



Political Organization among Beda Tribals in Ganadal of Karnataka

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Our Political system is an amalgamation of modern superstructure, historic delegation of authority-decentralization, incorporation of the grass-root level panchayat system, which is characterized by traditional consensus pattern of decision making, and is held in union by charismatic leadership. Every community in India, have its own methods to regulate the relationship between its members and to deal with disputes. The disciplinary a jurisdictional matters are managed by prescribing laws and punishments.

Objectives of the study:

1. To examine the political consciousness
2. To study about the past political system of Bedas.
3. To pinpoint the recent changes among Beda Tribal community.

Methodology:

Sample:

The researcher collected the data from 100 persons (heads of the households.). Researcher him self directly involved in the community, after the direct participant observation researcher also obtained the data from elders opinion leaders and knowledgeable persons in the community. The unit of the study was head of the house hold. The majority of them is very frank in expression their opinion towards various issues raised by the researcher.

A tribal society as everywhere else has got its own political organization. According to Vidyarthi and Rai some form of government exists even among the small wandering bands, forest hunting type of tribals and forest dwelling tribes. Today tribal political associations are micro political in nature. In their opinion, tribal society is marked by three important characteristics they are : (1) political association based on clan lineage (2) political association, based on the villages as unit and (3) political association of a group of villages of a territory (1977:1975-196).

The above features as delinked by Vidyarthi and Rai are clearly reflected in our present study on Bedas. At the time of Shorapur Kingdom, they have the judicial department to settle the disputes with the community people. King was a highest and absolute power in justice and law 'Disputes are settling on the basis of clan or kula and Jati' (Quoted from Kapatral Krishna Rao 1977:293). This type of system is called as "kulachareke". For settling disputes king was appointing Guru and Gurikar (Sardar).

This Gurikar normally belongs to Beda. He was also the commander in chief of army. This Gurikar is head for settling the different disputes of many jati, clan people. Gurikar is also called as Kattemane. This Kattemane we will found in all most all Jati, clan people (especiall in Bedas, Gollas, Kurubas, Kabbaligas, Holeyas, Madiga etc.,). The other jati, clan Kattimani/ Gurikar must have to subordinate to Beda Gurikar/ Kattimani. So this way absolute power is concentrated among Beda Gurikar/ Kattimani. Sometime Gurikar or Headman or chieftain office is hereditary. In case there is not direct male descendent of the office of Gurikar, the new successor is chosen from king or Raja of Shorapur.

Even among the upper caste people viz., Gowdas, Shetty's, Matthadhipatis the heads play an important role for setting disputes among their jati and clan people. These heads also subordinate to Beda Gurikar (Kattimani). This type of settling disputes is called as "Kulacharike". These heads men (Later in English we called law officers) once or twice in a week commencing to each villages, and hearing the both sides of arguments; they give judgments in written documents. This type of system is called as 'Taakidi'.

According to the Taakidi judgment, one must have to follow the rules, regulations and punishments.

If the disputes are of severe in nature these, will be the king had to them. Once in a year every Jati/clan people pay money (25 paise-1Rs) to the 'Kulacharika' officers. They were also collecting taxes from opposite party. Benefits of the taxes directly go to 'Kulacharika officers' as well as Kattimani heads.

The Kattimani/Gurikar regulates all internal relationships within village or many villages. He represents the rudimentary organization of justice. He is like a monarch who possess power and authority over the members of jati or clan (tribal people of Beda). He should also fulfill various objectives that are laid down by the Shorapur Kingdom. Various problems and grievances are usually discussed and decided at a meeting in village tribal (Beda) people, under a tree called Katti/ Katte which is headed by Kattimane Gurikar, elders of jati or clan also participants in the meeting. Kattemane performs excellent duties and functions at the time of Valmiki and other problem religious activities. The presence of Kattemane every Valmiki (Beda) marriage, within his jurisdiction is very essential. His presence is also necessary during funeral ritual of Beda. If Kattemane is not able to attend such rituals he sends others for conducting the meetings.

"Kaavaladar" (Havaladar today we call policeman) subordinate to Kattimani. His duty was to protect the grown up seeds-paddy fields in forest. He also carefully handles thieves, robbers etc., Bedas also have the system of Gowdaki. He also called as Gowda Kulakrni. A man called "nayakakodiyu" subordinate and reporting regularly, events conflicts facts (Day and Night) to Gowda Kulkarni.

Majority of Bedas are Talavars, which means strong and brave Bedas having Talavar's (swords) in their hands and they were wandering in villages at night and day time for the protection of villages.

King/Raja was given some of the duties and functions to 'Guru'. These 'Guru's' especially handling the upparas, Gollas, vesyanganeyaru (prostitutes) etc., cases and their personal problems and administrations.

In this way entire administrative system in Bedas looks like a pyramid. Top to bottom power is distributed and it is also called a caste council. Let us briefly point out their power (top to bottom)



Figure :1

Above figure:1 shows that power is distributed top to bottom (1) The status of the king is the highest in the political hierarchy, (2) Guru, Gurikar or Kattemane is placed in the middle of political hierarchy. (3) Gowdas, Gowda Kulkarni are in the middle of lower stratum (4) Kaavaladar or Havaladar, Talwars, Valekar Nayakodiyu occupies the lower status.

These representatives are controlling and directing the behavior and activities of Ganadal, Hulihaidar and surrounding people of Shorapur. Beda's life generally governed by religion, customs and tradition. Bedas celebrates the festivals like Gokula Ashtami, Ugadi, Mahanavami etc. Mann (1984-263) has asserted that "Systems of social control in tribal societies vary from simple to complex ones. It varies from hamlet leadership to chieftainship and from village council to regional one. The decision making process vary. But certain common elements do underline various kinds of councils and the way conflicting matters are resolved. Such elements are in the form of sanctions, mostly having religious roots". This way Bedas have a caste council at which, their tribal disputes are settled. Among Bedas there is an authority for prescribing punishments for those who disobey the laws and regulations. Those who disobey the laws, are fined or ostracized in accordance with the nature and type of offence or guilt. Some time the law depends on moral and religious principles. Since the Kattimani himself acts as a judge, his decisions are taken in all criminal cases.

In a traditional Beda society several rules, regulations were imposed by caste council authorities to check and observe anti-social and anti-religious activities within the group. The council also imposes certain specific sanctions for enforcing rules. There are variations in awarding elements to an offender in accordance with the nature elements to an offender in accordance with the nature of offences. According to L.K.A. Iyer (1988:218) "in Belgaum and Shorapur the following custom was in vogue among caste man at one time. A woman put out of caste for adultery or for eating with a member of lower caste, her head had to be shaved in the presence of Kattemane (Head man) and then allowed to go back. The present practice is to cut off five hairs of her head with the razor and to touch her tongue with the live torch of rui wood. A little bit of liquor also will be given to her to drink, to purify the body. If a man is guilty of incest with a kinswoman of his own stock, he has to purify himself by shaving off his moustaches, beard and top-knot, by bathing in cold water and by drinking a small quantity of liquor in the presence of guru and caste men. In such cases when fines are collected, the amount must be sufficient to cover the expenses, connected with feeding the panchayatdars (members of the councils) and the remuneration of the headman" (Tribes and castes of Bombay vol. I page 82).

If a man indulges in adultery, he will not be excommunicated, instead he receive equal respect like others. But a woman indulges in adultery it would be considered as a heinous act. If she commits adultery she will be excommunicated and expelled from her house. She is not allowed to participate in any of the activities of Beda.

If any outsider belonging to higher classes is to be admitted into Beda Caste, a formal ceremony being observed for the purpose. The headmen of two or three Kattemanes or caste guides as well as other caste-men are assembled, due notice being given of the purpose of the meeting. Then the person who wishes to be admitted comes to the assembly, and prostrating himself before it, and he begs that he may be admitted into the caste. A detail consultation is held along with in headsmen, and participants and it may prolong for two or three days, during that time the members are fed at expenses of the applicant. A fine together with a hana or four annas as tax (devoted to the temple god) is levied from the neophyte, who is purified with the five products of the cow, his tongue being slightly branded with headed gold. He is also made to drink holy water from a temple. Then the caste men sit down to a feast to receive a morsel from each of the elders before the feeding being and partake of the food thus collected with permission of the assembly which is given in a set formula that there is no longer any impediment (dosha).

This way, the power, respect influence, justice follows through king or Raja, Guru, Gurikar, Kattemane, Gowda, Hawaldars, Talwars, Valekars, Nayakodiyes etc. These are respected and influential in Bedas social

life. They take care of almost all the matters concerning their group and issues instructions on every occasion such as marriage, festivals, funeral, hunting, worship etc.

Recent changes:

Among the Bedas a few educated young men have started taking interest to participate in Village Grama/Mandal Panchayat politics. A new elite group has also emerged among Ganadal Beda's (Valmikies) in certain regions near Kushtagi, Yalaburga etc.,

Today, modern society is changing and becoming complex phenomenon, with a single person not able to run tribal administration successfully, therefore people do not consider the traditional organization of justice as important and necessary. Tribal authority (disputes settlement area Katti) have almost disappeared.

The Bedas prefer to consult the Mandal Pradhan or land lord or local M.L.A and as a last resort go to the modern court of law for settling their disputes and problems. This has further brought about change in the power structure of Beda society. The traditional court of justice had proved to take a very effective institution in olden days, when Beda society was small in size.

Significantly many changes can also be seen with regard to the method of awarding punishments for the violation of traditional rules, many acts of behavior which were formally considered to be objectionable are not viewed with seriousness in today's society. Eating non-vegetarian is tolerated in the society. In some society liquor also tolerated. In case of woman who violated the custom of wearing saree in traditional style is not punished. Instead of doti men also wear pants.

An intercaste marriage or inter-tribal marriage in case of educated male member of Beda family will be approved, provided the girl with whom he marries ultimately joins Beda group of follows their customs and traditions. In case, when a woman marries a non-Beda man, she is expelled from the Beda group on the ground that she does not come back to her parental community again. She has to go out from the group and join a different community. However, it is also observed that in case of both inter-caste and inter-tribal marriages and adultery, even today many members of Beda society still follows the traditional rules, regulation the awarding of punishments and imposing penalties. The traditional forms of punishments as observed by Thursten (1975), in a modern society a few dynamic educated Bedas have formed new organizations at different villages with different names.

Recently, Bedas are organising new organization in Ganadal and in Raichur district. These community organization, sanghas, enabled the Bedas to full-fill their objectives and ideals.

Major Findings:

Keeping above all aspects we can observe the following major findings that have taken place among the Bedas.

- 1) Today the dynasty rule has disappeared.
- 2) The absolute power of Gurikar or Kattimane is weakening but Kattimanans still have the power, authority in Ganadal and surrounding places of Raichur district.
- 3) Administration and power of Guru has disappeared.
- 4) The power and control of Gowdaki is lost.
- 5) Today also we can find Beda Kavaludar in villages (night time only) wandering here and there in villages and keeping the eyes on local thieves and robbers.
- 6) The role of Talwars Valekars, Nayakodiyus has lost, they are engaged in other activities in villages.

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