

A Brief Ethnographic Study of Chapparband Community of Dharwad Town

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Abstract

Chapparband a small community with Islamic faith found in both Bijapur and Dharwad districts of Karnataka. There are different versions about their origin. They are employed in different petty jobs. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the brief ethnographic profile of Chapparband community of Dharwad town of Karnataka.

Key Words: Chapparband, Baraganda, Cheganda

Introduction

Chapparband a small endogamous community subscribing to Islamic faith found mainly in different towns and villages of Bijapur and Dharwad districts of Karnataka state. Different scholars have given different opinions about the origin of 'Chapparband'. Kennedy (1907) opines that "Chapparbands are Sheikh Mohammadans and originally belonged to Punjab and some parts of Delhi". Enthoven (1975) says that "they claim Rajput origin and appear to be immigrants from upper India and speak Hindustani at home". In Bombay Gazetteer (1884) it has been mentioned that they are the immigrants from Gujarat, who came to south during Adilshahi's rule. The word Chapparband has come from Hindi. In Hindi, 'Chappar' means roof, and 'band' means maker. Hence, Chapparbands are roof makers.

There two endogamous groups among Chapparbands namely 'Baraganda' and 'Cheganda'.

Language, Dress Pattern and Food Habits

No unanimous opinion is there about the language of Chapparbands. Eaton (1978) opines that Chapparbands speak Urdu mixed with Gujarati. In Bombay Gazetteer (1884, Vol.23) it is said that 'the Chapparbands speak Hindustani with considerable mixture of Gujarati'.

As regards the dress pattern of the two groups of Chapparband, there are differences in costumes of males and females of rural Chapparband and urban Chapparband. The Chapparbands who live in villages ordinarily wear the same dresses as that of Hindus. Costumes of the males consist of shirt, loosely folded turban. The women wear saree and blouse. The women also adorn with ornaments in the ear, nose and neck. They wear bangles in both the hands. In urban area pyzama, shirt and cap are the usual male dresses. Women wear saree and blouse. Younger generation wear the dresses of other Hindus.

Like other people of northern Karnataka, Chapparbands use jowar as their staple food. Their meals

consist of roti, rice. Mutton, chicken and beef are consumed. Pork is tabooed. Especially laborers consume alcoholic drinks like arrack, brandy, whisky, etc. Smoking is common habit.

Marriage, Family and Kinship

Marriage is a civil contract for Chapparbands. Ideally, they say marriage alliance with mother's sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter, father's brother's daughter etc. is allowed. Alliance between Baraganda and Cheganda groups is always avoided. Kazi performs marriage formalities. Both men and women have right to divorce and remarry. But such cases are rare.

The two groups of Chapparband have nuclear as well as extended families. Authority in the family rests with father. Children respect their parents and other members of the family. Descent is traced through male line. Whole property is inherited equally among sons. Daughters have no claim on property. Each family belongs to an exogamous patrilineal group carrying the name whose origin is not known. More than 35 groups are found in both the sects of Chapparband.

The status of the women of this community is lower than that of men. The women contribute to their family income through wage labour, building work, road metalling, beedi rolling and vegetable selling etc. Women are not allowed to enter mosque. They are also not allowed to take part in the community level religious functions.

The relationship between the member of a family and patrilineal groups is marked by respect towards elders and authority towards youngsters with intimate obligations.

Life Cycle Rituals

As in other communities various rituals are performed right from birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, Occupational specialization and death. Pregnant women go to her mother's house for delivery. Child mortality among Chapparbands has gone down. Many go to hospitals for treatment. Mid-wife services are also utilized. Sixth day child is named. Boys have to undergo circumcision ceremony called 'Sunti' between eight and twelve years of age. When girl attains puberty, the puberty ceremony is performed. Women participate in this ceremony. Feast is served. Now-a day's school going girls do not attach much importance to the traditional rituals performed during this ceremony.

The marriage proposals are moved by the bride's party. Betrothal ceremony is held in bride's house. Bride-groom does not attend this ceremony. Other marriage rituals are performed as they are taking place in other Muslim communities. The marriage ceremony deemed complete after obtaining the consort for three times from both bride and groom. The Chapparbands dispose of the dead body as per the ideals of Islam. Relatives and friends of the dead assemble after hearing the news. The Khazi is called to perform the rituals. Bath will be given to dead body and decorations are made. Dead body is buried in north-south direction. Three flat stones are placed on the pit. Later other rituals are performed as per the direction of the religious leaders.

Economic Activities

In Dharwad, Chapparbands are engaged in different occupations like carpentry, masonry, road metalling work and so on. Some are working as labourers in building construction. Some of the

Chapparbands earn their livelihood by doing petty business such as tailoring, selling ice creams, fried ground nut and selling stationary articles in the towns and nearby village fairs. Majority of the community members are illiterate. Many boys and girls are school dropouts. Now, few members of this community are working as primary school teachers, clerks, drivers and attenders in government and private offices.

Social Control

Chapparbands have their own panchayat system known as 'Chapparband Jamat'. Jamat consists of five elderly members of the community. Any kind of dispute among the members of the community is settled in the Jamat. In a particular place where majority of Chapparband belong to Cheganda' group, the Jamat will have more Cheganda members. Chapparband Jamat generally solves all problems that are brought before it by members of the community. Jamat generally has its sittings in the masjid.

Religion

The Chapparband community as a whole, avail the services of three religious specialists known as 'Khazi', 'Khatib' and 'Mulla'. Khazi plays significant role in marriage and funeral ceremony. Khatib gives religious instructions especially on Fridays and other important occasions. Mulla is scholarly person in the religious matters. Chapparbands have belief in the mystic powers of 'Fakirs' and 'Pirs'. These persons are saintly persons who have renounced the worldly life and lead the 'life of ascetics'. Chapparbands celebrate all important festivals such as Moharrum', 'Ramzan', 'Bakrid' etc. Fasting is strictly observed during holy month of 'Ramzan.

Now a days because of changing conditions of the society, the members belonging to this community are also gradually changing and have occupied different positions in the society.

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