CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Compiled by: Dr N Sundaradevan IAS

Ni:lagiri,* the holy *giri

"There is one of these holy mountains in the Carnatic, in the district of Coimbatore. It is called *Nilagirimalai*, and is believed to be the highest in the province. For this reason alone the Hindus have made it a *punyasthala*, or place of virtue...As it is very difficult to reach the top of this mountain, a view of the summit alone (and is visible a long way off) is considered sufficient to remove the burden of sin from the conscience of any person who looks at it; provided that he looks at it with that intention"

wrote Abbe J. Dubois, the French clergyman, who was in India from 1792 to 1823 and studied Hindu customs extensively (Dubois,1906: 221).

The gentle people of the holy hill

"In the cluster of [these holy] hills, where the eastern and western Ghauts meet, are embosomed many charming valleys. They afford...a climate perhaps the most perfect in the world, equally removed form extremes of heat and cold...These hills and green plateaus are home of several mountain tribes... [T]he Badagas are the most numerous and prosperous tribe in the Neilgherry hills...[Badagas] are always ready to sing; at birth, marriage or death."

"But it is not only on such occasions that they sing. The belated traveler along hillside tracks will often hear the distant

chant, the loud and sudden chorus, and then again the floating strain of the single singer, borne gently and like the reflex of some distant wave on the wings of the cool night breeze. Such echoes tell of Badaga merriment, and remind the man who is not ignorant of the brother men who dwell around him, that at the moment a whole village-full of folk are gathered round some mossy stone, listening to and then joining in the song of a rustic Homer or Badaga bard, who, neither "mute nor inglorious", leads the resounding melody. Men, women, and children are there. Even as they sing some man or maiden springs to the front and dances to the song, light and agile as a deer or, better still, a mountaineer, such as they are. Thus with song and dance the evening glides away..." (Gover 1871: 63-65).

"Their tunes are quaint and original and, when heard from a distance, have an uncultured sweetness about them in keeping with the soft colouring and wild beauty of the scenery of the land which is their home..." (Grigg 1880: 222).

"The most prominent feature of all this class of literature is its high morality; often using very plain words and calling things by their right names...The more one reads them the greater is the astonishment...it is surely better and a mark of noble blood..." (Gover 1871: 66-67).

wrote Gover, in his introduction to "Badaga songs" in his book *The Folksongs of South India* published in 1871 (pp.63-100). "They are cheery people" wrote Francis in 1908 (p.130); "...a naturally gentle, and industrious but timid and ignorant people" wrote Grigg in 1880 (p. 224). "As the Burghers, salves to habit, prejudice, and the love of ease, oppose themselves to any change or improvement..." lamented Ouchterlony in 1847 (p.26).

But, times change

But, things have changed now. Much of the simple lifestyle, the singing and dancing have gone; so are many other aspects of their culture. The last fifty years or so have brought in sweeping changes in the lifestyle of the Badagas. From an

essentially agricultural-pastoral-semi-literate society in the early nineteenth century, Badagas have, by the turn of the century, come a long way.

Rev. Metz, the German missionary lamented in the 1850s: "This excellent and respected gentleman[1] soon[2] established a school for the education of the Badaga children, but so little were the hill tribes able to appreciate the value of mental culture that it was necessary to offer them a douceur of one anna per diem for every child sent to the school, before any parent could be induced to allow his off-spring to attend" (Metz 1864: 8). But today, Badagas are one of the most literate societies in India today, their literacy rate almost comparable to that of Chennai, the State capital (Hockings 1999: 48). Consequently, they are more "modernized" and urbanized than ever before; and there is a constant stream of Badagas emigrating out of their traditional homes in the Nilgiris, to various parts of India and abroad; so much so, the Badaga Diaspora in the new millennium spans not less than two dozen countries[3]. With many a Badaga out-migrant choosing to stay back, there comes about an inevitable erosion of their original Badaga culture and values.

Back home in the Nilgiris too, there has been a slow but perceptible degeneration of the Badaga culture, being constantly impinged by others. Perhaps this is the price to be paid for "modernization."

A society retains its individual identity only as long as its culture lasts. Hence, there is an imperative need to preserve Badaga culture, preferably in its pristine form or with

---

[1] Mr. Casamajor, the Governor General, who settled in Ketti, after retirement.

[2] Around 1845, in Ketti.

[3] See the membership list in www.badaga.org

adaptations to suit the modern age, if Badagas were to remain a distinct entity.

Fairs, festivals and rituals constitute important facets of a culture besides language, literature, food, dress, art and architecture. In addition to providing an understanding of the religion, festivals and rituals give us a glimpse of the beliefs and the world-view of a culture. An attempt is made in the following pages to revisit Badaga festivals and rituals, basically with a view to documenting them, since such attempts have been few in the past; and to walk you through the intricacies of Badaga festivals and rituals, as we have understood them, and to make you reflect on them. The description and analysis are based on materials available with us, both oral and written. The oral version was provided by Thiru S. Nanjan, retired Headmaster and our illustrious teacher, from Athigaratty village; hence, the reason for the rather excessive partiality towards Athigaratty in this book. The written materials are books written mostly by Europeans, most of them ex-administrators of the Nilgiris. We are conscious of the limitations of these sources.

In the next chapter, a general introduction about rituals and festivals is given which is followed by a brief account of the settings and background of the 19th century Badagas, as gleaned from published sources, mainly by European authors, which will be useful in appreciating the import of Badaga rituals and festivals.

CHAPTER 2

Rituals: An Introduction

Rituals (or rites), religion and symbols

Human ritual activity is at least 200,000 years old; and it existed in all civilizations and in all periods of time (Campbell 1989). Archaeological evidence from Paleolithic period suggests that burials even at that remote period were ritualistic affairs – bodies were not abandoned or thrown around, but kept in burial urns, which contained materials used by the human being during his lifetime.

Every human society, in the course of its evolution, looks for interpretations of or tries to make sense of the natural phenomena around it - the periodic movements of sun, moon and planets, the seasons, natural disasters and the like. It also needs an explanation for the various mysteries its individual members are faced with: death, disease, suffering, dreams, evil and injustice and the like. Many a natural phenomenon is explained through scientific knowledge at the disposal of the society; but not all of them. Society has to still grapple with many such phenomena, which defy scientific explanation - the "supernatural"; these have to be explained based on certain beliefs or myths: for example, for many Hindus, the solar or the lunar eclipse was a calamity, caused by the swallowing of the sun or the moon, for a brief period, by a demon called Rahu; and that one should fast for six hours before the commencement of the eclipse, and prepare and eat food only after the eclipse was over (Natesa Sastri 1903:31);

Badagas believed that it was a sin to watch “the moon being swallowed by the snake” and to go to bed thereafter.[4]

Such beliefs, by definition, cannot be empirically verified. The mass of beliefs or myths, particularly those of the super-natural, constitutes the core of the religion of that society. Thus, it is religion that provides explanations for and "truths" about phenomena and the nature of the cosmos. In short, religion provides the “world view” of a society.

There are those who argue that most of the belief systems evolve through three phases: magic (belief in spirits), religion (belief in gods) and science – that is, religious beliefs precede and are superceded by scientific facts; and that religion itself evolves through three phases: animism (belief in spiritual beings), polytheism (belief in a multiplicity of gods) and monotheism (belief in a single god). But this is highly debatable and we do not propose to get mired in that controversy.

A religious person demonstrates his beliefs by showing and practising his commitment through ritualized worship. Thus, people come to accept the world view and the belief system presented by religion by doing, i.e., acting out and participating in religious rituals. In this way, rituals are the vehicles through which the religious beliefs are transformed into action (Nelson 1990). Typically, rituals involve objects (associated with specific rituals), acts and utterances (by the performer of rituals).

Broadly, a ritual (also known as a rite) is *an act or series acts which is repetitive*; or *following a particular pattern* in the conduct of important matters. This pattern is "*representational behavior*" - that is, it is unique or representative of each

---

[4] This is one of the “three hundred sins” of an individual sought to be expiated during the *Karu harasuvadu* ritual performed during his funeral.

community. In a ritual activity, there is a *preponderance of symbolic action*. Rituals are prescribed by custom, tradition or religion. Ritual activity is deemed morally correct (La Fontaine 1985:11, quoted by Nelson 1990).

Rituals abound in symbolism - things which stand for something else. Symbols are *cultural* patterns - that is, they are learned, not in-born - a unique human trait. This system of symbols is the "model *of* the reality"; it also provides the blueprints of how things ought to be conducted, and thus, it is also a "model *for* the reality" (Geertz 1973:93). But there is a real danger of the rituals and symbols becoming ends in themselves, with the objects and beliefs behind the symbols and rituals lost sight of. Hence, there is a constant need for reminding oneself of the broad picture, the "reality" behind the rituals.

Ritual activity can be a public ceremony or a private affair. Festivals are examples of public rituals, which involve the entire community. Life-cycle rituals (also called *rites of passage*) like name-giving, first-solid-food ritual, initial tonsure for the child, coming of age, marriage and funerary rituals are examples of private rituals which usually involve at best a few families (Badaga funerary rituals are a community affair, though). Public rituals are held in public places like the temples and are almost always supervised by formal full-time "ritual elders" like priests. Private rituals usually take place at the homes of individuals, mostly without the supervision of ritual experts; but a few communities like the Brahmins, make use of the services of ritual experts like *purohita*s even in private rituals.

Some authors make a distinction between a ritual and a ceremony. The *MacMillan Dictionary of Anthropology*, for example, defines a ceremony as "a formalized or stylized performance, often public and always involving more than one participant and/or oberver...There are many ceremonies

which do not have a strong ritual component, in the sense that they have little or no religious significance or symbolic ramification" (Seymour-Smith, 34-35). But, since all the rituals described in this book have some religious significance or other, the terms "ritual" and "ceremony" have been used interchangeably.

In the following pages, Badaga festivals and their rituals are discussed. But, before discussing Badaga rituals and festivals, a brief introduction to nineteenth century Badaga life is in order.[5] Since all the published materials available with us are by European authors, what is presented in the next chapter is essentially a European point of view, but nevertheless it is a useful introduction, providing the historical and ecological backdrop to the Badaga culture.

[5] Badaga society was among those happy societies that did not have a written history. It was the Europeans who started documenting Badaga history and culture in the nineteenth century. This is the reason why we talk about 19th century, and not earlier.

CHAPTER 3

The 19th Century Badagas, through the eyes of the Europeans

The year was 1603 A.D. The Portuguese had long since established their Church at Calicut, in Kerala coast. "Vague rumours had reached the Lord Bishop Dom Frco Ros [of Calicut] that in the interior of this Malabar, among some mountains, there dwelt a race of men descended from the ancient Christians of S. Thomas; in order to discover and open the way to them he sent from our seminary...a priest and a deacon, who after travelling for more than fifty miles reached the summit of the mountain of Todramala. Here they came upon a race which appeared, in accordance with the rumour, to be of those who were driven from the territory of S. Thome by the many wars in former times and scattered through these parts..." But, "they did not bring back such full and certain intelligence as was desired. Therefore...the choice fell upon Father Yacomo Fenicio, who has known the people of Malabar for many years and is well acquainted with their language" (Rivers 1906: 719-720).

Father Fenicio reached "Manarecathe" (Mannarghat) from where he started his journey towards Todarmala:. After walking for two and half days they "reached the village of the Badegas [sic]. It is a village of 150 to 200 souls, called Maleuntao:...In this village they have fowls, cows, goats, rice, lentils, mustard seed, garlick, and honey. They brought me some wheat in the husk, which was very difficult to remove,

and therefore it seemed to me more like barley or some other grain than wheat. The Badagos [sic] are like the Malabars, and they say there are two other villages like this in these mountains, for, five, and six leagues distant from each other. These trade with the Thodares and sell them rice, buying buffalo butter from them, which they carry to Manarcathe for sale...The next day we went to visit the villages of the Thodares...They have no vassals, as was reported; on the contrary, they are subject and pay tribute to the Badega [sic] chiefs...On the return journey the Badegas showed us a shorter and less difficult road, which took us two days and a half, but saved going up and down the last steep mountains...There was a Badaga village at the foot of the mountain, and seeing us they took us for a hostile band and fled into the bush. Our guides called to them not to fly, for we were men of peace who had been to visit the Thodares, whereupon they returned, and coming down we found them armed with their lances, but we saw the women and children still hidden in the bush. A little further on we came upon four or five more houses; these people also fled into the bush, the women carrying children on their backs..."(Translation of Father Fenicio's report, given in Rivers 1906: 723-730).

This is the first-ever written report about the Badagas available to us, written by Father Fenicio, who, we presume, is the first-ever European to have visited the Nilgiris. Opinion is divided as to whether "Maleuntao" refers to Me:l Kundah or Me:lur or Manjacombai; this is because the description of the route taken by Fr. Fenicio accords more with the Sundapatti pass up the hills from Mannarghat, which leads to Me:lur and Manjacombai, though "Maleuntao" sounds like Me:l Kundah; the "Badaga village at the foot of the mountain" referred to by Father Fenicio may be Kinnakorai. But what is important from our point of view is that Badagas had been rather too well settled in fairly large villages by 1603 A.D. to be recent

immigrants as made out by many foreign authors. It also becomes clear that Badagas had a distinct religion[6]; and that they had economic relations with Todas not different from the one observed by the British two hundred years later. We do not propose to get into the debate as to whether Badagas were indigenous to the Nilgiris or were immigrants from Mysore or elsewhere. We merely quote the observations of the European writers on pre-literate Badagas to gain an insight into the lives and environs which serve as backdrops for their culture, particularly their rituals and festivals.

The Four Divisions of the Nilgiris

"The Nilagiris are divided into four *na:ds* or divisions, named respectively – Todana:d, Mekana:d, Perangana:d and Kundana:d (Breeks 1873: 3). In 1847, "there [were] altogether 227 Burgher villages on the Neilgherries, viz. 67 in Todanad, 86 in Meykenaad and 74 in Parungenaad" (Ouchterlony 1847:50) (Kundana:d was then part of the Malabar province and hence was not included in Ouchterlony's (after whom Ouchterlony Valley or O'Valley was named) survey in the 1840s). By 1989, "scattered over the eastern half of the Nilgiri Massif are nearly 350 hamlets of the Badaga community; nine more in the Nilgiri Wynaad and a dozen further outliers in the Ha:sanu:ru region off the northeast give a grand total of about 370 hamlets" (Hockings 1989).

"The total number of Burghers resident on the Neilgherries in December, 1847 has been found by the census to be as follows:

[6] Fr. Fenicio's report gives an interesting incident: he addresses the Badaga villagers about the virtues of Christianity and asks them to adopt it; but, a polite Badaga replies that the teaching are good, but they would rather follow their own religion, which is equally good.

In Todanaad	2,039
In Parangenaad	2,377
In Meykenaad	2,153
Total souls	6,569

(Ouchterlony 1847: 60-61). "Their number was returned, at the census, 1901, as 34,178" (Thurston and Rangachary 1909: 63).

Badaga Villages

"The villagers of the Burghers are, in general, very neat and clean, the houses, which are few in number, averaging 10 or 12, being built in a row on the summit of a low smooth hill, and having a wide level terrace running along the front, for the purpose of spreading out their grain to dry after damp weather, and also to pick and husk it on. They have usually two substantial cattle pens, or more, according to the size of the village, with high rough dry stone walls and barricaded entrances, to secure their cows and bullocks against cheetahs and tigers, which though not common on these Hills, occasionally find their way up from the forests below - and traverse the district, doing much mischief as they pass" (Ouchterlony 1847:49).

"Every Burgher and Kother village has a large herd of cattle attached to it, which are penned during the night in a large circular pen surrounded with stone walls, and allowed to graze over the country during the day" (*ibid.*, 32-33). "The houses are built with mud, or mud and stone, and covered

with a good roof of thatch, grass for which is abundant in all parts of the Hills" (*ibid.*, 50)[7].

Here is the version of Thurston and Rangachari (1909) on Badaga villages: "The Badagas dwell in extensive villages generally situated on the summit of a lower hillock, composed of rows of comfortable thatched or tiled houses, and surrounded by fields which yield the crops. The houses are not separate tenements, but a line of dwellings under one continuous roof, and divided by party walls. Sometimes there are two or three, or more lines, forming streets. Each house is partitioned off into an outer (*edumane*) and inner apartment (*ozhaga* or *o:gamane*). If the family has cows or buffaloes yielding milk, a portion of the latter is converted into a milk house (*ha:go:ttu*), in which the milk is stored, and which no woman may enter. Even males who are under pollution…may not enter it until they have had a ceremonial bath. To some houses a loft, made of bamboo posts, is added, to serve as a storehouse" (p. 75).

"In every Badaga village there is a raised platform composed of a single boulder or several stones with an erect stone slab set up thereon, called *Suththu kallu*. There is further, a platform, made of bricks and mud, called *mandhe kallu*, whereon the Badagas, when not working, sit at ease. In their folk tales men seated thereon are made to give information concerning the approach of strangers to the village…In front of the houses, the operations of drying and threshing grain are carried out. The cattle are kept in stone kraals, or covered sheds close to the habitations, and the litter is kept till it is knee or waist deep, and then carried away as manure for the Badaga's land or planter's estates" (*ibid.*, 75-76).

[7] Mangalore- tiled Badagas houses were a post-1880 phenomenon.

The organization of Badaga society

"They are organized into communes, groupings which take the name of the head hamlet and are always made up of a few contiguous hamlets. The smallest commune however has just one big hamlet (Ta:mbatti), while the largest, (Me:lu:ru, close by it), has thirty-three" (Hockings 1989: xx).

Their Local Administration

"Each village (*hatti*) has its own traditional headman (*gauda*), who works with a small council made up of male elders of each lineage and/or dominant family living there" (*ibid.*, xx).

"In former days, the monegar was a great personage, as he formed the unit of the administration. The appointment was more or less hereditary, and it generally fell to the lot of the richest and most well-to-do. All disputes within his jurisdiction were placed before him, and his decision was accepted as final. In the simple matters, such as partition of property, disputes between husband and wife, etc. the monegars themselves disposed of them. But, when questions of a complicated nature presented themselves, they took as their colleagues other people of the villages, and the disputes were settled by the collective wisdom of the village elders. They assembled at a place set apart for the purpose beneath a nim (*melia azadirchta*) or papal tree (*ficus religiosa*) on a raised platform (*ratchai*), generally situated at the entrance to the village. The monegar was ex-officio president of such councils. He and the committee had power to fine the parties, to excommunicate them, and to readmit them to caste…The monegar, in virtue of his position, wielded much power, and ruled the village as he pleased" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:79-80).

"All of the village headmen involved also constitute a commune (*u:r*) council under the leadership of a common headman (*u:r gauda* or *maneka:ra*). These headmen in turn constitute a regional (*na:du*) council which now rarely meets, under the leadership of its *pa:rpati*. Finally, the headmen of all four *na:dus* occasionally meet formally in Ootacamund when called together by the paramount chief of the Badagas (*na:ku betta gauda*, literally 'four mountains headman'). He, like all the lower-level headmen, occupies a hereditary status; and he is always the headman of Tu:ne:ri village, since it was in all probability the first Badaga settlement on the Nilgiri Hills" (Hockings 1989: xx).

"In former times, the monegar used to wear a silver ring as the badge of office, and some Badagas still have in their possession such rings, which are preserved as heirlooms, and worshipped during festivals. The term monegar is, at the present day, used for the village revenue official and munsiff" (Thurston and Rangachary 1909: 80).

The Nilgiri Climate

Grigg's *A Manual of the Nilagiri District of the Madras Presidency*, published in 1880, has the following to say about the Nilgiri climate:

"The north-east monsoon usually begins about the middle of October. In the early part of October the direction of the wind is variable from the north and north-west, but, as the monsoon sets in, the wind blows form the north-east. It is ushered in with about three weeks of rain, after which the atmosphere clears up and the cold weather sets in. This usually lasts from the beginning of December until the end of February. During the cold season the sky is remarkably clear, and the force of the sun is very great. The nights are, on the contrary, cold and frosty..."

"From the beginning of the year and until the end of April, north-easterly winds prevail…"

"From April until June the winds are variable, sometimes shifting to the north, south, or east… The months of April and May are the hottest in the year…"

"…In the early part of June the wind sets in steadily from the west, or west by north, and soon becoming intensified, is accompanied with…heavy showers. During the south-west monsoon, which usually prevails until the early part of October, much rain falls, and the air is generally saturated with moisture. The hills become quickly covered with luxuriant grasses and the forest trees put forth their fresh leaves. "

"During the months of August and September breaks, as they are called, occur. The mists clear off, and the sun shies forth for several days successively." (Grigg 1880: 51-52)

The Four Badaga Seasons

Hocking's (1989: xx) account of the Badaga year and seasons is as follows:

The Badaga Year

Ka:r (March 16 – June 15)	***Munka:r*** (March 16 – April 15)	Sowing season	**Ka:r bo:ga**
		Cultivation	
Ko:ḍa (June 16 – Sept. 15)	***Munko:ḍe*** (June 16 – July 15)	'main monsoon;' no work possible	
	Moda Ko:ḍe (July 16 – August 15)	'subsiding monsoon;' cultivation continues; harvesting starts.	
	Mora Ko:ḍe (August 16 – September 15)	'tree monsoon;' wind in trees	

Ka:rtige (Sept. 16 – Dec. 15)		Cultivation	**Kaḍe bo:ga**
	Kiru (part of November)	Rain; cultivation difficult	

Be:sage (Dec. 16 – March 15)		Dry, cultivation possible with some irrigation; harvesting second crop	

(Although the terms in Table [above] are also found in the Kannada language, they apply to different periods in Mysore than they do in the Nilgiris.)"

It can be seen that the Badaga *Be:sage* season corresponds to the cold weather season when the sky is clear, the sun is hot and the nights are cold; the *ka:r* corresponds to the pre-monsoon season: the north-easterly winds and the hottest months; *ko:ḍe* corresponds to the southwest monsoon season: heavy rains, cold winds (except for the August-September "break") and luxuriant growth of vegetation; and *ka:rtige* corresponds to the northeast monsoon season: weeks of intense rains followed by the clear sky of early winter. Curiously, April and May, the hottest months are not in *Be:sage* season, but in *ka:r* season; and the north-east monsoon season is known as *ka:rtige* and not *kiru.*

Their Economy and Occupation

In earlier times, "their economy was traditionally centred on buffalo pastoralism and the cultivation of several varieties of amaranth and millet, in earlier times by system of swidden agriculture" (Hockings 1989: xx).

"Though the primary occupation of the Badaga is agriculture, there are among their community, schoolmasters, clerks, public works contractors, bricklayers, painters, carpenters, sawyers, tailors, gardeners, forest guards, barbers, washermen, and scavengers. Many work on tea and coffee estates, and gangs of Badagas can always be seen breaking stones on, and repairing the hill roads. Others are, at the present day, earning good wages in the Cordite Factory near Wellington. Some of the more prosperous possess tea and coffee estates of their own. The rising generation are, to some extent, learning Tamil and English, in addition to their own

language, which is said to resemble old Canarese" (Thurston and Rangachary 1909: 63-64).

Their Crops

"Nobody, it has been said, can beat the Badaga at making mother earth produce to her utmost capacity, unless it be a Chinese gardener. Today we see a portion of the hill side covered with rocks and boulders. The Badagas become possessed of this scene of chaos, and turn out into the place in hundreds, reducing it, in a few weeks, to neat order. The unwieldy boulders, having been rolled aside, serve their purpose by being turned into a wall to keep out cattle, etc. The soil is pounded and worried until it becomes amenable to reason, and next we see a green crop running in waves over the surface. The Badagas are the most progressive of all the hill tribes, and always willing to test any new method of cultivation, or new crops brought to their notice by the Nilgiris Horticultural Society" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:76).

"Burghers cultivated…17,000 acres out of a total of 31,500 acres of cleared and arable land" in the Nilgiris in the 1840s (Ouchterlony 1853: 14). They also had cattle, consisting of buffaloes and bullocks, averaging 8,000 head (*ibid.*, 13).

"Burghers obtain from their wheat lands a quantity of grain equivalent to 11 1/8 bushels per acre" (*ibid.*, 14). "The barley grown on the Neilgherries is divided into two kinds by the Burghers, the first and best being "Sheemey ganjee" or English barely, so called from its being the degenerate produce of English seed given to the head Burghers many years ago, by, I believe, Mr.Sullivan, when Collector of this district and the other "Malley ganjee" or Hill barley, which they describe as indigenous to the Hills"(*ibid.*, 17).

"Other grain production of the Neilgherries are ragghee, samee, korallie, tenney, buttacudaley (a kind of peas), shanungee (a kind of gram), garlic, onions, kudagoo (mustard seed), vendium, opium and potatoes. Almost all the grains enumerated are raised solely for home consumption" (*ibid.,* 23)

"Opium is produced on the Neilgherries to a small extent…The opium extracted by the Burghers from their poppies appears to be of exceedingly fine quality, and meets with a ready sale in the bazaars of Ootacumand" (*ibid.,* 26).

"Hill wheat certainly finds its way to the low country, by being bartered by the Burghers with the traders for cloths and other articles but the quantity thus exported is insignificant." "There are several plantations of mulberry trees in various parts of the Hills" (*ibid.,* 27).

Education

"They are utterly illiterate and their ignorance of the accomplishments of reading and writing are transmitted to their children, since schools for their education are unknown amongst them" (*ibid.,* 59-60).

Their Religion

Metz (1864), whose constant attempts at proselytising Badagas met with stiff resistance, mentions contemptuously about the religion of Badagas: "In the matter of religion, the Badagas, and indeed all the hill tribes, are sunk to a condition little above Fetishism. Any thing with them may become an object of adoration, if the headman or the village priest should take a fancy to deify it. As a necessary consequence, however, of this state of thing, no real respect is entertained towards their deities…"(pp. 60-61). Grigg (1880) gives the following account:

"The Badagas are Hindus of the Siva sect, but their form of the worship of Siva has lost much of its purity since their settlement in the Hills and intercourse with the ore savage

tribes about them. A small number belong to the sect called Lingayats…"

"There are some hundreds of deities in the Hills… but the following are the principal shrines and idols:- The list is from Mr. Metz.

Kal-Kambarays, or the stone pillar god.

Koriaraya, a rusty knife preserved in the village of jackaneri, and supposed to have belonged to aman who committed suicide by leaping from St. Catheine's Fall.

Kariabettaraya, a sliver figure representing a charitable Badaga of the Adhikari caste, now deceased.

Hiriade:va and *Hette:*, a Badaga and his wife. The latter committed suicide when her husband died, and both are worshipped. Other Badaga women emulating the example of Hette: have received the same honours, notably one called *Manikamma*.

Ma:ha:deswara, an image of Siva copied form the one at Nanjanagudi, called *Nanjanda*.

Ra:ma, or Rangasa:mi, is worshipped at only two places; at Rangasami's Peak, where the officiating priest is an Irula, and at Hulikal Dru:g, there the priest is a Badaga and wears the Vishnu mark.

Ye:rnasa:mi, a refractor chief from Coimbatore, who took refuge in the Nilgiris and was betrayed by the Badagas and cursed them for their treachery.

Jedeasa:mi, a god said to have appeared to a Lingayat. He is supposed to make the hair grow.

Ketaraya, a gold nose-ring, a god worshipped by the Toreas.

Be:tasami, a god of sport.

Gangamma, who presides at every stream. The Todas also worship this deity.

Kakkaraya, the god of vomiting, who is frequently *propitiated* by an offering of a quarter rupee.

Virabhataraya, a granite image well carved and supposed to have been brought by the ancestors of the Badagas from Mysore.

The principal temple are the Hette Ko:vil in the Peranganad, two dedicated to the *Ma:ha:lingasa:mi* at Te:na:d in the Pe:rangana:d, and at Me:lur in the Mekanad, Jedeasa:mi's temple at Nidu:nku:lum in the Pe:rangana:d, Hiriasa:mi temples, one at Kuddana:d in the To:dana:d and the one at Me:lur.

There are also three others dedicated to gods not included in the above list, one to *Kariabettaraya* at Athiyarhatti in the Me:kana:d, one to *Rangana:tha* at Kurrachawadi in the Me:kana:d, and one to *Kattakal Mariammen*, probably the small-pox goddess, at Sho:lu:r in the To:dana:d" (Grigg 1880:225-227).

"Writing in 1832, Harkness states on leaving his house in the morning the Burgher pays his adoration to the god of day, proceeds to the *tu*-el or yard, in which the cattle have been confined, and, again addressing the sun as the emblem of Siva, asks his blessing and liberates the herd. He allows the cattle to stray about in the neighbourhood of the village, on a piece of ground which is always kept for this purpose, and, having performed his morning ablutions, commences the milking. This is also preceded by further salutations and praises to the sun. On entering the house in the evening, the Burgher addresses the lamp, now the only light or visible emblem of the deity. "Thou, creator of this and of all worlds, the greatest of the great, who are with us, as well in the mountain as in the wilderness, who keepeth the wreaths that adorn the head from fading, who guardeth the foot from the thorn, God, among a hundred, may we be prosperous" (Thurston and Rangachary 1909: 76-77).

Their Health Status

"All classes of natives located on these Hills, whether of high or low caste, aborigines or modern settlers, enjoy the most robust health, showing that the pure atmosphere and invigorating climate have the same genial effect upon the Native. The most prevalent diseases amongst the Burghers, who may be considered the mass of the Hill population, are small pox, occasionally fever, and an affection of the eyes resembling ophthalmia. The first of these is however the only one which can be called common amongst them, and is the greatest scourge by which they are visited; and as vaccination is not practiced, the disease often commits fearful ravages in their villages, carrying off whole families in a brief space of time" (Ouchterlony 1853: 65).

Their Relations with other Tribes

Colonel Ouchterlony, wrote in 1847 in his "A Geographical *and Statistical Memoir of a Survey of the Neilgherry Mountains*":

"The Burghers are a most superstitious timid race, perpetually filled with the dread of evil spirits hovering around them, and ever haunted with fear of the "*Coorumburs*" (a tribe to be hereafter described), to whose necromancy and demoniac influence, they attribute all accidents and infirmities which befall themselves, their families, cattle or crops. To such an extent is this feeling carried, that murders of the most brutal description have been known to be perpetrated upon the unfortunate *Coorumburs*, for which, although in general it is found difficult to obtain evidence to convict the perpetrators, Burghers have been tried and executed, much to their indignation and astonishment; since the principle inculcated amongst them appears to be, that to sacrifice a *Coorumbur* (and in some cases whole families of them), through whose preternatural agency disease has been brought

into a village, or murrain amongst their cattle, is the only way in which the evil can be averted, and the anger of the deity of destruction appeased. Yet, not withstanding this intuitive horror of their influence over the common affairs of their lives, they regard the *Coorumburs* with the utmost consideration in many other respects, looking upon them as priests, or rater enchanters, whose favor must be propitiated to secure their intercession with the geniuses of good and evil in their favour."

"For example, in the spring when a field is ready for the seed, the work of husbandry cannot proceed until a *Coorumbur* has been summoned, a kid sacrificed to a goddess equivalent to Ceres, the soil blessed, and the first handful of seed scattered over it by him. In like manner, a *Coorumbur* must drive the first plough a few paces, before their work of tillage commences; and at harvest time not a grain or ear is reaped until a small sheaf has been cut by a *Coorumbur*. For these offices, the *Coorumburs* receive gifts in money and produce, and finding their interest in the existence of these superstitions, doubtless encourage them by all the means in their power which they can safely employ" (pp. 60-61).

The following is from Thurston and Rangachari:

"Whenever, Dr. Rivers writes, a Toda meets a Badaga monegar or an old Badaga with whom he is acquainted, a salutation passes between the two. The Toda stands before the Badaga, inclines his head slightly, and says 'Madtin pudia'. (Madtin, you have come). The Badaga replies 'Buthuk! Buthuk! (blessing, blessing), and rests his hand on the top of the Toda's head. This greeting only takes place between Todas and the more important of the Badaga community. It would seem that every Badaga headman may be greeted in this way, but a Toda will only greet other Badaga elders, if he is already acquainted with them. The salutation is made to members of all the various castes of the Badagas, except the Toreyas. It has

been held to imply that the Todas regard the Badagas as their superiors, but it is doubtful how far this is the case. The Todas themselves say they follow the custom because the Badagas help to support them. It seems to be mark of respect paid by the Todas to the elders of a tribe with which they have very close relations, and it is perhaps significant that no similar sign of respect is shown to Toda elders by the Badagas" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:84-85).

"Every Badaga family has its Muttu Kota, from whom it gets the agricultural implements, pots, hoes, etc. In return, the Kotas receive an annual present of food grains, mustards and potatoes. For a Kota funeral, the Badagas have to give five rupees or a quantity of rice, and a buffalo. The pots obtained from the Kotas are not used immediately, but kept for three days in the jungle, or in a bush in some open spot. They are then taken to the outer apartment of the house, and kept there for three days, when they are smeared with the bark of *Meliosma pungens* (the *tud* tree of the Todas) and culms of *Andropogon Schananthus* (*bzambe hullu*). Thus purified, the pots are used for boiling water in for three days, and may then be used for any purpose. The Badagas are said to give a present of grain annually to the Todas. Every Toda *mand* (or *mad*) seems to have its own group of Badaga families, who pay them this *gudu*, as it is called. "There are," Dr. Rivers writes, "several regulations concerning the food of the *palol* (dairy man of a Toda sacred dairy). Any grain he eats must be that provided by the Badagas. At the present time more rice is eaten than was formerly the case. This is not grown by the Badagas, but nevertheless the rice for the *palol* must be obtained through them. The *palol* wears garments of a dark gray material made in the Coimbatore district. They are brought to the *palol* by the Badaga called *tikelfmav*. The earthenware vessels of the inner room (of the *ti* dairy) are not obtained from the Kotas,

like the ordinary vessels, but are made by Hindus, are procured through the Badagas" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:85).

"The Badagas live in dread of the Kurumbas, and the Kurumba constantly comes under reference in their folk stories. The Kurumba is the necromancer of the hills, and believed to be possessed of the power of outraging women, removing their livers, and so causing their death, while the wound heals by magic, so that no trace of the operation is left. He is supposed, too, to have the power of opening the bolts of doors by magic, and effecting an entrance into a house at night for some nefarious purpose. The Toda or Badaga requires the services of the Kurumba, when he fancies that any member of his family is possessed of the devil, or when he wants to remove the evil eye, to which he imagines that his children have been subjected. The Kurumba does his best to remove the malady by repeating various *mantrams* (magical formulae). If he fails, and if any suspicion is aroused in the mind of the Toda or Badaga that he is allowing the devil to play his pranks instead of loosing his hold in the supposed victim, woe betide him. The wrath of the entire village, or even the whole tribe, is raised against the unhappy Kurumba. His hut is surrounded at night, and the entire household massacred in cold blood, and their huts set on fire. This is very cleverly carried out, and the isolated position of the Kurumba settlements allows of very little clue for identification. In 1835, no less than fifty eight Kurumbas were thus murdered, and a smaller number in 1875 and 1882. In 1891, the live inmates of a single hut were murdered and their hut burnt to ashes, because, it was said, one of them who have been treating a sick Badaga child failed to cure it. The crime was traced to some Kotas in conjunction with Badagas, but the District Judge disbelieved the evidence, and all who were charged were acquitted. Every Badaga family pays an

annual tax of four annas to the Kurumbas, and, if a Kurumba comes to a Badaga *hatti* (village), a subscription is raised as an inducement to him to take his departure. The Kurumba receives a fee for every Badaga funeral and for the pregnancy ceremony (*kannikattu*).

It is noted by Dr. Rivers that "the Todas sorcerers are not only feared by their fellow Todas, but also by the Badagas, and it is probably largely owing to fear of Toda sorcery that the Badagas continue to pay their tribute of grain. The Badagas may also consult the Toda diviners, and it is possible that the belief of the Badagas in the magical powers of the Todas is turned to good account by the latter. In some cases, Todas, have been killed by Badagas owing to this belief" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:86-87).

Recent History

"Of the three phases in the history of the community, the latest began in about 1930[8], when most Badagas broke off this traditional exchanging relationship with the Kotas, and soon after let those they had maintained with the Todas and Kurumbas fall into abeyance too. The break with the Kotas, and the local meetings which inspired it, were charged with considerable animosity at the time; but whatever may have been the immediate cause for the discontinuance of what had been a complex, traditional interchange of goods and services, the underlying cause is clear in the decennial censuses" (Hockings 1989).

With this backdrop in mind, let us have a look at Badaga festivals and Rituals. The remaining chapters are divided into two parts: Part 1 dealing with festivals and Part 2 with rituals.

---

[8] The other two phases being the pre-British period and the British period.

PART 1

Badaga Festivals

நெலகோலு அறக்கட்டளை
நம்ம ஊள்ளித்தாலெ நாடு ஊள்ளிந்து
BADAGA DOCUMENTATION CENTER

CHAPTER 4

Badaga Festivals – An Introduction

Festivals are public rituals and are occasions for rejoicing, and frequently, feasting. Most of the festivals in India are "basically religious in origin, character and impact," according to one school of thought (Raman, A.S. 1987). Therefore, performance of religious rites is an essential aspect of most of the Hindu festivals.

The Evolution of Feasts and Festivals

But there is disagreement regarding the religious origin of festivals. Sudheer Birodkar, for example, has an interesting theory to offer on the evolution of festivals, wherein he seems to dispute the contention that "festivals were religious in origin," but agrees that at present festivals are religious "in character and impact": In the earliest phase of human evolution, man was a hunter-gatherer, moving from place to place in search of food. Every time he had a successful hunting, there was a celebration. "This celebration must have normally been around the fireplace where the hunted animal was roasted. Such an occasion for rejoicing must have stimulated inarticulate shouting and gesticulating from which could have originated singing and dancing." Feasting, singing and dancing are integral parts of festivals even today.

Hunting-gathering subsequently gave way to agriculture. "In an agricultural society, the occasion for feasting was logically at the end of a harvest. (As in today's industrial and commercial age, the finalization of accounts and bank closing

are an occasion for rejoicing.)" The festivals of hunter-gatherers centered on successful hunts, which were unpredictable and hence had to take place at irregular intervals. But with the coming of settled agriculture, the festivals attained a seasonal regularity since harvests were periodical and predictable. "It was at this stage that the practices of observing festivals ceased to take place at a random frequency and began to take the form of a tradition...What began as a habit was transformed into a custom...They obtained a changeless character. It was this character that was responsible for perpetuating the existence of customs even after the environment that had given birth to them no longer existed. What had begun as a social necessity, changed into a custom, had now become a ritual. A ritual that was continued to be performed not because the way of life or the natural environment demanded it, but because it had been performed so far and had been handed down from generation to generation, till human memory could recollect."

"Another very significant factor that went into the making of festivals along with seasonal regularity, was religious sanction. As long as festivals were only social functions, they were optional in nature and need not have had general approval and mass participation. But mass participation is a very essential element that transforms rejoicing into a festival. A medium was necessary to obtain this mass participation. Religious sanction satisfied this need" (Birodkar, 2001).

The Hindu Festal Cycle (*Panchanga*)

The Hindu festal cycle (also called the *almanac* or *panchanga* or religious calendar), takes into account not only the rhythm of agricultural operations, but "the cycles of sun, moon and the constellations; the ecology and rhythm of seasons (monsoons, planting and harvesting); celebration of the careers of deities and other sacred figures; and the moods

and the needs of the people" as well (The American Academy of Religion, 1995). Each of these factors is discussed in more detail below.

The solar, lunar and planetary cycles

The solar year is divided into the "northward journey" (*Uttarayan*) of the sun shortly after the winter solstice (December 22) and its "southward journey" (*Dakshinayan*) shortly after the summer solstice[9] (June 21). The solar cycle is believed by Hindus to be equivalent to a day in the life of the gods. During the winter solstice, "the sun, having finished its course towards the southern hemisphere, turns to the north again and comes back to visit the people of India" (Dubois, 19:647). The northward journey is termed the "light half" and is considered auspicious. Most of the auspicious Hindu festivals celebrating careers of Gods – like the commemoration of the incarnation of Vishnu, birth of saints and victory of gods (*devas*) over demons (*asuras*) - fall during the "light half", i.e., northward journey of the sun. Many Badaga festivals are celebrated during the light half of the year. There are, however, not many Badaga festivals celebrating the careers of Gods.

Likewise, the lunar month is divided into two halves (fortnights), with the new moon and the full moon forming the beginning and end of these fortnights. In the Badaga calendar, the month starts with the new moon, as in Kerala and Karnataka. Between the two fortnights, the waxing of moon (i.e., the fortnight starting with the new moon) which is called the "bright fortnight" or *Shukla Paksha* is considered

9 Solstice is the time of the year at which the sun is farthest from the equator: the *summer solstice* occurs about 21 June in the Northern hemisphere when the sun is at the Northernmost part; *winter solstice* occurs about 22 December in the Northern hemisphere when the sun is at the southernmost part (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary).

more auspicious than the "dark fortnight" or *Krishna Paksha* and most of the rituals and festivals of Badagas are held during the "bright" fortnight.

Similarly, there are auspicious and inauspicious days among the seven days of the week, which are named after the sun, moon and five planets[10]. While most Hindus consider Tuesday (day of Mars – *mangala*) and Friday (day of Venus – *shukra*) auspicious for worship, Badagas consider Monday the most auspicious; Tuesday, however, is inauspicious for them. Almost all Badaga festivals are held on Mondays. Friday (*Belli*) is also considered auspicious by the Badagas.

Ecology and Rhythm of seasons

Most of the Badaga festivals are essentially celebrations marking different agricultural seasons. The excessive importance Badaga culture attaches to the preservation of ecology and environment, the fountainheads of their livelihood, can be easily gleaned from a study of their festivals, rituals, proverbs and legends. The onset of monsoons and planting and harvesting seasons are all occasions for festivities for the Badagas. During many Badaga festivals, the five elements of nature, *viz*., the earth, fire, water, air and ether are worshipped.

The *Ka:ṇikke habba* (*Doḍḍa habba* or the "Grand festival") heralds the new year and it is the occasion for laying off the bulls and buffaloes from ploughing operations (*e:r ma:ttodu*) and to feed them salt-water (*kaḍe uppu aṭṭo:du*) before their months-long march to the green pastures of *Malla:ḍu*. Resumption of agricultural operations is marked by the observance of *bittikkodu* (seeding) and *e:r u:ḍo:du* (resumption of

[10] Till about the second century A.D., only five planets – Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn - were known, besides earth (Hawking, Stephen 1988:3). Had all the nine plantets of the sun been known then, perhaps we would have had ten-day weeks!

ploughing) ceremonies in the vicinity of *Kenḍa habba* (the fire-walking festival). The cattle are fed salt-water again during *Ka:r uppu*. *Jena buḍo:du* (lay-off from agricultural operations) is observed for three days during which prayers are offered for a bountiful monsoon. *Haḷḷaga ha:laṭṭo:du*, *Gangammana habba* and *Gowrabba* mark occasions for thanks-giving for bountiful monsoon and water. *Devva habba*, "the festival of God" is the harvest festival, the occasion for the *tene etto:du* ceremony. *Hette habba* or *Teppa kuḷa habba* is another occasion when the water-source is worshipped.

Celebration of the careers of deities and other sacred figures

Unlike the mainstream Hindu communities, there are very few Badaga festivals which are in the nature of celebration of the careers of deities, except perhaps the *Hette habba*, *Lakkisa habba* (*Ka:rtigai Di:pam*) and the *Nellitore habba*.

Moods and the needs of the people

Like most parts of southern India, there is no *Holi*-like festival among the Badagas. But festivals reflecting the needs of the people like prayer for monsoons (*jena buḍo:du*), prayers for protection (*ka:ppu habba*) and thanks-giving (*Gowrabba*, *ka:ṇikke habba*) are common among the Badagas.

Auspicious times of the day for festivals

Most Hindus make a correspondence between the solar year ("a day in the life of gods") and a day in the human life ("the ritual day"), to arrive at the appropriate time for the observance of rituals connected with festivals. Just as the solar year is divided into the light half and the dark half, the ritual day is divided into the light half and the dark half, the light half beginning at 6:00 a.m., around sunrise. January and February correspond to 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., March and April correspond to 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., May and June correspond to 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and so on. January-February represents the ritual welcoming of the return of the

sun to its northward journey and festivals of this season represent God's youthfulness and virility. March-April represents the season of love, marriage, fertility and new growth and usually coincides with the beginning of the agricultural season. May-June represents the hot season and festivals of this period act out the powerful, warrior-like, even terrifying aspects of the divine. The rituals of the respective festivals are usually observed at the appropriate time: mornings in January-February, forenoon-noon in March-April and so on (The American Academy of Religion, 1995).

The dark half starting with July represents the cooler portion of the year and corresponds to the afternoon of the ritual day. It is usually a period of ritual holiday, except festivals marking agricultural activities of planting or transplanting, since the southwest monsoon sets in during this period (*ibid.*).

August- September represents the dusk of the ritual day and festivals celebrating betrothals of goddesses are held during this period, suggesting fecundity (*ibid.*).

October-November represents the night time of the ritual day and night time Hindu festivals like *Navaratri* and *Dussera* are held during this period. *Diwali* represents the ritual midnight; it is believed that on this day, ancestors visit their kin and are returned to their ancestral homes by the burning of lights and firing of crackers. This is also the period of the onset of the northeast monsoon and festivals representing the conquest of evil, like the *Kanda Shasti*, are held during this period (*ibid.*).

November-December represents the preparation for the dawn of the ritual year and enhanced significance is given to pre-dawn rituals – *Ma:rgazhi* processions, being an example (*ibid*).

While Badaga festivals marking the seasonal and agricultural operations follow this scheme, other Badaga festivals seem to differ.

Utsava and *Vrata*

The Hindu festal activity is of two types: the *utsava* and the *vrata*. "The *utsava* is a festival, generally hosted by a temple, lasting five or more days and celebrating the career or special event in the life of the deity. *Utsavas* are usually observed at the appropriate conjunction of constellation, full moon, and solar cycle. The *utsava* has retained many of the elements of kingship (e.g., flag raisings and processions), because, in pre-modern times, kings were frequently the patrons of festivals, and because the deity's life and exploits were perceived as corresponding to a king's.

The *vrata*, on the other hand, is often observed by families and individuals in ways that involve fasting, purification, the keeping of vows, and other special rituals. *Vratas* are generally performed at times of chronometric transition or potential trauma, for example, at the first new moons following the winter and summer solstices or at other of the "dark" times in the lunar-solar calendar. *Shivaratri*, or the "night of Shiva," in the month corresponding to February and March, is one occasion on which *vratas* are performed, invoking Shiva's saving of the faithful" (*ibid.*). But almost all Badaga festivals are *utsavas* and the *vrata* part is conspicouos by its absence in Badaga festivals.

Badaga Almanac

The Badaga festal cycle or the *almanac* follows the luni-solar calendar (as is being done in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh) in which months are lunar but years are solar, i.e., the months are brought into line with the course of the sun. As already pointed out, Badaga months start on the new moon day (*muṭṭu*).

All Badaga festivals, with the exception of festivals adopted from others like *ma:si magam* and *ka:rtigai di:pam*, are held during the phase of waxing moon (the *Shukla Pasksha,* as already mentioned), usually on the Monday following the new moon day. The usual practice is to follow the English calendar and reckon the festival day based on the new moon day falling in that month. It may so happen that two new moon days fall within the same English month. In those months, there is always a confusion as to which new moon day should be considered for fixing the festival date. The thumb rule being followed is that all Badaga months start between 10th and 15th of the English month. This implies that if two new moon days occur within a single English month, that which falls before 10th of the English month is ignored and the other new moon day is taken into account.

There is another important difference. The Badaga new moon day is supposed to occur one day prior to the new moon day mentioned in the Tamil *pancha:ngas*. Festivals are held only after the waxing crescent is sighted. It is usually very difficult to sight to crescent on the second day, i.e., the day after new moon, when a very faint outline of the moon will flash for a few seconds before disappearing. Therefore, Badaga festivals are held usually on or after the third day after the new moon. Thus, if the Tamil *pancha:nga* new moon falls on a Sunday, the Badaga *muṭṭu* is on Saturday, and hence festivals can be held on the Monday, the third day of *muṭṭu*.

A summary of Badaga almanac – the seasons, months and festivals – is given in Table 1.

Table 1
Badaga *pancha:nga*

Badaga Season	Badaga month	Equivalent Tamil month	Equivalent English month	Name of the festival	Day
Be:sage (continues from the previous month)	***Ku:ḍal***	*Tai*	Jan – Feb	*Ka:ṇikke habba (Doḍḍa habba – kaḍe uppu aṭṭo:du, e:r ma:ttodu)*	Monday after new moon
	A:la:ni	*Ma:si*	Feb – Mar	*Ma:ri habba*	First Friday after New Moon
				Ma:si magam (te:r habba)	Full moon day
Ka:r	***Nalla:ni***	*Panguni*	Mar – Apr (Munka:r)	*Kenḍa habba (bittikkodu, e:r u:ḍo:du)*	
	A:ni	*Citirai*	Apr – May	No festival	
	A:dire	*Vaika:si*	May – Jun	*Ka:r uppu – Uppa:ṭṭa*	Monday
				Jena buḍo:du	Tuesday, Friday, Sunday

(Continued...)

(continued from previous page)

Badaga Season	Badaga month	Equivalent Tamil month	English month	Name of the festival	Day
Ko:ḍe	***A:ḍi***	*A:ni*	Jun – Jul (Munko:de)	*Haḷḷaga halaṭṭo:du*	Monday
	A:vaṇi	*A:di*	Jul – Aug (Modeko:de)	*Devva habba – paṭṭa harasodu, tene etto:du*	Monday, Tuesday
				Gangammana habba	The following Monday
	Peraṭṭa:di	*A:vani*	Aug – Sep (Morako:de)	*Gowrabba*	Monday
				Tene etto:du	Tuesday
Ka:rtige	***Doḍḍa di:vige***	*Puratta:si*	Sep – Oct		
	Kiru di:vige	*Aipasi*	Oct – Nov	*Haccikkore habba*	
	Tai	*Ka:rtigai*	Nov – Dec	*Nellitore habba Lakkisa habba (Ka:tigai Di:pam)*	Monday Full Moon day
Be:sage (continues into the next two months)	***Hemma:ṭṭi***	*Ma:rgazhi*	Dec – Jan	*Hette habba, Teppa kuḷa habba*	Monday
				Ka:ppu habba	Sunday
				Sakkala:ti habba	Monday

A glance at the names of the Badaga months clearly shows the influence of Tamil culture: as many as five Badaga months – *A:ni*, *A:ḍi*, *A:vaṇi*, *Peraṭṭa:di* and *Tai* – adopt Tamil names, but they *do not coincide with their eponymous Tamil months.* Badaga *A:ni* and *Tai* for example, precede their Tamil counterparts by

two months; Badaga *A:ḍi*, *A:vaṇi* and *Peraṭṭa:di* (*Puraṭṭasi*) precede the corresponding Tamil months by one month. *Hemma:ṭṭi*, *ku:ḍal*, *Doḍḍa Di:vige* and *Kiru Di:vige* are typical Badaga names. (Hockings (19xx:), however considers that "*Hemma:ṭi* derives from a Sanskrit word ('cold weather') which does not seem to occur in other Dravidian calendars."). The reason for adopting a few of the Tamil names and leaving out the rest in favour of Badaga names is not clear. (Is Badaga *A:dire* related to Tamil *Tiruvadirai*?)

"The Badaga calendar is quite different from the Tamil and Kanarese ones, even though they all divide the year into twelve zodiacal or solar months, and share some of the names of months." (Hockings 1989: xx).

Interestingly, the Toda months are identical to the Badaga months, but the year starts with the *tai* month. Rivers (1906: 634) is of the opinion that in the Toda calendar, "Badaga influence may be suspected."

Though Badagas are Saivite Hindus, they do not appear to be celebrating many of the mainstream Hindu festivals, including *Sivara:tri*. Natesa Sastri (1903) in his *Hindu Feasts, Fasts and Ceremonies,* lists out the most important of the Hindu festivals. Among them are: *The Ardra* festival (and the *Anandatandavam* of Lord Natesa of Chidambaram in December-January), *Avani Avittam* (the annual renewal of the sacred thread, in July-August), *Mahalaya Amavasa* (ceremonies for the departed ancestors), *Bhogi* (feast in honour of Indra, a feast of enjoyment for deliverance from the calamitous month of *Margazhi)* and *Pongal* (the harvest festival, offering of boiled rice in milk to the Sun-god), *Dipavali* (commemorating the killing of Narakasura by Krishna), *Holi* (commemorating the death of demon Holika) and *Kamandi* (death of Cupid), *Mukkoti* or *Vikunta Ekadasi* (the day of fast and prayers to Krishna), *Krittika* (Kartigai Deepam, to commemorate the

occasion of Siva's having stood up as a fire-pillar on this day), *Mahamakha* (the holy dip in the sacred tank at Kumbakonam), *Navaratri* (the festival of nine nights, in honour of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati), *Sarasvati Puja* (or *Durgapuja* in Bengal, both part of *Navarartri*), *Dusserah* (the tenth day following *Navaratri*, commemorating the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana), *Mahasivaratri* (day of fasting devoted to Shiva), *Srijayanti* or *Krishnashtami* (commemorating the birth of Lord Krishna), *Varalakshmi worship* (worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, especially by married women), *Vinayaka Chaturthi* (in honour of Lord Ganesha) *Mahara Sankranti* (celebrating the sun's northward journey) and the Hindu New Year's Day. The Badaga almanac lists only two of these festivals, the *Ka:rtigai Di:pam* (*Lakkisa habba*), and *Ma:si magam*, that too in a few villages. There are festivals equivalent to the *Bhogi* (*Doḍḍa habba*) and *Pongal* (*Devva habba*). Even *Mahasivaratri*, is not listed, though a few individuals observe it. *Sakkala:ti*, suggesting as if it is the Badaga version of *Sankranti*, is qualitatively different, the real equivalent of *Sankranti* being the *Doḍḍa habba* or the *ka:ṇikke habba*.

Rivers (1906), in his classic study on the Todas, observes: "It seems probable that the Todas once had a religious cult of a distinctly higher order than that they now possess, and if I am right in supposing that the Todas came from Malabar, it might follow that they brought their highly developed religion with them, and that although certain features of the religion may have undergone great development, the general result of the long isolation has been to produce degeneration" (714-715). Similar seems to be the case with Badagas. If we assume that Badagas were Hindu immigrants from the Mysore plains, much of their Hindu festivals, have disappeared, during their years of isolation in the hills; on the other hand, if we assume Badagas to be an indigenous tribe of the Nilgiri hills, their

original tribal culture has added on a few Hindu festivals, but not many. Most of their festivals are their own, mostly in the nature of commemorating or heralding different seasons or agricultural operations, during which they seem to worship mainly *Mahalinga, Gangamma* and *Gowramma*, besides their own deities like *Hette*, *Hiriodeya* and *Kariabeṭṭara:ya.*

Each of the festivals is described in more detail in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Ku:ḍal month and *Ka:ṇikke (Doḍḍa) habba*

"Ku:ḍal uṭṭi Ka:ṇikke konḍa:ḍu"

The first month of the Badaga calendar is *Ku:ḍal*. It starts around mid-January and ends in mid-February and coincides with the Tamil month of *tai*. It forms the mid-*Be:sage* season, the Nilgiri winter. In *Me:rku na:ḍu si:me*, the *Ka:ṇikke habba* or *Doḍḍa habba* is celebrated in this month. *Uppaṭṭo:du*, the ceremony of feeding salt to the cattle is conducted on the *Doḍḍa habba* day. *Uppaṭṭo:du* is done twice a year: the ceremony held in the month of *Ku:ḍal* (during *kaḍe bo:ga*) is known as *kaḍe uppu* and the ceremony held in the month of *A:dire* (in the *ka:r* season) is called *ka:r uppu*. Interestingly, Todas also perform the *uppaṭṭo:du* ceremony, not twice but five times a year (see Appendix 1 on page xx).

The month of *Ku:ḍal* (and *Ka:ṇikke habba*) is the beginning of a slack period for agriculture. It is the height of winter and till the onset of rains two or three months hence, there is not much of agricultural activity. Fodder for cattle, particularly buffaloes, will also be scarce. "It must be remembered that, until some land-hungry British planters came to the Nilgiris in the middle of the last century, Badagas placed no value on land as it was still readily available for the clearing. In their epic poems there is hardly any mention of agriculture: the heroes are always portrayed as cattle-keepers. Under the present capitalist economy few farmers keep oxen; but formerly the ox was the repository of wealth as well as being useful for ploughing, threshing, supply of manure, and

cart transportation" (Hockings 1988:387). Writing in 1847, Colonel Ouchterlony mentions that the 337 Todars in the district had about 2,000 buffaloes while the cattle held by the 6,569 "Burghers", consisting of buffaloes and bullocks, numbered about 8,000 (page 13).

"When the Badagas had large buffalo herds, it used to be normal for their caretakers to drive them to the western plateau known as Malla:du or Wenlock Downs for three or four months at the beginning of each year, during the dry season, for grazing" (Hockings 1988: 481). On *Ka:ṇikke habba* day, prayers are offered to God, and an offering (*Ka:ṇikke*) is made for the safety of the cattle and for a prosperous new year. The yoke *(e:r)* is off-loaded *(E:r ma:tto:du)* from the cattle and they are given salt *(uppu),* which is an excellent de-worming agent, before their departure for *Malla:ḍu*. *Ka:ṇikke habba* being the first *habba* (festival) of the year, it is in the nature of a new year celebration and is celebrated on a grand scale and is hence called *Doḍḍa habba*, the "grand festival".

On the *Doḍḍa habba* day, the temple is opened. In Athigaratty village, by temple, we refer to the *Mahalinga* temple (*A:ḍa guḍi*). The *Kariabeṭṭara:yar* temple is known by the name *Devva mane*, the Godly house, but not a temple. *Doḍḍa habba* is one of the only three occasions on which the temple is opened, the other two being the *Devva habba* and the *Kenḍa habba*. The Siva *linga*, the deity of the Mahalinga temple is usually kept in the *Devva mane*. When the Mahalinga temple is opened on the three occasions, the *linga* is taken from the *Devva mane* to the Mahalinga temple. People stay awake in the *Devva mane* throughout the night prior to the festival, cleaning the premises, lighting *di:pa*, offering *pu:je* and singing *bhajan* (this is known as "*savute aḍavadu*")[11].

[11] According to Hockings, "Sauta" refers to the "process of acquiring *sudda* or ritual purity. (Those who assist in a festival must sleep on the preceding

Early next morning, the *siva linga* is taken to the temple. The entire path between the *Devva mane* and the temple is cleaned. No women should cross the path of the deity. While the *pu:ja:ri* takes the *linga* in his loincloth, *the tu:ḍe pu:ja:ri* proceeds ahead of him with *doḍḍa tu:ḍe*[12] in his hand (see Appendix 2 on page xx for an account of the use of *tu:ḍe* among the Todas).

Ka:ṇikke habba is celebrated on the first Monday of the *ku:ḍal* month, in the *shukla paksha*[13]. Prayer is offered in the Mahalinga temple. In Athigaratty village, the *prasa:da* (*neivedya*, made of cooked rice and milk) is not distributed at the Mahalinga temple. The *prasa:da* prepared there is taken to the *Devva mane*, and during the night the *hu:ṭa* ceremony is conducted: *harakke* (chanting) is done for Lord Kariabettara:ya and after feeding Him, the *prasa:da* from the Mahalinga temple is mixed with the *prasa:da* prepared in the *Devva mane* and distributed.

In earlier days, women did not come to the temples, but nowadays they do. Each household makes on offering (*ka:ṇikke*) of not less than one *haṇa* (a quarter of a rupee) without fail, praying for a good yield of crops and protection for the cattle.

Years back, *Doḍḍa habba* was celebrated on a grand scale for two days (Monday and Tuesday) and sons-in-law were

---

night in a temple or the Great House, lying alone on the floor with no cloth under them; all assistant priests do this; df. Skt. *Sudhi*, 'good understanding, intelligence, having pious thoughts, wise')." "Saute" means preliminary ritual (Hockings 2001: 519).

[12] *Dodda tu:de* is the hill mango (*Meliosma wightii* or *Meliosma simplicifolia* alias *Millingtonia*) plant which is believed to purify the surroundings and offer protection against evil spirits.

[13] See p. xx for an explanation of the term.

invited. Games (*senḍa:ṭṭa* (ball game) lifting of huge stones[14], *llḷa:ṭṭa*[15] and throw-ball) and sports competitions including adventure sports were held on the second day. It was an occasion for many an eligible bachelor from neighbouring villages to show his valour and to win the hand of the belle of his dream. Unlike other communities, *Ku:ḍal* month was not inauspicious for marriages for Badagas; but thanks to the influence of other cultures, marriages during *Ku:ḍal* month have become a rarity.

The following brief account of *Doḍḍa habb*a is provided by Edgar Thurston and Rangachari:

> "In the month of November, a festival called *Dodda Habba* (big feast) is celebrated. In the afternoon, rice is cooked in whey within the *ha:gottu*, and eaten on *minege* leaves. Throughout the day the villagers play at various ball games" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:102).

In the pre-monsoon days, there is the frequent coming together (*ku:ḍal*) of clouds and hence the name *Ku:ḍal*.

---

[14] Seems to have been borrowed from Todas (see Rivers 1906; Marshall 1873).

[15] "A game resembling tip-cat... A piece of wood is pointed at both ends is propped against the stone and struck with a stick, and should be caught by someone at a distance" (Rivers, 1906: 596).

CHAPTER 6

A:la:ni month and *Ma:ri habba* and *Te:r habba* (*Ma:si Magam*)

The second month in the Badaga calendar is *A:la:ni* coinciding with the Tamil month of *ma:si*. "*A:la:niyo a:ḍu beṭṭodu*" (Goat be sacrificed in *a:la:ni*) is a Badaga saying. Though no animal sacrifice is done in Athigaratty, the ritual of sacrificing a goat by pushing it down a cliff was prevalent is *Kunde* and *Poranga:ḍ* areas (see Appendix 3 on page xx). Goat sacrifice continues till date in *Todana:ḍ* area.

Ma:ri habba

A:la:ni is the last month of the dry Nilgiri winter (*be:sage*) and epidemics of cholera, chicken pox and small pox used to break out during that season[16]. People believed that these epidemics break out due to the displeasure of Goddess *Ma:ri* and to propitiate Her, sacrifices were done. On the first Friday after the new moon in the month of *A:la:ni*, the *Ma:ri habba* is held in Athigaratty, the first *Ma:ri habba* in *Me:kuna:ḍu Si:me*. This festival is celebrated on Sundays or Mondays in other areas. Turmeric and *ve:ppilai* are used in plenty during this month, both of which have got antiseptic properties.

The Athigaratty *Ma:ri Amman* temple belongs to the six villages surrounding it: Athigaratty, Godalatty, Bickol, Muttina:du, Ko:deri and Ka:so:lai and all the villages join

---

[16] See page 19, Chapter 3.

together in the functions. No sacrifice is done. But the *Amman* is decorated, *bhajans* sung and *pu:je* offered.

Ma:si magam

Another important festival being celebrated in *A:la:ni* in Athigaratty is the *Ma:si Magam*, the car festival (*Te:r habba*). This is the most important festival for Athigaratty. However, this festival does not seem to be celebrated in any other Badaga village. The celebrations last almost a week. It falls on the full-moon day in *Magara nakshatra* in the Tamil month of *Ma:si*, the same day on which the car festival is held in Karamadai. Daughters, sons-in-law and their children are invited without fail. A finely decorated temple car (*te:r*) is drawn and a drama performance held on this festival.

Three days prior to the Car festival, the Lord's flag (*ba:vaṭṭu*)[17] is hoisted. The week-long celebrations start from the day *ba:vaṭṭu* is hoisted. All rituals connected with the festival are done by local *pu:ja:ris* and no outsider is engaged for this purpose. All the surrounding villages too join the festivities.

As already pointed out on page xx, many of the elements of the festival like flag raising and procession remind us of the royal functions, because long back, it was the kings who sponsored and piloted the temple festivals; and since the theory of divine origin of royalty was very much in vogue, all *utsavas* resembled royal celebrations, but on a grander scale.

On the *Te:r habba* night and the night following, the Lord is taken in a colourful procession (*Neravaṇe*) from the *Devva Mane* to the *Vina:yagar* temple to the accompaniment of bhajans and fire-crackers. *Hu:ṭa* is held on both the nights at the *Devva Mane*.

---

[17] A bamboo tree is used for the pole for hoisting the *ba:vaṭṭu*. The bamboo tree is replaced once a few years. The tree is obtained from forests near Pilloor or Chengal estate, almost 20 kms away from Athigaratty, and it is carried all the way up to the village by foot by the youth.

CHAPTER 7

Nalla:ni month and *Kenḍa habba*

The third Badaga month of *Nalla:ni* falls in March – April, coinciding with the Tamil month of *A:ni*. The festival called *uva:di* in Badagu and *uga:di* in Kannada and Telugu is celebrated on this month. The *Kenḍa habba*, the fire-walking festival is celebrated in Athigaratty on the *uva:di* day, but no fire-walking is done. Even though *Kenḍa habba* is celebrated every year, the Mahalinga temple is opened once in two years only. On the days when the Mahalinga temple is opened, the *Siva linga* is brought from the *Devva mane*, after following the ritual of *savute aḍavadu*[18]. During the years when the temple is not opened, *pu:je* is performed on the veranda of the temple.

Long ago, *kenḍa meṭṭo:du*, the fire-walking ceremony, was conducted in Athigartty, but over the last few decades, the fire-walking ritual has been discontinued. From the fact that the temple is opened once in two years, it becomes clear that *kenḍa meṭṭodu* was performed earlier on once in two years. During the years the temple is opened, *pu:je* is conducted and *prasa:da* prepared, but the actual distribution of the *prasa:da* is done only in the night at the *Devva Mane*, during *hu:ṭa* - when *pu:je* is offered to Kariabettara:ya, *arake* (*archana)* is done, and the *prasa:da* or *hu:ṭa*, made of cooked rice and milk, is mixed with the *prasa:da* brought from the Mahalinga temple, and distributed to the devotees, as done during *Doḍḍa habba*.

---

[18] See p.xx for an explanation of this term.

On the day following *kenḍa habba*, the ceremony of *bittikko:du* or *e:r u:ḍo:du* is performed. The rains are expected any time, and it is time for resuming agricultural operations. To symbolise this, the *e:r* (plough) is placed symbolically on the oxen or buffalo (?) (*e:r u:ḍo:du*). The *pu:ja:ri* sows *ganje* (barley) seeds in a secluded place, not frequented by cattle and women, on this day. A few months later, after the barley seeds sprout and grow and give out tender ears, the *pu:ja:ri* will harvest them from these plants on the harvest festival of *devva habba*.

After the village *pu:ja:ri* sows the *ganje* seeds in the sacred plot, the *Doḍḍa mane* of each *kuḍumba* also sows *ganje* in its own plot. Only after the *bittikko:du* ceremony is completed in the temple as well as the *Doḍḍa mane*, the villagers start their sowing in their fields in the next few days.

Earlier on *kurumbas* were associated in this festival. See subsequent paragraphs for an account of the role of *Kurumbas* in Badaga festivals.

The following account is given by Edgar Thurston and Rangachari on *Kenda habba*:

> "In connection with the *Jadeswari* festival the ceremony of walking through fire (burning embers) is carried out at *Melur*, *Tangalu*, *Mainele*, *Jakkanare*, *Tenad*, and *Nidugala*. At *Melur* and *Tangalu*, the temples belong to the *Haruvas*, who carry out all the details of ceremony. The temple at *Tenad* is owned by the *Udayas*, by whom the ceremonial is performed. In other places, the celebrants are Badagas. The festival is observed, on an elaborate scale, at *Nidugala* during the month of January – All those who are going to walk over the burning embers fast for eight days, and go through the rite on the ninth day. For its performance, Monday is considered an auspicious day. The omens are taken by boiling two pots of milk side by side on two hearths. If the milk overflows uniformly on all sides, the crops will be abundant for all the villages. But, if it flows over on one side only, there will be plentiful crops for villages on that side only. The space over which the embers are spread is said to be

about five yards long, and three yards broad. But, in some places, e.g. *Jakkanare* and *Melur*, it is circular as at the Muhammandan fire walking ceremony. For making the embers, the wood of *Eugenia Jambolana* and *Phyllanthus Emblica* are used. For boiling the milk, the setting fire to the wood, a light is obtained by friction must be used. The process is known as *niligolu*, or upright stick. The vertical stick is made of twig of *Rhodomyrtus lomentosus*, which is rotated in a socket in a long thick piece of a bought of *Debregeasia velutina*, in which a row of sockets has been made. The rotation is produced by a cord passed several times round the vertical stick, of which each end is pulled alternately. The horizontal block is pressed firmly on the ground by the toes of a man, who presses a half coconut shell down on the top of the vertical stick, so as to force it down into the socket...Though the Badagas make fire by friction, reference is made in their folk legends, not to this mode of obtaining fire, but to *chakkamukki* (flint and steel), which is repeatedly referred to in connection with cremation. After the milk boiling ceremonial, the pujari, tying bells on his legs, approaches the fire pit, carrying milk freshly drawn from a cow, which has calved for the first time, and flowers of *Rhododendron arboreum*, *Leucas aspera*, or jasmine. After doing *puja*, he throws the flowers on the embers and they should remain unscorched for a few seconds. He then pours some of the milk over the embers, and no hissing sound should be produced. The omens being propitious, he walks over the glowing embers, followed by an *Udaya*, and the crowd of celebrants, who, before going through the ordeal, count the hairs on their feet. If any are singed, it is a sign of approaching ill fortune, or even death. In an account of the fire walking ceremony, in 1902, it is noted that 'Badagas strongly repudiate the insinuation of preparing their feet to face to fire ordeal. It is done to propitiate *Jeddayaswami*, to whom vows are invoked, in token of which they grow one twist or plait of hair, which is treasured for years, and finally cut off as an offering to *Jeddayswami*. Numbers of *Chettis* were catering to the crowd, offering their wares, bangles, gay-coloured handkerchiefs, as well as edibles. The Kotas supplied the music, and an ancient

patriarch worked himself upto a high pitch of inspiration, and predicted all sorts of goods things for the Badagas with regard to the ensuing season and crops."

"The following legend, relating to the fire walking ceremony, is recorded by Bishop Whitehead, "When they first began to perform the ceremony fifty or sixty years ago, they were afraid to walk over the fire. Then the stone image of *Mahalinga Swami* turned into a snake, and made a hole through the temple wall. It came out, and crawled over the fire, and then went back to the temple. Then their fear vanished, and they walked over the embers. The hole is still to be seen in the temple."

"Of the fire walking ceremony at *Melur*, the following account is given in the Gazetteer of the Nilgiris. "It takes place on the Monday after the Mach new moon, just before the cultivation season begins, and is attended by Badagas from all over *Merkunad*. The inhabitants of certain villages (six in numbers), who are supposed to be the descendants of an early Badaga named *Guruvajja*, have first, however, to signify through their *Gottukars*, or headmen, that the festival may take place; and the *Gottukars* choose three, five, or seven men to walk through the fire. On the day appointed, the fire is lit by certain Badaga priests and a Kurumba. The men chosen by the *Gottukars* then bathe, adorn themselves with sandal, do obeisance to the *Udayas* of *Udayarhatti* near Keti, who are specially invited and feasted; pour into the adjacent stream milk from cows which have calved for the first time during the year; and, in the afternoon, throw more milk and some flowers from the *Mahalingasami* temple into the fire pit, and then walk across it. Earth is next thrown on the embers, and they walk across twice more. A general feast closes the ceremony, and the next day the first ploughings are done, the Kurumba sowing the first seeds, and the priests the next lot. Finally, a net is brought. The priest of the temple, standing over it, puts up prayers for a favourable agriculture season; two fowls are thrown into it, and pretence is made of spearing them; and then it is taken and put across some game path, and some wild animal (a *sambhar* deer if possible) is driven into it, slain, and divided among the villagers. This same custom of annually

killing a *sambhar* is also observed at other villages on the plateau, and in 1883 and 1894 special orders were passed to permit of its being done during the close season. Latterly, disputes about precedence in the matter of walking through the fire at *Melur* have been carried as far as the civil courts, and the two factions celebrate the festival separately in alternate years. A fire-walking ceremony also takes place annually at the *Jadayaswami* temple in *Jakkeneri* under the auspices of a *Sivachari* Badaga. It seems to have originally had some connection with agricultural prospects, as a young bull is made to go partly across the fire pit before the other devotees, and the owners of young cows which have had their first calves during the year take precedence of others in the ceremony, and bring offerings of milk, which are sprinkled over the burning embers." (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:98-101).

The following account of the seed-sowing ceremony is from Thurston and Rangachari (1909):

"Important agricultural ceremonies are performed by the Badagas at the time of sowing and harvest. The seed sowing ceremony takes place in March, and, in places, e.g. the *Mekanad* and *Paranginad*, a Kurumba plays an important part of it. On an auspicious day –a Tuesday before the crescent moon – a *pujari* of the *Devve* temple sets out several hours before dawn with five or seven kinds of grain in a basket and sickle, accompanied by a Kurumba, and leading a pair of bullocks with a plough. On reaching the field selected, the *pujari* pours the grain into the cloth of the Kurumba, and, yoking the animals to the plough, makes three furrows in the soil. The Kurumba, stopping the bullocks, kneels on the ground between the furrows facing east. Removing his turban, he places it on the ground, and, closing his ears with his palms, bawls out "Dho, Dho," thrice. He then rises, and scatters the grain thrice on the soil. The *pujari* and Kurumba then return to the village, and the former deposits what remains of the grain in the store-room (attu). A new pot, full of water, is placed in the milk house, and the *pujari* dips his right hand therein saying "Nerathubitta" (it is full). This

ceremony is an important one for the Badaga, as, until it has been performed, sowing may not commence. It is a day of feasting, and, in addition to rice, *Dolichos lablab* is cooked" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:94).

A:ni month

The Badaga month corresponding to the Tamil month of *Citirai*, in April-May, is *A:ni*. The Nilgiris summer (*ka:r*) is at its height during this month. There are no festivals on this month.

CHAPTER 8

A:dire month and *Ka:r uppu aṭṭo:du*

In the months of May – June comes the Badaga month of *A:dire*, coinciding with the Tamil month of *Vaika:si*. On the first Monday after the new moon day in *A:dire*, the cattle are given *ka:r uppu*.[19]

The cattle, earlier taken to *Malla:ḍu* during the month of *Ku:ḍal* (Jan – Feb) after *kaḍe uppu* for grazing, are brought back to the villages, after almost four months. In *Malla:ḍu*, the cattle graze all and sundry. The fresh sproutings in the charred areas of spontaneous bush fires, are eagerly foraged by the cattle. In the process, good feed gets mixed with charcoal, as also an assortment of worms. Hence, deworming is necessary and salt solution, a good dewormer, is given to them immediately on their return. Since *A:dire* falls in the *Ka:r* season, the ceremony is called *Ka:r uppu*, to distinguish it from the *Kaḍe uppu* given in the month of *Ku:ḍal* in *Kaḍe* season.

On the day of *Ka:r uppu*, *Pu:je* is offered in the *Devva mane* in the morning. Then the villagers take all their cattle to the village commons (*Niḍika:ḍu* and *Bu:dige* in the case of Athigaratty) and give salt water to them. All of them return to the village immediately afterwards.

In the *Doḍḍa mane* of every *kuḍumba*, adequate quantity of food and buttermilk are prepared and kept ready by lunch time. The returning villagers engage in various rural games

---

[19] Please see chapter 5 for an account of *kaḍe uppu*.

(*uppa:ṭṭa*) till lunch time. Then they go to their respective *Doḍḍa manes* and eat together from a single plate. This is to show symbolically that all of them are descendants of the same forefather and hence are brothers, sharing food from the same plate and sharing in each other's happiness and sorrow.

The Tuesday, Friday and Sunday following the Monday on which *uppaṭṭo:du* is done, the villagers suspend farm work (*jena buḍo:du*) and pray for rains (*haraso:du*). The seeds sown in the month of *Nalla:ni* (March - April) require rains. Hence, the prayer.

On each of these three days, *pu:je* is done in the *Devva mane* at about 7:00 a.m. After the *pu:je*, the *pu:ja:ri* and the *u:r gauḍa* come out of the temple and wait outside. The villagers assemble in numbers, men on one side and the women on the other. Then they pray:

"Sa:vira mane janavu	Persons from all the thousand houses
Ku:ḍi bandu aḍḍa buddanio:	Have come together and offer prayers
Me: u:du	Give us rains
Be: be:du	Let crops flourish
Oḷḷittu ma:ḍali so:mi"	Lord, bless us all prosperity

After prayers they return home and undertake no agricultural work; this prayer is done on all three days. At around this time, the *ko:ḍe ga:yi*, the monsoon gales start and bring rains most of the years.

CHAPTER 9

A:ḍi month and the *Haḷḷaga (Gangammaga) A:laṭṭo Habba*

The sixth month of the Badaga calendar is *A:ḍi*, corresponding to the Tamil month of *A:ni* in June-July. (The Tamil *A:ḍi* month occurs a month later.) On the first Monday following the new moon day in *A:ḍi*, the festival of *Haḷḷaga a:laṭṭodu* (offering milk to the water-stream)[20] is celebrated (similar to the Tamil *A:ḍi perukku* festival).

On the day the *haḷḷaga a:laṭṭodu* ceremony is observed, a small area on the bank of the stream near the Mahalinga temple is cleared. From each house, milk, coconut and a plantain are brought. The *pu:ja:ri* also brings milk and fruit. *Pu:je* is conducted on the bank and the milk offered to the stream. The temple is not opened on this occasion.

A different type of prayer is conducted on this occasion. The *u:r gauḍa*[21] is seated near the stream; everybody touches his feet and pay obeisance. Then the following prayer (*arakke*) is offered:

U:rella ku:ḍi	The entire village having assembled,
Mallammana esara e:gi	Praying to Goddess Mallamma
Malla Ma:deswarana esara e:gi	[and] praying to Malla Ma:de:swara
Anga haḷḷaga a:lu buṭṭano:	We let milk into the river;

[20] Goddess Gangamma is believed to be present in every stream. Please see page xx for an account of Badaga gods.

[21] See pages xx-12 for a brief account of the role of *U:r gauḍa*.

Ni:ru perugi
Me: u:du
Be: be:du
Oḷḷittu ma:ḍali so:mi

Let water be plenty;
Let rains be plenty;
Let there be a copious crop;
Lord, bless us all.

Mallamma is Goddess Gange Amma and the prayer is for copious rain, water and yield.

CHAPTER 10

A:vaṇi month and *Devva Habba* and *Gangammana Habba*

The seventh month in the Badaga calendar is *A:vaṇi*, corresponding to the Tamil *A:ḍi* (Tamil *A:vaṇi* falls a month later). The *Devva habba*, the Badaga harvest festival, is observed in this month, on the first Monday and Tuesday[22] following the new moon.

On the Thursday prior to the *Devva habba* Monday, is observed a ceremony called *Paṭṭa: haraso:du*. On this occasion, four silver replicas of the third eye of Lord Shiva are made and given to the following four temples: *AdikkaraṭṭI Devva mane*, *Mahalinga temple*, *Muṭṭina:ḍu temple* and *Aṇehatti temple*, after conducting *pu:je*. Offerings (*ka:ṇikke*) are made to the God from each of the houses in these villages. The *ka:ṇikke* used to be a quarter of a rupee, but now it is at least a rupee and a quarter but can be five rupees and a quarter or ten rupees and a quarter. These offerings are made to the *Devva mane*. Out of the money collected, nearly 50 kgs of fresh paddy, a bunch of plantains and four *hoṇes* (bamboo milking-vessel), are procured.

On Thursday morning, after conducting *pu:je*, a team leaves for Mettupalayam to procure these goods. A *ka:ṇikke* is paid to Ko:de:ri village who procure and supply the bunch of

---

22 Thusrston and Rangachari (1909) consider that the festival is performed in honour of *Mahalingaswami* and *Hiriya Udaya*.

plantains. The team visits the *Nellitore Kariabeṭṭara:ya* temple on Friday and offers prayers and *ka:ṇikke*. On its way back, it procures fresh paddy from Mettupalayam and four *hoṇes*[23] from Burlia:r, one each for the four temples. By Saturday, all these items reach the *Devva mane*.

Throughout Sunday night, devotees stay awake in the *Devva mane* for the *savute aḍavadu* ritual[24]. Around 10:00 p.m., the paddy brought is divided into three equal parts, one for the *Devva mane Kariabeṭṭara:ya* temple, one for the *Mahalinga* temple and the third kept as spare. In earlier periods, the portion earmarked for Mahalinga temple, was in fact given to Me:lu:r Maha:linga temple and the *prasa:da* (*hu:ṭṭa*) in Me:lu:r temple was made from the paddy given from Athigaratty village. It used to be said, "*Me:lu:ramana a:ṭṭa, Adikkaraṭṭiyamana hu:ṭṭa*", i.e., the festivities are that of Me:lu:r people, but the *hu:ṭṭa* is that of Adikkaratti. Due to a misunderstanding which crept in sometime in the past, this practice of sending paddy to Me:lu:r temple has been discontinued and it is given instead to the Adigaratti Mahalinga temple. The left-over portion of paddy from the previous year is given to the *Doḍḍa mane* for use during *korambu* rituals.[25]

The next day morning, the *Siva linga* is taken by the *pu:ja:ri* to the Mahalinga temple, preceded by the *tu:ḍe pu:ja:ri*, who wields the *doḍḍa tu:ḍe*[26] to purify the path being taken by the *Siva linga*. As is the custom, the path is cleaned in advance, and women refrain from crossing the path during the journey. The *Sivalinga* is kept in the *Mahalinga* temple, decorated and

---

[23] *Hone* is the milk container made from bamboo tree.

[24] See page xx ante for details on this ritual.

[25] Unlike other villages, during the *korambu* ritual, paddy is used in Adigaratti village, not *batta*.

[26] See page xx for an account of *Doḍḍa tu:ḍe*.

pu:je offered. Though *prasa:da* is prepared, it is not distributed there. It is mixed with the *prasa:da* (*hu:ṭṭa*) of the Kariabettara:ya temple in the night and distributed there. In the night, while prayers are offered (*haraso:du*), it is explicitly mentioned that "we are celebrating *Devva habba*" ("*Devva habba ma:ḍina*").

The next day night (i.e., Tuesday) also *hu:ṭṭa* is conducted. During this day, the *pu:ja:ri* harvests the fresh ears of *ganje* he had sown during the *bittikko:* ceremony on *Kenḍa habba* day. This fresh harvest is mixed with the *hu:ṭṭa* being prepared. So also, many villagers send their fresh harvest of beans, peas etc. to the temple before they start consuming them. All these materials are cooked and mixed with the *hu:ṭṭa* in the temple and distributed. While offering prayers (*haraso:du*), it is mentioned that "*indu osattu ecca ma:ḍina*", i.e., "We are tasting fresh grains today".

On that day, all the *Doḍḍa manes* also harvest their *ganje* and prepare food (*tene ku:)* using the freshly harvested *ganje*. People attending the prayers in the *Devva mane*, go to their respective *Doḍḍa manes* straight from the temple and partake of the *tene ku:* kept there.

Devva habba, the harvest festival, marks the beginning of the Badaga new year. Hence, the village annual body meeting (*maga: sabe*) is held, usually on Tuesday afternoon, to approve the accounts for the year just concluded. After the approval of these accounts, fresh accounts are opened for the new year.

On the occasion of the *maga: sabe*, the *pu:ja:ri, u:r gauḍa* and the *tu:ḍe pu:ja:ri* are given new clothes – dhoti, *si:le* and *manḍare* (turban). The honorarium due to them is also handed over during the *maga: sabe* meeting itself.

Also on this occasion, a new cloth is wrapped around the *sinnada gaṇige*, the golden insignia given to the village headman by the erstwhile rulers. Nobody is certain as to the

period from which the insignia is in the village. It used to be in the custody of the village *maṇiaga:r* in earlier years. The insignia is treated with reverence and there were stringent conditions imposed on their owners earlier on – for example, menstruating women could not stay in the house which had the *sinnada gaṇige*. Hence, from time immemorial, the Adikkaratti *maṇiaga:rs* preferred to keep the insignia in the precincts of *Devva mane*. Every year a new cloth is wrapped around the golden insignia, over the old one without ever removing it. As a result, the bundle has become quite bulky and has never been unpacked in the recent past.

Thus *Devva habba* rings in everything new: a new year, new accounts, fresh harvest, new grains and vegetables, new clothes for the functionaries and new cloth for the insignia.

Gangammana habba

On the eighth day of the *Devva habba*, another festival called *Gangammana habba* is celebrated. Milk is offered to the water-streamlet near the Mahalinga temple during this festival, this time to thank the Goddesses Gangi ad Gowri for the good rainfall and a bountiful harvest. The temple doors are not opened on this occasion though. It is considered a lucky year if virgin milk from a recently delivered cow is available on this occasion for offering to God (as also during *Devva habba* and *Ka:ṇikke habba*). Hence, if a cow has heifered its first calf within a few days preceding these festivals, the first milking is delayed till the festival day and the virgin milk is offered to the temple. Similarly, if anybody comes across honeycombs around this time, they harvest it on the festival day and offer the fresh honey to the temple for the *Pu:je*. After the *Pu:je*, milk and honey are offered to the water-stream (*Gangamma*). In the night, prayers and *hu:ṭṭa* are conducted at the *Devva mane* temple.

The following account is from Thurston and Rangachari (1909) on *Devva Habba*:

> "The other agricultural ceremony is called *Devve habba* or *tenai* (*Setaria italica*), and is usually celebrated in June or July, always on a Monday. It is apparently performed in honour of the two gods *Mahalingaswami* and *Hiriya Udaya*, to whom a group of villages will have temples dedicated. For example, the Badagas the neighbourhood of Kotagiri have their *Hiriya Udaya* temple at *Tandanad* and *Mahalingaswami* temple at *Kannermukku*. This *Devve festival*...is celebrate at one place, whither the Badagas from other villages proceed, to take part in it. About midday, some Badagas and the temple *pujari* go from the temple of *Hiriya Udaya* to that of *Mahalingaswami*. The procession was usually headed by a Kurumba, who scatters fragments of *tud* bark and wood as he goes on his way. The *pujari* takes with him the materials necessary for doing *puja*, and, after worshipping *Mahalingaswami*, the party return to the *Hiriya Udaya* temple, where milk and cooked rice are offered to the various gods within the temple precincts. On the following day, all assemble at the temple, and a Kurumba brings a few sheaves of *Setaria italica*, and ties them to a stone set up at the main entrance. After this, *puja* is done, and the people offer coconuts to the god. Later on, all the women of the *Madhave* sept, who have given birth to a first born child, come, dressed up in holiday attire, with their babies, to the temple. On this day they wear a special nose ornament, called *elemukkuththi*, which is only worn on one other occasion, at the funeral of a husband. The women do *puja* to *Hiriya Udaya* and the *pujari* gives a small quantity of rice on *minige* (*Argycia*) leaves. After eating this, they leave the temple in a line, and wash their hands with water given to them by the *pujari*. This ceremonial, performed by women of the *Madhave* sept, is called *Mandedhanda*. As soon as the *Devve* festival is concluded, the reaping of the crop commences, and a measure or two of grain from the

crop gathered on the first day, called *nisal*, is set apart for the *Mahalingaswamy* temple" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:94-95).

CHAPTER 11

Peraṭṭa:di month and *Gowrabba*

Peraṭṭa:di, the eighth month of the Badaga calendar comes in August – September, coinciding with Tamil *A:vaṇi*. On the *Peraṭṭa:di* Monday is celebrated *Gowrabba*, seeking the blessings of Goddess Gowramma. This festival is akin to the Tamil *Varalakshmi Viradam* and the *Ke:da:ra Gowri Viradam*, the festival on which married women seek the blessings of Goddesses (*Sumangali Pira:rtanai*) for long lives for their spouses. *Gowrabba* coincides with *Ke:da:ra Gowri Viradam*. In earlier days, women donate oil to the temple on this occasion. They also light *di:pas* in their house which are not extinguished before the *hu:ṭṭa* is over in the temple (which is announced by the sound of conch and the "*O: O:*" sound people have to make when they finally leave the temple); they are let burn till the oil supply lasts. This was strictly observed in all the *Doḍḍa manes*.

On the Tuesday following *Gowrabba* the *Pu:ja:ri* harvests the fresh crop of *korali* (*tinai* in Tamil)[27]. The earlier harvest on the day following *Devva habba* was that of *ganje* (barley). This harvest is also submitted to the God first, like in the *Devva habba*, by conducting *hu:ṭṭa* with it. *Sa:me*[28] was the staple food of Badagas and it was grown in plenty but it was not offered to God (may be because of its use during funerals?). Hence *korali tene* is offered to God. Once this offering has been done,

---

[27] *Setaria pumila*. No more cultivated in the Nilgiris after World War II.

[28] *Panicum sumatrense*.

people are free to harvest their *sa:me* crop. In the subsequent month a festival called *Haccikkore habba*, is observed when *haccikke*[29], a puffed *sa:me* specialty is prepared which can be stored for months and used as ready-made food.

Doḍḍa Di:vige month and *sa:me tene ettodu*

The ninth month of the Badaga calendar is *Doḍḍa Di:vige*, coming in September-October, corresponding to Tamil *Puraṭṭa:si*. In Badaga society, all agricultural operations like sowing and harvesting were done by the individual households only after the corresponding ceremonies of sowing and harvesting were completed both in the village temple and the *Doḍḍa mane*. Generally, ceremonies in the *Devva mane* temple and the *Doḍḍa mane* are not held on the same day; the ceremony is held in the *Doḍḍa manes* three or four days after it is held in the *Devva mane*. Thus, three or four days after the village *pu:ja:ri* sows the seed on behalf of the temple, all the eleven *Doḍḍa manes* in Athigaratty hold the ceremony. Similar is the case with harvests, the only difference being the harvesting of *Sa:me tene* in the *Doḍḍa manes* whereas it is *ganje tene* which is used in the *Devva mane*. The harvesting of *sa:me tene* in the *Doḍḍa manes* is done during the month of *Doḍḍa Di:vige*.

[29] "Steamed doughballs of little millet (which have first been soaked in water mixed with sugar, coconut and spices: a favourite dessert dish, made from *Panicum sumatrense*, it will keep for months" (Hockings and Raichoor 1992: 565).

CHAPTER 12

Kiru Di:vige month and *Haccikkore Habba*

The tenth month of the Badaga calendar is *Kiru Di:vige*, corresponding to Tamil *Aippasi*, falling in October-November. *Kiru di:vige* is the month of incessant rain, *kiru*. Agricultural operations are at a low ebb. *Haccikkore habba* is being celebrated during this month.

Haccikke is a ready-to-eat snack prepared from *sa:me*, the yester-year staple food of Badagas. *Haccikke* has a long shelf life and can be eaten as it is, or can be soaked in hot water or milk and eaten.[30] Because of the usefulness of *Haccikke*, a separate festival is celebrated marking the preparation of *Haccikke*. *Hu:ta* ceremony is conducted in the *devva mane* on that night.

Tai month

The next Badaga month occurring in November-December, corresponding to the Tamil *Ka:rtigai* is the Badaga *Tai*. Two important festivals – *Ka:rtigai Di:pam* (*Lakkisa habba*) and *Nellitore habba* are celebrated during this month.

Nellitore habba

Nellitore, near Mettuppalayam, is the place where *Aiya Kariabettara:ya* became one with God. The well in which *Aiya* threw himself is still there. There is a temple for *Kariabettara:ya* and near the well. Every year, on the Monday following the sighting of the crescent moon after new-moon day, the *pu:ja:ri*,

[30] See footnote xx.

Gauḍa and a large number of people from Athigaratty village go to *Nellitore*, offer prayers to the *Linga* and the holy well there. On their return, they offer prayer at the *Amman* temple on the banks of river *Bhavani.* That night, there is a *hu:ṭṭa* in the temple, during which it is mentioned that "We are celebrating *Nellitore habba*".

The following account is from Thurston and Rangachary (1909) and Metz (1864):

> Seven miles west of Coonoor is a village name *Athikarihatti*, or village of the *Athikari* or *Adhikari* section of the Badagas. The story goes that these people under a leader named *Karibetta Raya*, came from *Sarigur* in Mysore territory, and settled first at *Nellituraí* (a short distance south west of Mettupalayam) and afterwards at *Tudur* (on the plateau west of Kulakambi) and *Tadasimarahatti* (to the north west of Melur) and that it was they who erected the sculptured cromlechs of Tudur and Melur. Tudur and Tadasimarahatti are now both deserted; but in the former a cattle kraal, an old shrine, and a pit of fire walking may still be seen, and in the latter another kraal, and one of the raised stone platforms called *mandaikallu* by the Badagas. Tradition says that the Badagas left these places and founded *Athikarihatti* and its hamlets instead, because the Kurumbas round about continually troubled them with their magic arts, and indeed killed by sorcery several of their most prominent citizens (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:74-75).
>
> "*Kariabettara:ya* is a silver figure intended to symbolize a certain deceased Badaga of the Adikary caste, who had the character of being a good sportsman and a man of unbounded charity towards those around him. Offerings in money are made at his shrine by his descendants, and when the sum amounts to a hundred rupees, it is taken by some of the headmen to the Nellitore valley, on the eastern slope of the Hills, whence their

forefathers originally came, and the whole of it is there expended in feasting" (pp. 63-64).

During earlier years, the holy well in *Nellitore* was desilted and drained every twelve years and people vie for a *darshan* of idol of *Kariabeṭṭara:ya* which lies immersed in the well. The last such function was held in the early 1970s. In those years in which water is drained from the well, the *Linga* in Athigaratty temple, after worship, is carried all the way from Athigaratty to Nellitore by foot by the *pu:ja:ri*, who carries it all through. He is accompanied by the *Gauḍas* and at least one person from each household, the procession being preceded by the *Tu:ḍe*–wielding *Tu:ḍe pu:ja:ri*. The well is drained, *pu:je* offered to the well and the *Linga* and *prasa:da* distributed to the devotees. The next morning, the procession returns to Athigaratty, all the way from Nellitore on foot, with the *pu:ja:ri* carrying the *Linga* all the while. That (Tuesday) night, *hu:ṭṭa* is conducted in the Athigaratty *Devva Mane*, wherein it is mentioned that "We are celebrating *Nellitore habba*". The next day, there used to be a *Jaga paruva*, a grand feast for which people from all over *Na:kku Beṭṭa* used to be invited. The next such grand *Nellitore habba* is long overdue.

Kartigai Di:pam (Lakkisa habba)

On the full-moon day of this month (full moon on Tamil *Ka:rtigai* month), coinciding with the Tiruvannamalai Deepam, is celebrated the *Ka:rtigai Di:pam* festival or the *Lakkisa habba*. This day need not be a Monday. Until a few decades ago, the decorated temple car was drawn in Athigaratty on *Lakkisa habba* also. But because of the huge expenditure involved for the households to celebrate two car festivals every year, drawing of car is no more done on *Ka:rtigai Di:pam*. However, the procession of idols is taken out both on the full-moon day and the next day. On the *Ka:rtigai Di:pam* day, the procession of the idol of *Kariabettara:ya* is taken out from *Devva Mane* to the *Vina:yakar* temple; the next day is celebrated as

Vishnu Di:pam and the idol of *Vishnu-Bu:de:vi-Sride:vi* is taken out in procession accompanied by Bhajans. Worship is offered on both days to the *Teppakuḷa* near the *Vina:yaka temple*. During the *hu:ṭṭa*, it is mentioned that "We are celebrating *Lakkisa habba*". On both days, *di:pa* are lighted in all the houses.

CHAPTER 13

Hemma:ṭṭi month and *Hette Habba (Teppakuḷa habba), Ka:ppu habba* and *Sakkala:ti Habba*

The twelfth and last month of the Badaga calendar is *Hemma:ṭṭi*, coming in December-January coinciding with Tamil *Ma:rgazhi*. *Teppakula habba, Ka:ppu habba* and *Sakkala:ti habba* are celebrated on this month.

During *Hemma:ṭṭi*, in Poranga:d si:me and in villages like Nunthala, the *Hette habba* is celebrated on a grand scale. Though *Hette habba* per se is not celebrated in Athigaratty, on the same day is celebrated the *Teppakuḷa habba*. Goddess *Hette* is believed to have become one with God in a well. Similarly, *Karibeṭṭara:ya Aiya* is also believed to have achieved immortality in a well. Not coincidentally, *pu:je* is offered to the *teppa kuḷa* during a number of festivals.

On the *Teppakuḷa habba* day, the well in the place of origin of the drinking-water source (head works) for Athigaratty village is desilted and cleaned and *pu:je* with coconut and fruits is offered at the site earmarked for this purpose. *Pu:je* is also offered for the *Aḷḷajo:ṇi teppakkuḷa*. In the *hu:ṭṭa* held during the night at the *Devva Mane*, it is specifically mentioned that "We are celebrating *Teppakuḷa habba*".

The following is an extract from Thurston and Rangachari (1909) on *Hette habba*:

> "The festival in honour of *Heththeswami* is celebrated in the month of January at Baireganni. It is sometimes called *ermathohabba*, as, with it, ploughing operations cease. It always commences on a Monday, and

usually lasts eight days. A Sedan or *Devanga* weaver comes with the portable hand-loom, and sufficient thread for weaving a *dhubati* (coarse cloth) and turban. At Baireganni there is a special house, in which these articles are woven. But, at other places where the festival is observed, the Badagas go to the weaver's village to fetch the required cloths. Early on the second morning of the festival, some of the more respected Badagas and the weaver proceed to the weaving house after bathing. The weaver sets up his loom, and worships it by offering incense, and other things. The Badagas give him a new cloth, and a small sum of money, and ask him to weave a *dhubati* and two *kachches* (narrow strips of cloth). Daily, throughout the festival, the Badagas collect near the temple, and indulge in music and songs. Until the last day, they are not permitted to set eyes on the god *Heththeswami*. On the morning of the last day, the *pujari*, accompanied by all the Badagas, takes the newly woven cloths to a stream, in which they are washed. When they are dry, all proceed to the temple, where the idol is dressed up in them, and all, on this occasion only, are allowed to look at it. Devotees pay a small offering of money, which is placed on a tray near the idol. The crowd begins to disperse in the afternoon, and, on their way back to their villages, the wants of the travelers are attended to by people posted at intervals with coffee, fruit, and other articles of food. If the Badagas have to go to a weaver's village for the cloths, the weaver is, when the order is given for them, presented with four annas, after he has bathed. When handing the money to him, the Badagas bawl out 'This is the fee for making the cloths to be worn by *Heththe Iramasthi* and *Parasakti Parvati*'. On the last day o the festival, the cloths are washed, and one of them is made to represent an idol, which is decorated with waist and neck ornaments, and an umbrella. All prostrate themselves before it, and make offerings of money. Fruits and other things are then offered to *Heththeswami* and some recite the following prayer. "May all good acts be remembered, and

all bad ones be forgotten. Though there may be a thousand and on sins, may I reach the feet of the God".

"The following further information in connection with the Baireganni festival is given by Bishop Whitehead "the people from other villages offer money, rice, fruits, umbrellas of gold or silver for the goddess, cloths, and buffaloes. The buffaloes are never killed, but remain as the property of the temple. The *pujari* calls the representatives of one village, and tells them what *Heththeswami* says to him, e.g. 'this year you will have good (or bad) crops; cholera or small pox, good (or bad) rain, etc.' As the people present their offerings, they prostrate themselves, kneeling down and touching the ground with their foreheads, and the *pujari* gives them some flowers, which they wear in their hair. The people and the *pujari* play on the *kombu* (horn), and ring bells while the offerings are being made. After the offerings have finished, all the men dance, in two companies, in front of the temple, one shouting 'How-ko, How-ko," and the other 'Is-holi.' The dance was taught them by the Todas, and the words are Toda" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:96-98).

Sakkala:ti habba and *Ka:ppu habba*

In the interregnum between the *Teppakuḷa habba* and the *Ka:ṇikke (Dodda) habba*, is celebrated the *Sakkala:ti habba* on the Monday following the new-moon day after sighting the crescent. On the Sunday prior to the *Sakkala:ti* Monday, is celebrated the *Ka:ppu habba*.

On the *Ka:ppu habba* day, people go into the forests are bring the shoots of *Ka:ppu* plant. At about 4:00 p.m., they go in a procession chanting "hau kau" to the *Devva Mane* and throw the *Ka:ppu* plants on the roof of the temple. Then they go to their houses and throw *Ka:ppus* on their rooftops. *Ka:ppu* is a natural insecticide and is believed to protect the house. Even though most people still get the *Ka:ppu* from the forests,

the practice of using *Kongu ka:ppu*, a bunch of *Ve:ppilai* and other plants from the plains, is on the increase.

On the *Sakkala:ti* day, *di:vige* is lighted in the *Devva Mane* and *pu:je* offered at about 4:00 p.m. Then, a *ko:lam*, of edible flour is drawn in the front yard of the temple. The flour *Ko:lam* is supposedly for the insects to feed on. Afterwards, they disperse chanting "hau kau". Once this "hau kau" sound is heard from the temple, *ko:lams* are drawn in the yards of the houses.

The following is an extract from Thurston and Rangachari (1909) on *Sakkala:ti* and *ka:ppu habba*:

> "At the *Sakalathi* festival, in the month of October, Badagas, towards evening, throw on the roofs of their houses flowers of *Plectranthus Wightii*, *Crotalaria obtecta*, *Lobelia micotinanefolia*, *Achyranthes aspera*, and *Leucas aspera*. On the following day, then clean their houses, and have a feast. In the afternoon, numbers of them may be seen in the streets drawing in front of their houses pictures in wood ashes of buffaloes, bulls, cows, ploughs, stars, sun and moon, snakes, lizards, etc. They then go into their houses, and wash their hands. Taking up in his clean hands a big cake, on which are placed a little rice and butter, the Badaga puts on it three wicks steeped in castor oil, and lights them. The cake is then waved round the heads of all the children of the house taken to a field, and thrown therein with the words "Sakalathi has come". The cake-thrower returns home, and prostrate himself before a lamp placed in the inner room, and repeats a long formula, composed of the various synonyms of Siva" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:101-102).

For the last forty or fifty years, taking out the *Ma:rgazhi* round-up (procession) early in the morning, starting from the *Devva mane*, covering the entire village on all the thirty days of the *Tai* (Tamil *Ma:rgazhi)* month is in vogue in Athigaratty

village. On the concluding day, the arrival of the new month (Tamil *Tai)* is celebrated with much fanfare.

Since the Badaga festival season starts with the *Ka:ṇikke* or *Doḍḍa habba*, all the temples in the village are white-washed immediately after the *Sakkala:ti habba* and before the *Doḍḍa habba.* The sanctum sanctorum of the Mahalinga and the *Devva Mane* temples, are washed with white clay, not limestone, that too by the *Pu:ja:ri* himself. White-washing with limestone solution or colour-washing is done for the other walls of the temples. Only after the temples have been white-washed, are the individual houses cleared of the soot and white or colour-washed. The post *Sakkala:ti* season was suited for this purpose because it was an off-season for agricultural operations. During other months, people were neck-deep in agricultural operations and it was well nigh impossible for them to find adequate time for the annual maintenance works of their houses.

All agricultural operations in the village, be it sowing or harvesting, have to be done by the individual households only after the necessary ceremonies have been performed in the village temple and also in their respective *Doḍḍa Manes*. As already mentioned, the ceremonies in the *Doḍḍa Manes* take place three or four days after the corresponding ceremony is over in the *Devva Mane*.

In summary, there are twelve Badaga months: *Ku:ḍal, A:la:ni, Nalla:ni, A:ni, A:dire, A:ḍi, A:vaṇi, Peraṭṭa:di, Doḍḍa Di:vige, Kiru di:vige, Tai* and *Hemma:ṭṭi*. We had a brief look at the festivals falling on each of these months.

It is clear from a careful analysis of these festivals, how intimately the lives of Badagas were intertwined with nature and the seasons. The agricultural seasons follow the natural seasons of rain and shine, and each agricultural operation of Badaga community was done only after dedicating it to the Gods. Thus religion and livelihood were inseparable in lives

of olden-day Badagas. Not only that; they had separate festivals for each of the natural forces known to them and they worshipped them as Gods, like many Hindu communities. They worshipped land during *e:r ma:tto:du and e:r u:ḍo:du*. They worshipped water in the form of Goddess *Gangamma* during *Gangammana habba* and *Gowrabba*. They worshipped fire on *Kenda habba*. They worshipped wind and gale during *Doḍḍa habba* and when they prayed for rains. Thus almost all the five *pancha bu:tas* were worshipped. Nature worship and a life at peace with mother nature were the hall-marks of the blissful lives of Badagas.

நெலகோலு அறக்கட்டளை
நம்ம ஊள்ளித்தாலெ நாடு ஊள்ளிந்து
BADAGA DOCUMENTATION CENTER

PART 2

Badaga Rituals

நெலகோலு அறக்கட்டளை
நம்ம ஹள்ளித்தாலெ நாடு ஹள்ளித்து
BADAGA DOCUMENTATION CENTER

CHAPTER 14

Purification of the house after childbirth

Badaga custom requires that everybody visit and wish the mother and the new-born baby at the earliest. The *U:r Gauḍa*, *Pu:ja:ri*, other *Gauḍas* of the village, however, enter the house of the new-born only after it has been purified, since child birth is considered to be one of the many polluting events in Badaga tradition (See appendix xx for an account of the concepts of pollution and purity in different cultures). The following extract from Thurston and Rangachary (1909: 109) is instructive:

> "A first confinement must not take place within the house, and the verandah is converted into a lying in chamber, from which the woman is, after delivery, removed to the outer apartment, where she remains till she is free from pollution by catching sight of the crescent moon."

Decades ago, this restriction of not visiting the polluted house was applicable to all elders of the village, but in course of time its scope has narrowed down to the *pu:ja:ri* and the *gauḍas*. The purificatary cleansing is done usually between the third to the ninth day of the child-birth, whether the new-born baby is male or female.

The first step of the purificatory ritual, is the bath given to the baby's mother. Then the walls and the floors of all the rooms are brushed with *urungu*[31] or *ubbe*[32] foliage;

---

[31] false bog-myrtle (*Dodonoea angustifolia*).

broomstick is not used. The soot (*ḷḷlangu*) is not cleaned[33], perhaps due to the perceived adverse effects of the flying soot on the child. The entire house is sprinkled then with water and cow-dung solution[34] (*toppiṭṭu ni:r tekkisi*) and exposed to camphor (*Sa:mbira:ni*) smoke. Only after this, the house is considered pure enough for the elders to enter; the naming ceremony for the child is also held only after conducting this purification ritual.[35]

---

[32] Chinese pagoda tree (*Sophora glauca*), hill forest indigo (*Indigofera pulchella*), New Spain senna (*Senna laevigata*), trifoliate tick trefoil (*Desmodium refescens*), *Dumasia villosa* or downy mountain senna (*Cassia tomentosa*). These plants are belived to possess the power to purify the surroundings.

[33] Cleansing the Badaga house of soot is done only once a year, usually prior to the *Dodda habba*.

[34] Milk, curd, ghee, dung and urine, the five things or substances derived from the body of a cow, are called *pancha-gavia*, which are supposed to be efficacious for purifying any kind of pollution (Dubois 1906:47).

[35] Abbe J.A. Dubois (1906/2000: 172) gives the following account on "the purification of places" by Hindus: "Before the performance of any ceremony the place where it is to take place must be previously purified. This is usually the duty of the women, and the principal ingredients required are cow-dung and *darbha* grass. They dilute the cow-dung with water and make a sort of plaster with it, which they spread over the floor with their hands, making zigzags and other patterns with lime or chalk as they go on. 'They then draw wide line of alternate red and white over this and sprinkle the whole with *darbha* grass, after which the place is perfectly pure. This is the way in which Hindus purify their houses day by day from the defilements caused by promiscuous goers and comers. It is the rule amongst the upper classes to have their houses rubbed over once a day with cow-dung, but in any class it would be considered an unpardonable and gross breach of good manners to omit this ceremony when they expect friends to call or were going to receive company."

"This custom appears odd at first sight, but it brings this inestimable benefit in its train, that it cleanses the houses where it is in use from all the insects and vermin which would otherwise infest them."

CHAPTER 15

Naming the Child

Common Names

On an auspicious day, the child is named. It was common practice to name Badaga children after their paternal grandparents, though this is changing of late. Even if some other name is preferred, it is customary to give the grandparent's name to the child first, before giving other names. The other names used to be those of Gods, so that every time one calls out the name aloud, he or she willy-nilly pronounces the name of the Almighty. But, naming the child after its grand-parent or God is nowadays more an exception than rule, the preference being for a plethora of 'modern' names.

Astrology was an unknown science for the Badagas until a few decades ago. Of late, the practice of choosing a 'proper' name for the child based on the birth-stars of the child in consultation with an astrologer, has also crept into the Badaga culture.

Auspicious Days

Any auspicious ceremony in the Badaga community is celebrated in the interregnum between the day following new moon and the day before the full moon[36]; in other words, the period of the waxing crescent is the ideal period for all Badaga ceremonies and festivals. Usually, the day after the new moon

[36] See page .. for details.

is avoided, since the sighting of the crescent is very difficult on that day (this day is called *pa:time* in Badagu). Unlike the Hindus of the plains, the eighth and ninth day after the new-moon day (*ashṭami* and *navami*) are not inauspicious days for Badagas. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are good days for Badagas, Monday being the holiest[37]. Thus, any Monday, Wednesday or Friday between the third day after the new moon and a day before the full moon, is chosen for the ceremony to name the child. Badagas used to avoid Sundays earlier on. With many Badagas being office-goers nowadays and Sunday being a holiday for them, holding the ceremony on Sundays is no more anathema to them. It is worth remembering that Sundays were avoided earlier on since it was believed that the sun god was at its scorching best on this day[38].

If the child is born on the full-moon day or the days following it, it is customary for Badagas to wait until after the new-moon day for the naming ceremony. Similar is the case with other ceremonies like taking the child to the father's house, ceremony to mark the coming of age of girls, marriage, doing *bhu:mi-pu:je* for a new house, foundation-stone laying and consecration of the new house.

Items required for the ceremony

Invitations for the ceremony are extended to all close relatives of both the parents. A few items are necessary for the ceremony: (i) fresh, and as yet not boiled cow's milk from the father's house; (ii) freshly cooked rice; (iii) fresh fruit; by fruit,

---

[37] Badagas belonging to the *Bella makka* group, however, do not prefer Fridays.

[38] Interestingly, Sunday is the holiest day for the Todas. They worship the Sun god every morning.

we refer to the hill raspberry or the black-berry (*tuppa muḷḷi*)[39] which was available in plenty in the wild in olden days; if it is not available, banana can be used as a substitute; (iv) a few blades of *garikke* grass[40]; (v) *sinnada haṇa*[41]; (vi) new clothes for the child; (vii) a new towel to wrap around the child; (viii) a chain of beads for the child's neck[42] and (ix) a metal anklet for the child[43].

---

[39] bramble (*Rubus*, several spp., and *Prinsepia utilis*).

[40] Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). We can find a parallel in the *darpe* grass used by Brahmins for many of their ceremonies. Garike is "used in various cures, such as medicine for *dodda ga:i, poliomyelitis;* in oathitaking and in several ceremonies, including the funeral" (Hockings and Raichoor 1992:237).

[41] *Hana* or *Sinnada haṇa* is a minuscule coin made of gold, usually weighing about one tenth of a gram. Since *sinnada haṇa* is required for many a Badaga ceremony, Badagas usually keep a stock of these coins in every home. The round-shaped coin will have one or two dots representing the God. A cheaper version, made of copper, is also available, which is one of the stock items of trade in the villages by the *chettis* from the plains in the villages. *Sinnada haṇas* can be reused; hence there is no real expenditure involved. See also footnote 10 for the use of metals in Badaga rituals.

[42] In earlier days, a chain made of *guṇḍumaṇi* (round beads), in the case of male and *kakkila maṇi* (black beads) in the case of female child was used. Gold and Silver chains, have replaced the *guṇḍumaṇi* and *kakkilu maṇi* respectively in the modern era.

[43] Called *gaggare*. It used to be a rigid silver anklet, believed to protect the child from fits and from lightning (Hockings and Raichoor 1992:231). Rubber rings have taken the place of *gaggare* nowadays. Incidentally, metals play an important role in Badaga ceremonies. The *panchalo:ka* metals, viz. gold, silver, iron, copper and bronze are used in many ceremonies – like many other communities in India. It is widely believed that these metal are holy and good for the well-being of humans. Therapeutic value is also attributed to these metals.

Auspicious Time

The naming ceremony usually takes place in the morning, around the time of sunrise. But nowadays, looking for the "auspicious time" for the function is on the rise and it is not uncommon to have this function well past nine o' clock.

Preparations for the Ceremony

On the appointed day, all the guests gather in the baby's mother's house, where the ceremony takes place. The child is bathed, dressed with new clothes[44], bedecked with chains and ring, rolled in a new towel and is held on the lap of an elderly woman[45]. The woman sits by the side of the lighted *di:vige* in the *ida mane* facing east so that when the sun is out, the early morning rays fall directly on the child's face. The *ganguva*, the large brass (or bronze) plate is kept in front of the woman. Fresh milk, not yet boiled, is poured into the *ganguva* and *sinnada haṇa* is placed in the milk. Freshly cooked rice and the fruits are mixed with the milk. On one corner of the plate, *garikke* grass is place touching the milk and rice. A vessel with water is placed in a corner of the room for the people to wash their hands, after handling the rice porridge. It is worth remembering that bronze plate, milk, *sinnada haṇa*, rice, water and *garikke* grass are all auspicious things for Badagas.

The Ceremony Proper

Having got everything ready, the paternal grandfather is called upon to name the child. He washes his hands, picks up a morsel of the porridge and a piece of the fruit, feeds and

---

[44] Before new clothes are put on the child, it is customary to spread the new clothes over an elderly gentleman, so that only "used" clothes are put on the child. Articles untried on anybody, are usually avoided for the child.

[45] This is the practice in Athigaratty village. In some villages, the child is held on the lap of an elderly man.

blesses the child. He then names the child, usually his own (?) name. Then he washes his hand with the water in the other vessel. Then, the male relatives follow suit, in the order of their seniority. Only after all the males complete their turn, the female relatives get their turn to name the child.

Of late, the ceremony in most of the houses starts with a *pu:je*. In earlier times, there was no separate *pu:je* hall in Badaga houses. A *di:vige*, lighted on the *madilu*, the arched doorway separating the *o:ga mane* and the *ida mane*, represented the God; in fact, the daily routine of Badagas used to start with saluting the *di:vige* and the sun[46]; the ceremonial *pu:je* was a sporadic event and was done in the *Devva Mane*, not in the houses. Nowadays, a special *pu:je* is done, with the full complement of coconut, fruit, incense and camphor in the traditional Hindu style; the new clothes of the child are placed there and only then the ceremonies detailed above are completed.

In case some of the close relatives are delayed, the ceremony is completed within the auspicious time, but a portion of the food is retained in the *ganguva* till the relatives arrive. Only after the relatives complete the ritual by feeding a morsel of the food and naming the child, will the *ganguva* be washed.

After everybody has named the child, sweet and puffed rice are distributed and snacks and coffee served to all. The relatives are provided a feast. The practice of giving presents to the child has also spread among the Badagas.

The day following the ceremony, it is customary to ask the parents of the child whether it slept well during the night. Underlying this is the belief that the child would have slept

---

[46] See xx

peacefully if the spirits of the ancestors had been satisfied with the name given.

The following is an extract from Thurston and Rangachary (1909) on this ceremony:

> "A child receives its name on the seventh, ninth or eleventh day. A sumptuous meal is given to the community, and the grandfather (paternal, if possible) milks a cow, and pours the milk into a brass cup placed in the milk house. With it a little cooked samai grain is mixed. The babe is washed with water brought from a stream; marked on the forehead with sacred ashes; a turmeric dyed thread is tied round its waist; a silver or iron bangle placed on its wrists; and a silver bead tied by a thread round its neck. Thus decorated, the infant is taken up by the oldest man of the village who is not a widower; who gives it a name, which has already been chosen. The elder, and the child's parents and grandparents then place a little milk in its mouth" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:110).

CHAPTER 16

Bringing the child to the father's house

Appropriate time for bringing the child

Sometime after the naming ceremony is over, the child is brought to the father's house. This is an essential ritual. This is done on the third, fifth or ninth month of the child (i.e., after the child completes two, four or eight months). The seventh month is avoided. There is also no objection for bringing the child to the father's house in the very first month of birth itself. But the first or the third month being very early, most people prefer the fifth month.

Team from father's side to bring the child

An elderly man and an experienced woman from the father's family are sent to the baby's mother's house, usually a day in advance. The man takes an umbrella with him since the child, when outside the house, should be covered with umbrella and not exposed to sun directly. The woman will be carrying the child. Earlier on, the entourage of the child used to walk all the way from the child's mother's house to the father's house. That perhaps explains the use of the umbrella[47]. Nowadays, they almost always perform the journey by vehicles.

---

[47] There may be another reason, as obtaining among Todas: immediately after childbirth, the Toda mother is taken to a pollution hut where she stays for almost a month. "As they proceed from the house to the site of the pollution hut, the woman carrying the baby leads the way, accompanied by another woman who shades her with a holy umbrella; the

The entourage, including the child, consists of odd number of persons, say 3, 5, 9, or 11 or any other higher odd number. Number 7 is again avoided. The exact reason for Badagas avoiding number 7 is not known.

Before leaving the mother's house

The team leaves the mother's house during the auspicious hours. Before leaving the house, the ladies ensure that a small iron nail, a small charcoal block and a piece of broomstick (*kasikkilu*) are neatly tied in a corner of the child's clothes without the knowledge of others. This is believed to ward off evil spirits and evil eyes[48]. Likewise, before the child enters the father's house, someone quietly removes these items from the child's clothes, circles them around the child's head and disposes them of in a remote place.

On reaching the father's house

Once the vehicle reaches the father's village, the umbrella is opened and held over the head of the child. If

---

new mother follows likewise accompanied and protected ..." (Walker 1984: 195). The holy umbrella is nothing but a twig of the 'Nilgiri holly' (*Berberis nepalensis*) tree. The purpose of the umbrella is to protect the mother and the child against the malign influence of a star or other body called Keirt or *ke:t* (Tamil *kettai* or Sanskrit *Jye:stha:*, 'the 18th nakshatra, or lunar mansion) which is supposed to be near the sun" (Rivers 1906:324). Thus, the umbrella is after all not a protection against the hot sun, but against the evil influence of *ke:t*.

[48] Among Hindus, many remedies are considered to be efficacious against the evil eye: "(1) A few sticks from a new unused broom are set fire to, waved severl times round the child, and placed in a corner...(2) Some chillies, salt, human hair, nail-cuttings and finely powdered earth from the pit of the door-post are mixed together, waved three times in front of the baby and thrown on to the fire...(3) A piece f burning camphor is waved in front of the baby. (4) Cookedd rice-balls, painted red, black and yellow, and white (with curds) are waved in front of the child" (Thurston 1906: 256-257).

there is a temple on the way to the father's house or nearby, the child is taken there first and blessings of the God sought. Then the child is taken to the father's house straight (after removing the nail, charcoal and broom, as mentioned earlier). Pregnant women and lactating mothers (*ba:ti basaru emmakka*) do not cross the path of the child[49]. The man holding the umbrella keeps announcing the arrival of the child and requests others to give way.

Feast

The ritual ends with a feast for the guests in the father's house. Badaga custom requires that all the villagers visit and bless the baby and its mother.

The following is an account from (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:109) on the practice as it existed then:

> "If a woman has been delivered at her father's house, she returns to the home of her husband within a month of the birth of the child on an auspicious day. On arrival there, the infant is placed near the feet of an old man standing by a lamp within the milk house. Placing his right hand over the head of the infant, the old man blesses it, and a feast is held, before the commencement of which two cups, one containing milk, and the other cooked rice, are produced. All the relations take up a little of the milk and rice, and touch the tongue of the baby with them."

Returning to mother's house

If so desired, the child is taken back to the mother's house; but usually only after two or three days. However, where the mother has not yet recuperated fully, there is no objection to the mother and child returning to the mother's house the very same day. In that case, they reach their home before sunset.

---

[49] It may be that the young child should not be an object of envy of the expectant and the lactating mothers—to ward off evil eyes.

In case of bereavement in the family of the mother

If the event of bereavement or any other inauspicious occurrence in the house of the mother, the child is brought to the father's house immediately, whether day or night, whatever be the month. None of the rituals narrated above need be followed in such a situation.

Many ceremonies on the same day

Similarly, many Badagas living in towns would prefer to complete all the ceremonies of naming, bringing the child to the father's house and tonsuring its head in a single day and to take the child to their homes; they are allowed to do that.

Babies born in hospitals

Similarly, if the child is born in a hospital, after discharge, it is first taken to the house of the mother for the naming ceremony and from there it is brought to the father's house. When parents are under a compulsion to give a specific name for the child to get a valid birth certificate from the hospital authorities, it is not uncommon for the parents to offer prayers in a temple in the town and give a name to the child. In such cases, the naming ceremony according to Badaga customs is gone through all over again in the mother's house.

CHAPTER 17

Other Childhood Ceremonies

(1) Initial Tonsure

When to be done

After the child has been brought to the father's house, the next ceremony to be conducted is the sacrificial tonsuring of the child's hair. This is usually done on the fifth or the ninth month of childhood. In addition to the religious significance, removal of the nascent hair is known to be good for the child from the health point of view and it facilitates faster growth of the hair.

Special role for the *guru*[50]

In the initial tonsure ceremony, the child's maternal uncle (the *guru*) plays an important role. It is he who is required to buy the new clothes for the child for this occasion and also jewels – like necklace or chain, bangles and ring? along with a waist-string or chain (*oṭṭiya:ṇam*) and *gaggare* (metal anklets in olden days, but black rubber bangles nowadays worn as anklets) in the case of male and silver anklets (*golusu*) in the

[50] "The mother's brother is called *guru*, "preceptor", in this culture because he is the guide and counselor, especially in spiritual matters, for one or more of his sister's children. He therefore looms large in their lives, and in their life-cycle ceremonies"(Hockings 1988: 310).

case of female[51]. Silver jewellery was the order of the day earlier on, but gold has replaced silver in recent years.

Where to be done

The local deity was the most preferred God for the dedication of the initial tonsure ceremony earlier on. In the case of Athigaratty village, this meant that the hair was submitted to Lord Kariabettraya but the ceremony was performed at the *Vina:yaka* temple, the preferred occasion being the day after the *te:r habba* (*Ka:rtigai Di:pam* or *Ma:si magam*) or the day after *Vina:yaka Caturti*. Even when a pilgrimage is sought to be performed to other destinations like Palani or Madurai for this ceremony, it is customary to offer a *pu:je* to the local deity, more often along with the submission of a few locks of hair, before setting off for the distant place. The procedure narrated below is applicable when the ceremony is conducted locally.

Preparations for the ceremony

Relatives and village elders are invited for the ceremony. Early in the morning, the mother bathes and wears new clothes. The child is also given a bath, but new clothes are provided to it later, at the temple. Hence, the child wears only used clothes, but new clothes should be taken to the temple without fail. Before leaving for the temple, feast is cooked and kept ready. Hot water, necessary for giving a further wash to the child, is also taken along.

Who will wield the knife

In most villages the tonsuring will be done by Badagas themselves. In villages like Athigaratty, where a barber has been living locally for generations together, tonsuring is done

[51] The practice of wearing *gaggare* has been slowly disappearing.

by the barber and hence he too has to be invited for the ceremony.

The ceremony proper

The knife to be used for tonsuring is placed before the altar and the blessings of the God sought. Then, all the elders present there, touch the knife and bless. The oldest man in the gathering then takes the knife, removes one hair from the child's head; cuts off the waist-string (*araina:ṇ*); and then offers the hair, string and a *haṇa* (a quarter rupee coin) to *Gangamma*, the water stream flowing nearby, by placing them in it. After this, the barber completes the tonsuring of the child.

The child is given a thorough wash. Usually a few drops of cold water from the stream is sprinkled on its head and then it is washed with the warm water brought from home. The child is clad with new clothes and a *pu:je* is performed in the temple. Sandalwood paste is applied liberally over the tonsured head, which will soothe it. A *ka:ṇikke* (offering) is also made to God.

Piercing of ears

Piercing the ears of the child is also done on the same day. In the case of male child, the ear is not actually pierced, but an earring is kept in the ear, pressed symbolically and taken out. The girl child's ear is actually pierced and earrings fixed. New *Golusu* (silver anklet) is provided to the baby girl; *gaggare* in the case of male child.

New *oṭṭiya:ṇam* for the boy

For the male child, a new waist-chain (*oṭṭiya:ṇam*) is provided in place of the waist-string removed earlier. This chain is put in place by the *guru*, the maternal uncle.

***Ka:ṇikke* and *pu:je* again**

A *pu:je* is performed again and offerings (*ka:ṇikke*) are made to the God before returning home. With a feast for the guests, this ceremony gets completed. It should be noted that none of the goods bought for the child is ever sold, even under the direst of circumstances.

(2) The first solid food ritual

Earlier on, the occasion of shifting from liquid to solid food for the child was also observed as a ritual. When the shift was contemplated, a tiny pot for the tiny tot (*kuḍike*) was procured in which a food of *kucce ku:*[52]: (*sa:me* grain cooked in butter or ghee) was prepared; it was thoroughly mixed with ghee using a new *jakkala*[53] stick; and after seeking the blessings of God, it was fed to the child by the senior-most woman in the family. With the shift in the food habits of Badagas, rice has replaced *sa:me*; instead of *kucce ku:*, the child is nowadays given a mixture of rice and dhall and other tinned foods. Consequently, this ritual is all but forgotten.

(3) When the first tooth emerges on the upper row

Normally, the milk teeth first appear on the lower gum of the child. If it appears on the upper gum instead, Badagas consider it unusual, requiring a ritual. In a simple ceremony, the maternal uncle (the *guru*) gives five rupees to the child.[54]

---

[52] Or "*kuccalakki ku:*, little millet which is first parboiled, then pounded, then boiled again with butter or clarified butter, meal given to mother after delivery" (Hockings and Raichoor 1992: 177).

[53] common Nilgiri barberry (*Berberis tinctoria).*

[54] The reason is unknown. When the teeth struggle to pierce through the gum, dentists usually cut open the gum to facilitate the emergence of the teeth. Perhaps, it was believed that the child should be provided

(4) Initiation into milking duties

Years ago, when cattle-husbandry was as important as agriculture for Badagas, there was a specific ritual to mark the initiation of the young boy into milking the cows, but this is not in vogue now. Following is the account in Thurston and Rangachari (1909:87-88) on the milking ceremony based on Natesa Sastri (1892):

> "Every Badaga boy, when he is about seven or nine years old, is made to milk a cow on an auspicious day, or on new year's day. The ceremony is thus described by Mr. Natesa Sastri. "Early in the morning of the day appointed for this ceremony, the boy is bathed, and appears in his holiday dress. A she buffalo, with the calf, stands before his house, waiting to be milked. The parents, or other elder relations of the boy, and those who have been invited to be present on the occasion, or whose duty it is to be present, then conduct the boy to the spot. The father, or some one of the agnatic kindred, gives into the hands of the boy a bamboo vessel called *hone:*, which is already very nearly full of fresh drawn milk. The boy receives the vessel with both his hands, and is conducted to the buffalo. The elder relations show him the process, and the boy, sitting down, milks a small quantity into the *hone:*. This is his first initiation into the duty of milking, and it is that he may now commit mistakes on the very first day of his milking that the *hone:* is previously filled almost to the brim. The boy takes the vessel filled with milk into his house, and pours some of the sacred fluid into all his household eating vessels – a sign that from that day he has taken up on himself the responsibility of supplying the family with milk. He also throws some milk in the face of his

---

something to munch, through the money offered by the *guru*, which could soften the gum and facilitate the emergence of lower teeth. But then, the question remains as to why the money should come from the *guru*.

parents and relatives. They receive it very kindly, and bless him, and request him to continue thus to milk the buffaloes, and bring plenty and prosperity to the house. After this, the boy enters the milk house (*ha:go:ttu*); and places milk in his *hone:* there. From this moment, and all through his life, he may enter into that room, and this is therefore considered a very important ceremony".

CHAPTER 18

Coming of age

There is no other ritual to mark the coming of age of males in the Badaga community. There are however, some rituals when girls come of age.

World over, particularly among the technologically and scientifically advanced societies, the religious significance of initiation rites has come down and these rites have become increasingly secular. Many factors, including scientific advancements, changed views of the nature of the universe and changed social conditions, appear to have contributed to this.

But surprisingly, it is the other way around in the case of Badaga society. The puberty rite used to be a low-key affair; thanks to the exposure to other cultures, puberty has also become an occasion for a fairly elaborate ritual of late.

*Olaguḍi*s of yore

Not long ago, every village had a *olaguḍi* (a menstrual hut) to which menstruating women had to retire, away from the hustle and bustle of household chores to get the much-needed rest – not merely the first time, but every month. Women usually stayed there for three or four days. But then, a time came when *olaguḍi*s were viewed as isolation huts to house "polluted" women, and were viewed as institutions of discrimination against women; since then, *olaguḍi*s have, slowly but steadily, fallen into disuse. Earlier on, women could enter their houses only after spending three days in the *olaguḍi* and

having a ceremonial bath outside. Nowadays, women continue to remain in their homes during their menstrual period, but in orthodox homes, menstruating women refrain from cooking on those days.

Modern practice – isolation in the house itself

Nowadays, when a girl comes of age, she confines herself to the verandah of the house for the next five to nine days. She discards her soiled clothes once for all and wears other clothes. Every now and then, she is taken to the water stream (*aḷḷa jo:ṇi*) and bathed there; when the girl is too weak to withstand a cold-water bath, she bathes in hot water brought from home. Every time she has a bath, her old clothes are discarded for good. In the modern era when schooling is universal and school tests are very frequent, the girl is allowed to attend school, but is confined to the verandah till the ceremony is over, which takes place after five or nine days on an auspicious day. Since an auspicious day falls only on the bright half of the month (between the new-moon day and the full moon day), girls sometimes have to wait a good fifteen days when they are unfortunate enough to come of age on the full moon or the days immediately following. In extraordinary circumstances, the ceremony is conducted the very same day. Even then, the girl is not permitted to perform any work in the kitchen, the hearth being too sacred to be allowed entry of the polluted. A minimum of five days is usually insisted upon. During her days of confinement in the verandah, the girl uses a plate and glass earmarked for her.

An important phase in her life

Puberty is an important phase in a girl's life. Many physiological and hormonal changes take place during that stage. Culturally, it marks the transition from childhood to adulthood, i.e., she has come of age and has become a full member of the society. During this transition period, she is

vulnerable physically and psychologically. Unless proper guidance is provided by elders, and the anxiety and stress on the part of the girl are properly addressed, the experience may be traumatic for the girl. Badaga culture provides an opportunity for elderly women and peers to provide valuable guidance to the girl throughout the period of isolation. It is normal for the girls in the entire neighbourhood to give company day and night to the girl in 'isolation'. The girls usually bring delicious snacks with them. Nutritious food is sent to the girl from households in the neighbourhood. Thus the nutritional and emotional requirements of the girl during the crucial phase are taken care of.

The night before the ceremony

The ceremony at the end of the isolation period symbolises the fact that the girl has matured. A suitable day, usually a Monday, Wednesday or Friday following the new moon day is chosen for the ceremony. (Nowadays, even a Sunday or a Thursday is chosen if found convenient). The maternal uncle (the *guru*) and the aunts of the girl must necessarily be invited along with other relatives and village elders. On the night prior to the ceremony, the girl is taken to the water stream and made to bathe[55]. All the clothes and mattresses used so far by the girl are discarded. During the night, the girl usually sleeps on a jute bag or a reed carpet. The neighbourhood girls give company to her throughout the night: it will be a session of songs, ballads and chats, and in the din the girl never feels secluded.

[55] Usually hot water is carried from home.

The ceremony proper (*maḍakke muṭṭodu*)[56]

Very early in the morning, the girl is again taken to the water source, given another bath, and is given new clothes to wear. All the clothes and bedding used by the girl during the night are also discarded. The girl is brought and made to stand outside the house.

A vessel full of freshly fetched cold water is kept by the side of the entrance inside the house. The girl gets into the house keeping her right foot first (without stepping on the doorway). She dips her hand into the vessel of water kept there.[57] Once inside the house, she is given sour buttermilk by elderly women. She is then taken to the kitchen and asked to fetch a cup of water from the bigger hearth in the *o:ga mane*. The *o:ga mane* or the *olematti*, and especially the bigger hearth, being holy places in Badaga houses, the symbolism of this gesture is quite significant. It must be remembered that menstruating women never entered the *o:ga mane* in olden days.

The girl fetches a cup of water from a pot on the larger hearth and worships the *olematti* (fireplace). In modern homes without a hearth, the girl puts the spatula into a vessel kept on the stove and stirs the contents, worships there and once again prays to the God in the *pu:je* room. Then she kneels down to get the blessings of her grandparents, *guru* and other relatives.

---

[56] "Literally, seizing the pot - ceremony mariking the attainment of womanhood after a gril's first menses (symbolising her adult role in the household duties; on this occaion she touches three pots, bils water in them, and then her mother's brother presents her with a new cloth)" (Hockings and Raichoor 1992: 446).

[57] Cold water is considered by Hindus to be purifying (). In addition, it helps her acclamatise to the cold air and water inside. In olden days, the debilitating attack of stroke (*dodda ga:i*) was thought to be on account of sudden exposure to extreme cold. This acclamatization is perhaps to avert such a sudden exposure.

Jewels for the girl – a new incursion

A new custom among the Badagas is to provide jewels to the girl by the *guru* and the parents. In olden days, the woman of the household would remove her *serappaṇige* (silver necklace) from her neck and put it around the girl's neck indicating that time has come for her to take over bigger responsibilities. In those days, there were fewer women than men, and it was not uncommon for girls to be married out within days of attaining maturity. But, nowadays, even if the girl is married out years later, it has almost become compulsory for the parents and the maternal uncle to buy golden jewellery for her on this occasion. Other guests also present new clothes ranging from *churidar* to silk, to the girl. There will be a feast for the guests.

Tella:tti

The practice of giving *tella:ṭṭi*, a reciprocal contribution of money on important occasions - both good and bad - is prevalent among Badagas and this ceremony is one such occasion when *tella:ṭṭi* is given by close relatives. In addition, all those invited for the feast, usually come with some gift or other.

Turning over a new leaf

An outstanding feature of rites at coming-of-age is their emphasis upon instruction in behaviour appropriate to the status of adults. Instruction in dress, speech, deportment, and morality may be given over a period of months.

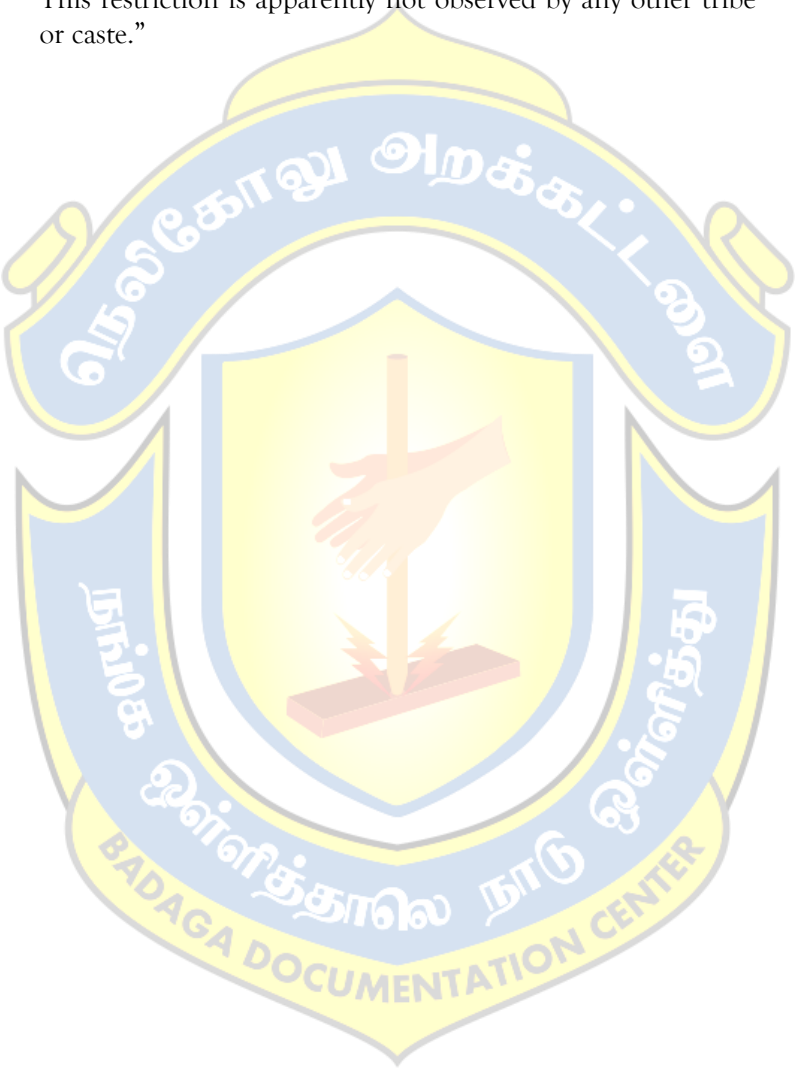
A new code of conduct awaits the girl who has just attained maturity. She will be a "woman" from then on. She can no longer enter the *o:ga mane* with unclean plates or without washing her mouth; she should not blow out the *di:vige*, the burning light, but should snuff it out using a flower, an incense stick or any such article; she cannot cross or step over the stretched legs of elderly men and women; she should

not visit other houses during menstruation lest she cross the path of elders, the *pu:ja:ri* and the *gauḍa*; she cannot offer the plate of food she has been eating or the glass of liquid she has been drinking to others without thoroughly washing them; and so on. Slowly and slowly, she will be taught lessons like these on Badaga culture by the elderly women of the household.

The following account is from Thurston and Rangachari (1909:102-103) on the puberty ritual:

> "All Badaga villages, except those of the Udayas, have a hut called holagudi, for the exclusive use of women during their monthly periods. A few months before a girl is expected to reach puberty, she is sent to the holagudi, on a Friday, four or five days before the new moon day. This is done lest, in the ordinary course of events, the first menstruation should commence on an inauspicious day. The girl remains in the holagudi one night, and returns home on the following day clad in new cloths, leaving the old ones in the hut. When she arrives at her house, she salutes all the people who are there, and receives their blessing. On Sunday, the goes to the houses of her relations, where she is given *kadalai* (*Cicer arietinum*) and other food. She may not enter the inner apartment of her house until she has seen the crescent moon. Badaga women observe five days menstrual pollution. If a woman discovers her condition before washing her face in the early morning, that day is included in the pollution period. Otherwise, the period must be prolonged over six days. On the third day she bathes in cold water, using the bark of *Pouzolzia* (*thorekolu*), and on the fourth day is allowed a change of clothing after a bath. On this day she leaves the hut, and passes a portion of the night in the verandah of her house. After cooking and eating her evening meal, she bathes, and enters the outer room. Early on the following morning, the spot, which she has occupied, is cleaned, and she bathes in a stream. Returning home, she eats her food in the outer room, where she remains till next morning.

Even children may not be touched by a menstruating woman. If, by chance, this happens the child must be washed to remove the pollution, before it can be handled by others. This restriction is apparently not observed by any other tribe or caste."



CHAPTER 19

Marriage Rites I: Till Engagement

Arranged marriages on the decline

Most of the Badaga marriages were arranged marriages – at least until recently. Like most Hindus of South India, marriage among cross cousins[58] is permitted and was in fact, highly preferred. But unlike many other South Indian communities, marrying a niece (sister's daughter) is forbidden. More often than not, parents select a suitable bride for their son from among his cross cousins with his consent. There was also the custom of agreeing among parents, usually very close relatives, about the alliance even while the children were very young. In fact, this was the most prevalent practice until a few decades ago; and the marriage ceremony was a simple affair in such cases. With the advent of education, particularly the near universal female education, boys and girls have a higher chance of meeting partners from outside their close circle in educational institutions or workplaces. Consequently, in recent years, the choice of one's mate is usually left to the boy or the girl.

Initial moves by parents

Be that as it may, as soon as the boy reaches marriageable age, the parents broach the subject of his marriage – usually under the pretext of his mother's failing health and the need for assistance in her domestic chores.

[58] Children of father's sister or mother's brother.

They also obliquely hint his close friends by asking them whether their son has somebody in mind. If a cross cousin is not available or found not suitable, the parents will suggest the names of a few girls from neighbouring villages or acquaintances, personally known to them; if anyone is acceptable to the boy, the parents make further arrangements and it almost resembles an arranged marriage. In earlier days, the choice was limited to a smaller circle, Badagas being a small and close-knit community confined to the Nilgiris, and information about the boys and girls was readily available through the network of friends and relatives. This has changed in recent years. There is an increased tendency to marry non-relatives. At present, the Badaga Diaspora has spread far and wide and information about suitable mates is hard to come by. As one would expect, newer communication channels including the Internet are being tapped, to exchange information regarding matrimonial alliances.

Boy's first visit to the girl's house

After the exchange of preliminary information, the boy makes the first move, if he is satisfied with the information received. He goes to the village[59] of the prospective bride along with one or two of his friends, and rarely with relatives (but never with parents). They do not go to the girl's house straight though. Instead, they go to the house of a relative or an acquaintance and enquire about the girl and her background. They ensure that the girl is suitable and available. The girl is then brought there under some pretext and the boy has a brief look at her. If he likes her, they send word to the girl's house about their visit. Though there is no express ban on visiting the girl's house straight, it is considered lack of etiquette. At the other extreme, instances of a boy seeing two or three girls in a single day are also not lacking.

---

[59] To the girl's house, if her parents reside in a town.

At the girl's house

Over snacks, the boy's team and the parents of the girl exchange information about each other. The girl is also given an opportunity to have a look at the boy. If both sides are satisfied, they mutually agree on a date for the visit of the boy's parents. No other details are discussed during this visit.

Boy's parents visit the girl

After getting the green signal for their visit, the parents of the boy, along with his siblings, visit the girl's house. The girl's family members, including her siblings will be present. There is no specific ritual on this occasion and the formal engagement will be taking place later. The occasion is used to have a heart to heart discussion between the parties. If both the sides are satisfied with each other, they agree upon a convenient date for the engagement ceremony. It is usual to provide a sumptuous lunch to the guests on this occasion. It should however be noted that a separate engagement ceremony is a recent intrusion; the earlier practice was to straight away fix a date for the marriage and to have a engagement ceremony (*ungara-maṇi kaṭṭo:du*) during the night before the marriage, at the bride's residence.

The engagement

The engagement ceremony takes place at the bride's residence. The bridegroom's party usually consists of 5 to 50 persons, but even a 100-strong party is not rare nowadays. There is no upper limit for this number; but the bridegroom is forbidden from attending this ceremony. Most often, the *u:r gauḍa* of the bridegroom's village is also invited. The girl's relatives will also be present in numbers. The girl's *guru* (maternal uncle) is invited without fail. Yet another recent abominable incursion is to carry gifts like *sa:ris*, jewelry and fruits (*si:r varisai*) for the girl.

The girl will be ready, at her presentable best with new clothes and jewellery. She is called into the hall where the guests are seated. The oldest man in the bridegroom's party formally seeks the girl's consent for the marriage. Only if the girl replies in the affirmative, does the ceremony proceed further. Else, it comes to an abrupt end. If the girl gives her consent, the guests bless her, give her gifts and ask her to wear the *sa:ri* and jewels in token of becoming a member of their family.

Ungara maṇi, the engagement ring and chain

Ungara-maṇi ceremony (the tying of engagement ring and chain) may take place immediately; or as mentioned earlier, can be held during the night before marriage. There is a restriction in some villages that the girl should not visit other relatives once *ungara-maṇi* has been tied; the practice in such villages is to defer the *ungara-maṇi* ceremony till the day of marriage and to tie only the chain (without the ring) on this occasion. (One is formally engaged only if both the chain and the ring are tied). *Ungara-maṇi* should be tied by a *sumangali* (a currently married women - whose husband is alive); out of ignorance, the senior-most woman is called upon to tie it, even if she is a widow, on many occasions; but this is not correct. The *sumangali* ties the chain (which has the ring attached to it) around the neck of the bride and applies *kunguma* on her forehead. The girl kneels down touching her forehead to the ground and gets her blessings. All other *sumangali* women present there apply *kunguma* on the forehead of the girl and bless her. After this is over, one of the brothers (or paternal cousins) of the bridegroom kneels down and bows to the girl's *guru*, makes a *ka:ṇikke* (contribution) of five and a quarter rupees and seeks his approval and blessing for the alliance.

The *guru* blesses him and accepts the *ka:ṇikke*.[60] The girl brings coffee for the guests. All the guests also partake in the feast.

Fixing the marriage date

The date for the marriage is finalised on the occasion of the engagement. The marriage ceremony takes place in the bridegroom's village. The number of guests from the bride's side attending the marriage is also finalized thereon. It is common practice to leave these choices to the bride's family. The bride's family, however, takes into account the financial status and other constraints, if any, of the bridegroom's family: like ailing relatives or factions in the village which preclude ostentatious functions. There will be absolutely no discussion on the quantum of jewelry and the *he:ru*[61] (the gift from the bride's family) though.

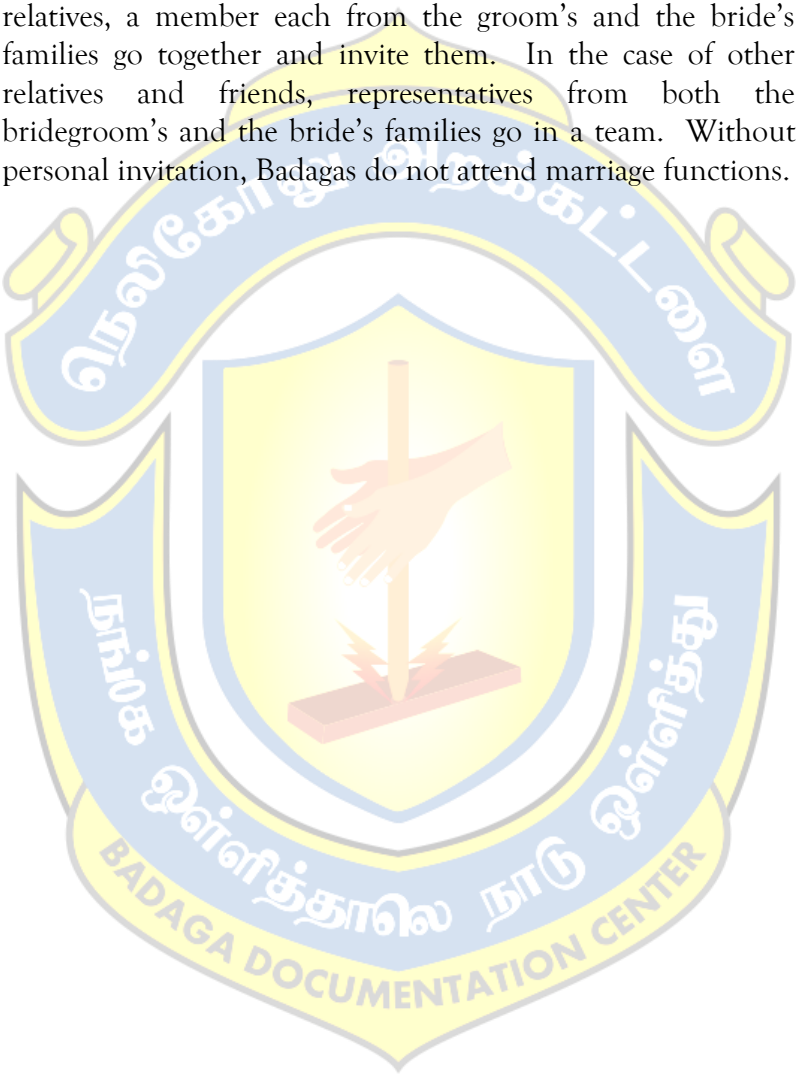
---

[60] The role of the maternal uncle, the *guru*, may be noted. The appellation – *guru* – itself is revealing – teacher or spiritual guide of the child. The *Guru* plays an important role in may Badaga rituals. We have already seen in earlier chapters his role in the ceremonies marking the appearance of the first tooth on the upper gum and when the girl matures. He has important role in marriages besides other rituals like house-warming and funeral ceremonies. The *Guru* has the first claim over the boy or the girl to have him or her as his son-in-law or daughter-in-law. That is perhaps why his permission and blessings are sought.

[61] See page .xx.Why is this called *he:ru* or *e:ru*? *E:ru* literally means plough or male buffalo. We understand that in olden days, "the father of the bride generally gives her a dowry in the shape of an ox or buffalo" (Metz, 1864:87), which was very valuable then. Incidentally, Todas do offer buffaloes as gift (or dowry if we may call so) during the marriage of their daughters. But in the last few decades, *e:ru* is in the form of a bag or two of grain, but we believe, it used to be brought on the back of an ox or horse (Hockings and Raichoor 1992: 610). Hence the name *e:ru*? Other items have been added on to the list in recent times. Is it dowry through the back-door?

Invitations for marriage

After the date is finalised, relatives and friends have to be personally invited, by both the parties. In the case of close relatives, a member each from the groom's and the bride's families go together and invite them. In the case of other relatives and friends, representatives from both the bridegroom's and the bride's families go in a team. Without personal invitation, Badagas do not attend marriage functions.



CHAPTER 20

Marriage Rites II: Ceremonies at the Bride's House

Unlike in many other communities, Badaga marriage ceremony is held in the house of the bridegroom and all the arrangements for the function are made by the bridegroom's family. Nowadays, though quite a few marriages are held in marriage halls in towns, the responsibility for organising them and the expenditure for the event are that of the bridegroom's family. We may expect this arrangement to continue into the future since the prestige of the bridegroom's family is at stake.

Another unique feature of the Badaga community is the payment of *honnu*, the bride wealth paid by the bridegroom to the bride's parents; this is paid before the bride leaves her house for the marriage. This amount used to be one hundred rupees earlier, but is currently Rs. 200. Is this dowry (or reverse dowry)? More about *honnu* later.

The day before marriage

The day prior to the marriage, a team of at least three members (it may be five or any other odd number) starts from the bridegroom's house around 3:00 p.m. so as to reach the bride's house before sunset. There are at least two male members in the team: one elderly gentleman to pay the *honnu* and a youngster, usually a paternal cousin of the bridegroom, to take the permission of the *u:r gauḍa* of the bride's village (*ka:liḍappadu*) for bringing the bride. Depending upon the

availability of space in the vehicle, one or more women accompany them; it goes without saying that all the women involved in the marriage ceremony should be *sumangali*s (i.e., currently married women). Before the team is seen off, the house is thoroughly swept, sprinkled with water, the *di:vige* lighted and *pu:je* performed, even while marriage arrangements like erecting the *pandal* and preparation of food etc. are going on; the *di:vige* should continue to burn till the marriage ceremony is over the next day. Before leaving, the elderly gentleman is given two hundred and ten rupees - Rs. 200 towards *honnu,* Rs. 5 towards *ka:ṇikke* to the *u:r gauḍa* and Rs. 5 for other expenses. If *ungara-maṇi* has not been tied already, it is also handed over to the lady in the team. The team reaches the bride's village well before sunset.

At the bride's village

The team does not go to the bride's house straight. On reaching the periphery of the village, they send word through others of their arrival. This is to provide the bride's house time to clean the house and light the *di:vige* before receiving the team; only after the *di:vige* is lighted, should the team from the bridegroom's side enter the house with the *ungara-maṇi*. Even where *ungara-maṇi* has already been tied, the house is nevertheless cleaned before receiving the team.

In the bride's house

On entering the house, the team is provided dinner. The lady who has the *ungara-maṇi* in her possession should never hand it over to anybody else; nor should she leave the house to visit others. This restriction does not however, apply to others in the team.

Bride seeks the blessings of the *gauḍa*s

Late in the evening, the bride is taken to the houses of the *gauḍa*s and other village elders to seek their blessings. She is also taken to the temple to offer worship. In *Athigaratty*

village, the girl offers worship at the *Kariabeṭṭara:yar* temple where she is blessed by the elders; this is tantamount to seeking the blessings of all the households in the village, a practice prevalent until a few decades ago. She would have taken the blessings of her close relatives a day or two earlier.

Ka:l hiḍippadu (rite of kneeling by a bride to receive the blessing of the maternal grandparents Hockings and Raichoor 1992: 167)

Ungara-maṇi in the night

In the night, after everybody has had dinner, the house is thoroughly wiped and cleaned again for the *ungara-maṇi* ceremony. It may be 11:00 or even 12:00 p.m. by then. Badagas customarily avoid Saturdays for any auspicious ceremonies; hence, if that day happens to be a Saturday (Sunday being the marriage day), the *ungara-maṇi* ceremony is conducted only after midnight (i.e., early Sunday). Some villagers prefer the *ungara-maṇi* ceremony in early morning just before leaving for the bridegroom's house. This is not advisable since everybody will be in a hurry and the tension palpable; moreover, there may arise a contingency, like some untoward happening in the bridegroom's family or the village, necessitating the immediate departure of the marriage party for a simplified marriage ceremony which has to be completed well before sunrise. We have already seen the procedure for *ungara-maṇi* ceremony (see page xx).

In the morning

The bride gets ready by early morning. She is required to take a bath; and get dressed for the marriage. She leaves the house during auspicious hours.

Items to accompany the bride

The paraphernalia of bride's party should include: (i) a bronze or brass eating plate (*bengala* or *kaccu baṭlu*); (ii) a tiny

mud pot (*kuḍikke*); (iii) a handful of *asaru* (green gram dhall); and (iv) a handful of dehusked *sa:me* grain (*ba:ti akki*). In addition, she also brings *e:ru*, a gift from her household ~ at least one bag of rice. The bride's family may also bring items of their choice, but this is not obligatory. These items would have been procured and kept ready days in advance.

Mothers did not attend daughters' marriages in olden days

Strange though it may seem, the bride's mother was not to attend her daughter's marriage in earlier days. The exact reason for this is not known; perhaps it was that the bride's sorrow in leaving her parents' house might intensify every time she sees her mother. But then, the mother is an indispensable part of the bride's party nowadays.

Daughter gives her mother *haṇa*

Before the bride leaves her house, her father gives her a *haṇa* (quarter rupee coin) and asks her to slip it into her mother's hand. While crossing the doorsteps, the bride, without turning back, thrusts the coin into her mother's hand secretly. The bride uses her left hand for this purpose, and the mother receives it before her daughter crosses the doorsteps. The meaning of this ritual is not known. Perhaps, it symbolises the severing of the bonds between the girl and her mother and the symbolic compensation paid by the bride for the efforts and expenses in bringing her up. It is not unusual for both the mother and the daughter to shed tears on this occasion.

Paying the *honnu* money

Immediately after the bride steps out of the house, the *honnu* money is paid. The elderly man from the bridegroom's side calls the bride's father, *u:r gauḍa* and the village elders into the house. They sit in the *ida mane*; the *gauḍa* and the bride's father sit with their *si:le* open on their laps ready to receive the money. The elderly person counts and places the currency

notes one after another in the *si:le* of the *gauḍa*. After counting and handing over the two hundred rupees, the elderly man kneels and bows to the *gauḍa* who blesses him. All of them have coffee. The *gauḍa* hands over five rupees to the elder for his expenses *en route*. The rest of the money is paid to the bride's father.[62]

Leaving for the bridegroom's village

Immediately after the bride steps out of her house, coconut is broken and a lemon, with *kunguma* applied on it, is cut into four pieces, to ward off evil eyes[63]. An elderly lady[64] spreads open the umbrella decorated with flowers and holds it over the bride's head[65] and leads her to the vehicle that takes them to the bride-bridegroom's village. On reaching the

---

[62] *Honnu* literally means gold. Since the bride brings *e:ru*, does *honnu* represent an exchange payment for the valuable labour of the bride, which will be available to the bridegroom's family? Or, is it a compensation for the marriage expenses? We are not sure. Marriage ceremonies were simple affairs in earlier times and it cost them little. A loin cloth for the girl, an upper garment, a silver chain, bangles, reed carpet and food for about hundred persons – this was all the expenditure. All these items put together cost less than a hundred rupees; that perhaps explains why the *honnu* amount was fixed at hundred rupees those days. There is also a quote in Badagu attributed to a parent of a bride that he would clear his debts once he gets the *honnu*. Though marriage expenses have skyrocketed now, *honnu* amount has only doubled over the centuries. According to Hockings and Raichoor (1992:614) however, "the customary amount was sixty pieces of silver, but nowadays quite variable sums are paid, up to Rs. 500 or more; but once the sum was just Rs. 3."

[63] See footnote 18 *ante* for further details on evil-eye.

[64] It is preferable that she should be currently married; but this is seldom observed since the senior-most woman among the relatives, whether she is currently married or not, will usually play this role.

[65] See page for a possible explanation for the umbrella cover.

bridegroom's village, they send word to the bridegroom's house of their arrival.

CHAPTER 21

Marriage Rites III: Ceremonies at the Bridegroom's Place

As in the case of the bride, there are certain ceremonies to be performed in the bride-groom's house also the night before the marriage. In these ceremonies, the *guru*, the maternal uncle of the bridegroom is given the pride of place. In fact, it is the *guru* who is expected to be in the forefront directing the entire ceremony.

The night before the marriage: *maḍakke kanappadu*

Very early in the morning i.e., at about 2:00 – 3:00 a.m., after the *pandal* works are almost over, preparations start for cooking the feast. Before cooking could start, the *guru* should initiate it by performing the ceremony of heating the new pot (*maḍakke kanappadu*). The entire house is swept clean and sprinkled with water. The kitchen should be especially cleaned. The *guru* and at least four other *naṭṭa*s[66] (affines) touch and bless a new earthen pot, place it on the hearth, warm it slightly[67], then pour water and cook homegrown[68] peas and

---

[66] *Naṭṭas* are affines, i.e., those related primarily by marriage and agnates are those related to one by "blood" (Hockings 1988: p. 89).

[67] Badagas, being conservative Hindus, believed in different types of pollution (see footnotes .xx. ante) and in cleansing or depolluting any place or substance before they are used for or in a ritual. Earthern pots in earlier days were procured from Kotas (so also were agricultural implements). Badagas considered physical contact with Kotas polluting since Kotas were

beans in it. While this is cooking, the larger kitchen set up outside to prepare food for the guests starts functioning. The peas and beans cooked inside the house are eventually mixed with the *sa:mba:r* being prepared in the kitchen outside.

In the morning in the bridegroom's house

In the morning, the bridegroom gets ready, starting with a bath and then dressing up for the occasion. In some villages, the bridegroom is taken out to some other house and brought back to his house. This ritual is done out of ignorance, and it is not required. It should be remembered that in earlier days, the bridegroom never left the house until the entire ceremony was over.

In some villages, on receiving the news of the arrival of the bride's party, the bridegroom goes in a procession to the threshold of the village to ceremoniously welcome the bride's party; but in many villages including Athigaratty, this is not being done, since there never was such a practice in the past.

Bride's procession to the bridegroom's house and *naḍemuḍi*

The bridegroom's house is cleaned again and sprinkled with water. The *di:vige* is lighted. The bride is brought in a procession to the *ke:ri* of the bridegroom's house, accompanied by the chanting of "hau – kau". On behalf of the bridegroom's house, a new white cloth[69] is spread out in front of the doorway and the eldest of the currently married women in the household kneels and on the white cloth and bows to the guests with her head touching the cloth. The *naṭṭa*s step

---

carrion-eaters. Perhapts, the ritual heating of new pots before using them was meant to remove the pollution by fire, believed to be a powerful depollutant like water and cowdung.

[68] Buying peas and beans from the market is not permitted. Peas, like *sa:me* is considered holy by the Badagas, and are used in many rituals.

[69] Never a jute bag.

on the white cloth and enter the house (the cloth so treaded on is called *naḍemuḍi*). After all the guests enter the house, the woman is expected to put the *naḍemuḍi* on her, since it is believed that it is holy and brings her good luck.[70]

Bride's feet washed with turmeric water

Before entering the house, water mixed with turmeric powder poured on her legs by a *sumangali* woman. She ensures that both legs of the bride, particularly the heels, are thoroughly washed.[71]

A:ratti

In some places, the women of the bridegroom's house take *a:ratti*: showing a plate of turmeric solution, sandalwood paste and *kunguma* with incense lighted, around the face of the bride. This is a borrowed culture and is not followed everywhere.[72]

---

[70] The reference here is to the mythical episode in Vamana avatar where King Mahabali receives Lord Krishna by making him walk on a cloth spread across in the belief that the cloth trod on by the holy feet will bring fortunes.

[71] The reference here is perhaps to the story of Nalạ Maharaj, who had washed his entire body but left out the back heels, through which *cani* entered his body and brought untold miseries.

[72] "*Arti* or *Aratti*: This ceremony is performed only by married women and courtesans. Widows would not be allowed, under any circumstances, to participate in it.

A lamp made of kneaded rice-flour is placed on a metal dish or plate. It is then filled with oil or liquefied butter and lighted. The women each take hold of the plate in turn ad raise ti to the level of the person's head for whom the ceremony is bing performed, describing a specified number of circles with it. Instead of using a lighted lamp they sometimes content thtmselves wth filijng a vessel with wter coloured with saffron, vermilion, and other ingredients. The object of his ceremony is to counteract the influence of the evil eye and any ill-effets which, according to Hindu belief, may arise from the jealous and spiteful looks of ill-

Pattuku: for the bride

The bride then gets into the house with her right foot first, without stepping on the doorway (*da:rangallu*).[73] Immediately on entering the house, the bride eats the *pattuku:* – freshly cooked rice[74] mixed with curd[75] and banana. The bride is joined by at least four other women, all classificatory daughters-in-law of the family. Each takes at least two mouthfuls, the bride being offered the lion's share. They do not empty the plate – but leave a little behind. The bride then takes the plate outside the house and washes it. She then sweeps and cleans the place – indicating symbolically that she has become a member of the family.[76]

Bride brings water from the *aḷḷa jo:ṇi*

The bride then goes to the *aḷḷa jo:ṇi*, the water tank, to fetch water. Three small containers, decorated with flowers, are kept ready for this purpose. The bride is accompanied by two other women - daughters-in-law or classificatory daughters-in-law. At the water tank, they offer prayers to the God, fetch water and pour over the idol. Then they fill the containers again and carry it in their heads and

---

intentioned persons" (Dubois 1906/2000: 166-167). It is customary that that a small gift is given to those who take *a:ratti*.

[73] Stepping on the doorway is believed to bring bad luck to the house.

[74] Home-cooked; not from the kitchen outside.

[75] This indicates the importance being attached to cattle wealth. Curd is one of the *pancha gavia*, the five sacred products from the sacred cow. The bride was usually given fermented curd, which was believed to improve the fertility. For that matter, most of the food materials offered to the newly married are those believed to improve her fertility.

[76] Sharing food from the same plate is the Badaga way of proclaiming that all or them belong to one large family. See the chapter on *Uppatto: habba*, wherein a similar ritual taking place in the *dodda mane* is described.

reach the bridegroom's house in a procession.[77] Whenever the girl is taken in procession, those accompanying her will be chanting "*hau-kau*". On entering the house, the bride goes straight to the *o:ga mane* and places the vessel next to the holy place.[78]

Exchanging garlands and procession to the temples

Decades ago, immediately after the bride brings home water, the next ceremony was tying the *kaṇṇi* (the marriage thread - a twine made of cotton) and *ta:li* (the gold disk tied to a string). (Long long ago, the *ta:li* was tied only when the bride was in the seventh month of her pregnancy, during the *kaṇṇi kaṭṭo:* ceremony). Of late, exchange of garlands precedes the *ta:li* ceremony.

The bride and bridegroom come out of the house, kneel down and bow to their parents. They garland each other and then exchange the garlands.[79] The bride and the bridegroom are then taken in a procession to the temples: in the case of Athigaratty village, first to the *Kariabeṭṭara:yar* temple and then to the *Vina:yaka* temple. In both the temples, they offer prayers, make an offering (*ka:ṇikke*) and seek the blessings

---

[77] In certain circumstances, when there is considerable distance between the house of the bridegroom and the water source, the bride will be taken to the water source first and she will be carrying water in her head when she enters the bridegroom's house for the first time.

[78] It must be remembered that fetching water from the streams was one of the manin duties of women in yester-years when there was no piped water supply to the villages. Rain or shine, women had to walk quite a distance, often upon steep slopes, to the stream and back. This ritual of fetching water from the house signifies that the new girl has become an integral part of the family and is ready to undertake this task, and is perhaps the most important ritual in Badaga marriages in the nineteenth century.

[79] A few of them even exchange wedding rings, a ritual copied from the Christians.

of God. Then they are taken back to the *pandal* in a procession.

In many villages, the bridegroom wears the turban (*maṇḍare*) and a white *si:le* or shawl signifying that he has become old enough to take up responsibilities; but this is not an essential requirement.

Preparation of the dais

The bride then takes the new mat (*mandirike*) and spreads it on the dais. If no separate dais has been put up, the ceremony takes place inside the house. While raising the dais, to the extent possible it should be made to face the sun; under no circumstances, should it face south.

On the dais

The bridegroom sits on the dais and the bride sits to his left. An old man from the bridegroom's side sits near the bridegroom and an elder in the rank of the bride's father sits near the bride. The *guru*s are not seated on the dais. A lighted *di:vige* is kept near the dais.

Everybody blesses the *ta:li* and *kaṇṇi*

The *ta:li* chain, the marriage thread (*kaṇṇi*, made up of soft cotton strands and dipped in turmeric solution) and *akshatai* or *atcatai*[80] (rice dipped in turmeric powder) are kept in a plate, placed in the *pu:je* room, incense lighted and *pu:je* offered. The parents of the bride and the bridegroom touch

[80] " *Akshatas*: This is the name given to husked rice colured with a mixture of saffron an vermilion. There are two kinds of *akshatas*, one specially consecrated by *mantrams*, the other simple couloured rice. The first is used when performing *puja* and in other great ceremonies; the other kind is only a toilet reuisite, or is used an offering of politeness. It is considered good manners to offer some in a metal cup to any one to whom a ceremonious invitation is sent. The latter in return takes a few grains and applies them to the forehead" (Dubois 1906/2000: 168-169).

and bless the *ta:li* and the *kaṇṇi*. The plate is then passed around and the elders bless; it is not required that everybody in the gathering should touch and bless the *ta:li*, but everybody should take a handful of *atcatai* to shower on the couple after the *ta:li* is tied.

Tying the *ta:li*

The village *gauḍa* finally blesses the *ta:li* and *kaṇṇi* and hands them over to the bridegroom, first the *kaṇṇi* and then the *ta:li*. The bridegroom holds the *kaṇṇi*, keeping the left hand in front, with the *kaṇṇi* held by the thumb and the small finger of the left hand and the corresponding fingers of the right hand (in the style of holding the sacred thread, the *jangura*), and seeks the permission of elder sitting by the bride: "Shall I tie the *kaṇṇi?*" (*"a:kko:na mamma:?")*. The elder gives his consent (*"a:ku tamma"*). This permission seeking and giving is done thrice. After the third time, the bridegroom gently slips the *ta:li* around the bride's head keeping his left hand in front and to the extent possible, without disturbing the hairdo. In fact, the elders jokingly warn the bridegroom that if he disturbs the hairdo of the bride, he will have to pay a fine of Rs. 100 - to ensure that the bridegroom is careful enough not to pull apart the soft thread and not to disturb the hairdo. After he puts the *kaṇṇi*, the bridegroom is given the *ta:li*. He puts the *ta:li* and secures it with three knots. This practice of tying three knots is borrowed from other cultures and was not prevalent among Badagas earlier on. However, since the three knots signify a solemn assurance from the bridegroom that he would sincerely care for the three – himself, his wife and their family – this practice has been accepted totally and forms an integral part of Badaga marriages nowadays. Once the *ta:li* is tied, the elders near the dais shower the *atcatai* on the couple and bless them; everybody in the crowd follows suit.

Haṇa ikko:du

The next important ritual is entrusting money (*haṇa ikko:du*) to the couple. The bridegroom holds both his hands together in the form of cup ready to receive the coins. The bridegroom is given 11 *haṇa* of which one is a *sinnada haṇa* and the remaining ten are quarter rupee coins. The elder from the bridegroom's side drops the *sinnada haṇa* into the hand of the bridegroom, counting "one *haṇa*". Sometimes he counts the first *haṇa* as "one hundred *haṇa*" followed by "two hundred *haṇa*" etc. The *sinnada haṇa* is followed by the ten quarter-rupee coins one by one, each time the elder counting it aloud. Similarly, the bride is given 9 *haṇa* of which one is a *sinnada haṇa* and the rest quarter rupee coins. The elder from the bride's side places the nine *haṇa*s in the cupped hands of the bride, loudly calling out the count one after another. After this, the bridegroom gently drops all the eleven coins into the cupped hands of the bride. The bride in turn drops all the twenty coins (including her nine coins) into the cupped hands of the bridegroom. The bridegroom then ties all the coins in a white handkerchief for safekeeping. Sometimes, the bridegroom drops the twenty coins into the *ta:li* plate and from there picks them up and ties in the white handkerchief. These coins will be held like a treasure by most couples lifelong. Some others, however, choose to offer them to the first temple they visit after their marriage.[81]

Feeding each other – *eṇṇu gaṇdu ku: ecca ma:ḍodu*

As already mentioned, the bride brings with her a new brass plate, *sa:me rice* (*ba:ti akki*), green gram dhall (*asaru)* and a tiny mud pot. The ladies of the house mix the *ba:ti akki* and *asaru* thoroughly with freshly cooked rice in the new brass

[81] The ritual perhaps signifies the resolve of the couple to take good care of the wealth of the family with mutual co-operation and strive to augment it in course of their life.

plate and bring it to the dais.[82] The bridegroom first tastes this food followed by the bride. Then, the bridegroom feeds the bride and the bride feeds the bridegroom to signify their mutual care and concern.[83] They wash their hand into the plate. An elderly lady pours water for them to wash; while receiving the water, the bridegroom keeps his hand above that of the bride. The bride then takes the plate and pours out the water.

Blessing and dress change

The bride and the bridegroom get down from the dais, kneel down and bow to the guests. Everybody blesses the couple. The bride then cleans the plate and the mat. The bride then removes the *kaṇṇi* (not the *taːli* chain) and tucks it safely under the tiles over the front porch[84] and leaves for the ghat for bathing and changing. In earlier days, the bride used to go to the bathing ghat outside the village limits (*uːr tore*) for

---

[82] The symbolism should be noted here. The tiny pot – the cooking vessel, comes from the bride's place. So also are the grain and the dhall and the eating plate. But the food items brought by the bride are mixed with the food prepared in the bridegroom's house, indicating that the fortunes of the two familes are firmly interlinked. The bridegroom gets priority over the bride in being fed and washed. There is a subtle hint to the bride that she should be prepated to be satisfied with whatever is left over by the bridegroom.

[83] It should be noted that in the bygone era, when the ceremony of tying *kanni* was held when the bride was in her seventh month of pregnancy, the bridegroom used to feed the bride with his left hand. It is explained that the action of the bridegroom is to indicate that while the right hand will serve the society, the left – the side of the body on which the heart lies – will be devoted exclusively to the wife's welfare. With more and more exposure to other cultures, the use of left hand for this purpose is considered indecent and has been given up.

[84] It is considered that by placing the *kanni* like this, the holy thread will remain safe for ever.

bathing and changing, but nowadays it is done in an enclosed bathing ghat, next to the water tank of the village. After cleaning and bathing, she wears new clothes. Meanwhile, the bridegroom also dresses up.

U:r ka:ṇikke[85]: The thanks-giving ceremony

While the bride and the bridegroom go for a dress change, the guests are served coffee and snacks. Then all the villages, from which guests have come for the marriage, are honoured with a token offering of money (*u:r ka:ṇikke*). First, the bride's village is called out and an offering of five and a quarter rupees is made; the money is offered along with betel leaves and areca nuts. If the *u:r gauḍa* is present, he receives it; or else somebody from that village receives it on his behalf. Then, the bridegroom's party that brought the bride, is given a *ka:ṇikke* of five and a quarter rupees. Subsequently, all the villages, to which marriage invitation was extended, are called out one after another; if the *u:r gauḍa* of that village is present an *u:r ka:ṇikke* of one and a quarter rupee is given; if not, a *ka:ṇikke* of one rupee is given. Only men can accept the *ka:ṇikke*. No *ka:ṇikke* is made to the village if no men have come from there but only women. The *bhajan* group is also paid the *ka:ṇikke*.

Guru ka:nikke[86]: Thanking the *Gurus*

After the bride and the bridegroom come back, the maternal uncles (*gurus*) of the bride and the bridegroom are called and the couple kneels down and bows to them. A *guru*

[85] "Money gift, traditionally 1 Re. 4 Annas (i.e., 5 silver coins), given especially during a wedding by the groom to the bride's commune headman or his representative" (Hockings and Raichoor 1992: 76).

[86] "Money gift, traditionally 1 Re. 4 Annas (i.e., 5 silver coins), given especially during an auspicious ceremony such as a wedding in rcognition of social merit, usually by a bride to her mother's brother" (Hockings and Raichoor 1992: 246).

ka:ṇikke (offering to the guru) of five and a quarter rupees is made to each of them. Both of them bless the bride. The bride offers the *gurus* something to eat or drink.

Tella:ṭṭi or gifts

In earlier days, *tella:ṭṭi* (contribution) was given by relatives to the couple, but nowadays no *tella:ṭṭi* is given, but only gifts[87].

With the marriage feast, the marriage ceremony is completed.

Ritual simplified in emergencies

In certain extraordinary circumstances, the marriage ceremony will be compressed and made simpler. After all the arrangements have been made for the marriage, an untoward incident like death may take place in the bridegroom's village. Since the funeral cannot be postponed, the marriage has to be postponed; or if it is too late in the day to postpone the marriage, the bride will be brought to the groom's house well before sunrise (before the corpse is brought into the *ke:ri*). The bridegroom will straight away tie *the kaṇṇi* and the *ta:li* and all other rituals are dispensed with.

Guddali a:kko:du

Similarly, after the engagement and the *ungara-maṇi* ceremonies, but before the marriage day, somebody might die in the bridegroom's household. Since it will be awkward to have an elaborate function in the immediate aftermath of a tragedy, the ceremony is drastically cut down; and a special ritual called *guddali a:kko:du* ("applying the hoe") is performed before the marriage ceremony. All the ceremonies in the bride's house are gone through as usual. However, the bride's party will consist of only a handful of relatives, and it arrives at

---

[87] See the chapter on Funeral ceremony for more information about *tella:tti*.

the bridegroom's village very early in the morning on the marriage day. An elderly woman from the bridegroom's household meets the bride's party at the threshold of the village. The lady carries two white towels and two small weeding-hoes with her. She wraps one of the towels around the head of the bride in the style of a Badaga lady working in a field and hands over one of the hoes to her. She also wraps the towel over her head in a similar style, carries the other hoe in her hand and takes the bride to a field nearby. There, the bride digs the land with the hoe thrice. Then the bride is brought to the bridegroom's house, hoe in hand, by the old lady, both of them sporting the head-cloth giving an impression as if the girl is returning to her house after working in the field (i.e., she is after all not a new girl, but an old hand returning after work). She is taken to the *ida mane* and the bridegroom ties the *ta:li* and the *kaṇṇi*. All other rituals including fetching water from the water source and procession to the temple are dispensed with – the function extremely simplified for an extraordinary situation.

CHAPTER 22

Building a house

Getting married ad then having a house of his own are the twin ambitions of any individual, besides perhaps getting a good job. "*Mane kaṭṭi no:ḍu; maduve ma:ḍi no:ḍu*" is a Badaga proverb, indicating how crucial and at the same time how difficult they are. Rituals surrounding marriage were discussed in deatail in previous chapters. This chapter looks at the rituals accompanying house-building. Separate rituals have been prescribed in Badaga culture for preparing the plot, foundation-stone laying, fixing the first doorway and "house-warming".

***Paṭṭu pu:je* (*Pu:je* for preparing the plot):**

In the Nilgiri hills, house site plots require leveling more often than not before construction. But before levelling work could start, *paṭṭu pu:je* has to be done. This is held on an auspicious day. One has to invite his *guru* (maternal uncle), his parents, at least one elder from his *kuḍumba* (phratry) and the mason who is going to build the house among others for the *pu:je*. Articles required for the *pu:je* like coconut, plantains and incense and *guddali* (the two-pronged hoe), *mammuṭṭi* (large hoe) and spade (*muḷḷu*) are kept ready.

Since most of the tradigional houses in villages are row-houses, the plot is quite likely to be flanked by houses on both sides, which puts constraints on factors like the extent of the house to be built, its direction and drainage facilities. Hence, the cooperation and the goodwill of the neighbours

are always required in constructing a house in villages. Village elders will be of immense help in giving valuable advice regarding the factors, particularly on the most suitable orientation for the house, facilities for drainage etc. which will save a lot of botheration later on. Hence, a lengthy discussion will usually precede the *paṭṭu pu:je*.

For the *pu:je*, a rubble stone is taken, water sprinkled on it and kept in a corner and is treated as the deity. If the village *pu:ja:ri* has been invited, he is normally requested to perform the *pu:je*. In his absence, the mason, if he is a Badaga, conducts the *pu:je*. Otherwise the owner of the plot himself conducts the *pu:je*. The *pu:je* is conducted to the deity, coconut broken and holy water sprinkled all over the plot. Then the *guru* is requested to put the first *muḷḷu* and turn over the earth two or three times. Following the *guru*, the *pu:ja:ri*, village elders, parents and others – in that order - dig and turn the earth with the spade. With this, the work of levelling the ground is entrusted to the labour employed for this purpose.

Foundation-stone laying ceremony

After the ground has been levelled, another *pu:je* has to be performed for foundation-laying. The *guru* should be invited for this *pu:je* without fail; his presence is a must, if he had not attended the *paṭṭu pu:je*. Elders in the family and the mason are also invited.

One or two days before the *pu:je*, the pit for laying foundation is dug. The ceremony commences with *pu:je*. Fresh water from the stream is brought for the *pu:je*. *Ganga* water (water used for the *pu:je*) is aprinkled all aound the plot. Lighted incense, camphor and incense stick are also shown around all the four sides of the plot. The foundation stone is laid on the eastern corner of the plot. The eldest person in

the gathering places *panchalo:ka*[88] metal pieces, already procured and kept ready, in the pit at the eastern corner. He places *nava da:nia*, the nine sacred grains over the metal pieces.[89] Then he places a stone over the metal pieces and grains. Following the oldest person, all those present lay a stone each. If nobody had been invited, the house-owner himself lays the first stone. Whether the ceremony is grand or simple, the number of persons laying foundation stones is always an odd number. Finances permitting, a *ka:ṇikke* of one and a quarter Rupee or five and a quarter Rupees or ten and a quarter Rupees is paid. The mason may start construction work that day itself immediately after the ceremony.

Fixing the front doorway (*da:rangalu*)

After the foundation work is completed, another *pu:je* is conducted for fixing the front doorway. This is an important ceremony. The *guru* should necessarily be present for the ceremony. The mason and the carpenter who did the doorway are also invited. Since it is a practice to keep *panchalo:kas*, *navada:nias* and *navamaṇis* under the doorway, these materials are procured and kept ready for the ceremony. *Panchalo:ka* and *navamaṇi*s are believed to give protection to the house by neutralising negative influences of persons crossing the *da:rangalu*. Similarly, *navada:nias* are believed to bring prosperity to the house; *navada:nia* are tied to the top of the doorway before being placed in the wall and plastered over.

The *pu:je* is done to the eastern doorway, the *pu:ja:ri* also facing eastward; after the *pu:je* is done, the *guru* is requested to step over the doorway (without stepping on it) with his right

---

[88] gold, silver, iron, copper and bronze. *Panchaloka* metals are considered holy and are believed to protect the house from evil influences.

[89] *Navadhania* symbolise wealth and are believed to bring prosperity to the house.

foot first. The *guru* is followed by the house-owner and another elderly man from his household. Two women from the household also step over the doorway. Thus, three men and two women cross the doorway. Only then, the mason or others cross the doorway. It is the *guru* who should cross the doorway first, irrespective of who accepts the *ka:ṇikke*.

There is no specific ritual when the roof-ceiling is laid.

House-warming ceremony

After construction is over, *kiccu oṭṭo:du* ("house warming") is an important ceremony. The *guru*, village elders and close relatives must necessarily be invited for this ceremony. It shouled be noted that, there are certain entry restrictions on strangers into the house once the house-warming ceremony is over, unlike the construction phase when anybody can have access to any room.

An auspicious day is fixed for the ceremony. The village *pu:ja:ri* is requested to attend the ceremony and to bring *tu:ḍe* for cleansing the house[90]. There are two types of *tu:ḍe:* the major or *doḍḍa tu:ḍe*[91], is a tree growing in the wild; *doḍḍa tu:ḍe* is believed to give protection for twelve years for the house; but there is also a belief that if menstruating women stray into the room in which *doḍḍa tu:ḍe* branch has been kept, either knowingly or inadvertently, it will bring misfortune to the household. Hence, only those who are confident of ensuring strict discipline use *doḍḍa tu:ḍe*; others prefer *kunna tu:ḍe*, a combination of the branches of *tavuṭṭe*[92], *kolanga*[93] and *uttaraṇe*[94]

---

[90] Please see pages xx for the use of *tu:de* on other occasions.

[91] *Meliosma simplicifolia.*

[92] *Rhodomyrtus tomentosa.*

[93] *Elaeagnus kologa.*

[94] *Microtropis ovalifolia.*

plants. These plants are items of daily use and they are not believed to cause any harm if menstruating women stray into their vicinity. The choice of *doḍḍa tu:ḍe* or *kunna tu:ḍe* should be indicated to the *pu:ja:ri* who procures and keeps it outside the doorsteps of the house well in time for the ceremony.

The night before the ceremony, all old materials like used shoes, vessels and knickknacks are removed from the newly-built house and thoroughly swept using *urungu*[95] and *ubbe*[96] twigs (broomstick should not be used). Two new mud pots are kept ready for the *maḍakke kanappadu* ceremony – one for the house-owner and another for the *naṭṭa*. The *naṭṭa*s usually bring a new pot themselves. For purifying the house, freshly fetched water, cow-dung and cow-urine ("*go: mu:tra*") are also kept ready.

For warming the hearth, the fire should come from the house in which the house-owner lives currently (*okkalibbo: mane*). After readying the fire in his current house, enough embers are brought on a spade (*mammuṭṭi*) and kept outside the doorsteps of the new house by 3:00 a.m. This fire is kept alive till the ceremony. Embers are not brought in early because they have to be tended till the morning.

Some people bring *Brahmin* priests for the ceremony who build the *homagunḍam* inside the house itself. But this practice is not sanctioned by Badaga customs.

Before the embers are brought in, the new house has to be cleansed with *tu:ḍe*. *Tu:ḍe* is sacred and can be handled only by a select few; there is a restriction that after handling

---

[95] *moranda* sticks (*Dodonaea angustifolia*).

[96] There are six different varieties of hubbe: *Cassia floribunda*, *Cassia hirsute*, *Desmodium ferrugineum*, *Dumasia villosa*, *Indigofera cassioides* and *Sophora glaluca*; the last one mentioned is also used as *ka:pu* (See page xx) (Hockings and Raichoor 2001:596).

tu:ḍe, a person should not leave the village for at least two days; hence only an authorised person should handle the *tu:ḍe*.

The house is thoroughly cleaned using *urungu* and *ubbe* twigs. The hearth is also thoroughly cleaned. Then *tu:ḍe pu:ja:ri* enters the house with *tu:ḍe* in hand, goes to each and every room and rubs all the four walls of all the rooms with *tu:ḍe* and places *tu:ḍe* twigs on each of the doors. After completing this, he invites others inside. The embers in the spade are brought in and kept on the *madilu* if there is one, or in the *pu:je* room. Using these embers, *di:vige* is lighted and from the *di:vige*, incense. From the spade, the embers are transferred to the hearth for the *maḍakke kanappo:* ceremony.

Fire is started in the hearth by placing dried *darbe*[97] or *ba:mbe*[98] grass and dried twigs (*si:ku*) on the embers and blowing air into it. The *guru* is then invited to warm and blacken one pot: cowdung is applied on the pot, the pot is touched and blessed, first by the *guru* and then the *naṭṭa*s, and then placed on the fire by the *guru* while he and the *naṭṭa*s chant "*o oh ... o oh ...*". The guru pours fresh water into the pot. Beans and peas are cooked in this pot which are subsequently mixed with *sa:mba:r*.

The second pot is warmed on behalf of the house-owner. Cow-dung is applied to the pot, an elder of the household touches and blesses the pot and places it over the hearth chanting "*o oh ... o oh ...*". He then pours fresh cow milk, milked just then; if fresh milk is not available in the early morning, this part of the ceremony is deferred till fresh milk arrives. But, fresh milk should arrive well before sunrise, since milk should start boiling exactly at sunrise. *Pu:je* is performed at the hearth and the *pu:je* room. *Di:vige* is lighted on the

[97] *Desmostachya bipinnata.*

[98] *Cymbopogon caesius*, *C. cofertiflorus*, *C. polyneuros.*

madilu. *Vibu:di* and *konguma* are applied to the hearth and everybody offers worship.

Boiling the milk in the second pot is an important ritual. In earlier days, the entire ritual was conducted by men only and women were not allowed inside the house till milk was boiled. Nowadays, it is women who do the milk-boiling. As already pointed out, boiling should be timed in such a way that the milk boils and spills over exactly when the sun rises. When milk boils over, everybody chants "*o oh ... o oh ...*". A few drops of milk should spill over to the fire. The pot is then taken out and the milk distributed to those present there as milk or mixed with coffee which is offered along with puffed rice and groundnut.

The fire should burn continuously in the new house for three days, whether the house-owner moves in immediately or not. Similarly, the *di:vige* should also burn continuously for three days. Necessary arrangements should be made to ensure these.

Ka:ṇikke and *tella:ṭṭi* are offered on the occasion. Earlier on, the ceremony was restricted to Badagas but things have changed now and friends and well-wishers are invited cutting across communal barriers.

Kambu a:kodu

Kambu a:ko:du is an obligatory ritual under two circumstances:

- if the house-owner is not a local villager, but a *naṭṭa*; in such a case, only after the *kambu a:ko:du* ceremony is conducted, will the house be considered one belonging to the village authorised for conducting rituals in future; or
- if the house-owner is a local villager, but the house is constructed on a purchased site, other than his ancestral property; in such a case, only after the *kambu* is

laid, will the house be acquiring the status of an ancestral property.

Kambu is a 'Y' shaped piece (*kave*), three to four inches long, cut from the *ne:ri*[99] tree. This piece is kept away from public glare and secretly in the *pu:je* room or the *o:ga mane* with only the house-owner and the *pu:ja:ri* knowing about it. After the milk-boiling ceremony, a pit is dug in the *o:ga mane* deep enough to accommodate the *kambu*. The *kambu* is placed there and covered with *navada:nia* and milk. One *haṇa* (quarter rupee coin) is placed on top. Incense is lighted and worship offered. Afterwards, it is completely plastered over. With the laying of the *kambu*, the new house gets the status of a house belonging to the local commune.

[99] *Syzygium Arnottianum*, Arnott's mountain black plum. "Its wood was traditionally used to make fire for the firewalking ceremony, and its bark can be used in the fermentation of arrack.

CHAPTER 23

Funeral rites I: At the House

When a person is seriously ill, and the chances of recovery appear remote, message is sent to the relatives (*no: e:godu*), particularly the affines (*naṭṭas*), i.e., people related by marriage. In earlier days, the message was sent through Toreya servant, but not any more (Hockings 2001:1). The message is usually sent to the village headmen[100] of different villages who in turn pass it on to the villagers, particularly the relatives of the dying person. It is considered essential to visit a dying daughter or son-in-law of that village (*no: no:ḍo:du*), and a failure to do so may result in ill-feelings between the families life-long.

The visiting villagers contribute money and buy items like milk and fruit; sometimes even a bag of rice. The visiting persons never go empty-handed; likewise, the visiting persons are never sent back unfed. For this reason, death and disease used to be huge financial burdens for the family. Nevertheless, it was a duty cast upon the children of the dying person to take care of not only their parent, but the visitors too. Whether the parent dies or recovers, the fact of having provided *no: iṭṭu* (food for guests visiting a dying father or mother) itself is a matter of satisfaction for many Badagas.

The visitors, after they drink the coffee offered, see the sick person: visitors senior to the sick person bless him or her

[100] "In the case of auspicious ceremonies, the headman sends an invitation to each house, but for matters of illness or death, as for general meetings, the messengers will inform only the other headmen" (Hockings 2001: 1)

by touching his or her head; younger visitors touch the sick person's feet with their heads and seek his or her blessing. They also feed the person a little milk: by accepting the milk brought by the visitor it is implied that the sick person harbours no ill-feeling towards him or her, even if there had been any earlier. Later, the visitors are fed. Most of them leave thereafter, but close relatives stay back.

No: ka:ppadu

Throughout night, local villagers keep awake and give company to the family members of the sick, a gesture expected to be reciprocated at a later date. They spend the night reading epic stories, singing ballads, chatting or playing cards. The purpose is to ensure that there are people present when life departs, to put *hana* and butter to the dying (*haṇa beṇṇe ikko:du*), an important ritual. There is a strong belief that failure to perform *haṇa beṇṇe ikko:du* makes the journey of the departed to the after-world very bothersome besides being a stigma for the family members. Experienced villagers easily identify symptoms of approaching death – like cooling of arms and limbs, inactivity of eyelids, cooling of the nose, weakening pulse, involuntary urination and purgation.

Sinnada Haṇa or *Vi:ra ra:ya haṇa* is a small coin, about the size of one tenth of a centi-meter, made of gold or copper[101]. Many households keep a stock of *sinnada haṇa*, available from itinerant *cetti* traders. A *no: mane*, the house of the seriously ill, keeps stock also of fresh butter and *ba:ti akki*, the dehusked *batta*[102].

[101] "The coin was originally a gold *hana* of about ¼–inch diameter, from the reign of Kanthirava Narsa Ra:ja of Mysore, 1638-1659. Today the coin would be made of silver, not copper or gold. Kotas have the same custom of lacing a *hana* in the mouth" (Hockings 2001: 4, note 9).

[102] The grain of *sa:me* (*Panicum sumatrense*).

Haṇa beṇṇe ikko:du

When the life is about to depart, the eldest son or in his absence the eldest of the classificatory sons (i.e., an agnate of the same generational rank), puts the *sinnada haṇa*, a little butter and a handful of *ba:ti akki* into the mouth of the dead person and pours a little milk. The dying person should swallow the *sinnada haṇa*. It is reported that in earlier days, whenever the dying person failed to swallow the *sinnada haṇa*, "it was tied in a cloth to the arm or put in the mouth just after death" so as to remain in the tongue (Harkness 1832; Natesa Sastri 1892, quoted in Hocking 2001:3). All the males present then put *ba:ti akki* into the mouth of the dying person.[103]

---

[103] Butter (or ghee, the clarified butter) is "to give his spirit strength for the journey ahead" (Noble and Noble 1965) and *sinnada hana* is the entry fee for the next world, to be paid to the guard at the end of the thread-bridge (*nu:la pa:la*).

"Like the Romans of old, the Badags thus provide their deparing friends with money for the supoosed purpose of paying their expenses on the road to the other world, and the coin they think is sufficient for the juourney till they have passed over the thread-bridge whih they suppose separates the valley of death from the invisible world" (Metz 1864: 76).

"As soon as the last struggle sets in, the whole village springs into activity and earnest labor. The family gathers round the dying man, The father or senior member of the family takes a small gold coin – a remnant of times long forgotten – worth but about six pence and, therefore, very very tiny; dips it in ghee and places it in the sick man's mouth, telling him to swallow what shoud be his last and most important food and fortune. If the tiny coin slip down, well. He will need both gold and ghee. The one to sustain his strength in the dark journey to the river of death, the other to fee the guardian of the fairylike bridge that spans the dreaded tide. If sense remain to the wretched man he knows that now his death is nigh. Despair and the gold make recovery impossible, and there are none who have swallowed the Birianhana and yet have lived. If insensibility or deathly weakness make it impossible for the coin to pass the thorax, it is carefully bound in cloth and tied to the right arm, so that there may be

Women do not perform this rite though. Under extraordinary circumstances, when death takes place in a hospital with no male member around, a woman does perform this rite, but she normally does not admit it; she will rather attribute it to some male member of the family. After putting the rice, the men close the eyes and mouth of the dying man and straighten his legs and limbs.[104]

Funeral, an affair of the village community as a whole

The funeral is usually held the next day. In extraordinary circumstances (e.g., the next day being an important festival day for which the temple has to be opened during which a polluting ceremony like funeral cannot be held), it is held the same day; or, if some close relatives have to come from a long distance, the funeral is deferred till their arrival.[105]

---

nought to hinder the passage of the worthy soul into the regions of the blest" (Gover 1871: 67-68).

[104] Noble and Noble (1965), Thurston (1906) and Hockings (2001) also talk of sticking a coin in the center of the brow or the forehead: "In every village, a few large East India Company silver rupees are still kept. After dancing is over, one of these rupees is stuck in the center of the brow or the corpse, male or female, using a shite paste from the gm-thistle (*e:gore* or *Euphorbia rothiana*. Thurston (1906) reported that "two silver coins – Japanese yens or rupees - are stuck on the forehead" (Thurston 1906: 190).

[105] "If the person died on a Friday and the corpse is to be removed on Saturday, the latter is very unlucky day, and so the corpse will require some "company" when it leaves the house. This will simply consist of a walking stick for a male corpse or a wooden door bolt for a female, which is laid on the cot. It is said that if this rite is neglected, there will be another death in the same house befoe the *korumbu* ritual the following week" (Hockings 2001: 11, note 1). This belief is not peculiar to Badagas: "The Tamulians (sic), in like manner, have a proverb, 'A Saturday corpse will not go alone'" (Thurston 1906:169). Hockings (2001: 11, note 1) also states that "if the corpse is not to be disposed of on the day following death but on a later

It is Badaga custom to conduct funeral rites as an event concerning the entire village community and not as a family affair[106] and "no one in the village works on the day of a funeral so that all can participate in it" (Hockings 2001: 11). Therefore, immediately after death, the *u:r gauḍas* take charge. In Athigaratty village, even the expenditure is borne by the village community, thereby relieving the burden on the bereaved family. Except the ceremonial cloth which is required to be provided by the bereaved family (by the father or brothers in the case of women), all other arrangements are made and the attendant expenditure borne by the village. The entire responsibility, right from getting a list of relatives to be informed, procuring materials for the ceremony and the feast, cooking them, receiving the guests and feeding them, apart from conducting the rituals, vests with the village and not with the bereaved family.

Informing relatives

News of the death is immediately conveyed to the relatives.[107] The list of relatives to be informed is finalised in

---

day, then it will be removed for the night to the veranda of the Great House (*Dodda mane*)

[106] "The village headman, the ***gauḍa***, will serve as the chief mourner (since this is tobe a communal ceremony rather thatn a family one), and all other male participants will express their condolences to him. He has a cloth draped loosely over the head and sits on the bank in front of the house while the men come to him" (Hockings 2001: 5).

[107] In earlier days, Toreyas were sent on this errand, but not any more. The following is the version of Thurston (1906: 190) on the practice obtaining then: "Cremtion may take place on any day, except Tuesday. News of a death is conveyed to distant hamlets (hattis) by a Toreya, who is paid a rupee for his services. On approaching a hamlet, he removes his turban to signify the nature of his errand, and, standing o the side of a hill, yells out "Dho! Dho! Who is in the hamlet"? Having imparted his news, he proceeds on his journey to the next hamlet." See Hockings (2001) for

consultation with the family of the deceased. The *gauḍa*s maintain a roster of the households and decide whose turn it is to go on the errand. The messengers inform the *u:r gauḍa*s and the relatives in different villages. In the case of a married woman, it is imperative to inform her parents and brothers at once since they have to procure certain items immediately (like *e: baṇṇa* cloth), which are required for the rites. All other relatives are also informed through special messengers. If the person dead is very old, it is customary to inform all women born in that village and married out to other villages. In the case of young, only relatives are informed.

Eḍe eṇa ka:ppadu

If the death occurs in the evening, the corpse has to be attended to during the night (*eḍe eṇa ka:ppadu*). The corpse is treated by the family members as if the person is still alive: its face is washed, *vibu:di* is applied on the forehead, food is served on a plate and the family members go through the motion of feeding it: a morsel is placed on its mouth, the mouth washed, the remaining food put back into the plate and washed and the wash water poured out. The members of the household perform their routine chores, eat their food and be with the corpse throughout the night, treating as if the person is fast asleep.

A *di:vige* is lit which should burn day and night till the last rites are over. A small bell is kept nearby which is sounded at frequent intervals to inform the passers-by of the death. Early next morning, the face of the corpse is washed again, *vibu:di* applied and dressed with new or clean clothes. In the case of females, a special coloured cloth known as *e: baṇṇa*, is brought by the father or the brothers of the dead woman

---

the earlier practice of notifying Kotas, Kurambas and Todas associated with the village.

and laid across it.[108] All the old clothes are discarded. No feeding is done though as in the previous night. *Pu:je* is conducted and only then, the body is removed.

[108] Hockings (2001: 12) thinks that "the [*e: baṇṇa*] cloth signifies the saris that ancestral Badagas wore before they ever left Mysore District four centuries ago." But we are not so sure. "It is torn down the middle somewhat so that it can be put over the head of the corse to cover its back and front" and "no affine [*naṭṭa*] may see the face of the corpse before the particular cloth is laid across it" (*ibid*, 11-12).

Hockings (2001: 12) also mentions that "for either male or female corpse, the daughter and her husband present the body with a special shawl embroidered by a Toda lady (*bugu si:le*)" and "the shawl (*bugu si:le*) that they brought is torn in half, one piece going on the corpse and the other laid on the cot...[and] wrapped round the body over the *e: baṇṇa*." Further, "another piece of cloth, called *puka:su*, is provided for a dead woman by the grandsons and granddaughters...The cloth is offered first by the sons' children, then by the daughters' children. If they are too young to understand, the cloth is tied round their heads and then they are carried once around the catafalque or are told to walk around it counterclockwise. After this, the cloth is tied to the catafalque" (*ibid*).

CHAPTER 24

Funeral rites II: At the *sa:vu keri*, the yard of the *Doḍḍa Mane*

In the morning, at about 7:00 a.m., the body is taken out. The funeral cot, kept exclusively for this purpose, is brought to the *ke:ri* of the bereaved house by the villagers. As already mentioned, after conducting *pu:je*, the body is taken out and placed on the funeral cot.[109] All the materials which came in contact with the corpse like the mattress, bedspreads and old clothes, are removed from the house. Water stored in vessels in the house is emptied since there is a belief that the spirit of the dead, if still attached to the house, will take shelter there. The house is swept clean and purified by applying cow-dung wash all over the floor. Till the ceremonies are over, food is not cooked in the house except snacks like *tuppada Iṭṭu* (cake

[109] According to Hockings (2001: 13), "once the body is on the front yard, a brass plate full of food that the dead person had enjoyed, along with curry and rice – but always vegetarian food – is brought out. A gourd is left near the feet of the dead to drink from during the coming journey (Metz 1864: 77). If it is a woman who has died, her mother or brother's wife ties a bead necklace (*kakkila mani*) and a bead wristlet (*kai kattu mani*) on the body. One or sometimes two hanks of human hair, called *savari* (Hockings 1979: 155, 160), with a comb (to tie up the hair behind the head) are attached. Female corpses are also given a string (*ode kanni*) to hold the cloth in place over the breasts, and s strip of cloth (*kacce*) about 9 inches wide and 2 yards long to serve as a waistbelt...At least one copper coin should be put into the pocket of the cloak by a relative or by some agnatic villager."

made in ghee), *ganjikke* (puffed barley) and *godume doṭṭi* (wheat dosai) required for the funeral rites (see subsequent paragraphs). Food is sent by neighbours to the bereaved family till the rites are over.

Da:na batta e:ro:du or *ḍu: Iḍappadu*[110] – at the Funeral green

The corpse is taken to the *sa:vu ke:ri*, the yard in front of the *Doḍḍa Mane*.[111] From there, it is taken to the *sa:vu aṇe*, the funeral green. If the dead person is a male, a ritual known as *ḍu: Iḍappadu* or *da:na batta e:ro:du* is done in the *sa:vu aṇe*. A young calf is brought; about a quarter bag of *batta* (grain of *sa:me* millet) is kept on the calf. A village elder leads the calf with the grain around the cot so that *batta* grain spills all around the cot. Whatever grain left in the bag is also cast there. Then the elder pours a little milk to the mouth of the corpse three times (*a:lu buḍodu* ritual). Then the calf is brought near the corpse and the hand of the corpse is made to touch its horns. The calf is released afterwards. The calf should not be used for ploughing henceforth. This is the *indu buṭṭa basava*, referred to in the *karu haraso:du* recitation, performed a little later. It is believed by Badagas that by this ritual, all sins committed in his lifetime by the dead person, are transferred to the calf, relieving him of his burden when he reaches the other world.[112] This ritual is not done for women though. In olden days, the ritual was not conducted without the presence

---

[110] Hockings (2001:21) calls it *tu:r sa:stira*.

[111] *Dodda mane* "is not the headman's house but rather that of the founder of the hamlet. It has quasi-temple staus and is the home of some of the founder's descendants" (Hockings 2001:11, note 1).

[112] Many parallels have been drawn between the Jewish scape-goating and the Badaga *karu harasuvadu*. See annexure xx for the versions of Gover (1871) and James Frazer (1921).

of *Kota*s and their music.[113] It is presumed that the name *ḍu: lḍappadu* for this ritual was derived from the *ḍu:* sound of the *Kota* horn.

It appears from literature that in earlier centuries, a buffalo, an oxen and a buffalo-calf were used for rituals. A milking buffalo, preferably one that belonged to the dead man, was actually brought to the spot for the *a:lu buḍodu* ritual, led counterclockwise around the corpse (which lay on the ground) three times, the hand of the dead person is made[114] to touch the udder and then a small amount of milk from the udder was directed into the mouth of the corpse (*ha:lu hi:nju:du*, Hockings 2001: 21). Sometimes, three or even more buffaloes were led around the corpse. "Thereafter the buffalo must not be sold, having become sacred" ("Miles" 1933: 75, quoted by Hockings 2001: 22, note 33). The *da:na batta e:ro:du* rituals was held next and for this ritual, instead of the calf, bulls or oxen, in one instance seven of them, were brought, and the right hand of the corpse made to touch their horns, not once, but three times.[115] It also appears that for the *karu harusuvadu* ritual

[113] "A major factional dispute that arose around 1930 between reformists and traditionalist centered on the propriety of dancing at afuneral, and thus having a Kota band play music. Since that period, most Badaga families have abandoned the practice of inviting a Kota band, and indeed, Kotas today ususlly have something better to do with their time. Traditionally, though, it was a ritual requirement tht some Kotas play music at every Badaga funeral or memorial ceremony, and the tradition is still sometimes observed by a more conservative family in certain villages" (Hockings 2001: 6).

[114] By a classificatory father or brother, according to Hockings (2001:21).

[115] In the Toda funeral, buffaloes are sacrificed. Before the sacrifice, the buffaloes are chased and caught, much the way as in the present day *Jallikattu*. After the sacrifice, the hand of the corpse is made to touch the horns of the dead buffalo. The Toda belief is that the sacrificed buffalo(es) will accompany the dead person to the after world (called *amno:r*) where he will use them (Rivers 1906:351 check). Old literature on Badaga funerals

(which is conducted before taking the corpse to the graveyard - see later), a calf - male calf if the dead person was a male and a female calf is the dead was a female - was actually brought in those days. No calf (*karu)* is brought for the *karu harasuvadu* ritual nowadays, but only a reference is made to the calf.

On the day of this ceremony, no other cattle was milked in the village, since it was the day the dead drink the milk (Belli Gowder, quoted by Hockings 2001:22, note 33). Whether this was followed by the entire village or not, the buffalo, if one was used for the *ha:lu buḍo:du or ha:lu hi:nju:du* ceremony, was not milked for a few days. This was because members of the bereaved family who owned the buffalo were under pollution and consequently could not enter the *ha:go:ṭṭu*, the milk-house, which was always sacred and hence out of bounds for them.

"The animals are supposed to be used by the dead man in Paradise, where he ploughs his fields, &c." (S.W.H. 1879, quoted by Hockings 2001: 22, note 33). "Dead Badaga women do not receive these rites because women never milk cattle" (*ibid*.)

E: kaṭṭo:du

Immediately afterwards, another ritual called *e: kaṭṭo:du* is performed, both for male and female corpses. Sisters of the dead remove a hair from the left side of their head and tie it around the left big toe of the deceased; and tie a hair from their right side around the right big toe of the deceased. They

---

mention of a similar practive (Thurston 1906: 190); sometimes, the buffalo was not actually chased and caught but they went through the motion of catching the buffaloes (Morike 1857:60, quoted by Hockings 2001: 21, note 32). Does *du: idappadu* refer to catching the buffaloes? Incidentally, Hockings (2001:22) mentions about a "bull-catching" tune played by Kotas in Badaga funerals.

keep a constant vigil to ensure that the knots are intact till the burial is over. These knots indicate the intimate bond between the siblings. This is perhaps a symbolic reference to the legend of Lord Kariabettaraya, around whose toes black and white threads were tied.

According to Thurston (1906: 192), this ritual was conducted immediately after *o:le kaṭṭo:* ritual.

After these rituals, the cot is taken back to the *sa:vu ke:ri* where it is decorated (*sappara alanga:ra*).[116, 117]

Snacks for the dead

Meanwhile, in the bereaved house, after it has been purified with cow-dung wash (*Oḷḷiya mane ma:ḍo:du*), snacks liked by the dead like *tuppada Iṭṭu* (cake made in ghee), *ganjikke* (puffed barley) and *godume doṭṭi* (wheat dosai) are prepared. Usually, neighbours help the bereaved family prepare these items. These are for the dead, who requires them on his or her way to heaven.

---

[116] In earlier days, Badagas constructed "a catafalque (*gudikattu*), a fremework of poles decorated with lengths of cloth...Depending on the wealth of the bereaved family, it could have one, three, five, or even seven tiers (certainly not an evern number)" (Hockings 2001: 8). "By the poorer members of the community the [catafalque] is replaced by a cot covered with cloth, and surmounted by five umbrellas" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909, I:112). "This has become the standard today" (Hockings 2001: 9). Thurston (1906: 204) is of the opinion that the funeral car represents the chariot (*vima:nam*) used for the heavenly journey.

[117] "People must dance around the cot at least once" (Hockings 2001: 14). "The dances move in a counterclockwise, inauspicious direction" (*ibid.*). "Any one dancing or performing another functrion at a funeral may not wear a turban. It is also the rule that at least one male relative of the deceased must remain bareheaded throughout the funeral, although as a sign of mournig he should cover his head loosely with a cloth (*si:le* or *dupati*) " (*ibid.*, note 15).

Keeping *ganjikke kukkes*

After the *sappara* decoration is over, word is sent around that it is time for the ritual of keeping *ganjikke kukke* (basket of buffed barley). Villagers prepare *ganjikke* and *ki:re* (puffed *amaranthus*) and take them to the bereaved house. There *ganjikke* and *ki:re* are distributed over many *ganjikke kukkes* and the snacks prepared in the bereaved house are also put in different *kukkes*, slightly different for males and females[118]. These baskets are decorated with flowers and carried in a procession by the women of the village and kept under the funeral cot. These snacks, along with the *tuppada Iṭṭu* etc., are for the dead person's use on his or her way to the heaven. Only after the *ganjikke kukkes* are kept, will the guests come and pay their respects to the body, even if they have arrived earlier.[119, 120]

---

[118] "The basket is slightly different in sesign for a male's funeral than for a female's, since in the former case a big central basket, which has four tiney ones attached to it, has a kind of raised rib panel about a half of an inch wide running around its midde. Another basket (*he:gi kukke*) is only used in the funeral of a female" (Hockings 2001:51, note 6). "The female dead should also be presented with a needle and a piece of fiber (*manji*) from the Nilgiri nettle [*dodda turuce*] or harmless nettle [*tore ko:lu*]; the needle is stuck into the offering basket" (*ibid.*).

[119] According to Hockings (2001: 19), women married into the village (i.e., those related to the dead as mothers, sisters-in-law or daughters-in-law keep the *ganjikke kukkes* first and then by women from other villages. "Women who live in the village and who are related to the dead man or te widower as brother's wife or father's wife (or father's brother's son's wife, etc.) bring some baskets of millet and wheat, with which they make sweets. Three or more women must then take these on plates held on their heads and proceed around the catafalque at least once counterclockwise, wailing as they do. When they come to the head of the corpse, they place these plates under the cot there. Once thee village women have finished, the wives of affinal visitors will doteh same thing".

Cutting the nails

If the dead person is a women whose husband is alive, a ritual called *ugilu ku:vadu* (cutting the nail) is performed after *ganjikke kukkes* have been placed. Sisters of the dead take a bronze plate (*kaccu baṭlu*) filled with turmeric-water; and with a knife in hand, go through the motion of cutting the nails of the dead person, dropping them into the *kaccu baṭlu* and throwing them out. The idea is that while going to the heaven, the dead woman should be decorated like a bride with all the attendant embellishments.

Preparing the grave

Immediately afterwards, arrangements are made for preparing the grave. Nowadays, the dead are buried almost always, unlike the earlier days when cremation was the rule and burial, an exception. The implements for digging – the spade, hoe, knife and crowbar – brought from the houses are placed under the funeral cot. A person senior in rank and age, blesses the implements and entrusts them to the youth who proceed to the burialground to get the grave ready in time.

Guests pay respect

From the time *ganjikke kukkes* have been placed, incense sticks are lighted and kept near the corpse; and pieces of

---

[120] According to Hockings (2001: 15), "the dead man's milking vessel is also there, and cigarettes, beedies, snuff, cigars, or chewing tobacco may be brought, according to his tastes – perhaps, too, a favorite walking stick, bow and arrow (formerly), or flute will be included." If it is a woman who has died, the affines "must bring at least one winnow, one coconut-shell ladle, and one pounding stick (probably not a genuine one, which today is very valuable) to present to their dead daughter or sister...[T]hen they give them to villagers, who place them under the cot. Only after this ritual has been completed can a member of the family ask the afines' permission to dispose of the corpse" (ibid., 18-19).

sandalwood are burnt in fire for fragrance. Women sit in the benches kept along either side of the cot and wail. "The corpse, whether male or female, should be tended by a daughter or a sister or, if there is none, by a classificatory daughter…She may fan flies off the face, and from time to time she picks up a handbell[121] and rings it next to the head" (Hockings 2001:15).

Guests from different villages come in groups to pay their respects; they come a procession chanting "hau kau". *Bhajan* (devotional) songs are sung continuously nearby. Whenever a group of guests from a village arrive, they are received on behalf of the village, their umbrellas received and kept in a safe place and offered coffee and a little later, food.[122] The *bhajans* go on till about 1:30 p.m. till all the close relatives arrive. In the meantime, the persons who had gone to prepare the grave return after completing the work and they too are

---

[121] "This bell ringing, and the later swinging of the body three times over the fire or grave prior to cremation or burial, are seemingly precautionary tests long taken in case the person is cateleptic but not yet dead" (Hockings 2001: 16). "[The Todas] say that long ago, about 400 years, a man supposed to be dead was put on funeral pyre, and revived by the heat, he was found to be alive and was able to walk away from the funeral place" (*ibid*, note 17, quoting Rivers 1906: 363)

[122] The version of Hockings (2001: 15) is as follows: "As groups of visitors arrive, the men remove their footwear out of respect and walk onto the yard, chanting "*o: hau hau*" repeatedly, as they scatter aound puffed rice and perhaps coins of the smallest denomination. Next, after removing their turbans, they pay respects to the corpse. They go to the head if they are of a more senior generation or of the same gneration as the deceased but older in age; alternatively, they go to the feet if they are of a more junior generation or of the same generation as the deceased but younger in age." "The face and feet of the corpse (unless it is Lingayat) remain uncovered all day so that senior and junior people can pay their respects to the deceased" (*ibid.*, 16). They "touch the feet. Immediately after doing so, men but not women touch their own foreheads" (*ibid.*).

offered coffee. After ensuring that all important relatives have arrived and that the grave is ready, preparations are made for removing the corpse to the *sa:vu aṇe*, the funeral green.[123]

"At one time there used to be dancing of males around the cot, but this practice has been given up by the great majority of Badagas" (Noble and Noble 1965: 263).

Oppaṇe ke:ppadu

In the case of women, the next ritual is *oppane ke:ppadu* – seeking the permission of the *naṭṭa*s (the affines) for removing the corpse. The affines are taken to the *Doḍḍa mane* (the first-settled house in the village), and they are told that as their girl, who for so long had been a member of this village community is no more, they should not ask for her any more and permit the villagers to conduct her last rites. A person from the village kneels down and bows before the affines, who bless him (*arakke ma:ḍi*) and raise him. The *naṭṭa*s are given coffee. Only after they drink the coffee, is the body removed to the *sa:vu aṇe*.[124]

---

[123] In earlier days when Kotas were very much a part of the ceremony, "the Kota associate makes an offering to the corpse. If the deceased was a Lingayat, he gives an iron toe-ring for the second toe of each foot; if the deceased was a non-Lingayat, he gives an axe with a bow and arrow. This is to protect the departed soul during the journey to the afterworld. The bow is mdeo firon and string, with a wooden arrow tipped with iron. For Lingayats, the Kota must also offer a hoe, which is used later to dig the grave. This presentation for non-Lingayats is called *bil sa:stira* (bow ritual); that for Lingayats is *miccu sa:stir* (toe-ring ritual)" (Hockings 2001:18). "They think that iron has a repulsive power over the spirits that hover about the dead" (Harkness 1832:132, note, quoted by Hockings 2001: 20, note 28).

[124] The version of Hockings (2001: 19) is as follows: "Before the woman's corpse is removed from the yard, one or more of thse men [*naṭṭa*s] are invited into the house, asked to sit on jute or some other prestigious material, and offered a glass of water. Then the widower or another close male relative in the family says to the visitors, "You see, your daughter is

Removing the body to the *sa:vu aṇe*

Pu:je is offered with plantains, coconut and incense at the foot of the cot and the *pu:je* plate taken around the cot (in *Me:kuna:ḍu* and *Kunde* areas). *Bhajans* are sung. A woman sits on the funeral cot and the funeral procession starts. In the case of women, the cot is carried to the *sa:vu aṇe* by the *naṭṭa*s[125]; in the case of men, the cot is carried by the local villagers. A person goes ahead of the funeral cot and keeps throwing puffed rice and coins of small denominations all the way. The *bhajan* group follows the cot. All others follow them chanting "*o: hau kau*" (*havukkikko:du*).

---

dead. Please do not ask us for her at some later time." Each affine present then touches the man's forehead (or, if the affine is very youg, bouws down to his feet), blesses him, and says, "You can remove it" (Belli Gowder 1923-1941: 9)".

[125] But according to Hockings (2001: 20), "the corpse must be carried by men of that village, never by affines."

CHAPTER 25

Funeral Rites III: At the *sa:vu aṇe*, the funeral grassland

Karu harasuvadu

Immediately after the funeral cot is placed in *sa:vu ane*, the most important ritual of *karu harusuvadu* is performed. It is a prayer to the Almighty that the dead person be absolved of all his sins committed in his whole lifetime and he be admitted to the Assembly of the Lord. An elderly person recites the litany of sins – more than hundred in number – with everybody around responding in chorus; as the elderly person waves his right hand toward the feet at the end of each line, everybody responds. The slokas are repeated three times.[126] "The way from the deceased's feet is always kept open while the prayer is being said" (Noble and Noble 1965: 264).

As already mentioned, in earlier centuries a buffalo-calf (*karu*) of the same sex as the dead person, seems to have been actually brought to the *sa:vu aṇe* for the *karu haraso:* ceremony and driven around the cot three times in the counterclockwise direction and then released.[127] Hockings (2001: 22) mentions

---

[126] See annexure xx (page xx) for different versions and their translations of the slokas.

[127] Gover (1870: 71) goes a step further: "...the performer enters into details and cries, "He killed the crawling snake, it is a sin." In a moment the last word is caught up and all the people cry, "It is a sin." *As they shout the performer lays his hand upon the calf*. The sin is transferred to the calf. Thus

that "at this time, too, a cow is led onto the Funeral Grassland and is milked, or milk is brought in a pot, which is emptied onto the ground", but this practice does not seem to be in vogue.[128]

O:le kaṭṭo:du

If the dead person is survived by a spouse, a ceremony called *o:le kaṭṭo:du* is performed next.[129] If the deceased is a male, the wife comes to the foot of the funeral cot and all her

---

the whold catalogue is gone through in this impressive way...Then, still in solemn silence, the calf is let loose. Like the Jewish scape-goat, it may never be used for secular work," implying that the calf was present near the corpse all through the *karu harasuvadu* ritual. See annexure xx (page xx) for the full text of Gover (1870). (Emphasis supplied).

[128] Hockings describes another ritual which immediately follows *karu harasuvadu* quoting Metz (1864): "At this point most relatives walk three times around the corpse "with earth on their heads and hatchets in their hands" (Metz 1864: 79) and put a little earth on the face as they say: "Mud for the mouth of the man that died: [but] gruel for the mouth of the living" (Hockings 1988: 193, no. 263). This symbolizes three daily meals" (Hockings 2001: 26-27). But a careful reading of Metz (1864) shows that he refers only to the *akkiyetto* ceremony.

[129] According to Hockings (2001: 13), "when a man had died, his widow is dressed well for the funeral, "almost as a bride." She does not wear the usual round nose ring but a rather special funereal one that hangs down from the nostril by about 1 to 1½ inches (*kodlingi*. This practice is not followed in the Poranga:du area). The affines, her relatives, give her a cloth called *muccuku si:le*, "meant to cover her face while weeping" (i.e., mourning; Nates Sastri 1892: 833). The presentation of this is said to represent a final marriage of the deceased...As in a wedding, they shout *o: hau hau*, which is a cry to ward off the inauspiciousness, but – unlike at a wedding – they have to go around the catafalque three times in a counterclockwise direction. Only after this ritual has been performed may the widow sit on the cot beside the corpse, the first moment she has been near it since the death."

jewels are removed[130]. A classificatory brother of the dead person (i.e., brother or paternal cousin) keeps fragments of palmyrah leaves on the neck, ear, nose and hands of the woman as if replacing the old jewels with palm leaves. The removed jewels and the palm leaves are placed in a corner of the cloth covering the corpse and tied in a knot in an anticlockwise direction (i.e., from below to top). If the surviving spouse is male, his ears and hands are touched with a *moranda* twig (false bog-myrtle - *Dodonoea angustifolia*) which is then tied in a corner of the cloth covering the corpse in an anticlockwise direction.[131]

Akki etto:du (Grain-carrying rite)

The next ritual is *akki etto:du*, placing grain on the corpse. In the *Doḍḍa mane*, sufficient quantity of *batta*[132] will be kept ready by an elderly lady in a *mora,* along with blades of *garike* (Bermuda grass - *Cynodon dactylon*).[133] Earlier accounts

---

[130] Particularly her earrings, finger-rings, rose-ring and necklace(Noble and Noble 1965:264) and the *ta:li* is broken (Hockings 2001: 29).

[131] "Once this ritual is over, the couple is no longer considered married" (Hockings 2001: 28) and "Should the bereaved couple want to remarry, it is possible once the *korumbu* is over" (*ibid*., 61).

[132] According to Thurston (1906: 196), paddy and not *batta* was used for this ritual.

[133] Here is the version of Noble and Noble (1965:264): "Relatives...and spouse...carry a mixture of of *samai* (Panicum miliare), *ghee* and grass in hands usually held together on their heads. The mixture is prepared with great care in the funeral-temple [i.e., *dodda mane*]. A mortar is first swept with branches of *hubai* (Sophora glauca) leaves. Then fresh cowdung is rubbed on the inside and areas close to the mortar. Raw *samai* is placed three times in the mortar, and each time it is pounded with a pestle and winnowed. It is from the winnower that members of the two processions obtain *samai,* into which *ghee* and grass have been mixed." Pounding and winnowing of *samai* does not seem to be done nowadays; so also mixing the grain with ghee.

mention that the grain is pounded and winnowed three times at the *Doḍḍa mane* and mixed with ghee and garikke grass (Noble and Noble 1965: 264; see footnote 98).[134] The chief mourner (*tale akki etto:ma*) is in the rank of a younger brother and he gets a handful of *batta* and a few blades of grass from the elderly lady and keep both his hands, fists closed, on his head with the blades of *garikke* grass protruding through the space between fingers. He also holds on his head, a knife[135] meant for the chief mourner. Another person holds an umbrella over his head. Others, who are younger brothers in rank to the deceased will line up behind the chief mourner in the order of their age with *batta* and *garikke* on their head but without the knife and without the umbrella cover. After all those in the rank of brothers to the deceased are exhausted, those in the rank of sons to the deceased line up according to their ages; a local villager holds an umbrella over the head of the first person in this rank. Likewise, the grandsons and great-grandsons follow, with the first person being given an umbrella cover to easily identify the different generations. Thus, the first person in each generational level is provided umbrella cover over his head and may carry a knife if he desires. After the males, women and girls born in the village line up according to their generation and age, but no umbrella cover or knife is provided to them. The spouse (who performs

---

[134] Natesa Sastri (1892)'s account suggests that in earlier days, the mixture of pounded grain, ghee and grass were made into small balls by the old lady and kept in a mud pot from where they were handed out to the mourners; after the balls were placed on the corpse, the lady seems to have broken the pot at the feet of the cot, signifying that the dead man's connection with those alive were completely broken with this ritual (quoted by Hockings 2001: 28).

[135] "A billhook (Hockings 2001: 28); "a double iron sickle with imitation buffalo horns on the tip" (Thurston 1906: 192).

the *o:le kaṭṭo:* ritual) comes last.[136] The spouse also carries *batta* and *garikke* on his or her head and the special knife meant for him or her[137]. An umbrella cover is given to the widower or a canopy of white shawl tied to an umbrella in each or the four corners to the widow. It is the affines (*naṭṭas*) who hold the canopy for the widow; for the widower, the umbrella is held by an agnate (local villager).

The entire mourners, including the spouse, come in a procession from the *Doḍḍa mane* to the *sa:vu aṇe*. While the procession of the local villagers marches in silence, those accompanying the spouse continuously chant "*o: hau kau*".

Earlier on, the procession went round the corpse three times in an anticlockwise direction, each time the persons dropping a portion of the grain on the head of the corpse; the procession of the surviving spouse also "marched around the funeral-cot three time, [but] the surviving spouse waits until all in the procession or relatives have dropped their mixture at the head of the deceased. Then he or she goes to the foot of the cot, and drops mixture on the feet of the deceased" (Noble and Noble 1965: 266). But due to space constraints in Athigaratty village, nowadays the procession goes round the corpse only one and the mourners drop the entire grain and *garikke* on the head of the corpse in the first round itself. An elderly person stands near the head of the corpse and ruffles the hair of each mourner clear of any grain, as soon as he drops the grain on the corpse. As already mentioned, the procession of the spouse goes in a clockwise direction to the leg of the corpse where he or she drops the grain. "Afterwards the surviving spouse may go in turn to to each of the funeral

---

[136] "All men who participate ought to be bare-chested as well as bareheaded, but now most of them wear shirts" (Hockings 2001: 28).

[137] "a sickle, held with the poing upward" (*ibid.*).

cot's legs, bow down, and touch the ground with both hands, but this rite is nowadays sometimes dispensed with" (*ibid.*)

After this ritual, the spouse gets back home and takes no further part in the funeral till *korumbu.*

Taking embers to the burial ground

One of the relatively young mourners is sent to *Doḍḍa mane* to bring embers of fire in a new pot and a few pieces of firewood.[138] After ensuring that he has reached the burial ground, preparations are made for removing the corpse there.

***oppanda koḍo:du* and taking the body to the burial ground**

The chief mourner (*tale akki ettidama*) seeks the approval of the Lord and the assembly - he touches the leg of the funeral cot, then looks at the sky, prays, kneels down and bows. He repeats this for all the four legs of the cot, one after the other[139]. A woman mourner[140] also (i.e., a person who participated in *akki a:ko* ritual) repeats the gesture. The corpse is then placed on a simple cot. The *sappara* decorations of the funeral cot are dismantled and the cot sent back to the *Doḍḍa mane* after washing. The corpse is taken to the burial ground[141]. The *ganjikke kukkais* (baskets of puffed barley, puffed

---

[138] In earlier days, the chief mourner seems to have carried the pot containing the embers to the burial ground (Hockings 2001:29).

[139] In a counterclockwise direction, starting at the leg to the right (east) of the head, according to Hockings (2001: 29).

[140] Sister of the deceased (*ibid.*), followed by other close female relatives, such as classificatory daughter, son's daughter, or sister (now discontinued).

[141] "The order of the procession is, first, the Kota musicians; then the man who led the grain-placing rite (now carrying a pot of fire from the Great House, with which to drive away ghosts that lurk near the funeral ground); then one of the women who have just fallen down (either a sister of a dead man or a husbnd's sister of a dead woman); then the cot with the corpse; then the catafalque (if there is one); then the male mourners; and finally a few women, some of whom carry baskets of food offerings and kitchen

amaranthus and snacks) are also taken to the burial ground along with the pounding stick, ladle, winnowing basket (*mora*) and coconut oil in case of women and umbrella and walking stick in the case of men.

In the meantime, the person who carried the embers of fire ahead, starts the fire in the *Doḍḍa du:ve*, the elevated ground near the place where the cremation usually takes place. Earlier on, all the dead were cremated in Athigaratty village. Each household used to send a small load of firewood for this purpose. Nowadays, due to scarcity of firewood all bodies are buried. The burial ground is spacious enough to accommodate the bodies. The rituals for burial and cremation are slightly different from each other.

implements." "[The pot containing embers] is grasped by the rim with a bunch of hill mango leaves (*tu:de*, or *Meliosma simplicifolia*) so that the fingers do not touch the pot" (Hockings 2001: 31 & note 52). "The cot is then carried to the burning-ground, a woman heading the procession, and shaking the end of her cloth all the way" (Thurston 1906: 196).

CHAPTER 26

Funeral Rites IV: at the Burial-ground

E: ki:ro:du (koḷḷi muri)* or *e: baṇṇa ki:ro:du

For men, a ritual called *e: ki:rodu* or *koḷḷi muri ki:ro:du* is performed next. The chief mourner tears two or three pieces from different corners of the *si:le* covering the corpse. Each of these pieces is called *koḷḷi muri*.

For women, the affines tear two or three pieces from the *e: baṇṇa*, the coloured cloth covering the corpse, which was earlier brought by them. This signifies the end of the bond linking the affines with the bereaved family through the dead woman.

Baṭṭe buḍaso:du

No clothes, strings or jewels should be left firmly tied to the corpse. Hence, the corpse is disrobed and covered with a loose cloth. In the case of a female corpse, women form a temporary cloth-screen around it and then disrobe and remove the jewels. Men disrobe male corpses and cut of the loin thread or chain.

Cremation

In the case of cremation, a platform of firewood is made; on top of this platform, the *koḷḷi muri* is placed by the chief mourner; and the corpse is placed over it. Before the corpse is placed on the firewood platform, it is swayed three times to the left and right.[142] The corpse is further covered

[142] This is to ensure that the body will revive if any trace of life is left in it. See footnote xx ante.

with fire wood and the chief mourner[143] sets fire to it (*tale koḷḷi a:ko:du*). Others throw pieces of twigs on to the burning fire.[144]

Natesa Sastri (1892:842) and Hockings (1988: 144-145) contend that "the nearest relative – the son in case there is one" is the one who performs this ritual. According to them, he offers the following *arakke* while performing this ritual:

Hetta hettappa
mutte muttappa
ma:ḍida darma:nda
ennavv:enappaga na: huṭṭi
ennavve [or ennappa] satta sa:vuga
na: tappa:de: tale koḷḷi bi:tane
sarva nu:ru de:va ariya

Burial

In the case of burial, the chief mourner gets into the burial pit and spreads the *koḷḷi muri* on the ground. The body is swayed three times to the left and right. After the chief mourner gets out, two persons get into the pit, receive the body and place it on the *koḷḷi muri*. No mattresses, gunny bags

---

[143] "preferably the eldest son of the dead," according to "Miles" (1933: 75), quoted by Hockings (2001: 55). "The corpse is laid on the pyre with its feet to the south, and the pyre lighted by the eldest son standing at the head" (Thurston 1906: 196-197).

[144] "According to Malinowski's student, A. Aiyappan, a "relic of *Sati* is now seen ... when the widow's robe is thrown on the funeral pyre" (1948: 17). He is probably referring to King (1870: 6-7), who mentions, in regard to Badagas, that "the widow merely pretends to rush towards the blazing pile to sacrifice herself with her husband's dead-body, and is pulled back by her friends, who throw her robe on the funeral pyre instead, and she herself commences a new lease of life with new clothing." Harkness (1832: 134) and Muzzy (1844: 359) had earlier observed the same thing. Today the widowed woman is not allowed close to the pyre, and none of her clothig or hair is burned" (Hockings 2001: 55, note 20).

or sheets are spread on the ground except the *koḷḷi muris*.[145] The body, including the face, is covered by the *si:le*. The snacks in the *ganjikke kukke*s are poured over the body. Articles used by the person are also put into the pit: like clothes (non-degradable materials like polyesters are not put into the pit but burnt separately) and walking stick (umbrella is not put into the pit) in the case of men and pounding stick, ladle, winnowing basket and coconut oil in the case of men. The chief mourner, followed by men and then women, puts three handful of mud on the corpse. The pit is completely covered with mud[146] and two or three big rubbles are kept on top to keep dogs and foxes at bay. Then a garland is placed over it and *pu:je* performed with the full paraphernalia of incense sticks, coconuts and bananas.

Implements like the shovel, hoe and crowbar, used for digging the pit are thoroughly washed.[147] All the women

---

[145] "The corpse is buried directly in the ground, and not placed in a casket first" (Noble and Noble 1965: 267).

[146] "There are specific rules about filling in a grave. All the earth that has been dug out must be replaced, although it will form a heap, because it might contain pieces of bone from some former burial. As it is being dragged into the grave with hoes and shovels, the outermost earth must be dragged first so that no "islands" of loose earth remain on the ground. A further ritual requirement is that a man filling a grave may not pass any tool between his legs but can pass it only on his outer side (Natesa Sastri 1892: 839)" (Hockings 2001: 52, note 7).

[147] "Another nameless ritual is performed. Two or three of the tools used are picked up by one of the gravediggers, and the metal heads of these are put on the reverse way around, such that the tools are rendered useless. Then this man holds them with the crowbar and stands on the south side of the grave, facing west. He swings the tools back and forth three times while saying, "Once, twice, thrice,' and then he throws them across the grave toward the north, using an underhand motin to do this (Natesa Sastri 1892: 838). As he soes so, he simultaneously turns his head away from the garave and toward the south. Old men say that this rutual act,

return to the village. Only men stay back for the remaining rituals.[148]

Unlike in the case of other communities, usually the central role is given not to the eldest son, but to the chief mourner, in the Badaga funeral rites. As we have already seen, the chief mourner is in the rank of the younger brother and the oldest among them in the case of males; and in the case of women, the oldest among those in the rank of sons. This signifies that in the case of death, the Badaga community rises as one and treats any death in the village as one in their own family. The community, and not the individual family, taking

---

and the disabling of the tools for it, imply a wish that there should be no more death" (Hockings 2001:52-53).

[148] The version of Hockings (2001: 49-50, note 1) is as follows: "Among Gaudas who habitually cremate, when they decide to bury a corpse instead, the cot is put down on the edge of he burial ground. A small fire is lit with dry twigs in a circular clearing of the turf...Before the cropse is...buried..., it is swung three times over the grave. Once it is interred and baskets of grain are heaped on top of it, the grave is filled, and then the fire is put out with a potful of water. A second man brings another potful and throws it onto the cold embers of some recent cremation. Then men go through the act of looking for a piece of burned bone there; they put it on a small bed of fern fronds and place this on a fragment of white cloth that was previously torn from a loincloth of the deceased. This is placed on the ground, and everyone there bows to it. The same two men who got potfuls of water now do so again. Then the chief mourner pours one pot onto the wet charcoal. He takes a piece of plantain leaf with sprigs of Bermuda grass on it and throws this into the puddle at the burining place so that the grass is under the leaf. The piece of burned bone and fern fronds are then wrapped up in the cloth and buried nearby with a fork. A small stone is placed on top of the spot. Finally, the men wash their hands in the second pot of water and take some millet from a bag. They stand in a circle with a break in it while an old man says a prayer, and then all throw their handfuls of grain into the wet charcoal." The later portion of the description appears to relate to the *karitallo:du* ritual.

the entire responsibility, including the financial burden, is very unique.

CHAPTER 27

Funeral Rites V: *Kari*

A:laṭṭo:du

The chief mourner goes to the *Doḍḍa mane* to bring the necessary items for the next ritual, *a:laṭṭo:du* – i.e., pouring milk.[149] At the *Doḍḍa mane*, the chief mourner is fed first since in all probability, he would be starving from the morning. Food is served for him on a plantain leaf. The chief mourner divides the food into four portions using the knife he used during the *akki etto* ceremony. He separates the first portion with his knife saying it is meant for *hetta hettappa*, the forefathers. The second portion he offers for the *mutte muttappa,* the great forefathers and the third portion for the *ba:ga*, the deceased. The fourth portion he eats fully. After eating, he takes adequate quantity of *batta*[150] and ghee from the *Doḍḍa mane* and proceeds to the burial ground for the next ritual, *kari taḷḷo:du*.

In earlier days, when most of the bodies were cremated, the *kari* ritual used to be performed the next day when pieces of bones were picked up and buried; the *korumbu* ritual was performed a few days thereafter, usually on a Sunday

---

[149] Hockings (2001: 53) mentions that "Persons related as classificatory brither or father to the dead person bring fresh floers to the burial ground while the others wait. These are collected, together with fresh fire and milk, from the Great House..." This practice is not in vogue in *Me:kuna:du.*

[150] Five measures (five *ko:ga*, *or* around 18.5 litres), according to Hockings (2001:53).

night (into the wee hours of Monday) males and Thursday night (till early Friday) for females. But nowadays, all these rituals are completed on the very same day. If *kari* ceremony is performed the next day, *di:vige ka:ppadu* (taking care of the lamp) ritual has to be performed during the night in the bereaved house: "...tend one central lamp in the interior doorway [*madilu*], which must remain lighted...until the coming morning" (Hockings 2001:56).[151]

Batta kumbiḍo:du or kari taḷḷo:du

As soon as the chief mourner reaches the burial ground, the waiting men bring fresh water in a new pot and pour over and snuff out the fire still burning in the *Doḍḍa du:ve* till it becomes a puddle. Copious fresh water is poured into a puddle on the cremation ground nearby, where the bodies used to be burnt earlier on. The chief mourner puts half the ghee he has brought into the puddle of the *Doḍḍa du:ve*. The other half of the ghee, he dissolves in the puddle in the cremation ground.[152] All those present go to the stream nearby and wash their hands, legs and mouth and assemble near the puddle in the cremation ground. The chief mourner gives a handful *of batta* to each of them. All of them stand facing east; the eastern side is kept free without any obstruction.[153] The chief mourner or an elderly person offers

---

[151] "Badagas believe that after cremation or burial, the soul immediately starts its travels to the other world and that this light will guide it. They also believe that if the lamp dies down by itself, prosperity will leave the household. Hence, on a normal night, a Badaga pays respect to the lamp but then carefully wxtinguishes it before sleeping (Natesa Sastri 1892: 839)" (Hockings 2001:57, note 23).

[152] The ghee is "put on a leaf and placed on the puddle of water" accoding to Hockings (*ibid.*)

[153] According to Hockings (*ibid.*), the bread is usually on the northern side, "through which the soul may depart".

prayer for the soul of so-and-so to reach heaven (*oḷḷiya lo:gaga se:rali*):

Sa:vu nillili
Ke:ḍu nillili
Sagala oḷḷittu a:gali
Mutte muttappara darma:ndavu:
Hette hettappara darma:ndavu:
Ba:ga bandiga se:rili

(Natesa Sastri 1892: 844; Hockings 1988: 147). Everybody else chants "*o: o:*". The chief mourner casts *batta* over the puddle. Others follow suit. With this the *batta kumbiḍo:du* or *kari taḷḷo:du* ritual gets over. The affines return to the village with the completion of *kari* ceremony.

If cremated, *kari* is usually performed the next day. Water is poured on the embers into a puddle, to completely put the fire out and the charcoal is thoroughly combed for pieces of bone. The bone pieces are collected on kept on *ta:ve* (bracken frond, *Pteris aquilina*) and buried nearby[154], except a few pieces which are usually taken to temples like *Pe:ru:r* where they are immersed in river. Then, ghee is dissolved in the puddle, prayer offered and *batta* sprinkled as narrated above along with the following prayer:

Doḍḍavar kunnavar satti haḍla [hattale?]
A:ka:la:nda i:ka:laga sattavaka satti haḍla [hattale?]
Ku:ta kuḍumba ella onda:gi ho:gali

(Natesa Sastri 1892: 843; Hockings 1988: 147-148).

Tonsuring

The chief mourner and at least two other persons (who have participated in the *akki etto* ceremony, who will have a role to play in the *korumbu* ritual) get their head tonsured immediately. Other persons can get tonsured later on. The senior-most person first handles the knife and removes a lock of hair from the head of the chief mourner. Thereafter, the

[154] The bones in the bracken frond are kept on a white cloth, and "each person touches it. This is the most important act of the day" (*ibid.*).

chief mourner and the other two are tonsured, either by the barber or by other Badagas. Since most of the guests from other villages have to return home after completing the remaining rituals, as little time as possible is taken for tonsuring by restricting the number; others shave their head later, but before the conclusion *of korumbu*. After tonsuring is over, all of them return to the village.

Before returning to the village, peole go to the stream nearby, wash their hands and legs, and sprinkle water over themselves to signify that they have bathed (Hockings 2001: 54).

Oppanda ko:ro:du

On the way to the village, in the place earmarked for this purpose, one or two persons from the bereaved family (usually the tonsured persons) kneel down and bow to the returning crowd and thank them for having conducted the last rites for the dead person and invite them all to a cup of coffee and snacks (*oppanda ko:ro:du*). The villagers bless and raise them.

Di:vige kumbiḍo:du

After the guests finish their food, the *Doḍḍa mane* is swept and wiped clean, and purified with cowdung wash. At the entrance, on the right side of the doorway, a little cow-dung is placed, a depression is made in it and filled with ghee and a few blades of *garikke* are placed on it. A *di:vige* is lighted and kept nearby. All those returning from the burial ground go into the *Doḍḍa mane* without stepping on the doorway, touch the ghee in the cow-dung, salute the *di:vige* and come out. Women do not take part in this ritual. After worshipping, all of them take coffee. With this the *kari jo:li* (*kari*

ritual) comes to an end; arrangements are made for the next ritual, viz. *korumbu*.[155]

[155] Thurston (1906: 198) mentions about a ritual which does not seem to be in vogue now: "The chief mourner then prostrates himself on the ground, and is blessed by all. He and the Toreya then proceed to the house of the deceased. Taking a three-pronged twig of *Rhodomyrtus tomentosus* and placing a minige (*Argyreia,* sp.) leaf on the prongs, he thrusts it into a rubbish heap near the house. He then places a small quantity of sa:mai grain (which is called street food) on the leaf and , after sprinkling it thrice with water, goes away."

CHAPTER 28

Funeral Rites VI: *Korumbu*

The *korumbu*[156] ritual is conducted in the *Doḍḍa mane*. The *sibbilige* or *kerasi* (flat drying basket) and *mora* (winnow), required for the ritual, are kept in the *Doḍḍa mane*.

[156] "The indigenous Badaga belief for all phratries is that the soul's journey begins after its final meal at the *korumbu* ritual. According to some, the soul crosses five seas by itself in aboat. Landing in the other world, it goes through thick jungles and then crosses a chasm on a bridge of threads. This chasm contains seven terrors, including a wide river, a great fire, poisonous snakes, demons, and wild beasts, which are referred to the the litany of sins. The soul comes to a door that is ever closed, and the living relatives pray that it will yield to let the soul enter. If fortunate, the dead thus reches the place of judgment, where a trial is conducted. With a heavy load of sins, a soul may still be relegated to Hell.

Jagor provides further details of Badaga belief:

"The Nilgris were surrounded by a sea, the ring of which however has not entirely closed to the north. There one would find the canal unattainable by mortals, which joins the world of the dead with Mahaloka: across it there is a bridge made of one thred. Fire and frightful monsters terrify the wicked; but whosoever's sins are buried at the feet of Bassava will go across without hindrance. On the slope on our side in a narrow path running down to the bridge, where the Sunkadavanu 'customs official' stands...The sustoms official is a dead person" (Jagor 1914: 50, trans.)." (Hockings 2001: 51, note 5).

Adequate quantity of paddy is also kept in the *Doḍḍa mane*.[157] Sweet peas, beans, two new earthen pots and a vessel are procured and kept ready.

Next to the *di:vige* on the *madilu*, the arched doorway between the inner room (*o:ga mane*) and the outer room (*ida mane*), the *sibbilige* is kept. The chief mourner places three handfuls of paddy on the *sibbilige* and worships the *di:vige* in the *o:ga mane*. He spreads the paddy with the funeral knife he used during *akki etto* ceremony and kneels down and bows to it. Everybody else kneels down and bows to the basket containing paddy. If the dead person is older, they touch the bottom side of the *sibbilige* and pray; if the dead person is younger, they touch the paddy and pray that the soul of the dead may rest in peace. The spouse who performed the *o:le kaṭṭo:* ceremony, waits outside – all by himself if male and with company, if female. The spouse (along with companions) is asked to weep for the dead and he or she does so.

The chief mourner then "cleans the mortar with a brush consisting of a bunch of *hubbe*" (Hockings 2001: 60), puts the paddy from the *sibbilige* into the mortar and converts it into rice by pounding and dehusking it three times. (Usually, a few minutes after the chief mourner starts, others take over and complete the work).[158] While this work is going on, the affines are invited to warm the two new pots (*maḍakke kanappadu).159* "Some sticks of the false bog-myrtle [*moranda*]

---

[157] Adequate stock of paddy for this ritual (50 kgs for the whole year) is procured along with the requirement of the *devva mane* and kept in the *dodda mane*.

[158] "Some grain is left in the pounding hole, beside which the brush now lies. A brass tumbler of water is left all night on top of this grain; it is for the departing soul to drink" (Hockings 2001: 60).

[159] According to Hockings (2001: 59), one of the two pots is warmed by an old man from the bereaved family and another by the *naṭṭa*s.

are used to make a fire" (Hockings 2001:59). According to Natesa Sastri (1892:841) and Hockings (1988: 146) the following prayer is offered at this point:

Enduna tinnuda,
Nanga muttavar naḍake
Beṭṭavar naḍake
Nanga naḍadana:
Hostu haḷadalle
Haḷadu hostale
Tala hotta ganḍille
Mola hetta heṇṇille
Ja:tige: se:rili
Janage: se:rili
Kulage: se:rili
Kovu:

The affines place the pots on the hearth and when it warms, everybody chants "*o: o:*" and blesses the pots:

Ha:leccali
Haṇeccali
Kuḍi haccali
Paileccali

(Natesa Sastri 1892: 840; Hockings 1988: 359).

The chief mourner and the two tonsured persons take the two pots and the vessel and fetch fresh water from the water source (*aḷḷa jo:ṇi*). Before filling water, "the pots are cleaned with cow-dung, and rubbed over with the culms of geranium or lemon grass" (Hockings 2001:59). While returning, they carry *su:ṭṭe*, lighted dry *ba:mbe* grass.[160]

In one of the pots, the cleaned rice, peas and beans are cooked.[161] Water is boiled in the other pot. In the meantime, three *tekkes*, or crude wheels, are made from *ba:mbe* grass and

[160] In earlier days, the entire *korumbu* ritual was conducted during the night. Hence, to see the path and to keep away the evil spirits, *su:te* was used; despite conducting the ritual in the evening nowadays, the practice lingers on.

[161] Cooked without any salt; a small amount of rice that has been especially preserved form the grain-placing ritual [*akki ettodu*] is also added according to Hockings (2001: 60).

kept ready. Adequate dry *ba:mbe* grass is kept apart for making *su:ṭṭe*.

After alerting others and ensuring their readiness, the cooked food is mixed around with a new twig of *jakkala* (common Nilgiri barberry, *Berberis tinctoria*), and poured into the *ganguva* (the bronze eating plate) using the *jakkala* stick. The place earmarked in the outer yard of the *dodda mane* for conducting *korumbu* is sprinkled with water (*toppido:du*) and purified. The three *tekkai*s are kept there. The chief mourner brings a little food in his funeral knife and drops it carefully on one of the *tekke*s saying "this is for *hette hettappa*". He bows to the food on the *tekke*, carefully lifts it and places it over the roof. Then he comes back in, takes another portion of food with his knife, keeps it on the second *tekke* saying, "this is for *mutte muttappa*". He bows to it, and places the *tekke* on the roof again. He takes the third portion of the food with his knife, places it on the third *tekke*, saying, "this is for *ba:ga bandi* and so-and-so who died to-day (*idu ba:ga bandiga; indu satta …ga*)",[162] worships and keeps it over the roof. All the three *tekke*s on the roof are then covered with the *sibbilige*. During the entire ritual, a bell is kept ringing; and women keep wailing continuously. After the *tekke*s are covered with the *sibbilige*, the women are asked not to weep any more. The chief mourner and the two persons who fetched the water, come in and eat one or two handfuls of the remaining food. While the chief mourner continues to eat slowly, the other two come out. One of them gets on the roof; the other one wraps one end of a bedsheet around his waist and holds the other end ready to receive the *tekke*s; the person on the roof-top carefully drops the *tekke*s into the sheet. Both of them are asked to drop them beyond the *sa:vu aṇe* and return immediately without looking

[162] "Ta:yi tandega, Hette hettappaga, Mutte muttappaga" as per Hockings (1988: p. 145).

back. Both of them go towards the *sa:vu aṇe* shouting "*oh oh*", one person with the *tekkes* in his person and the other person with the lighted *su:ṭṭe* in hand. People on the way clear away on hearing them. They go beyond the *sa:vu aṇe*, throw away the *tekke*s and return to the *Doḍḍa mane* without looking back.[163] They join the chief mourner in eating the food; ghee is mixed with the food and everyone present, joins them and eat a little from the plate. "This eating is called the eating of the *hinḍiya ku:ḷu.*[164] The plate is cleaned and kept apart.

It is ensured that all, particularly the affines, have been fed. Thereafter, the *Doḍḍa mane* is thoroughly cleaned. From the spouse, who had performed *o:le kaṭṭo:* ceremony, the funeral knife is got back, cleaned and kept in the *Doḍḍa mane*; and he or she is asked to get back home and have a bath. The knife of the chief mourner and other items used for the rituals are all got back, cleaned and kept in safe custody. The chief mourner is asked to take a bath in the *Doḍḍa mane*. He either takes bath there or sprinkles a few drops of water over his head and takes a bath subsequently at his home. With this the *korumbu* ritual comes to an end. Until the *korumbu* is over, the *di:vige* should continuously burn in the grieving house.

---

[163] A parallel can be found in the funeral rites of Brahmins: "The sacred fire is lighted, and ghee, a small quantity of raw and cooked rice, and vegetables are offered up in the fire. The Brahmans then wash their feet, and are fed. Before they enter the space set apart for the meal, water, gingelly, and rice are sprinkled about it, to keep off evil spirits. As soon as the meal is finished, a ball of rice, called vayasa pindam (crow's food) is offered to the pithru de:vatas (ancestors of three generations), and thrown to the crows. If they do not eat the rice, the omens are considered to be unfavourable" (Thurston 1906: 136-137).

[164] *Hindiya kulu*—the tasting of funeral rice…is considered a great sign of attachment and caste union. He who does not partake of this rice is neither a good friend nor a relation (Hockings 1988: p. 263).

"On the following morning a handful of straw is pulled out of the thatch (but today has to come from somewhere else, as roofs are tiled) and is lit inside the outer room to remove pollution. The family members and other close relatives of the deceased do not bathe untile the entire funerary ritual is over" (Hockings 2001: 60).[165]

The entire expenditure for funeral ceremony is, as already mentioned, met by the village community. If some of the guests stay back, food for them is provided by the bereaved family and not by the village community.

Enguva korumbu

If the deceased is an elderly person, the women of the *kuḍumba*, i.e., women born in the *kuḍumba* and married out, jointly organise the *enguva korumbu* the next day. It is more in the nature of a family get-together than a ritual. The bereaved family and all their close relatives are invited and a fairly lavish dinner is thrown for them by the women relatives. The bereaved family, in turn, provide gifts to the women, according to their capacity, in the form of new clothes. No particular rites are performed during this day. If the dead person in not very old, usually there is no *enguva korumbu*.

Ka:ḍu sa:vu

---

[165] Paying *tella:tti* to the bereaved family by relatives is an essential requirement: Affines of the dead must make an offering, called *tella:ti*. It can be presented at any time right up to the morning after the *korumbu* ritual. For dead children, the gift may be cash; for adults, either cash or foodstuff, generally rice. Traditionally, the minimum sum for a dead child was 1 rupee and the maximum price was 10 rupees; for adults, the mimimum was 5 rupees and the maximum 100, or else an offering ranging from one-half to two bags of rice was made. A wealthy donor might give bags of beans or *dhall* (legumes) instead. But the *tella:ti* is not really an outright gif and records are kept of what is given by everybody; these offering will have to be returned at some later funeral (Hockings 2001: note 11).

In olden days, when somebody died outside the village (*ka:ḍu sa:vu*), his body was not brought to the house or the *Doḍḍa mane*. Instead, it was directly taken to the *sa:vu aṇe* and all the rituals, without exception, were done there. The body was then taken to the burial ground as usual and buried there like any other death. Nowadays, since a large number of Badagas live in towns and many of them wish to be buried in their native villages, their bodies are brought and kept in the *sa:vu keri* (i.e., the yard of the *Doḍḍa mane*) and all the rituals are conducted treating them on par with locals.

Bara sa:vu

If sometimes, the body of a dead person becomes unavailable, a handful of mud from the last known area of his survival or a piece of cloth or any other item used by him is brought, and it is treated as a proxy for the dead body; it is kept in a cot, covered with a cloth and all the rituals are performed.[166]

---

[166] The following is the description of Hockings (2001) on *Ka:du sa:vu* and *bara sa:vu:* "If a person dies outside his hamlet (*hatti*), the corpse can be carried back to the hamlet from elsewhere in the same commune (*u:r*), but if he dies beyond the commune boundaries, it can never be brought back. In such a case the corpse is burnt or buried at the proper place in the hamlet in which the person died (this is called *ka:du sa:vu*, forest funeral) or else is disposed of at the main grounds of the commune to swhich that particular hamlet belongs. In all such cases, and also in the burial of an infant, in which no rituals are performed, people come to the household later to express their condolences."

"The relatives, however, bring back a handful of earth from that cremation or burial ground and later use it in a "dry funeral." For this ceremony the earth is tied in a cloth to the neck of a walking stick, and all the usual funerary rituals are then performed on the stick. If a person is eaten by tiger, carried away in a flood, buried by government authorization after an autopsy, or burned as a plague victim (such that no corpse remains), the rituals can be performed over some object that the deceased was fond of or over a walking stick, in the case of man, or a headband, in the case of a woman. And in earlier times, if a man disappeared, his

Death on a festival day

Another contingency is death occurring on a festival day. On no account, the festival is postponed. In earlier periods, the body was kept covered for two or even three days for burial, till the festival was over. But in instances of unnatural death, the relatives do not want to keep the body till the festival is over. When the temple is open, the body cannot be kept in the *saːvu keːri*, which is quite close to the temple. Under such circumstances, the body is never brought to the *saːvu keːri*, but directly taken to the *saːvu aṇe* instead and the rituals are completed in a hurry, almost like a *kaːḍu saːvu*, without the festival being hindered in any way. Those taking part in the rituals, do not attend the temple as a rule.

Manavale, the memorial of the dead

relatives would wait 12 years to see if he might return. After that they held the dry funeral using a stick in place of the corpse. (Should he return, he was isolated from the community until a ritual or reinstatement had been performed)" (Hockings 2001: 4-5, note 10).

CHAPTER 29

Badaga Funeral Rites: a Relook[167]

Is there life after death? This is the million-dollar question agitating the minds of men ever since *homo sapiens* evolved, and will continue to haunt them till the last man on earth breathes his last.

Not surprisingly, the central theme of most religions is death and life-after-death. Each religon offers its own speculations on how the world will end and descriptions of after-life. These constitute the *eschatology* of that religion.

Man has always found it difficult to accept that death is the definitive end of human life. He tended to believe that "something of the individual person survives the experience of dying." Consequently, disposal of the dead has been given special significance throughout history and in every human society. Not only was it significant but was of a ritual kind from the earliest times. "Paleolithic peoples, such as the Neanderthals and later groups, not only buried their dead but provided them with food, weapons, and other equipment, thereby implying a belief that the dead still needed such things in the grave..." (Encycopaedia Britannica Online).

Mortuary rituals and funerary customs of a society reflect its evaluations of the afterlife, the practical measures taken to assist the dead reach its destiny and also to save the living from the onslaughts of the dead if perchance the dead

---

[167] This chaper draws heavily from the *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*.

get transformed into something dreadful and abominable (like devils or demons) (*ibid.*).

Consequently, proper performance of funerary rites was considered essential for the dead to reach the place or condition to which they properly belonged (*ibid.*).

Two views of the nature of man and the life after death

The escatologies of different religions can be broadly divided into two categories or schools of thought:

(1) According to the first school, an individual person is a psychophysical organism, i.e., he has both a material (physical, the body) and a nonmaterial component (soul, or whatever we may prefer to call it, the psychic), which are inseparable. Death shatters both the physical and psychic compoents. For an afterlife, both body and the nonmaterial component have to be revived. Failure of the physical and nonmaterial components to come together may result in unhappy consequences, both for the dead and the alive – like the devils, which are but disembodied souls, are not only disconted themselves, but a veritable danger to the living.

(2) As per the second school, an individual person comprises an inner essential self or soul, which is nonmaterial, and a physical body; the soul is essentially immortal and exists even before the body was formed. At death the soul leaves the body; whether it remains disembodied or takes on a new body (rebirth or reincarnation or transmigratin of souls or metempsychosis) depends on whether it has fulfilled what has been prescribed by his religion for achieving salvation. Here again, the disembodied soul may be disconted and dangerous. Hinduism and Buddhism are the prime examples of this school of thought (*ibid.*).

Mortuary rituals of socities which believe in the first school of thought pay particular attention to providing for both the body and the soul to perform the journey to, and for

the life in, the afterworld. Comparatively, the rituals of societies believing in the second school of thought are less elaborate.

Badaga view of afterlife

Badaga rituals in the bygone era seem to suggest that Badaga society perhaps belonged more to the first school of thought than the second one. Writing in mid-19th century, Metz (1864: 82) observers that "the concluding protion of the [*karu harasuvadu*] poem clearly proves that the Badagas believe in a future state; and...there are no traces of their belief in the common Hindu doctrine of metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls" (Metz 1864: 82).

But, the strong influence of Hinduism in subsequent years is clearly visible. Writing almost a century and half later, Hockings (1988: 366) observes that "Badagas believe in a series of seven births, only one of which (and not necessarily the final one) will be as a person. The other six incarnations will be in the form of animals. One birth-form can have an influence on the next one; and thus a man's character can be determined at least in part by whether he had been previously born, for example, as perhaps a jackal or a lion." A careful study of Badaga mortuary rituals throws no hint at all on transmigration of souls; on the contrary, there is ample evidences for a belief in life in the other world; as a result, the rituals pay particular attention to the preparation of and provision for the body. Later-day ballads of course are replete with references to dead persons condemned to rebirths as plants or animals, indicating a belief in transmigration of souls.

Geography of the afterlife and the means of approach to the afterworld

Many religions provide graphic description of the afterworld. Most of them also believe in the idea that the

dead had to make a journey to the other world. "...The oldest evidence occurs in the Egyptian Pyramid Texts (c. 2375-c.2200 BC) ...and images. The dead *pharaoh* flies up to heaven to join the sun-god *Re*, in his solar boat, on his unceasing voyage across the sky, or he joins the circumpolar stars, known as the "Imperishable Ones," or he ascends a ladder to join the gods in heaven."

"Later Egyptian funerary texts depict the way to the next world as beset by awful perils: fearsome monsters, lakes of fire, gates that cannot be passed except by the use of magical formulas, and a sinister ferryman whose evil intent must be thwarted by magic."

"The idea of crossing water en route to the other world, which first appears in Egyptian eschatology, occurs in the eschatological topography of other religions, as was noted above. Many mythologies describe journeys to the underworld; they invariably reflect the fear felt for the grim experience that was believed to await the dead. Ancient Mesopotamian literature records the visit of the goddess *Ishtar* to the realm of the dead, the way to which was barred by gates. At each gate the goddess was deprived of some article of her attire, so that she was naked when she finally came before *Ereshkigal*, the queen of the underworld..."

"To assist that grim journey, various aids have been provided. Thus, on some Egyptian coffins of the 11th dynasty, a plan of the "Two Ways" to the underworld was painted, and from the New Kingdom period (c. 1567-1085 BC), copies of the Book of the Dead, containing spells for dealing with perils encountered en route, were placed in the tombs..."

"More practical equipment for the journey to the next world was provided for the Greek and Roman dead: in addition to the money to pay *Charon* for their passage across

the *Styx*, they were provided with honey cakes for *Cerberus*, the fearsome dog that guarded the entrance to *Hades*."[168]

"The idea that the dead had to cross some barrier that divided the land of the living from that of the dead also occurs in many religions: the Greeks and Romans believed that the dead were ferried across an infernal river, the *Acheron* or *Styx*, by a demonic boatman called *Charon*, for whose payment a coin was placed in the mouth of the deceased; in Zoroastrianism the dead cross the **Bridge of the Requiter** (*Cinvato Paratu*); bridges figure also in Muslim and Scandinavian eschatologies – the *Sirat bridge* and the *bridge over the Gjöll River* (*Gjallarbrú*)—and Christian folklore knew of a *Brig o' Dread*, or *Brigo' Death*" (*ibid.*).

The geography of Badaga afterworld and the means of approaching it

Surprisingly, many such ideas occur in the Badaga belief system. The concluding portion of the *Karu harasuvadu* recital during Badaga funerals goes like this:

Nu:la pa:la bigiyali:
Muḷḷu mora moṭṭa:gali
U:na: be:yu muccali
Uriya kamba taṇiyali
Sinnada go:ḍega se:rali
Beḷḷiya go:ḍega orasali
Naragada aḍi muccali
Saggada aḍi tariyali
Savundara neriyali
Sivana pa:daga se:rali"

which roughly gets translated as:

"Let the *thread* bridge become stronger

[168] There is a remarkable coincidence between this Greek and Roman belief and the Badaga belief (see previous chapters regarding *sinnada hana* and the snacks for the dead. Similarly, the expanse of water and a bridge across it, appearing in subsequent paragraphs, also find place in the Badaga beliefs.

Let the thorny trees become smooth
Let the pit of worms be closed
Let the burning pillar be cooled
Let him reach the golden walls
Let his body rub the silver walls
Let the doors of the Hell close
Let the doors of Heaven open
Let the ocean fill up
Let his soul reach the feet of Shiva."

Thus, in the Badaga after-world, there is a Hell, and a Heaven as well; the walls of the heavenly abode are plated with gold and silver; but before reaching this other world, the soul has to cross an ocean through a bridge made of thread; if the soul fails in this attempt, it may end up in a thorny bush or a pit full of worms and dragons or a burning pillar.

"According to some [Badagas], the soul crosses five seas by itself in a boat. Landing in the other world, it goes through thick jungles and then crosses a chasm on a bridge of threads. This chasm contains seven terrors, including a wide river, a great fire, poisonous snakes, demons, and wild beasts, which are referred to in the litany of sins. The soul comes to a door that is ever closed, and the living relatives pray that it will yield to let the soul enter. If fortunate, the dead thus reches the place of judgment, where a trial is conducted. With a heavy load of sins, a soul may still be relegated to Hell" (Hockings 2001: 51, note 5).

"The Nilgris were surrounded by a sea, the ring of which however has not entirely closed to the north. There one would find the canal unattainable by mortals, which joins the world of the dead with *Mahaloka*: across it there is a bridge made of one thread. Fire and frightful monsters terrify the wicked; but whosoever's sins are buried at the feet of Bassava will go across without hindrance. On the slope on our side in a narrow path running down to the bridge, where the

Sunkadavanu 'customs official' stands...The sustoms official is a dead person" (Jagor 1914: 50)" (translation by Hockings 2001: 51, note 5).

How is that ancient Badagas thought that the Nilgiris was surrounded by sea? We have to remind ourselves that before the advent of the British in the 1820s, the Nilgiris was a virtual island unmolested by marauding immigrants. The indigenous community was very small in size and its mobility highly limited. Journey up or down the hills was hazardous - malarial swamps were innumerable, man-eaters were rampant and the passes leading up the mountains were too steep to climb. No wonder, Mukurthy precipice at the end of *Malla:ḍu* (*Male na:ḍu*, the present day Wenlock Downs) marked the end of the world for Badagas and they believed earnestly that the dead go through Malla:du to the yonder sea across the bottomless pit over a thread bridge.

These themes are repeated in many a Badaga ballad. Let us see some extracts from the ballads of *Hattitippe* and *Bale*:

"The woman *Hattitippe*, having a desire to see the other world, stood between the Neilgherries and the invisible world, and thus addressed herself to her companion [*Ariyamande*]: 'O brother! There, near the road leading to the plains is a fiery pillar and a river: from one shore to the other there is a bridge of thread; what is it?' 'The house you see here is the abode of the blliss, and the one you there is the place of woe' (Metz 1864: 82-85).

And in "The story of Bale", the Bale sisters ask the angels:"...tell us, what pillar of fire is that on yonder hill-side?" The angels reply: "The wicked have erected it, and if you have committed a crime you must embrace the fiery pillar, and be burnt to ahes. They will cast you into hell, and the raven-mouthed giant will torture and devour you..." They went forward and approached the thread-bridge: and saw the mouth

of the dragon, and drew near to the fiery pillar...[A]s they came near the fiery pillar, the fire god got hold of them and consumed them, and the five angels cast them into hell. There the raven-mouthed giant tortured them, and the dragon of hell preyed upon them; and after seven days he immersed them in oil and burned them on seven piles of wood..." (Metz 1864:99-103).

What awaits the dead in the Badaga afterworld?

In *Hattitippe*, there is catalogue of what awaits the sinners and the virtuous:

- The cattle of those who died without proper funeral rites lapses to the Government of the invisible world.
- Those who committed suicide by hanging themselves hang from a tree, with ropes round their necks, for ever.
- Those who killed themselves by eating opium must water the opium garden till they die.
- Those who ill-treated widows and took away their property and levied money from the poor, are put in a noisome ditch with nothing to eat; instead of meat they have only tobacco to smoke.
- The virtuous - those who tilled their own land and assisted others in their labour without envy; who gave alms to those who came; who fed the hungry and made a fire to warm those who were cold; who clothed the naked and relieved the poor; should they sow their seed upon a rock, they would nevertheless reap a bountiful harvest - have beautiful fields of grain (in the afterworld) with ears an ell in length, and thick as a potter's vessel.

- Those who, when the cattle of strangers strayed, took them back to their rightful owners in the earth, have [in the after world] their hair nicely smoothed; have a cloth around their loins; have washed in warm water, and go to milk their buffaloes. They have a large milk vessel and yet they milk it entirely full!
- Those who, when they were taking a meal and saw a beggar coming, hid their food from him, fall into a ditch, and in answers to their cries for food are told to eat mud.
- The virtuous, who acted according to the wisdom of God work as Munshees (scribes) in the other world.
- Women who went astray are bound to a tree and they are always talking to themselves without having any one to listen to them; and have nothing to eat and nothing to cover them (Metz 1864: 99-103).

***Karu harasuvadu* – the transference of evil**

Thus, the Badagas believed in a life in the other world, and the life of the blessed resembled very much their life in this world: they had an abundance of cattle and milk, excellent crops and other luxuries like good cloth and warm water to bathe. But this blissful existence required the dead person not tainted by sin. Badaga society wished every dying person heaven; that is why the entire burden of sins was sought to be transferred to the buffalo-calf through the *karu haraso:* ritual.

From whom did Badagas get this concept? No other community in India seems to have this ritual, except a few other Nilgiri communities which have apparently borrowed this idea from the Badagas. But, surprisingly, there is a striking similarity between this *karu harasuvadu* ritual and the Jewish scape-goat ritual. Here is an excerpt from Gover:

"...read the book of Leviticus, and then compare the history of the scape-goat with that of the Badaga buffalo. "He shall bring the live goat, and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities, into a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." Is not this the exact scene that takes place each year on the Neilgherry hills? In the solemn gathering of the people, the loud rehearsing of the sin, and the still more awful reply of the great crowd, we see, combined with the touching ceremony of the scape-goat, the greatest and most solemn gathering in Judain history after the thunders and lightnings of Sinai,- whn half the people stood on Gerizim and half on Ebal" (Gover 1871: 77-78).

Did Badagas borrow this idea from Jews? The probabilities are remote. It appears to be a strange coincidence. But, the fact remains that there were Jewish presence in Malabar, not far from the Nilgiris, a few centuries ago. And there are reports that Badagas were in possession of Roman coins which Badagas made use of during their funerary rituals.[169] If these reports are true, it will be interesting to unearth through which connection they got hold of those coins.

Types of sins transferred

What are the types of sins which are sought to be absolved? There are three hundred possible sins - sins against

[169] See Price (1908: ?) and Breeks (1873:?)

humanity at large, sins against immediate community, sins against close relatives, sins against animals and plants, sins against sun, moon and elements of nature like waterways and fire, sins of jeopardizing agricultural and grazing interests of the community, sins of personal immorality and so on. The Badaga prayer is that even an inveterate sinner, who has committed all the three hundred sins, be absolved of all his sins so that he too reaches the feet of Shiva, back to where he came from.

Parallels from other Nilgiri communities

As already pointed out, Badaga funerary rituals seem to indicate a belief in the body proper or an image of it, reaching the other world where it continues to lead a "normal" life, with the full complement of buffaloes, milking, ploughing and harvesting. Interestingly, many other Nilgiri communities also have a similar belief. Todas, for example, used to sacrifice a number of buffaloes during their funerals and made the corpse touch the horns of the dead buffaloes. They used to chase the buffaloes round and round the *to:* (krall, the buffalo pound), not unlike the present day *Jallikattu*, before subduing and slaughtering them. Similarly, pouring milk into the mouth of the dead was also an important ritual for them. While interpreting these rituals, Marshalls (187?), Rivers (1906) and ?? (1986) hold that Todas believe in an after-world called *Amno:r* (the Badaga equivalent for which is *A: naḍu*, 'that country') and the sacrificed buffaloes were believed to accompany the dead to the other world for his use there. If we make an assumption that Badagas also had a similar belief – along the lines of Gover (1871: 79), "according to Badaga belief, the soul carries with it an "eidolon" or image of its earthly body, capable of bearing pain and delighting in pleasure" - and have a relook at their rituals, many of them fall in place and their symbolism and meanings become clear.

A relook at Badaga funeral rites

Immediately after death, the "person" should be prepared and provided with, for the long journey. He or she has to be dressed up for the journey; hence the new clothes. He or she should be fed well for the arduous journey; hence *ba:ti akki* and butter or ghee. Expenses *en route*, including payment to the toll-man, have to be met; hence *sinnada haṇa* is provided and coins thrown. He or she should carry all his or her implements and knickknacks for use in the next world; hence walking sticks, pounding sticks, ladles, tobacco, flute and even hair-do (*savuri*). Snacks are also provided, in large enough quantity for self and for bribing the prowling demons.

Let us take the *da:na batta e:rodu* or *ḍu: Iḍappadu* ritual next (see page xx). Two interpretations are possible: (1) It is a charitable gesture by the dead of distributing foodgrain to the needy all around; of (2) the departing person should also take along his oxen or buffalo for milking and ploughing and should have enough grains for sowing in the next world (as we assumed in an earlier paragraph). The calf is "handed over" to the dead (the corpse is made to "hold" the horns). The calf goes through the motion of ploughing – going round the cot – with five measures of *batta* spilling all around the "ploughed" area, symbolizing sowing. A few of his choicest milch buffaloes are (symbolically) sent along in the *a:lu buḍo:du* or *a:lu hi:njo:du* ceremony (in earlier days, a milking buffalo of the dead person was actually brought for the ritual and the corpse was made to touch its udders, symbolizing milking). If we also agree with earlier writers like Thurston (1906: 190), Morike (1857:60, quoted by Hockings 2001: 21, note 32) and Belli Gowder (1923) that the buffalo was chased and caught in the Toda fashion, we may explain why the ritual is called *to: Iḍappadu* (which might have corrupted in course of time as *ḍu: Iḍappadu*). The village community also provides the *vima:na* or

te:r for performing the journey (symbolized by the *guḍikaṭṭu* or *gu:ḍara*).

But before undertaking such a long journey, he or she has to be given a fitting farewell. The immediate family members give the send-off in the house itself, by providing him with rice and milk, thanking him for all he has done for them throughout his life.

The affines (*naṭṭas*) give their send-off at the *sa:vu keri*. A chariot for the journey and a procession accompanied by dance and music befitting a royal tour are ensured ("*mattiya lo:ga:nda ma: lo:gaga te:ru tiruppati hondige payaṇa*", as narrated in the *karu haraso:* recital). *Naṭṭas* and grandchildren also offer new clothes (*muccugu si:le* and *pu:kasu*).

The spouse sees him or her off at the *sa:vu aṇe*. After a final procession resembling a marrige procession to the accompaniment of the chants of "O hau kau", the widow, dressed in new clothes and jewels, finally returns all the jewels provided by the dead husband during the *ta:li* or *kaṇṇi kaṭṭo:du* ceremony to him, and the *kaṇṇi* or *ta:li* on her neck is broken by the brother of the dead husband during the *O:le kaṭṭo:* ceremony signifying the end of marriage ties; and she expresses a warm "thank you" by placing rice, ghee, grass and buffalo (symbolized by the buffalo-horned knife), at his feet and then bowing down as a mark of respect. A widower also gives the final send-off to her dead wife.

But then, why is this ritual called *O:le kaṭṭo:du*? Is it to contra-distinguish it from *kaṇṇi kaṭṭo:du*, its opposite? Or is it a sort of assurance – symbolically scripted on the *O:le* regarding taking care of the children? Or, as Belli Gowder (1923) mentions, is it a "forget-me-not" gesture by the widow? Or, "I am with you" gesture by the widower? We are not sure and no explanations are available.

The entire village community then bids farewell to the departed member; the younger generation thanking the dead

for his or her services to the village society by repaying him or her with rice, ghee, and grass. But what is the significance of the funeral knives? Interestingly, Todas also have a ritual knife almost similar to their Badaga counterpart. Experts on Toda culture like Marshall () and Rivers (1906) hold that these knives are symbolic representations of buffaloes ("buffalo-horned" knives). If we make a similar assumption regarding Badaga funerary knives, then the inescapable conclusion is that the *akki etto* ceremony is a counterpart of the *da:na batta e:ro:du* ceremony: while in the former, the family provides the requirements of the dead, in the latter, the community, on its part, offers buffaloes, grass and grain to the dead.

The sisters of the dead take leave of and pray for the safe journey of the dead through the *e:kaṭṭo:du* and *oppaṇe ke:ppadu* ceremonies.

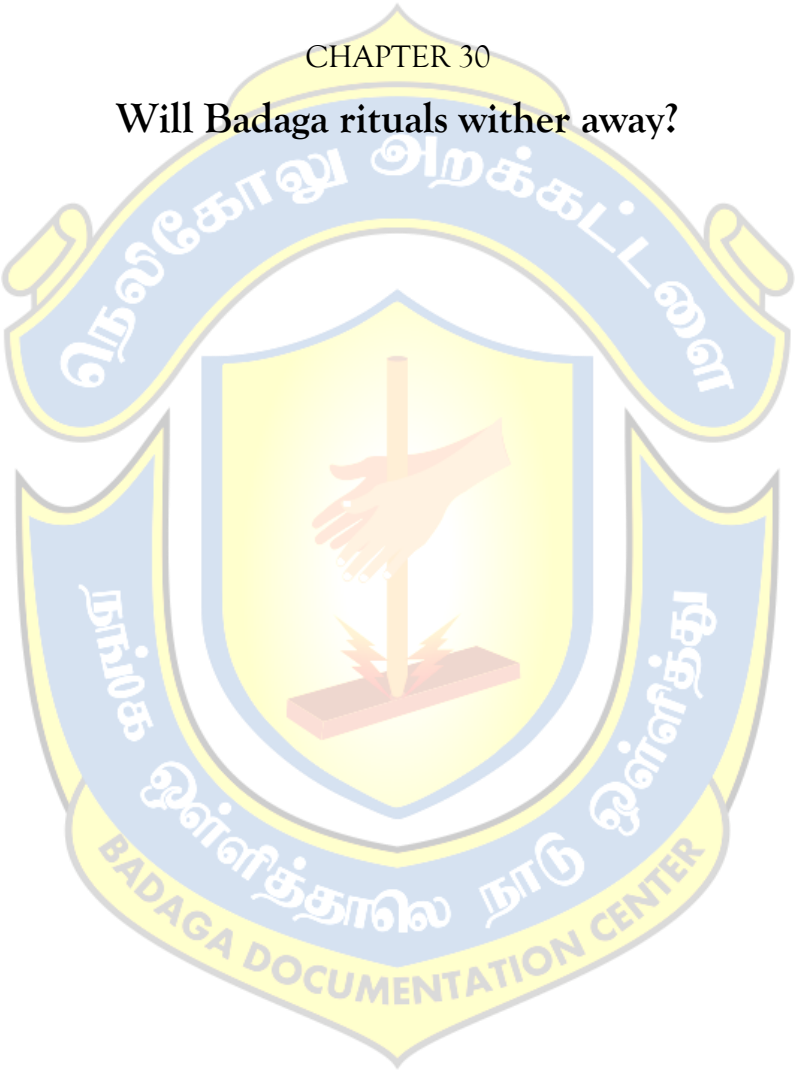
After ensuring that his physical body returns to the earth again and the breath given by Lord Shiva returns to Shiva again (by cremation or burial - "*maṇṇuna kaṭṭe maṇṇuga se:du, ma:yada kaṭṭe sivaga se:rali*"), light is provided by his family members throughout the night to facilitate the journey. In the *ha:laṭṭo: – kari taḷḷo:* ceremony, the soul is again provided with milk and ghee, grass for his cattle and five measures of grain for sowing with a strong prayer that it should join its ancestors and should not expect further company from the village for his journey (i.e., there should be no further deaths).

By the final *korumbu* ritual, the soul has already reached the Heaven and joined its ancestors. (Is the term '*korumbu*' a corruption of the Tamil *karuma:di*?) It is widely believed that *korumbu* represents the "last supper" given by the community to the dead and their ancestors who specially come for the ceremony to partake of the dinner. In the *korumbu* ritual, the *sibbilige* or *kerasi*, the flat drying basket fixed overhead in olden-day Badaga kitchens, plays a central role. If we take a leap in the dark and make a bold assumption that the *kerasi*

symbolicallyl represents the sky (or heaven, because it is broad and flat and found over our heads), then many of the *korumbu* rituals can be explained. The *kerasi* is placed on the *madilu*, near the lighted lamp, which traditionally represented God. Thus the symbolism appears to be that in the heaven, the dead person is comfortably placed with a lot of paddy (a grain superior to the *korali* or *sa:me* it had access to in this world) to grow and is helped in ploughing his fields by a lot of buffaloes (the symbolic gesture of spreading the paddy around with the buffalo-horned knife). The worshipping of the *kerasi* by all those present – persons older than the dead touching the top-side of the *kerasi* and persons younger than the dead touching the underneath – give further credence to the above assumption. That the departed soul, *hette hettappa* and *mutte muttappa* are all believed to partake in the final feast is clear from the prayers and the fact that the *kerasi* is placed over the balls of food in the *tekkes* kept on rooftops. The commensality, all persons eating as equals from the same plate after feeding the ancestors resembles very much the ceremonial eating at the *Doḍḍa mane* during the *uppaṭṭo: habba* (see chapter xx). The left overs are fed to the demons and crows.

CHAPTER 30

Will Badaga rituals wither away?



Holagudi - maturing

All Badaga villages, except those of the Udayas, have a hut called holagudi, for the exclusive use of women during their monthly periods. A few months before a girl is expected to reach puberty, she is sent to the holagudi, on a Friday, four or five days before the new moon day. This is done lest, in the ordinary course of events, the first menstruation should commence on an inauspicious day. The girl remains in the holagudi one night, and returns home on the following day clad in new cloths, leaving the old ones in the hut. When she arrives at her house, she salutes all the people who are there, and receives their blessing. On Sunday, the goes to the houses of her relations, where she is given kadalai (cicer arietinum) and other food. She may not enter the inner apartment of her house until she has seen the crescent moon. Badaga women observe five days menstrual pollution. If a woman discovers her condition before washing her face in the early morning, that day is included in the pollution period. Otherwise, the period must be prolonged over six days. On the third day she bathes in cold water, using the bark of Pouzolzia (thorekolu), and on the fourth day is allowed a change of clothing after a bath. On this day she leaves the hut, and passes a portion of the night in the verandah of her house. After cooking and eating her evening meal, she bathes, and enters the outer room. Early on the following morning, the spot, which she has occupied, is cleaned, and she bathes in a stream. Returning home, she eats her food in the outer room, where she remains till next morning. Even children may not be touched by a menstruating woman. If, by chance, this happens the child must be washed to remove the pollution, before it can be handled by others. This restriction is apparently not observed by any other tribe or caste (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:102-103).

Marriage – early days

Writing concerning marriage among the Badagas, Harkness states that "it is said to be common for one who is in want of labourers to promise his daughter in marriage to the son or other relative of a neighbour not in circumstances so flourishing as himself. And, these engagements being entered into, the intended bridegroom serves the father of his betrothed as one of his own family till the girl comes of age, when the marriage is consummated, and he becomes a partner in the general property of the family of his father-in-law."

A man may marry a girl belonging to the same village as himself, if he and she are not members of the same exogamous sept. In most cases, however, all the inhabitants of a village are of the same sept, and a man has to take as his wife a girl from a village other than his own.

Among all sections of the Badagas, adult marriage is the general rule, though infrant marriage is also practiced. Marriage is preceded by a simple form of courtship, but the consent of the parents to the union is necessary. A girl does not suffer in reputation if she is rejected by a number of suitors, before she finally settles down. Except among the Udayas, the marriage ceremony is of a very simple nature. A day or two before that fixed for taking the girl to the house of her husband select, the latter proceeds to her village, accompanies by his brothers, who, as a token of respect, touch the feet of all the Badagas who are assembled. The bride is taken to the house of the bridegroom, accompanies by the Kota band. Arrived there, she stands at the entrance, and her mother-in-law or sister-in-law brings water in a vessel, and pours it into her hands thrice. Each time she lets the water fall over her feet. The mother in law then ties round her neck

a string of beads (male mani), and leads her to the outer room (edumane), where cooked samai (Panicum miliare) and milk is given to her. This she pretends to eat, and the bridegroom's sister gives her water to wash her hands with. The bridge and two married women or virgins (preferably the bridegroom's sisters) go to a stream in procession, accompanies by the Kota musicians, and bring therefrom water for cooking purposes in decorated new pots. The bridge then salutes all her new relations, and they in turn give her their blessing. The ceremonial concludes with a feast, at the conclusion of which, in some cases, the bridge and bridegroom sit on the raised veranada (pial), and receive presents (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:103-105).

kanni

A ceremony is performed in the seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy, which is important, inasmuch as it seals the marriage contract, and, after its performance, divorce can only be obtained through the decree of the Panchayat (tribal council). Moreover, if it has not been performed, a man cannot claim the paternity of the child. The ceremony is called kanni kattodu or kanni hakodu (thread tying or throwing). The husband and wife are seated in the middle of those who have assembled for the occasion, and the former asks his father in low whether he may throw the thread round his wife's neck, and, having received permission, proceeds to do so. If he gets the thread, which must have no knots in it, entangled in the woman's bunch of hair (kondai), which is made large for the occasion by the addition of false hair, he is fined three rupees. On the day of the ceremony, the man and his wife are supposed to be under pollution, and sit in the verandah to receive presents. The mats used by them for sleeping on are cleaned on the following morning, and they

get rid of the pollution by bathing (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:108-109).

Child birth – earlier times

A first confinement must not take place within the house, and the verandah is converted into a lying in chamber, from which the woman is, after delivery, removed to the outer apartment, where she remains till she is free from pollution by catching sight of the crescent moon (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:109).

Bringing the child to father's house

If a woman has been delivered at her father's house, she returns to the home of her husband within a month of the birth of the child on an auspicious day. On arrival there, the infant is placed near the feet of an old man standing by a lamp within the milk house. Placing his right hand over the head of the infant, the old man blesses it, and a feast is held, before the commencement of which two cups, one containing milk, and the other cooked rice, are produced. All the relations take up a little of the milk and rice, and touch the tongue of the baby with them (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:109).

Naming

A child receives its name on the seventh, ninth or eleventh day. A sumptuous meal is given to the community, and the grandfather (paternal, if possible) milks a cow, and pours the milk into a brass cup placed in the milk house. With it a little cooked samai grain is mixed. The babe is washed with water brought from a stream; marked on the forehead with sacred ashes; a turmeric dyed thread is tied round its waist; a silver or iron bangle placed on its writs; and a silver bead tied by a thread round its neck. Thus decorated, the infant is taken up by the oldest man of the village who is not a widower; who

gives it a name, which has already been chosen. The elder, and the child's parents and grant parents then place a little milk in its mouth (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:110).

Shaving ceremony

Children, both male and female, go through a shaving ceremony, usually when they are seven months old. The infant is seated in the lap of a Badaga, and, after water has been applied to its head by a Badaga or a barber, the maternal uncle removes some of the hair with a razor, and then hands it over to another Badaga or a barber to complete the operation (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:110).

Nelson, John K. 1990. The Anthropology of Religion. A Field Statement for the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

"Beneath the cot are placed a crowbar, and baskets containing cakes, parched paddy, tobacco, chick pea (*Cicer arietinum*), jaggery, and sa:mai (*Panicum miliare*) flour." (Thurston 1906: 190-191).

"In some places the son, when lighting the pyre, repeats the word "Being begotten by my father and mother, I, in the presence of all and the de:va, set fire at the head after the manner of my ancestors and forefathers." (Thurston 1906: 197).

"A tray is made of the fronds of the bracken fern (*Pteris aquilina*) covered with a cloth, on which the bones are placed together with culms of *Cynodon* grass and ghi:. The Badagas of the hamlet who are younger than the deceased salute the bones by touching them, and a few men, including the chief mourner, hold the tray, and convey it to the bone pit, which every hamlet possesses. Into it the bones are thrown, while an elder repeats the words "Become united with the line of your relations, with your clan, and with the big people," or "May

the young and old who have died, may all those who have died from time immemorial up to the present time, mingle in one. When the pit has been closed up, all return to the spot where the body was burnt, and clearing a space, make a puddle, round which they stand, and throw into it a handful of korali (*Sataria italica),* uttering the words "May deaths cease; may evils cease; may good prevail in the village; in virtue of the good deeds of the ancestors and forefathers, may this one mingle with them." This ceremony concluded, they repair to a stream, where a member of the bereaved family shaves a Toreya partially or completely. Some take a razor, and, after removing a patch of hair, pass the Toreya on to a barber. All the agnates are then shaved by a Badaga or a barber.

The final death ceremonies are carried out on a Sunday following the day of death." (Thurston 1906: 197-198).

Manavale

"The origin of the funeral cars, which play a conspicuous part in the death ceremonies of the Badags, Kotas, Ura:lis, Okkiliyans, Bants, Baidyas, and others, must, I imagine, be sought for in the of bamboo chair decorated with plantain stems, coloured cloths, and falgs, which has already (p.139) been referred to in the account of Lingayat death ceremonies."

Tellatti

Hubbe: Cassia floribunda

Ottarane: Microtropis ovalifolia

PART 3

Appendices

நெலகோலு அறக்கட்டளை
நம்ம ஊர்ல நாடு ஊர்ந்து
BADAGA DOCUMENTATION CENTER

APPENDIX 1.

The Todas: *Giving* Salt to Buffaloes

"Salt is given to the buffaloes five times a year...The first occasion is *ko:rup,* or 'new grass salt,' which takes place in the month of *Nalani* (February-March). The second is *marup*, or 'again salt,' a month later in *Ani*. The next two occasions have no special names, but in the ordinary village are known as *arsup,* 'house salt,' given in the months of *Ovani* and *Kirdivi* (June-July and September-October). The last occasion is in the month of *Emioti* (November-December), and is known as *paniup*, meaning 'frost salt.' In the case of *ko:rup* and *paniup*, it seemed that salt was given shortly before the time at which the young grass and frost respectively were expected."

"On the day before the ceremony each *palol*[170] digs a round hole called the *upunkudi* at a prescribed spot; or more commonly enlarges the ole remaining from a previous ceremony. On the following day each *palol* carried out the usual morning churning and milking, but before drinking buttermilk the dairy is cleansed with buffalo-dung. The *palol* then pours into the vessel called *alug* two *kudi* of buttermilk and takes the vessel and some salt to the *upunkudi*. He throws bark of the *tudr* tree three times into the hole, three times into the buttermilk and on the salt, and going to the spring he throws the bark three times into the water, saying "*On*" each time. The *palol* then fills the *alug* with water from spring,

---

170 *Palol* is the Toda priest in charge of the dairy.

mixing it with the buttermilk already in the vessel. He adds salt, saying "*On*" three times, and the whole is poured into the *upunkudi.* A special buffalo is then brought to the *upunkudi*...After this all the buffaloes are taken to drink in groups of five or six. When the hole has been emptied, it is refilled with salt and water, but this time no buttermilk is added. When all the buffaloes have drunk, each *palol* pulls some of the grass called *kargh* and throws it into the hole three times and returns to his dairy..."

"The object of this ceremony is said to be that the buffaloes shall give a plentiful supply of milk" (Rivers 1906:175-177).

APPENDIX 2

The use of Tudr (Tu:de) tree by the Todas

"The most sacred tree of the Todas is undoubtedly the *tudr*. This name is given by the Todas to two species, *Meliosma pungens* and *M. wightii*, the two trees resembling one another closely. The bark is used in the dairy ceremonial...[and] a ceremony at the second funeral... and this was said to have the purpose that every Toda should be purified with *tudr* before he enters on the future life."

"The leaves of *tudr* used in any of these ceremonies must be perfect, and the bark must be knocked off the tree by means of a stone, this being one of the Toda practices which show the persistence of stone implements in ceremonial. The identity of this sacred tree is important, for it may furnish a clue to the home of the Todas. So sacred a tree would almost certainly have been already known to the Todas when they reached the Nilgiris, though it is, of course, possible that it might have been chosen on account of its resemblance to some tree sacred in their past history. The tee has, however, a wide distribution in India."

"Pope has suggested that *tudr* is connected with *tulasi*, *Ocymum sanctum* or holy basil. This is a small flowering plant, and it is improbable that there is any connexion between the two plants except a resemblance in name" (Rivers, 1906: 433-35).

A parallel can be found in the use of *darbha grass* by Brahmins:

"This plant (Darbha Grass *Poa synosuroides*) belongs to the genus borage. It is found everywhere, especially in damp marshy ground. Brahmins always keep some in their houses, and it is used in all their ceremonies. It grows to the height of about two feet and is finely pointed at the top. It is extremely rough to the touch, and if rubbed the wrong way it cuts through the skin and draws blood."

"Hindu legends differ as to the origin of this sacred grass. Some say that is was produced at the time when the gods and the giants were all busy churning, with the mountain Mandara, the sea of milk in order to extract from it *amrita* or nectar, which would render them all immortal. The story is that the mountain, while rolling about on Vishnu's back (who, under the form of a turtle, was supporting it), rubbed off a great many of the god's hairs, and that these hairs, came ashore by the waves, took root there and became *darbha* grass. Others say that the gods, while greedily drinking the *amrita* which they had with infinite pains extracted from the sea of milk, let fall a few drops of the nectar on this grass, which thus became sacred...Be this as it may, *darbha* grass is looked upon as part of *Vshnu* himself. On the strength of this the Brahmins worship it and offer sacrifices to it, and, as may be remembered, make use of it in all their ceremonies, in the belief that it possesses the virtue of purifying everything...I have no idea why this plant should have been selected as worthy of special honour. I have never heard of its being endowed with any peculiar properties, either medicinal, culinary, or other, which would account for its high position" (Dubois: 736).

APPENDIX 3

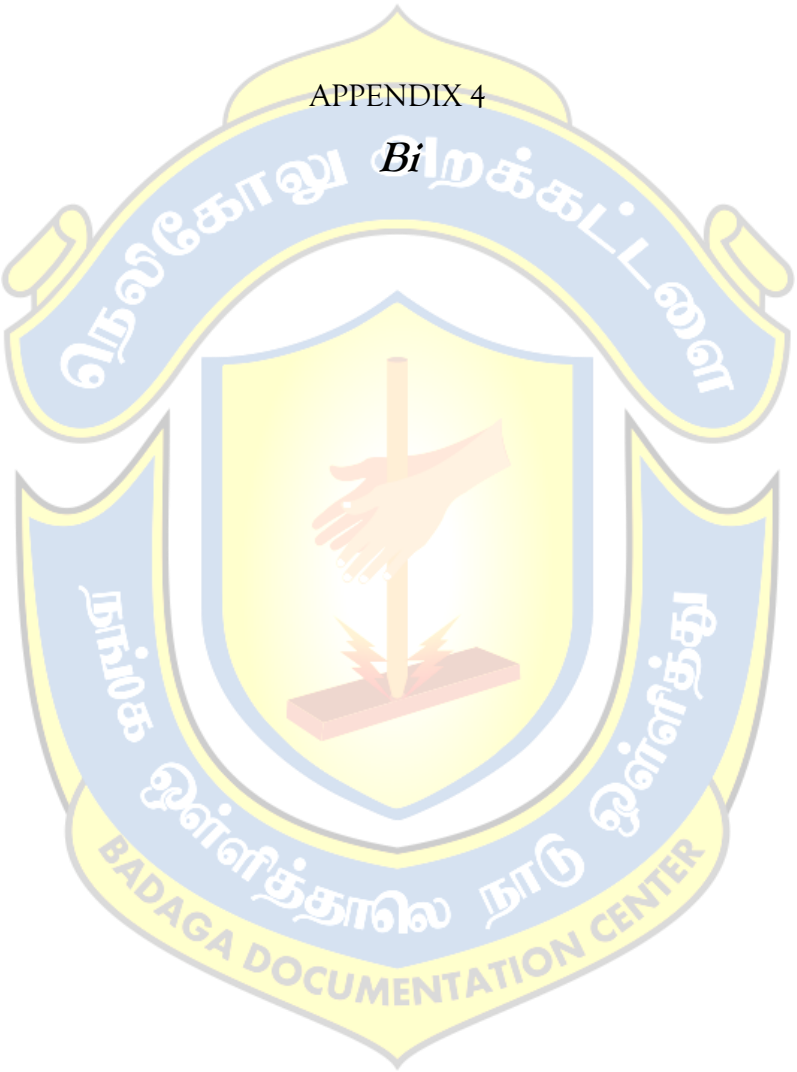
Buffalo sacrifice in Konavakkarai

Edgar Thurston and Rangachari provide the following account of a festival in Konavakkarai, when a buffalo (nowadays a goat) is sacrificed:

"A festival, which is purely local, is celebrated near Konakore in honour of *Mahangkali*. A buffalo is led to the side of a precipice, killed by a *Kurumba* with a spear, and thrown over the edge thereof. There is a legend that, in olden days, a pujari used to put a stick in the crevice of a rock, and, on removing it, get the value of a buffalo in *fanams* (gold coins). But, on one occasion, he put the stick in a second time, in the hopes of gaining more money. No money, however, was forthcoming and, as a punishment for his greed, he died on the spot" (Thurston and Rangachari 1909:102).

APPENDIX 4

Bi



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aiyappan, A.
1948. Report on the Socio-economic conditions of the aboriginal tribes of the province of Madras. Madras: Government Press.

Birodkar, Sudheer.
2001. *Popular Hindu Festivals - Diwali, Dassera* and *Holi*. http://members.tripod.com/~sudheerb/festivals1.html

Breeks

Campbell, Joseph.

Dubois, Abbe J.A.
1906. *Hindu Manners, Customs and* Ceremonies. New Delhi: Rupa & co. (Reprinted in 2000).

Geertz, Clifford
1973. The Interpretations of Culture: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books.

Gover, Charles E.
1871. *The Folk-songs of Southern India*. Madras: Higginbotham and Co.

Grigg, Henry Bidewell, Ed.

1880. *A Manual of theNilagiri District in he Madras Presidency*. Madras: Government Press, E. Keys.

Hawking, Stephen.
1988. *A Brief History of Time*. London: Bantam Books.

Hockings, Paul.
1999. *Kindreds of the Earth*.

Hockings, Paul.
1989. *The Badagas*, in "Blue Mountains: The Ethnography and Biogeography of a South Indian Region" edited by Paul Hockings. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hockings, Paul and Chriastiane Pilot-Raichoor.
1992. *A Badaga-English Dictionary*. Trends in Linguistics – Documentation 8 (Ed. Werner Winter and Richard A. Rhodes). Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

La Fontaine, Jean.
1985 Initiation. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Marshall

Metz

Natesa Sastri, Sangendi Mahalinga.
1892. The Badagas of the Ni:lagiri District. *Madras Christian College Magazine*, 9: 753-764, 830-843.

Natesa Sastri, Pandit S.M.

1903. *Hindu Feasts, Fasts and Ceremonies*. Madras: M.E. Publishing House.

Nelson, John K.
1990. *The Anthropology of Religion*. A Field Statement for the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

Ouchterlony, Colonel.
1847. *A Geographical and Statistical* Memoir *of a Survey of the Neilgherry Mountains.*

Raman, A.S.
1987. *Fairs and Festivals* in "Spell of the South". Thanjavur: South Zone Cultural Centre.

Rivers, William Halse Rivers.
1906. *The Todas*. London: MacMillan and Company Ltd.

Thurston, Edgar.
1906. Ethnographic Notes in Southern India. Madras: Government Press.

Thurston, Edgar and Kadamki Rangachari.
1909. Castes and Tribes of Southern India. Madras: Government Press; New Delhi: Asian Educational Services (1987 Reprint).

Encycopaedia Brittannica Online

Hockings, Paul.
2001. *Mortuary Ritual of* the *Badagas of Southern India*. Chiacago: Field Museum of Natural History; [*Fieldiana*, Anthropology New Series, No. 32].

Seymour-Smith, Charlotte.

???? Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology. London and Basingstone: Macmillan Press.

Noble, William Allister and Louisa Booth Noble,
1965. 'Badaga Funeral Customs'. *Anthropos*, 60: 262-72. [I thank Prof. Othmar Gachter, editor-in-chief of *Anthropos* for sending me an off-print copy of the article].

Vivekananda, Swami.
1989 [reprint 1999]. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama.

The American Academy of Religion.
1995. *Hinduism (festal cycle)* in the HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion. SanFrancisco: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. Also available at: http://www.beliefnet.com.

Daruma, karuma

Because Badagas use the Sanskrit terms dharma and Karma here, it must not be assumed that the terms have for them the same complexity of meaning that is found in Hindu philosophical writings. In Badaga, daruma is "religious merit, bounden duty, charity" and karuma is "sin, ill-fate". Until the past century the Badagas were unable to read philosophical writings of any sort.

(Hockings 1988: p. 484).

He:ru

He:ru is a gift of grain, from one to several sacks, which is made to the groom's family by the bride's during a wedding. As this is carried to the wedding procession it is a public mark of the relative social standing of the bride's family, and so they may borrow money in order to give a greater amount. Purchased rice used formerly to be considered more prestigeful than millet as a gift.

(Hockings 1988: p. 460).

Holagudi

In earlier days each village had a menstrual hut (holagudi) so that women would not pollute the houses each month ("Miles" 1933: 73-74). All people should wash their hands and mouth after a meal, before doing anything else, to avoid pollution. It would be a gross breach, for example, to go near the ha:go:tu, "milk corner", or to trim the lamp wick, without washing first, since fire and milk have a sacred quality.

(Hockings 1988: p. 299-300).

Honnu

Payment of bride-wealth (honnu, lit. “gold”) was another traditional custom. As I have recorded elsewhere (Hocking 1980a: 217-218), “It is money to be spent on the gold ornaments that bedeck the bride when she leaves her home to join her husband and without which the marriage would not be performed.” Hence it is not strictly a dowry, since it is paid by the youth’s family to the girl’s. The sum has risen with the price of gold, form 15-20 rupees at the beginning of the 19th Century to 500 or more today. Until this is paid, the groom has no hold over the girl; and it must be paid before the end of six months of marriage.

(Hockings 1988: p. 172

House

In pre-modern times Badaga houses were not built of brick or stone as they commonly are today, but rather of ud packed into a framework built up of branches (Fig. 17).

(Hockings 1988: p. 192).

House

The veranda of a Badaga house is supported by four or more ornate posts (Fig. 4), which are a powerful symbol of occupants. Thus, when a man wishes to divorce his wife (not an uncommon desire) but her father is dead, the headman may order the man concerned to bow down before the kambu of that dead man’s house while announcing the divorce. The erection of a kambu marks the true foundation of a house. In

O:ranayi village, for example, at the beginning of the last century, the initial two houses of the joint founders were built together. In the case of one of these, however, where a kambu was erected some five minutes ahead of the other, that first house became the dodda mane of Great House, a sort of minor temple because it is the house of the founding ancestor of the entire hamlet. Until perhaps a century ago a major punishment for a man would be to tie him to a kambu of the village headman's house. This punishment is in fact threatened in the epic poem Ka:ge Gauda, where a headman says to Ka:ge, "I'll tie you with rope to may post".

(Hockings 1988: p. 204).

Hullu

A special grass was universally used for thatching Badaga roofs util the 1880s, when tile began to become fashionable

(Hockings 1988: p. 100).

Infant betrothal

Infant betrothal used to be a common feature of Badaga matrimony, until perhaps the nineteen thirties. Once an infant girl had had her naming ceremony, her father's sister would claim her as future bride for her own son, the girl's cross-cousin. The woman simply had to tie a cloth round the little girl's neck and say, "She is to be my son's wife". Another woman, such as the child's mother's brother's wife, could also make this claim, but only after checking first with any of the father's sisters, since they were deemed to have a closer claim on the young bride. No money is paid in order to bespeak a child bride, and if the would-be groom when grown up decides he would rather marry someone else he has to pay

no reparation or fine. On the other hand, if the girl's parents want to marry her to a young man after she has been bespoke by another youth's mother, they must first pay a fine of five rupees to that woman (or if she has died, to her widower or another close male relative). Alternatively, if a young man wants to marry a girl who was already bespoke as an infant, he will take his father and mother on a visit to the woman who had previously tied the cloth on the girl's neck, will bow to her feet, ask her permission t marry the girl, and they pay her the five rupees in reparation. Normally that woman would bless him and provide the visitors with a meal. Natesa Sastri (1892: 760) cited the sum as ten rupees. Thurston & Rangachari (1909: I, 104) also mention the practice. "This custom of contracting relationship is rare but it does occur in ten out of a hundred cases. Violations of this kind of marriage are considered very ungentlemanly but they are not infrequent. The fine for such violations if after all very light..." (Natesa Sastri 1892: 760)

(Hockings 1988: p. 271-272).

jannige

Jannige is that period when a cow has no good flow of milk: the last two months of a pregnancy, and also just after her calf has been weaned. At these times when the flow is irregular, one should not milk the animal: listed as a sin in 1125d.

(Hockings 1988: p. 155).

Ma:lu

Ma:lu, "swing", is also a cradle made of a length of cloth slung over a beam or branch. Legend has it that Badaga women did not wear saris—the usual material for such a cradle—in memory

of the time long ago when some of them were fleeing from Mysore and left a baby behind, forgotten as it hung in such a cradle (Hockings 1980a: 40, n.11).

(Hockings 1988: p. 341).

O:le

The same word o:le is used for a “thatched roof” and a “written document” because before the days when paper was generally available records were scratched with a stylus on strips of dried palm-leaf not unlike what was used for roofing then. This palm-leaf was most usually the palmyra (Borassus flabelliformis), which does not grow on the Nilgiri Hills.

(Hockings 1988: p. 404).