

40 of 1996, will empower the panchayats in Scheduled Areas and bring about a sea change in their development provided it is implemented in its true spirit. Further, the elections to panchayats in Scheduled Areas of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were held but the results were withheld due to Supreme Court stay on reservations. The tenure of the elected body in the case of others is over, but the tribals in Scheduled Areas could not view the elected body or their development (Rao 1999)

In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, like the rest of India, it has become important for tribes to be treated with dignity and respect. This includes an active recognition of their way of life and of the fact that they are very much tied to the lands they live in. Through legislation, government policy and tribal participation many of the 33 diverse tribes of Andhra Pradesh are becoming part of mainstream society without losing out on their own culture.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Discuss the kind of government policies being enacted for tribal welfare in Andhra Pradesh.

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

This unit looked at the tribal population in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana from the following perspectives:

- The kind of tribal population found in the state and its divisions based on habitation and lifestyle followed.
- A look at three tribes, Chenchus, Gonds and Konda Reddis, from an anthropological perspective that examined their culture and way of life.
- A brief look at the government policies and its involvement with the tribals in the state before and after Independence.
- The salient problems that the tribals are facing especially in terms of land rights and development issues in modern India.

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UNIT 2 TRIBES OF KARNATAKA

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Tribes of Karnataka
- 2.3 Present Scenario of Tribes in Karnataka
- 2.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Enumerate the various important tribes living in the state of Karnataka;
- Describe the various facets of Tribal culture and its varied exuberance; and
- Discuss in details the present socio-economic states of tribes in the society of Karnataka.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Geographically, Karnataka occupies the centre tableland of the Deccan Plateau. At times, it has been termed as an anthropological museum, where the people of different racial traits are seen. Apart from the so-called Dravidians and Indo-Aryan races, the land has notable strains of other categories too. Owing to their rich and varied cultural elements, the tribes of Karnataka have drawn the attention of numerous anthropologists. After conducting several researches on the lifestyle, culture and tradition of these tribes of Karnataka, they have been able to throw some important points about them. In this unit, we shall be emphasizing on getting a general overview about tribal life of Karnataka and also talk about few important tribes in particular.

2.2 TRIBES OF KARNATAKA

According to 2011 census, Karnataka with an area of 1,91,791 sq. km. has a population of 61,095,297 with 30,966,657 males and 30,128,640 females.

Demographic Profile of Tribals in the State

Karnataka's population constitutes 7% of India's tribal population. According to 2011 census, there are 101 Schedule Caste and 50 Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka. A vast majority of people of the Schedule Caste and the Scheduled Tribes live in rural areas. The tribal population of Karnataka increased to 4,248,987 lakh in 2001 from 1,915,691 lakh in 1991. The decadal growth rate during this period is a high 80.8 per cent, caused not by a spurt in fertility rates but by the addition of several new tribes to the Scheduled Tribes category.

Cultural Aspects of Tribals in Karnataka

The tribes of Karnataka have built their settlements in several hilly and mountainous areas. As far as the languages are concerned, the tribes of Karnataka state converse with each other in different languages with Kannada language being the main language. Today these tribes of Karnataka speak in other languages like Malayalam, Hindi etc.

Following the tradition of most of the tribes of the whole country, these tribes of Karnataka are also followers of diverse religions. Although Hinduism is the most prevalent religion, there are only a handful of tribes of Karnataka who have adept to religions like Islam and Christianity.

Several other tribal communities of Karnataka possess their distinct tradition and ethnicity. They communicate in their local dialect and they also maintain their own tradition. Some of them are also reckoned as being originated from the warrior race. Coorg and Kodavas are known for their cultural and traditional distinctions among the tribal communities.

Fairs and festivals too are an integral part of the culture of and tradition of the state of Karnataka. The tribes of Karnataka are also known for their costumes, cultural habits, folk dances and songs, foods and their way of celebrating different festivals and occasions. A renowned dance format of the tribal communities of Karnataka is the 'open- air folk theatre', better known as Bayalataa. This dance-drama in general has four or five actors or actresses, aided by a jester. The theme of this dance drama centers around several mythological stories. However, there are times when true life incidents are also emphasized in this dance of the tribes of Karnataka. This dance is executed at religious festivals and various social and family occasions. Generally these festivals start at night and carry on till quite a long period of time. Other dance forms that are quite popular amongst all the tribes of Karnataka are namely Yakshagana, Daddata etc. In case of both the dance forms, the tribes of Karnataka enact several famous stories of the great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. Certain norms are followed by the tribes of Karnataka while undertaking dance performances. For instance the costumes are complicated, the make-up is loud, facial expression are vital and are usually associated with thunderous noises and 'war-cries'.

The long list of the tribes of Karnataka state includes Bedar tribe, Toda tribe, Hakkipikki tribe, Jenu Kuruba tribe, Kadu Kuruba tribe, Kattunayakan tribe, Konda Kapus tribe, Sholaga tribe etc. Among several tribal communities of the state of Karnataka, the Bedar tribe is worth mentioning which is far famed by several names, namely, Beda, Berad, Boya, Bendar, etc. Another tribal community of Karnataka is the Hakkipikki tribe. The birth of this Hakkipikki tribal community has rich history, which also establishes a relation with the famous Ranaprathap Singh.

The Jenu Kuruba tribes have caught the attention of all the famous anthropologists of the Indian Territory because of their profession, superb language, households etc. Kadu Kuruba tribe is one of the significant tribes who have got the rich tradition of worshiping stone and also their predecessors with lots of festivity and enthusiasm. Apart from these tribal groups, the Kattunayakan tribe is said to be the descendants of the Pallavas. Collection of food is one of the chief professional activities of the Kattunayakan tribes who also have got inclination to religious values and ethnicity. Konda Kapus tribe falls in the list of the scheduled tribes in the whole of the Indian subcontinent exulting in its culture and tradition.

Another important tribal group, Sholaga tribe, has a belonging to the Kannada group. Numerous members of the Sholaga tribes converse with each other in the beautiful

language of Sholaga, which is also famous amongst other people in different names like Kadu Sholigar, Sholiga, Sholigar, Solaga, Soliga, Soligar, Solanayakkans, Sholanayika. They are the followers of Hindu religion. Moreover, the wonderful houses, good clothes, ennobled language has drawn the attention of many people towards the tradition of this Toda tribal community. These tribes have added multiplicity in the culture and tradition of Karnataka.

Historically, the tribal economy was based on subsistence agriculture and/or hunting and gathering. However, since the tribal people treated land as a common resource, they rarely had land titles, and thus, lost their lands to outsiders when exploitation of forest resources began to take place on a significant scale. This ensured that a majority ended up as small and marginal landholders. For the purpose of getting an in depth insight into the Tribal life of Karnataka, we shall elaborate on the social and cultural lives of the main tribes of Karnataka:

i) **Toda**

Toda Tribe of Karnataka is reckoned by the beautiful houses, nice costumes and enriched language and their culture. The origin of the Toda tribal community has got a history behind it. As per the records of the anthropologists, this Toda tribal community has established their settlements and lives cordially with other tribal communities like the Badaga, Kota, and Kurumba.

The Todas are seen as a pastoral tribe who herd buffaloes that roam the Nilgiri hills. Their way of living is simple and with their flowing beards, long hair, fine bodies and tall sticks in hand they resemble the prophets of the Old Testament. The Toda tribes judge time by the opening of the evening primrose which they call the 'six o'clock flower'.

As far as the languages are concerned, this Toda tribal community converse with each other in the language of the same name i.e. Toda language which belongs to the Dravidian language family with complex and intricate phonology. They are conversant with the earlier and present lingua franca of the Nilgiris, Badaga and Tamil. The Tamil script is used by them.

According to a particular school of thought, the Toda tribal community is one of the original tribal communities who had resided in the rugged provinces of the Nilgiris. Thus for quite a long time, the Toda tribal community have lead a life of complete isolation and alienation. Then in around 1823, the contemporary administrator of Coimbatore, John Sullivan liked the place of residence of this Toda tribal community and finally bought it from them. He also formed a town at that region which is popularly known as Udagamandalam. Thus the rapid communication with the modern world brought about several changes in the lifestyle this community. Areas where these Toda tribes make their dwellings are integrated under the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve; a UNESCO famed International Biosphere Reserve.

Like most of the tribal communities of Indian subcontinent, the Toda tribal community has got huge inclination towards religion and spiritualism. This Toda tribal community worships their dairy-buffaloes with lots of veneration. Besides this Toda tribal community has a plethora of Gods and Goddesses. Kona Shastra is the sole religious occasion, which deals with yearly sacrifice of a male buffalo calf.

The society of Toda tribe is very well knit. Monogamy is an ideal norm. Child marriage is the norm. Mates are normally acquired through negotiation, otherwise marriage by elopement is permissible, but marriage by capture is no more practiced. Bride price is

paid both in cash and kind. Residence after marriage is patrilocal. Divorce is permissible as is the remarriage of a divorcee, widow or a widower. The Toda women take part in agricultural operations, tend cattle, collect fuel and fetch potable water. They participate in economic activities and observe rituals. A pregnant woman is separated from the household as it entails pollution. The Toda marriage rituals are simple. The marriage and nuptials are performed at the bride's residence. The Toda funeral rites are rather elaborate. At the time of funeral rites, buffalo sacrifice is obligatory. Ancestors are worshipped by these people.

As far as the occupations of this Toda tribal community is concerned, maximum of these Toda tribes have taken up the occupations of cattle rearing and dairy farming. Most of the members have huge herd of buffaloes. This Toda tribal community sustains their livelihood from milk products. Toda tribes have also developed expertise in silver making. Although traditionally, the Toda are pastoral, but of late about a quarter of them have taken up commercial agriculture, particularly the cultivation of vegetables such as potato and cabbage.

Their attitude towards formal education is positive and thus their literacy rate is improving. Modern allopathic medicines, the Kurumba medicinal system and other indigenous methods of health care are simultaneously utilized by them. Hill area Development Programmes and other rural economic development projects are availed of and the resultant benefits are appreciated. Wood is the domestic fuel used. Their arable lands are irrigated by lift irrigation, rain water and water drawn from wells. The agriculturist Toda utilizes organic manure, as well as chemical fertilizers and insecticides. Midday-meal schemes, facilities of the Integrated Child Development scheme and of the public distribution system are available to them. Their attitude towards savings is not positive and they depend on moneylenders and shopkeepers for procuring loans and credit.

ii) **Jenu Kuruba**

Jenu Kuruba tribes of Karnataka are original residents of the forests regions of the Western Ghats. A Kuruba or Kurumba group who derive their name from jen or honey which they used to collect from the forest. They are concentrated in the Kodagu and Mysore districts of Karnataka. In the Kannada language, the term 'Jenu' signifies honey and 'kuruba' stands for caste. Therefore their name suggests that these Jenu Kuruba tribes have adapted the profession of honey gathering. Their speech, locally called Jenu Nudi, is a dialect of Kannada, one of the South Dravidian languages. They speak to others in Kannada. They use the Kannada script.

The anthropologists also have traced a rich history of the origination of this Jenu Kuruba tribal community of Karnataka. According to them, after the downfall of the Pallava dynasty, several Jenu Kuruba tribes have taken refuge in different places of the southern state of Indian subcontinent. The Jenu Kuruba tribes have taken up occupations like small land employers and cultivators. Since many of these Jenu Kuruba tribes have settled down in several forests hideouts, quite naturally these Jenu Kuruba tribes embraced the natural habitat of the forest region. Due to the elongated alienation, these Jenu Kuruba tribes have developed their own culture and ethnicity.

Adult marriage is preferred and alliances are generally made through negotiation. The people are monogamous. Divorce can be sought by either spouse. The remarriage of widows, widowers and male or female divorcees is permissible. Women participate in all economic activities and contribute to the family income considerably. But they are not allowed to participate in the worship of some deities. The Jenu Kuruba bury the dead and observe pollution for twelve days.

Moreover the Jenu Kuruba tribes lead a carefree lifestyle of a typical nomad, adapting to various occupations like conventional food collectors, shifting cultivators. These Jenu Kuruba tribes also carry on cultivation as a supplementary profession. Instead of plowing the field, these Jenu Kuruba tribes rub the surface with a sort of bamboo spear.

Housing settlements of these Jenu Kuruba tribes too witnesses the style and excellence of the whole of the Jenu Kuruba tribal community. Most of these Jenu Kuruba tribal communities reside in some tiny houses, popularly known as Hadi or Hatti.

Formal education is favored for the boys and to a certain extent for the girls. There are number of drop outs among the Jenu Kuruba students due to economic reasons. Residential schools impart primary education to the Jenu Kuruba children. These people use both traditional and modern system of medicine. Their attitude toward family planning is not very favorable. Facilities for drinking water, electricity, roads, postal services are available to them. They have been provided with houses by the government. The community has not responded positively towards the idea of saving money, and continues to depend on moneylenders and shopkeepers for procuring loans.

iii) **Bedar**

Bedar Tribes of Karnataka are also known as Beda, Berad, Boya, Bendar and are divided in six social groups. Bedar tribes belong to the famous Dravidian language family group. The Bedar tribal community can be found in several places of Karnataka. They are also known as Beda, Berad, Boya, Bendar, Berar, Burar, Ramoshi, Talwar, Byadar, and Valmiki.

The word 'bedar' has an etymological significance. The word has been derived from the word bed or bedaru, which signifies a hunter. The ancestors of Bedar tribes were the Pindaris. However, some claim that their ancestors were Tirole Kunbis.

The origin of the name of the tribe is not properly known. It is said that the meaning of the term bedar is without fear. Less information is available about the origin of these Bedar tribes. Within the Bedar tribal community, there are few Hindus and are called Bedar. The Muslims are being referred as Berad. These Bedar tribes themselves like to be identified as Naikwadi since they work as village policemen or Talwar (watchmen) or Naikmakkalu (chief's children).

The societal structure of the Bedar tribal community is quite significant. The Bedar tribes have six social groups. Bedar tribes have taken up occupations like farming labourers, security guards, workers, stonecutters, drovers etc. Apart from these occupations, the Bedar tribal are also engaged in occupations of servants, traders, messengers, police and soldiers. The Bedar tribal community is of a mixed nature. There are three sub-divisions of Bedar tribal communities. These are Maratha, Kande and Telugu Bedars. They have their indigenous customs and traditions. They eat meat and also drink liquor.

Just like many of the tribal communities, the institution of marriage is given prime importance in Bedar tribal communities. The proposal of marriage usually comes from the parents of the bridegroom. Although child marriage is prevalent in the Bedar society; the bride does not reside with her husband till her puberty. Marriage within the sub group of the Bedar community is not allowed. Widow re-marriage and divorce are permitted amongst the Bedar tribes. In matters of administration, especially in case of disputable matters, the Bedar tribes take the help of the village headmen, popularly called Kattimani.

Bedar tribal community has developed immense faith on various practices related to religion and spiritualism like fortune telling, magic and astrology. In the Bedar tribal community, all the Brahmins undertake the role of priests. In some places however, Lingayat Mathpatis also act as priests. Amongst the Bedar tribes, both the religions of Hinduism and Islam are prevalent. Janai, Jokhai, Khandoba, Hanmappa, Ambabai, Jotiba, Khandoba are some of the supreme deities of the Bedar tribal community. Images from deities like Durgava, Maruti, Venkatesh, Yellamma and Mallikarjun, are made from silver, copper or brass images and the Durgamurgavva image is made in a box on their head.

Cultural exuberance of the whole of the Bedar tribal community has nicely being depicted in all its aspects like festivals, language, jewellerys etc. The people of Bedar tribal community communicate in Bedar language. Today the Bedar tribes use diverse languages like Kannada language and Marathi language. Jewellerys are an integral part of the costumes of the Bedar tribal community. Both Bedar males and females are very fond of wearing ornaments that are made up mainly from silver and gold. As per the custom, these Bedar tribes have a set of conventional jewellerys. The Bedar tribes wear gold and silver bracelets (khade), waist girdles (uddurs), and gold earrings (muruva). In addition, Bedar females place their hair in a loose knots, wear several other ornaments like nose-rings, a gold necklace, Dhora is a social hoofed silver jewellery which these Bedar females wear on the head. Moreover there are quite a handful of Bedar tribes who shave their heads, according to the custom.

Tattooing also is a special custom of these Bedar tribes. The males and females of the Bedar tribe do tattooing on the several parts like forehead, corners of the eyes and forearms. Rites, rituals, customs are part of the Bedar tribal community. Basavis are a group of Bedar tribal females who reside inside the temple premises. After branding them with stamps by the spiritual head the Bedar girls get to the temple where a necklace is attached around their neck in the name of the god. Fairs and festivals are part and parcel of the culture and tradition of the Bedar tribal community. The Bedar tribes celebrate various Hindu festivals like Diwali, Dussehra, and Holi and have a conventional headman or guru. They celebrate these festivals with tribal songs and dances.

iv) **Hakkipikki**

The name of the community is derived from their traditional occupation of bird catching: hakki in Kannada means a bird while pikki is an echo-formation. Their titles are Singh, Rao and Appa. The community is distributed in the Mysore, Kolar, Shimoga and Hassan districts of Karnataka. They speak in the Indo-Aryan language, Vaghari, at home and in the regional language, Kannada, with outsiders. They are conversant with Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi and use the Kannada script. Hakkipikki tribes of Karnataka are Kshatriya or warrior tribal community and set their community after defeat by the Mughals.

The Hakkipikki tribes are said to be semi nomadic and the tribe has four clan divisions namely the Gujratia, Kaliwala, Mewara and Panwara. Among these clans Gujratia is considered as being the highest status clan whereas Mewara is considered as the lowest one. Adult marriage is the rule among them and marriages are mostly arranged by negotiation though instances of marriage through exchange and elopement are also reported. Monogamy is the common form and some cases of polygyny have been reported. During a marriage, bride price is paid in cash, and after marriage patrilocal residence is followed. Divorce may be granted on account of adultery or maladjustment, and the remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees is permissible. There has been

a recent increase in the age at marriage. Women participate in all the economic, social and ritual activities and contribute to the family income. Aphulwanti ceremony is observed when a girl attains puberty. The dead are buried and death pollution is observed for twelve days. Ancestor worship is part of the death rituals.

The traditional occupation of the Hakkipikki is trapping of birds and animals and the collection of forest produce. Many of them lead a nomadic life and move from one village to another, selling cosmetics used by the womenfolk. In order to sustain their livelihood, these Hakkipikki tribal communities have taken up occupations like hunting. Nowadays, a few are settled cultivators or are earning a livelihood as agricultural labourers. Some of them are employed as peons and clerks in government establishments.

Following the tradition of most of the nomadic tribal communities, these Hakkipikki tribal communities too follow the rules of matriarchy. When the male member of the Hakkipikki family is out for most part of the year, a woman of the Hakkipikki tribal community maintains the family. Many of the Hakkipikki tribal community women also take a trip selling beads. Hakkipikki females in general execute skillful jobs like polishing beads, organizing decorative flowers and vases amongst the tribal communities. Religion has got an ardent faith in the numerous Gods and Goddesses. Every clan of the community has their own deities and marriage of the worshippers of the same deity is strictly prohibited. Amongst the numerous deities these Hakkipikki tribal community is the ardent followers of the Goddess Chamundeshwari. They consider 'Dadaji' as their supreme God. Apart from these Gods, they worship Jogan, Vihli, Nokor, and Dugao-Kalka. They are considered as believers of Hindu religion and apart from these their religious beliefs encompass some other religious beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, rites etc.

The Hakkipikki generally do not favour formal education for their children, especially for the females. However, it has been observed that a few boys have studied upto the secondary level and a few girls upto the primary level. Children who attend schools continue their studies due to the nomadic way of life of the community. They make use of both traditional and modern medicines.

v) **Sholaga**

In Karnataka, they use the term Gowda, meaning a headman, as their title. In this state they are mainly distributed in the hilly parts of Mysore district. The language they speak amongst them is a dialect of the Dravidian language, Kannada. But the Urali Soliga division speaks the Soliga language for intra-group communication and Kannada for inter-group communication. They use the Kannada script. There are some people who also have given alternative names to this language viz. Solanayakkans, Sholiga, Solaga, Kadu Sholigar, Sholigar, Soligar, Sholanayika. As per the provision of the Indian Constitution, Sholaga tribal community is one of the Scheduled tribes. This Sholaga tribal community has a belonging to the Kannada group.

Adult marriage is generally practiced and normally arranged alliances are preferred. Divorce is sanctioned on the grounds of adultery and maladjustment. The remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees is permitted. The Women of this community fetch water, collect fuel and tubers, take part in social and ritual activities and contribute to the family income. The dead are buried and ancestors are worshipped annually.

The traditional occupations of the Soliga were shifting cultivation and the collection of minor forest produce. Now they have taken to forest and agricultural labour. A few of them are landowning cultivators.

Agriculture and farming are considered as the major occupation of the Sholaga tribal community. Quite a number of this Sholaga tribal community collects various products from the forest areas. That this Sholaga tribal community is very much pious and the people of this group are religious minded. Hinduism is the main religion. The Soliga worship community deities like Karayya, Kyatedevaru, Jadeswamy and some others. Mahadeswar is their regional deity. They observe their traditional festivals like Rotti Habba and Mane Devera Habba. There are residential schools in the Soliga area, where primary education is imparted to the children. The general response of the people towards formal education is favourable. A few boys and girls drop out after the primary school level due to social and economic reasons. This community makes use of both traditional and modern health care systems.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) List out the major tribal groups found in the State of Karnataka.

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2.3 PRESENT SCENARIO OF TRIBES IN KARNATAKA

Demographic Profile

According to 2011 census, there were 42,48,987 Scheduled Tribes people (34,29,791 Rural and 8,19,196 Urban) which is about 6.6% of the total population of the State.

Sex Ratio

The overall sex ratio of the ST population of Karnataka is 990, which is higher than 973 reported for state population in 2011. The sex ratio of ST population has improved from 961 reported in 1991 Census. The overall sex ratio as well as child sex ratio (0-6) of ST population of Karnataka is similar to the corresponding national figures for ST population. At individual tribe level, Gond and Koli Dhor have lower sex ratio in total and 0-6 age group populations, in comparison to the state ST population as well as other major STs.

Work Participation Rate

The work participation rate (WPR) is the percentage of workers to the total population. The WPR of 50.3 per cent among the ST population in 2011 is higher than that of the state population (45.6 per cent). The WPR has increased from 47.8 per cent reported in 1991.

Marital Status

Marital status is one of the important determinants of fertility and growth of a population. The 2011 Census data on marital status show that 46.14 per cent persons among the STs of Karnataka are 'never married'. The 'currently married' constitute 47.47 per cent while 15.83 per cent are 'widowed' and only 0.16 per cent is 'divorced and separated'.

Literacy Rate

The literacy rate of STs in Karnataka is a cause for concern, as it has consistently been lower than that of the total population. The literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes, which was 48.3 per cent in 2001, increased to 62.1 per cent in 2011, while the state average moved up from 66.6 to 75.36 per cent. The gap between the literacy rate of the total population and the ST population is very wide, although there has been a marginal decline of about 1.6 percentage points in the last decade. While the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes has improved in the decade 2001-2011, they still have a long way to go before they catch up with the rest of the population. The ST literacy rate in 2011 (62.1 per cent) was even lower than the literacy rate of the total population in 2001 (66.64 per cent), placing them more than a decade behind in literacy levels. Though the literacy rate for women has increased at a faster pace than for males, it is still problematic because it is so much lower than the literacy rate for all women in 2011.

Religion

Hinduism is the predominant religion of ST population of the state. The 2001 Census data show that Hindus constitute 98.17 per cent, followed by Muslims 44,599 (1 per cent). The remaining population belongs to the category of 'other religions and persuasions' and 'religion not stated'.

The literacy rate of STs in Karnataka is a cause for concern, as it has consistently been lower than that of the total population. Unequal access to schooling is exacerbated by the fact that ST children stay in school for the least amount of time, as gets indicated by the mean years of schooling.

Lack of data is a constraint when it comes to tracking the health indicators of the ST population. Declining access of the tribal people to forest areas, which had earlier provided them with food rich in protein and micronutrients, is the biggest cause of poor nutrition amongst the tribal population of Karnataka.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Describe briefly the educational status of tribals in Karnataka.

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2.4 LET US SUM UP

We have discussed the tribes of Karnataka in a detailed manner emphasizing on the important tribes. It is now important to sum up what we have discussed so far. This will help us to get a better understanding of the subject matter of this unit, and also help us to review our own understanding of the subject matter.

We started the unit with an introductory note on the Tribes Karnataka. Next, we discussed the Demographic profile and cultural elements of the tribal life in Karnataka. Along side, we tried to have an insight into the major tribes of Karnataka. Eventually the discussion ended with a brief on the present scenario of the tribes in the context of Progress made as per the Census of India 2011.

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UNIT 3 TRIBES OF KERALA

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Tribes of Kerala
- 3.3 Present Scenario of Tribes in Kerala
- 3.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.5 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Enumerate the various important tribes living in the state of Kerala;
- Describe the various facets of Tribal culture and its varied exuberance; and
- Discuss in details the present socio-economic status of tribes in the state of Kerala.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Kerala, the situation of the tribal populations has been diverse. Many tribes had previously lived in isolated forests, jungles, or hills, and therefore lived relatively independent. Other tribes were forced by encroachers to inhabit these same previously uninhabited region. Most prevalent viewpoint is that some of these tribes were in ancient times rulers and even kings of the land till they were defeated by invaders and either escaped or were sent to live in the forests. Regardless, they are inextricably linked to the forest, previously being their main source of livelihood. All the tribes have an extensive knowledge of the forest, its flora and fauna, which resulted in an impressive system of traditional medicine. They lived very much in tune with the forest. Today the tribal people have been forced out of the forests by the government or business corporations.

3.2 TRIBES OF KERALA

There are still 36 Scheduled Tribes in Kerala, they constitute only 1.45 per cent of the state's population. What this figure indicates is that the rate of the assimilation of the aboriginals of State has been extremely rapid. In the past few years 11 tribal communities have been declassified on account of the social and cultural progress they have made. Among the Scheduled Tribes, the numerically dominant ones are the Pulayans, Paniyans, Maratis, Malayarayar, Kurumans, Kurichiyans and Irulas. The numerical strength of each remaining tribes is in the range of 25 to 20000.

Cultural Elements of Tribals at Kerala

Tribes of this southern state belong to the famous family group of Dravidians; they have got similar body stature and traits. In fact these tribes have a dark complexion and are quite short in height. They are also well-built with flat nose. The tribes in this state grow very long hair and they tie it by forming hair locks. The mountainous regions of Kerala

are inhabited by tribes namely Urali tribe, Paniyan tribe, Kapu tribe, Kanikkar tribe, Kadar tribe etc. They are reckoned as the descendants of the Negrito race. Cultural exuberances of these tribes are exhibited in a number of aspects. House building, norms and rituals bearing resemblance to the tradition and ethnicity of the tribal culture. A majority of these tribes build their settlements in the dense forest grounds and also on the top of the mountains. The houses of these tribes are closely built so that they can depend on each other and thus maintain cordial relations. As a result of the rugged topography of the region, these tribes remain undisturbed by any kind of invasion from the foreigners, especially the Aryans. This is one of the factors why these tribes have maintained the originality intact. Influences of the modern day times hardly have brought about any changes in their life styles and in socio-economic scenario of their tribal society.

According to the observations of the anthropologists of the Indian subcontinent, these tribes of Kerala have developed ardent faith on spiritualism and religion. They dwell in groups and depend largely on the vast nature for their various needs. Almost all the tribes of this state follow religion, which is centered round Animism. They appease spirits for calamities and sickness. Apart from this, there is a plethora of local Gods and Goddesses, whom majority of these tribes revere and show immense respect and veneration. Worship of Amman or Goddess Kali and Ayyan or Ayyappan was quite common. Moreover, there are few tribes of the state amongst whom ancestral worship is prevalent. All of the tribes are united in their worship of Malleshwara, the great mountain peak of the area. They have worshipped this deity since time immemorial, but recently have equated it with Lord Shiva, due to influence from outside.

It is often easy to spot a member of a tribe by the type and style of dress, hair, physical features, and body modifications. This was especially true of the women who wear, for example, usually one piece of cloth wrapped around their bodies and tied off just above the chest. Quite often, the women also have their hair pulled in a tuft on the left side of their heads. Tatoo's were prevalent and most tribal women could be found with them on their arms or heads.

Fairs and festivals are a part and parcel of the tradition and culture of these tribes. Especially during the festive seasons, the whole population of tribes of the state gets enthralled by the dance, music and get engross with the mood of jubilation and frenzy. For the purpose of getting an indepth insight into the Tribal life of Kerala, we shall elaborate on the social and cultural lives of the main tribes in the state:

i) **Paniyan**

Paniyan tribes are said to be the major tribal communities residing in different parts of the state. They reside in different hilly and forest areas of Kerala. Some of the districts where these Paniyan tribes have built their settlements include Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram etc. The Paniyan tribes are also called by the names of Pania, Paniya and Panya. Most of these Paniyan tribes use a dialect of the Malayalam language. However, the Paniyan tribes who work in the plain also speak Kannada. The dialect of the Paniyan people is Paniya language.

The word 'Paniyan' is derived from 'pani' which is a Malayalam word, meaning work. The people of this tribal community are majorly labourers and their past history also suggests the same. In fact these Paniyan are amongst those tribal people who have worked as bonded laborers in the ancient period. Naturally, these Paniyan tribes have got life long bondage with the tribal employees. Though the detailed information of the origin of this Paniyan tribe is still vague, some tales relating to this tribal community

signify a little about the lineage of this tribal group. Thick lips, dark complexion and curly hair are the physical appearance of the Paniyan people. There is a resemblance between the Paniya people with the people of Africa and as per some scholars, the Paniyan people are of African origin. According to some scholars, Kapiri (Africa or the Cape) is the land of origin of the Paniyan tribes.

These Paniyan tribes have developed unique style of making their houses. A Paniyan village comprises of rows of huts constructed from bamboo with thatched roofs. These houses of Paniyan tribes are either single- or double-storied. At the time of rainy seasons, the Paniyan tribes migrate to nearby rivers and cold regions. However, at the end of the season, these Paniyan tribes return to their original village homes. They live together in colonies.

Just like any other tribes of the region, these Paniyan tribes too held the institution of marriage in a high esteem. Usually, the Paniyan marriage is arranged with the aid of parents of both the bride and groom. The family of the groom chooses a bride. The whole marriage ceremony is quite simple and is carried on by the village priest, better known as chemmi. As part of the ritual, 16 coins and new dresses are given to the chemmi, who again give these items to the parents of the Paniyan bride. Although monogamy is the common practice, instances are no rare when a Paniyan man marries more than one wife.

The chief occupation of these Paniyan tribes is to work as farmers in the field of rich land owners. In the ancient periods, they have worked as bonded laborers. In the contemporary period, Paniyan tribes own their individual lands and also produce crops like rice and ragi. The Paniyan females and children generally take part in digging roots of the forests or 'pot herbs'. It is heard that some of these Paniyan tribes, especially those employed by the rich landlords deliver the coffee beans to their landlords. Apart from being employed in agricultural works, some are also engaged in Tea and Coffee estates.

The Paniyan tribes have a plethora of religious practices and rituals, which they follow with lots of reverence and devotion. Several sacrifices and also worship of diverse animal Gods and Goddesses are feted though occasionally. Kuli, Kadu Bhagavadi are worshipped with great reverence by the members of this tribal group. Moreover, the Paniyan tribes also revere Hindu gods and goddesses. In some parts of the Paniyan village, the shrines of this deity have been built and offerings are being given to appease her. They also believe in spirits and worship natural objects to stay away from evil forces.

ii) Pulaya

The anthropologists have incited that these Pulaya tribes, also known as Pulayar, Holeya etc, is considered to be one of the major social groups found in Kerala. Very recently, these Pulaya have been bestowed upon the status of a Dalit. Etymologically, the term Pulaya has got significance.

In the archaic literature, Pulaya means the origin of caste or jati system in the whole south Indian Territory. Even in the Sangam 'anthologies' which were written down as early as five hundred years ago, in the Christian era, reference of these Pulaya tribes have been made. Pulaitchi (female) and Pulaian (male) are being referred as a gang of people who live closely to the houses of village leaders and were engaged in some minor jobs. A popular belief of these Pulaya tribes, especially those residing in the Thiruvananthapuram district, is that they have ruled the region in the ancient times.

They further added that in the Pulayanarkotta hill of the Trivandrum, a Pulayar king built his castle in the primitive period. Eminent ethnographers including Edgar Thurston also gave consent to the belief. Unanimously, they have accepted that the Pulayar tribes are descendants of the original native habitants of South India who were being thrown away and then taken into imprisonment by the encroachers.

As far as the religious practices and norms are concerned, these Pulaya tribes have maintained their unique customs and practices. In fact the Pulaya tribes have retained several pre Hindu practices of the then period. Magic, spirits, 'arcane mysteries' are an integral part of this Pulaya tribal community. Due to their treasure house of these mysteries, several people of the Indian society have time and again sought advice from Pulaya shamans, or Manthrikavadi.

The cultural exuberance of this Pulaya tribal society is rightly being depicted in its bounty of music, dance forms etc. It is also reflected in the exquisite crafts works that they have produced. Kolam-thullal is a beautiful mask dance rituals done to free themselves from evil spirits, and another dance, better known as Mudi-attam is related to the fertility. Various art forms are popular. Chimmanakali is an art form of Pulaya, prevalent amongst those residing with northern part of Kerala state. Here, Chimmanam signifies humor or chat. Chimmanakali is related to Garbhavali which is called Kannal Kalampattu. The melodious songs that are sung with the performance of this play are called "chothiyum pidiyam pattu". To make the play really entertaining, these Pulaya artists add humor to the speeches and the story is presented in a dramatized form. In other words, Chimmanakali essentially is a satirical form of art performed by the Pulaya tribes pinpointing at the social ills.

Margam Kali is an art form popular among the Paliyan tribes especially those residing in Travancore district. This comprises of group dances and martial arts like Parichamuttu Kali. The theme of the songs centers around the life of St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus.

Pulaya people are noted for their pleasant and cordial nature. What is also remarkable is that these Puraya tribes have restrained from adapting to violent means even when they are being invaded or intimidated.

Just like any other tribal communities, these Pulaya tribes follow all the rituals associated with the marriage ceremony. Mangalamkali is a dance ritual related to marriage ceremonies. It is a source of amusements at the time of marriage. Usually Pulaya tribes execute it in accompaniment with beautiful musical instruments including Para and Kannupara. The dance is performed in a fast speed.

According to the famous scholar Edgar Thurston, these customs emphasized the fact that the beautiful face of the Pulaya was painted with red and white designs. However, several of these customs are being discarded for the sake of accepting new trends.

iii) **Muthuvan**

This community inhabits the border regions of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The Muthuvan are distributed in Idukki district and the adjoining western ghats of the Palghat and Trichur districts. The literal meaning of word Muthuvan in Malayalam means those who carry something on their back. Even today the Muthuvan carry their children and belongings on their back. Within family and kins groups they talk in a dialect of their own. With others they converse in Malayalam or Tamil and use the Malayalam script. The origin of these Muthuvan tribal societies has got a significant history behind. As per

the observation of many anthropologists of the Indian territory, the Muthuvan tribes serve as obedient subjects of the royal dynasty of Madurai. In fact the popular legend is that when the dynasty was thrown out of power, these existing royal members immigrated to several places of central Kerala, and established the famous dynasty of Poonjar. While going to Kerala state, the Muthuva tribes carried along with them the images of the deity of the regal family, Madurai Meenakshi, at the back of their bodies. What is also interesting is that the word Muthuvan has been taken from the word “muthuku” which stands for back in both the Malayalam and Tamil languages.

The Muthuvan are reported to have six clans (koottams). A woman after marriage retains her Koottam. Her children also belong to her Koottam. They prefer cross cousin marriages. Marriage by negotiation is the usual mode of acquiring a mate, but marriage by elopement also takes place. The practice of paying a bride price or dowry does not exist among them. A Bamboo comb made and presented by the groom to the bride is the marriage symbol and she wears it throughout her life. Monogamy is the usual form of marriage but Polygyny is also permitted by the permission of first wife if she is barren. Divorce is socially approved on grounds of adultery, cruelty, impotency and maladjustment. Their families are of nuclear type but live together in clusters of close proximity. A hamlet is called Kudi. Each Kudi has a dormitory for boys and bachelors (chavadi), and a dormitory for girls and widows (palpura). Delivery of a baby takes place in a separate hut called thennu veedu. The women contribute to the family income by participating in economic activities like agricultural operations, animal husbandry, collection of minor forest produce, etc. Boys between the age of sixteen to twenty years have to go through the ritual of tying a turban called urumalkettu. For girls, the puberty ritual (thalai sadanku) is performed immediately after menarche. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride’s residence or at a public place of the hamlet (Kudi).

It is one of the few tribes who have still abstained from developing connections with the people of the outside world. These Muthuvan tribes are quite independent and do not rely on the people of the civilized society. These Muthuvan tribes restrained from partaking education. So much so, that most of these Muthuvan tribes refuse to maintain connection with other tribes. Especially, the Muthuvan females have to obey the strict rules of the society of not maintaining any relation with the people outside their tribal community, including all the males. Instances are cited where it has been found that the Muthuvan females had to stay aloof and live an isolated life in the bamboo huts without talking or even seeing men outside the Muthuvan tribe.

Agriculture is the main occupation of these Muthuvan tribes, producing quite a number of products like ragi, cardamom and lemon grass. They have got three to ten acres of forest lands allotted for farming and other related activities. These Muthuvan tribes are being exploited by the mediators. Taking advantage of their simplicity and lack of awareness, these people pay less for various products like cardamom.

The most remarkable feature of their agricultural practice is their expertise in locating springs and streams and bringing the water to their cultivable lands. Animal husbandry, wage labour in the forest department, and the collection of seasonal minor forest produce are their subsidiary occupations.

Earlier the Muthuvan followed the local tribal religion but now they profess Hinduism. They worship deities like Karuppa Swami and Mariyamma. Their material culture includes a variety of bows and arrows, slings and snares. They have access to shrines, public places, wells and other water sources along with them.

The Muthuvans use both traditional and modern medicines with a preference for the former. Muthuvan tribes have remained aloof from outside world and have adopted own techniques of extracting food and medicines

iv) **Kanikkar**

They are also known as kanikkaran, but their neighbors refer to them as the Kani. They inhabit the hills of Neyyattinkara and Nedumangadu taluks of Trivandrum district and also live in the adjoining district of Quilon. Kannikkar means a hereditary proprietor. They speak in their own dialect, Kannikkar Bhasha or Malampashi, which is close to the Dravidian language, Malayalam, and use the Malayalam script for writing. They are conversant with the Malayalam language also.

The community is divided into two broad divisions, Annanthambi Illakkars and Machambi Illakkars. Marriage with cross-cousins is allowed. Junior sororate and junior levirate are also permitted. Adult marriage is practiced and mates are acquired through service, elopement and exchange. The symbol of marriage is a bead necklace. The post-marital residence is either neolocal or patrilocal, while the dominant family type is nuclear. Divorce is permitted by social approval. The colony of these Kanikkar tribes comprises of huts made from tree leaves and bamboo. It is popularly known as Kani, with an aged man who has been given the responsibility of controlling the tribal community. He is called Kani Mooppan or Muttukani.

Traditionally the kannikkar were hunters, gatherers and shifting cultivators. Occasionally fishing, hunting and gathering are still practiced. These Kanikkar tribes have the tradition of using herbal medicines in order to heal up their wounds as well as for curing diseases. According to them, these medicines have magical powers and so, do not reveal their composition. Nowadays, they have discarded it. The present day occupation of the community is Settled Cultivation. Besides, they work as wage labourers in the forest department. The kannikars are expert basket makers.

Most of these Kanikkar tribes follow special rites for wedding ceremonies as well as for death ceremonies. They have an oral tradition of songs and tales. They play different percussion instruments. They visit religious shrines and participate in festivals like Onam with all the neighbouring communities. Some of these Kanikkar tribes too have developed faith on various hill deities. Sacrifice of chicken is done under the trees by the banks of the rivers.

The literacy rate in the Kanikkars is much higher than any other schedule tribe in the state. They use both traditional and modern medicines. Their attitude towards family Planning programme is favourable. Some of them have made use of employment generation programmes. Midday-meal schemes for children and public distribution facilities are availed of. They continue to depend on moneylenders and shopkeepers during a monetary crisis.

v) **Kurumba**

The Kurumba are concentrated in the Palghat district of Kerala. The script used for written communication is Malayalam. As far as the languages are concerned, these Kurumba tribes converse with each other in a language, which belongs to the sub group of the Dravidian family language. This tribal community speaks in a language that is a blend of Kannada and Tamil language.

The racial group known as Kurumba tribe had close affinity with the Todas and Badagas. The tribal group is recognised in Badaga as 'Kurumba' and 'Kurb' in Toda. The term

Kurumba connotes jungle-dweller. The Kurumba tribal community is also identified as Alu-Kurumbas, Betta-Kurumbas, Jenu-Kurumbas, Kurubas, Mudugas, Mulla-Kurumbas, Palu-Kurumbas, Urali-Kurumbas. Several Kurumba tribes are concentrated in the dense forest ranges and also at the bottom of hills. They are said to be the modern representatives of ancient Pallavas.

In particular, the Kurumba groups have a clan constitution that has adapted the practice of 'exogamous and patrilineal'. The Kurumba tribes also practice endogamy. Cross-cousin marriages also occur in a frequent basis. For better administration and controlling, these Kurumba tribes have developed several councils. Both the village headman and priest occupy a high place in the Kurumba society. The village head man is called maniagara, while the priest is called mannugara. The headman and people who assist him and his offices are hereditary in nature following the lineage of the Kurumba males. However either a female or a Kurumba man occupies the position of a priest or sorcerer. What is to be noted that all the customary religious beliefs call for an ancestor 'cult' with due emphasis on pollution and purity. All these religious beliefs that these Kurumba tribes follow are similar to most of the norms and customs of other religion like Hinduism in particular. Keeping in par with the trends of modernity, most of these tribes of Kurumba society, especially the youths embrace other religions as whole like Hinduism and Christianity apart from observing several traditional beliefs of the Kurumba locales. They profess Hinduism. Pai, the ancestors spirits, are their clan deities, while Malleswaran is their village deity. They celebrate Ammapooja, Paipooja and Nombi festivals.

Just like any other tribal communities of India, these Kurumba tribes too have earned their livelihood by undertaking the occupations like hunting as well as gathering. Some of the people of these Kurumba tribes, who resided in the hills, adapt to the profession of shifting cultivation and also the jobs of catching tiny birds and animals. Interestingly, Kurumba tribes give a supply of huge poles that are mostly utilized in the funeral rituals of other tribes like Toda tribe. Also these Kurumba tribes supply three types of baskets used by the Badaga tribes. Also it is known that many of the Bagada tribes have appointed people from these Kurumba tribes as watchman for guarding the village households. In fact this was a prestigious lifetime appointment that has been passed on from one generation to another. Apart from fulfilling the role of watchman these Kurumba tribes also undertook the important responsibility of being a priest during their festivals including sowing and harvest festivals. The Kurumba priest is popularly known as kani-kuruma. Another activity for which these Kurumba tribes have gained acclamation is their art of practicing sorcery. Even today, these Kurumba sorceresses have nicely played diverse roles like exorciser (devvagara), 'diviner (kanigara), and sorcerer (odigara or odia)'. It is said these Kurumba tribes can cause sickness or even kill enemies with the aid of things like herbs, spells, and roots. In the present Kurumba society, these tribes have adapted to several other professions, all related to the art of sorcery. For example, the therapist (maddugara) plays the vital role of a doctor and a curer. Pilligara is the wizard who has got the power to even turn himself into any animal.

Mat weaving and basketry are their crafts. Folk-dances are performed by both men and women. They share sources of drinking water and visit religious shrines with other neighbouring communities. They use traditional as well as modern systems of medicine and show a favourable attitude towards family planning programmes. They have also benefitted from various rural employment generation programmes.

vi) **Marati**

In Kerala, the Marati are also called Maratha and Marathi. They are notified as Marati only in Hondurg and Kasargod taluks of the Cannanore district. Besides their mother tongue Marathi, they are conversant in Tulu, Kannada and Malayalam languages. The Malayalam and Kannada scripts are used by them. Their main occupations are settled cultivation and animal husbandry. Some of them are engaged in business and services.

Marati tribes are one of the ancient tribes of the state of Kerala. The Marati tribes cultivate their own fields; 'cattle rearing' and dairy are the subsidiary occupation.

Although the economy of these Marati tribes is agrarian based, they are financially more affluent and sound than other tribes of the whole of the state. Some of the educated people of this community go for better jobs.

Also the society of these Marati tribes follows the norms of a typical patrilineal society. They practice tribal endogamy and clan exogamy. On all the significant affairs be it social or religion, these Marati tribes take the advice of the 'Hindu Brahmin priest', better known as the 'purohit'.

Marriage is celebrated with great pompousness and merriment among the tribal group. Almost all the Marati tribes fete the occasions by observing lots of rites and rituals. All the Marati grooms have to pay bride price, which is a famous custom for acquiring bride. Also 'sororate' marriage is permitted. Polygamy is also prevalent amongst these Marati tribes. The practice of remarriage or divorce is also prevalent in the society of the Marati tribes. However, it is customary for these Marati tribes that they do not marry, dine or even maintain friendly relations with the members of the other tribal communities. On all the important matters or issues, these Marati tribes seek the advice of a village head whom they have chosen for better administration and controlling. This Marati headman goes to all social occasions of the society.

The attitude of Marati towards modern health care systems and family welfare programmes is positive. Drinking water, electricity, media and communication facilities are available to them. Wood is used as domestic fuel. The Marati agriculturists use organic manure, chemical fertilizers and insecticides. Child welfare schemes and the public distribution system are availed of by them.

vii) **Malayan**

They are a hill people of Kerala. These Malayan tribes are mainly concentrated in the district of Idukki. In the district, they are found in places like the Edamalayar in Kuttampuzha panchayat, Adimali block panchayat. Quite a handful of Malayan tribes are also found in Ernakulam district which is considered to be the official home of these Malayan tribes. Two groups of the Malayan have been studied separately: Nattu Malayan and Kongu Malayan.

Fishing, gathering, bamboo cutting are various occupations that these Malai tribes of Kerala have adopted for livelihood. Hunting, gathering and the collection of honey are their traditional occupations. Now they have taken up animal husbandry, agricultural labour and cultivation as their primary occupations. The Malayan tribes too have adapted to various jobs like bamboo carving, fishing. Gathering of the products from the dense forest areas is also a lucrative occupation of most of the Malayan tribes. Instances are also found where these Malayan tribes have rented their cultivating lands and got involved as manual laborers in the fields.

The Malayan professes a local form of Hinduism, which bears traces of traditional tribal religion. The major festivals observed by them are Onam and Thandanvala. Festivals and fairs play an important part in the society of these Malayan tribes, which also emphasizes the cultural exuberance of the community. Amongst various feted festivals, especially in Idukki district, the Adimali Fest is the most famous one. It is actually the tourism and agricultural festival held mainly in the mountainous region since the beginning of the year 1991. After that once in a year this festival is observed by the Malayan tribes during the last week of December. During the Adimali Festival, fairs and exhibition are organized in the venue. Myriads of the cultivators make a display of various items that they have prepared with their own hands.

Adult marriage is the norm and alliances are settled through negotiations. Monogamy is the form of marriage. The married women wear a pendant called Thali. They follow a patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Adoption of nuclear families is a recent trend among these tribes. The women take part in agricultural operations, animal husbandry, collection of fuel, bringing of potable water. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence and the bride's family entertains the guests to a feast.

The Malayan children find it difficult to continue their education owing to the schools being located at far distances. The people have accepted the modern health care system, but still have faith in their traditional medicinal system. The assistance of different rural economic development schemes has helped them to strengthen their economy. They also utilize the facilities of media and communication, drinking water supply, irrigation and nutrition schemes for children.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Give a brief account of the cultural elements inherent to the tribes of Kerala

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3.3 PRESENT SCENARIO OF TRIBES IN KERALA

Demographic Profile

As per the Census report of 2011, the Demographic profile of the tribes in Kerala shows that out of thirty six (36) Scheduled Tribes notified for the state, Paniyan is the most populous tribe with a population of 88,450 forming 18.24 percent of the total tribal population of the State. Kurichchan is the second largest tribe having a number of 35,171 constituting 7.25 per cent of the total ST population. Six other STs, namely, Muthuvan, Kanikaran, Irular, Kurumans, Mavilan and Malai Arayan having a population ranging from 21,000 to 33,000 along with Paniyan and Kurichchan constitute 57.4 per cent of the total tribal population. Seven tribes, namely, Malayan, Kattunaykan, Malai Vedan, Mannan etc. having 5,000 -20,000 population. Tribes having below 500 populations are six in number. Out of them, Kochu Velan and Ten Kurumban are the smallest groups each with less than 50 population.

Sex Ratio

The over all sex ratio of the total ST population at 1035 i.e. 1035 females per 1000 males shows preponderance of females and is significantly higher than that of the national average (990) for the total ST population as per the census 2011.

At the individual level, all the major tribes of the state have sex ratio higher than the national average except Muthuvan. Among Kanikaran, Paniyan, Malai Arayan and Marati, females outnumber the males in their total population. The sex ratio among the tribal children in the age group 0-6 years (949) and that of all STs at the national level(957). Mahamalar tribes have 1600 followed by Kudyya (1393).

Literacy Rate

The overall literacy rate of the Scheduled Tribes has increased from 64.4 percent recorded at 2001 census to 75.8 per cent at 2011 census. It is higher than the national average of 59 per cent in respect of the total STs. Male literacy has increased from 70.8 per cent to 80.8 per cent while female literacy has gone up from 58.1 per cent to 71.1 per cent during 2001-2011, thereby showing significant improvement. Among the numerically larger tribes, Malai Arayan have the the highest percentage of literates (96.3 per cent) followed by Kanikaran (88%), Kurichchan (83.6%), Kurumans (84.10%), Marati (81.4 per cent) etc.. Marati, Kurumans, Kurichchan, Kanikaran and Malai Arayan, have shown higher female literacy ranging from 75 - 95 per cent whereas Muthuvan, Paniyan and Irular have shown lower female literacy in the range of 45 - 60 per cent.

So far in regards to the levels of education, as many as 52.78 per cent of tribal literates are either without any educational level or have attained education below primary level. The proportion of literates who have attained education up to primary level and middle levels are 25.52 per cent & 19.84 per cent respectively. Persons educated up to matric / secondary / higher secondary etc. have a share of only 19.71 percent in total literate population. Graduates and above are 3.27 per cent while non-technical & technical diploma holders constitute a meager 1.44 percent only.

Work Participation Rate

The Work Participation Rate (WPR) of the ST population is 47.5 per cent which is lower than that of all STs at the national level (53.9 per cent). The work participation rate of male (60.34 per cent) is higher than their female counterparts (39.65 per cent). There has been an increase in male WPR from 57.5 to 60.3 per cent and for female, it has decreased by 3.2 percentage during 2001-2011. Among the total workers, 70.1 per cent are main workers. Among the major tribal groups, Irular, Muthuvan, Paniyan, Marati, have higher WPR than the state average. Similar trend has been noticed among these tribes in respect of female WPR also.

Marital Status

The census 2011 data on marital status show that 'never married' persons is 43.65 per cent and the 'married' persons is 48.1 per cent in total ST population. 'Widowed' persons form 6.75 per cent while only 1.56 per cent are 'divorced and separated'. Marriage of girls and boys below the legal age of 18 years and 21 years respectively is not common among the tribal of Kerala. The data show that both the married girls below 18 years as well as married boys below 21 years each constitute less than 1 per cent only.

Religion

The Scheduled Tribes professing Hinduism account for 88.92 per cent. Christian tribal are 6.77 per cent while 3.77 per cent of tribal follow Islam.

3.4 LET US SUM UP

We have discussed the tribes of Kerala in a detailed manner emphasizing on the important tribes. It is now important to sum up what we have discussed so far. This will help us to review our own understanding of the subject matter. We started the unit with an introductory note on the Tribes in Kerala. Next, we discussed the cultural elements of the tribal life at Kerala. In our effort to examine the social and cultural lives of the tribes in Kerala, the unit covered discussions on some of the major tribes such as Paniyan, Pulaya, Muthuvan, Kurumba, Kanikkar, Marati and Malayan.

3.5 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4 TRIBES OF TAMIL NADU

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 About Tamil Nadu
- 4.3 Tribes of Tamil Nadu
- 4.4 Social Hierarchy of the Tribes in Tamil Nadu
- 4.5 Tribal Languages in Tamil Nadu
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit gives a description of the tribes of Tamil Nadu State which is a part of South India. It provides information about their origin, social, cultural and economic characteristics and their present status with the object of developing an understanding in the learner about the distinct features of the tribes located in the heart of the nation. After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the tribal areas of Tamil Nadu;
- Trace the origin of the tribes and understand their culture and occupation;
- Understand the different tribes of the region and their social, economic and cultural characteristics;
- Discuss the social hierarchy of the people in Tamil Nadu; and
- Outline their present status in terms of literacy, occupation, etc.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Tribes of Tamil Nadu are mainly found in the district of Nilgiris. Of all the distinct tribes, the Kotas, the Todas, the Irulas, the Kurumbas and the Badagas form the larger groups, who mainly had a pastoral existence. The men from each family of this tribe are occupied in milking and grazing their large herds of buffaloes; a very common form of pastoral farming. This tribe is distinguished by their traditional costume; a thick white cotton cloth having stripes in red, blue or black, called puthukuli worn by both women and men over a waist cloth. They settle mainly in Munds, comprising of five-six typical wagon shaped, windowless split bamboo, reeds and thatch huts. They do not worship any God and their consciousness is cosmic.

4.2 ABOUT TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu lies in the south-eastern region of the Indian sub- continent. The region is home to one of the most ancient cultures of India. The official language spoken in the state, Tamil, is considered to be one of the oldest literary languages to be still existing

after Sanskrit. It is believed that the age of Tamil Nadu, as a culturally rich ancient region dates to about 2000 years. It was believed that the Indians had settled in the Tamil region around 1500 B.C. to 600 A.D. The Tamils have been referred to as the last surviving classical civilization on Earth.

Tamil Nadu and its people belong to the Dravidian group of families who inhabited India in the very early centuries. The Tamil people or Tamilians are an ethnic group of people belonging to the southern eastern part of the country. Tamil, being the official language of the state, is also spoken by other tribes in and outside the region, such as Sri-Lanka and also within the state of Andhra Pradesh. No doubt, Tamil Nadu is home to one of the largest population of tribes, their numerous language, customs and cultural traditions in India.

During the colonial rule of the East India Company, British colonists consolidated the Tamil territory in southern India into the Madras Presidency, which was then integrated into British India. Similarly, the Tamil parts of Sri Lanka were joined with the other regions of the island in 1802 to form the Ceylon colony. Tamils live throughout India but particularly in southern states neighbouring Tamil Nadu such as Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh as well as Maharashtra. When India became independent in 1947, Madras Presidency became the Madras State, comprising present-day Tamil Nadu, coastal Andhra Pradesh, northern Kerala, and the southwest coast of Karnataka. The state was subsequently split along linguistic lines. In 1953, the northern districts formed Andhra Pradesh. Under the States Reorganization Act in 1956, Madras State lost its western coastal districts. In 1968, Madras State was renamed Tamil Nadu and today the state capital is known by the name 'Chennai'.

In the first part of this unit we shall study in detail the various tribes that constitute more than half of the population of the Tamil region in the south eastern part of India.

4.3 TRIBES OF TAMIL NADU

The Badagas

They belong to the backward class and are not classified as tribals. They comprise of an agricultural community and settle near Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu. They are engaged in tea cultivation and potato growing. They speak a language which is a mixture of Tamil and Kannada language.

They form the largest group of tribes and boast of a rich oral tradition of folktales, songs and poetry. These tribes are Hindus and belong to the Shiva sect. The Badagas celebrate the Hindu festivals such as Diwali, and the famous festival of Pongal.

The Irulas

These tribes of Tamil Nadu occupy the lower slopes and forests at the base of the Nilgiri hills. This tribe is famous for snake catching and removing the venom. It is often said that the people of these tribes are called upon whenever a native require any medical / herbal assistance. They are the second largest group of tribes after the Badagas and they are largely similar to the Kurumba tribe of Tamil Nadu. This tribe produces honey, fruits, herbs, roots, gum, dyes etc., and trades them with the people in the plains. They are also gradually changing from their earlier ways of hunting to a more modern form of living.

The Kotas

They are mainly concentrated in the Tiruchigadi area in the Nilgiris Hills. They are distinguished by their colourful folk dances and are basically musicians. They are mainly engaged in producing handicrafts. These tribes of Tamil Nadu are expert iron smiths, potters and carpenters. Their population is very small and they live in huts that have a living and sleeping area and a place of worship. Their language is similar to that of the Badagas. They speak Tamil and a form of Kanada language.

The Kurumba

The Kurumba tribes of Tamil Nadu inhabit the intermediate valleys and forests around villages. They are famous for their black magic and witch craft, and in the past were believed to be performing sacrifices as part of the voodoo magic. Primarily, they were engaged in hunting and gathering for their living, but gradually shifted to cultivating and working in coffee and tea plantation.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Briefly discuss the Irula tribe found in Tamil Nadu.

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4.4 SOCIAL HIERARCHY OF TRIBES IN TAMIL NADU

Besides the tribes which have been discussed above, Tamil Nadu also encompasses a rich culture of scheduled tribes and scheduled caste population. Being one of the oldest regions inhabited by the Indians, the Tamil region too was a victim of the Hindu caste system in India. The origin of the caste system, is believed, by some to be divinely ordained on human beings. Essentially, caste system was a mechanism through which the society was segregated, initially based on occupational differentiation, but later on became a rigid framework, which unfortunately, is prevalent till date.

The people of Tamil Nadu, primarily follow Hinduism, but animism and witchcraft is also prevalent among the tribals. The oppressive caste system got firmly entrenched and as a result, the society was divided into four major divisions:

1. The Brahmans

The first level or at the top of the hierarchy of the Caste system comprises of the Upper Caste Brahmins, who are mainly priests, carry out religious rites and rituals. They form the highest decree of the caste system in Tamil Nadu. This particular group in the Caste system enjoys the highest form of respect in the society.

2. The Kshatriyas

The Kshatriyas constitute the second highest level of the caste system in Tamil Nadu. They are warrior lords and princes, who take care of the provinces and rule the kingdom. In short they constitute the ruling military group in the Hindu Vedic system.

3. The Vaishyas

According to the Hindu belief, the Vaishyas, along with the Kshatriyas are considered to be the twice born castes in the Hindu religion. The Vaishyas are that section of the caste system in the Tamil region who are given the authority to grow crop i.e. cultivation, rear cattle, and indulge in trade works.

4. Dalits

This section of people of the caste system in Tamil Nadu includes the lower laborers who are succumbed to racial discrimination in the society. During the early ancient periods, these dalits were considered untouchable. They are prohibited to touch anything which belongs to the other three upper castes.

The dalits of Tamil Nadu constitute rural Dalits who worked as agricultural labourers for caste landowners without remuneration. The majority of bonded labourers were Dalits. Dalits, among the poorest of citizens, generally did not own land, and often were illiterate. They faced significant discrimination despite laws to protect them, and often were socially prohibited from using the same wells and from attending the same temples as caste Hindus, and from marrying caste Hindus. In addition, they faced social segregation in housing, land ownership, and public transport. Many of the tribes in Tamil Nadu have numerous numbers of Dalits in its rural areas. It is unfortunate to say, that the dalits still exist in the Indian society and the discrimination of these Dalits are still prevalent in many parts of the country.

Under this section, Tamil Nadu has many other caste groups which fall under the category of Dalits. They are as follows:

- a) **Pallan:** The Pallan are an ancient community, engaged extensively in wet land farming and distributed mainly in Thanjavur, Madurai and Ramanathapuram districts of Tamil Nadu. They are mostly agriculturalists in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka and amongst the Tamil diaspora. They are also known as 'Devendra Kula Vellalar'. Pallars also called with the title 'Kudumban' after their names.
- b) **Paraiyar or Pariyan:** This particular section of the caste group in Tamil Nadu is known with different names in different regions of the Tamil State. In the northern region they are called as Paraiyars and in the southern region they called as Sambavar or samban. This paraiyar caste is considered to be one of the oldest tribal groups of ancient India, who thrive in the southern part of the Indian sub-continent today. They are also called as Adi-dravida, which means the earliest Dravidians to have come and inhabited the Indian sub continent.
- c) **Chakkiliyar:** They are known to be one of the most marginalised groups of the Tamil society. According to history, it is believed that the chakkiliyar caste were among the soldiers and did military services for the society but due to social and political changes, they were forced to do menial labor in the military and hence, got branded as part of the lower caste of the society in Tamil Nadu.
- d) **Kallar:** The Kallar caste in Tamil Nadu is known to be one caste which does not succumb to any forms of subjugation. They are an independent caste. Kallars are known to be the oldest immigrants of Neolithic period with Mediterranean racial elements. Kallar, the name itself, denotes "brave people". They had strongly resisted any form of subjugation by the British colonialist in India. Traditionally, they were described as semi agriculturists and semi warriors. They are mostly agriculturists, and are mainly distributed in Thanjavur and Madurai districts and to

a lesser extent in Tiruchirapalli, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Pudukkottai districts of Tamil Nadu.

- e) **Maravar:** This section of the society, the Maravars, was a group of courageous people in the Tamil Nadu region. They were involved in almost all the battles and wars which took place in the regions of Tamil Nadu. They are one of the oldest social groups to be mentioned by the Sangam Tamil literature.
- f) **Agamudaiyar:** This group belongs to one of the three clans of Mukkulathor caste in Tamil Nadu. They are an endogamous part of the Tamil caste system. They were mainly landlords or householders in the society. They were usually involved in performing professions of attending to the businesses’ of the kings in courts or the kings’ interior palaces or pagodas.

In the above discussion, the details of the various tribal groups of Tamil Nadu along with the various caste groups, has been discussed; but there are still many other tribal groups and castes which are eminently unnoticed in all the regions of Tamil Nadu. There are in fact various other tribal groups which have not yet been recognised by the Indian Constitution or whose existence is uncertain to us. Tamil Nadu, as a whole, is one of the earliest regions occupied by the Indian people, the Dravidians. It is a fact that Tamil Nadu is one of the richest cultural regions in India with various tribals co-existing with the Hindus.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Discuss in brief the Dalit caste found in Tamil Nadu.

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4.5 TRIBAL LANGUAGES IN TAMIL NADU

Having discussed much about the tribes of Tamil Nadu, it is important to observe that this region of South India has a lot to offer in terms of its cultural diversity, of peoples and their languages. As much as the rich culture and amalgamation of people and their lifestyles, the languages spoken by the tribes in Tamil Nadu is as diverse as its tribal population. The languages spoken in some parts of the region are also languages spoken in other parts in other states of India. It is because the Tamil languages are one of the oldest and most widely spoken languages from the ancient time. It is considered to be from a family of Dravidian language, spoken by the first inhabitants of the Indian Sub-Continent.

We shall now look into the various tribal languages of Tamil Nadu.

Adiyan or commonly known as Eravas is spoken in Tamil Nadu and also parts of Kerala. The word Adiyan means “slave” in the Malayalam language. The Adiyans are mostly agricultural labourers.

Allar (Chatans), a Dravidian language spoken in Tamil Nadu mainly in the Palghat regions. The lexical similarity with the Tamil language is about 59% and they are mainly hunters, gatherers, labourers and they believe in a very traditional form of religion.

Alu (Kurumba) mainly spoken in the Nilgiri districts of Tamil Nadu. It also shares lexical similarity with a non standard form of Kannada language. The language is mainly spoken by the scheduled tribe population in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu and they are mainly bee gatherers, tea and coffee labourers, horticulturalists and hunters. They believe in the traditional Hindu religion.

Badaga or Badugu spoken in the Kundur and Nilgiri districts of Tamil Nadu. The language is also the name of the Badaga tribe in the state. It is believed that they are the largest most populated people in the southern most regions and they were agricultural people, who have now relocated to towns and cities and earn from an urban style of employment. They believe in Hinduism especially of the Saiva sect.

Irula or commonly known by different names by the tribes as Eravallan, Irular, Iruliga, Erukala, Yerukala, Irava, Korava, Chensu, Kad, or Urali is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in the districts of Coimbatore, Chengai Anna, Salem, Nilgiri and Periyar.

Besides this, **Jatapu** is also a tribal language spoken in some parts of Tamil Nadu. It is a language spoken mainly by the scheduled tribes. Most of them have adopted Telugu as their mother tongue, since Jatapu language is very similar to that of the Telugu language. They are mostly farmers and forest labourers. All Jatapus are Hindu by faith and they believe in many Gods and Goddesses.

The other tribal languages also spoken in other parts of India besides them being spoken in Tamil Nadu are **Kachchi, Kadar, Kanikkaran, Kota, Kudiya, Kui and Kurichiya.**

Malavedan is a language spoken in the Tirunelveli part of Tamil Nadu and also in the south of Kanya Kumari. It is also a dying language with its major shift to Tamil. The natives of this language were hunters and gatherers but now many are wage labourers. They believe in their traditional religion with a little mix of Hinduism.

Manna-Dora and Mukha –Dora are also two very famous tribal languages spoken in parts of Tamil Nadu and mainly in the southern regions of the Indian –Sub continent. Spoken mainly by the scheduled tribes and the Adivasis, their script is similar to that of Telugu. They follow a form of syncretistic Hinduism and they are mainly agriculturalists.

Another set of tribal languages are **Paliyan and Paniya** spoken mainly in Tamil Nadu by the Adivasis living in the south of that region. They are generally hunters, gatherers, traders, food cultivators and beekeepers. They belong to the Scheduled Tribe group in the India Constitution. Paniya although on the other hand is spoken by the tribes living mainly in Kerala, it is also spoken in the Nilgiri areas of Tamil Nadu. They were mainly agricultural workers and wood cutters.

Tulu is also another language spoken by the tribes of Tamil Nadu. The southwest part of India is known as Tulu Nadu since it has been inhabited by the Tulu people. They are also very much prevalent in parts of Karnataka and Kerala.

Toda, another tribal language spoken by the tribes inhabiting the south of Nilgiri Plateau is a language spoken by the pastoral population. The tribe is named after the language Toda. Their occupation is cattle –herding and dairy works. They follow a very traditional religion known as the Toda religion.

One of the tribal languages belonging to the Indo –Aryan family and spoken by the tribes of Tamil Nadu is the **Saurashtri** language. It is mainly spoken by the people residing in Gujarat but some of them have migrated into the regions of Tamil Nadu and Madurai. Since its strong affections to the Dravidian family of language, this particular Saurashtrian language is now largely spoken by the inhabitants in Tamil Nadu. They engaged in silk trade and hence migrated into the other two regions.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) What do you understand by the Jatapu language spoken in some parts of Tamil Nadu?

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

Tamil Nadu and its people belong to the Dravidian group of families who inhabited India in the very early centuries. The Tamil People are an ethnic group of people belonging to the southern eastern part of the country. Their culture and traditions are diverse and the tribal population of Tamil Nadu inhabits mainly the southern areas of the state. The language of the tribes mostly denotes the names of the tribes prevalent in this region.

The languages spoken in some parts of the region are also languages spoken in other parts in different states of India. It is because the Tamil language is one of the oldest surviving languages from the ancient period. It is considered to be a part of the family of the Dravidian language spoken by the first inhabitants of the Indian Sub-Continent. Tamil Nadu also encompasses a rich culture of scheduled tribes and scheduled caste population. Being one of the oldest regions inhabited by the Indians who followed Hinduism, the Tamil region too, was a victim of the oppressive caste system.

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UNIT 5 TRIBES OF LAKSHADWEEP AND PUDUCHERRY

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Lakshadweep
- 5.2 Culture, Religion, Festivities and Political System : Lakshadweep
- 5.3 Tribes of Lakshadweep
- 5.4 Puducherry
- 5.5 Social Organisation
- 5.6 Religion
- 5.7 Tribes of Puducherry
- 5.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.9 Further Readings and References

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to :

- Understand about the culture and tribal way of life of Lakshadweep;
- Explain about the tribes residing in Puducherry; and
- Describe the social organisation and religion of the tribals in Puducherry.

5.1 LAKSHADWEEP

Lakshadweep is a group of coral islands which lie scattered in the Arabian Sea. They are located at a distance of 225-450 km from the nearest Kerala coast. Among the 22 islands only 10 islands are inhabited. These are categorized into three groups: the five inhabited islands of Amini, Kadmat, Kiltan, Chelat and Bitra belong to the Amindivi group. The 4 inhabited islands of Androth, Karavatti, Agatti and Kalpeni, and the 12 uninhabited islands of Kalpitti, Bangaram, Tinnakara, Parali, Tilakkam, Pitti, Cheriya, Suheli Valiyakara, Suheli Cheriya, Pakshi Pitti (the island of birds), Viringili and Kodithala constitute the Laccadive group. The third group is represented by a solitary inhabited island called Minicoy.

5.2 CULTURE, RELIGION, FESTIVITIES AND POLITICAL SYSTEM : LAKSHADWEEP

In respect of cultural regions, Lakshadweep can be divided into two distinct regions. In one region, all the inhabited islands, except Minicoy, can be grouped. Minicoy differs from the rest of the Lakshadweep Islands in language, dress and lifestyle as well as culture. The Minicoyans are ethnically and culturally closer to the people of Maldives, whereas the rest of the people living in the different islands are culturally closer to the people living in coastal Kerala.

The people of Lakshadweep profess Islam and the majority of them belong to the Shafi School of the Sunni sect. There are also a few Whabi and Ahamadiyya among them but they constitute only a microscopic minority of the Lakshadweep inhabitants.

In all the islands, the important religious festivals which have recognition in Islam are observed. Besides these, the people observe some festivities associated with the religious preceptors, e.g Sheikh Mohiddin and Sheikh Raffai. Id-ul-Fitr is locally known as Cheriya Perunnal. It marks the culmination of the Ramzan fast, and is celebrated on the first of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Islamic calendar. It is the day of feasting and rejoicing. In some islands, feasts are arranged at the mosques and *maulood* conducted in the name of the prophet. Id-ul-Zuha is known as Bakrid, and is celebrated on the tenth day of Dulhaj, the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar, to commemorate Prophet Ibrahim's surrender to the will of God. Prayers are offered and sacrifices of cows and goats are made in the name of God and meat distributed among friends, relatives and neighbours.

The life cycle rituals observed in Minicoy are, to some extent, different from those of the other islands of Lakshadweep. But inter-ethnic differences in regard to the observance of these rituals are not found either in Minicoy or other islands. Moharram is not of much importance in the islands. It is mostly celebrated by the well-to-do families. They observe it on the tenth day of Moharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar.

Before the linguistic reorganization of the states, these islands were part of the Chevayoor constituency of the Malabar district of the erstwhile Madras (now, Chennai) Presidency.

The members elected from this constituency to the Madras (now, Chennai) Legislative Assembly and parliament represented these islands in the Madras (now, Chennai) Legislative assembly and the Parliament. After the formation of these islands into a union territory, one member used to be nominated by the president of India to represent the islands in the Parliament till 1967, after which a constituency, covering the Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands, was created and since then a member is elected from this constituency to represent it in the parliament. Moreover, to ensure that the people are closely associated with the local administration and developmental process, committee/councils have been constituted.

5.3 TRIBES OF LAKSHADWEEP

KOYA

The term Koya is a corrupt form of the word *Khoja* which means "the respected". The name Koya itself is of comparatively recent origin. Formerly, the Koya were known as the Tarwadi or the Karnavar and claimed their descent from the Namboodari and the Nair from mainland India. Presently, the Koya are distributed in all the inhabited islands except Minicoy. Their group-wise population is not available. The language spoken with the kin group is Laccadive, i.e., Dweep Bhasha (a local variation of Malayalam). Their constitutional status is that of a scheduled tribe. The Koya do not have any sub-groups or synonyms.

Traditionally, the Koya men wear a white or coloured lungi and shirt, but nowadays the youngsters wear shirts and trousers. The Koya women's traditional dress is similar to that of the Kerala Muslim women. They wear a white or coloured cloth (*kachi*) and a tight-fitting blouse with long sleeves (*kuppayam*). The head-dress (*thattam*) covers the head and shoulders. The women have a great penchant for ornaments. Eardrops and ear-rings are common adornments. The Koya are non-vegetarian and eat beef but not pork. Their staple food is rice and fish.

Social divisions among the Koya exist at the *tarwad* (a matrilineal descent household) level but internal hierarchy does not exist. The community self perception about its social status is high. The other communities also have a high perception of the Koya. The Koya maintain endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the *tarwad* level.

Consanguineous marriages-both parallel and cross, except maternally parallel-are practised. However, mother's brother's daughter (MBD) is preferred to father's sister's daughter (FSD). Maternal uncle-niece marriage is not allowed. Sororate junior (a custom by which on the death of a woman her husband is required or has the right to marry her younger sister) is allowed. Adult marriage for either sex is practised and the mode of acquiring a mate is either exchange (of sister) or negotiation. The form of marriage is monogamous. Divorce by either party is permissible with the approval of the *Kazi* (muslim priest). In the case of divorce by the wife, the compensation is given to the ex-husband, and children are the liability of the mother but the payment is made every month by the ex-husband for their livelihood till they reach adulthood. Remarriage of a widow/widower/divorcee is permissible. The Koya prefer the joint family system, but nowadays nuclear family is also coming into existence because of the gradual erosion of authority of the matrilineal group as well as the emergence of the individualistic outlook. There are two types of property among the Koya. One is the self-acquired property and the other is the ancestral property. In the *tarwad* property, each member, irrespective of age, sex or generation, has an equal share. However, no individual member can alienate his/her share of her property, sons get double the share of daughters' and wife gets one-eight share following the *shariat* (Islamic code of conduct). The rule of succession is either by nephew or the younger brother of the head of a *tarwad*, whoever is older. The Koya women of this territory enjoy a higher social and economic status than the other Muslim societies in India. They participate in economic activities and contribute to the family income. The major natural resource is land. Among the Koya, the land is controlled individually as well as by the *tarwad*. The Koya were the principal landowners and they still remain so.

MALMI

The word Malmi or Mali is derived from Arabic word *Muallim*, meaning the leader of a crew. The people who were specialists in the art of sailing and in doing the calculation needed in sailing used to be (and are) engaged by the Koya to ply their *odam* (indigenous sailing-boat). These people have come to call themselves Malmi or Mali.

The Mali as a rule, learn and practise navigation and astrology and propose a suitable date for the departure and return of a sailing vessel, for laying the foundation stone of a house and for designating the auspicious time for conducting a social ceremony. The Malmi converse in Dweep Bhasha with their family and kin group. The script used with them is Arabic. The language and the script used with others are Malayalam. Among the Malmi, marriage with the MBD is more frequent than with the FSD.

There is a practice of parallel-cousin marriages: both maternal and paternal. Uncle-niece marriage is not allowed. The Malmi are non-vegetarian. Social divisions among the Malmi exist at the *tarwad* level but there is no hierarchy. A *tarwad* mainly functions as a corporate group and confines the marital alliances within the group. Their self perception is of middle order. The Koya and the Melacheri also perceive the Malmi as belonging to the middle order. Community endogamy is practiced by the Malmi but exogamy operates at the *tarwad* level. They prefer cross cousin marriages. Though Islam permits parallel-cousin marriages, the Malmi gives less preference to it. Maternal uncle-niece marriage is not permitted. Adult marriage is practiced and the mode of

acquiring a mate is either negotiation or exchange. Monogamy is practiced. Divorce is permitted for either sex but with the approval of the *kazi*. A male divorcee or widow can remarry only after the completion of three menstruations. Normally, the main reasons for divorce are adultery, maladjustment, chronic sickness, etc. If the divorce is sought by the wife and granted, the compensation is to be given to the ex-husband. After the divorce, children are the liability of the mother but the ex-husband has to pay some amount (mutually agreed) every month till the children reach adulthood.

The Malmi prefer an extended family, but nowadays nuclear family is also coming up.

Malmi follow the *marumakkathayam* (the matrilineal system of inheritance) and Islamic laws of inheritance. Property is of two types: *tarwad* and self acquired. In the *tarwad* property, each member, irrespective of age, sex or generation, has an equal share. No individual member can alienate his/her share of her property from the *tarwad*. In the case of self acquired property, sons get double the share of daughters' and wife gets one-eighth. Succession is either by nephew or the younger brother of the head of the *karnavar* (the head of a matrilineal unit, usually the oldest male) whoever is older.

The Malmi women are mostly engaged in the collection of fuel, fetching of potable water and other domestic chores. They also play an active role in the political activities. They have a higher social status in the area of literacy and economic freedom. They also contribute to the family income. They do not have any decision-making powers and do not control the family expenditure.

The marriage proposals, in the Malmi, usually come from the girl's family. Preference is given to maternal uncle's son. Marriage consists of *kanoth* (the term used for Islamic marriage contract) and *mangalam* (the social ceremony in connection with marriage). The *kanoth* ceremony is usually performed at a mosque or, sometimes, at the bride's house, in which the *kazi* takes the consent of both the parties. The nuptial ceremony is performed at the bride's residence, either on the day of the *kanoth* ceremony itself, or subsequently, on the third or seventh day. Since the Malmi are sailors, their main natural resources is water. Originally a tenant class, the Malmi were considered experts in navigation and held the rank of a captain in *odam*. The Malmi follow Islam and belong to the Shafi school of the sunni sect.

MELACHERI

The term Melacheri means high climbers, an apparent reference to the primary occupation of the Melacheri, i.e., coconut plucking. The main function of a Melacheri *tarwad* is to regulate marriage. The community's self perception is low and the Koya and the Malmi also have low perception about the status of the Melacheri. Endogamy is maintained at the community level. Divorce is permitted for either sex, with the approval of the *kazi*. If the wife seeks and is granted the divorce, the compensation has to be paid to the ex-husband. Remarriage is permitted for a widow/widower and divorcee-male and female. The Melacheri follow two types of inheritance rule-one for the *tarwad* property and one for *tingalaicha* (self acquired or personal property).

For the latter, they follow the Islamic law of inheritance as mentioned in the *Shariat*, i.e., "to the male a portion equal to that of two females". The share prescribed for wife is one-eighth of the whole property, after deducting debts, and one quarter in case the male has no child. In the case of the *tarwad* property, the rule of inheritance is passed on matrilineally in which each member of the *tarwad* gets an equal share. Succession passes to either nephew or younger of the *karnavar*, whoever is older. The Melacheri women enjoy a higher social status than women belonging to any other Muslim society in India in literacy and economic freedom. They have the right to inheritance. They play

a role in the plantation operation, collection of fuel, fetching of potable water as well as other economic activities, besides their household chores. They also actively participate in social and religious functions. In the political field, they do not play any significant role. Women contribute to the family income but do not control the family expenditure. In the Melacheri, the marriage proposal is initiated generally by the girl's family. The Melacheri follow Islam and belong to the Shafi School of the Sunni sect.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) Briefly discuss the religion and festivities observed by the people of Lakshadweep?

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5.4 PUDUCHERRY

The Pondicherry (now, Puducherry) Union territory is home to multi-ethnic communities, with different languages and culture.

The population of Puducherry (Census, 2011) is 12.48 lakhs. As a proportion of the country's total population, it is 0.10%. Puducherry had quite a favourable sex ratio at the beginning of the 20th Century. But, it steadily decreased decade after decade until 1991 when it reached 979. However, there has been a remarkable improvement in sex ratio in the UT in 2001 (1001) and in 2011 it is 1037. The main languages spoken in the Union Territory of Puducherry are Tamil (in Puducherry and Karaikal), Telugu (in Yanam) and Malayalam (in Mahe), apart from French which continues to be spoken by many. Hinduism, Christianity and Islam co-exist in Puducherry. The Hindus have scores of ancient temples in Puducherry.

Puducherry is part of the geographic and linguistic-cultural region of the South Indian peninsula. Like the other South Indians, the people of Puducherry are primarily Dravidians.

The Union Territory of Puducherry includes four enclaves located in three states of South India. It includes the coastal towns of Puducherry and Karaikal in Tamil Nadu, Yanam in Andhra Pradesh and Mahe in Kerala. While Puducherry and Karaikal and Yanam are on the East coast bound by the Bay of Bengal, Mahe is on the West coast bound by the Arabian Sea. Puducherry is surrounded by South Arcot District, Karaikal by Thanjavur District Yanam by East Godavari District and Mahe by Kannur District.

5.5 SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Clans and lineages are important kin groups, dividing the communities into a number of social divisions. These kin groups are exogamous units. All the members of a clan/*gotram* and *pravara*/lineage maintain brotherly relationships (*pangali*). The *pangali* have specific roles to perform collectively during rituals, ceremonies and festivals. The Brahman and the other Brahmanical communities, like the Vysya, Kammalar, Kshatriya, Raju and Patnulkaran, have *gotrams* which are affiliated to a putative ancestor. Further, the *Gotrams* of the Brahmans are divided into *pravara* like *yekarishi* (single rishi),

trayarishi (three rishi), *pancharishi* (five rishis), *saptarishi* (seven rishi), to maintain marital alliances, and to indicate descent. In some communities, the clans are named after a plant, fruit, flower, animal, as well as other natural objects and man-made things. The clans of the Vellalar, Naicker and Vanniyar communities are affiliated to particular deities and are named after those deities. The clans may be further divided into a number of lineages based on *veetuperu* (house name), *intiperu* (house name), *tharavad* (household name) etc, that have roots in a person's *parambai* (ancestry). The Muslim communities are divided into many kin groups based on lineage alone.

The local name for the family is *kudumbam*. The family is the smallest basic unit in all four regions of the Puducherry union territory. It acquires membership through birth, marriage and adoption. The family and household are synonymous and it comprises of husband, wife, and children, either married or unmarried and other related members, such as aged parents. The predominant family type is nuclear, consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. The joint families are of two kinds: vertically extended and horizontally extended. The widowed mother or father living along with her or his married sons is the other family type. In all the communities, a girl after marriage, joins her husband's family and continues to live with his parents for sometime. A majority of the communities are patrilineal and patrilocal. Matrilocal residence is commonly found among the Maraikayar community.

5.6 RELIGION

The main religion practised in the Union Territory of Puducherry is Hinduism. Other religions practised are Christianity and Islam. Hindus constitute the majority. Among the Hindus, there are Saivites, who worship Siva, and Vaishnavites who worship Tirumal or Vishnu. Among the Vaishnavites, there are two further sects, Thengalai and Vadagalai. The following are the important festivals celebrated in the Union territory of Puducherry. *Amavasai*, or the day of the conjunction of the Sun and the Moon, occurs every month and is considered auspicious by observing rituals to the *pitri* (souls of ancestors). Ugadi is the Telegu New year Day. It falls on the first day of the Tamil month *Chitthirai* (March-April). It is generally believed to be the anniversary of the creation or the first day of the Sathyayuga. The most important festival celebrated in Puducherry is Pongal (harvest festival), also known as Makara Sanskranti in other regions. The celebration lasts for four days. Vishu is an important festival celebrated in the Mahe region. It is the Malayali New Year and is celebrated on the first day of the Malayalam month of *Medom* (April-May). On this day astrologers bring to every household a note on the fortunes of men, animals, seasonal conditions and crops in the New Year. They are given a measure of rice in return. Deepavali is celebrated in all the four regions. Onam is a post harvest festival special to the Mahe region. Mahasivaratri is observed in honour of Lord Siva in the Tamil month *Masi* (March).

5.7 TRIBES OF PUDUCHERRY

IRULA

The Irula are an endogamous group sparsely distributed in and around the Puducherry and Karaikal regions. Traditionally rat trappers, they are also referred to as Vettaikaran or Villi. The term Irula, in Tamil, means 'dark' or 'night'. The Irula mainly live in thatched roof huts. Several families live in the fields. Their staple foodgrains are finger millet, great millet and pearl millet. They are non-vegetarian. They trap field rats, porcupine and rabbits and catch snakes.

The Irula community is an endogamous group with several exogamous *gotrams* or *jatis* (Clans). Each *gotram* is divided into exogamous *kulams* (surname or lineage) whose function is again, to regulate marriage alliances. Each *gotram* is divided into exogamous *kulams* (Surname or lineage) whose function is again, to regulate marriage alliances. The head of the *kulam* (lineage/caste/clan) is the *kula guruvan* (head of the *kulam*). Every man is a member of his father's lineage. Women retain their father's lineage even after marriage.

The Irula worship plants and animals such as veppa (neem), lu (papal), naai (dog), kudhirai (horse), puli (tiger) and aane (elephant). However, such worship is no longer done. It is not clear whether these were totemic symbols or clans. The father is the head of the family. The majority of Irula families are nuclear in nature, but a few are vertically extended through the youngest son. Immovable property, particularly the house, is shared by sons by partitioning the rooms. Household items, such as utensils and furniture, are shared by all the sons equally. However, daughters are also given some of these at the time of their marriage. Old parents are looked after by the youngest son. Succession is by the eldest son. Women have a secondary status in the Irula community. They participate in economic activities along with men, apart from doing domestic work and looking after the children. During the first four days of menstruation Irula women are banned from entering their kitchens or cooking food. Compared to others in their neighborhood, Irula women enjoy more freedom within the family as well as outside. They take part in all social and religious functions. An Irula woman goes to her parents' home during the seventh month of her first pregnancy. Consanguineous marriages are the norm among Irula. Marriages with close kin, namely niece, father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter or second degree cross cousins are generally preferred. Monogamy is the rule, but polygyny is permitted. Pre-puberty marriages are not allowed. Land is the main resource of the Irula. The forests are their secondary source of income. Traditionally they are hunters and food-gatherers. They also collect honey and are paid for it in paddy. They catch rats in the fields and are also paid for this in paddy annually. In addition, they take the grain stored in the holes by the rats. But primarily they engage themselves in agricultural labour nowadays. Most of them do not own any land and live below the poverty line.

KURAVAR

The Kuravar are also called Malai Kuravar, Thombaikkuravan, Koravan and Mala Kuravar. They have of late, started identifying themselves as KattuNaicker, which is a Scheduled Tribe. The term *kuravar* simply means a 'hunter' or 'forest dweller'. Some of them live in the hills, hence they are called Malai Kuravar. they practiced their age-old professions, hunting and pig rearing. The Kuravar speak their own dialect, *viz.* Kuravar *basha*, among themselves. It is a mixture of Telegu and Tamil. The Kuravar are non-vegetarian. They rarely eat vegetables, their staple food are rice and ragi. The Kuravar are divided into four phratries, *viz.* Melpadi, Satpadi, Mendra Kuttan and Kavadi. Each one is further divided into different clans, *viz.* Otel mogam, Bandi mogam, sisulu mogam, nadi mogam, Katta mogam. These kin groups indicate ancestry and regulate marriage alliances. The Kuravar are not aware of the Hindu *varna* system and are, therefore, unable to recognize their position in the *varna* order. The community's self-perception, as well as others' perception of the Kuravar, is very low. The Kuravar follow phratry exogamy and community endogamy. Among the Kuravar, a boy can marry his maternal uncle's daughter or paternal aunt's daughter or his own sister's daughter. They practice only adult marriages. Most marriages are negotiated. Generally, girls get married immediately after puberty. Either spouse can divorce, for such reasons as maladjustment,

adultery, cruelty, the practice of witchcraft etc. If the wife initiates the divorce, she has to return the bride-price to her husband. But no divorce compensation is paid to the wife. Children remain with either the father or mother, as suggested by the elders. Remarriage is allowed for both the widowed and the divorced of either sex.

The Kuravar have both nuclear and joint families, though the former seem to be increasing. Kuravar women are hard working and participate in all kinds of jobs along with their men. They help in rearing pigs, collecting pig waste and pig fodder, drying fish when there is a catch, gathering fuel and carrying potable water. Besides participating in economic activities, child rearing and domestic work are the duties of women. They also control family expenditure. They participate in socio-religious functions and have special roles to play in them. Despite all this, the women have a lower status than the men. The Kuravar are a landless community. They are traditional pig-rearers and hunters.

YERUKULA

The Yerukula are chiefly found in the yanam district of Puducherry. They are a small migrant population from Andhra Pradesh. The term Yerukula is an etymological derivative of *yeruka* meaning 'fortune-telling' or 'foresight'. The women of this community are experts in telling fortunes. They wander in the streets crying "*Yeruko-amma-Yeruka*" (prophecies, mother, and prophecies) hence their name. The yerukula speak their dialect, Yerukula Bhasha, or Oadra, a corrupt polyglot of Telegu, Tamil and Kanarese, among themselves. With outsiders they talk in Telegu. At the community level, the dialect not only identifies them but enables them to maintain secrecy in their communications. The literacy level is low among the Yerukula and most of the elders are illiterate. The Yerukula are non-vegetarian. The Yerukula are divided into several endogamous sub-tribes based on their traditional occupation and the form of nomadism they practice: Suvu (date palm basketry), Badda or Dabba (bamboo basketry), Uppu ort Bidari (trading in salt) and Kunchi or Kaunchapuri (makers of brushes).

Each sub-tribe is split into four common exogamous phratries (*gotras*), viz. the Kavadi, Sathpadi, Menapadi and Mendrakutti. These are all corrupted Tamil words and signify various activities connected with deity worship. Of these, the first two are considered superior to the other two.

They regulate marriage alliances. People belonging to the Kavadi group are *pothu* (male) and those belonging to Sathpadi are *penti* (female). Marriages are favoured between these two groups. Membership in a Yerukula family can be acquired through marriage and adoption, apart from being born into it. The Yerukula unit is patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal. The most elderly male member of the family is the highest authority. In case of his death, his wife, if she is elder to his brothers, becomes the head of the household. The Yerukula family is a social unit, the members of which act for their common good. Marriage by negotiation is the Yerukula norm. Monogamy is the marital norm. Polygyny is practiced, usually when the first wife suffers from chronic illness or is barren. Nevertheless, the number of wives a man has signifies his wealth, status and authority in Yerukula society. They prefer consanguineous marriage alliances. Both types of cross-cousin marriages, i.e., maternal uncle's daughter and paternal aunt's daughter are common. The maternal uncle plays an important role in all phases of a person's life. He has the first choice in seeking the hands of his sisters' daughters for his sons, if he has no sons or has arranged their marriages with outsiders; he receives a certain share of the bride price given to the girls. He offers clothes, bangles and toilet items to his niece on her marriage. Among the Yerukula, widows and widowers can remarry. The Yerukula have their own *kula panchayat* (tribal council). The *kula*

panchayat is now called Yerukula Sangam and is headed by a president, secretary and some elderly persons (*peddalu*). They decide disputes pertaining to marriage, divorce, remarriage, property etc., and impose fines. The Yerukula have animistic beliefs. They are highly superstitious and take serious note of bad and good omens. The Yerukulas specialize in making baskets, mats and ropes. The women are skillful tattooists.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Write a brief note about the Irula tribe of Puducherry.

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5.8 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit, you would have understood the social organization, religion, political structure, cultures, marriage customs of the tribes of Lakshadweep and Puducherry. You can analyze that each of the tribes that has been written about have different occupations, in which they specialize, e.g., the Yerukulas specialize in making baskets, mats and ropes. The Kuravar practiced their age-old professions, hunting and pig rearing, which goes to show that each tribe has their own identity.

5.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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