



A Societal Study of Medha Community in Haveri District

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *Medha' tribe is called with different names like 'Medha', Medar, Myadar, Medaru, Gourig, Buruda, Buddaru etc.,. Kittle's dictionary gives the meaning of 'Medar- Medaar' for 'Medha'. Some people belong to this tribe speak Telugu and Kannada. According to 2011 census by and large there are 37371 Medha tribes in Karnataka. In Haveri, according to a survey, there are 220 families-means 982 people have been residing. These people are good craftsmen and artisans. They prepare baskets, mats, and hand fans with the help of bamboos which is a wonderful art. But unfortunately, their art is not recognised either by academies or by government.*

Purpose of the study:

1. To know their social, financial, cultural and literacy status.
2. They need to be considered as schedule tribes and job opportunities be given to him.
3. To draw the attention of the government for supply of sufficient raw material (bamboo) and suitable market for their products.
4. They are homeless, reside at cottages and should be brought into main stream by giving education and employment

Their Social Life:

Despite of the modernity their culture remains unaffected. Very little studies are made about their culture, art, beliefs, and way of life, but it needs extensive studies. To bring awareness about the social, political and religious thoughts, the leaders of Medha community-Sri Ananda Parande and Sri Nandish Parande have established periodical called "Keteshwara vani" in Mandya. Its primary concern is overall development of Medha tribe. Apart from this, in district and taluka places "Medhara Industrial Busines co-operative society" is essential.

The people belonging to 'Medha' community all over the state are brought under schedule tribe category. This community is mainly seen in Gulbarga, Dharwad, Koppal, Bellary, Haveri, Kolar, South Canara, Chikkamagalur and Shimoga districts. From ancient times till now their profession is preparing useful things for daily use. They use bamboos for artisan work. They are in a sense weavers. It is their age-old profession (it is what they have believed). Their pedigree was found in the 12th century in Basava Kalyana. It is learnt that there were Medhar Keteswararu in the "Anubhav Mantap" of Basaveshwara. They associated with Basavanna in bringing out social reforms. Medhar Ketayya was considered as a leader by 'Medha' community, even, he is worshiped as their deity and his 'Jayanti' is being observed every year by the community.

Name of the Tribe and its Population:

'Medha' tribe is called with different names like 'Medha', Medar, Myadar, Medaru, Gourig, Buruda, Buddaru etc, Kittle's dictionary gives the meaning of 'Medar- Medaar' for 'Medha'. Some people belong to this tribe speak Telugu and Kannada.

According to 1901 census their population was 5774, out of which 2887 Males and remaining, females. In 1971 there were hardly 325 people in Kodagu, but now 1,860 people are residing in Kodagu (according to 1981 census). Majority are living in rural area. According to 2011 census by and large there are 37371 Medha tribes in Karnataka. In Haveri, according to a survey, there are 220 families-means 982 people have been residing.

The main features of Medha Tribe:

In Medhar community there are no social cadres. Usually marriages take place with relatives from paternal and maternal side. These people are good craftsmen and artisans. They prepare baskets, mats, and hand fans with the help of bamboos which is a wonderful art. But unfortunately, their art is not recognised either by academies or by government.

Some people among Medhas work as coolies, and some work as drum-beaters on special occasions. If any dispute happens, they get it solved among themselves in presence of their elders. Medhas have some superstitions. Every year in the month of December-January they offer sheep to their deity and every year their home-Goddess-Mariyamma festival is observed.

In Ranebennur one can see the beautiful temple of their Goddess-Mariyamma. Pontiffs are appointed to perform rituals in the temple. Their life-style, mode of leading life, cremations, run according to Hindu culture. Though, government is spending more money on literacy programme, yet their life needs to be changed socially, economically and educationally.

Surveys till now:

In most of the districts of Karnataka proper, sufficient surveys and studies are not made. In this regard, they remain aloof from their relations. The speculations are many, they might not have the cultural heritage as other Medha tribes possess and might have forgotten their ideals, culture by mixing up with city- people. Once, these people were tribals and hence possessing others culture might have become indispensable. However, they have their own traditions, convention and celebrations.

There have been elaborate government reports and articles about this tribe, viz, E.Thirston's "The Cast and Tribes

of Southern India" vol-5 and Ananta Krishna Ayyar's "The Mysore Tribes and Castes." Apart from these, the information is found in Kannada folklore encyclopaedia, "The Castes And Tribes of Nizam's Dominions" etc., But, these studies have not been able to give the complete picture of their lifestyle and culture.

A good number of writers have cast light on the cultural heroes of the Medha tribe. They are: Shri Chandrashekar Swami who has written book called "Keteshwra charite", Prof.C.M.Dharmappa in his book "Sharana-Sharaneyara charite" has detailed the life history of Medaar Ketayya. Sri Ananda Parande of Mandya District has been publishing a monthly magazine called "Keteshwara vani" and Kannada University of Hampi publishing an article called "Budakattu Adyayana" which supplies some information about this tribe.

Its Jurisdiction:

The whole Medha community scattered all over Karnataka is chosen for my study, it is only confined to Haveri district and it is my sample survey. Those people are selected who live in a backward area financially and solely whose livelihood is depended upon bamboo work for my study. The places like Ranebennur, Rattihalli, Savanur, Masur, Hirekerur, Chikkeruru, Byadagi, Sidenur, Hosaritti, Guttal, Akki Alur, Shiggoan, Bankapur are included for the study and their cultural, financial and educational conditions are collected for information.

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The present case study is an attempt to draw the attention of the government. They should become organised to show their identity in society. Compulsorily these people should send their children to the schools and colleges. In this direction government and NGOs should come forward to uplift their humble life.

Mythological and Historical background of this Medha Tribe:

Medha tribe came from border lands of Andhra and Tamil Nadu adjoining to Karnataka border. Therefore, they tell a story about their origin. According to a mythical story they belong to 'Vidura' family. There is a similarity between the sound 'biduru' and 'vidura. Another story tells that they are manufacturers of bamboo plates for Parvati the Goddess of strength. Another story is in vogue that Medhas born out 'NandiDeva's mouth, the chariot of God Shiva.

Their Social Life:

Despite of the modernity their culture remains unaffected. Very little studies are made about their culture, art, beliefs, and way of life, but it needs extensive studies.

Marriages:

Marriages are celebrated in Medar tribe according to Hindu tradition. Elders take the lead and they go to the bride's home having taken the consent of their house-

Goddess. There is a tradition of taking dowry (money) from bridegroom, then negotiation takes place. Usually marriages in 'Medha' community take place in the house of brides. In this tribe, we find child marriages, polygamy and widow marriages. Their costumes are in the tradition of Hindus; burial function also takes place according to Hindu convention. The Medha people of Haveri have accepted Shree Mariamma as their community Goddess.

Food habits:

Medhas are basically non-vegetarians. Once, they were hunters, but now they have stopped hunting as it is prohibited by the government. However, they domesticate chicken, sheep and goats for their food.

Festivals:

Though, they celebrate all the Hindu festivals but with a difference. They celebrate Deepavali overwhelmingly and in Haveri the Mariamma festival is celebrated with great composity. 'Maha navami' is also celebrated by them.

Births:

In Medhar tribe births used to take place in a separate place and elderly women would take the responsibility of the deliveries. They purge the house after 9 days of the deliveries and on 11th day houses are decorated and celebrate the birth of a child especially male child.

Internal Administration of law System:

As far as internal administration is concerned Medhas elect an elderly man and he is called as 'Patel'. He administers the things. In case of internal disputes among themselves, they do not go to court and "Patels" will settle the cases.

Financial position:

Medhas are found in a stringent financial condition as they solely depend upon bamboo products. Their profession is to prepare products like canes, furniture, baskets etc. which is not so profitable. Therefore, they need government employments and other professions, but unfortunately they are educationally not advanced educationally.

Educational position:

Majority of the Medha tribe are not literate. A survey says that people who reside at towns and cities are found sending their children to the schools and colleges. In the whole Haveri district graduates are pretty less. Hardly seven people of Medha tribe work as attendants and peons. However, recently they have started giving importance to education, but 80% of the population is illiterate. The consolation is that central government has included this tribe into ST category.

Present Social Condition:

To bring awareness about the social, political and religious thoughts, the leaders of Medha community-Sri Ananda Parande and Sri Nandish Parande have established periodical called "Keteshwara vani" in Mandya. Its primary concern is overall development of Medha tribe. Apart from this, in district and taluka places "Medhara Industrial Busines co-oparative society" is essential.

In Ranebennur this tribe has established "Shri Mariamma Devi Industrial Society" for the upliftment of the community. This organisation helps much towards the growth of Medha community. As it is difficult to lead life solely on the basis of this profession, they need reeds (bamboos) at cheaper rates from the government. By and large I learn

that only Rs25 is a margin profit, if a whole one reed is used for the work. Their total life is pathetic.

Suggestions:

1. Parents need to be persuaded to send their children to the schools compulsorily.
2. The children of Medha tribe need hostel facilities and scholar ship facilities from primary to higher education.
3. Baghya jyoti facilities are needed
4. They need basic facilities like shelter, water, toilets, community hall, library and other things.
5. Bank-loan facilities for self-employment.
6. Helps from self-help groups for empowerment of women.
7. Monthly pension for widows, destitute and physically disabled.
8. Bamboo quota needs to be increased.
9. Purchase of their products from the government.
10. "Shadi Bhagya" plans for below poverty line people.

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