



ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF GABITS IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

In every society the growth and changes take place. The change is a process towards alteration. It may be in a society or in an institution. This paper is focused on historical process among Gabit caste in Karnataka state.

There are three objectives are discussed. Researcher went to the field and collected 500 samples in four talukas of Uttar Kannada district of Karnataka state. After collecting the data researcher written this article.

KEYWORDS : Gabit.

INTRODUCTION

Every society undergoes evolution. It is a usual process that takes place over a long period of time till the present day, and will continue tomorrow. According to Charles Darwin (1859: Origin of Species), "species evolved due to minor variations in individual members of the species. The variations may have been inherited by the offspring. As a result of a long process, the variations ended up with the emergence of a new species". In every society the growth and changes take place. The change is a process towards alteration. It may be in a society or in an institution. This paper is focused on historical process among Gabit caste in Karnataka state.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are as follows

1. To trace the origin of Gabits of Uttar Kannada.
2. To understand the historical background of Gabit caste.
3. To study the respondents migration.

Methodology

The present study has been conducted in Uttar Kannada district like Karwar, Ankola, Kumta and Honnavar talukas to analyse the origin and development of Gabits in Karnataka. According to the 2011 census report the total population of Karnataka is 5,28,50,562. In Uttara Kannada district the population is 13,53,644 among which the Gabit is one of the backward caste. They are approximately 27000 (1.8%) followed by other districts like Bangalore, Dakshina Kannada, Shivmoga etc....

Sample

Researcher in the field work obtained the information from head of the households in Uttar Kannada districts. Houses are scattered in different talukas, in each taluka for eg: Karwar, Ankola, Kumta researcher obtained 150 sampling in each households and 50 sampling from Honnavar taluka. In total, for the study purpose, researcher adopted a simple random sampling about 500.

Background of the Community

Each community/caste/groups, are in some way or the other, effected by natural disaster like conflicts, threat, poverty, economic crisis, family disturbance. Due to the education mobility, most of the families are dispersed in different places to search food. To begin with some groups of people start to settle in particular areas in different parts of the nation according to their needs and convenience. Similarly in Karnataka the 'Gabits' community live near the coastal belt and also have settled in towns, tiny villages and cities of Karnataka. For eg- Karwar, Ankola, Kumta, Honnavar, Bhatkal, Shivmoga, Mangalore etc.

India is the second largest populous nation in the world with a mixture of various races and ethnic groups. Different groups have contributed their essential share in the making of Indian history and culture. The different kinds of people living in different areas even from other civilizations and culture have merged along with them. Each community/caste have their own traditions, mores, customs, belief systems etc. which are strengthened and integrated with the pre-existing traditions.

In India, different communities are living in peace and harmony. Each community has its own life, either they are living under a single roof or living separately in different areas in different places. Community means a group of a section of the people who are following a particular culture. Indian people have variety of different communities depending upon their traditions, geographic location, belief system, social, economic, political, agriculture interest, culture, language, education, skills, race and caste. Apart from the people of different communities the culture, language, social and political communities are also famous in Indian history. Likewise Kolis, Kharvis, Mogavera, Ambiga, Bhovis, Besthas, Harikantras etc. caste are also living in cities and coastal belt in Karnataka state.

During the pre-historic period of the world, fishing and hunting had been the primary occupation of man till he turned his attention to agriculture. Even when agriculture has come to his rescue in the matter of both food production, the unlimited resources of both the forest and the sea provided supplemental food, rich in protein. Hence, it is evident that fishing has been the main occupations of fisherman from times immemorial.

Dutta (1968), in his book Origin and Growth of Caste in India, first published in 1931, tried to present a history of the development of caste institutions through various influence and under various circumstances from the nebular stage to their present state. According to him, the caste system in its principle of exclusion, isolation and disintegration is reminiscent of the savage man. In the sanctity and privileged position which it accords to the priesthood it bears analogy to conditions in ancient Egypt, Persia and Medieval Europe. In its occupational character and the proud exclusiveness of the ruling class it contains the spirit of medieval guild system of feudalism. But in none of its aspects can it fit with modern conceptions of nation, state, democracy and individual liberty. As far as the factor of its origin, Dutta (1968) says that the important factor in the development of caste were the racial struggle between the fair skinned Aryans and the dark skinned non-Aryans, the division of labour leading to the

formulation of occupational classes and the tribal differences, especially among the non-aryans which survived the spread of a common Aryan culture.

According to Thurston, E (1909: P-243), A Bombay fishing caste returned at the census 1901, to Malpe in the south canara district, during the fishing season, fishermen come with a flotilla of keeled and outriggered sailing boats from Ratnagiri in the Bombay presidency. The reason given by the Ratnagiri fishermen for coming southward was that fish are not so abundant off their own coast, competition is keener, and salt more expensive. Moreover the crystals of Bombay salt are too large for successful curing and "do not agree with the fish, for which the flesh is turned back".

The word Gabit is derived from the word 'Grab' a word of Arabic origin which means a small vessel employed in sea for war. The masses who are skilled in such warships were known as "Grabits". which later came to be called as "Gabit". When Shivaji established his navy he employed many such vessels as they were fast to move and in case of lack of wind they were moved by oars in his navy. Shivaji appointed some of his Maratha chiefs, who were not having seafaring knowledge at first and later distinguished themselves and came to be known as Sarang, Tandel, Panjari, Mheter etc. At present these titles have been found among Gabits. In the western coast of Ratnagiri District, Shivaji built his forts and he gave the responsibility to protect the fort to a number of ships which consisted of Grabs in sea and they had to keep their children either in these forts or outside. During the same period, the Raja of Savantwadi had also grabs in his possession which he used for the protection of Aronda, Vengurla and Nivate ports. The Anthropological society of Bombay by Mr. Cadel on 26-02-1919 referred to the piracy that was carried by fleet that belonged to the Sacond Khem Savant of Savantwadi who had many grabs with him. (Kubal Ramesh:1983, Gabit Kshatriya Aarmari Gharanyancha Itihaas).

DISCUSSION

1. To trace the Origin of Gabits.

The origin and growth of a community goes back to the origin of human civilization. Man is living in community since his arrival into existence . When a group of families live together in a particular area which make them to share each other's joy and sorrows which results in a pattern of common living is marked to be the origin of a community life. In the study area 53.2 percent of the respondents said that, their family originally belongs to Maharashtra. During the field work the questions asked to the respondents, about they originally belong to which area? They said that, 46.8 percent of the respondents originally belong to Goa. Their ancestors were settled in Goa. In 1510, Portuguese captured Goa. The Portuguese visited Goa for the spice and other trade business. In the period of 1788, Portuguese controlled entire Goa and dominated different regions of Goa. They started to trouble Muslims by killing them and they gave shelter to Hindus. Later the Portuguese also disturbed and destroyed the Hindu culture and tradition. Because of all this harmful situation and disturbances, Gabits ran away from Goa and settled in the coastal regions of Karnataka.

2. To understand the Historical Background of Gabit caste.

Table 1.1 Respondents opinion about the originality of Gabit community

Sl. No	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
A	Yes	426	85.2
B	No	74	14.8
		500	100

In the study area, table no 1.1 it is mentioned that, 85.2 percent of the respondents have agreed that their community originally belong to Malawan, Ratnagiri district of

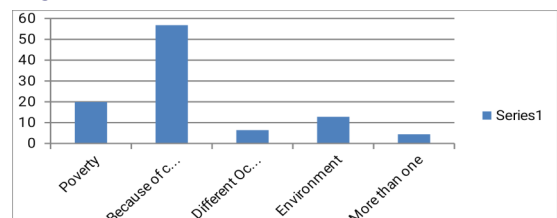
Maharashtra. Whereas 14.8 percent of the respondents do not agree that they belong to Malwan region. It is because of lack of information about the origin of their caste and incomplete knowledge that makes them unaware about their originality.

The historical background of Gabits community signifies that as mentioned earlier, Gabits originally belong to Malwan taluka of Maharashtra. Malwan is a town and taluka in Sindhudurg district, the southernmost district of Maharashtra state. It is a compact town situated on the coast of western India. The data reveals that 62.44 percent of the respondent's ancestors were working as Armari (a fleet of warship) during the Shivaji's period. They were very popular during Shivaji's period for the active work in warships. 37.09 percent of the respondents said that, their ancestors were serving class during the Peshwas period. The reason was that these people were courageous and good enough in swimming. It helped them to be in the serving class and their active participation in warship (armar) makes them to achieve good popularity in Peshwas period. 0.47 percent of the respondents said that, they had given other reasons like they might have been in working as Armari or working in Peshwas period.

3. To study the respondents migration.

In the field study region Researcher involved in their various socio – economic activities and asked whether respondents were migrated from one place to another or not. The respondents said that movement of population from one place to another is not much. It may be of temporary or permanent type. But Gabits were migrated long ago in 18th and 19th century and settled permanently in the study area. The entire Gabit population migrated from Goa and Maharashtra to Uttar Kannada district. Overall that is 100% of the respondents said that, they belong to Goa and Maharashtra and their ancestors migrated to study area and settled permanently.

Bar Diagram 1.1. Respondents given reasons about causes of migration



The terms migration and mobility are interrelated. In field study region, Researcher noticed that affected (poverty) people migrating to one place to another place, means rural to urban. Sorokin said that, "mobility explained both geographical mobility and social mobility". Migration may be upward and downward social mobility, since it is assumed that individuals migrate from their native places in search of better livelihood opportunities followed by higher wages. The above diagram indicates 19.6% of the respondents feel poverty as the reason for their ancestors to migrate from their original land. In the study area, large number of respondents around 56.8% of respondents migrated because of the conflicts, harassment towards them as the main cause. During the 18th century Portuguese started to trouble the Hindus by exploiting their culture. Britishers started to spread their Christianity and they were not supporting the Hindus. It lead to the conflicts between Portuguese and Hindus (Gabits). Trying to escape from the clutches of Britishers, Gabits ran away and settled in Karwar districts. It is indicated that 6.4% of the respondents migrated to the study area to start different occupation for their livelihood. Fishing is their main occupation and not profitable comparing to other occupation. It is observed that, ancestors in study area have migrated for better livelihood. 12.8% of the respondents reveal that, their forefathers migrated because they do not like the surrounding

area and were disappointed by the British dominance. It is clear from the above data, that 4.4% of the respondents replied that their ancestors migrated not because of one reason but more than single reason and due to this the Gabbits migrated from original area and settled in different areas of the coastal regions.

Major Findings

1. During the 18th and 19th centuries the Gabbits lived in Goa and Maharashtra state.
2. Beginning of the 21st century Gabbits were not much educated and their literacy rate was below 20 percent, but after the 21st century the literacy rate increased.
3. The data reveals that Gabbits migrated and settled down in other states like Karnataka, Goa and Kerala coastal regions.
4. 56.8 percent of the respondents ran away and settled down in various regions of Karnataka due to the poverty, conflicts and harassment by the Portuguese.
5. For the livelihood 6.4 percent of the respondents started new occupation like petty business and government employment in Karnataka.
6. Due to the modern education 50 percent of the respondent's children's education has been increased from primary level to secondary level.
7. Today the younger generations are not interested to continue the fishing as their occupation.

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