



## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF BHОВI COMMUNITY

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### ABSTRACT :

*Bhovi community people are different from the other castes in India. The dressing style, language, marriage system, festivals and other social events are also different than other communities. They have acquired more or less traditions and customs of other communities of different communities in respective States of India. It would not be exaggeration if we say that People from Bhovi community are first Engineers as they are considered to be the first people who made weapons from the stone. The Bhovi community is known by different names in Karnataka such as Mannu Vadar, Kallu Vadar, Bandi Vadar etc.,*

**KEYWORDS :** language, marriage system, festivals, Bhovi community.

### INTRODUCTION:

The 'Bhovi' community has been regarded differently as being a Backward Caste, Nomadic Race, Tribe or Scheduled Tribe, by different states in India. Because they settle where they go for work, these people have been able to maintain their individuality by preserving much of their cultural uniqueness. Historically speaking, Bhovi seems to be a caste or a race. In the beginning they used to work only with a piece of cloth tied round the waist to the knee, and so were considered to be a Tribe.

Thurston in his "Castes and Tribes of Southern India" regarded the Bhovi or Waddar as a backward community. The Havnur Commission included the Waddar (Bhovi) in the backward tribe in 1975. The Govt. of Karnataka has accepted the Waddar (Bhovi) as Scheduled Tribe (ST) from 1977 onwards and subsequently has included them as Scheduled Caste (SC).

Kinship is the most important element in this tribe. Every individual understands the internal aspects of his community. The socio-cultural system of the Waddar depends on kinship. The tribe follows strict traditions and always suspects others. The tribe has its own language, customs, traditions, folklore, literature etc.

It has been opined that, the Bhovi's fled from (Odiss) Orissa, being the traitors and so they are considered Waddars or Bhovi's, Some people are of the opinion that they migrated from A.P. and come to Karnataka during the reign of Vijayanagara kings. Originally, Waddar (Bhovi) is a group in Dravidas. Vaddu (Kannada word) means big bunds in fields, Wadda (in Kannada) means Yajmana or the patriarch. Therefore it can be discerned that these Waddars travelled far and wide in the country for work and settled in different states.



## Social and Cultural life of Bhovi Community

### Festivals :

Each family has its own diety for worship. But generally, for the entire community there is a temple of god<sup>^</sup>ss Durga Devi. The week day for the worship is Friday. Every Ugadi (New year according to Indian calendar), they celebrate a fair by individual contribution from all people of the community.

The practice of Bali (animal sacrifice) is found. Usually on the Day of Annual Fair, lamb, fowl he buffalo or goat are offered as sacrifice. It is a sight to see the grandeur of the fair. Men and women pray the goddess for the fulfilment of certain promises (Individual Harake). Some people show their devotion by prostrating themselves in front of the deity in fair-day. Some others fulfill their pledges by offering two-legged animals (hen), four legged animal (lamb, he-buffalo), eight legged animal (a pregnant sheep) etc. They are much pious and all members of the community pray her on that day. The animal sacrifice (Bali) is the speciality of these deities. It is believed that, these deities are strong and short tempered and hence they need the sacrifice of blood.

### The Ritual of Girls' Maturation (Coming of Age) :

In the Bhovi community, when girl reaches her maturity, it is celebrated as a family function quite grandly. The person, who happens to be the brother-in-law, builds a hut in her courtyard. She sits on a platform, and a sickle, neera leaves, and areca nuts are placed in front of her. To keep her free from other's harmful eye sight (Drishti-Nivarana) and make her mentally quite sound, a sickle is placed. Neem, which is bitter but of medicinal value, prevents any harmful creature from moving near her. And, arecanut is supposed to be of good omen.

On the day of maturity, one hen is killed and arati is offered to her. She does not do any work till this arati ritual is finished. For her meals, meat of the hen and coconut and jaggery is given. She stays for five days in the hut prepared by her brother-in-law. Then only she enters the home. This is followed by the burning of the hut by the brother-in-law. The elders replace the old mud pots with the new ones.

On the last day, she is given a head-bath. Then, she touches a green plant. It believed that if the plant continues to be green, her life will flourish.

### Marriage :

The system of child-marriage is not in vogue in this community. A girl is married only after maturity. The system of searching for bride (Kanya - Vadhu) is in practice. If the groom consents, the bride is given the sacred -bananas. This is followed by other enquiries whether the two horoscopes match or not etc. There are more than hundred 'Bedagu' (Gotras) in the Bhovi Waddar community. If the Bedagu of the bride and the groom is same, they are thought to be brother and sister, and so they cannot marry. The marriage takes place if the bride's side go to the grooms home. The marriage is the result of the mutual consent of the two parties.

The party of the groom, at the time of coming to the bride's home, bring sugar, betel-leaves, areca nuts, etc, Openly, the groom's party is to announce that they have selected the bride, and the bride's party should say that they have agreed. Then, the bride is given a kind of Arathi by the elders. This is the engagement of the two. Marriage takes place at their convenience. The groom's party has to give vadhudakshina to the bride, before marriage.

According to the tradition, marriage takes place before the bride's home. Her yard is decorated with leaves of banana, mango, etc. Thus a roof is prepared. The groom comes s a day before the marriage and is given a hearty welcome. Marriage ceremony lasts for 3 days.

The first day is the day of worship, the second day is of turmeric day, followed by marriage on the third day. The bride and the groom are made up with sancal paste in their respective village temples. This is known as Devara Gandha (sacred sandal). The turmeric bath is given in their respective homes. The bride is accompanied by her younger sister.

### The marriage ritual :

Four new mud pots are placed in all the four directions. The bride and the groom go round this mantap five times. Then they sit at the centre of the vivah-mantap. At this moment their hands are decorated with a sacred knot of turmeric, betel leaves and holy string. Then they are given arathi. Afterwards the couple go round the central pole of the marriage mantap five times. The groom asks the permission of the elders to tie the mangal-sutra (symbol of marriage) round the bride's neck. He is teased, but at last permitted. Once again after the mangalya dharana, the couple go round the central pole of the mantap. He bows and salutes all the elders. After make up, the couple sit on the stage, others bless them with rice (Akshata).

The bride is sent in new saree from her mother's home to the husband's home before the night falls (She should not see the light of her mother's house that day). The couple is given a warm welcome in the groom's home. The arathi is given for five times. One, arati may be given in bride's home, remaining four aratis can be performed in her mother's house. In this way, the marriage ceremony reaches its happy ending. The marriage practice of Bhovi's is very similar to that of other Hindus.

### Birth of a Child and Naming :

A pregnant woman gives birth to a child either in her mother's home or in her husband's house. But the first delivery is to be done in her mother's home, with the help of a nurse. On the 3rd day of the child's birth, they worship goddess of fate (Shettawa Devi).

The birth of a child is looked upon as being no much pure; so the mother and the new born child are kept in a separate room. She and her child are given hot water bath twice a day and fire is kept burning to keep warm. Fire is of dung cakes. Her food consists of meat of fowl and pig. She eats wheat and its dishes, coconut with jaggery etc. She returns to her husband's home in the 3rd or the 7th month.

### Naming :

On the thirteenth day of child's birth, the surrounding women are invited to the 'namakarana' ritual. First, the sister of the child's father calls loudly a name in its (child's) ears. All other women sing a song in this respect. And bakedcorns are distributed to all invited guests. The usual names in this community are : **Male** : name duragappa, hanmappa, tammappa, holeppa, huligeppa, sanndurgappa: dodddurgappa,. **Female** name : duragawa, hanmawa, tammawa, holewa, huligawa, sanndurgawa, dodddurgawa.

### The Funeral Ceremony :

When a person dies, they perform a typical funeral rite. Fruits, kumkum, and sacred ash are placed in front of the deid body which is in slept position. In the same position the dead body is carried on the bier to the grave yard. The shroud is usually new cloth. The body is buried, and a tomb is prepared. But in case a pregnant or a woman giving birth to a child, dies, she is burnt and not buried.

On the day of obituary, the dead person's favourite dishes are prepared and placed before his photograph. After prayer, requesting for the peace of his soul, the people place the meals in the yard. If a crow comes and touches the meals, the dead person is supposed to have died in satisfaction. If it does not come and touch, they think that the man has died, with many wishes unfulfilled or unsatisfied. This is known as murukoolu (Three meals).

After the death of her husband, the widow removes her kumkum, breaks her bangles, and the mangal sutra. Widow re-marriage is not allowed, it is strictly prohibited. Nine or 10 days after the death a memorial function is celebrated. If the dead person is a woman, a silver statue of the goddess is made and kept in the box; if it is a man, god's statue is kept in the box. This marks the end of the funeral ceremony.

### Food Habits :

The food of these people consists of bread (rotti), pulses, vegetables etc. as far as regular meals is concerned. They prefer non-vegetarian food like mutton, fish or chicken at least once in a week. They think

that it is inevitable to drink arrack to overcome exhaustion and tiredness. Mannu Waddaru, a community of the Waddar, eat white rat, found in the fields. Their festival-special is sweet-meals. Generally, they like meat and are non-vegetarians.

#### **Dress :**

Their traditional dress is simple and beautiful. Men wear dhotra (a cloth tied round the waist, to the knee), shirt and cap or turban. Women wear simple saree. They don't wear any blouse or tunics to cover their breasts. They do wear bangles but keep the right hand bare. If you ask the reason, they say that a man has gone to fetch blouse and bangles and he has not yet returned, so they don't wear bangles and blouse. This tradition is in practice till today.

#### **Ornaments :**

The women of this community wear the ornaments such as ear-rings, other-ear ornaments, (regionally known by the names - Bentjaval, kaddi, talk etc), nose-rings (regionally familiar with the names - mugubat, nattu etc.). They decorate their legs with anklets and rings for toes (in vernacular they are - pilli, kalungar, geji) and the silver chain with musical bells. They wear necklace (of various kinds - talisara, havalad sara, gundinsara, padaka sara, etc.) and lace made of pearls and precious stones. Their fingers are decorated with rings with jade and other such precious stones. Some arms' ornaments worn by these women are - tolabandi, wristlet, wristlace, etc. They also wear girdles of silver or gold on their waist.

Men also wear wristlet and anklet. They are fond of wearing ear rings and gold chains on the neck. They prefer silver anklet. These are the traditional ornaments of the waddar community.

Some of the important ornaments are as follows :

1. **Ear ornaments** : Bendavali, Bugadi kaddi, Ba:vali kaddi, Kenesarapani and Tazluk kaddi.
2. **Nose ornaments** : Mugabattu, Nattu, Gutumugut, Naksatra: mugat, Ringu.
3. **Leg's ornaments** : Ka:lungr, Philli, Mi^cu, Penda:ligeji and Tode, 4.
4. **Neck ornaments** : Tarlisar, Havaladsar, Tikisar, Gundinsar and Padaksar.
5. **Finger Ornaments** : Ungur, Halin ungur, Mutin Ungur and Vanki ungur.
6. **Arm's ornaments** : Tolabandi, Kadag, Bilavarrbali, Ungura,
7. **Waist's ornaments** : Da:bu, Nadapatti and Mincupatti.

#### **Occupation :**

As has been cited above, there are three communities, Kalluwaddaru, Mannuwaddaru and Bandiwaddaru among the Waddars.

**Occupation of Kalluwaddaru** : Their occupation is mostly associated with stones. They prepare grinding stones, make statues of lord Hanuman, etc. They show their skill in sculpture also.

**Occupation of Mannuwaddaru** : They work in soil. Construction of ponds, fencing the fields with mud fence, digging the canals and wells, etc. are their usual work.

**Occupation of Bandiwaddaru** : They work with the rocks. They cut the rocks and transport them in the cart.

In short it is these three communities who work in road construction, building construction, dam construction, and preparing many household instruments of stone for use, which they sell in the villages. They lead their life which is at subsistence level on the basis of these works which are, but labor-intensive works.

#### **Settlement Pattern :**

As they lead a nomadic life, their settlement is temporary. At the place of work they build small but simple and beautiful huts. They live there till the work is over. And at another place where they migrate in search of work, they build another hut and so on. Thus, they were nomadic. Usually, these people don't

have well constructed homes, but only small huts though they can build any beautiful bungalow. The huts are built with, bamboo, sticks, twigs, mats and dried grass.

But in these days of rapid scientific and technological advancement, some people do show a significant change. There are separate streets in each town, or village for them. Now huts are no more in common existence. As per their capability they have homes of tiles, asbestos cement sheets and RCC homes. Now, they have mostly permanent houses. They go to the place of work every day and return to their permanent dwelling places. Because they live permanently at a specific area in group, their areas are known by names such as Waddar oni (Waddar colony), Bhovi keri or Waddarageri.

### CONCLUSION :

- Bhovi community peoples were mostly illiterate and the level of education amongst the literate parents was to secondary school education only.
- Bhovi community peoples were carrying good opinion about the attitude of working Vadar woman.
- Bhovi community was expert in building structure for Bhovi management in the ancient time they built wells ponds, dames, canals for storage & big bungalows supply of weaker but today's Lack of the traditional work. There for finish the identity of the Bhovi community.
- The peoples of Bhovi community were not well aware about their health. Because of lack of awareness about health issues, they were not able to prevent diseases.
- The peoples of Bhovi community spend their money to celebrate the religious festivals whether they have to take money on loan.
- The impact of the modernization on the religion, customs and traditional work of the Bhovi Community.
- Major impact of the Vadar Community population facing in the shape of loss of identity through the establishment of industries that brings in development in the technology and its concurrent side -effects.

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