on their shoulders. Their religious preceptors are said to be *Srivaishnavas*. *Thirumalasi Alvar* of *Govindarayapattanam* near *Tirupathi* is one such preceptor. Their family deities are *Venkataramana* of *Tirupathi*. *Venkataramana* of *Budabal*, *Ranganathaswamy* of *Biligirirangana Betta* in *Yelandur taluk*, *Cheluvarayawamy* of *Melkote* etc. Some of the Kaniyan households worship Lord *Eswara* as their family deity but even then, they profess to be *Vaishnavites*. *Mallikarjuna* of *Mudukutore* and *Nanjundeswara* of *Nanjangud* are the two important Gods who exert influence on some of the Kaniyans. The Goddesses worshipped by the Kaniyans are generally *Lakshmi*, *Raja Rajeswari*, *Chowdeswari* and *Savukamma*. In addition to these Gods and Goddesses, the Kaniyans offer worship at the shrines of village deities such as *Hanuman* and *Maramma*. On certain occasions they worship the ant-hills and when they believe that some *Graha* (planet) has been tormenting them, they circumambulate the pepal tree for specified number of days. In some households, the idols of *Ganapathi*, *Venkataramana* or any other Gods are kept for worship but in most of the households there would be one or two photo pictures of Gods. Saturday is the day prescribed by custom to offer worship at home. *Tulsi* (Sweet basil) is also worshipped by the Kaniyans. In the households where a person is practising astrology and exorcism there would be idols on copper-plates representing *Kali*, *Maheshwari* and such other Goddesses. In these households *puja* is performed daily. The

pilgrimage centres of the Kaniyans are identical with those of the local Brahmins. The Kaniyans do not have any deity exclusive to their own community. They revere and worship the Gods and Goddesses popularly worshipped by other Hindus of the region. At *Surapura* hamlet of *Kunigalli* village, the Kaniyans have a *Rama Mandiram* (built in 1962-63). On every Saturday evening the male members of the community meet together and sing devotional songs. On the occasion of *Sri Ramanavami* in *Chaitra* (April) they celebrate a *Utsava* of the Idol with the co-operation of the other communities of the village. Where the Kaniyans have no temples of their own they join the other communities in offering worship at the local shrines. In general it may be said that the Kaniyans are religious minded and are god-fearing. They believe in the concepts of hell and heaven and consider that the souls of the evil-doers would be condemned to hell. They at times, attribute many of their day-to-day misfortunes to the sins committed during the past lives and have faith in rebirths. They believe in the existence of evil spirits and ghosts, as well as, in witchcraft. The pundits of this community try to specialise in the art of expelling the ghosts and spirits that may take possession of the human beings and also in the art of eradicating the evil influence cast by witchcraft.

Ugadi (lunar new year), *Gowri*, *Mahanavami* and *Deepavali* are the important festivals, observed by the Kaniyans. On the occasion of *Ugadi*, they offer worship at the river and to a *Kalasha* in the house. The bullocks are also washed and worshipped on the occasion. All the members consume a mixture of jaggery, neem leaves and soaked Bengalgram after the *puja*. *Gowri* festival in *Bhadrapada* (August-September) is performed by renewing the cooking pots in the house and offering food to the departed ancestors. A *Kalasha* placed by the side of a photo is worshipped. *Kalasha* consists of a narrow mouthed copper vessel. It is filled with water and the exterior is smeared with *Vaishnavite* emblems. The mouth of the vessel is covered by a couple of betel leaves and a coconut (sometimes a plantain or a brinjal are used instead of cocoanuts). *Deepavali* is celebrated by merely feasting. Sweet dishes and non-vegetarian items of food are prepared for the occasion. A *kalasha* is worshipped at home on the *Mahanavami* day and after the *puja*, *Yede* (food served on a plantain leaf) is placed for the God and the spirits. Rice, *payasa* and *sikkimunde* are the special dishes for the day. *Shashti* in the month of December is an occasion for offering worship to the cobra at the ant-hills.

The Kaniyans visit the fairs held at Biligirirangana-betta during *Chaitra* (March-April), Nanjangud (during March), Mudukotore (during January-February) and Melkote. These fairs are largely attended by several other Hindu Castes also.

X. LEISURE AND RECREATION

The Kaniyans are generally engaged all through the year earning a living. They are either cultivators, industrial workers or labourers. The female members attend to the domestic duties besides caring for the children and occasionally lending a hand in the household economic pursuits. Thus they have very little leisure to think of any form of recreation. If there were to be some idle moments during the day, these are generally spent in gossip. The children mingle sometimes with other children of the village and play some country games with balls, tops, marbles etc. Men, especially the adolescents, take some lively interest in singing devotional songs on Saturdays. Whenever the other men of the village such as the Vokkaligas or the Kurubas decide to enact a drama or *bailata* (open air plays) a few enthusiasts of the Kaniyan caste also enlist themselves as actors. The actors themselves bear the cost of enacting the play and this factor sometimes adversely affects the talented persons. At Surapura, during the year 1966 *Danashura Karm* drama was enacted and Kaniyan actors also participated in it. The Kaniyans visit cinema shows occasionally and are also quite enthusiastic to witness the *bailatas* and dramas performed in the surrounding villages.

XI. INTER AND INTRA-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

The Kaniyans are not classified into any recognised segments within the community. Though there are some instances of economic inequalities among them, these have not led to any class distinctions. But a sense of superiority which is being assumed by a few educated men and women may now be discerned. Nonetheless all the Kaniyans have a feeling of caste solidarity. The various clans or *kulas* are reckoned to be of equal status. The old men as well as the wise are respected and their advice is sought on various occasions. The astrologers and sooth sayers are also respected. In social status women are inferior to men. But in all economic pursuits except the traditional one, women work shoulder-to-shoulder with men. However, they do not participate in social gatherings or meetings.

The Kaniyans are ranked above the erstwhile untouchable castes, such as the Holeyas, Madiga etc., in the social hierarchy. Now the Kaniyans have free access to village wells. They do not accept food and water from anyone but a Brahmin. In the past it was said the rigidity was carried to the extreme and they were accepting food and water only at the hands of Srivaishnava Brahmins who had branded on themselves the *Shanka, Chakra, Gada, Padma* symbols of Lord Vishnu. Even the acceptance of *chunam* (lime) was prohibited. The people of all other communities reciprocated this commensal customs and none used to accept any food or water from Kaniyans (exception being the herbal medicines). Now it is said the Holeyas and Madigas accept food and water from Kaniyans. The Kaniyans do not have any *Jajmani* relationship with the functional castes of the village. Nevertheless, the village barber serves them and receives cash in lieu of his services. The Kaniyans seldom call for the services of a washerman. But they seek the services of a Brahmin *purohit* during the ceremonies associated with birth, death and marriage. In the villages the Kaniyans form part of the village community and try to participate in and identify themselves with all the social and cultural activities.

XII. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, SOCIAL WELFARE AND REFORM

The Kaniyans have the institution of *Yajaman*. The traditional caste council is functioning, though with withered influence now. It is mostly concerned with matters relating to their social life i.e. *Matha Sambanda Nyayagalu*. A village (or at times 2 or 3 small villages) has a village headman or *Gramada Yajamana* who is selected by election and he functions as a local leader. He may try to settle disputes of a minor nature amicably. *Kattemane* has jurisdiction over several (five or six) villages. For example, Mudugunda happens to be the *Kattemane* of Kollegal, Bendahalli, Mamballi, Mudugunda and Kunagalli villages. Likewise Kamagere and Gundaigala of Kollegal Taluk are also *Kattemanes*. The Office of the *Kattemane Yajamana* tends to be hereditary though it is also said to be filled up by election at times. Generally, the eldest son of the *Yajaman* is the heir apparent. Several *Kattemanes* constitute a *Gadi*. The *Yelandur Gadi* (also called *Yelandur patta*) is the central authority over the Kaniyans of Kollegal, Yelandur, Chamarajanagar, T. Narasipur and other neighbouring Taluks. The office of the *Yajaman* though filled up by election, tends to be hereditary. The family of the present headman is holding office

for the past three generations. Whenever a new *Yajaman* assumes charge, a document known as *Kattu* is made out by the members of the community. He is not vested with any emblems or insignias. His function is mainly to preside over caste councils and adjudicate over disputes of a social nature referred to the council. He is highly respected and honoured by the ordinary people of the community. Every year the fair at the Biligirirangana hills is the occasion for the Kaniyans from the surrounding talukas to meet and discuss their problems.

In Kollegal Taluk, there have been no movements or activities sponsored for either their economic uplift or for social welfare. Most of them, and also some of the officials, are not aware of the fact that the community is declared as a scheduled tribe in the taluk of Kollegal. No benefits, economic or otherwise, have so far been conferred on them by the Government under the Tribal Welfare Schemes.

The Kaniyans have a central organisation known as *Kaniyara Kendra Sabha* which has its office at Yelandur. Its President is the present *Gadi Yajaman* himself. In addition there is a Vice-President and also there is a Secretary. This organisation may be said to be a modern counterpart of the traditional Panchayat and the institution of *Yajaman*. It is said that the organisation was started some 20 years back and this Sabha has influence over the Kaniyans residing not only in and around Yelandur but also in the Cities of Mysore and Bangalore. At Bangalore, the Kaniyars have a voluntary organisation called *Kaniyara Seva Samaja*. It was founded in 1941-42 by a few progressive men of the community with the purpose of providing educational facilities to the youth of the community and also to strive for a better place in the Society. Their intensive efforts soon achieved the objective of transferring the name of the community from the category of "Depressed Classes" to the category of "Backward Classes". A hostel was started in the City and many of the students were enabled to prosecute higher studies. Further, the leaders of the community have been striving hard ever since the thirties to procure Government scholarships to their students. At present the hostel accommodates 22 boys. The organisation is running a free reading room and a library. It is interested in such activities as scouting and has organised a *Gayana Mandira* and a *Kala-vrinda* which are open to all. The present membership is said to be around 300 and each member subscribes Rs. 6 per annum. Government Grants such as those from the Social Welfare Department, Social

Welfare Board, Sangeeth Natak Academy etc., and donations in addition to periodical subscriptions constitute the main sources of finance for this organisation. It has a president, a Vice-President, a Secretary and 12 Managing Committee Members. The accounts are properly audited every year. They have a temple of Venkataramana in the Kaniyara Colony, Bangalore and it was built under the auspices of *Kaniyara Sangha* which was founded in 1926 and now assimilated with the *Seva Samaja*. A nursery and primary school are also being run by this organisation. There are branches of this organisation at Mysore, Yelandur, Chamarajanagar, Kodipura (Channapatna Taluk) and Hirisave (Channarayapatna Taluk). The Kaniyans of Kollegal have close association with those of Yelandur Taluk and are largely influenced by the activities of *Kaniyara Seva Samaja*. At present there are no widespread movements for social reform. But there is an awakening in the community and its members are striving hard to gain social prestige as well as improve their economic and educational standards. The leaders of the community are not favourably disposed towards the inclusion of their community in the 'Lists of Scheduled Tribes.'

CONCLUSION

Though the Kaniyans are spread over a large area in the Southern Districts of Mysore State they are scheduled only in a small area viz. Kollegal Taluk of Mysore district. This disparity is mainly due to the transfer of the Taluk from the erstwhile Coimbatore district of Madras State to Mysore in 1956. The movement in Mysore State started around 1930 and intensified by about 1942 achieved the objective of the community being shifted from the category of 'Depressed Classes' to 'Backward Classes' and the Government Notification then issued, referred to former Mysore State only. This movement probably did not spread to other States and therefore in Kollegal it continued to be treated as depressed community. Thus it came to be included in the List of Scheduled Tribes.

The Kaniyans of Kollegal also consider themselves to be economically backward but they dislike to be called a Scheduled Tribe. Among them there has been considerable occupational mobility. Though a number of the Kaniyans, particularly those beyond 40 years of age, are following the profession of astrology, exorcism and herbal medicines the response from the younger generation is said to be poor. Many young men have acquired training in homoeopathy and are

thus qualified doctors, while a few have studied allopathic medicines in colleges. Owing to the efforts of their organisation at Bangalore and Mysore the standard of education is said to have greatly improved during the past two decades. They are striving hard to improve their economic conditions and many are

entering Government or other institutions for salaried jobs. In rural areas they form part of the village communities having integrated in the main stream of society, and are showing a keen interest in educating their children and also in improving their economic condition.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

FRAME WORK FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES

I. Name, Identity, Origin and History.

1. Name, synonym sub-caste/sub-tribe as in President's Order, as in other published sources such as Census-reports, monographs etc. Grouping with other castes & tribes during Censuses. Affinity with other castes and tribes according to recognised authorities.
2. Etymological significance of the name, name by which others call the community, by the community itself.
3. Identification of the community by occupation or any other way of life.
4. Myths and legends connected with the origin and history of the community and its segments. Historical references and popular beliefs about history and migration of the community.

II. Distribution and Population Trend

1. Area where found, population and concentration in the State and outside. Physical aspects of the areas of concentration.
2. Numerical strength in 1961 and population variation from 1901 to 1961. Sex, age-group, rural cum urban distribution in 1961.

III. Physical Characteristics

1. Racial stock, appearance and affinity with other known communities.

IV. Family, Clan, Kinship and other Analogous Divisions

1. Family: size (observed & published), types, residence after marriage, descent, lineage and its economic and religious function; variations.
2. Clan/gotra and sub clans: names, Etymological meaning, clustering of clans, belief and mythology about origin, status among clans, clan and regulation of marriage (preference and prohibition) occupation and clan, clan and rituals, clan and food (restrictions, prescriptions etc.)
3. Others: Phratry, dual organisation like moieties etc. as in 2.

V. Dwelling, Dress, Food, Ornament and Other Material Objects Distinctive of the Community.

1. Settlement: Village site, location, settlement pattern (agglomerated, nucleated, dispersed, sprinkled, isolated etc. and amorphous, star shaped, horse-shoe shaped, linear, rectangular, circular or ring shaped etc.) and variations, regional pattern *vis-a-vis* pattern of the community.
2. Neighbourhood pattern on the basis of relation, community (Caste Hindus, untouchables) clan, caste and tribe etc. with segregations if any and the basis thereof.
3. Dwelling unit, compound, entrance, source of water, the use of different parts of the house (latrine, cattle shed, isolation huts etc.) shape (square, round, irregular etc.), storeys, nature of floor, plinth, wall, roofing, thatching ventilation and doors, materials used, decorations and embellishments, temporary structures.
4. Dress including head-gear and foot-wear; used ordinarily, on ceremonial occasions and special occasions sex-wise and according to majority or minority. Dress of priests and office bearers—variations.
5. Ornaments: use, material used, from where obtained, sex-wise and according to age-variations.
6. Personal decoration: tattooing, chipping of teeth etc. hair cutting etc. how done, sex and age, purpose, attitude towards these-variation.
7. Food & drink; materials (staple and others), prescriptions and prohibitions connected with food and drink; fuel, implement and mode of preparation; practices connected with serving and taking of food; preservation of food; rituals if any;
8. Equipments connected with economic pursuits, religion and ritual.
9. Other household equipments.
10. Equipments connected with recording of time, space and weight and their methods of use.

VI. *Environmental Sanitation, Hygienic Habits, Disease and Treatment.*

1. Environmental sanitation; settlement, disposal of night soil, garbage etc.
2. Hygienic habit: cleanliness of body, teeth, dress, cleanliness of domicile, utensils etc.
3. Diseases: incidence, local names of diseases, interpretation of the causes, cure of diseases (persons and methods involved) symptoms etc.
4. Modern systems of medicine and attitude of the community towards it.

VII. *Language and Literature*

1. Ancestral language, classification according to Grierson, persistence of ancestral language.
2. Mother tongue, classification according to Grierson, bilingualism and multi-lingualism. Regional language.
3. Information collected during 1961 on language and literacy.

VIII. *Economic Life*

1. Economic resources: land, community land, individual ownership and types of land possessed and land utilization.
2. Forest wealth, flora, fauna, nature and extent of right in the forest, forest utilization.
3. Fishery, livestock and others.
4. Working force (Sex-wise) urban and rural variation and comparison of the same with the region.
5. Non-workers;
6. Industrial classification (details as collected in the field and compared with that of the 1961 figures). Traditional occupation and changes in the pattern. Main and subsidiary occupations.
7. Forced labour, bonded labour, patron-client relationship (Jajmani), mode of payment.
8. Seasonal migration connected with occupation: recruitment, formation of working groups.
9. Nomadic movement and occupation.
10. Shifting cultivation: method, implements and equipments, produce, participation, cycle of rotation, measure to regulate shifting cultivation and its impact.
11. Terrace cultivation: as above.
12. Income and expenditure. Sources of income and extent; expenditure on food, clothing, house, education social functions, others.
13. Other aspects of economic life.

IX. *Life Cycle.*

A. *Birth :*

1. Beliefs and practices connected with conception, barrenness, still birth, miscarriage, abortion, child death, regulation of sex etc.
2. Pre-natal practices: (residence, diet, work, taboos etc.) Delivery place, assistance, equipments used in delivery, position during delivery, severance of umbilical cord (who does and how done), disposal of placenta.
3. Post natal practices: confinement and segregation, ceremonial pollution, diet for mother and child, rituals.
4. Protection and care of child and training.
5. Attitude towards birth of child, preference about sex, preference about number, segregation of sex etc.

B. *Initiation :*

1. Does initiation ceremony exist-description
2. Pre-marital sex relations, within the community, outside the community, sanctions and taboos.

C. *Marriage*

1. Age at marriage for both sexes. Prohibited degrees of relationship, preferences, widow remarriage (preferences & taboos).
2. Civil status and social status.
3. Types of marriage: monogamy, polygamy (polyandry and polygyny).
4. Selection of spouse: qualities valued (for bride and groom) who selects, procedure.
5. Modes of acquiring a mate: by negotiation, by force, intrusion, elopement etc.
6. Terms of settlement: payment of bride price, dowry, service, exchange, adoption etc.
7. Ceremonies connected with marriage (details including who presides over the marriage and services of functional castes.)
8. Statistical data as per 1961 Census.
9. Divorce: reasons and procedure.

D. *Death*

1. Concept about death, measures to ensure future well being of the soul, measures to avert harm by the spirit.
2. Preparations for disposal of dead, informing friends and relatives, treatment of the dead body, digging of pit etc. for disposal.
3. How carried, who carry, who accompany, place of disposal, methods of disposal, norms and taboos.
4. Ceremonies connected with disposal.
5. Methods of disposal; burial, cremation, by exposure, float or water etc.
6. Tombs, megaliths, etc.
7. Pollution: duration, restrictions in work, food, dress, shaving hair cropping, sex life etc. how pollution removed.
8. Mourning, duration, who does? Death rites.

X. *Religion.*

1. Deities, supreme deity, benevolent deities, malevolent spirits, presiding deity of village and other aspects of life including occupation, clan, tribes etc.
2. Place of the deities in the regional pattern and Brahmanical traditions.
3. Rituals and concepts connected with the pantheon.
4. Spots associated with the deities, pilgrim centres and methods of worship.
5. Functionaries.
6. Calendar of festivals and their observance.
7. Concept of soul, hell, heaven, rebirth, trans-migration of soul etc.
8. Sects and denominations: name, distribution, beliefs and practices etc.
9. Statistical information.

XI. *Leisure, Recreation and Child Play.*

1. Use of leisure time (male, female, children and adult), seasonal variation in leisure time.
2. Recreation: their mode and extent, for males, females and children.
3. Leisure and recreation with reference to work.

XII. *Relation among Different Segments of the community.*

Recognised Segments—name, basis (territorial, ceremonial, social prestige, religion, sect, education, age etc.), inter-relationship among various segments, status of the segment; status of women.

XIII. Inter-community Relationship.

1. Ceremonial relationship, service by Brahmins, traditional service by castes like barbers, washermen etc.
2. Pollution by touch or proximity to High Caste Hindus, use of well, admission to temple.
3. Secular relationship: model for other communities; dominance due to economic resources, political status social status etc.
4. Bridge role, buffer role, alliance and antagonism of the community.

XIV. Structure of Social Control, Prestige and Leadership.

1. Social control: levels of social control (community level, regional level, hereditary, special functionaries etc.). Social control by other agencies.
2. How the offices are filled up.
3. Control exercised by traditionally recognised leaders, functionaries of statutory bodies of the region, powerful individuals belonging to the community etc. at the regional level and local level.
4. Relationship between spheres of social control and agencies of social control.
5. Leadership: for social change, for technological change, for political action and for other organised activities at the community level, regional level and local level.
6. Social prestige: method of gaining social prestige (by performing ritual, feast of merit, associating with historical association etc.) symbols of social prestige.

XV. Social Reform and Welfare.

1. Social reform movements whether vigorous or feeble in the community; reasons for the movement (for raising social status, establishing traditional norms, for westernisation etc.) History of the movements.
2. Social welfare: agency (religious organisation, community as a whole etc.), role of the Socialwelfare movements and effects.

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