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MORASU VOKKALIGAS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MORASUNADU

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ABSTRACT:

The region of Morasunadu is spread across the three states, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. The Vokkaligas of this region would have got the name Morasu Vokkaligas. From the times of Gangas till the aftermath of Yelahanka Nadaprabhus the regions consisting of Kolar, Bangalore, Kolar, Chikkaballapura, Hosur, Dindigal and Kanchi were known as Morasu or Marasu is authenticated by number of inscriptions. Literary and inscriptional evidences throw light on Morasu Vokkaligas of Morasunadu region.



KEYWORDS: Morasunadu, Vokkaligas, aftermath, authenticated, literary, evidences.

INTRODUCTION

Morasu Vokkaligas community is one of the very important agricultural communities of Karnataka. This sub-caste is mainly concentrating in the south – eastern part of Karnataka which was known as Morasunadu from sangam age till 16th century (authenticated by inscriptions and literary records). The Morasu Vokkaligas are numerically large in number in Morasunadu region of Karnataka. Cultivation is the traditional occupation of this caste. They have Gotras or bedagus namely: Mallige, Honge, Hippe, Ala, Kaggali, Mandalaka, Minchalarama etc. There are two groups among them Telugu speaking Morasu Vokkaligas and Kannada speaking Morasu Vokkaligas. In olden days they had Jati panchayat system.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the boundary of Morasunadu
- To get knowledge about Morasu Vokkaligas of Morasunadu
- This paper probes and highlights their geographical spread and history

“MORASU” Meaning

The meaning of the term Morasu is not clear. Some say that it is the name of the language which they speak, that is, Canarese; but this name is not traceable in usage for the Canarese language. Other say that it means, weavers of mats and baskets. This meaning cannot be a correct one, as Morasus are nowhere known as having been basket or mat makers. The third and most probable meaning is that they are so called because they formerly inhabited a country known by the name of Morasunadu¹.

It is good to take the term as Morasu which means to hide, to keep oneself out of view according to Kittel. It shows that Morasu region had been hilly place. Kannada literary works mention about hunting tribe of Morasu region were known for warfare skills. The Vokkaligas of this region would have got the name Morasu Vokkaligas². It is stated that 'Moradu' a Kannada word closure to 'Morasu' means a place full of hillocks and boulders. True to this mention we can see hillocks and boulders throughout this region. It also means a land of gravel. The entire Morasunadu is a land of gravel.

The original form of Vokkaliga is believed as "Urke" which is quoted in "Shabdhamani Darpana" of Keshiraja. The word "urke" means, "good manners" or "noble nature". As per

¹Nanjundayya, H. V, Ananthakrishna Iyer, L. K, Mysore Tribes and Castes, Vol-IV, p.226.

²Rajegowda, H. K, Vasu, M. V (Edi), Dakshina Karnatakada Arasu Manetanagalu, Prasaranga, p.287.

Halagannada (old Kannada), ploughing of land is referred as "urke". As the time passed, the word "urke" has become "ukke". The one who plough, sow, and reap was called "ukkeyiga". Gradually, the word "ukkeyiga" took a different shape "ukkaliga" and then "Vokkaliga". Vokkalutana or ploughing profession gradually became a caste³.

MORASUNADU

The region of Morasunadu is spread across the three states, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. The region consists of Doddaballapura, Devanahalli and Hoskote of Bangalore rural district, Chikkaballapura and Kolar districts in Karnataka, Hosur, Dindigal and Krishnagiri in Tamilnadu and Chittoor and some parts of Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh. Major part of Morasunadu is in Karnataka. Though it was divided into three fragments, it has a unique culture⁴. The folklore of any region is moulded with the influence of surrounding geographical and cultural elements. Same tradition, but the way it is followed varies from place to place. For the same reason, it is very essential to know the geography of the region before entering the study of folklore of that region. It is a place situated at the height of about 2500 feet above the sea level, summer is also a cool and pleasant season here, though some eastern parts of this region that belong to Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu is slightly hot. The minimum temperature of this region of the year is 13 degrees centigrade and the maximum is 35 degrees. Morasunadu belongs to the maidan group of areas as distinct from the hilly regions. And is located geographically between 12° 35' and 13° 06' north latitude and 77° 35' and 78° 58' east longitude. The statistics based on* the census of 2011 records that the region has a total population of 76,80,080. According to 2011 census, the average literacy rate of this region is 73.50%. The famous Horsley

³Pandukumar, B, 1600 Varshagala Vokkaligara Itihasa, p.12.

⁴Banjagere Jayaprakasha (Edi), Morasunadu Kathhegalu, p.IV.

hills, Shatashrunge Parvatha (Anataragange) and Nandi hills are situated in this region. Nandi hills stretches in northern direction until Penagonda of Andhra Pradesh and Dharmavaram. Runs parallelly towards east by dividing Chitravathi and Papagni valleys. This same hilly range expands until Tekal through Kolar and Vakkaleri. The region is included under the Monsoon area and the annual rainfall amounts to 768 mm. The temperature varies from the lowest of 14° to 16° C to maximum of 36° C during the months of April-May. The rivers: South Pennar and North Pennar, Kumudavathi, Chitravathi, Kushavathi, Paapaagni, Sanath Kumara, Paalar and Vanneru are born in and flow through the region. Ragi (Black millet) and paddy are the popular crops here. Though Hosur has become an industrial town and Bengaluru is acclaimed as the Silicon Valley, the people of the region have a firm base for agriculture. In the recent decades, industries entered most southern east part of Morasunadu, and the region as become hub of industrial activity. Industrial areas and industrial towns are raised around Hosur, Tamaka (Kolar), Narasapura, Vemagal and in many areas of Bangalore⁵.

From the times of Gangas till the aftermath of Yelahanka Nadaprabhus the regions consisting of Kolar, Bangalore, Kolar, Chikkaballapura, Hosur, Dindigal and Kanchi were known as Morasu or Marasu is authenticated by number of inscriptions. The earliest reference about Morasunadu is made in an inscription found at Varthuru dated, 820 A.D⁶. An inscription found at Halehalli of Anekal taluk has stated "Mudigonda Cholamandalattu Rajendra Cholavalanattu Murusunadu" which meant that Morasunadu was under the control of Rajendra Chola of Chola kingdom⁷. There is mention of Morasunadu in another inscription found at

⁵Anees Siraj, S (Edi), Kolar District Gazetteer, p.1-49. ⁶Epigraphia Karnatica, Vol-IX (Rice Volumes), Bengaluru 40. ⁷ibid, 46.

Beguru dated 1110 A.D⁸. This region was under the control of different ruling dynasties from the ancient times: Banas, Nolambas, Hoysalas, Cholas and Vijayanagara kingdoms. This region was named differently during the ruling of different dynasties. During Cholas it was part of "Cholamandalam", and it was "Nolambavadi" during Nolambas⁹.

There is a reference as 'swasti sri permanadi pritivi rajyageye nolamba shivamaram morasu naadaluttire' in an inscription belonged to the period of the king Permanadi of Ganga dynasty¹⁰. An inscription dated to the period of King Madhava Varman of Ganga dynasty refers about "Madavamahadhirajar koraju tamma kula gattivarmapasetaadu morasunada perpusur namagrama adara tatakada vatigai kade kottu moodaidiseyadu"¹¹.

An Inscription dated to the period of Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar Kingdom tells that "Morasenadakke samsthe hosakotyakhaseemagam samsthitam purvadigbage gopura pallita"¹². It is evident that this place was known as Morasunadu from the period of King Madhava, one of the founders of Ganga dynasty till the period of popular King Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar dynasty¹³. References about Morasunadu can be seen not only in the inscriptions but also in some of the Kannada and Sanskrit poetries. The poetry "Chikkadevaraja Vijaya" written by Tirumalarya about the triumph of king of Mysore Chikkadevaraya mentions about Marasu nadu as follows:

Palarumolanaada doregal
Malenadugarodane beda morasaumennee

⁸ibid, 45.

⁹Raghunath, Sa, Vijayaraghavan, R (Edi), Banjagere Jayaprakasha (Chi Edi), Morasunadu Kathegalu, p.VIII.

¹⁰Epigraphia carnatica, Vol-IX, Bengaluru 40.

¹¹M.A.R. 1941, p.27.

¹²E.C. Vol-9, Bengaluru 30.

¹³Rajegowda, H. K, Vasu. M. V (Edi), Dakshina Karnatakada Arasu Manetanagalu, p.288.

Baladodagharadire dhareyol Maleparadaarendu nindanadantinda Morasu rajyava hokku turuvanu
serevidi Dirade janara kangedisi
Sharanu hokkuvarige nambugeya kottu mundakke Teralidanaa khananaaga¹⁴

The above examples indicate that Yelahanka region was known as Morasunadu even after the downfall of Vijayanagar kingdom. There is a reference about Ranadulla Khan entering Morasunadu through Tumkur and Shivagange route in the literary work 'Kanthirava narasarajavijaya'. It is clear from these sources that Bangalore, Kolar and Chikkaballapura were known as Morasunadu from the ancient times. My study is confined to South Eastern part of Karnataka which was once part of Morasunadu.

MORASU VOKKALIGAS:

The Vokkaligas who lived in Morasunadu region are known as “Morasu Vokkaligas”. There is a mention of branches of Vokkaliga’s in poem believed to be written by a poet called Devalaraja in the time of Bukkaraya.

Bele (vamsha) yanvayadi hadinalku shakhegalu Chokkadi vivarisuve sathyavarasi
Motati Velnati Morasembayodhya

¹⁴Bharathi Nanja (Edi), Kanteerava Narasaraja Vijaya, p.11-56.

Vamsha pongalanati pakanati Bhumanchi kurucheti munnoti desati Onara gandiyakota voruganti
Emba prasidhi andjrvanasthaladi Gowravadhishitita okkala kulavu
Vamsha hadinalku kulagalembuvu jagadi Parampareyim prakashisiva nadive Nivara upajathigalihavu
vidhagalagi Bhujabalatopa chikka bukkabhupa¹⁵

Territorial element would have played an important role for Vokkaligas of Morasunadu region in getting the name “Morasu Vokkaligas”. For example, the divisions among the Kapus or Reddis of Telugu speaking portion, the macro region, show a strong territorial character. Pant Reddis, one of the major sub-divisions among this dominant peasant group, are called the fourteen community during and after the 15th century. Of the fourteen names, twelve may be conclusively identified as territorial: Pakanati Kapus of Kapunadu, Velanati Kapus of Valanadu, Motali Kapus of Mottanadu, Munnuru Kapus of Mulki 300 country¹⁶.

The Vokkaliga community is perhaps the oldest and predominant agricultural community in Karnataka. This community has several sub-groups within its fold such as Morasu Vokkaliga, Dasokkaliga, Sada Vokkaliga, Kunchitiga Vokkaliga, Namadari Vokkaliga etc. Among them Morasu Vokkaligas form one of the large and important sub-caste of Vokkaliga caste of the Southern Karnataka.

¹⁵Raghunath, Sa. Vijayaraghavan, R (Edi), Banjagere Jayaprakasha (Chi Edi), Morasunadu Kathhegalu, p.VII.

¹⁶ Somasekhara Sarma, M, History of Reddi Kingdoms (circa. 1325 A. D., to circa. 1448 A. D), p.52, 239

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In marriage they had the tradition of giving Tera (Balehana) to the bride. Along with the Hindu festivals, the Morasu Vokkaligas worship their own Hosadevaru, Karaga- devaru, Bandidevaru etc. In olden days they (women of this caste) had a custom of offering a finger to Lord Bhairaveshvara (shiva). They are most commonly called as Morasu Vokkaligaru or Hosadevara Vokkaligaru or Bandidyavara Vokkaligaru or Beralu kodo Vokkaligaru. Morasu

Vokkaliga is a main sub-caste which has few sub-groups. These sub-groups including Morasu sub-caste strictly follow endogamous rules¹⁷.

The following legendary account of the origin of the “Morasu Vellalu” is given in the Baramahal Records. Paluru villagewas in the kingdom of Kanjeevaram. This village was inhabited by Morasu Vellalu. The chieftain of this region fell in love with daughter of one of the Morasu Vellalu. He demanded her family to get her married to him. But her parents denied this proposal because of the caste

difference. But the chieftain determined on using force to fulfil his desires. Girl's parents understood his adamancy, discussed with Vellalu group, and decided to

¹⁷S. Anees Siraj (Edi), Kolar District Gazetteer, 258.

pretend that they agree to his proposal for the time being and quitting the country in a favorable time. They sent their consent and fixed marriage. Prepared their house for wedding ceremonies. The chief sent grain, cloths, ornaments, and other gracefulness for the wedding. The parents put the cloths and ornaments to a dog, tied it to a pillar of wedding pandal and ran away with their daughter and the sect. The chief being vexed and mortified after hearing their trick, set out with his men chasing the prey. When the fugitives came to the banks of river Pennar, could see her flowing full and impossible to cross.

They prayed god Vishnu for his assistance in crossing the river and if he helps, they henceforth will adopt Vishnu and Hanumantha their tutelary deities. Vishnu was pleased to grant their prayer, and by his command the water in an instant divided, and left a dry space, over which they passed. The moment they reached the opposite bank. The water closed and prevented their adversary from pursuing them, who returned their country. The sect settled near the banks of river pennar and in the later years, they spread across eastern part of Mysore state which was then called Morasunadu. Since then, the surname Morasu arose¹⁸.

Though most of the historians refer this theory for the origin of this community, hard to believe this as migration of seven families around beginning of medieval period would account to the present population around 12 lakhs. It can be believed that the seven families of Ranabyregowda migrated from Elamanji Puttur of Tamilnadu and rose as chieftains of seven principalities in and around Chikkaballapura, Kolar and Bangalore districts. But this family alone cannot be considered as the originator of the whole Morasu Vokkaliga community. They are the aboriginal people of Morasunadu region that spread across three states, known with different

¹⁸Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol-5, p.74-75.

names: Morasu Vokkaligas in Karnataka, Morsu Vellallu in Tamilnadu and Veralu Icche Kapulu in Andhra Pradesh.

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