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Social Relationship among Beda Tribes of Karnataka

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Introduction

Indian society suffers from a number of social evils. In the past, these social evils stood in the way of its progress. In those days great men like Guru Nanak and Bhakt Kabir exhorted the people to remove all social evils particularly casteism, communalism and superstitious beliefs and practices.

Edger Thurston (1909:98) observes that "in the matter of personal names and ceremonial observances, they have been much influenced by other castes". Therefore, among Bedas social practices of the various dominant castes were transmitted from generation to generation with some modifications which influenced their life styles like food habits, dress, customs and traditions etc. Hence the task of identifying a common feature will be a difficult thing.

According to Vijay Kachroo, (1990:90) "the new economic system also brought about a new grouping of population in the economic sphere. Indian have been differentiated by such categories as capitalists, workers, peasants, proprietors, merchants, land labourers, doctors, lawyers and technicians. Each of these categories is composed of individuals belonging to various castes and communities but having identical, material and political interests. This horizontal division on new class lines has increasingly weakened the old vertical caste line". Thus there came into existence such organisation as Millowners Associations, All India trade Union Congress, All India Kissan Sabha and Landlords Union. Similar to the above concept there arose in Dharwad, Gadag, Bagalkot, Haveri, Raichur, Koppal, Gulbarga, Belgaum and Karwar districts Valmiki Sangha and Valmiki Yuva Sabha among Bedas at village, taluk and district levels. These groups (sanghas) struggle to establish their own interests. In the process of these struggles they are developing a new outlook and a new solidarity. Beda is a polluting caste. They have their own tribal institutions which enforce their social norms, irrespective of family setup, whether it is patrilineal or matrilineal. Normally, the eldest male member enjoys a dominant place in the family. For a cluster of houses there is a head called "Kattimane". This leadership is hereditary through male line. Normally the Kattimane exercises his powers during the settlement of marriages and disputes, while organising the periodical worship, at the time of death, birth and other ceremonies. The power of Kattimane is not being weakened on account of the very slow spread of secular forces like modernisation, panchayat, cinema, education etc.

According to Captain Taylor (Sri Krishna Rao and Kapatral 1977: 266), "in such years that I had been at Shorapur there were, I think, only two murders among them (Bedas). They never dreamt of resisting authority in such cases, but gave up the offenders to justice at once. In civil cases I never interfered with their usages and they never complained of injustice. Bedas or Bedars and their elders had the knowledge of their laws and customs and always attended the panchayats. I was very thankful that during my stay no blood had been shed nor a single shot fired in structure of the anger among them". Therefore, today, Bedas are known to be sincere, sentimental and sensitive. They are honest and most hospitable people in their social life. We may find various differences among Bedas with regard to family inheritance, marriage, religion and rituals. In general we notice different social structures and social relationships in their socio-economic life.

Objective of the study

1. To trace the family pattern among Beda community.
2. To identifying the changes among Beda community.
3. To pinpoint loosing its joint family structure.

Methodology

Universe of data selection

The investigator has visited and collected the data in Gadag districts of Karnataka. In our study region approximately 60% of the Bedas settlement were scattered different part of the district. In our study region along with the Beda people main people also living peacefully. Bedas are living outside the village. For study purpose Researcher selected 500 respondents in the field.

Tools and Technique

The study is based on both primary and secondary data collected with the help of interview schedule. The Researcher participated in interview head of the households. The interview schedule contain both pre coded and open ended questions. On an average interview had conducted during evening time, because respondents are returning from work in the evening. Each interview took about 15 to 20 minutes. Researcher also collected data from books, articles etc.

The Family

Family is the basic institution of any society. It remains as the basic group, though its forms and functions differ in different cultures. The social structure of the tribe is mainly based on family. In other words family is an important element in any tribal social structure. Vidyarthi and Rai hold the view that clan and family are some popular social units among the tribes of South India (1977:163-64).

Vidyarthi and Rai have also observed that monogamous family with a nuclear structure is the main feature of Indian Tribes. But the major tribes hope, as their economy demands or permits, to have a good number of joint as well as extended families. They have further observed that in South India, the tribes of both patriarchal and matriarchal family forms are in great number (1971: 188).

Bedas traditional pattern of life has undergone rapid changes. Moreover these changes have slowly affected their life in all dimensions. The present situation is assessed only through empirical work.

If we look at the history of Bedas, we find that joint family was patriarchal in nature. The father wielded undisputed authority over his children and other members of the family. This form of family is said to prevail among the primitive groups of people who roamed far and wide coming home irregularly and staying away for periods of time. In the absence of the father the eldest female/male of the family looks after the activities of the family.

The structure of the sample families are of three types. They are 1) Nuclear 2) Joint 3) Stem-extended family. The most common family consists of the head, his wife, married sons and daughters. The joint family type comprises of the head living with parents, his wife, children and unmarried brothers and sisters and sick/men/women/old people. Sometimes one or two relatives are also found staying along with family members in Beda community. The following table explains the type of families among Beda community.

Table 3.1: Type of Family

Sl No	Type of Family	Number	Percentage
1	Nuclear	444	88.8
2	Joint	36	7.2

Sl No	Type of Family	Number	Percentage
3	Stem-extended family	20	4
		500	100

The above Table 3.1 data shows that 88.8% of the interviewed families were nuclear; 7.2% of the families were joint and 4% of the families were extended families. The most prevalent type of family in the village consists of the head, his wife and unmarried sons and daughters. Through discussion it is known that during 16th and 17th centuries Bedas joint family was disturbed.majority of them were in the army of Vijayanagar, Chitradurga and Shorapur Kingdoms. Some of them lost their husbands, children and other family members. Even though Beda joint family is in transition, there are a few houses within which several nuclear families live. In such houses the nuclear families cultivate the land separately and cook and dine separately. But the ancestral land is not legally divided. However the land is divided and cultivated separately by the brothers with an oral agreement. Many such families are found only in villages. Due to poverty and illiteracy they cannot move outside and construct their own houses. Therefore their ancestral houses are partitioned and brothers form their own nuclear families and remain separately after they get married. If the houses are too small and cannot be partitioned then only sons may go a little away as a last resort to have a separate house. Consequently such newly formed nuclear families are also seen around the ancestral house.

They have the sole right over the family property and they are the owners and responsible persons. They preside over the religious rites of the family. They enjoy full authority over the family members. In a Beda family it is usual for the head to bring domestic articles from the nearby weekly market (Sante in Kannada). When father is alive, son is not allowed to discharge the duties of his father. Sometimes father may resign some of his works and transfer it to other members of the family an account of pre-occupations. The head of the family has also to play an important role in cultivation and agricultural operations. He has the great responsibility of supervising cultivation and food collection for the whole year. To begin cultivation there is be a religious function in the land and all the members of the family eat food in the field.

Traditionally the husband or the male head of the family is the earning member to maintain his wife and children are also earning members. At various ceremonies such as marriage, death, worship etc., he enjoys a higher status. If he fails to maintain the family on account of unemployment or inefficiency it is the woman who takes the whole responsibility of the family for its protection and welfare. Similarly whenever he is away at work the family is managed by the woman. It is her duty to look after the children and prepare food at home. She also has the responsibility of entertaining the guests in the absence of her husband.

In a nuclear family, husband and wife have freedom to take decisions. The elder siblings look after the younger ones. Normally the mother spends much of her leisure time along with the children and the father universally spends his time along with his friends roaming around the settlement, visiting the neighbouring, settlement for domestic work, visiting tea shops, cinema theater, market, temples etc. the father uses his authority on his younger brothers and grown up children to adopt socialization. If they fail they have to face minor punishments. Similarly mother and grandmother, besides bringing up the children and grand children, also socialize them in the society. They prepare and serve food to the family. But in some families the situation is different. Even father/brother (younger/elder) also share some of the family responsibilities like looking after cattle, buffaloes, sheep preparing non-vegetarian food, bringing water, household articles etc.

Today, due to unpredictable rainy season, Beda families temporarily break and move to work in urban areas.

The roles of family among Beda community have undergone significant changes in modern societies. But even today the family occupies a unique place.

In general, there has been continued interest in the study of family by scholars in sociology and anthropology. At first, several authors (Howard: 1904; Wesrer Market: 1922; Goodsell: 1934) were mainly concerned with the historical aspects of family. On the other hand some of the leading anthropologists (Malinowski: 1929; Lowie: 1934; Linton: 1949) were interested in highlighting the main features of primitive family. In a restricted sociological sense, systematic works on family appeared in the post-second world war period (Burgess and Locke: 1945; Zimmerman: 1947; Goode: 1963; Micheal: 1971).

The family is the primary group and is closely related to kinship, marriage and property. It has been defined as "a group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing together (Bureau of the U.S Census, Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics Series p.20 No.17 May19, 1948, p-5). This definition keeps in view only the relationship and living together. As being the members of a family and interacting with each other, they perform certain roles.

However (Burgess and Locke: 1945), the highlights of role aspects of family clearly reflect on Beda families.

The family is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other in their respective roles of husband wife, mother and father, brother and sister.

The unique feature among Beda community is the joint family system today it is in the process of transition. May new nuclear and extended families are emerging. This feature is observed in almost all regions of the above mentioned districts. The important factors responsible for the past disappearance of the joint family system are socio-economic and domestic. Deforestation, dynasty rule and migration of individual and family members are the main reasons for the breaking up of the joint families. But some of them due to geographical regions have migrated to urban areas. It is observed that some of the respondents were in favour of joint family system for the following reasons.

1. Joint family is based on the concept of economic solidarity. Economic stability for an individual, family or a community is essential for its continuity. The ups and downs through which our society has passed through could swept it away, as were our ancient and contemporary societies. But the joint has withstood the challenge. The deep rooted mutual feelings that it generates provided moral support to the small groups to stand against the crisis.
2. Joint family ensures economic satisfaction and social security of the growing children in the society. The growing ones are owned and brought up and the young are socialized and provided with the moral support to begin their life. They are not allowed to be left under the effects of the integrational gap. It eliminates the emotional break- down. The old are provided with economic sustenance, personal care and social assistance. These values were and are served only by joint families.
3. Joint family is a society in miniature. It cannot provide the output services, unless the input values ate attended to. The family collectively is based on the concept 'each for all'. It instills a sense of cooperation and spirit of sacrifice. It ensures broad-mindedness. Everybody is under the watchful eyes of others and therefore evil and undesirable tendencies that crop up in individuals here and there are quickly attended to and eliminated. This discourages the possibility of deviation, delinquency and distressful situations to grow to a dangerous level. It stimulates the virtue for the unvirtuous, and prevents the members from doing anything bad.
4. Being highly functional, joint family is a school in perpetual session. One imbibes the values and norms without being taught. The internalization is stimulated by precept and practice. The youth come after the prescribed course of conduct and in the image of their choice who may be anyone in the kinship group as the intimate relations are assured due to the physical nearness and affectionate social accommodations. The young pick up their roles. Sons imitate their fathers and grandfathers and girls their mothers and grandmothers. This provides them the training with regard to the social role of sex and also the role-of discipline. It educates the young in sex behaviour and they are saved from making mistakes. By the time, they are married, the environment of the joint family gives them enough introduction to their role-set performance. A girl gets so cast that she does not find herself flung into a bottomless sea of the in-laws. The internalised values and norms provide her the ample guidelines for her day to day performances.
5. Joint family involves collective and individual responsibility. Everybody in the family is bound by role and status relationship. This

involves division of labour and job differentiation of the simple order. But in the context of time and space it provides full opportunity to younger ones for training and discipline.

Najamani M (1987:141) emphasised that "there is division of labour in the joint family. All the members attend to the work assigned to them and contribute to the well being of the family. The joint family contributes to the development of fellow feeling, mutual service, selflessness and discipline among its members. It has a check over its younger members and moulds their character. The good environment in a cultural joint family exercises its good effects on the younger member". Therefore 60% of the respondents opined that social security to the aged, sick, physically handicapped and mentally disordered people is the main reason for the existence of joint family. 20% regarded joint property as an important factor for the prevalence of joint family system and remaining 20% gave different other reasons. It was also observed that some of them preferred to live in joint families in some of them though did not wish to live in joint families were forced to live because of various constraints.

Findings of the study

The major findings of the study are as follows.

1. In the past Beda are eating non vegetarian food but today researcher observed that more than 40 % of them started to eat vegetarian food.
2. Like other caste among Beda tribal people loosing their traditional type of joint family.
3. Majority 60% of them reveals that at the time age old they required security.
4. In modernisation till 60% people following the traditional pattern of life style.

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