



## CULTURAL STUDY OF MORASU VOKKALIGAS

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### ABSTRACT

*Social practices, rituals and festive events are habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups and that are shared by and relevant to many of their members. They are significant because they reaffirm the identity of those who practise them as a group or a society and, whether performed in public or private, are closely linked to important events. Social, ritual and festive practices may help to mark the passing of the seasons, events in the agricultural calendar or the stages of a person's life. They are closely linked to a community's worldview and perception of its own history and memory. They vary from small gatherings to large-scale social celebrations and commemorations. Each of these sub-domains is vast but there is also a great deal of overlap between them. Bandidyavara and Hosadyavara are unique cultural traits among Morasu Vokkaliga caste people.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Rituals, Habitual, Practice, Calender, Gatherings, Bandidyavara*

### INTRODUCTION :

Indian society is vast and complex as it is the land of multiple religions, communities and cultures. Due to its diversified nature, Indian society is considered unique in more than one sense. The vast landscape, over-sized population, multiplicity of castes and communities, religions and cultures are hardly found elsewhere in the world. It is very difficult to say precisely how and when Indian society originated and took a unique form. In the absence of written records relating to this, several speculations and oral traditions have come up. Thus, "the people of India are born of many vicissitudes of long history, each of the many stands adding its own special note of color, or a sudden flash of gold, to the intricate pattern of national life. "

Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." M.Albrow defines culture as "ways of acting, thinking and feeling which are transmitted from generation to generation ... through learning, not through inheritance." In Britannica Concise Encyclopedia Article the term 'culture' is explained as: "Integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that is both a result of and integral to the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations." Culture thus consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies and symbols".

Social practices, rituals and festive events are habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups and that are shared by and relevant to many of their members. They are significant because they reaffirm the identity of those who practise them as a group or a society and, whether performed in public or private, are closely linked to important events. Social, ritual and festive practices may help to mark the passing of the seasons, events in the agricultural calendar or the stages

of a person's life. They are closely linked to a community's worldview and perception of its own history and memory. They vary from small gatherings to large-scale social celebrations and commemorations. Each of these sub-domains is vast but there is also a great deal of overlap between them.

Social practices shape everyday life and are familiar to all members of the community, even if not everybody participates in them. Distinctive social practices that are specially relevant to a community and help reinforce a sense of identity and continuity with the past. Social practices, rituals and festive events involve a dazzling variety of forms: worship rites; rites of passage; birth, wedding and funeral rituals; oaths of allegiance; traditional legal systems; traditional games and sports; kinship and ritual kinship ceremonies; settlement patterns; culinary traditions; seasonal ceremonies; practices specific to men or women only; hunting, fishing and gathering practices and many more. They also include a wide variety of expressions and physical elements: special gestures and words, recitations, songs or dances, special clothing, processions, animal sacrifice, special food.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Showing to the society the important social practices of a community
2. Recognition of cultural values, practices of Morasu Vokkaliga Caste
3. Describe and explicate the rituals and customs of the Morasu Vokkaliga caste

### METHODOLOGY

Historical and analytical method is used in the present study. The entire study is mainly based on primary and secondary sources and field work is the core of the research used to gather the information gleaned from primary and secondary sources.

### DISCUSSION

Rituals and festive events often take place at special times and places and remind a community of aspects of its worldview and history. In some cases, access to rituals may be restricted to certain members of the community; initiation rites and burial ceremonies are two such examples. Some festive events, however, are a key part of public life and are open to all members of society; carnivals and events to mark the New Year, beginning of Spring and end of the harvest are inclusive occasions common all over the world.

The Vokkaliga community is perhaps the oldest and predominant agricultural community in Karnataka. This community has several sub-groups within its fold. Among them Morasu Vokkaligas form one of largest and important sub - division of the peasant class of the Southern Karnataka . They are found chiefly in the Taluks of Doddaballapura, Devanahalli, Chikkaballapura, Gummanayakanapalya, Malur, Hoskote, Kolar and Bangalore Rural. There are some peculiar and unique rites and rituals of Morasu Vokkaligas.

Some of the special customs and rituals of Morasu Vokkaliga Community are :-

**Bandidyavara :** This ritual is the prominent one among this caste. Originally Bandidyavara was celebrated once in 20 years as the girl Doddamma( symbol of chastity) with whose respect it is performed, was believed to have saved her family with her prayers to river god when she was 20 years old. But now a days that period of celebration varies from 10 years to 20 years at different places for different reasons. The majority of families among this sub-caste identify themselves as "Bandidyavara Vokkaligas". They are also identified as " Beralu Koduva Vokkaligas". These are the customary traditions which are the integral part of their lives. The practice would have had the pre-historic background and are being practiced as unique rituals. The puranic evidences for this ritual is theoretic classic and historically the migration theory of the caste is said to be unconvincing.

There is a legendary story pertaining to this ritual. According to this the originator of Morasu vokkaligas, Ranabhairegowda and his five brothers had their settlement at Yanamanji - Puttur near kanchi. The local palegar's eye fell on Doddamma, the daughter of Ranabhairegowda. As the palegar was from lower caste, to escape from caste violation , Doddamma family decided to vacate the place to

safeguard themselves from the wrath of the Palegar. Ranabhairegowda and his associates along with Doddamma left their settlement and travelled in the north direction. They were chased by the Palegar and his men. The fugitives at length came to the banks of river parlar, which they found full and impassable, and their cruel pursuer approaching at hand. In the dreadful dilemma, Doddamma prayed to the river goddess to help them to cross the river and she also offered her ear studs to the river goddess. Goddess was pleased to grant their prayer, and water in an instant divided, and left a dry place, over which they passed. The moment they reached the opposite bank, the waters closed and prevented their adversary from pursuing them, who returned to his own country.

The family settled in Avati and soon afterwards emerged as Palegars of Avati. The members migrated to different parts of Morasu Nadu and established their own palepattu in Hosakote, Bangalore, Chikkabalapura. From that period onwards they started celebration of Bandidyavara ritual i.e., worship of Bandi and their sister Doddamma (symbol of chastity) and the river goddess who helped them to flee from Yanamanji-Puttur.

To undergo the custom of marriage one (male as well as female) has to go through Bandidyavara ritual. Earlier this ritual was performed for a month but now a days it is reduced to a week. During Bandidyavara celebration Gangamma, Akkojamma, Patalamma, Karagadamma, Garigeshwari, Eerlappa, suggalamma, satyamma, Chowdeshwaramma and other female goddesses are specially worshipped with the animal sacrifices and lighting lamps. Same goddesses have different names at different regions. Seven to nine goddesses are worshipped during the occasion.

One of the highlights of the celebration of bandidyavara is the observance of well being of children. During the celebration, worshipping of their clan goddesses for their upliftment through all rituals. It is only after observing this ritual the ear piercing ceremony for the children is done. During the entire process women play a major role in the entire process.

Normally it is celebrated in the Karaga masa after Yugadi. Prior conditions for this celebration are - no deaths take place among these families from the period of Yugadi till the period of celebration. In case any pregnant women are there among the families and incase of sutaka for death is there also, dyavara should not be celebrated. The main members of families or elderly members of Bandidyavara should not take part in other castes' death rituals. For the celebration, families of same gotras from different villages will gather in the main village.



### **A couple performing ritual for their son carrying Karaga during Bandidyavara celebration**

Prior to the ritual the main heads of families assemble at a place and decide about the day when it has to be initiated. The expenses of celebration should also be calculated and divided among the families. The celebration process is considered as group responsibility. Prior to the ritual, other caste people i.e., Aasadi, Kalati, Madivala, Valaga are also informed and seek their co-operation. Though it demands more economic resources and appears economic burden on the families, people show their interest, commitment and caste responsibility and determination to follow the tradition with the interest of welfare of the families and caste system.

'**Beralu Kattarisuva**' (finger amputation) custom or finger amputation practice is a part bandidyavara celebration. The origin of the custom is narrated by Mr. V.N.Narasimmiyengar in an article

in Indian antiquary, II, 1873 and is briefly explained here : The women of this community sacrifice their forefinger to Bhairava Linga or Bandi Devaru( Shaiva Phallus so called) which are cut of by the village carpenter. The popular belief for this practice is as follows. Mahadeva or shiva, who was in great peril, after hiding successively in a castor- oil and Jawari plantation, concealed himself in a linga-tonde shrub from a rakshasa Bhasmasura who was pursuing him, to whom a Morasu Vokkaliga cultivator indicated, with the fore finger of his right hand, the hiding place of Siva. The god was only rescued from his peril by the interposition of Vishnu in the form of a lovely maiden meritoriously dressed, whom the lusty rakshasa, forgetting all about Shiva, attempted to ravish, and was consumed to ashes. On emerging from hiding place , Shiva decreed that the cultivator should forfeit the offending finger. The culprit's wife, who had just arrived at the field with food for her husband, hearing this dreadful sentences, threw herself at Siva's feet, and represented the certain ruin of her family if her husband should be disabled for some months from performing the labours of the farm, and besought the deity to accept her fore finger instead of one from her husband. Siva, pleased with so sincere a proof of conjugal affection, accepted the exchange, and ordered that her family posterity in all future generations should sacrifice fore finger at his temple as a memorial of the transaction, and of their exclusive devotion to the god of the lingam. The place where the wicked giant was burnt to death may still be recognized by a hill in the Kolar taluk called Bhasmasura Betta ( Bhasmasura hill) near Siti Betta, where there is a mine of Vibhiti or sacred ashes. According to Mr.F.Fawcett it was regularly practiced until the commissioner of Mysore put a stop to it about twenty years ago i.e., probably around 1878-80's. Afterwards the ritual would have been continued by replacing finger amputation with removal of gold or silver finger stall, which is removed instead of the finger itself. Afterwards practice of tying of flower to the fore finger and cutting of the flower as a symbol of amputation started and still in existence.

### Thali ( Mangalasutra)

A special kind of Thali can be seen among the morasu Vokkaligas which is unique among all the Vokkaligas castes of Karnataka and which can be seen only in the Morasu nadu region. Thali is circular in shape and has the circumference of about . There is slight difference in the shape of thali among families who have Shiva as their family god and families having Vishnu as their family god. The married women wear two thalis after marriage , the bigger one is tied by the Husband and the smaller one is tied to the bride by her mother.



**Hosadyavara** : Among the Morasu Vokkaligas one more important ritual is Hosadyavara. It is unique for the women of this caste (daughter -in- laws of the family). The purpose seems to be showing gratitude to the god for the good crops, rains and welfare of all the members and also introducing new daughter- in- law to the customs and practices of the family, teaching her the methods of worship by involving her closely in the customary function. It is a custom of collective worship. This ritual is performed, only once in a year that is on Sunday or Saturday and Sunday in Karthika month in some places. But in some other places it is held on Thursday of Chitra month, and Saturday and Sunday - two days ritualistic practice is also there in some other places . It is a ritual of showing gratitude towards the nature by attributing her with cultivated crops, fruits, flowers. It means being agricultural

community, the people have the belief of nature worship as it is the Mother earth is the creator of new life and she in the form of female goddesses maintains the well being of the people . This ritual indicates importance given to mother goddess and importance to female gender or woman who is the cause for the continuation of generation.

**Gotra System:** It is one more unique feature of this caste. Other than Kunchitiga subcaste of Vokkaliga community, this is the only subcaste among vokkaligas which has the Gotra system, which is of great importance in several fundamental matters of family affairs like inheritance, marriage, religious ceremonies and death rituals.

### CONCLUSION

Thus the article has briefly explained some of the cultural elements of Morasu Vokklaiga caste. The important features like nature worship( fertility goddess) in the form of worshipping fruits, animals crops and agricultural tools, worshipping of many female goddesses, collectiveness among the people of this caste, harmony with other castes of the village, importance to the women can be seen.

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