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III.
BEDA CASTE.



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BEDAS.

The Bédas ಬೇಡರು called Bóyi ಬೋಯಿ in Telugu and Védan ವೇಡನ್ in Tamil number according to the latest Census 241,990, comprising 123,345 males and 121,645 females. Of these about three-tenths are in the Chitaldrug District and three-tenths in the Kolar and Tumkur Districts together, the rest being in the remaining five districts. Number.

The name *Náyaka* (ನಾಯಕ chief) or *Náyakanamakkaḷu* (ನಾಯಕನ ಮಕ್ಕಳು chief's children) is sometimes applied to this caste. They also style themselves as the members of Valmiki's family or members of Kannayya's caste. *Gurikara* (ಗುರಿಕಾರ a marksman) and *Kirata* (ಕಿರಾತ the cruel) are often given as their nicknames. Names.

Béda (ಬೇಡ) sometimes written *Biyada* (ಬಿಯಡ) is a corruption of the Sanskrit word *Vyálha* (ವ್ಯಾಢ) meaning a hunter and shows what the original occupation of the caste was. They call themselves in Telugu *Dora-biddalu* (king's children) and occasionally as *Pályegars*, the latter appellation being appropriated as many of these who gathered a larger band of predatory followers than usual around them, succeeded in setting themselves up in the troublous days of the common dissolution of authority during the two or three centuries preceding the last, as Palyegars or chiefs of a *Palya* (ಪಾಲ್ಯ) or a settlement.

The connection with Valmiki is founded on a tradition that the great author of the epic Ramayana was of this caste before his conversion. He was a highway robber of more than usual rapacity, and when he attacked the Sage Vasishtha, the latter showed him the sin of his bad life and proved its worthlessness even in a worldly sense, when his own wife for whom he had been undergoing all this risk, declined to share the accountability

for his sins. The man was so ignorant that he could not pronounce the holy name of Rama and the teacher had to adopt the expedient of making him repeat *mara* (a tree in Kannada) in rapid succession, to make him meditate about *Rama*. As a result of his long meditation, the repenting hunter and robber got divine wisdom, and was able to compose the grand epic that has obtained such renown in the world. He subsequently had twelve sons who are claimed to be the progenitors of the present caste. It is hardly necessary to add that all this has no support in the Ramayana itself. Perhaps its germ is to be found in the statement therein, that, being induced by Nárada and Brahma to compose the immortal epic, the Rishi Valmiki threw himself into *Yoga-Samadhi*, when all the facts of Rama's earthly career became as clear to him as a fruit held in his palm of his hand, and enabled him to compass his end.

Another ingenious explanation is given of the term Válmíkaru as applied to Bedas, which says that they are so called because during the first rains of the year they dig ant-hills, take out winged ants therein and eat them.

Origin and
history.

As some of the names of the caste unmistakably indicate, the Bédas were originally a wild tribe living in jungles and mountains and supporting themselves by hunting. They used to infest the highways for robbery and were considered fit instruments for all acts of rapine and cruelty. Hence they were known as *Kirátas* (ಕಿರಾತ the cruel). A story of Kannayya, an eponymous leader of this caste, is of some significance as showing the original occupation of the caste or at any rate its ideal. He was a devotee of Siva and was finding fault with the usual form of worship in which the worshipper placed a dish of food before his god but subsequently ate it himself. When, in order to test him, God Siva surprised him in an inaccessible jungle in the guise of a hungry guest and asked for food, he was offered some meat of an animal killed in the jungle, and when after a while the guest was in danger of losing an eye from disease, Kannayya plucked out his own and offered to replace the poor wayfarer's lost organ. Siva was of course gratified and offered the devotee some boon. But he was quite content with his lot and would have none of it. He had all that he wanted, a gruel in an earthen pot, children round a common earthen eating plate, a burning faggot for light and a highway for robbery, what more needed he ?

Their early habits well fitted them for the army of which in later times they became a most important element. They were largely employed in the rank and file of the armies of Vijianagar Empire. They gradually spread to the south, and by the time of Hyder Ali, they not only constituted the pick of his army, but many of the caste had set themselves up as petty chiefs known as Palyegars who had also men of the same caste in their armies. Buchanan writing in 1800 says of them :—

Throughout these hills (*near Magadi, Bangalore District*), which extend northward from *Capaladurga*, are many cultivated spots in which during *Tippoo's* government were settled many *Baydaru* or hunters who received twelve *pagodas* (£4-5s) a year and served as irregular troops whenever required. Being accustomed to pursue tigers and deer in the woods, they were excellent marksmen with their matchlocks, and indefatigable in following their prey; which in the time of war, was the life and property of every helpless creature that came in their way. During the wars of *Hyder* and his son, these men were chief instruments in the terrible deprivations committed in the lower Carnatic. They were also frequently employed with success against the *Polyagars*, whose followers were men of a similar description. At present, as they receive no pay, they are obliged to apply more closely to agriculture; for in that way they always employed their leisure; and there is a prospect of their becoming a quiet and industrious people although they still retain their arms and an anxious desire for plunder.

With the advent of more peaceful times, this expectation about the habits and occupation of these people has been fully realized. Many of them are employed as village watchmen or *Talaris*, and also find employment as peons in the Police and Revenue Departments of Government.

They seem to be originally a Telugu speaking people, but after long settlement, those of the Kannada districts have adopted that language as their mother tongue. Language.

The following endogamous divisions are found in the caste:— Endoga-
mous divi-
sions.

Ūru Bédas (ಊರು ಬೇಡರು) called in Telugu, *Chinna Boyis* (ಚಿನ್ನ ಬೋಯಿ ವಾಂಡ್ಲು).

Myāsa Bédas (ಮ್ಯಾಸ ಬೇಡರು) Sometimes called *Pedda Boyis* (ಪೆದ್ದ ಬೋಯಿ ವಾಂಡ್ಲು) and *Chenchûs* (ಚೆಂಚುಲು).

Gudūsi or gudlu Bédas (ಗುಡು ಬೇಡರು) called also *ಗುಂತಬೋಯಿ ವಾಂಡ್ಲು* and nicknamed (ಅಡ್ಡ ಚೇತುಲವಾಳ್ಳು) (cross-handed).

Māremmana Bédas (ಮಾರೆಮ್ಮನ ಬೇಡರು) also called *Mutyā-amma or Urume Bédas* (ಮುತ್ತಾಯಲಮ್ಮ ಅಥವಾ ಉರುಮೆ ಬೇಡರು) and *Sadara Bédas* (ಸದರ ಬೇಡರು).

Hálu Bédas (ಹಾಲು ಬೇಡರು).

Monda Bédas (ಮೊಂಡ ಬೇಡರು).

There are a few more divisions such as those named *Ba-rika* (ಬಾರಿಕ), *Goliga* (ಗೋಳಿಗ), *Gadilabala* (ಗದ್ದಲಬಾಲ), *Muddalu* (ಮುದ್ದಲು) and *Patra* (ಪಟ) which are returned as endogamous.

It is, however, probable that they are nothing but synonyms of one or another of the divisions already mentioned.

Úru Bedas are by far the largest division of the caste, and are so called because of their residence in towns and villages, unlike, for example, Monda Bedas, a wandering tribe, who are beggars by profession.

Myasa Bedas are found mostly in the Chitaldrug District. They profess to derive their name from *mesha* (ಮೇಷ), a goat, the name of the first sign of the Zodiac, Aries. They form an interesting division and have some peculiar customs such as circumcision, and abstaining from eating fowls and pigs. They lived mostly in jungles till recently; many have since taken to living in towns and villages. It deserves to be ascertained how far their customs have been moulded by Mussulman influences. They seem to be the same as the forest tribe known as Chenchus.

Gudisi or gudlu Bedas (ಗುಡಿಸಿ, ಗುಡ್ಲು ಬೇಡರು) are so called on account of their living in *gudlu* or temporary huts. They are an inferior division.

The significance of the term Sadara Bédá could not be ascertained. The appellation of Halu Bedas (*i.e.* milk Bedas) is used to indicate their superiority to other divisions.

Monda* Bedas are said to be the descendants of a man of the Mandala (ಮಂಡಲ) exogamous section, who through ignorance married a girl of the same section. This was discovered too late and the couple were expelled from the village and were made to live outside,—eking out their living by beggary. Even now persons of this division never enter the houses of the other Bedas, and they are not allowed to beg from the people of the Mandala section.

* Monda (ಮೊಂಡ) means in Kannada, an indolent or rude or obstinate fellow.

The caste is divided into a number of exogamous divisions, and their integrity is kept up with the utmost scrupulousness. The tradition regarding the origin of these divisions is as follows :—

Exogamous divisions.

The descendants of *Valmiki* by his twelve sons fell out with one another and had a fight amongst themselves, in the course of which many lives were lost. The eldest of these sons called Mandala-Manibattu-Razu (ಮಂಡಲಮಾನಿಬತ್ತು ರಾಜು) hearing of the carnage, went to the scene of the quarrel to reprimand them. The combatants were afraid of meeting him and fleeing from the place hid themselves in various places. After a search they were discovered, some hiding under washerman's tubs, some in ant-hills, some in hills and such other places. The chief divided them into separate groups, distinguished each by the hiding place of its representatives, himself becoming the head of the Manda division. Even now on marriage and other occasions, a *támbula* is given in the name of Mandalamani-battu Razu and sometimes in that of his servant also who belonged to the Ankila section. Some of the exogamous divisions are named in the appendix.

There are said to be altogether 101 such divisions, but the names of all of them could not be ascertained. Most of them are apparently totemistic and as usual bear the names of plants and animals. But except in a few instances,—not however, quite authenticated, no special regard seems to be paid to the particular *totems* in any respect.

There are no hypergamous divisions.

The names of children are generally taken either from those of their household gods or of their ancestors. In some families on the 5th or the 7th day of the birth of a child, an elderly woman consults a Korama woman, professing to be a soothsayer, as to the name to be given to the child. The Korama woman, after consulting her signs in her usual manner, gives out the name, which generally happens to be the name of the family god or of an ancestor of the child's parents. Only one name is given; but sometimes an additional name is tacked on just before marriage if a match otherwise agreeable to all parties, is found not to answer the tests of astrological calculation.

Superstitions in names.

There are no names specially appropriated by this caste; the following are given as examples of common names occurring therein :—

Male	Female
<i>Kadiriga</i> (ಕದಿರಿಗ)	<i>Kadiri</i> (ಕದಿರಿ)
<i>Sanjiva</i> (ಸಂಜೀವ)	<i>Sanjivi</i> (ಸಂಜೀವಿ)
<i>Māra</i> (ಮಾರ)	<i>Bommi</i> (ಬೊಮ್ಮಿ)
<i>Bōra</i> (ಬೋರ)	<i>O'bi</i> (ಓಬಿ)
<i>Nāga</i> (ನಾಗ)	<i>Yerri</i> (ಯರಿ)
<i>Konda</i> (ಕೊಂಡ)	<i>Chaudamma</i> (ಚೌಡಮ್ಮ)

Nicknames are given either to denote occupation or to describe size and appearance, such as *A'vula Vādu* a cowherd; *Goralodu* (ಗೊರಲೋಡು) sheep tender; *Chevvulodu* (ಚವ್ವಲೋಡು) long eared; *Mōtodu* (ಮೋಟೋಡು) dwarf.

A child born after the parents have successively lost a number of children in childhood, is thrown on a manure heap placed on a sieve and taken back. Sometimes it is thrown on its face. Its right nostril is bored and a nose screw put on.

Names like the following are given to such children :—*Tippa* (ತಿಪ್ಪ); *Tippi* (ತಿಪ್ಪಿ) a manure heap; *Bārta* (ಬಾರ್ತ) *Bārli* (ಬಾರ್ಲಿ) thrown on the face; *Gunda* (ಗುಂಡ) *Gundi* (ಗುಂಡಿ) round stone; *Pullākulodu* (ಪುಲ್ಲುಕುಲೋಡು) thrown-out leaves; *Paradēs'i* (ಪರದೇಸಿ) foreigner; *Pāresi* (ಪಾರೇಸಿ) one cast out; *Adavi* (ಅಡವಿ) jungle; *Kalla* (ಕಲ್ಲ) stone; *Gidaqa* (ಗಿಡಗ) hawk; *Kaṭiga* (ಕಾಟಗ) a man of the desert; *Javarūya* (ಜವರಾಯ) or Yama, the god of death; *Sachchēvādu* (ಸಚ್ಚೇವಾಡು) one likely to die.

When an unusual number of girls are born in succession, the last born child is given the name of *Santamma* (ಶಾಂತಮ್ಮ) or *Sakamma* (ಸಾಕಮ್ಮ), these names meaning that the female children are enough and are no more needed. The belief is that thereafter no female children would be born, and if the mother gives birth to any children at all, they would all be male ones. The saying is “ಸಾಕು ಸಾಕು ಶಾಂತಮ್ಮ ಬೇಕು ಬೇಕು ಬೆನವಣ್ಣ” which means that *Santammas* (denoting female children) are enough and *Bevarannas* (standing for males) are wanted.

Marriage.

Polygamy is allowed though as a matter of fact, it is rarely resorted to except when such reasons as barrenness, or incurable disease, of the first wife exist. Polyandry is unknown.

A marriage is either regular or irregular, the latter is held somewhat in lower repute and is variously known as *Kudike* (कुडीके union), *Sirudike* (सिरुडीके, the giving of a woman's garment as a present by the man).

Marriage in the section to which either one's own mother, paternal grandmother or maternal grandmother belongs, is allowed, provided this section is different from that of the person. The only other formula not covered by the rule of exogamy is that the boy and the girl should not be related to each other either by affinity or by analogy as brother and sister or parent and child. Two sisters may be married by one man, and two brothers may marry two sisters. Marriage with an elder sister's daughter is sanctioned, but one may marry a younger sister's daughter only when inevitable, as when a widower cannot procure any other girl to marry. A sister's daughter may be married to a man's son, in which case the man himself cannot marry another daughter of the same sister.

Marriage is generally of adults, though infants are often so united. A woman may remain without marriage all through her life, though few or none do so by choice. A woman dying without marriage is carried by men without a bier and interred with the face downwards, no funeral ceremonies being observed.

The negotiations for a regular marriage are carried on by the parents or guardians of the parties, the initiative being generally taken by the male's side. The astrologer is consulted and where the horoscopes are wanting, the stars corresponding to the first letters of the names of the parties according to a settled convention, are taken as representing the nativity of the parties. If they are pronounced to be suitable, a day is fixed by him and the contracting parties exchange betel-leaves with nuts as an earnest of their agreement, in the presence of the elders. The girl is given a present of a cloth and a feast is generally held. After this the girl cannot be given in marriage to another without the consent of the other party. This preliminary event is however non-essential and is often omitted or considerably shortened.

Ceremonies
of marriage.

The ceremonies of marriage proper begin with *Devar-uta* or god's feast. Five new earthen pots painted red and white are brought from the potter's house and some date fruits, uncooked rice, and *dhall*, glass bangles and some other articles are placed in each of them, with an oil light in

each of the earthen dishes covering them as lids. These pots with a *kalasa* (i.e. a small metallic vessel with a coconut over it) are placed in a room set apart for the purpose and worshipped as representing the marriage deity. A dinner also is given, sheep or goats being specially killed for the occasion.

On the second day, *chappara* or marriage booth is constructed. This should have twelve posts of which one is called the *milk post* or marriage pillar and should be green wood of the mango or *Háluvánu* tree. In the night, the bride's party repair to a place outside the town, where on a spot washed with cowdung water, they place cooked food on three plantain leaves as an offering, and consecrate it with water dyed red with saffron and lime, and return home without looking back.

On the third day, the bride and bridegroom are bathed in their respective houses. They are seated on plank seats and are besmeared with saffron, and the ceremony is known as ಅರಣಿ ಕಾಸ್ತುರಿ or the saffron ceremony or ಮದವಣಿಗೆ ಕಾಸ್ತುರಿ or bride or bridegroom ceremony.

The fourth is the chief day of the ceremony. Early in the morning the bridegroom is brought to the bride's house. He is made to sit by the side of the bride. The village barber comes and pares the nails of the bride and bridegroom. Then the couple are given a bath called *malé niru* in Kannada and *tódu nítlu* in Telugu. They stand one stooping over the other, and some married women pour water from four vessels. After this the bridegroom is sent out with a party to a place outside the village and sits under a tree. From there a procession of the people of his party go to the bride's house, taking with them in a bamboo box jewels and cloths intended for her and other sundry articles such as rice, fruit and other edible articles, which they present to the bride. Then her party go in procession led by a married woman carrying a *kalasa* in her hand. They in their turn bring to the bridegroom cloths, toe-rings, *bhashinga* or the marriage coronet and other presents. The bridegroom puts on all these things and holding a dagger is taken to the marriage booth. The two parties meet near the marriage pavilions and a show of resistance is offered by each party throwing half-pounded rice (called ಎದುರಕ್ಕಿ) at the other. The bridegroom is conducted to the marriage dais and is made to stand there. In the meantime the bride is

decorated and is brought to the pandal with the *bhášhinga* and placed standing opposite the bridegroom with a cloth held as a screen between them. The *Purohit* is then called in, and the bride and bridegroom throw on each other's head some cummin seed and jaggory, the girl if small in stature being held up by her maternal uncle or other near relative.

The *tali** is touched by all those present, and the bridegroom with the countenance and blessing of the men assembled, ties it round the neck of the bride. Both the bride and the bridegroom tie the *kankana*† to their wrists and stand facing each other. Their hands are joined together and hold a cocoanut on which milk is poured first by the parents of the bride, and then by those of the bridegroom, and then by the whole assembly.

The married couple then sit side by side with the fringes of their cloths tied together. Some elderly married women besmear them with saffron and put over them *sése*, that is rice from both their hands first on the knees, then on the shoulders and then on the heads of the happy couple. The assembly then disperses after the distribution of *Pansupari*.

In the evening the couple are shown the star called Arundhati.‡

Another ceremony that takes place that day, is that of partaking of *ಋಷ್ಯ* or common meal. Two or three persons from both sides sit together and eat food from a common dish to indicate the union of both the parties.

On the last day called the *Nagavali* day, the *kankana* or wrist thread is taken off and *puja* is made to what is called *Simhasana* (or seat) and to a heap of arecanut and betel-leaves and the latter articles distributed to the assembly. A certain order is observed in *tambula*-giving: *Kannayya* (the eponymous hero), *Valmiki* and the household deity are named first and then the local caste head (*Katte Mane Yajaman*) and the convener (or beadle), and then the others of the assembly get the leaves in turn.

* The small gold disc worn by a married woman as a symbol of the married state.

† This is a twisted thread of black and white wool, with a turmeric root and an iron-ring tied to it.

‡ Arundhati is the wife of *Vasishta*, the sage, and is believed to be in the constellation of stars known as the Great Bear.

The next two days are employed in complimentary visits and feasting among the two parties.

Expenses.

The bride's price or *tera* in Kannada, and *oli* (ಒಲಿ) in Telugu, is Rs. 12. But a discount of $1\frac{1}{2}$ Rs. is allowed if asked for, except when a widower marries a maid, when the full amount of *tera* namely Rs. 12, and sometimes even a *Mádu* (ಮಾಡು) of $1\frac{1}{2}$ Rs. more is levied.

Marriage expenses in a family of moderate means amount to the bride's party to Rs. 30 ; the bridegroom's party incur about Rs. 100, to be spent on jewels, *tera* and feeding expenses. There is no particular feeling that the present expenditure is in any way exorbitant ; and no movement in favor of reduction is discernible or indeed called for.

Puberty.

When a girl first shows signs of womanhood, she is considered impure for three days, and does not come in contact with the other members of the family. She cannot use the metal plate for eating her meal which is placed on leaves for her. She bathes on the fourth day and the washerman supplies her with a fresh washed cloth. A shed of green leaves (generally of Margosa), is put up on an auspicious day, in which the girl remains apart for three nights getting a particularly rich food consisting of cocoanut, gingelly, pulses and jaggory, the while. She is exhibited in the evenings seated, dressed and decorated, in the company of married women who congregate for the show. Songs are sung and saffron and *kunkuma* and *pan-supari* are distributed to all the visitors. During this period the girl is kept awake at nights and is allowed to sleep only in day time, for fear that some evil spirit (which prowls about only in the dark) might take hold of her.

Intimation of the event is sent by the village washerman to the parents of the husband of such girl if she is already married, and it is considered the correct thing for the husband and wife beginning to live together within sixteen days. If the girl should happen to be unmarried, they try to get her married within the year of her attaining this age. They have a saying that a third head should not appear in the year of marriage, and so where the girl that is married is already of an age to live in her husband's company, the common living is put off for at least three months.

Widow marriage is allowed and generally practised but the form differs considerably from the regular marriage, and is styled union or *kudike* or the giving of a cloth to wear (ವಿಲೇಬಿಡಿಕೆ) or the tying of a tali. Widow marriage.

The ceremony is simple and generally comes off in the evening. The match as may be expected is as a rule settled by the consent of the parties and in most cases is preceded by a *de facto* union. The head and others of the caste assemble in front of the woman's house who comes out after having had a bath. The new husband presents her with a new cloth which she puts on. The Yajman to whom their intention is formally announced gives his sanction to the union. Thereafter the husband ties the *tali* which is the essential and the binding portion of the ceremony. A fine called *Kannayyana Kanike* (ಕನ್ನಯ್ಯನ ಕಾಣಿಕೆ) is levied from the man. *Pan-supari* is distributed and a feast is held afterwards. The same form is observed in the case of divorced women remarrying, and of an unmarried girl who has clandestinely conceived being married to her lover; sometimes this form is also resorted to in preference to the more regular one to save expense.

A woman married in this form has certain disabilities. She is not allowed to take part in the ceremonies of a regular marriage and is not, allowed even to enter the marriage *pandal*. She cannot carry the *kalasa* on any auspicious day. Her issue for two or three generations at least are deprived of the privileges of regular marriage. The *kudike* marriage section is kept separate, and in some places becomes so defined that these disabilities continue to attach to it for generations together.

With regard to the right of inheritance, as soon as a widow is remarried, she becomes divested of her rights to the previous husband's property and even her children continue in his family. This is of course compensated for by the acquisition of title to her second husband's property.

A widow cannot marry any one belonging to her first husband's *gotra* or division; much less therefore his elder or younger brother.

Loss of caste and adultery are good grounds for divorce. The aggrieved party, generally the husband, complains to the caste Yajman regarding the conduct of his partner and obtains his sanction for divorce in Divorce.

the caste assembly who fully enter into the details and find out which party is to blame. If the charge is made out against the wife, the husband tears her *tali* in token of separation and gets back the jewels which he might have given her during their conjugal life. He has to pay a fine to the caste.

The woman thus divorced is married in *kudike* form, to another (generally her paramour) who pays to the previous husband, the *tera* amount and the expenses of the marriage, and has also to pay a fine to the caste and stand the expense of feeding the castemen. It is said that adultery on the part of the husband is also a good reason for divorce and the husband in this case gets back neither the *tera* amount nor the marriage expenses.

Adultery.

If the married woman is guilty of adultery with a man of the same or a higher caste it can be expiated for at the option of the husband by payment of a small fine to the caste.

Dedication of Basavis.

The practice of making 'Basavis'* of women obtains in this caste. The reasons that lead a parent to take this step are generally one of the following:—When there are no male children, the eldest daughter may be converted to a *Basavi*, when she remains permanently in her father's house, inherits the property and in all possible respects takes the place of a son. This may be done in accordance with a vow taken when the girl is afflicted with any dangerous illness, this conversion into a Basavi being, in opposition to all civilized notions, regarded as a dedication to God's service.

The dedication of Basavi is made by a ceremony which, as far as possible, resembles a marriage. The *Chappira* (marriage pavilion) with 12 pillars is erected, a procession goes to a temple where the girl is seated by the side of a dagger and the *tali* (marriage emblem) tied to her by the *Purohit* or by a maternal uncle or maternal uncle's son. A feast is given to the castemen; and after three days the girl is free to take to her bed any man who is not of a lower caste than her own. The first person who receives

* Near Kurubatti Mailari (ಕುರುಬತ್ತಿ ಮೈಲಾರಿ) temple, it is said that *Basavis* are dedicated in a large number on the day of God's marriage. (ಕೃಷ್ಣನ ವಿವಾಹದ ದಿನ). The ceremony is very simple. Girls are brought to the temple after bathing and in front of it *kankanas* and *talis* are tied to them. They have to sleep that night in the temple.

her favors has generally to pay her father the expenses incurred by him for making her a Basavi. Her issue become legitimate and are entitled to a share of their grandfather's property. For purposes of marriage, the issue of such Basavi are as eligible as those of the regular marriage division.

Besides these, who are known as born Basavis (*puttu basavi*, ಪುಟ್ಟುಬಸವಿ), there is yet another class of public women called Kulam Bidḡalu (ಕುಲಂಬಿಡ್ಡಲು) or children of the caste who are dedicated as follows:—

A widow even with issue and a divorced woman may be made children of the caste after paying a fine to the caste and standing the expense of a feast according to her means. She asks for permission formally at the meeting of the caste men, who as a token of consent give her a handful of the food prepared for the feast which she partakes of along with them. She has thereafter the license to share her bed with strangers (not of an inferior caste) as a *Basavi* has. The chief distinction between the two is that the issue of a *Basavi* are regarded as legitimate for all purposes while those of a daughter of the caste, though legitimate, rank only as the issue of a '*Kudike*' or conventional marriage.

From the above, it may be inferred that sexual license before marriage is not visited with any condign punishment. When an unmarried girl becomes pregnant, she will be married to her paramour in *kudike* form if he is of the same caste. If he would not have her or is of a higher caste, a fine will be levied and she will be made a child of the caste, but if the paramour is of lower caste she loses her caste.

In cases of regular marriages no courtship is known, and the parents of the parties bring about the connection. But the *kudike* marriages are as a rule by courtship and consent of the parties. The average age of the boy to marry may be taken as about eighteen.

The dead among them are buried except such as are afflicted with leprosy or other incurable cutaneous diseases, whose bodies are burnt.

Death and funeral ceremonies.

On the death of a person, the body is washed and wrapped up in a new cloth. Two new earthen pots are brought, and in one of them a small quantity of rice is

cooked in front of the house. But this ceremony is very often dispensed with. The body is placed on a bier made of bamboo or *Kalli* (*Euphorbia Tirukalli*). Betel-leaves and nuts are crushed and the paste is put in the mouth of the dead body. The relatives and friends of the deceased put rice in the eyes of the deceased's body and sometimes beat their mouths. After this, the body is carried by four persons to the burial ground, the chief mourner heading the procession with fire in one hand and the pot with the cooked rice in the other. As soon as the carriers and mourners pass away, a woman in the house, if present, a widow, sprinkles cowdung water on the place where the body had been kept and cleans it. Half the way, the body is kept on the ground and balls of cooked rice are thrown around the body. It is then carried straight to the burial ground. By this time, a Mádiga of the village will have dug a grave ready, for which labor a small fee is paid. The body is carried round the grave three times and is then lowered into it. The bier is taken out, together with any jewels which the deceased might have worn at the time of death. The body is then laid on the back with the head to the South and the grave is closed in. A small mound is raised on the ground, and four quarter-anna pieces are buried, on the four corners of it. Another anna is placed on the grave for *kádupapa* (ಕಾಡುಪಾಪ) and is intended to be the price of the ground taken up for the grave, and this is taken by the Holeyá of the village. Thereafter the chief mourner, with an earthen pot filled with water, is made to go round the grave three times, and at the end of each turn, a stone is thrown at the vessel by some by-stander, so as to make a hole. With the water thus leaking he comes three rounds and then breaks the vessel on the grave with his back turned towards it and goes away without looking back. The chief mourner and the persons that carried the body wash themselves in a tank or river and return home in wet cloths. By this time, the house has been cleaned and on the spot where the deceased expired, has been kept a light on a window (ವೆಂಡಿ) and an *Yakka* twig, which the party must see before they go to their houses.

If the deceased is only a child or unmarried girl, no ceremony is observed and the body is carried in the arms to the burial place and interred.

On the third day, a ceremony called ಕೂಳುನೀರುಹಾಕುವದು— (putting food and water to the deceased) takes place. The chief mourner with other castemen takes some rice and

vegetables to the burial ground and serves them on the grave in a plantain leaf. The party withdraw to a distance expecting the crows to come and eat the food. When the crows have eaten it, they go to the tank or river, bathe and return home.

No further ceremony is observed till the 12th day. On that day the whole house is whitewashed. The chief mourner as well as all the *Dajadas* (agnates) have a bath.

A Brahman Purohit is called for purifying the house with holy water. Then a party go to the burial ground and on the grave are served up various dishes of food prepared for the purpose. The chief mourner gets his head shaved. After bathing in the river, the party go to the temple and return home. All the agnate and other relations are invited and treated to a feast. This day gifts of cows, shoes, umbrellas and other things are given in charity to Brahmans, their number depending upon the means of the family.

In the case of the death of an unmarried girl or a child, on the 3rd day some milk and edibles are placed on the ground and no further ceremony is observed.

The period of pollution, in the case of adults, is 12 days and in the case of children, 3 days. During this period, the near agnates do not put on the caste mark, or eat any sweet substance or drink milk. They should not enter other's houses, much less touch them.

These men do not perform *sradhas*; but on the new-moon day in the month of *Bhadrapada* and on the new year's day, they make *puja* in the names of their deceased ancestors. They instal a *Kalasa* in the house, place near it new cloths, burn frankincense and offer prayers to it. They invite their castemen to a dinner.

Outsiders belonging to any recognized higher castes are, though of course rarely, admitted into the Beda caste, a formal ceremony being observed for the purpose. The headmen of two or three *Kattamanes* or caste guilds as well as other castemen are assembled, due notice being given of the purpose of the meeting. Then the person who wishes to be admitted comes to the assembly and prostrating himself before it, begs that he be admitted into the caste. A consultation is held and is sometimes prolonged for two or three days during which time, the members are fed at the expense of the applicant. A fine together with

Admission
of outsiders.

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a *hana* or 4 annas as Kannayya's tax (devoted to the temple of that idol) is levied from the neophyte who is purified with the five products of the cow, his tongue being slightly branded with heated gold. He is also made to drink holy water from a temple. Then the castemen sit down to a feast given at his expense, at which he has to receive a morsel from each of the elders before the feeding begins and partake of the food thus collected with the permission of the assembly which is given in a set formula that there is no longer any impediment (*dòsha*).

Such perversion from higher castes is generally due to the man having illicit relation with some woman of the caste. Such a recruit becomes a member of the caste for all practical purposes, and marries the woman, however, in an inferior marriage, the stigma of which may stick on to his descendants for two or three generations.

Law of inheritance.

They follow ordinarily the Hindu Law of inheritance. *Illatam* (*Manevátana* in Kannada) or affiliation of the son-in-law is practised—and such son-in-law gets a share equal to that of a son. A Basavi daughter also gets an equal share with her brothers, and when she dies, if the family is undivided, her sons step into her place and are entitled to her share. A destitute sister is generally given a cow and a cloth every year.

Social status.

The Bédas are generally considered as low caste people, and therefore Brahmans and other *Dwija* or twice-born classes do not touch them. But they can draw water in the village well, the village barber shaves them and pares their nails and the washerman washes their clothes.

Food.

In the matter of eating meat, they are allowed great latitude. Even jackals and some of the lizard tribe are allowed to them; and though beef is permitted and indeed cannot be refused when offered at a feast, many of them seem to draw a line there, and do not eat cows and buffaloes. The lowest well-known caste with which the Bedas eat is Kuruba and only Agasa (washerman) Madiga (village cobbler) and Holeyas eat in Beda's houses.

They employ Brahmans for auspicious ceremonies such as marriage, and these Brahmans do not suffer in their status by such employment. But for funeral or minor ceremonies, Dasaris and Satanis are called in. But on the 12th day after death, the Brahman *purohit* has to

cleanse the house with water purified by the recitation of holy words.

The Bedas belong to what is called *Nine Phanas* or left hand section. They have a caste council at which their tribal disputes are settled. It is presided over by a headman, who has under him a servant or a beadle known as *Kondigádu* (ಕೊಂಡಿಗಾಡು). The jurisdiction of a headman is called *Kattemane*, and any matter affecting the caste such as admission of an outsider, *kúdi* marriage, dedication of a girl as a Basavi or a *Kulambidádu* comes before him for settlement. Any transgression of the caste rules is punished by him. And for all this service, he receives *maryáde* (ಮರ್ಯಾಡೆ) or the conventional fee and a special *támbúla*. When however a dispute of a very serious nature affecting not only one *Kattemane* but several, has to be settled, *Yajamans* of several *Kattemanes* are collected. There is at the head of several *Kattemanes*, a *Dora* or chief whose presence is necessary only in cases of great importance. In marriage and other occasions, the *Dora* or chief, also gets a *támbúla* with a small fee.

Tribal constitution.

They are Vaishnavas and worship Vishnu under the different names of Venkataramana, Chennarayana, Narasimha and others. Some of them have also Siva as their family God and go on pilgrimage to Naujangud, the chief place of Siva worship in the State. Their *guru* or spiritual leader, is a Srivaishnava Brahmin who pays occasional visits, gives them *Chakrankitam* (branding) and holy water and receives his fees. Among the minor goddesses worshipped by Bedas are Gangamma, Mariamma, Kavellemma, Lakkamma, Payamma, Odisilamma, Marigamma, Duramma, and Challapuramma.

Religion.

Gangamma (river or water God) is generally worshipped either at the riverside or near a tank or other reservoir of water. A place is selected and cleaned with water. Three or five or seven stones are set up on which saffron is put on. Incense is burnt, a new cloth is kept near the images, and coconut is broken. After the worship, the cloth may be worn by any female member in the house. This worship is specially confined to women, and no bloody sacrifices are offered. The other Goddesses are worshipped some in groves, and some in temples, permanently dedicated to them. Sacrifices of sheep, goats and fowls are very freely offered and partaken of by the

devotees. Fridays and Tuesdays are the days set apart for the worship, but the worship of Gangamma is always confined to a Monday.

To Mári, the village Goddess, a he-buffalo is sacrificed. This worship, though performed by this caste, is done at the instance of the whole village. In the central portion of the village, a temporary shed is erected and in it an image generally of some grotesque or hideous form is installed. The whole village population, except Brahmans, Jains and Lingayats, carry their offerings to the Goddess and the more superstitious of these excepted persons also sometimes send votive offerings. In the night, a he-buffalo is sacrificed. The remains of the animal are then divided among the 12 members comprising the village corporation. As most of them however do not eat buffalo flesh, their shares are taken by the village cobbler or Madiga.

Munísvara (ಮುನೀಶ್ವರ) is another object of common worship, not only among the Bedas, but also among other lower castes. He is believed to be the soul of a saint who lived at a time beyond memory and is said to reside in trees. Under a tree, which is said to be the dwelling place of this spirit, a small temple, hardly big enough for one to get in, is built and two or three stones installed therein in the name of this spirit. Sometimes bells are tied to the branches, and when they are shaken by the wind, the sounds are attributed to the sylvan deity. He is considered as an evil spirit and as always waiting for an opportunity to enter the body of persons passing near and bring on sickness to the victim. He is much dreaded and to propitiate him, occasional offerings of sheep, goats, fowls and cooked articles, are made. The animals sacrificed are eaten by the votaries but other articles such as cooked rice, plantains, &c., are left under the tree. They also name their children after this deity.

The spirits of such diseases as, cholera and smallpox, are also worshipped. Serpent worship is also common among them, the belief being that by this skin disease and the diseases of the eye, ulceration in the ear, are cured.

Omens.

In common with the other castes of similar status, they believe in omens*, and the following are a few of them.

* Omens are not a specially 'caste' institution. They are a matter of general belief and observance with persons who have not passed a certain stage of mental culture.

Good omens—A crow, a bird called hálu-hakki (ಹಾಲುಹಕ್ಕಿ) or a crow pheasant (ಸಂಬಾರಕಾಳಿ) passing from left to right when starting on a journey; a kite (garuḍa or Brahmin kite) passing from right to left; toddy pots, dead body, or flowers being carried, or a married woman coming, from the opposite direction.

Among bad Omens may be mentioned, the crossing of the birds named above in a contrary direction, a serpent crossing the path, or the meeting with a barber or a carrier of fire-wood when setting out on any business.

Belief in oracles and witchcraft is general.

They follow their original profession of hunting in the jungles only nominally, and have settled down to agriculture as their chief occupation. As is the case with all agricultural classes in the State, many are petty raiyatwari occupants of lands, paying revenue direct to Government; while many cultivate the lands of others as tenants on "vára," generally paying half the produce to the superior holder. The system of joint-ownership of village lands is not in force anywhere in the State. Some who are village watchmen known as *Talaris* have some free lands (service inam) or get a recognized quantity of grain from each raiyat at the harvest time. Several of them are landless day labourers, earning wages varying from two to five annas a day. There are no nomadic cultivators in the caste. Occupation.

They have many beliefs, some superstitious and some empirical, in regard to the agricultural operations, which however are common to almost all of the cultivating classes in the State, and which are embodied in popular sayings, such for example as the following. The first ploughing of the season must be commenced on a Sunday or a Thursday. No ploughing should be done on Mondays. Seed should not be sown on Mondays and Tuesdays. There are some popular sayings about the efficacy of rains in certain specified seasons. Agricultural superstitions.

A scare crow (generally an old earthen pot with eyes and other marks of the face roughly daubed over) placed on the top of cross sticks dressed with rags, is often set up in fields with the double object of frightening away birds and beasts, and averting the evil eye.

When undertaking any important work such as the sinking of a well or building a house, it is usual to worship

'*Ganesha*' made of cowdung, in the form of a cone. Sometimes a goat or sheep or a fowl is sacrificed on such occasions.

If an eclipse of the Sun or the Moon occurs when the crops are standing, sometimes the owners of the fields bathe and sacrifice a sheep or goat to the field. Boiled rice is mixed with the blood of the sacrificed animal and scattered all over the field.

Dress.

There is nothing peculiar in their dress. Men generally put on short drawers reaching to the knees - sometimes only a loin cloth. Their women wear *Sire* like other Sudras without dividing the skirt, but such of them as are not Basavis do not wear bodices. In the larger places, there is however an improvement and family women also use this article of dress.

APPENDIX

(Names of *Kulas*)

- 1 *Mandala* (ಮಂಡಲ) = Herd of cattle
- 2 *Yanumala* (ಯನುಮಲ) = Buffalo
- 3 *Muchchala* (ಮುಚ್ಚಲ)
- 4 *Sákéla* (ಸಾಕೇಲ)
- 5 *Kámagétula* (ಕಾಮಗೇತುಲ)
- 6 *Chinnamagala* (ಚಿನ್ನಮಗಲ)
- 7 *Manegala* (ಮನೆಗಲ)
- 8 *Pegadapótula* (ಪೆಗಡಪೋತುಲ)
- 9 *Chinnamákila* (ಚಿನ್ನಮಾಕಿಲ)
- 10 *Peddamáki* (ಪೆದ್ದಮಾಕಿಲ)
- 11 *Chímala* (ಚೀಮಲ) Ants
- 12 *Gujjala* (ಗುಜ್ಜಲ)
- 13 *Sibbala* (ಸಿಬ್ಬಲ)
- 14 *Eḍu kondala* (ಏಡುಕೊಂಡಲ) = Seven hills
- 15 *Gangaváramu* (ಗಂಗವಾರಮು) = Name of a place
- 16 *Purvalu gampalu* (ಪುಸ್ವಲು ಗಂಪಲ) = Flower baskets
- 17 *Pótulu* (ಪೋತುಲ) = He-buffaloes
- 18 *Mallelu* (ಮಲ್ಲೆಲ) = Jassamin
- 19 *Ankéla* (ಅಂಕೇಲ)
- 20 *Settila* (ಸೆಟ್ಟಲ)
- 21 *Muchchatla* (ಮುಚ್ಚಟ್ಟಲ)
- 22 *Nallula* (ನಲ್ಲಲ) = Bugs
- 23 *Minugala* (ಮಿನುಗಲ)
- 24 *Payyala* (ಪಯ್ಯಲ)
- 25 *Gútamu* (ಗೂಟಮು) = Pegs
- 26 *Jemmudu* (ಜಮ್ಮಡು)
- 27 *Yeddula* (ಯೆದ್ದಲ) = Oxen
- 28 *Jerrébotula* (ಜೆರೇಪೋತುಲ) = A centipede
- 29 *Súrya* (ಸೂರ್ಯ) = The Sun
- 30 *Chendra* (ಚಂದ್ರ) = The Moon
- 31 *Bangáru* (ಬಂಗಾಲ) = Gold

- 32 *Bhúcha kra* (ಭೂಚಕ್ರ) The Globe
 33 *Káchi kadla* (ಕಾಚಿಕ್ಡಲ) = A kind of grass
 34 *Hurali* (ಹುರಳಿ) = Horse gram
 35 *Navane* (ನವಣೆ) = Italian millet
 36 *Gannérta* (ಗನ್ನೇರ್ತ) = Sweet-scented oleander
 37 *Madáala* (ಮದಾಲ)
 38 *Mungala* (ಮುಂಗಲ)
 39 *Gadubárla* (ಗಡ್ಯಬಾರ್ಲ) = Crowbar
 40 *Gajjala* (ಗಜ್ಜಲ)
 41 *Jánamala* (ಜಾನಮಲ)
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