



BHOVIS (WADDARS) MOBILIZATION IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT Bhovis they were a wandering and had an unsettled life or called as nomadic tribe. They were classified as wandering tribe/ nomadic tribe and also called as Criminal tribes come under Depressed classes. Bhovis or Waddars, as per the Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribe modification order 1956, they are listed under Scheduled castes, throughout Karnataka. There are however nine sub castes of Waddars and among the nine sub castes of Waddars or Bhovi castes, Kallu Waddars, Mannu Waddars and Uppu Waddars form the bulk or majority of Bhovi population in Karnataka State. Bhovis or Waddars believe that they form a single endogamous group but due to some differences in occupation and jobs in cities led to the emergence of several separate endogamous groups. And as nomads these Bhovis remained peripheral to the social system. The process of sedentarization and incorporation of Bhovi in community life provided them with a foundation to initiate a movement. The present article is on the Bhovis Mobilization in Karnataka. Researcher explains the mobilization of Bhovis, sedentarization process and position of Bhovis in caste hierarchy.

KEYWORDS : Bhovis or Waddars, Sedentarization, nomads

Introduction

Earlier, Waddars or Bhovis as mentioned, they were a wandering and had an unsettled life or called as nomadic tribe. They were classified as wandering tribe/ nomadic tribe and also called as Criminal tribes come under Depressed classes. Bhovis or Waddars, as per the Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribe modification order 1956, they are listed under Scheduled castes, throughout Karnataka. Bhovis or Waddars claim that they had a number of sub castes prevailing. They are said to be Kallu Waddars (stone breakers), Mannu Waddars (earth workers), Uppu Waddars (salt traders), Bandi Waddars (Cart Waddars), Girmi Waddars (Grind stone makers), Raja Waddars, (Employed by Royal Families), Aragu Waddars (Lac Sellers), Tudug Waddars (Thieves) and lastly Oru Waddars (Town Dwellers). We can notice here, that all these sub castes, appear to have been named after their traditional or ancestral occupation. Among these nine sub castes of Waddars or Bhovi castes, Kallu Waddars, Mannu Waddars and Uppu Waddars form the bulk or majority of Bhovi population in Karnataka State.

Kallu Waddars: Kallu Waddar is a sub caste of the Waddar or Bhovi caste and has the largest population among the Waddars of Karnataka. These people work on stone like it seem they have derived the name from their traditional occupation of working on stone. They are spread all over the state and are mainly engaged in stone quarries, construction (building) cutting grind stones and road metaling etc. though they are spread all over the state they are said to be found in majority in the districts of Bangalore, Bellary, Chitradurga, kolar, and shimoga.

Mannu Waddars (Bhovis): This is the next group of Waddar caste and are especially recognized for their earth work, such as they are engaged in sinking wells, constructing railway tracks, tanks, dams, irrigation canals, bridges and also in repairing all such type of constructions. They are found in Mandya, Mysore, Gulbarga and to some extent, in Chitradurga and Shimoga.

Uppu Waddars: These subcaste are known by their traditional occupation of trade in salt and tamarind. Uppu Waddars pursued their traditional occupation till the beginning of the century, and later they gave up their occupation because they faced some problems as trade in salt and tamarind could no longer meet their needs or earn them a livelihood. Therefore, to meet their needs and earn livelihood they migrated to urban areas or cities in search of jobs, where they were forced to take up menial jobs like scavenging and sweeping etc. in districts such as, Bangalore, Kolar, Tumkur and Chitradurga the Uppu waddars are in more number.

Bhovis or Waddars believe they form a single endogamous group but due to some differences in occupation and jobs in cities led to the emergence of several separate endogamous groups. Mentioning to the endogamous nature of the Bhovi caste (Waddar). Nanjundayya and Iyer wrote "If suppose Mannu Waddar has to marry a girl of Kallu Waddar subcaste then by changing their type of work into that of stone cutter, Mannu Waddar or eath diggers can marry a Kallu Waddar girl.

Thus, researcher states that these endogamous groups are hierarchically graded and each sub castes claims dominance over the other castes.

As per the Mysore Census Report of 1981-it was mentioned that Kallu Waddars consider themselves as superior to Mannu Waddars. Mannu Waddars are the sub castes of waddar caste they are engaged in earth digging work which is considered as lower than Kallu Waddars occupation that is, stone work, but higher than other occupations. Henceforth Uppu Waddars are considered to be lowest in the status hierarchy of the Waddar sub caste. But among all the occupations of the waddars stone work or working on stone is considered as the most respectable one.

POSITION OF THE BHOVIS IN THE CASTE HIERARCHY

However, there are several opinions regarding the position of Bhovis in caste hierarchy. There are some early accounts of the Bhovis were found which describes Waddars (or at least some of their sub castes as Untouchables). In the Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency (1884) -For Illustration, states that "Waddar earlier were living in small huts of bamboo matting and thatched roofs on the border of the towns and villages". The process of Sedentarization of Bhovis in rural and urban areas had different social consequences. Waddars were nomads and as wandering group of people they were leading a nomadic life in this society till recently and henceforth sedentarization of Bhovis (Waddars) put forth the base in providing a contextual situation for any social movement to occur. And as nomads these Bhovis remained peripheral to the social system. The process of sedentarization and incorporation of Bhovi in community life provided them with a foundation to initiate a movement.

Internal and External Factors Motivate Waddars or Bhovis for their settlement at a place:

Both internal and external factors motivated for the Waddars (Bhovis) to settle down in different parts of Karnataka. At the first point-Internal factors are educational opportunities, political participation, settle/stable life and other benefits of sedentary (nomadic) life. Secondly- the process of sedentarization also be motivated by external factors, such as government schemes and social reformers. Hence in the case of the Waddars they had to recognize themselves as a caste and had to establish a position or status in the society of region in which they get settle their life. However, the migration of Bhovis in Karnataka from other regions took place without any opposition and obstruction. Waddars comprises of different occupational and endogamous groups, and posses' certain characteristic features in common, all Waddars speak Telugu dialect, believe in common myths, rituals, religious beliefs and similar political institutions. They have both positive and negative side in their behavioural aspects. Positive side they are known for their hard work and ignorance and roughness in their behavioural aspect on the negative side. Thus, they have been able to create an ethnic identity or their individuality and a place in the system of castes following their sedentarization.

Conclusion:

Both internal and external factors motivated for the Waddars (Bhavis) to settle down in different parts of Karnataka. At the first point-Internal factors are educational opportunities, political participation, settle/stable life and other benefits of sedentary (nomadic) life. Secondly- the process of sedentarization also be motivated by external factors such as government schemes and social reformers. Hence in the case of the Waddars they had to recognize themselves as a caste and had to establish a position or status in the society of region in which they get settle their life. And as nomads, Bhavis remained peripheral to the social system. The process of sedentarization and incorporation of Bhovi in community life provided them with a foundation to initiate a movement.

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