

A Study On The Cultural Heritage Of The Mesta (Charodi) Community

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the cultural identity, traditions, occupation, rituals, and social life of the Mesta (Charodi) community of coastal Karnataka. Originally migrated from Goa nearly 400 years ago, the community settled in regions such as Karwar, Honnavar, Shirur, Kundapur, and Mangalore, preserving its distinct cultural heritage despite social and geographical changes. The study highlights their religious beliefs, family system, language, rituals, festivals, and unique customs associated with marriage and funeral practices. Special attention is given to the traditional occupation of fishing boat construction, which represents the artistic and technical expertise of the community. The paper explains the detailed process of boat building, from the initial rituals to the final launching ceremony, emphasizing the community's contribution to the coastal economy and maritime culture. Although small in population and less recognized politically, the Mesta community continues to maintain its unity, cultural values, and economic progress while adapting to modern social conditions. The study underlines the importance of preserving the cultural traces and traditional knowledge of the Mesta (Charodi) community as a valuable part of Karnataka's diverse cultural heritage.

Keywords: Karnataka, Mesta (Charodi), community, coastal environment, Government.

INTRODUCTION

India is known for its rich cultural diversity, where numerous communities and ethnic groups have preserved their unique traditions, occupations, rituals, and social identities for centuries. Among these communities, the Mesta (Charodi) community of coastal Karnataka occupies a distinctive place because of its traditional lifestyle, strong cultural values, and specialized skills in fishing boat construction. Though small in population and less represented in mainstream social and political discussions, the community has successfully maintained its cultural identity and social unity through generations.

The Mesta (Charodi) community is believed to have migrated from Goa to the coastal regions of Karnataka nearly four centuries ago. Settling in places such as Karwar, Honnavar, Shirur, Kundapur, and Mangalore, they adapted themselves to the coastal environment while preserving their Konkani language, religious beliefs, rituals, and customs. Their devotion to Goddess worship, Lord Shiva, and

Nagadeva reflects their deep spiritual traditions and connection with local culture.

One of the most remarkable contributions of the Mesta community is their traditional occupation of fishing boat construction. Their craftsmanship, technical knowledge, and artistic skill in building fishing boats have earned recognition across Karnataka and neighboring coastal regions. Apart from their occupational identity, the community also follows unique family traditions, wedding customs, festivals, and social practices that highlight their disciplined and harmonious way of life.

This study attempts to explore the historical background, cultural practices, religious beliefs, occupational traditions, and present status of the Mesta (Charodi) community. It aims to document and preserve the cultural traces of this community, which forms an important part of the socio-cultural heritage of coastal Karnataka.

The man began to build a systematic life through civilization and began to recognize his community. In addition, he began to develop his own lifestyle,

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rituals, ideas, faith, employment obligations. But he began to build a new life, inevitably traveling to areas where he was worthy of living to maintain his identity in the face of changed conditions and social challenges.

In our Karnataka state, different, different caste and ethnic communities have built their lives. It is ironic, however, that some communities are trying to maintain their own unity without being identified in the mainstream of society. The Mesta (Charodi) community is one of such communities.

Historical Background

The origin of this community, known by many surnames - Mesta, Charodi, Konkani Achari, Nayaka, Khandekar, etc., inevitably left Goa to the coastal areas of Karnataka. Then came from Karawara to Mangalore on the Kannada coast and built a new life.

The community began to live near the bank of Kali river in Karawara after that they migrated to Honnavar, Shirur and Kundapur. The 1975 Karnataka Government's Backward Classes Commission report, despite some confusion in the name of the caste name, mentions that those who identified Mesta, Charodi and Konkani Acharya belong to the same community.

The meaning of the word Charodi :

Char means four in Konkani language, Hodi means a boat. The basic meaning is that four boats migrated from Goa to the coastal areas of Karnataka. About 400 years ago, the community migrated from Goa to the coastal areas of Karnataka.

Religious Background:

This community, originally from Hinduism, is a devotee of Goddess and Shiva. Their original kula daiva is Sri Mahalakshmiravalanatha (Shiva) in Ponda, Goa. After migrating to the coastal area of Karnataka, Sri Sringeri began to have great devotion and faith in Sharadambe and began to devote to the Sri Sringeri Math. They built some temples in the name of Sharadambe and KuladaivaRavanatha in the region of coastal Karnataka

In addition to the worship of Goddess and Lord Shiva, Nagadeva has a great faith. This is evidence that the Mestha community, located in the Gujjadi village of

Kundapur taluk, is celebrating the Nagamandalotsavam every year in the nearby Benere village. Similarly, the local deity of the respective region, which is believed in God, is mixed with local culture.

Kulakasubu (Employment)

This community, which resembles the Vishwakarma (Carpenter) community of Karnataka, is believed to be the work of the wood. This community, especially involved in building fishing boats, is known for its construction of well -equipped fishing boats. The boats built on the banks of Goa, Karwar, Mangalore, Shirur, Kundapur and Gangolli River are in demand not only in Karnataka but also from neighboring states, Goa and Maharashtra.

The community is also recognized in the construction of a fishing boat. Located in Shimoga, Sagar and Shirasi, these communities are actively involved in farming and agricultural activities.

Language and Ritual:

Although Konkani's mother tongue, Konkani, in many parts of Karnataka, They have maintained their own unity in language and word use. Konkani can also be eloquent and speaking fluent in local languages.

Rituals and Celebrations:

Naming, Brahmopadesh celebration is in this community. The boys of the community do Brahmopadesha when they reach the age of 10 to 12 years. Wearing sacred thread for Men are mandatory.

Like other communities, they celebrate festivals with excitement. Shivaratri, Diwali, Ganesha Chaturthi and Choodi festivals are celebrated. They are given greater importance to vegetarian diet during festivals.

Family System and Wedding:

The community follows Patriarchal family system where descent of the children are identified from the father's side.

No authority is given after marriage to girls in the birthplace, and the custom is to change the name of the girls after the wedding. In the case of marriage, females have the freedom to freely convey their

opinion. In addition, women's freedom and respect are given high priority.

Like the other community of Konkani, marriage is carried out systematically, as a source of ritual. The community, located in the Karwar-Honnavara area, celebrates the 'Kashi Yatra' celebration on the eve of the wedding.

The bridegroom's father changes the name of the girl when the wedding is completed and the bride is being added to the husband's house. The name he wants to change is said 3 times in the ear of the bride. The new name is then informed to the rest. Upon changing the name, the girls give this name to all their next business and activities. Similarly, when the bride and groom are welcomed to the groom's house, they put the mixture of mixed water and put the ring in it. It is concluded that the bride and groom are the strongest of the ring in the water. This competition is fun.

This community, which has faith in the joint family system, is giving a great deal to family harmony. The 'nuclear family system' has also been adopted in accordance with the changed social situation.

Although not culturally highly characteristic, this community is giving more prostitution to a peaceful, comfortable and disciplined life. If a vegetarian diet is given high priority during the celebration of engagement, wedding, guidance and other festivals, in other cases the carnivorous diet is also adopted.

Funeral and trust:

This community takes a bath after the death of a person as a common ritual of Hinduism and then takes to the cemetery. The corpse is burned. The rest of the rituals of worship are carried out on the 14th day. There is also a practice of serving ancestors during festive feasts.

Construction of Fishing Boat– A Unique Art of Mesta Community

The construction of a fishing boat is a unique and special art of the community. The community has the skills, ability and art of building modern -made boats from traditional fishing boat. The new technology is also used by this community in the work of boat.

Action and method of following during a fishing boat construction

The man who wants to have a boat or a boat, first visit the owner of the community who builds the boat and discusses the boat. The cost, duration, timber and other equipment for boat construction will be discussed. Then the person who wants to have a boat has to pay a certain amount of advance money to the owner of the boat. And then a good day is held to look at the "Muhurta Puja". The Muhurta worship is performed through the priests.

A blueprint in the beginning of building a boat is created. The mango tree is temporarily attached to the blueprint. Then the work of the boat construction begins step by step. The secured foundation (Paton) is laid at the bottom. It is often used for this. Sometimes a piece of wood wood is also used. Two pieces of the foundation are then attached. The wooden pieces (Batan) are attached to the top of the foundation. On the back of the foundation, a piece of wood is attached to the L shape. L is attached to the piece to the piece. Part of the foundation of the front of the boat is called a dump. This is also attached to the traces. The body of the boat begins. Thumbnail wooden planks are often used for the body structure of the boat. The wooden planks are heated to the planks on the board to make a wooden plot to shape the figure they want. It is then used in the work of the body structure of the boat.

Wanks are attached to the inside of the boat's body. Wankboard is fitted for security. Wank is often used for Nandi and Violet Tree. Then the foundation is attached to the house and the hand (a piece of wood) made of nandi tree. Copper nails are struck in the work of the body's body structure and cotton is tucked into the center of the cardboard. Reviting to secure it when the plank is nailed.

Steel rods are used to connect wooden pieces. The top of the boat (duck) is then formed. Thumbnail wooden planks are often used for the structure of the duck or upward. The duck structure is the process of closing the top of the boat. The engine is then fitted to the boat. Then create the cabin and allow the driver and workers to stay. The shaft and fan are fitted to the rear l pieces of the boat. Suran is also attached to it. The glass fiber is then completely applied to the body structure of the outer part of the boat. The fiber is

taken care of so that the water inside the boat does not leak. Large -sized boats are formed of a fish cold. Fiber is also used there. The boat is given a final touches of the boat using other equipment. The construction of smaller boats usually takes 1½ to 3 months. It takes about 3 to 7 months to build large boats (40 to 80 feet).

The boat is completely dropped into water on a certain day when the fishing is ready for fishing. It is carried out by the priests in Shubhamuhurta through worship. That worship is called "kutty worship". On that day, the owner of the boat, the owner and the workers who built the boat were present. A special gift is given by the owner of the boat to the owner who built the boat. The owner who built the boat will give up the boat to the boat owner through his greeting.

Current Status:

Even though the population of this community is very low in Karnataka, the community is trying to identify socially, economically and academically. Although not politically recognized, this community is economically, academically and industrial, and is improving their lifestyle from time to time. The development of this community, which is living a disciplined, friendly life, is inevitable and the need for government assistance and support.

CONCLUSION

The Mesta (Charodi) community is a culturally rich community of coastal Karnataka that has preserved its traditions, rituals, language, and occupational skills for generations. Their unique contribution to fishing boat construction reflects their traditional knowledge and craftsmanship. Though small in population, the

community continues to progress socially, economically, and educationally while maintaining its cultural identity. Therefore, preserving and recognizing the heritage of the Mesta community is important for protecting the cultural diversity of Karnataka.

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