



## Kabbaliga Community in Karnataka: An Overview

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### ABSTRACT

*Kabbaliga community is known by different names such as Besta, Ambiga, Mogaveera, Koli, Tokrekoli, Ganga Mata, etc. These communities were played significant role in protecting villages, fishing, transportation, maintaining law and order in villages, etc. After independence, due to mechanization, these people have become backward as their occupations were mechanized and these communities become unemployed or under employed in unorganized sector. The paper looks into history and development of the Kabbaliga community and suggested for the development of the community.*

### KEYWORDS :

#### Introduction:

Kabbaliga community is also known as Koli community, which contributed much to the nation as many of the people of the community were protected the kingdoms in Karnataka. Kabbaliga community is having fourth biggest strength in terms of population in Karnataka after Vokkaliga, Veerashaiva Lingayats and Kuruba communities. Still the community is backward in terms of education, socio-economic and political aspects.

Kabbaliga people are strong in terms of health, well being and hard workers. During the British period, they were employed as Talwars, who used to protect the villages from the robbers and other army. The Kabbaliga community was engaged in occupations like hunting, animal husbandry, fishing and agriculture. Later, hunting was banned and majority of these people started their agriculture and animal husbandry.

Kabbaliga or Koli community has history of more than three thousand years. They were living in 'Kori' kolla (means pond called Kori) of Sindhu River basin. Due to the frequent attacks and invasions of Aryas and famines, these people were migrated to south India in three parts. In Sanskrit language, the alphabet 'ra' and 'la' have same meaning and as such, the alphabet 'ri' may be derived as 'li' and the community was renamed as 'Koli' (Vadde, 2002).

#### History and Development of Kabbaliga Community:

Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari written as "In the Madras Census Report, 1901, the Kolis (Kabbaligas) are described as being a Bombay Caste of Fishermen and Boatmen in South Canara..." (Thurston and Rangachari, 1906). Koli or Kabbaliga community is spread in different parts of India and are slightly changed the names of their communities. The community is spread across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Dadar, Nagar Haveli, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Orissa States and the community is called as Vaitikoli, Mangelkoli, Chunavaliya Koli, Dhorkoli, Malharkoli, Sonkoli, Talapadakoli, Mahadevkoli, Kolirajpur and Tokrekoli in different states. Based on the names of their communities, their occupations are also slightly different from each other. Major occupations of all these communities are fishery, agricultural labour, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc and it was also said that they were earlier called as Vyadha or Nishadha, means hunters. It has also been said that these communities were also called as successors of Vyasa, saint and writer of Mahabharata and Valmiki, writer of Ramayana (Maitri, 2002).

The first reference to the community was in 1340, when Muhammad Tughlak found the fort of Kondana or Sinhagad, about 10 miles south of Poona, in the hands of a Koli chief. In 1347, another Koli chief was mentioned as ruling over Javhar, in Thana, which yielded an annual revenue of 9 lacs of rupees and included thirty-two forts. By the Bahmani kings, the Kolis were left almost independent under their own hereditary chiefs or naiks. The Koli country was then known as Bavan Mavals, or fifty-two valleys, each under a naik. These naiks held

a good position, both in the Bahmani and in the Ahmednagar kingdoms, ranking among the nobles called "Sardars" and "Mansabdars". About the middle of the seventeenth century, when the Emperor Shahjahan, on the final fall of Ahmednagar, introduced the Toda Mall's survey into the conquered territories, the Kolis resented the minute measuring of their lands and the fixing of a regular rental. Under one Kheni Naik they rose in rebellion against their Mogal rulers and the revolt was not put down without extreme severity. After this outbreak was crushed, the Kolis were treated with kindness by Aurangzeb. Under the Peshwas they gained a high reputation for their skill and daring in taking hill forts. During the latter part of the eighteenth century and for many years after, the beginning of British rule, the country was disturbed by the robberies of bands of Koli outlaws. In 1760, the peace was broken by a rising of Kolis under their Naik Jiwaji Bomla. Jiwaji withdrew to the hills and organized a series of gang robberies, causing widespread terror and misery throughout the country. For twenty years he held out bravely, defeating and killing the generals the Peshwa's Government sent against him. At last he was so hotly pursued that, on the advice of Dhondo Gopal, the Peshwa's governor at Nasik, he surrendered all his forts to Tukoji Holkar and, through Holkar's influence, was pardoned and placed in military and police charge of a district of sixty villages with powers of life and death over Koli robbers and outlaws. In 1798, a fresh disturbance took place among the Kolis. The leader of this outbreak was Ramji Naik Bhangria, who was an abler and more daring man than his predecessors and succeeded in baffling all the efforts of the Government officers to seize him. As force seemed hopeless, the Government offered Ramji a pardon and gave him an important police post, in which he did excellent service (Hassan, 1920).

Now in Karnataka, the Kabbaliga community is popularly recognized in different names such as Gangamatha, Mogaveer, Besta, Kabbaliga, Barki, Jalagar, Koli, Tokrekoli, Dhorkoli, Kolcha, Koya, Gabbit, Kharvi, Talwar, Ambigaru, Chunari, Mogaveera, etc. It is estimated that more than 50 lakh population of these Kabbaliga and related communities are inhabited in India.

Many of the philosophers, warriors and great leaders were born in Kabbaliga community. To name a few, Bhisma and Karna of Mahabharata, Mahamayadevi, mother of Gautam Buddha and Yashodhare, wife of Buddha, Shivasharana Ambigara Choudayya and recently in Gulbarga district, mother Manikeshwari are from Kabbaliga community.

The culture of the Kabbaligas is rich as they were warriors, who were protected villages and kingdoms in the ancient age. They are popular for their bravery. Like other communities, the Kabbaligas have also their own social life expressed in terms of their own culture. Their community is recognized by folk songs of their community. Each aspect of the Kabbaliga community is expressed in terms of folk songs.

As the community based census is not published so far, the population of Kabbaliga community is not assessed separately and approximately Karnataka constituted 50 lakh population of Kabbaliga community. The community is grouped under Category-I of the Other Backward Castes by the Government of Karnataka and it is proposed to classify Kabbaliga and such other communities under Scheduled Tribe by the Government. The educational status of Kabbaliga community is fully backward and majority of the Kabbaliga community people are engaged in seasonal employment or employment in unorganized sector due to lack of proper education.

#### **Conclusion:**

To sum up, though Kabbaliga community is backward now, we assess the early role of these communities in diverse activities such as transportation, fishing, protecting villages, maintaining law and order in villages, etc. With the increase in mechanization, the community lost its significance and as majority of these people are not educated or low educated, these people are depending on the work in unorganized sector. Hence, it is essential to assess the education and employment status of these communities by caste based census and provide suitable reservations in education and employment, so that they can develop and participate in the mainstream of the society.

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