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KARNATAKA

PART-XI

THE YERAVAS OF KODAGU

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FOREWORD

The Indian Census is still the largest single source which provides basic information on different demographic and socio-economic aspects of the people of this country. In fact each decennial census takes lead over the preceding one by widening the scope and dimension of its enquiry and thereby helps to keep the frontiers of knowledge expanding. Thus, today apart from the usual census operation it has become a tradition with this organisation to take up studies on a wide spectrum of topics including arts and crafts, fairs and festivals, towns and villages and on castes and tribes.

The present report is the outcome of an ethnographic study conducted on the Yeravas - a Scheduled Tribe of Karnataka by Shri B.K. Das, Director of Census Operations. In this comprehensive note Shri Das has made every effort to cast wider and question more penetratingly into the different aspects of socio-economic and religious life of the Yeravas. I am sure that the present publication will be a welcome addition to the literature on tribal ethnography which is still in its infancy in India.

Shri M.S.Ramachandra, Assistant Director of Census Operations and Shri K.B. Koppad, Deputy Director of Census Operations have ably assisted Shri B.K. Das in bringing out this publication in its present form. I am thankful to both of them.

This study was taken up by Shri B.K.Das as a special project and the entire credit for its successful completion, therefore, goes to him. I take this opportunity to thank Shri B.K.Das for undertaking this useful study.

New Delhi
Dated the 19 Nov. , 1987

V.S.Verma
Registrar General, India

PREFACE

As the Director of Census Operations, Karnataka, I had the privilege of extensively touring the State and visiting interior areas in various parts of the State. These occasions provided me ample opportunities to closely observe the economic and socio-cultural life of the people belonging to various sections of our multi-faceted society. Whenever I came across groups of people, who have now come to be regarded as tribals, I was often struck by their extremely simple life and the relative ease with which they *could relax, forgetting their woes and hard realities of life.* When Shri P.Padmanabha, the then Registrar General, India, suggested that the Directors of Census Operations may take up a few special studies on subjects of their choice in addition to the main census operations, my immediate choice fell on the study of such simple folks. Accordingly, I decided to conduct an ethnographic study of the "Yeravas" - one of the numerically important tribal communities exclusively found in the Kodagu district of the State. I am grateful to Shri P.Padmanabha for having readily given his assent to the project.

Kodagu district is renowned for its coffee plantations and forest wealth. The southern, northern and western parts of the district are endowed with densely wooded hills and fertile valleys. These forests have in the past provided shelter to several species of wild animals as well as to groups of people who preferred to dwell in forests or were compelled by force of circumstances to retreat to the forests and lead a secluded life with reference to the mainstream of the society. Yeravas are the most numerous among the tribals with such a background. The present study represents an attempt to trace their origin and history as well as to portray the various facets of their socio-cultural life. During the post-independence period which almost corresponds to the era of planned development, especially during the last decade, the Yeravas are exposed to powerful forces promoting a rapid socio-

economic change. As a result, they are no longer living in isolation but are gradually overcoming their instinctive urge to keep themselves aloof from the mainstream of the society. The forces of acculturation are active as never before.

I express my thanks to the following officers who have been closely associated with the project : Shri N.P. Shankara Narayana Rao, Investigator carried out the field investigation with zeal and devotion under the able guidance and supervision of Shri M.S. Ramachandra, A.D.C.O(T). The preliminary report drafted by the Investigator has been revised by Shri M.S. Ramachandra, A.D.C.O(T). Shri K.B. Koppad, D.D.C.O. examined the draft report in detail and offered valuable suggestions in the light of which the report has been finalised. I am also thankful to Shri K.N. S. Iyer, Photographer *cum* Artist of the State Forest Department (Forest Utilisation Division) for his professional services.

Last but not least, I feel greatly indebted to Shri V.S. Verma, the present Registrar General, India who has read through the report with interest and has enriched it with his valuable foreword.

B.K.Das
Director of Census Operations
Karnataka

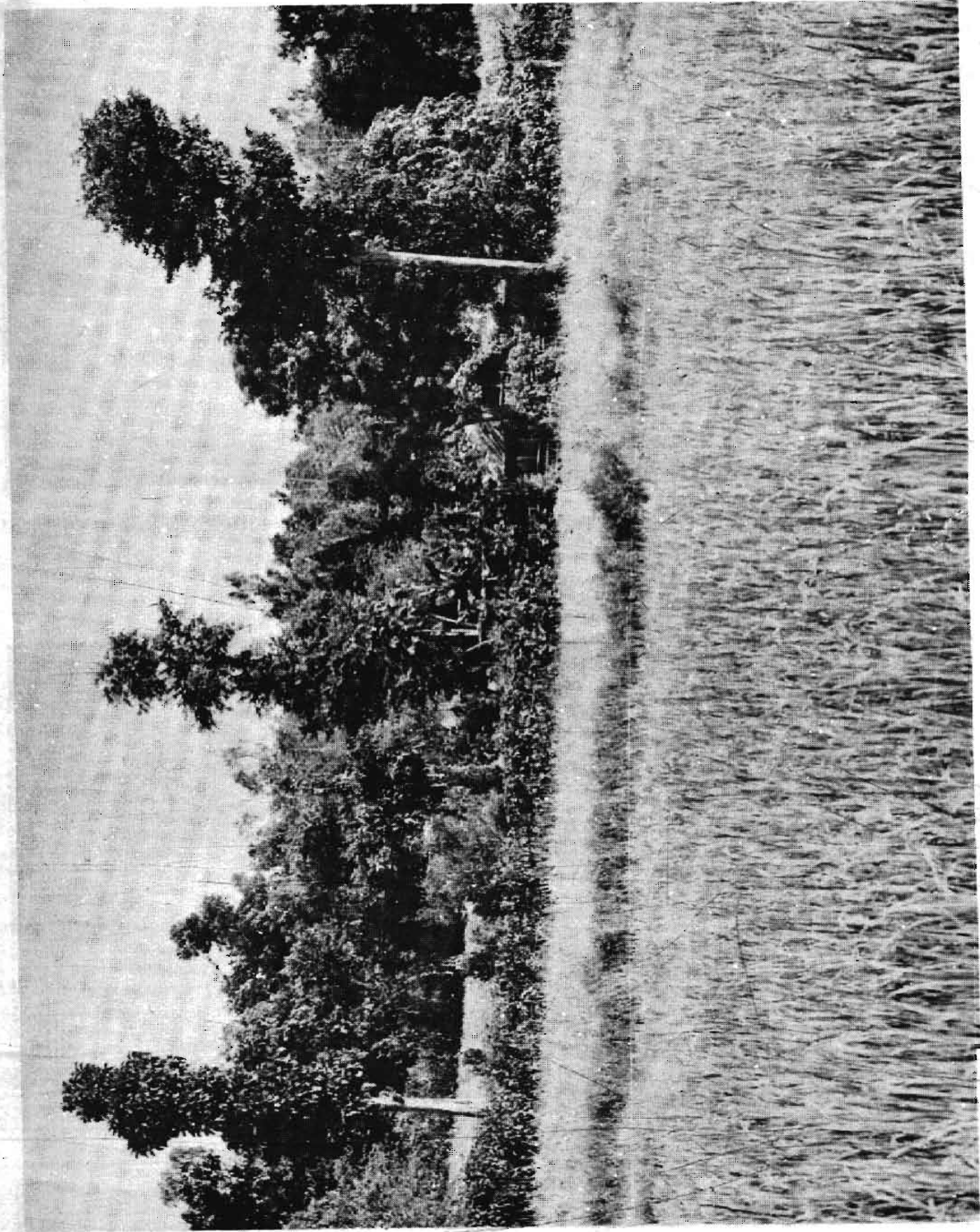
CONTENTS

	Page No.
FOREWORD	(iii)
PREFACE	(V-VI)
1. Introduction	1
2. Name and Identity	2
3. Area where found	11
4. Origin and history	15
5. Demography	27
6. Physical Characteristics	34
7. Family, clan and analogous divisions of the community	37
8. Material life	45
9. Environmental sanitation, hygienic habits, disease and treatment	60
10. Language and literature	63
11. Education and literacy	68
12. Economic life	74
13. Life Cycle: Beliefs and practices connected with birth, marriage and death	91
14. Religion	121
15. Leisure and recreation	125
16. Relationship among different segments of the community	127
17. Inter community relationship	128
18. Structure of social control, prestige and leadership	130
19. Social reform and welfare	136
20. Conclusion	143
Appendix 1 - Badaga Yeravas of Kutta and its neighbourhood	145
2 - Badaga Yeravas of northern parts of Virajpet	149
3 - Brief Note on Tribal Sub-plan	152
4 - A short note on Yerava of Coorg	158
Bibliography.	160

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

1. A view of Mathigodu Colony of Yeravas from a distance. Their dwellings are situated amidst sylvan surroundings. The hut overlooks the paddy field.
2. Closer view of the dwelling of a Yerava at Mathigodu Colony - the walls are of mud and the roof is of thatching grass.
3. View of another dwelling situated in Karekandi. In this case too the walls are of mud and the roof is of thatching grass.
4. A mortar is built into the raised platform in the front portion of the dwelling. Here the old woman is pounding paddy with a long wooden pestle.
5. After pounding, the dehusked paddy is sieved to separate the rice grains from the broken pieces.
6. And then rice is winnowed to remove dust and husk.
7. Pounding paddy by *Yatha*, another type of wooden device with lever action.
8. Front view of an old man.
9. Profile of an old man.
10. Front view of a young man.
11. Profile of a young man.
12. Profile of a teenaged boy. Notice the frizzly hair.
13. Front view of an old woman.
14. Profile of a middle aged woman.
15. A young woman wearing saree in traditional style and holding a child in her arms.

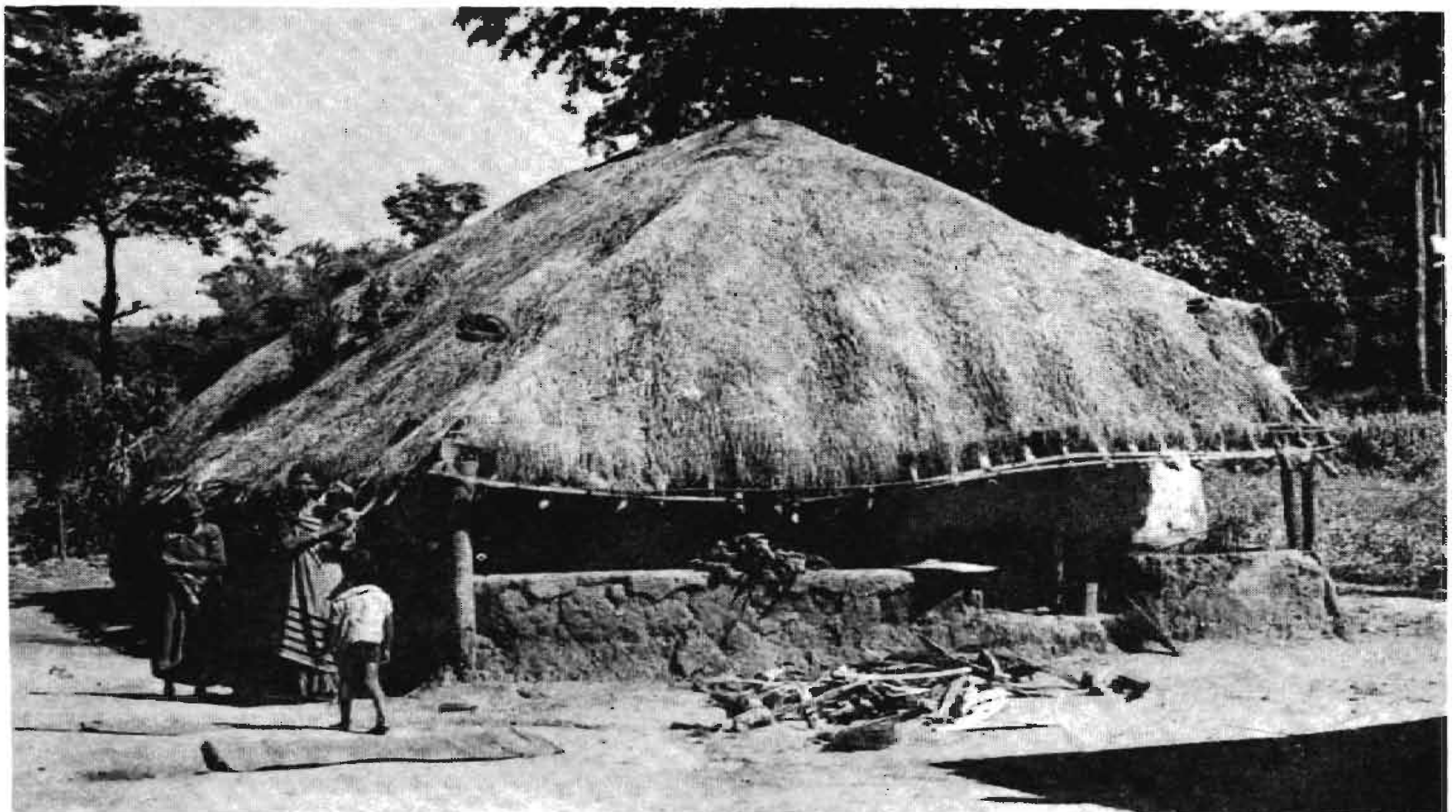
16. Another young married woman wearing saree in a different style which is quite common in other parts of the State and elsewhere .
17. Young girl dressed in traditional style - notice curly hair.
18. Another young girl dressed in traditional style- notice trizzly hair.
19. Profile of a young girl. Notice the bead necklace and tawdry ornaments adorning the ear-lobe and the nose.
20. A couple.
21. A couple with grown up sons.
22. Another couple with young children.
23. An elderly woman with her daughters and grand children.
24. Women and girls belonging to Adiyar tribe at Tirunelveli (Kerala State).
25. Fishing traps made of bamboo reeds lay in the foreground of the old man and his grand son.
26. *Kanjeladi* (priest) with *dudi* the percussion instrument in position.
27. *Thammadi*, the priest who gets possessed and acts as a medium, in his functional attire.
28. Close up view of the symbols kept inside a Yerava shrine.
29. Articles kept in a corner of the same shrine, on a slightly raised platform, represent *achchandebedi* and a *Kadtale*.
30. View of the interior portion of another shrine.
31. The dilapidated temple at Kudure Kode (near Tirunelveli in Kerala) - which is closely associated with the progenitors of Panjiri Yeravas.
32. The two stones representing Achche and Itthi, the progenitors of the Panjiri Yeravas.



A view of Mathigodu Colony of Yeravas from a distance. Their dwellings are situated amidst sylvan surroundings. The hut overlooks the paddy field.



Closer view of the dwelling of a Yerava at Mathigodu Colony - the walls are of mud and the roof is of thatching grass.



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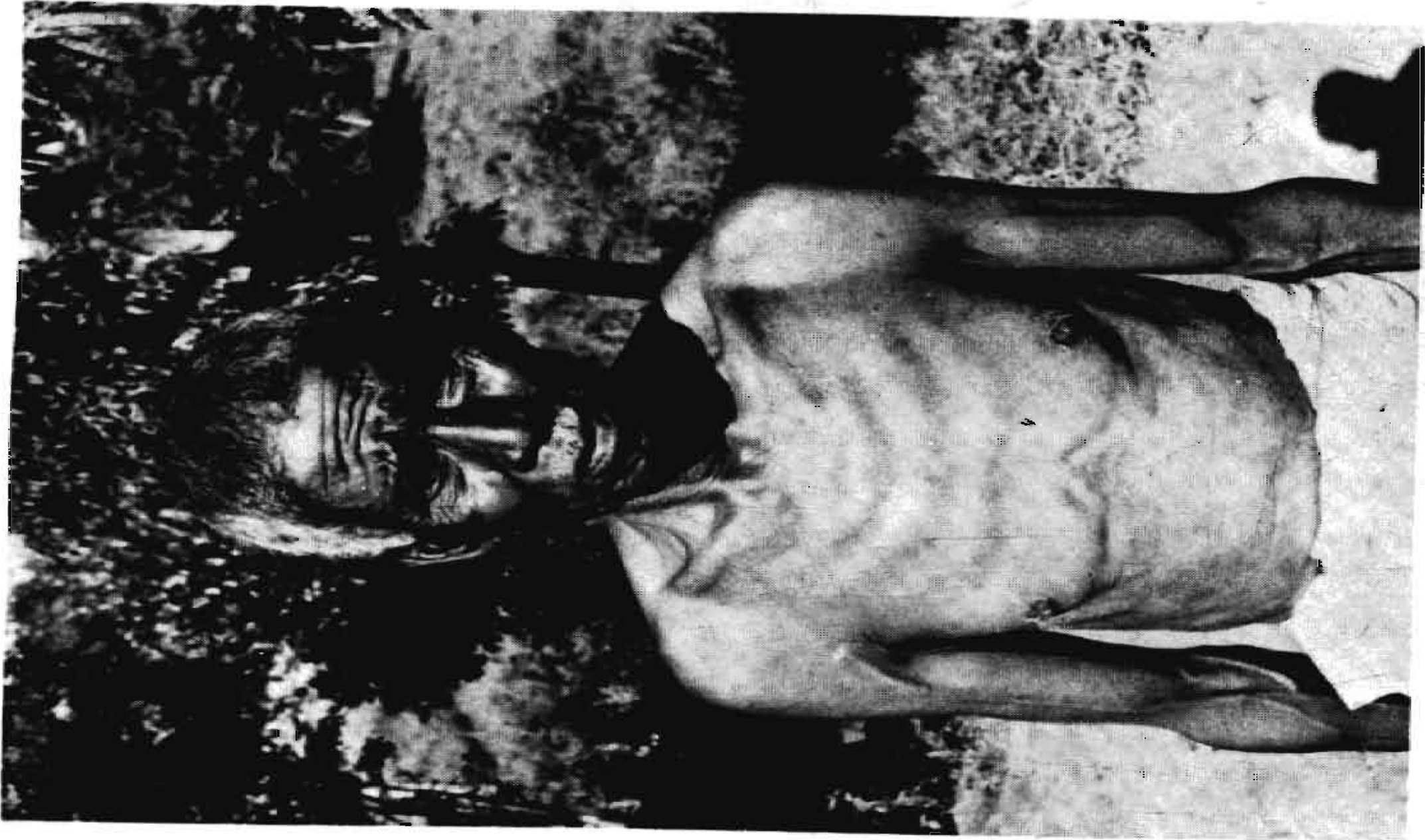
After pounding, the dehusked paddy is sieved to separate the rice grains from the broken pieces.



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Pounding paddy by *Yatha*, another type of wooden device with lever action.



Front view of an old man.



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Profile of a middle aged woman.



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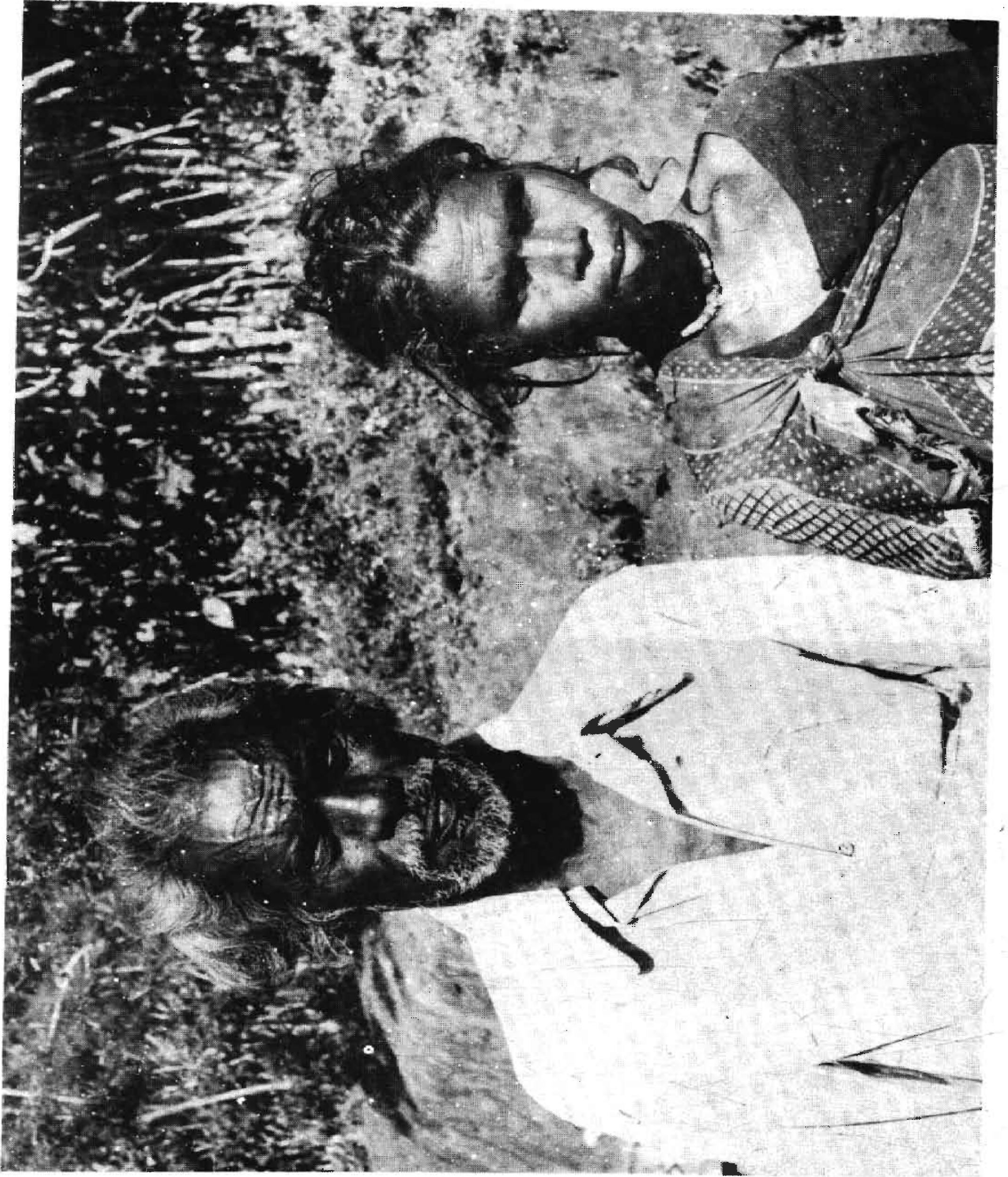
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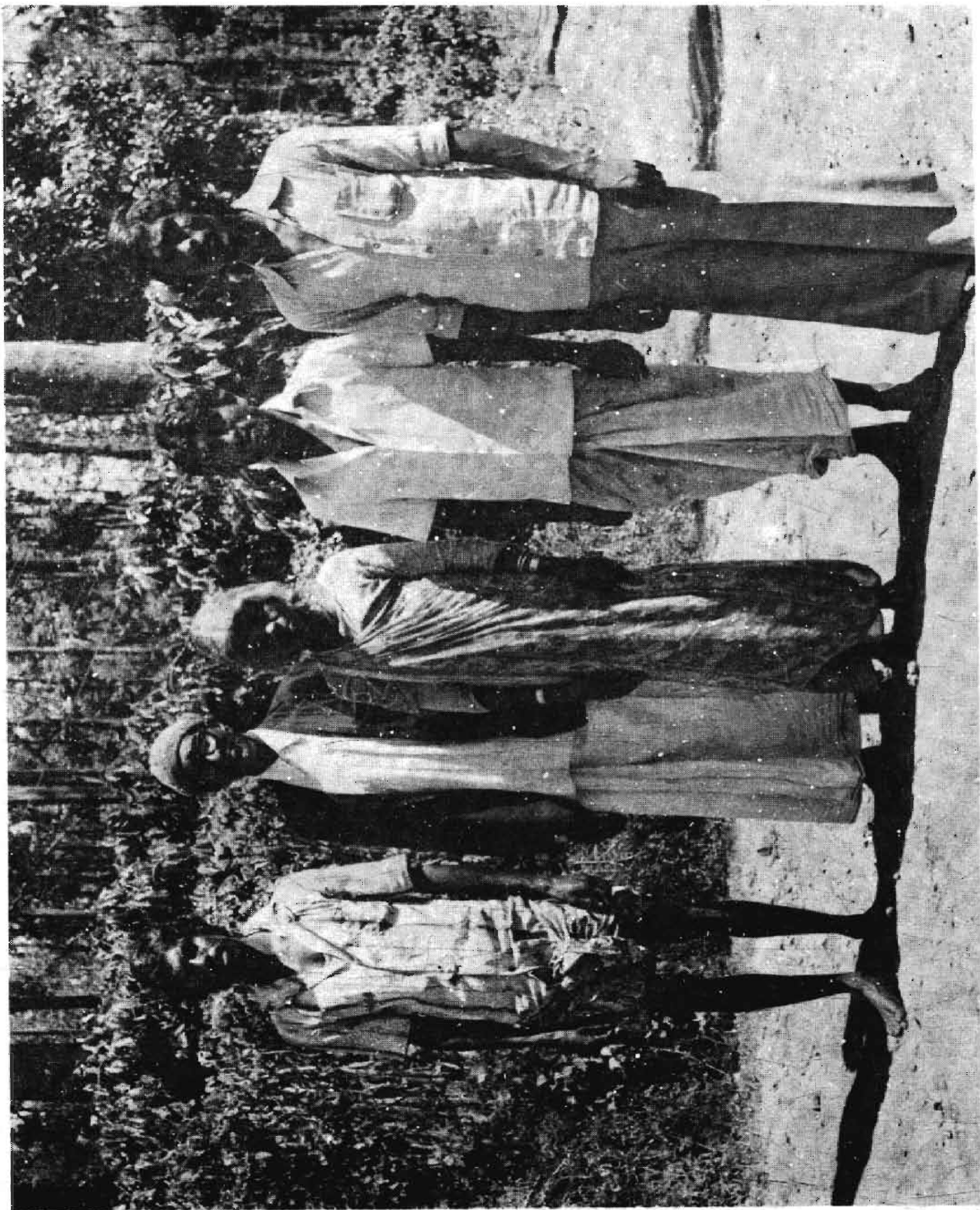
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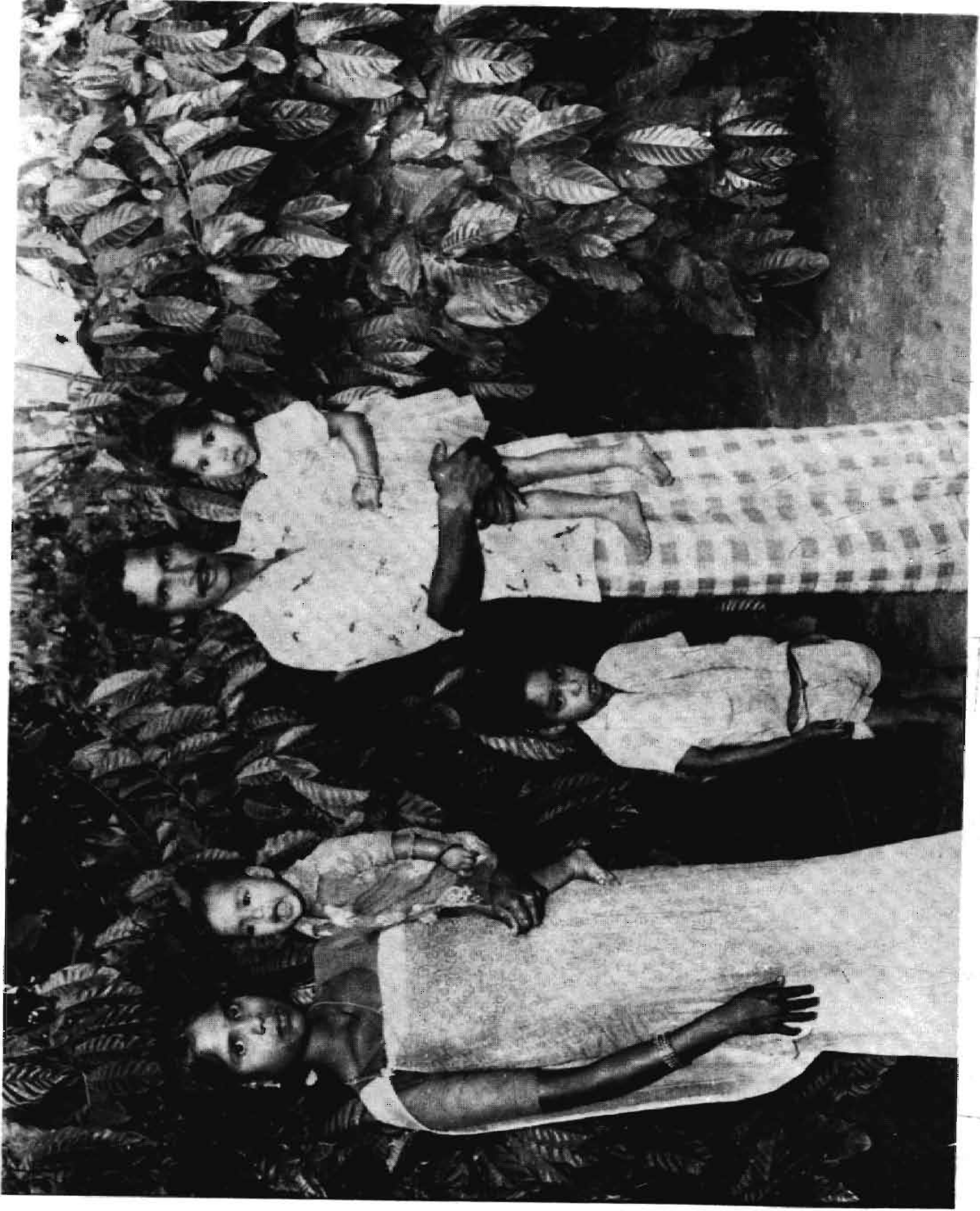
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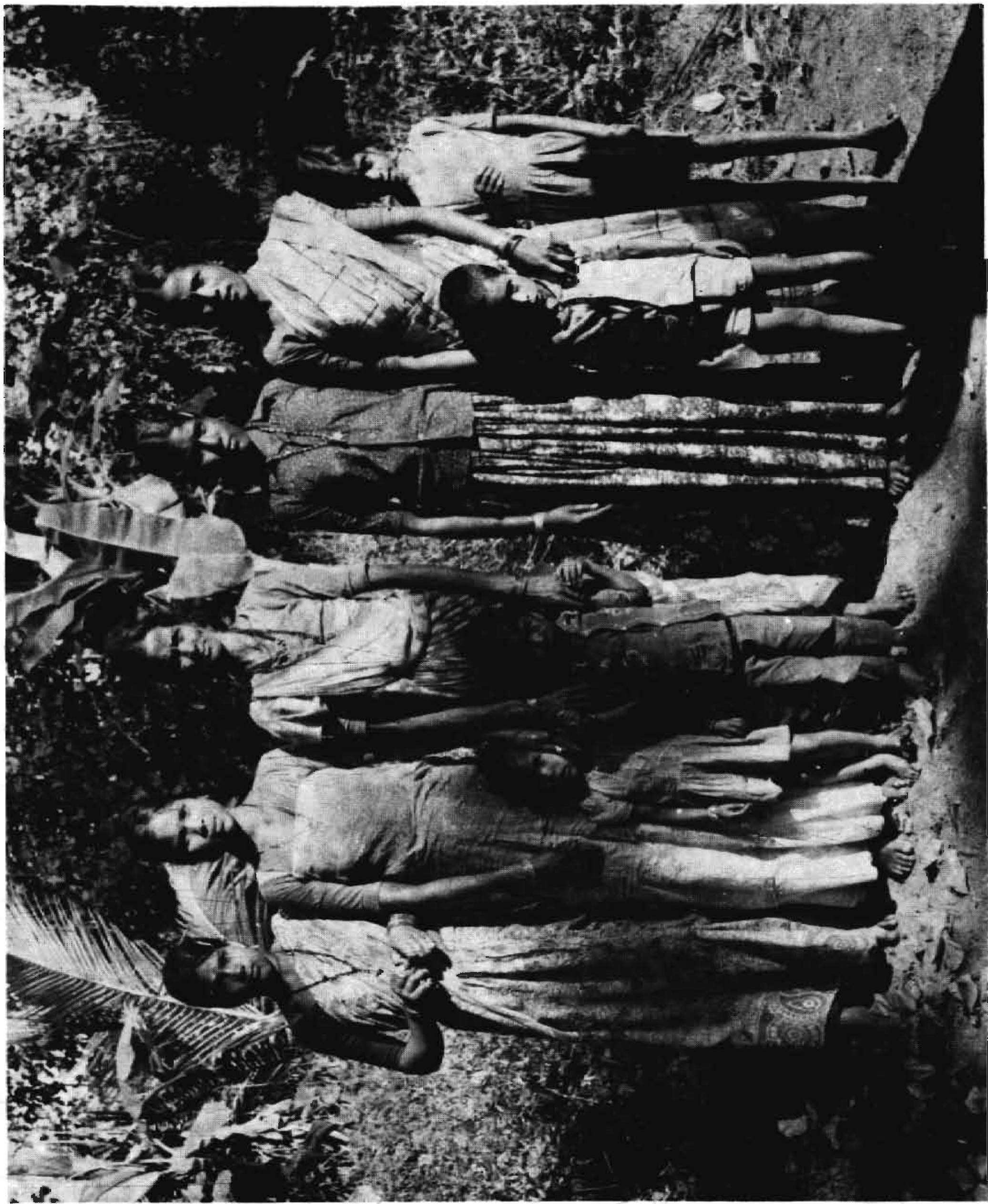
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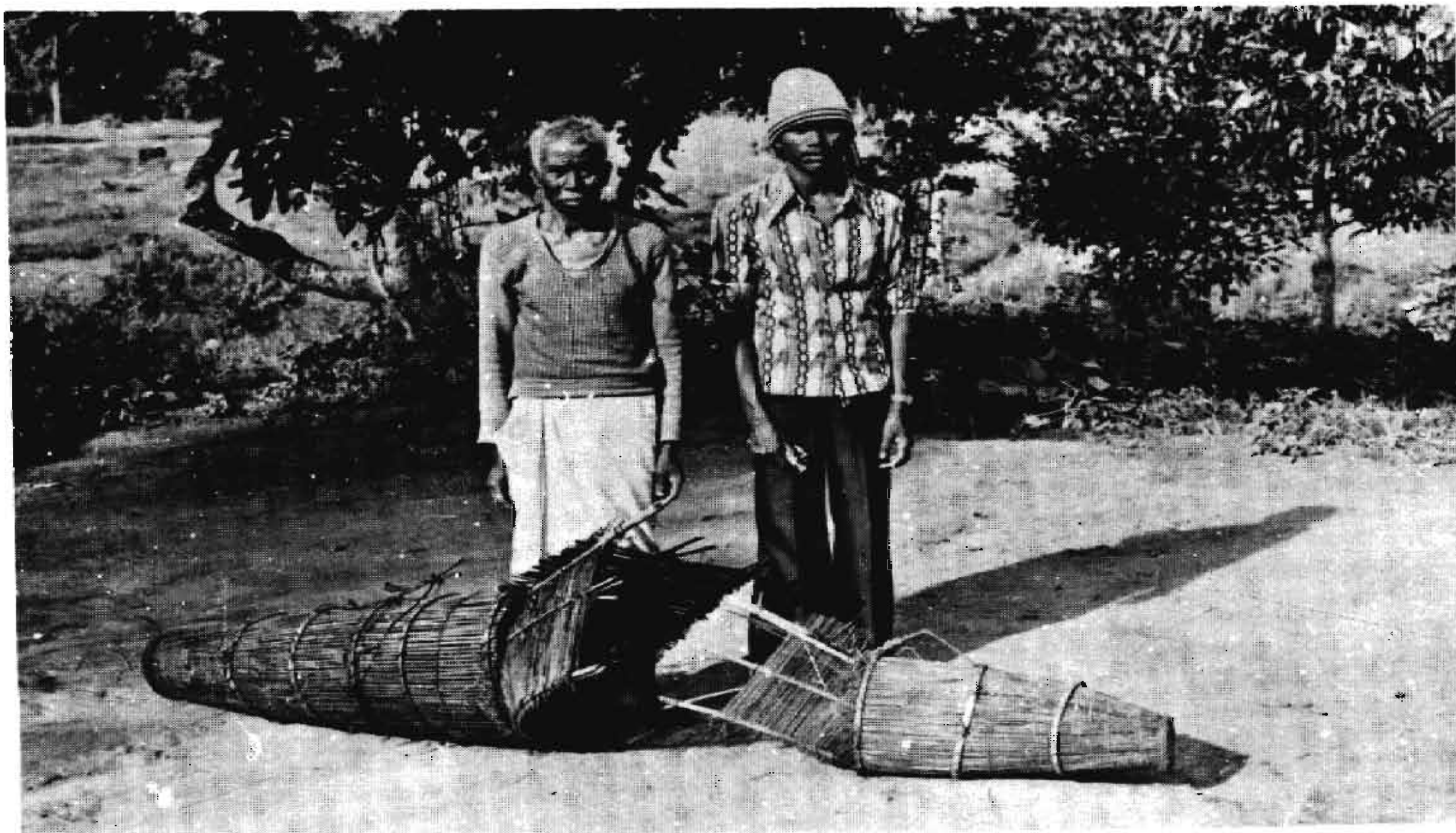
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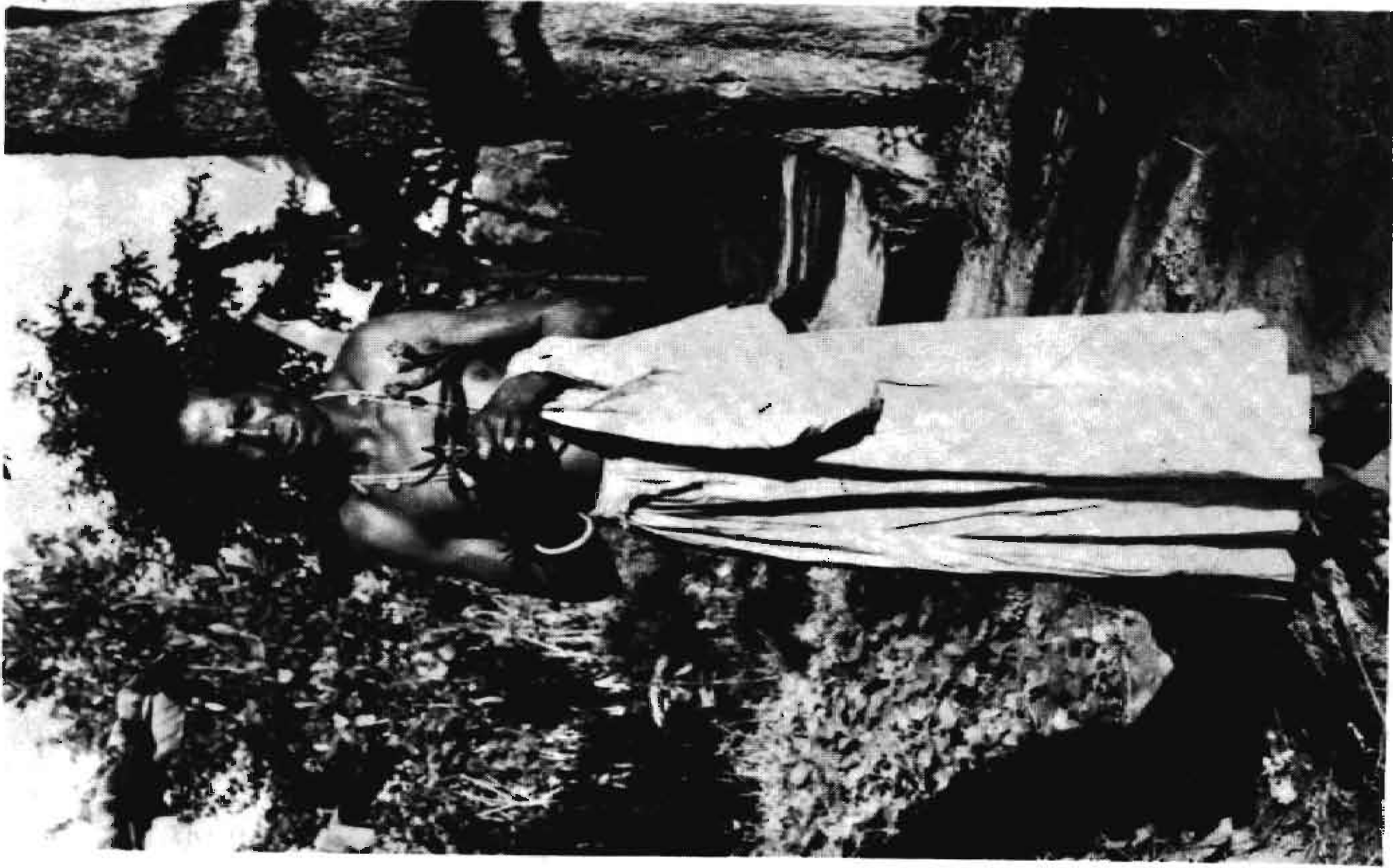
Women and girls belonging to Adiyen tribe at Timelly (Kerala State).



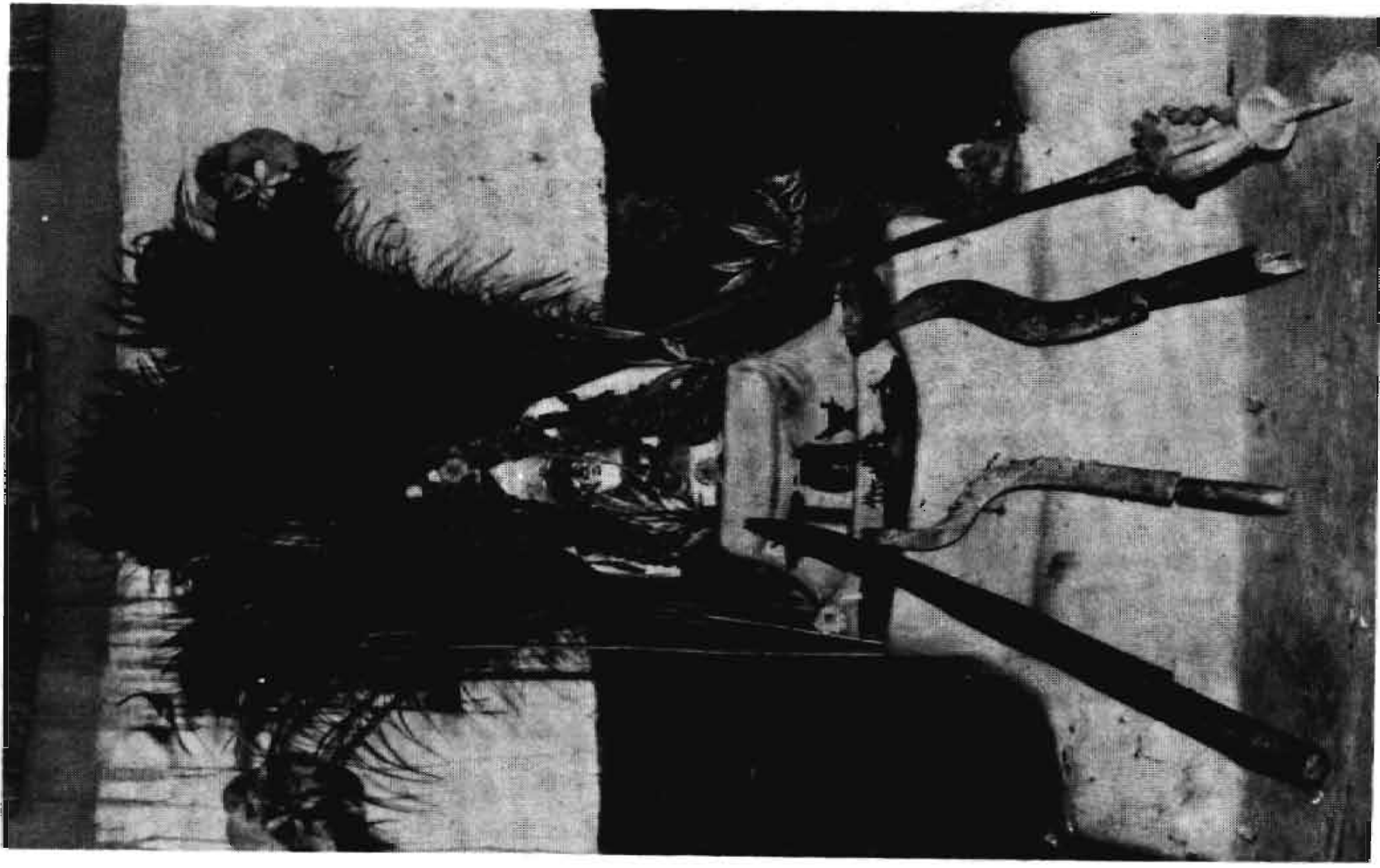
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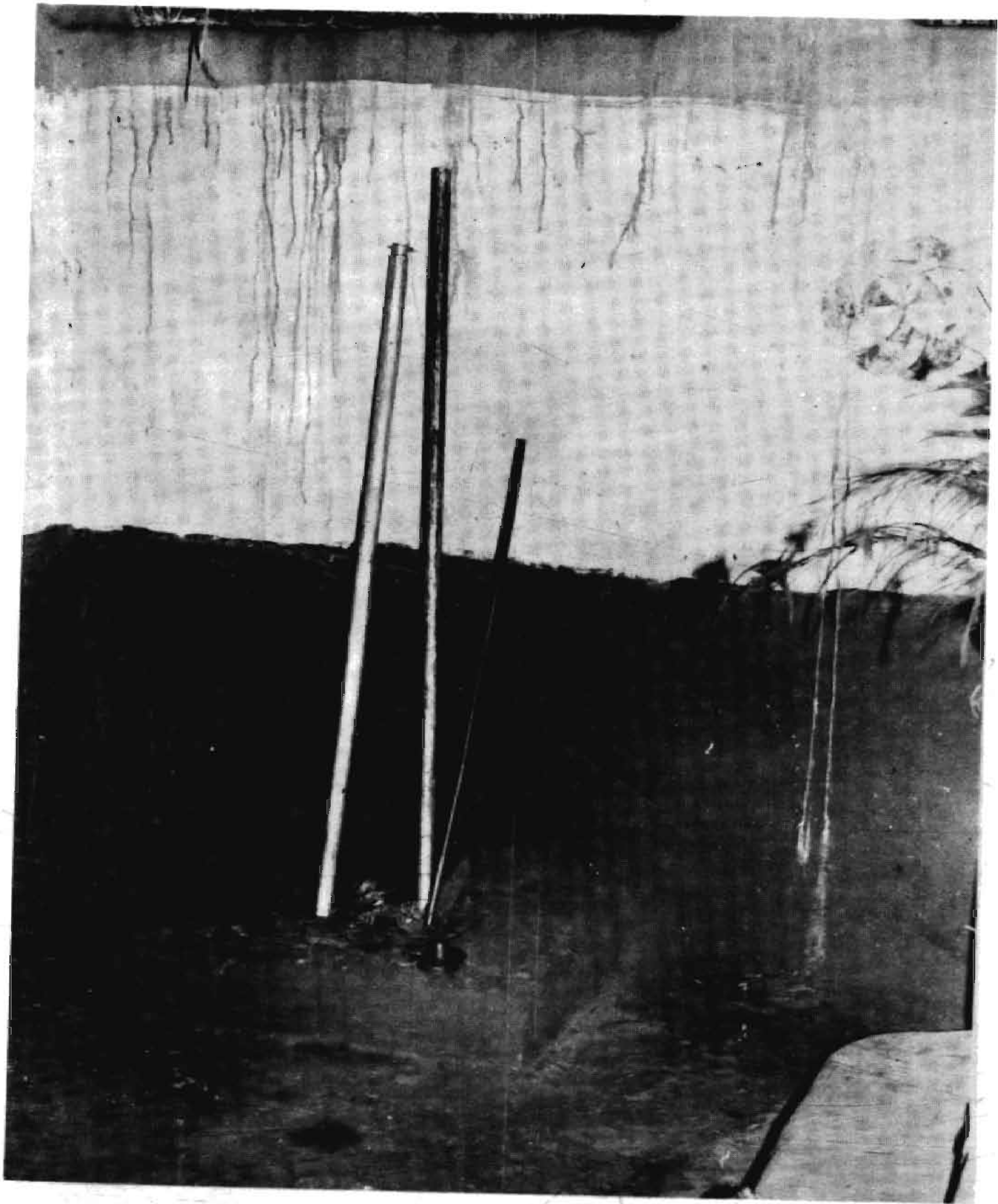
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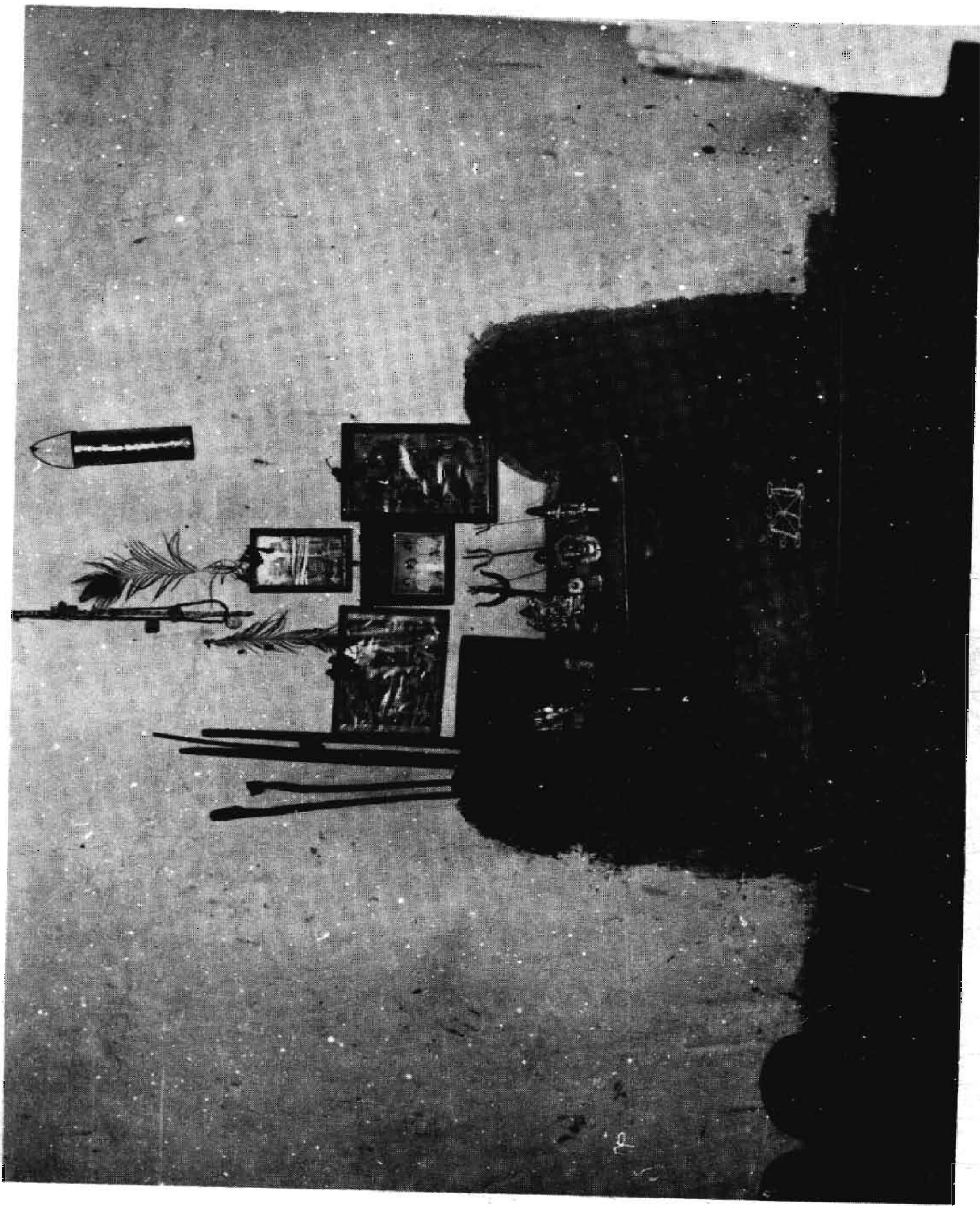
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Close up view of the symbols kept inside a Yerava shrine.



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View of the interior portion of another shrine.



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The two stones representing Achche and Iththi, the progenitors of the Panjiri Yeravas.

THE YERAVAS OF KODAGU

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerically the Scheduled Tribes constitute an insignificant minority in Karnataka. According to the 1971 census, hardly 0.79 per cent of the total population of the State professed to belong to the Scheduled Tribes. This tribal population is unevenly distributed all over the State and is made up of several tribal communities. Districtwise consideration discloses that there are a few pockets of higher concentration and that Kodagu is one such district. In the total population of Kodagu, according to 1971 census returns, 8.23 per cent belonged to Scheduled Tribes. Within this small district, Virajpet taluk happens to be an area of higher concentration. The Scheduled Tribes constituted as much as 14.13 per cent of its 1971 population. The major tribal community found here is that of the Yeravas. The Yeravas are a localised group confined to a narrow belt in the south-western sector of the State. When considered in relation to the total Scheduled Tribes population of the State the Yeravas account for 5.94 per cent and numerically form the third largest community among the Scheduled Tribes of the State.

1.1 From the very first population census in Kodagu (formerly known as the Province of Coorg), the Yeravas have been enumerated separately. Their economic and social backwardness was recognised by the administrators during the early years of the British period. Having been considered as animists and tribals they have presumably been receiving a sympathetic treatment by the Government all along. When the concept of Scheduled Tribes was introduced in the country, the Yeravas of Kodagu were naturally considered as one among such tribes. The Constitution Order 1950, issued under Article 342 of the Constitution of India, declared the Yeravas as a Scheduled Tribe in the erstwhile State of Coorg. Consequent on the re-organisation of States in November 1956,

Coorg, now renamed as Kodagu, became a district of Karnataka. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) Order, 1956 issued thereafter too declared the Yerava as a Scheduled Tribe only in Kodagu district. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 1976 (Act No. 108 of 1976 of Government of India) the Yerava is notified as a Scheduled Tribe throughout Karnataka. Thus, the erstwhile area restriction within the State now stands removed. An examination of the lists of Scheduled Tribes relating to the neighbouring States of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu reveals that Yerava is not a Scheduled Tribe in any of these States

1.2 This monograph is based mainly on the field data gathered during 1983 through informal meetings and discussions with the knowledgeable people of the community, covering as many as twenty settlements in Virajpet taluk. In this process, household schedules were canvassed for a small number of households and the techniques of unstructured interview and case study were also adopted. An attempt has been made to assess the impact of various development programmes sponsored from time to time by the Government for the upliftment of the Scheduled Tribes. It may be incidentally mentioned that under the Tribal Sub Plan an integrated Tribal Development Project was launched during 1976 in Kodagu District and that the headquarters of the Block was located at Ponnampet—a town in the heart of the area known for its heavy concentration of the Yeravas. This apart, in recent decades, like other sections of the society, the Yeravas are also exposed to the influence of several factors which are promoting socio-cultural and economic changes. It would therefore be of interest to know whether the Yeravas have remained static and are even now retaining their exclusive tribal characteristics or whether they have been infused with any new sense of dynamism and are rapidly changing with the times.

2. NAME AND IDENTITY

The earliest references to Yeravas in published literature date back to the year 1870. In his *Memoirs of the Kodugu Survey*, Lt. Connor (Connor, 1870, Vol.II) states that, "the caste of people

consigned to praedial slavery in Codugu proper are known generally under the term *Yeravaru*". In Kannada language, the term *Yeravaru* happens to be the plural form of Yerava. In his article on the 'Original Inhabitants of Bharat Varsha or India' under the sub-title, Kodagas, Gustav Oppert (The Journal of Literature and Science, 1888-89, ed. Captain R.H. Campbell, Part II, P 140) avers that, "It is not impossible that the present Kodagas, unless they are regarded as aborigines, immigrated at a later period to Kurg. In those early days, the Billavas and the Kurumbas, the two representatives of ancient Dravidian and Gondian tribes, were already living on these mountains, as well as the Holeyas and Yeravas who probably had not been degraded as bond slaves and out castes". Reverend G.Richter who compiled the Coorg Manual observes (Richter, 1867, p.114) that, "Yeravas, a wandering tribe originally from Wynad, where, like the Holeyas in Coorg, they were held in slavery by the Nairs. They speak their own language and live chiefly in Kiggatnad with the Coorgs to whose mode of life and worship they have conformed. Like them they eat no beef and therefore rank higher than the Holeyas and Medas. They are strong and diligent labourers..... In features and complexion the Yeravas resemble the Kurubas; like them they are scantily dressed. At their wedding and at their *pandalata* or demon feast they chant their peculiar songs and have dances, in which like in those of the Paleyas, women take part, an extra ordinary practice amongst Hindus". During 1897-98, T.H. Holland who took anthropometric measurements of 50 Kodavas and 25 Yeruvas (Holland, 1901,p.59) states that "Like many of the aboriginal tribes of South India who have been compelled to retire to the unhealthy hills before the southward spread of the Aryans, the Yeruvas found in Coorg an asylum or refuge from the aggressive invaders. At a later period.....Kodagas (Coorgs) found in the jungles of Coorg the means for satisfying their hunting propensities....whilst to the Yeruva the little mountain province was a place of retreat, to the Kodaga it was a Nature-made *point d' appui* for border raids, conducted with a view to supplementing the limited agricultural resources of the small plateau".

In the Imperial Gazetteer of India dealing with Coorg, B.L. Rice (Vol. XI, Mysore and Coorg, 1908, pp-295 & 300) writes, "the two

distinctive classes special to Coorg are the Kodagas or Coorgs proper, from time immemorial the lords of the soil, and the Eravas or Yeravas, their hereditary praedial slaves, now of course free.... They (Yeravas) live almost entirely in the Kiggatnad and Yedenal-knad taluks and are said to have come originally from the Wynad. They speak a language of their own—a dialect of Malayalam. They are much sought after as labourers, and are slaves in all but the name.... There are two sections - Panjiris and Paniyas. The former allow their fleecy hair to grow to dense masses which are never disturbed by a comb, but seldom have more than a few straggling hairs to represent a beard. Their appearance resembles that of Australian aborigines....” It may be incidentally mentioned that at the 1871 and 1891 censuses, the Yeravas are shown as belonging to two groups namely Panjiri Yeravas and Pani Yeravas. Coming to later times, L.A. Krishna Iyer (Iyer L.A.K. 1948, p. 8) records that “the Yeravas are aborigines of Wynad from which they gradually migrated to the forests of South Coorg.... They are the lowest of the jungle tribes and appear to have been in a servile condition to the Betta Kurubas.... The tribe is composed of four endogamous groups, the Panjiri, the Pania, the Badava and the Kaji Yeravas. The Panjiri stand highest in the social scale and the Kaji the lowest, because of their habit of eating crows. The Panjiri Yeravas who came from Mysore are divided into two sub-groups : Ippumale Yeravas and Karatti Yeravas. The former are said to have immigrated from Ippumale which is situated beyond the Manantoddi river, and are generally found in Srimangala and Ponnampet nads; and the latter in Parattimale near Bythoor. There is no inter marriage between them. The Badava Yeravas, who are also found in Mysore are mostly found in Coorg.... The Panias and Panjiri neither interdine nor intermarry. A Panjiri can become a Pania but not *vice-versa*....” In 1951, K.L.N.Rao, merely repeats the observations of Iyer when he writes that “the Yeravas seem to have migrated from Wynad At one time seem to have been slaves of Betta Kurubas... There are four endogamous groups : Panjiri, Paniya, Badava and Kaji Yeravas in the order of social standing”. Again, in 1963, A.A.D. Luiz repeats the salient observations made by the earlier writers and states, “the three main divisions are Panjiri, Pani and Badava or Badaga. All sections have the suffix Yerava, which is the generic name in common parlance, though

they do not mix or inter marry.... It would be appropriate to list them as distinct tribes... The claim that the Pani section is an offshoot of the Paniyans of Wynad has not been substantiated. The three groups have kulas (clans) named after locations, trees and animals. All sections follow the patrilineal rule of succession". (Luiz, A.A.D. 1963. p 188-9). It is also interesting to note that in his notes on Adiyam, Luiz (Ibid, p-1) mentions that, "In certain tracts they are known as Eravas (Yeravas)," a name which connotes that they were alineable with the land and were given to begging, without, however, incorporating a corroborative statement in the notes on Yerava. Further, Luiz, has not made any reference to the Kaji Yeravas, the fourth group among the Yeravas, mentioned by the earlier writers.

2.1 It is obvious from the foregoing that while the earlier writers have recognised only two groups of Yeravas (both presumably speaking the same language) the later writers, notably Iyer, have listed out four groups. In so far as the census count is concerned, it is only during 1871 and 1891 that the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas were enumerated separately. At the remaining censuses the Yerava has been considered as a single tribe without regard to its internal structure. Thus, the four communities of Kodagu which have been using the suffix Yerava with their distinctive names are the Pani Yerava, the Panjiri Yerava, the Badava or Badaga Yerava and the Kaji or Kage Yerava. Apart from the fact that in the past members of these communities were agricultural labourers, more or less permanently attached to the landlords, nothing much is known about their identity i.e., whether these groups represent branches of a single tribe sharing a common origin or whether these represent different communities which have been integrated into a single tribe with a specific regional or socio-political order to form a heirarchy of sub-tribes. It is of interest to note at this juncture that Badaga is also an independent tribe. According to Edgar Thurston, "As the Todas are the pastoral, and the Kotas the artisan tribe of the Nilgiris, so the agricultural element on these hills is represented by the Badagas.... The name Badaga or Vadugan means northener, and the Badagas are believed to be descended from Canarese colonists from the Mysore country, who migrated to the Nilgiris three centuries ago owing to famine, politi-

cal turmoil, or local oppression in their own country" (Thurston, Vol. I-A and B, pages 63 and 67, 1909 Reprinted 1975). On this basis it would be difficult to deny outright any suggestion that the Badaga Yeravas met within Kodagu represent the descendants of a section of the Badagas which migrated to Kodagu several centuries ago. Anyway, Yerava appears to be more a generic name than the name of particular tribe. As has been observed by Connor, the term seems to simply denote the 'people consigned to agrestic serfdom in the past' irrespective of their internal differences with reference to their myths, about their origins, customs and habits.

2.2 According to this field study also, in Kodagu district members belonging to the above mentioned four communities which are suffixing their names with the term Yerava are met within varying numbers. Further, among the Badaga Yeravas themselves there are two distinct groups; those found in the region around Kutta and those found in the north eastern parts of Virajpet. Thus, at present, five different groups are found to be using the suffix Yerava to identify themselves. Each one of these groups has a distinct story of origin, a distinct social organisation and kinship system, its own rites and rituals as well as gods and goddesses. Though there are some similarities each group has a claim to be treated as a separate unit.

2.3 The Pani Yeravas trace their origin to *Manathur Makka*, the two children of the spirits who have been mentioned in their mythological accounts as a brother and sister who were ensnared by the Thambira of Ippimalai and compelled by circumstances to live subsequently as husband and wife. The Pani Yeravas are patrilineal and the exogamous divisions among them are known as *Tharanas*. They have a language of their own. Among themselves they are known as *Paniyaru*.

2.4 The Panjiri Yeravas trace their origin to a male and female figure which were made out of clay under divine instructions by two men of a higher caste (who sought to acquire the powers of creation) and, as desired by them, were infused with life by the God Himself and ordained there-after to procreate and multiply

themselves. The Paniiri Yeravas are matrilineal. Their clan divisions are called *Chemmas*. They speak a language which is different from that spoken among the Pani Yeravas. When queried about the name of the community to which they belong they refer to themselves as *Panjiri*.

2.5 The Badaga Yeravas of the region around Kutta in the south-eastern parts of Virajpet taluk trace their habitat to places in Heggadadevankote taluk of Mysore district. They claim that they are basically Panjiri Yeravas and that their ancestors, who settled generations ago in the villages of Heggadadevankote taluk, were compelled by circumstances to give up their traditional socio-religious practices and adapt themselves totally to the local conditions. They are patrilineal. They speak Kannada both among themselves and with outsiders. Their social customs and religious practices are similar to those of the dominant Hindu caste groups of Heggadadevankote taluk. They have moved over to this part of Kodagu district in quest of work in agricultural fields and coffee plantations. They have continued to retain kinship and social links with their counterparts in the villages of Heggadadevankote taluk and also border villages of Kerala State.

2.6 The Badaga Yeravas in the north-eastern belt of Virajpet taluk are mainly met with around Maldare forest and the areas bordering Piriapatna taluk of Mysore district. They identify themselves with the Soligas of the Biligirirangana betta of Mysore district. They claim that their ancestors accompanied the army units of the Mysore Raja during the wars with the Raja of Kodagu and at some point of time due to unknown reasons, they were stranded in this area. Instead of being known by their proper tribal name, later on, they came to be called Badava Yerava on account of their poverty stricken conditions and this name got further transformed into Badaga Yerava. In Kannada the word *Badava* means a poor man and *Badaga* means the north. They speak Kannada both at home and with outsiders. They are patrilineal. Their folk-lore is replete with references to gods and goddesses popular among the Soligas.

2.7 The Kage or Kaji Yeravas are, it is gathered, also known as *Kake Paniyas*. However, these people are said to be more prone to

identify themselves as Pani Yeravas than by any other group name. They are met with in very small numbers in Hebbale, Devarakadu and a few other villages in the central parts of Kodagu district. They are said to be quite indistinguishable from the Pani Yeravas. The Yerava language they speak is said to contain a large number of words and idioms of the Kodava language. Further, their womenfolk wear the saree in a fashion which is very much similar to that in vogue among the Kodava women. For all practical purposes, therefore, this group may be regarded as a part and parcel of the main tribal community of Pani Yeravas.

2.8 It is thus obvious that the community notified as a Scheduled Tribe under the nomenclature Yerava consists of at least four different tribal communities. In the list of Scheduled Tribes there is no reference whatsoever to the sub-tribes or groups among the Yeravas. For all practical purposes all those who suffix their community name by the term Yerava have been treated as belonging to the Scheduled Tribe of Yerava. As could be ascertained through extensive local enquiries, the Pani Yeravas are by far the most numerous and the Panjiri Yeravas rank next. The two groups of Badaga Yeravas account for a few hundreds each while those who call themselves Kage Yeravas may add up to just about a hundred or so. In the report that follows the Pani Yerava and Panjiri Yerava have been dealt with in detail and, in the appendix, brief notes are furnished on the two groups of Badaga Yeravas. Kage Yeravas have been regarded as a part and parcel of the Pani Yeravas and no specific mention has been made of their customs and traditions.

2.9 The Yeravas do not have any unique or characteristic features that are so overtly recognisable as to enable one to distinguish them from the rest of the agricultural labourers and plantation workers of the region. They do not have any distinct skills, either traditional or recently acquired, or professional abilities that provide them an exclusive identity. Like the other tribals such as the Jenu Kurubas and Betta Kurubas of this hilly and once densely forested belt they too seem to share the tradition of having once been forest-dwellers subsisting on practices like food gathering and slash and burn cultivation. They are however more gener-

ally known to have served the local landlords as permanent agricultural labourers. The same tradition, of course, with certain changes keeping in tune with the recent developments, has more or less continued even to this day and the Yeravas have by and large remained as agricultural labourers. Thus, if anything, it is their past tradition of agrestic serfdom that stands out as an important identification mark. The subservient and meek behaviour patterns that are moulded under such conditions have been handed down the generations to such an extent that even now an observant eye (of course after some initiation) can easily spot out the Pani Yerava. The same cannot be said of the Panjiri Yeravas who compare in their looks favourably with those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and other groups mainly engaged as field labourers.

2.10 Etymological Significance : The language to which the term Yerava belongs or its exact meaning according to any one or more of the locally prevailing languages could not be ascertained with any degree of certainty. *Yeravu* or *Yeravalu* is a Kannada word which connotes 'to borrow' and it is quite likely that Yerava is its derivative or its corrupt form. It is known that in the not so remote past it was customary for the landlords to advance money to agricultural workers at usurious rates of interest and on conditions that would virtually render the borrower (and his descendants as well) to remain in a state of perpetual indebtedness. To redeem such debts they had no other go but to enlist themselves as agrestic serfs and leave a legacy of serfdom to their sons and grandsons. Such borrowers might very well have got this name or nickname at least, in this particular region. This derivation appears to be quite in consonance with the observation made more than a century ago by Connor.

2.11 The area in which these people are found is geographically quite close to the borders of the erstwhile Malabar district of Kerala State. Formerly, in Malabar district, there were two taluks known as Kurumbra Nad and Er Nad. The original abode of Vetta Kurumbas and Mullukurumbas is traced to Kurumbra Nad and this leads to the speculation that in so far as Er Nad is concerned there could have been a tribe the name of which starts with the

words Er or Ir. Since Yerava can also be spelt as Erava without any difference in pronunciation one would perhaps be justified to venture the conjecture that Eravas had their original abode in the tract known as Er Nad. In Tamil *Erd* means a bull or bullock and Er Nad perhaps signifies the land of bulls which was full of meadows and pastures. In one of the ancestral songs of the Panjiri Yeravas, who claim to have been known in the past as Iryavuleru also, there is a specific reference to an area called *pon direlli pullubhoomi*. Here, *Pon dire* may be translated as golden land and *Pullubhoomi* obviously means a grass land. The reference here is perhaps to Er Nad.

2.12 Yerava may be a corrupt form of the term *Iryavula*, the name by which the Panjiris claim to have been known in the past, at least among themselves. In Malayalam the word *Ira* refers to the raised platform in the front portion of a house. *Iryavuleru* may be construed to mean the persons who are by custom permitted to come upto the *Ira* of the house (the reference here is obviously to the rigorous hierarchical arrangement of castes, according to social status assigned to each by the higher echelons of the Hindu society in the past). That such an association of the term could be conceived of is evidenced by the details given in *Pattole Palame*, a compilation of Kodagu customs (Nadakerianda Chinnappa, 1924). The castes and communities which are permitted to come up to the *Jagali* i.e., the raised platform in the front portion of the house, are enumerated and among these the Yerava also finds a mention. It is likely that the term *Iryavuleru* gradually got corrupted into Yerava in Kodagu. The two foregoing derivations may perhaps explain as to how the Panjiri group might have got the name Yerava. The question as to why, how and when the other and the more numerous Pani group acquired the name Yerava remains unanswered. It is possible that the Pani Yeravas got their name first on account of their work as indebted agricultural labourers and later the suffix came to be applied to all the other tribal groups that took up work under similar conditions. The term *Pani* occurs in Tamil and Malayalam and in both it means work. Thus, *Paniya* is a man who works, that is a labourer. While adding the suffix Yerava it is quite probable that the word *Ya* in *Paniya* has been skipped and the name of this community has come to be

mentioned as Pani Yerava. The term Panjiri poses a difficult problem and defies proper explanation. In old Kannada and Tamil *Panje* means a man in distress, a poor man and one who is afraid of others. Panjiri may be a derivative of this word to convey the above meaning. *Panji* also means a pig. These people do not have any special association with this animal and there is no taboo regarding consumption of pork. Though they too offer worship to *Panjurli Bhoota*, which is quite popular in Dakshin Kannad district, there is nothing unique about it. However, one of the informants tried to explain that the head of the Panjurli Bhoota is depicted as having raised hair in a disorderly fashion. In the past, the Panjiri Yeravas too were known for such a hair style and they might have looked like the very incarnation of Panjurli. It may be of interest to note that Lewis Rice (1908) too has made a similar observation about the hair style of Yeravas. It is somewhat hard to find a satisfactory explanation or meaning for the term Panjiri and the leaders of the community could not venture forth any meaningful answers in this regard.

2.13 The Scheduled Tribes population returned in 1971 and earlier under the nomenclature of Yerava is thus seen to refer to four or five groups of which Pani and Panjiri are the two that are numerically very large. The narrow strip of land where they are found in higher concentrations is quite close to the State borders. The other side of the border which too shares a similar geographical condition belongs to Kerala State. This geographical continuum suggests the possibilities of migratory movements among the tribal groups across the present day State borders. Whether the Yeravas enumerated in Kodagu represent a mere spill over from the bordering tracts of Kerala or whether they are in fact part and parcel of a larger tribe found in a larger tract including portions of present Kodagu also is worth examining.

3. AREA WHERE FOUND

In Karnataka, the Yeravas are known to be found only in Kodagu district. Prior to the reorganisation of States this district was an independent State and the Yeravas have all along formed an important segment of its population. In so far as the other districts

of the State are concerned there are no references to the Yeravas in any of the earlier census reports even for the periods when it was customary to present castewise data. Castewise enumeration has now been eschewed except of course regarding the communities included in the lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Since Yerava was not declared as a Scheduled Tribe in any other district of the State till 1976, even if a few stray individuals of this tribe were to have been found elsewhere they would not have been separately enumerated and mentioned in the reports. According to local enquiries and the bench-mark survey carried out by the Integrated Tribal Development Project in 1976, the Yeravas are found in small numbers in a few villages of the taluks of Heggadadevanakote, Piriapatna and Hunsur which adjoin the borders of Kodagu. Geographically Kodagu is a very small district consisting of only 3 taluks. Very few Yeravas are to be found in the taluks of Madikeri and Somvarpet. Thus, the Yeravas are virtually found concentrated in Virajpet taluk which spans an area of 1620 square kilometres. A further probe indicates that these tribals are to be met with in larger and larger numbers as one moves towards the south and south-western belts of the taluk and approaches the border line of the taluk.

3.1 According to the benchmark survey of Scheduled Tribes cited above, the Yeravas are found in almost every village of Virajpet taluk. If the distinction between the Panjiri and Pani Yeravas is ignored it is noticed that the population of Yeravas exceeded 500 in the villages of Badaga, Hebbale, Nokya, Kutta, Kothur and Arakeri Forest and that the figure stood in the range of 300 to 500 in the villages of Balele, Badagarakeri, Devanoor, Kanoor, Kurchi and Nalkeri. As between the two groups, the Pani Yeravas are more widely dispersed and found in a larger number of villages. Local enquiries further reveal that the Pani Yeravas are, even now, to a greater extent residing in the lands belonging to the landlords for whom they mostly work as agricultural or plantation labourers.

3.2 The landscape of Virajpet taluk is characterised by a rugged terrain with numerous low hills and broad valleys. Everywhere the lands are covered with lush green vegetation and as one moves towards the borders of Kerala there are dense moist-deciduous forests. In the eastern sector also there are forests and most of these forests contain plantations of fine timber trees such as teak,

rosewood, *mathi* etc, besides the innumerable species of jungle wood and the sandal trees. Nagarahole game sanctuary is also located partly in this taluk. Elephants, bisons, wild boars, spotted deer, jackals, wild dogs and such other animals are found to inhabit these forests in considerable numbers. Hunting is now completely prohibited. The taluk is known for its coffee plantations and fertile paddy fields. Orange and pepper are also important crops. Virajpet, Gonikoppal and Ponnampet are the three municipal towns of the taluk and these towns are centres of trade and commerce. The temple of Muthappa at Virajpet, under the auspices of which an annual festival called *Muthappa thera* is held, is of considerable regional importance and attracts a large number of tribals as well. Gonikoppal is a transport centre as well as an educational centre. Ponnampet is a smaller town close to Gonikoppal. It has a hospital run by the Ramakrishna mission. A socio-cultural *cum* religious organisation called Shri Sai Sankara Ashrama has been evincing keen interest in rendering service to the people of this neighbourhood. A mention may be made of Kutta, a large sized village bordering Kerala. This place is famous for its temple dedicated to Kuttadamma and the week-long annual fair attended by a large number of people including the tribals. Irupu is yet another place of importance in this neighbourhood. Being known for its Rameshvara temple and also as the place of origin of Lakshmana Teertha river, it is an important centre of pilgrimage.

3.3 The tract on the southern borders of this taluk now belongs to Kerala State. Formerly it formed part of the Malabar district which stood included in the then Madras Province. There are no references to Yeravas as such in the published literature relating to this area. But this area, especially the Wynad tract, is well known for its tribal population. Paniyan and Adiyar are two of the important tribes of this tract and both are listed as Scheduled Tribes in Kerala.

3.4 According to the 1971 census, in Kerala, the Paniyans numbered 45,562 and formed as much as 23.37 per cent of the total tribal population of the State. Their main centres of concentration being South Wynad and North Wynad, they were to be found in considerable numbers in the adjacent taluks as well. In Tamil Nadu also Paniyans are declared as a Scheduled Tribe and their centre of concentration is Gudalur taluk in Nilgiri (i.e. Udagha-

mandalam) district. There are evidences which indicate that the Pani Yeravas of Kodagu are none other than the descendants of the Paniyans of Wynad. The earlier ethnographers have held the view that the Yeravas have migrated to Kodagu from Wynad. The Paniyans are said to hail from Ippimalai, a place which has however not been identified. Their progenitors are said to be Appe Muthi and Amme Muthi. When shocked or surprised they are known to involuntarily exclaim '*ippi ippi*'. They are patrilineal. They bury their dead and perform the main funerary rites on the seventh day after death. On all these points there are no differences between the Paniyans and Pani Yeravas. Thurston (1908, Vol. VI) mentions that the Paniyans could speak Kannada besides their own language. A detailed comparative study including their folk songs, especially the one prescribed to be sung as an indispensable part of death rites, and covering a wider area spanning both Wynad and Kodagu would perhaps provide much more valuable data with which one could easily establish their identity.

3.5 The Adiyans are found mainly in North Wynad and according to 1971 census their population in Kerala stood at 7072. Tirnelly, Kartikulam and Bavali are their chief centres of concentration. These areas are quite close to the State borders. There is enough evidence to show that the Adiyans of Kerala and the Panjiri Yeravas of Kodagu are one and the same, that is, the Panjiris of Kodagu are either direct in-migrant Adiyans or the descendants of such in-migrants. Among themselves the Panjiri are known as Iryavuleru; They trace their original home to Tirnelly and regard the mythical Achche and Iththi as their progenitors. In the precincts of a dilapidated temple at Kudure Kode there are two black stones placed side by side along with a trident. These stones are regarded by them as the symbolic representations of their progenitors. They are matrilineal and the clan divisions, called *chemma*, are grouped into three units termed *mandyu*. On all these counts there are no differences between the Adiyans and Panjiris. Added to this is the fact that most of the Panjiri Yeravas, especially those nearer the border, are very well aware of their alternative name which is current in Kerala. There are quite a large number of marriage links between the Panjiri Yeravas of Kodagu and the Adiyans of Kerala.

3.6 It may also be mentioned in passing that Adiyans has for long been declared as a Scheduled Caste in Kodagu district. Their

numerical strength under this nomenclature has however been very small, being 516 in 1961 and 588 in 1971. However no attempt has been made during this study to trace these Adiyans and obtain details from them. Kollegal taluk of Mysore district and Dakshin Kannad district (formerly known as South Kanara) formed part of Madras State before the reorganisation of States. In this area both Adiyans and Paniyans have all along been declared as Scheduled Tribes. But from these areas while none has returned himself or herself as belonging to either of the tribes during the 1961 Census, at the 1971 Census only 3 persons have been returned under the nomenclature of Adiyans.

3.7 Thus, when viewed in a broader perspective the Yeravas, or more exactly their identical counterparts, are seen to be found in considerable numbers in the adjoining areas belonging to Kerala State. Geographically however the entire tract forms a continuum of a narrow hilly belt characterised by low to moderate hills and broad valleys more or less clothed by dense forests and in its midst runs the inter-state boundary line. But in so far as the tribals are concerned this dividing line might not have been of any consequence in the past, and they, that is the Paniyans and Adiyans, might have very well regarded the entire tract from Tirnally to Gudalur as their homeland and freely moved about from one end to the other depending upon their own exigencies. The Adiyans, however, are said to have a tradition-imposed ban on crossing the Manandavady river and settling down anywhere south of that river. Presumably this has kept them confined to North Wynad.

4. ORIGIN AND HISTORY

It may perhaps be far-fetched to assert that the Yeravas are the aborigines of Wynad. But, all the available data indicate that Wynad and its peripheral region happens to be the original homeland of the Pani Yeravas as well as the Panjiri Yeravas. These people, especially the elders among them, are also aware of their original homeland. As already pointed out, the Pani Yerava and Panjiri Yerava are two distinct tribal communities. Even though they hail from the same broad territory known as Wynad they have their own myths about the founding of their tribe and its subsequent history. In the ensuing paragraphs these myths are separately narrated.

4.1 Pani Yerava: The song prescribed to be sung by their priest

on the seventh day after the death of a person as an essential part of the funerary rites contains a myth about the creation of this world. A free translation of this part of the song is as follows :

“The sky assumed the male form, the earth assumed the female form and the two united and remained in a tight embrace. *Noochu Nalu Thayyanga* and *Pynatappa* (one hundred and four spirits and their chief by name) watched this event and wanted to separate the earth from the sky. They extracted gold from the earth and wood from a tree grown on the sky. With these they made a gold-tipped pestle-like weapon and used it effectively. With the very first piercing blow aimed at the interstitial space the earth stood still and the separated sky began to move upwards. When a second blow was struck the earth began to vibrate convulsively and the sky began to fly farther and farther away. The spirits instinctively felt that the vibrations and flight of the earth and the sky respectively had to be stopped by some means or the other. They immediately began to search for a proper stone which could be used for the purpose. Such a stone was soon found and they blasted it after etching over it their orders to the sky and the earth. When the blast occurred the earth and the sky were both vehemently rocked. But, the two did not obey the orders and while the earth continued its convulsive vibrations the sky continued its flight. The spirits and their chief felt perplexed and then set out to seek the help of an old bird named *Chathangottu Muthi* (presumably a female elderly spirit). By the time the spirits reached the spot, *Chathangottu Muthi* had arranged three sticks in a conical form and at the base of the cone had laid three eggs. She was ill. Her head had shrunk like an areca nut and her limbs were as thin as those of a crab. At this sight, *Pynatappa* and the spirits naturally got disheartened. But still they narrated the events to the *Muthi* and sought her help. *Chathangottu Muthi* pleaded extreme weakness and her inability to either stop the convulsions of the earth or the flight of the sky. Being disillusioned and not knowing as to what should be done next, *Pynatappa* and the spirits made a sword out of *ongel* wood. With this sword one of the eggs laid and guarded by *Chathangottu Muthi* was cut into pieces. To their surprise, forests endowed with tall trees and lands covered with green grass were formed at once on the earth. Encouraged by this, the second egg was then cut into pieces. Immediately thereof all kinds of animals, birds and reptiles as also human beings belonging to forty-four *kulas* (clans) and various castes emerged on the earth. When the third egg was

likewise cut, Chathangottu Muthi rose up like the rising sun and at first flew in four different directions near her home, pecked four times and made four dance-like movements and flew away. With this, the sky slowed down and the earth became steady. Before departing, Chathangottu Muthi gave one eye and one breast to the earth."

4.2 The same song, in a further part, narrates the myth about their origin also. A free translation of this portion of the song yields the following story. "Noochu Nalu Theyyanga and Pynatappa, i.e., the one hundred and four spirits and their chief, directed that a fort be built at Ippimalai. Accordingly the work was taken up and completed. Later, with the material left unused at this site, another fort was built at Mayili Kottai. All the workmen went to Ippimalai to receive their wages. Here the *Thambiratti* (wife of *Thambira* the Lord) of Ippimalai paid the wages and also offered them food and drinks. After the workmen partook of their meals, the food left over in the dining leaves was thrown away. As if waiting for this offal, the *Manathur Makka* (the one hundred and one children of the spirits) thronged the place to consume the food thus thrown away. *Thambira* of Ippimalai and his assistant *Kala Kurume*, saw this crowd of *Manathur Makka* and decided to catch hold of them. Accordingly they made a big net of 60 eyelets and spread it out to ensnare as many *Manathur Makka* as they could. Out of them, all except two escaped. The two that were thus caught happened to be a male and a female related to each other as a brother and sister. *Thambira* caught hold of these two children and noticing that they were naked gave to them a seven cubit length of cloth. The children were non-plussed with this single piece of cloth, for if the boy were to put it on the girl would have to go naked and if the girl were to use it the boy had to go about naked. *Thambiratti* saw their plight and offered another piece of cloth measuring seven cubits in length. The boy and the girl got themselves dressed and grew up under the care of the *Thambira* and *Thambiratti* of Ippimalai. As they grew into adulthood they began to play a dual role in their lives: they became *Angalai* and *Pengalum*, i.e. brother and sister, in all their dealings involving the limbs and other parts of the body above their waist and at the same time began to live as *Ann* and *Ponn* i.e., man and wife, in so far as the parts of their body below the waist were concerned. Later, they begot five sons and five daughters and came to be known among their descendants by the names *Anjilathu Appe Muthi* and *Papalathu Amme Muthi*.

Both these progenitors of the tribe are remembered at the time of marriage, death and such other important occasions and their blessings are invoked to ensure the well-being of the tribal members”.

4.3 In the same song, in a subsequent portion, there is an allusion to the historical developments that took place at some later point of time. This portion is somewhat sketchy and, in addition to *Paya Manathur Makka*, that is the descendants of the above mentioned Appe Muthi and Amme Muthi, the song introduces without explanation one more group termed *Pudiya* (i.e. new) *Manathur Makka*. “The Thambira and Thambiratti of Ippimalai asked these Manathur Makka to plough and cultivate the lands, whereupon being fully ignorant, they commit awful mistakes like tying the plough to the tail or the neck of a bullock, placing the yoke vertically below the neck of a bullock and killing the bullock itself in the process. They were then taught, slowly and step by step, the right way of working the lands. Gradually they picked up the basics of cultivation and, by their hard labour, transformed the landscape of Wynad. Agriculture developed by leaps and bounds and soon enveloped hundreds and hundreds of acres. The yields of a variety of crops were so bountiful that the landlords had to engage hundreds of carts to transport the same to other places beyond their territory. This however was not in any way a boon to these Manathur Makka. They had merely to toil in the fields to produce the fruits that were taken away by others. They had no land of their own. They had no status. They were orphans as it were, for there was nobody to protect their interests like a father, or to care for them in distress like a mother. They felt like being engirdled with a chain in the waist, felt their hands bound as if by handcuffs and sensed that on their heads there was always a hanging sword. Their plight was so pathetic that they always wept and it was as if the tears that flowed out of their eyes could be easily made use of for preparing the porridge that they consumed every day. When they could no longer bear with it the Manathur Makka ran away in a bid to escape from the clutches of their masters. Enroute they washed their feet at a water source, ate some berries (myrabolans) at another spot and knelt and drank water at yet another place and at all these spots left such marks as could easily be identified by their pursuers. Thus, they were soon caught, brought back to their original abodes and forced to work under harsher conditions. They had no other go but to reconcile

themselves to their plight and, with faith in their own *Guru* (inner self) they continued their pitiable existence”.

4.4 The internal evidence provided in the song hints that these happenings are not very remote. The enslavement of the former denizens of the forest seems to have taken place during the period when forts began to be built in the Wynad area and blasting of stones using dynamite was quite familiar. That the Pani Yeravas and the Paniyans in large numbers were enslaved by the landed gentry a few centuries ago cannot at all be disputed. To quote Aiyappan (1960;p.42) “Some of the food-gathering tribes such as the Paniyar of Wynad were enslaved and came to have a precarious, symbiotic existence under the peasant communities of the plains. Large annual fairs where agriculturists of Wynad used to engage their indentured labourers—mostly of the Paniya tribe - were a regular feature of the economy of that area”.

4.5 At this juncture a brief reference to the system of agrestic serfdom that existed in Malabar may not be out of place. It may be recalled that in 1792 when the Britishers took over the administration of Malabar a proclamation was issued to prohibit all sorts of dealings involving the slaves and a person offering a slave for sale was to be treated as a thief. In 1843 an Act was passed to totally abolish the practice of slavery. Besides appointing enforcing authorities designated as protectors, the then Government sponsored some developmental schemes for improving the living conditions of the erstwhile slaves. According to William Logan (1887) in 1857, there were 16,561 slaves in Wynad taluk, 16,590 slaves in the Kurumbra Nad and 35,419 slaves in the Er Nad taluk. The system seems to have lingered on in one form or the other until about the middle of the 19th century when cultivation of coffee was taken up on a large scale in these areas creating thereby new opportunities for those who were eager to come out of the serfdom.

4.6 Kodagu is quite close to Wynad and shares much of its geographical features. It would not be far fetched if it were to be conjectured that the conditions in Kodagu during the early British period were more or less similar to those that prevailed in Malabar. It is a historical fact that Tippu Sultan, by his frequent incursions, had virtually ruined Kodagu. In those days of incessant warfare the services of every able bodied Kodava were required for waging

wars and naturally there would have been a need for a set of meek men who would stay back near the fields and continue to bring forth the much needed food crops. Even after the fall of Tippu Sultan and restoration of the kingdom to the Haleri Raja in 1792 there could in all probability have been a shortage of men to work on the fields. These conditions might have impelled the Kodava landlords to recruit labourers from the not so far off Wynad area, perhaps in addition to the class of agrestic serfs like Kembatti Holeyas who had already settled down among them and had been accorded some functional status in the society. The Pani Yeravas must have thus been brought into Kodagu in small batches over a period of time to settle down more or less permanently in Kodagu itself—may be as agrestic serfs under new masters. In Kodagu too there have been a few stray cases of buying and selling of slaves in the past. In 1817 for instance, any young Yerava was valued at 7 *pagodas* and in 1834, a Paniya Yerava couple was valued at 6 *Kanterai pagodas*.

Richter observes that their bondage must have been originally derived from voluntary submission in order to obtain a livelihood or, the cultivators purchased free persons for assisting them in their cultivation at cheap rates. The Pani Yeravas do not have any role in the socio-cultural life of the Kodavas. Their relationship with their landlord is that of a servant and a master and is more or less purely based on economic considerations. Though theoretically he is free to change his master, once a Pani Yerava enrolls himself to work under a landlord he and his descendants continue to keep on working for the same master. Such a labourer is provided with a plot of land along with a hut to live in and is usually not allowed to slip out. The vestiges of this system appear to be lingering even now in a milder form. These labourers are nowadays engaged on annual contracts or on seasonal contracts which get renewed year after year or season after season. Among Pani Yeravas quite a large number are said to be thus residing in lands belonging to the landlords for whom they usually work on contract basis and receive wages for the work they do, be it in the paddy fields or in the coffee plantations of their masters.

4.7 The waves of such in-migration which seems to have started about a century and half ago if not a little earlier appears to be continuing even now, though in the form of a small trickle. Several older men and women spoken to during the field work could

remember how they were brought to Kodagu by their parents, and could also mention the names of places where they settled down first. For instance Nanja, aged about 80 years, cited that when he was a child his father and mother moved in from Wynad to Kothur and took up work as labourers under an Amma Kodava named Subbaya. As one moves nearer to Kerala borders one is sure enough to come across recent migrants, first generation of descendants and also those who have been in Kodagu for two or more generations.

4.8 (ii) Panjiri Yeravas: Among the Panjiri Yeravas too it is only their priests that are conversant with their ancestral songs including those that are prescribed for specific occasions such as marriage and death rites. Several of such songs are in praise of their tribal deities and one such relates the manner in which the Panjiri Yeravas were created. In its broad outline the story is known to several elderly men and women of the community and the version gathered during this study is given below.

“Two men of a high caste implored *Thambiramaru* (reference is to God as the word *Thambira* means a Lord and the suffix *maru* is an honorific) to grant them the powers to create human beings using the basic elements. *Thambiramaru* commanded them to go round and get some clay from a potter. Accordingly the two set out in search of a potter. While still on their way, it became dark as night befell and at the same time they came across a river as well. They did not venture forth to cross this river at night. Even as they were thinking of a place to spend the night they sighted a house on the bank of the river. They went straight to that house and found the occupant to be a young Madiga woman staying all alone in the house. She offered them food and asked them to spend the night in her house. The two men however refused to accept the food but agreed to sleep in the house. During the night they indulged in sexual intercourse with her and slept. In the early hours of the morning they got up and to their dismay noticed the bones of the head and horns of a cow which were fastened to a beam supporting the roof. Even though it was still quite dark outside, they set forth to resume their journey. On their way they came across a stream near which they noticed an old man putting up a small mud barrage across the stream to catch fish. This man was in fact the father of the young woman with whom these two men had spent the previous night. In their hurry to cross the stream the two men

caught hold of this man by his tuft and pushed him aside as they felt him to be an obstacle on their path. Suddenly the old man turned to them and asked as to why they did not accept food proffered by the woman on the previous night even though they had no scruples to indulge in sex with her and asked further as to why at the sight of the head and horns of a dead cow tied to a beam of the house they were running away. The two were terribly shaken and could not imagine as to how this old man came to know of the things that transpired on the previous night. Suddenly they made amends regarding their curt behaviour towards the old man and to assuage his hurt feelings granted him the powers to prophecy, taught him the technique of making and tying talisman and also granted him the powers by which he could render his adversaries completely powerless. After this diversion they resumed their journey in quest of a potter. As they were about to start, the old man using his just acquired powers told them that they would soon come across a river which had to be crossed by walking over a very narrow bridge of stone with all care to avoid falling into the river and that after crossing the river they would find two cots, one of rope and the other of gold. The two men however did not care. Nevertheless, they soon came to a river with a narrow stone bridge. Ignoring the words of caution, the two men hurried past and in the process one of them fell into the river and was immediately gobbled up by a large fish. The other man reached the other bank of the river and with the help of a large net caught the fish which had swallowed his friend. Thereupon the man caught inside the belly of the fish spoke out to his friend advising him to cut the fish at the back so that, on opening, he can come out unhurt. These instructions were followed and the man came out quite safely. The two then resumed their journey. As foretold by the old man they saw two cots and made use of the same to lie down and rest a while. Here they met some ants with black heads and enquired as to where the ants were heading. The ants informed the two men that they were proceeding to the house of a potter. The two men became elated and stated that they would also go along with the ants. The ants however tried to dissuade them saying that the path that they take is not suitable for men to tread and went about their way. The two men tried to follow the ants but soon lost their way. However, at last, they reached the village with the potter's house. By local enquiries they found out the potter's house and asked for the potter. The potter's wife denied that it was the house of a potter and sent them back. After

roaming about in the village and further enquiries the two men returned to the potter's house. By now, to their solace, the potter was at home and had sat down for his meal. The potter's wife was also there ready to serve food to her husband. Right at this moment the potter was worried, for he had dumped the clay nearby and left it without anyone to keep a watch over it. The two men spoke to him and on coming to know of his cause for worry volunteered their services. They proceeded to the place where the heap of clay was found and while keeping a vigilant watch they themselves stole four handfuls of clay and secreted the same in a bag. The potter finished his food and came over to the spot to take care of the clay heap. On getting suspicious he measured the heap twice and detected that a small quantity of clay had been stolen. He demanded an explanation from the two men. They claimed ignorance and denied that they ever stole the clay. Then they volunteered to detect the thief, for they had noticed a lot of clay still sticking to the limbs of the potter. Along with the potter they went to a nearby stream and asked him to bathe. Then they went a few steps downstream and waited. Accordingly the potter cleaned himself and rubbed off the clay from his body which got mixed up in water and moved down. The two men caught some quantity of this clay and pointed out the muddy water also to the potter. They then stated that the body of the potter himself was the thief. Thus, outwitted, the potter begged their excuse and gave them a pot of lime as a compensation for having wrongly charged them with theft. With their mission accomplished the two men returned with a little quantity of clay. With this clay they moulded two human figures of which one was a male and the other a female. Thereupon *Thambiramaru* the God, infused life into the two clay human figures. The man and woman thus created became the progenitors of the tribe."

4.9 The scene of this mythological event is said to be a place called *Pada maru thile muthadi* which is identified with *Pakath Kottai* fort. The ruins of this fort are stated to be found near Valliyur Kavu on the other side i.e. the southern banks of Manandavady river. Valliyur Kavu is famous for its Bhagavati temple and is located close to the river at a distance of about three kilometres from Manandavady town. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the Paniyans too consider Valliyur Kavu as a sacred place, for according to a legend it was one of their fellow tribesmen who saw the hanging sword of the Bhagavati in a bamboo grove close to

this spot. In former times this was an important centre where an annual fair used to be held and this occasion was being made use of by the landlords to recruit agricultural labourers and also to settle the annual accounts with their labourers.

4.10 The man and woman, soon after their creation, started out to find a place to settle down. When they reached Tirnelly they noticed that the sandy surface of the earth had become very hot. They halted there and out of the black sand made a pot calling it *Kari Kala* and out of the white sand wove a winnowing basket calling it *belli muramu* (silver winnowing fan). They settled down at Tirnelly and multiplied themselves. The name of this original man is given out as Mel Arachai or *Achchai* for short and that of the woman as Keel Arathi or *lththi* for short.

4.11 References to their subsequent progress can be traced in one of the songs which is prescribed to be sung during the funerary rites. When such references are pieced together the story assumes the following form, especially after the narration of the heroic deeds of two heroes named Aryai and Banyai.

“Aryai and Banyai grew palm trees in their groves and when they could get enough quantity of palmyra leaves to put up a large pandal, they called a meeting of men belonging to all the castes and communities with a view to distribute the lands and providing assistance to men in the matter of cultivation of lands. While all the invitees attended the meeting the one by name Kalachitre Balamagan stayed back as he had fallen asleep at that moment. However, he was awakened by his mother and, unmindful of his being naked, he rushed forth to the venue of the meeting. At the meeting, his indecent behaviour was frowned upon and he was chastised for having come to the meeting without covering himself. He was refused the land. At this he got angry and with his bow and arrow took an aim at the Sun and also at the Moon ready to strike at any moment as it were. At this the Sun and Moon stood still and while the day remained day the night continued to remain night. Fearing further consequences Aryai and Banyai offered him the land and asked him to sow the seeds of *ragi*, *samai* (small millet) and *pundi* after burning the lands and told him that the lands of a better quality had already been distributed among the others. Kalachitre Balamagan agreed to these conditions and began to practice the slash and burn form of cultivation”.

4.12 Kalachitre Balamagan is apparently an ancestor of the Panjiri Yeravas. He is remembered and offered food on occasions such as birth, puberty, and death on the day on which the ritual pollution comes to an end. In the invocation part of the ancestral song prescribed to be sung by the priest during the funerary rites, their ancestors are frequently referred to as those, who "with a staff in their left hand, cleared the land of thorns and overgrowth using their right; turned and diverted water to the fields; planted the fields with crops; lighted the lamps, made place for the dead and established homes for the living". The Panjiri Yeravas point out large tracts of the paddy fields and other lands near about Kutta and state that in the past all these lands belonged to their ancestors. In Wynad too they had such lands. According to the elders of the community they lost their lands in favour of Betta Kurubas in the Wynad region and to others in the border areas. That such a thing could easily have happened a couple of centuries ago is borne out by the following quotation from Aiyappan (1960; p.46). "During the chaotic days of early British occupation, tribal peasants lost their holdings to planters and their agents, getting little or no compensation. There are cases in which tribesmen who owned acres of jungle land had their properties confiscated just because they were not in a position to meet the petty demands made by the revenue officials".

4.13 On the basis of the foregoing narrative it could be safely stated that Panjiri Yeravas were once upon a time landed agriculturists and that they were by and large accustomed to *Kumari* (slash and burn) method of cultivation. In this competitive world, a class of men with better skills and abilities seem to have divested these simple folk of their lands and compelled them to accept agrestic serfdom as a means of eking out their livelihood. In Malabar district, the counterparts of Panjiri Yeravas are known by the name Adiyans. In Malayalam this word connotes a slave. When exactly they became such slaves cannot be determined at this point of time. So also the first superior community which overran them cannot also be identified. It is mentioned by Thurston (Vol. I - A&B, 1909) that the Adiyans were required to acknowledge their vassalage and to pay a *nuzer* (gift money) to Tamburans to signify their *Adimai* (slavery). It was formerly customary to identify himself (and also to be addressed to by others) as so and so Adiya of such and such landlord as for example may be witnessed in the name 'Belli, the Adiya of Veerappa Chetty'. Such persons were also

expected to acknowledge their slave like status by periodically declaring themselves using the words "Ayyandadiya Nangalo (we are your slaves, oh Lord!) and bow before their masters.

4.14 The Panjiri Yeravas claim that there are the remains of an ancient fort associated with their tribe, named Pakath Kottai, on the banks of the river near Manandavady. Likewise they state that amidst the cluster of stones found lying in the precincts of the dilapidated temple at Kudure Kode on way to Tirnelly from The-trot, there are the stones which represent their progenitors *Achchai* and *Iththi* as well as the pot *Karikala* and the winnowing basket *belli muramu*. They claim that Tirnelly temple itself was their own place of worship in the past and also say that a stone conduit installed there-at for conveying water to the temple from the *Papa Nashini Tirtha* is the contribution of their own fellow tribesmen. Whether the Panjiri Yeravas contributed their labour for the purpose or conceived of and installed the device all by themselves is not clear. The authorities in charge of the Narayana temple at Tirnelly however state that the stone conduit was installed some 300 years ago by a devout Malayali family. This is one of the very ancient temples in Kerala and is an important centre of pilgrimage. On his way to Guruvayuru to settle down, Lord Vishnu is believed to have alighted at Tirnelly and rendered it holy for all time to come. As it contains the *Vishnu Pada* it is considered by Brahmanic Hindus as a place eminently suited for offering food to the ancestors. When viewed in this context the claims of Panjiri Yerava, or their counterparts the Adiyans, to the temple may appear to be some what far-fetched.

4.15 The original habitat of the Panjiri Yeravas appears to be the North Wynad region and the south-western parts of Kodagu. Even now they appear to be keen on observing their traditional taboo regarding migrating south of Manandavady river. Enquiries amongst the Adiyans and a retired official of Social Welfare Department who has served for long in Manandavady area revealed that when, about 20 years ago, lands lying to the south of Manandavady river were offered to the Adiyans they simply refused to accept the offer. Their ancestral songs refer to several places where their forefathers settled down and cultivated the lands. This list of names includes places such as Tholpatti, Idep-padi and Chengadi of Wynad on the one hand and places such as Kutta, Kulthoor, Karmad, Balele and Kurchi on the other. Within

the broad region which they identify as their homeland, especially the part which stands included in Kodagu district, they have moved about from place to place. Introduction of game laws, forest conservation methods adopted by the Government and depredation caused by wild animals might have all been responsible for such migratory movements. Added to these is the economic factor. In quest of work and wages they have moved from place to place and worked for different masters as agricultural and, of late, as plantation labourers.

4.16 For reconstructing the history of the Yeravas there are no sources other than their folklore and the narratives of the old men. They have no recorded history and have no specific historical monuments of their own. They do not have the tradition of ever having wielded any weapons and fought any wars, or of having built any kingdoms. They seem to have been one amongst the docile tribes and their very mention in any written records dates from the early days of British administration.

5. DEMOGRAPHY

As the demographic data based on the latest, that is, 1981 census count are not yet published the population figures available for the earlier censuses are made use of for the following discussion. Though the Yeravas constituted a Scheduled Tribe even in 1951, separate tribewise population figures are not available, for at the 1951 census it is only the aggregate of all Scheduled Tribes population that has been published. At the earlier censuses, in view of their numerical importance in a small territory which enjoyed the status of a State, the Yeravas have been shown separately and data are available from the 1871 census itself. However, except in 1871 and 1891, at no other census there is any reference regarding the numerical strength of the important groups among the Yeravas. Even during those early days, subgroup classification seems to have posed considerable difficulties. In 1871, the total population of Yerava stood at 11,148 and comprised of 10,516 Panjiris and 632 Panis. But by 1891, the position seems to have been completely reversed, for according to the 1891 census, in a total Yerava population of 14,209 as many as 10,003 belonged to Pani-group and 3345 belonged to Panjiri group. Obviously the practice of distinguishing the two groups and enumerating them separately seems to have been given up at the subsequent censuses.

5.1 As regards the three latest censuses the following remarks appear to be necessary. It is only because the Yerava is a Scheduled Tribe that separate data are available. The list of Scheduled Tribes has, all along, been containing the name Yerava without the mention of any synonyms or sub-groups or sub-tribes. Theoretically therefore, for the census purposes, only those who have returned themselves simply as Yerava are to be treated as belonging to the concerned Scheduled Tribe. But it is more than likely that, to a greater part, though as per local practice the group names like Pani and Panjiri are also reported with the suffix or on the other hand this vital term itself is skipped and only the group name is returned by the informants and also recorded thus by the enumerators, at the next data processing level, in view of the local knowledge such variations are ignored. By implication therefore the population of Yerava as revealed at the census counts cover those who have returned themselves as Pani Yeravas, as Panjiri Yeravas or by any other group name with the suffix Yerava as well as those who have merely returned themselves as Pani, Panjiri or Yeravas. The problem posed in tabulating such data can very well be appreciated and this, to some extent at least, accounts for abnormalities in the intercensal variation in their numbers.

5.2 Growth Trends The following table presents the sex-wise population figures as recorded at the preceding eleven censuses and also indicates growth trends in terms of percentage decadal variation and the sex ratio expressed as the number of females for every thousand males.

Table-1 Population of Yeravas, 1871-1971

Census year	Population			Percentage decadal variation			Sex Ratio
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1871	5926	5222	11,148	—	—	—	881
1881	7214	6641	13,855	21.73	27.17	24.28	921

Census year	Population			Percentage decadal variation			Sex Ratio
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1891	7376	6833	14,209	2.25	2.89	2.56	926
1901	7510	7076	14,586	1.82	3.56	2.65	942
1911	7918	7420	15,338	5.43	4.88	5.16	937
1921	7312	6696	14,008	-7.65	-9.76	-8.67	916
1931	6763	6047	12,810	-7.51	-9.69	-8.55	894
1941	6724	5950	12,674	-0.58	-1.60	-1.06	885
1951	Data not available						
1961	8006	7284	15,290	19.66*	22.42*	20.64*	910
1971	7087	6656	13,743	-11.48	-8.62	-10.12	939

* These rates are for 2 decades.

5.3 During the span of 100 years between 1871 and 1971, there has been a net addition of 2595 souls to the 1871 population. The overall annual average works out to an addition of a meagre 26 persons. This increase too is not the result of a steady process. There have been periods of growth and also periods of decay. The decade 1871-81, witnessed the highest ever growth, namely 24.28 per cent and in fact if this 1881 census population be compared with the 1971 position there has been a net decrease in the number of Yeravas. The growth between 1871 and 1881 may perhaps be mainly attributed to the phenomenon of migration, which however may be of two types. It is possible that a large number of Yeravas left their erstwhile homes in the adjacent Wynad and other regions and moved to Kodagu and settled down to eke out a living. On the other hand it is also likely that for some

such reason at the 1871 census the Yeravas of Kodagu had themselves moved out, may be purely as a temporary measure, and returned later on to their own homes. It is also possible that the process of migration from Wynad to Kodagu had started earlier to 1871 and in the first phase mainly men moved in and were later on joined by their womenfolk. As can be seen, at the 1871 census there were hardly 881 females for every thousand males and this ratio increased to 921 by 1881. In either case, after the 1871 census was taken and prior to the taking of the 1881 census, some amount of migratory movement seems to have taken place amongst the Yeravas. After 1881, for the next 20 years their population in Kodagu increased, though at a low rate of about 2.5 per cent per decade. Significantly enough, during this period the growth rate among the females was considerably higher than among the males and the sex ratio improved steadily.

5.4 If the growth trends after 1901 census are examined, especially in relation to the trends noticed in the district, the following picture emerges. Between 1901 and 1971 while the population of the district has more than doubled itself (180,607 to 378,291) that of Yeravas has declined by 5.78 per cent as compared to its 1901 level. Between 1901 and 1911 the population of Kodagu experienced a negative growth to the extent of 3.12 per cent. In contrast to this general trend, the population of Yeravas registered an increase by 5.16 per cent and this rate, as can be seen from the above table, happens to be almost double the rates given out at the two earlier decades. This phenomenon is rather inexplicable, for during this period the Yerava male population grew at a slightly higher rate and the sex ratio declined marginally. May be this signifies an addition of male members due to an influx of Yeravas to Kodagu from the border areas. During the next two decades the Yeravas seem to have fared very badly. Though the population of the district also registered a fall, that of the Yeravas decreased at a considerably higher rate and the process seems to have set in all of a sudden. The earlier trend of steady to accelerated growth was reversed. One cannot be certain as to whether this was due to a sizeable out-migration or due to large scale decimation because of their susceptibilities to particular diseases like malaria, influenza and pneumonia. May be there are other important reasons also. But to delve deeper into the problems and find out such reasons are beyond the scope of the present study. At the three successive census counts from 1921 it is the female section of the population

that suffered greater losses and, as a result, by 1941 the proportion of females per thousand males moved down to 885. During the earlier phase of population growth it was the female section that gained more and when the population began to slide down again it was the female section that was affected more.

5.5 After 1941, the population of the district has been registering growth at a high rate. Between 1941 and 51 the decadal increase was of the order of 35.96 per cent and this figure was surpassed during the next decade (1951-61), when the decadal growth rate reached the all time high rate of 40.72 per cent. Since the 1951 census does not reveal the Yerava population separately it is not possible to assess the extent of growth or decline for the decades 1941-51 and 1951-61 separately. However, during the 20 year period between 1941 and 1961 the population of Yeravas increased by 20.64 per cent— a rate which is very much lower than the district average. It is common knowledge that between 1941 and 1961 a tremendous amount of change took place in the political and administrative set up of the country. The Yeravas were declared as a Scheduled Tribe and as a class became entitled to several benefits sponsored, and extended to them, by the Government and it became imperative for the Government to identify the tribals, educate them regarding the plans and programmes charted out for their uplift and also to take such assistance and help to their doorsteps. These measures as well as the newly established democratic set up seems to have created an awareness among the members of the community, hitherto not found, to identify themselves as belonging to this particular community of Scheduled Tribes. Perhaps there was some amount of in-migration of Yeravas also during this period. Yet another reason may be the vast improvements achieved in public health and consequent fall in the general death rate. Particularly, after mid-forties there have been very few outbreaks of epidemics and after mid-fifties even malaria has been brought under control. The net result of all these factors is seen in the increase in the population of Yeravas. This period of 1941-61 has once again witnessed a reversal of the earlier trend of declining population.

5.6 Between 1961 and 1971 too the population of the district continued to increase though at a lower rate. The decadal growth rate being just 17.18 per cent, perhaps the stage of stabilization set in during this period. The population of Yeravas, on the other

hand, suffered a decrease to a considerable extent. Instead of keeping pace with the general trend of increase, this community lost as many as 1547 persons. This decrease is noticeable more among males than among females. The reasons for this fall in population are not clearly discernible. There have been no reports of outbreaks of epidemics or of any specific fatal diseases attacking specific sections of the population. Yeravas in particular do not appear to be vulnerable to any specific fatal diseases and the occupations they pursue are not in any way hazardous. Therefore, decrease due to large scale decimation of Yeravas is ruled out. However, at this juncture a passing mention may be made of the incidence of sickle cell disease among certain tribals of Karnataka and the bordering areas of Tamil Nadu. This debilitating and fatal disease is known to have affected the Soligas of Biligirirangana Betta and the tribals found in Gudalur taluk of Tamil Nadu. Denudation of forests and consequential changes in the climate and the natural environment to which these tribals have for generations been accustomed to is said to be one of the reasons for a high incidence of this disease. Perhaps in certain areas of Kodagu some of the Yeravas have fallen a victim to this disease. This matter however requires a deeper probe by competent persons. The other factor may be migration of males to areas beyond Kodagu borders, may be to the areas of the adjacent districts of the State where they were not treated as a Scheduled Tribe hitherto. Even this possibility is somewhat remote because of the fact that the economy of Kodagu is more labour intensive. People from outside Kodagu are known to temporarily migrate to Kodagu in search of work in plantations. The Yeravas are by and large agricultural labourers and plantation workers who have got a better base here than elsewhere and are more likely to stick to the places where they are confident of getting work and wages. The other alternative reason may be the stricter application of the concept of Scheduled Tribes at the stage of enumeration and also at the data processing stage during the 1971 census. Some of those who failed to report themselves specifically and simply as Yeravas preferring to identify themselves by the name of their subgroup only might very well have been treated as not belonging to this scheduled community. It was noticed during this field study that quite a few among the Badaga Yeravas nowadays prefer to identify themselves with, and also report themselves as, Soligas and do not like to mention that they belong to the Scheduled Tribe of Yeravas. However, the 1971 census reveals that once again the

growth trend stands reversed. Instead of increasing by about one per cent per annum as in the earlier two decades, during the decade 1961-71 the Yerava population began to decrease at almost the same annual rate. Whether the same trend has continued even after 1971 can be known only when the 1981 census results are available.

5.7 The foregoing analysis indicates that the population growth of the Yeravas has not been steady and that it has been fluctuating considerably for reasons which cannot be easily discerned. During almost every decade the growth trends exhibited by this community do not correspond to the general pattern displayed by the district as a whole. Statistical data on migration, birth rate and death rate in so far as these pertain to Yeravas, are not available. Thus the reasons for variation in population can only be conjectured. Migratory movements and confusion caused by inclusion of four separate groups under a single nomenclature also appear to be among the factors that are responsible for abnormal trends in population growth.

5.8 Rural-urban Distribution : The Yeravas are concentrated in Virajpet taluk in which there are three small municipal towns. These are business and service centres. According to 1961 census only 20 males and 12 females among Yeravas, together accounting for a negligible 0.2 per cent of the total population of the community, resided in urban areas. At the next census, though the overall population and, more so, the rural population of Yeravas declined considerably, the urban component registered an increase. As many as 54 persons (27 males and 27 females) constituting 0.4 per cent of the total population were enumerated in urban areas. Despite this increase which may perhaps have some significance as indicative of the future trends, the bulk of the Yeravas are found living in the rural areas. The nature of work to which they have for generations been accustomed to, keeps them tied to the countryside.

5.9 Age-Group Composition: Age-group data are available in the Tribewise Special Tables generated at the censuses of 1961 and 1971 for the various Scheduled Tribes. The population is divided into three age-groups, namely 0-14, 15-44 and 45 plus, for purposes of presenting the data on marital status. According to the 1961 census the children below 15 years of age formed 40.63

per cent, while the young adults and adolescents formed as much as 44.20 per cent and the middle-aged and older persons constituted the remaining 15.17 per cent. It may be interesting to note that among the Scheduled Tribes as a whole in the State, the children below 15 years of age constitute as much as 43.45 per cent, while the adolescents and young adults form 41.62 per cent. According to the 1971 census, among the Yeravas 39.77 per cent belonged to the 0-14 age-group, 44.96 per cent belonged to the 15-44 age-group and the remaining 15.27 per cent belonged to the 45 plus age-group. As compared to 1961, there is a slight fall in the proportion of Yeravas in the youngest age-group of 0-14. Among the Scheduled Tribes as a whole in the State too a similar trend (though to a lesser extent) is perceived, for according to 1971 census, persons in the age-group of 0 to 14 form 43.02 per cent while those in the next age-group of 15-44 constitute 39.54 per cent. However, as compared to the general conditions prevailing among the Scheduled Tribes of the State as a whole the Yeravas have a lower proportion of children among them.

6. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Holland, who took anthropometric measurements of 50 Coorgs and 25 Yeravas during 1897-98 with a view to studying the ethnological contrast between these two communities, observes that "The Coorgs and Yeravas belong to two distinct ethnic types. The latter tribe falls into a group with the Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyans and Kadirs, who are the South Indian cousins of the Kols and Gonds living in the central highlands - people of a very dark colour, curly hair, thick, slightly everted lips, feeble prognathism, distinctly platyrhine noses (index 89.6), low stature (158.7 cm.) and comparatively long feet, long fore-arms, wide span and dolichocephalic skull (73.6)" (Holland, 1901, p.96). The summary measurements of Yeravas indicating the averages are as follows (Ibid; p.79, Table VI):- "Stature-158.7cm, span of arms-167.3 cm, span of arms relative to stature (100): 105.4, chest girth-79.5 cm, chest girth relative to stature (100): 50.1, Height sitting: 79.7 cm, Height kneeling: 117 cm, Left forearm (cubit): 45.5 cm, cubit relative to stature(100): 28.6, Left foot- length: 24.0 cm, Length of foot relative to stature: 15.1, Length of middle finger-10.9 cm, Cephalic length: 18.2 cm, Cephalic breadth : 13.4 cm; Cephalic index: 73.6, Bigonaic breadth-9.4 cm, Bizygomatic breadth: 12.8 cm, Maxillary-Zygomatic index: 73.4, Facial angle-65.7° Nasal height: 4.52 cm, Nasal breadth: 4.05 cm, Nasal index: 89.6, Bimalar

breadth: 9.9 cm, Naso-malar breadth: 11.4 cm, Naso-malar index-115, Vertex to intersupercillary point: 9.5 cm, Vertex to tragus: 12.2 cm, Vertex to chin: 21.0 cm". On the basis of the summary measurement of the Coorgs and the Yeruvas, Holland concludes that "the Coorg is on an average 10 cm taller than the Yeruva, has a more leptorhine nose, a shorter relative span, forearm and foot, a larger head with a distinct tendency towards brachy-cephalism, and a more perfect approach to orthognathism. With these characters which can be expressed in figures, we have the contrast of colour between the fair (light-brown) Coorg and the very-dark-skinned Yeruva. The hair of the Coorg is straight whilst that of the Yeruva is distinctly wavy, and the features of the latter are generally of the stamp which we should characterise as distinctly low, the broad nose being accompanied by thick, slightly everted lips" (Ibid pp.79-81). Holland has also presented in his note, the comparative figures relating to the stature, cephalic index and nasal index of several other South Indian Tribes. The relevant particulars in respect of the Badagas of Nilgiris and the Paniyans of Wynad as also the Yeruvas of Kodagu are as follows:

	Stature (cm)	Cephalic Index	Nasal Index
Badaga	164.1	71.7	75.6
Paniyan	157.4	74.0	95.1
Yeruva	158.7	73.6	89.1

About the Paniyans, it may be noticed, Thurston avers that they have African features (Thurston, Vol.VI p.71, 1907, Reprinted 1975, and also see Census of India, 1891, Madras Vol. XIII-A p.249). In his note on the Yeravas, Rice (1908, p.300) repeats the above quoted summary observations of Holland on 'Coorgs and Yeruvass' and adds that "their appearance resembles that of the Australian aborigines". In a general way, Iyer (1948, p.14), observes that, "The Yeravas are short in stature, very dark in complexion, and have curly hair much softened by combing. Their hair is tied into a knot at the top of the head, which gives them a wild and savage aspect. They have thick lips and flat noses, though both the features are being effaced..." After Holland till now none seems to have made anthropometric measurements of the Yeravas of Kodagu. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that as part of a nation-wide project the Anthropological Survey of India carried out a

brief study of the Yerava during 1983 in the course of which certain physical measurements were also made (see Appendix-4).

6.1 On the basis of the somatoscopic and general observations made during this field study on a sample of 26 individuals the following impressionistic views are expressed. Though the Pani Yeravas and Panjiri Yeravas appear to be separate tribes, the differences are not very acute in the matter of physical features. The Pani Yeravas generally wear a meeker look and appear to have retained the tribal features to a somewhat greater extent. Among both the groups there are definite signs of racial admixture. Since quite a long period persons belonging to other castes and communities have found acceptance and admittance into the tribal fold on payment of fines and or on undergoing simple purification rites. Neither such persons nor their progeny face any intra-tribal social problem, for such persons smoothly get affiliated to one or the other exogamous clans of which the tribe is composed of. Divorce and remarriage are not only permitted but are also widely practised. Sexual offences are dealt with somewhat lightly. Thus, in effect, these tribals are undergoing a gradual transformation with regard to their physical features. This phenomenon appears to be more pronounced among the Panjiri Yeravas than among the Pani Yeravas. By and large it may be stated that both are dark skinned and the complexion varies between dark brown colour and brown. Among Panjiri Yeravas men and women with brown and light brown complexions can be met with in a relatively larger proportion. The hair growth on the body of the males including the face is somewhat scanty. Even on the head the hair growth for both men and women is only moderate and cannot be termed as abundant. The hair form varies from straight to medium wavy. Occasional instances of men and women having curly and even frizzly hair are also seen and this perhaps is indicative of the sudden emergence of the subsumed tribal strain in a particular individual. Men and women of the older generation have unkempt and untidy hair. But most of the young men and women as well as children are nowadays accustomed to the habit of applying coconut oil or castor oil to their heads and comb the hair neatly. The shape of the nose is that which is generally known as the snubbed nose. A large proportion of men and, more so, the women have noses that have low depressions at the root and have somewhat broad and flared nostrils. Their eyeslits are straight and they do not have any epicanthic folds. Prognathism is absent and

the chins and lips are medium. Very few have prominent cheeks. The shape of the face is usually oval. The average height of an adult male is about 161 cm and that of a female is 141 cm. In their stature the Yeravas are shorter and also present a somewhat puny appearance in comparison to the stature of Kodavas, the dominant community of Kodagu.

7. FAMILY, CLAN AND ANALOGOUS DIVISIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

As among the generality of Indian communities, among the Yeravas also family, lineage and clan-like divisions are important institutions of sociological significance. In the next few paragraphs the details relating to the Pani Yeravas are narrated first and these are followed up by the particulars pertaining to the Panjiri Yeravas.

7.1 Pani Yeravas: Household is the basic economic unit. By and large the Pani Yerava household consist of a married couple with or without their unmarried children. Nuclear family household appears to be the general rule, especially amongst those that have taken up residence in tribal colonies or on encroached lands. Supplemented nuclear family households which contain additional members such as a widowed parent or a widowed sibling of one of the spouses are also occasionally met with. So also, there may be a few cases of patrilineal linear joint family households, especially amongst those that are living on the lands owned by the landlords and coffee planters for whom they generally work. Even when they are residing in the same cluster of houses as in a tribal colony or on the lands of a single landlord or on government land that they have encroached upon, rather than living together in joint family households along with their married children and grand grand children, the aged parents live in a separate house as an independent household. The married brothers too prefer to set up their own separate households. This mode of living in separate conjugal families has for long been the accepted norm among the Yeravas. In the colonies visited during this field study it was noticed that but for a few exceptional instances of supplemented nuclear family households, almost all the households consisted of nuclear families. Single member households are also quite few. Soon after his marriage it is customary for the young man to establish a separate household and start living with his wife. The man can choose any convenient place to set up his new household, though quite often the choice

ends up with a place near his natal home itself. Thus, family consists of a small group: a man, his wife and their children. Man is regarded as the head of the family as well as of the household.

7.2 Pani Yeravas are patrilineal. Descent is reckoned along the male line for both sons and daughters. All the children thus belong to the father's group and, on marriage, the clan-like division to which the woman belongs by birth gets subsumed. To some extent they can be regarded as patrilocal also. Married brothers and at times their married parents are found to live in separate families but in close proximity to each other. They are bound together by the institution of lineage. Normally the eldest male member of the group of families is regarded as the head. Sometimes a more active and capable youngster may take on the responsibilities as head of the lineage. Generally the lineage group consists of persons of three generations, that is a man and his brothers, his father and father's brothers and father's father. Very few can remember any details regarding their great grand fathers. Socially, it is this lineage group that enforces the traditional rules and regulations of the community on the individual. Though economically each conjugal unit is a separate household, in times of crisis the entire group or at least an important segment of it, helps the man in distress by extending physical as well as financial assistance depending upon the needs of the situation. Occasions like moving the house, marriage, death, accident etc., provide opportunities for the expression of such group solidarity. In case of death of a member of the lineage all the other members have to attend the obsequial ceremonies and also contribute their mite to reduce the financial burden that has so befallen the bereaved members. After her marriage a woman is regarded as a part of the lineage to which her husband belongs. She would continue to retain a cordial relationship with her parents, brothers and sisters and generally her husband and his agnates as well, would endeavour to be on good terms with their affinal kin.

7.3 *Pattole* or *Tharana* is the term used among Pani Yeravas to denote the division analogous to clan. *Tharana* is an exogamous group and the union of a man and woman belonging to the same *Tharana* is considered as incestuous and is punishable by the extreme penalty of expulsion from the tribe. Thus, no two persons belonging to the same *Tharana* can become husband and wife. Therefore, whenever marriage proposals are under consideration the identity of the persons concerned with reference to his or her

Tharana affiliation assumes importance. There is practically no specific occasion for the members of a particular *Tharana* to have a get-together and celebrate any rites or rituals that would symbolically denote their clan identity and solidarity. Perhaps on account of this lacuna in the system an ordinary Pani Yerava would not normally be aware of the name of the *Tharana* to which he belongs. His response to any query on this point would quite often be that he would have to enquire his elders. Numerically the Pani Yervas are quite large and no single person, however well informed he may be about their traditions, can be expected to know the names of all the *Tharanas* into which the tribe is divided. The knowledgeable informants whom the Investigator met during this field investigation could altogether furnish the names of 35 *Tharanas*. A phonetic rendering of these names into English is given below in alphabetical order.

1 Achiriya	13 Chundepattiyai	25 Kutaachcheriyai
2 Ammangaliya	14 Evilathyu	26 Madathile
3 Animalai	15 Melode	27 Malaikodu
4 Anjiliya	16 Iyanjeriyai	28 Mootthottai
5 Bainadu	17 Karumathai	29 Muchaliyam
6 Bengeriya	18 Kidaichuza	30 Mundachiya
7 Boottryadi	19 Kirumathai	31 Nagaaraththe
8 Cherattoniyam	20 Kiyakkai	32 Pakathai
9 Cherike	21 Kothaliyam	33 Pappaliyai
10 Chingapache	22 Kottepatteya	34 Pathuboodu
11 Chingarimaru	23 Koyimootai	35 Thandiyodem
12 Chulyoadu	24 Kundaniyam	

7.4 Even the knowledgeable informants like priests among them could not explain either the meaning or the significance of the above terms. All that could be gathered is that some of these terms are place names in a much corrupted form, perhaps because of long usage. For the Yervas of the present generation these do not appear to be matters of any special relevance. If the name of their clan is known that is more than enough for it is on that basis that a man has to choose his mate. The only function of *Tharana* as of today is to regulate marriages and nothing beyond that. Perhaps a deeper study of the genealogies, covering a wide section of the population including a segment across the border may throw enough light on the meaning and significance of *Tharana* names

and also whether these *Tharanas* are organised into larger divisions like phratries or moieties. The Pani Yeravas are dispersed in small numbers in numerous villages and are residing on the lands of others for whom they work and are therefore enjoying very little freedom including that of expression and furnishing of detailed information to the inquisitive enquirer. Given their tradition of food-gathering and agrestic serfdom one could hardly expect the continuance of a well defined, well-knit and broad-based social organisation among them to this day even if one were to assume that such a thing existed in the past. As of today family is the basic unit and it is based on good conjugal relationship. Next to it the lineage has retained some of its relevance. The clan-like organisation exists merely in name. At some places there are tribal functionaries called *Chemmakara* and *Attali* who officiate at marriages and funerary ceremonies. These persons are generally accepted as leaders and even in matters other than those relating to their own customs and traditions, these leaders are consulted. In their dealings with the officers of the Welfare Department, Forest Department and with the landlords and planters as well, the ordinary men seek the help and guidance of their *Chemmakara*. In fact *Chemmakara* or *Attali* plays the role of a local representative or spokesman for the Pani Yeravas living in a neighbourhood.

7.5 Panjiri Yerava: Among Panjiri Yeravas also household is the basic economic unit. Almost always this corresponds to a nuclear family consisting of a man, his wife and their un-married children. Cases of sub-nuclear and supplemented nuclear family households are occasionally met with. As compared to the Pani Yeravas, a larger proportion of Panjiri Yeravas are found to be living in tribal colonies established by the government, and also on government lands that they have encroached upon. They are thus seen to be enjoying a greater degree of freedom to move about, mix with others and exchange information. According to the prevailing practice, soon after his marriage the man sets up a new household with his wife. The place they choose to live depends on their convenience with reference to their place of work and also the suggestions and pressures from close relatives. Their kinsmen render all such help that they can afford to the couple at the initial stages.

7.6 The Panjiri Yeravas are matrilineal. Descent is reckoned along the female line. Children of either sex belong to the lineage

and clan to which their mother belongs. Even after his marriage the man continues to belong to his natal clan and so does the woman. The affectionate relationship existing between a woman and her children and also the cordial relationship amongst the siblings themselves are cherished and retained intact even after one gets married. Their kinship system centres around this basic fact. Though there are instances of married women residing in close proximity to the houses of their parents or sisters, as a tribe the Panjiri Yeravas cannot be categorised as matrilocal especially in the present day context. Convenience and availability of work are the main factors that are taken into consideration by the couple when setting up their home. In several tribal colonies there are cases of two or more brothers residing in separate households set up side by side while their married sisters are living elsewhere with their husbands. In this matter there is no general rule. In the family, the male member is the head for all practical purposes. But he is not the perpetuator of the lineage or clan to which he himself belongs. The lineage consists of several families related to each other through a common female ancestor. The eldest male member of this group, which at best consists of persons belonging to three generations, is regarded as the headman. A man's sister's children receive much of his attention and an affectionate treatment. The main function of the lineage organisation is to create among its group members a sense of belonging and also provide moral and material help in case of distress and grief. It is the responsibility of the lineage, through its headman, to organise the funerary rite (*Koota*) within about 6 or 8 months after the death of any adult member of the lineage. This rite signifies the culmination of the mourning period of the surviving spouse and renders him or her free to seek fresh marital alliance. This would provide an opportunity for all the members of the lineage to have a get together and discuss matters of common interest. On such occasions it is also customary for their other kinsfolk to attend and to have their disputes if any properly resolved. Non-compliance with this obligatory responsibility often gives rise to disputes which may assume the proportions of scandals within the community. The following case study illustrates a mechanism by which at times the person concerned is compelled to discharge this obligatory duty.

'Jogi's wife Putti died after delivering her fourth child, incidentally a female. The death rites like burial and the *Padimoonju* were

performed as per custom at the place of her death, that is the place where she and Jogi lived. Her kinsfolk as well as some relatives of Jogi participated in these rites. Custom demanded that in the next 6 to 8 months the *Koota* rite be performed for Putti by the headman of her lineage. The position was somewhat bad, for she had lost her mother and father long ago and did not have any surviving relatives like her mother's brothers or her own brothers. The only close surviving kin she had was her mother's sister. Under these circumstances the duty of arranging the *Koota* devolved on this woman i.e., Putti's mother's sister, who was living with her husband and family at a nearby place. Jogi and his well-wishers suggested to her on a couple of occasions that the *Koota* ceremony for Putti had become due and had to be arranged early. But this was of no avail for quite some time. A little later she fell sick and her daughter also became seriously ill. When divination was resorted to, to diagnose the cause for illness the oracle stated that this misfortune was cast upon her and her family by the dissatisfied spirit of Putti and that the remedy lay in performing the *Koota* ceremony at the earliest. Thereupon, she made immediate arrangements in consultation with her relatives including Jogi and, with their material and moral help had the *Koota* rites duly performed. With this, she and her daughter regained their normal health and Jogi, on his part, secured freedom from the restrictions imposed on the chief mourner and regained his right to marry again'.

7.7 Nowadays a change in attitudes seems to have come about. If a man dies leaving some landed property behind him, his sons are considered to be the rightful and legal heirs, whereas persons belonging to his own lineage like his sister's children get nothing whatsoever by way of share. The headman of the lineage stands to lose while others inherit the property and, on account of this consideration he is reluctant to take on the traditional responsibility and perform the *Koota* ceremony. The surviving partner, on the other hand, is eager to have this ceremony gone through at the earliest. Intervention by elders and compromises have therefore become quite common of late.

7.8 *Chemma* or *Kudi* is the name of the division analogous to clan. Since Panjiri Yeravas are matrilineal, children, irrespective of sex, belong to the clan of their mother. Even after marriage the clan identities of the man and his wife are maintained. A person always belongs to the clan into which he or she is born. Thus, even

after getting married and raising a family a man continues to be devoted to his natal clan and displays a more than ordinary interest in his own sisters, sister's children, mother, mother's sisters and such other kinsfolk. According to the details contained in one of the songs prescribed to be sung by their priest while offering prayers to their ancestors there are thirty-three *Chemmas* or *Kudis*. A phonetic rendering of these clan names into English is given below in an alphabetical order.

1 Anjila	12 Kachele	23 Mudrila
2 Badakamandyu	13 Kademale	24 Mudunguthlu
3 Balepathera	14 Kalakottai	25 Nalappadi
4 Bellechalu	15 Kallumani	26 Panneli
5 Bynatla	16 Kallya	27 Pavade
6 Chainde	17 Karyela	28 Podarmandyu
7 Chalumbedu	18 Kottai	29 Poodari
8 Chegadi	19 Kuppethodu	30 Puducheri
9 Cheruvalla	20 Madacheri	31 Puththru
10 Evila	21 Mammattla	32 Thirumandye
11 Idemale	22 Marengavla	33 Ulakuthu (Ulanguthu)

The headman of the *Chemma* in a locality is called *Chemmakara*. Generally he happens to be the eldest male member of several families comprising 2 or 3 or even more lineages to which the kinship can be traced without much difficulty. He has to discharge certain customary duties towards his clansmen. Formerly he used to go round annually once to each one of the households of his clans-women and collect a certain amount of paddy and cash with which he would arrange for the worship of the ancestors of his clan. As an emblem of his office he would carry with him one or more wooden staves of his ancestors (called *Achande Badi*) and a sling bag called (*Kulapaimbe*).

7.9 *Chemma* is an exogamous group. But the above mentioned 33 *Chemmas* are grouped into 13 exogamous units as follows:

- 1 Kottai, Cheruvalla,
- 2 Kuppethodu, Bynatla,
- 3 Ulakuthu (Ulanguthu), Mudunguthu,
- 4 Kalakottai, Kallya, Mudrila, Mammattla,
- 5 Madacheri, Ide male,

- 6 Chainde, Thirumandye,
- 7 Nalappadi, Marengavla,
- 8 Karyela, Kallumani, Puducheri,
- 9 Kachele, Kademale, Balepathera,
- 10 Badakamandyu, Puththur, Poodari,
- 11 Chegadi, Chalumbedu, Anjila, Panneli,
- 12 Pavade,
- 13 Podarmandyu, Evila, Bellechalu.

The basis for the above grouping of *Chemmas* is not known. Persons born into the same *Chemma* or group of *Chemmas* cannot intermarry. Most of the men and women of this community are aware of the name of their own *Chemma* and also of the *Chemmas* which are regarded as belonging to the same group. These names appear to refer to places or may be tracts to which their fore-fathers once belonged. As in the case of Pani Yeravas in the case of Panjiri Yeravas also an in-depth study of kinship network cutting across State borders may disclose interesting material.

7.10 The 33 *Chemmas* are organised into three larger groups called *Mandyu*. These are Badak Mandyu, Podar Mandyu, and Tirnelly Mandyu. Each *Mandyu* has its own set of deities. The chief deity of these three *Mandyus* respectively are *Pookari Mage*, *Kari-chathai Mariammai* and *Pakathayya*. But for this, there is apparently no other difference in the matter of status and ranking of these 33 groups within the tribe. All the *Chemmas* are regarded as of equal status. All their *Chemma* and *Mandyu* deities, except *Pookari Mage* are worshipped in a common form. In the case of *Pookari Mage*, the officiating priest has to put on a sacred thread like a Brahmin, and offer only fruits and beaten rice, because meat and alcoholic drinks are taboo for this deity.

7.11 The colony or group of houses of Panjiri Yeravas is called *Kunju*. Each *Kunju* would generally have a *Kunjukkara*, an elderly man among themselves, to function as their spokesman and local leader in all matters concerning their welfare. As between the Pani Yeravas and Panjiri Yeravas, the latter are better organised and have a kinship system and clan organisation which is even now functioning quite effectively.

8. MATERIAL LIFE

Settlement Pattern: The region in which the Yeravas are found in concentration belongs to the *malnad* and is noted for low hills and valleys, dense forests and heavy rainfall. The settlement pattern here is characterised by dispersed clusters of houses and isolated homesteads built to suit one's convenience rather than to form part of any pre-determined or prescribed pattern. The settlement pattern among Yeravas too conforms to this general rule. However, there is a qualitative difference between the settlements of Yeravas and those of the other land-owning communities of the region. The landlords and the tenants live on the lands they own or possess whereas the Yeravas live on the lands of the landlords and planters for whom they generally work. Their association with agrestic serfdom indicates that they, as well as their immediate forefathers, have all along been living in such a manner only. Because of their economic plight they did not enjoy enough freedom to exercise any sort of choice in planning out their settlements. They have no tradition of having ever lived as an independent community in a compact and sizeable group at any one place or set of places at any time, especially in the recent past. Thus, much significance cannot be attached to questions such as their traditional or prescribed pattern and spatial arrangement of their dwellings within their settlement. It is also known that quite a few of them have for generations been living on forest lands and working as labourers in forestry occupations. Here too, their freedom is limited in that each family or group has to build the hut on the land assigned by the Departmental Officials.

8.1 From about the early 1950's the Central as well as the State Government began to sponsor several tribal welfare programmes and to set up tribal colonies as well. In addition, the expansion of forestry activities also led to the liberal grants of house-sites to tribals from out of the forest lands and in such areas also groups of houses belonging to tribals began to show up. In Virajpet taluk numerous colonies of these two types have come up during the last 3 decades and, in addition, some of the Yeravas have encroached upon or have sought and secured small bits of *Paisari* lands from the revenue authorities and have built their own houses on such lands. A qualitative change in the settlement pattern is thus taking place among the Yeravas almost imperceptibly.

According to local knowledgeable informants, at present about 35 per cent of the Panjiri Yeravas are living in tribal colonies set up by the Government and another 15 per cent are living in lands that have been either encroached upon or have been granted to them by the forest or the revenue department. It is only 50 per cent of the Panjiri Yeravas that are even now residing on lands owned by the landlords. Among the Pani Yeravas however it is estimated that only about 8 per cent and 2 per cent of their households respectively dwell in Government sponsored tribal colonies and on forest or revenue lands which they have secured from the Government. The majority of the Pani Yeravas are thus found to be living in a widely dispersed state on the lands belonging to the landlords for whom they work and are thus under a constant obligation to their masters. Theoretically they can give up work and residence under the landlord and seek an independent living. But practically there are no such lucrative opportunities and the best that could be done is to move from one landlord to another and in such a case too the consequences may not always turn out to be bearable. There are forces which are quite informal, and usually very subtle as well, which compel them to stick to their masters for generations. In recent years some of the coffee planters and landlords have been somewhat lucky in that the colonies set up by the government on the government waste land or on forest lands are located in the close proximity of their estates and fields and the shifting of the tribal people to such colonies has been beneficial to them in that they have a ready labour force at their doors as it were. With the improvement of communications nowadays it is easy to transport the labourers to their place of work by engaging tractor trailers even if it is a matter of 10 to 15 kilometres. During peak seasons several planters adopt this method to enlist the services of an adequate labour force.

8.2 As a large proportion of the Yeravas live on the lands of others for whom they work it is difficult to come across large groups of their houses at any single place. They are mainly agricultural workers and are found to have their houses or huts close to, if not overlooking, the paddy fields on which they work. In small groups, consisting of one or two families, they are engaged by large and medium farmers and are either provided with huts to live

in or else assigned plots and are assisted to build their own huts. They are rarely found in the labour lines or tenement houses that one comes across in large coffee estates. Thus, it would indeed be a surprise if one could locate a cluster of 10 Yerava households all living in close proximity on the lands of a single landlord. Of course the local conditions are such that a distance of one or two kilometres is not considered as distance at all and therefore people living a kilometre apart are regarded as next door neighbours. This is true of the Kodavas and also other communities of the district.

8.3 On the other hand the dwellings in the tribal colonies as also those on the forest or *paisari* lands are built in close proximity to each other. Most of the colonies consist of one or two streets. In the Makutta colony for example there are 32 houses arranged in 3 rows. In Kattimala colony there are ten houses arranged in two rows facing each other. At Majjigehalla colony which abuts the main road from Mysore to Virajpet, there are two rows and a cross road so that the settlement appears as an inverted L in its shape. In the case of Bhadragola colony there is a single row of houses and a street has been laid out in front of these houses. This street is provided with electric street lights also. In colonies of this type one can easily come across groups of 10, 15, or even 20 households of Yerava community. Most of these colonies are however not exclusively meant for the Yeravas. Several such colonies have households belonging to Jenu Kuruba, Betta Kuruba or some other community. In Bhadragola colony, for example, there is the private house of a Pale (a Scheduled Caste) and one of the houses in the colony itself is at present occupied by a person belonging to Adi Karnataka caste. In Majjigehalla colony there are a few houses of Jenu Kurubas. The settlements that have come up on forest lands would also contain 10 to 15 Yerava households, all found in close proximity. Their dwellings are usually found on the slopes overlooking the paddy fields which they cultivate.

8.4 **Dwellings** : The majority of the Yeravas live in conventional mud-walled, thatched huts built on a raised platform in accordance with the local custom. The slope land is cleared and levelled first and then the hut is built in such a way that it does not

get damaged even during the heavy rainfall season. The raised platform and the sloping low roof at the sides provide enough protection. The mud walls are usually 12 to 15 inches thick. But it is also common to have thin mud plastered bamboo walls which can withstand water-logging. The roof rests on wooden poles which support a bamboo framework with slopes on four sides. Over and above this framework, several layers of thatching grass are firmly spread. The flooring is of mud and this is kept neat and tidy by frequent application of cow dung emulsion. Quite often bamboo mats serve as doors. The main elements of the dwelling are the open verandah (i.e., the raised platform in the front portion of the hut) and the kitchen *cum* living room. The verandah is used for sitting purposes during day time and for sleeping purposes at night. During the winter season and also during the rainy season a fire is lit and kept burning all through the night in this verandah so that the inmates of the house can have some warmth throughout the night. Quite often, a wooden mortar is found fixed into the flooring of the verandah for pounding of paddy. It is a common practice to have a niche built into the wall of the raised platform and provide it with a sliding door so that the poultry birds can be kept safely at night. Within the kitchen *cum* living room a corner is usually set apart for placing the symbols or pictures of household deities.

8.5 In the tribal colonies the houses are of a slightly different type. The walls are built of sun-dried large sized bricks and are provided with Mangalore tiled roofing, resting on a wooden framework. Each house is provided with wooden doors and windows. Such houses have been built by contractors working for the Government. It is also likely that there are several instances where the Yerava has received the materials like wood, tiles etc., from the Government and has arranged to build the house himself. In these houses there would be either one or two rooms, but the open verandah would generally be missing unless the beneficiary has himself made it a point to later extend the roof and erect one such verandah for his use. Each house stands independently and is surrounded by some open space all around. The extent of land granted varies from place to place and may range from 10 cents to as much as an acre and a half. If the

household is rearing cattle it is usual to have a separate cattle-shed close to the house. Cattle are never tethered in the living part of the house. Similarly there would be a separate pigsty if the household is keeping pigs. The houses built on forest lands are also of a similar type, for in almost all these cases the Yerava would have received some assistance from the Government.

8.6 Almost every dwelling has a courtyard in front. This portion is swept clean everyday and is periodically washed with cowdung so that it bears a neat and tidy appearance. Beyond this courtyard, on its borders and on the other sides of the house there would be generally a few fruit-bearing trees such as mango, jack, banana, papaya etc, and a small kitchen garden containing a variety of flower plants and vegetables. The hut is thus surrounded by trees and plants on all sides. Though it was the hut that was built first and the garden that came up as an appendage to it, a visitor from the plains would get an illusory feeling that the hut was built in the garden. Between Panjiri Yeravas and Pani Yeravas, the former are more enterprising in this regard and take good care to maintain their surroundings clean and tidy and to have a nice garden with a variety of flower plants.

8.7 In most of the tribal colonies, draw-wells with parapet walls have been provided for the supply of drinking water. At several places there are handpumps also. The Yeravas do not suffer from any social disability regarding access to wells and are allowed to draw water from common wells. For a greater part of the year water would be available in the streams that flow near their dwellings.

8.8 The dwellings of the Yeravas conform to the type commonly met with in the region, especially amongst the poorer classes. In the matter of settlement pattern and dwellings, the Yeravas do not have any peculiar features that may be regarded as distinctive traits specially associated with the tribe. They are not accustomed to decorate their houses or huts with wall paintings or by way of drawing geometrical or floral designs with *rangoli* powder and the like in the front courtyards or at any other place.

8.9 Dress and Ornaments : In the matter of dress and ornaments too the Yeravas do not have any distinctive features that set them

apart from other castes and tribes of similar socio-economic status. In the past, as traditional agricultural labourers attached to landlords they suffered certain disadvantages and dared not to put on good clothes in the fashion in which their masters dressed. Their economic conditions too did not permit them to indulge in wearing neat and fashionable dresses. They would receive and use the used apparel, quite often generously given away by their masters. If they were working on annual contract they were entitled to get a new set of clothes every year from their landlord. However the recent decades have witnessed a lot of changes in attitudes and patterns of behaviour of various sections of the population and the old feudal order has been slowly yielding place to a new order based on egalitarian values. The rigidity of the old order has vanished and men and women of the so called lower rungs of the society feel and enjoy a greater sense of freedom. One need not be greatly surprised to meet an occasional Yerava young man in the modern dress, like trousers and shirts or slacks stitched out of costly cloth in the latest fashion, and wearing a pair of leather shoes as well.

8.10 The normal dress of an adult male consists of two pieces. A white cotton lungi, of the approximate size 120 cm by 182 cm, is the lower garment which, when wrapped round the waist, covers the lower part of the body upto the ankles. This is worn in what is locally known as the *datti* style as an outer garment. It is common for most of the men to have a waist cloth or knickers of coarse and cheap cotton cloth or a *cheddy* of hosiery as the under-garment. The usual upper garment is a shirt or a slack with half sleeves. Use of hosiery banians is also quite common. For occasional use several men, particularly those of the older generation, have coats and dhoti. The dhoti is folded into double and used in the *datti* style.

8.11 Regarding the use of headgear there are no prescriptions. If anyone feels like doing so he may have a towel wound round his head in a haphazard manner or else put on a woollen or a flax cap. Several men are accustomed to the use of footwear, especially the Hawai type or Sandak type chappals made out of synthetic material. In the past, the use of leather footwear was tabooed. But nowadays such taboos are ignored and deviations are not taken cognizance of. Thus, a few among them use leather footwear regularly.

8.12 The adolescent and young men are now more accustomed to the use of trousers than of the *lungis*. Several men, especially those who work as forest labourers, use Khaki knickers instead of either the *lungi* or the trousers. Generally, the Yeravas buy coarser varieties of cloth which are cheaper and possess at a time two or three sets of clothes at the most. They do not mind using the clothes used by others. Several among them buy pants, coats and shirts from the shops which deal with such second hand dress materials and are to be found in the weekly markets and nearby towns.

8.13 The usual dress of an adult female also consists of two pieces, namely the saree and the blouse. While the saree covers the entire body from neck down to the ankles almost, the blouse covers the back, the bosom and the upper arms. The manner of wearing the saree bears superficial resemblance to the traditional Kodava style. An essential aspect of the Kodava style is to arrange the major portion of the saree into a bunch of small folds or pleats and tuck this in at the waist at the back. This is not so among the Yeravas, who seem to fold the excess length into a couple of large pleats or else simply wrap the saree around the body without any pleats. One end of the saree is secured at the waist and the other end is carried round and below the left armpit and then it is fastened by a tight knot to the upper edge of the saree pulled from the back over the right shoulder. The Kodava fashion differs in this regard also. Cotton sarees of 6 yards (5.4 metres) length of somewhat dull colours are popular. Both plain sarees with contrast borders and those with designs woven into or printed on them are in vogue. Similarly they are accustomed to use the handloom sarees as well as the powerloom and mill made sarees. Younger women, of course, have their own preferences and quite a few nowadays go in for cheaper varieties of nylon and nylex sarees. On account of their financial plight they are compelled to limit their choice to cheaper goods. The torn and worn out sarees are also used and at any one time a woman does not usually possess more than two or three sarees in good condition. Formerly, custom did not permit their women to wear blouses. Though even now some elderly women do not wear blouses, such customary restrictions are no longer enforced. Several women of the higher age-groups on the other hand wear old-fashioned blouses with full-sleeves. But the general practice is to put on blouses with half sleeves covering only a part of the upper arms. Nowadays, the

younger women regularly use the undergarments like petticoats and brassiers and are gradually giving up their traditional mode of wearing the saree as well. They seem to have developed a liking to the *datti* style which is more popular and is the most common style prevalent in the State and elsewhere as well. Usually women do not wear any headgear. While working in the fields, however, they may tie a scarf or a piece of cloth as a covering for the head. They are accustomed to walk about and work barefoot. Very few women use footwear.

8.14 Boys usually wear knickers and a shirt or a slack. The school-going boys are generally neat in their dress. Young boys while at home are often seen in large-sized worn out or torn shirts which once adorned their elders. Very young boys go about half naked wearing only a shirt or a slack. The adolescents usually put on trousers and shirts. Some among them wear *lungis* or pyjamas instead of trousers or knickers. Young girls usually wear frocks and jackets so as to cover their bodies from shoulders to ankles. The adolescents also use similar garments till they start wearing sarees and blouses regularly. They too are accustomed to use petticoats and bodice.

8.15 The dress prescribed for the bridegroom for the occasion of *moortha* is a *dhoti* and a white shirt. The white *dhoti* of 8 cubits length is double-folded and worn in the usual *datti* style. The bridal dress consists of a red saree and a red blouse. The ceremonial dress of a priest is usually a red skirt. Those who get possessed by spirits and divinities too wear such a red skirt as part of their ceremonial ensemble.

8.16 Apart from the wearing apparel the Yeravas possess very little clothing of other types. A household may have a couple of towels and the like but not bed-sheets, bed-spreads, rugs and beddings. They sleep on mats or gunny sacks spread on the floor and cover themselves with old dhoties or sarees. a few do have some bedding of sorts. If they can gather some silk cotton which is grown abundantly in coffee estates they do so and stuff it in a long gunny sack so that it would serve as a bed. During the cold season they would keep a fire burning for most part of the night in the front *verandah* and thus keep themselves warm. It is usual for men and boys to sleep in the *verandah* and for the women and girls to sleep in the room *cum* kitchen which would be comparatively more

warm. Use of woollen garments, coarse rugs (kambli) or shawls or clothing of good quality is minimal. Woollen or flax mufflers and monkey caps are, however, in use to a little extent.

8.17 Ornaments and Personal Decoration : In these matters too the Yeravas do not have anything which can be pointed out as a distinctive feature of their tribe. Their customs and traditions have neither prescribed nor proscribed the use of any specific ornaments for their men or women. The only ornament which is in common use among men is the finger ring. Several men, irrespective of age, are often seen wearing one or two finger rings in accordance with their individual liking. These rings are usually of silver or imitation gold or of some cheaper material including the plastic and would usually have a facsimile or emblem of a deity embossed or engraved on them. Men's ornaments include the earstuds, which however are no longer popular. These earstuds too are of silver or imitation gold. The other form of decoration to which young men have taken a fancy nowadays is to adorn their necks with a black thread carrying a pendant. This pendant of silver or of some other cheaper metal contains an emblem or facsimile of a deity embossed on it. The pendant may even be a talisman which the person might be wearing since his boyhood. The ornament worn by men are of cheap material and are readily available at the temporary shops set up during the weekly markets and periodical fairs. The habit of getting tattooed as a mark of personal decoration is not quite popular among men. However, tattooing carries some sentimental value, for it is generally a friend or a close relative that makes payment to the tattooer.

8.18 Women are more fond of ornaments and they satisfy their cravings by wearing trinkets and cheap ornaments. The most common types of ornaments in use are the earstuds, the nose-screw, bead necklaces, glass bangles and finger rings. They do like to have gold earstuds, silver chains and silver bracelets called *kādaga*. However it is only very few women that possess and regularly use one or more items of the following jewellery: gold earstuds, gold nose-screw, one or two silver chains to adorn their necks, silver anklets and silver toe-rings. The married women constantly wear a black bead necklace with a *tali* (pendant) along with a number of bead necklaces as a mark of their civil status. Similarly toe-rings are indicative of the fact that the woman is married. Nose-screw does not carry any special significance. At a tender age of 7 or 8 years, the girls get their

nostrils pierced and thereafter, though unmarried, they may also put on a nose-ring or nose-screw. Girls and young women are very fond of hair broaches and hair clips as well as ankle chains. Glass as well as plastic and rubber bangles are in vogue. Some elderly women and also those who cannot even afford the tawdry ear-studs use small rolled bits of palmyra leaf instead of earstuds. This form of decorating one's earlobes with bits of palmyra leaf was more common in the past. As between the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas, the former are known in the region to be very fond of bead necklaces of different hues. It is very rarely that an Yerava visits a silversmith or a goldsmith for buying ornaments. As stated earlier, purchases are made at the weekly *shandy* or at the periodical fairs from the retail vendors of imitation jewellery.

8.19 In former days the services of village barbers were not available to the Yeravas as a result of which their men had to help themselves. There are no such restrictions now and they can have their hair-cut and face-shave at the local barber-shops. Older men usually have a closely cropped hair-cut while the young men tend to have medium or long hair in keeping with the current trends. They are not very particular of always having a neat and clean shaven face. A few young men are accustomed to use the safety razor at home while many prefer to visit a barber for having a shave. There are a few elderly men among them who are unwilling to give up their old habit and have the haircut by themselves or prefer to help each other than to visit a barber. Men also apply castor oil or coconut oil to their head and comb the hair. The generality of the middle-aged and elderly men however do not very much bother about keeping their hair neat and tidy.

8.20 Women are a little more careful about their hairdo. Neither the Pani nor the Panjiri women can boast of possessing long and lustrous hair. Several women have curly hair. Women apply castor oil or coconut oil and comb their hair. The common hair style is to gather the hairs at the back and tie the same securely with a ribbon or a piece of cloth. Young women and girls have pigtailed which rest on the nape and the back. Women are fond of decorating their hairdo with flowers of bright colours including the Bouganville which are either grown in their yards or which they can get from their neighbours.

8.21 Among both Pani and Panjiri groups, women regard the tattoo marks as a form of personal decoration. They depend upon

the services of the itinerant womenfolk of Korama or Koracha community or such other professionals who usually visit the weekly markets and fairs at nearby places. The tattoo marks do not have any ritual or ceremonial value. It is just a matter of one's fancy and in a way it may also be considered as the response of the person concerned to the affection bestowed upon her by her friends and relatives. Tattooing provides an opportunity for the womenfolk to give a concrete expression to the affection and love they have towards one another. Generally, the one who gets tattooed does so in deference to the wishes of an affectionate friend or relative who pays the charges demanded by the tattooer. Of course, such gestures are reciprocated when suitable opportunities arise. The most common form of tattoo mark to be found on their persons is the circular patch on the forehead at about the point where the eyebrows meet and also on the chin. A series of such circular dots are also got tattooed on the temples in continuation of the eyebrows on either side in the form of a semicircle. Nose is the other part which often gets this treatment. On either side of the central ridge there would be five or six dots symmetrically arranged in columns. The other parts of the body that are often decorated with tattoo marks are the forearms and the back of the palm. Floral designs and geometric designs are preferred to simple dots for these parts. Since most of the women are dark-skinned and the tattoo marks are greenish in colour there would not be any contrast effect.

8.22 Food and Drinks : The Yeravas are non-vegetarians and have no social inhibitions regarding the consumption of alcoholic and intoxicating drinks. They are very fond of pork and prepare non-vegetarian dishes with pork, meat, fish and poultry as often as they can afford. Beef and carrion are taboo. Hand-pound rice is their staple food. Most of them get paddy as wages from their landlords. Paddy-pounding is almost a daily routine in most of the households. Every evening women first attend to this task of pounding the paddy, seiving it and cleaning the rice obtained thereof and then light the oven to cook the food. The rice cooked for the night meal is different from the rice prepared for the morning meal. For cooking the rice at nights a larger quantity of water is added during the initial stages. When the rice is half-cooked or when it becomes sufficiently soft the excess water, called *ganji* or *kanji*, is drained out. The rice cooked for the morning meal is called *Ganjianna* and in preparing this rice the excess water is not

drained out, but is allowed to evaporate. The Yeravas of both the groups are accustomed to take food twice a day. The morning meal is taken before they set out for the day's work at about 7-30. This would be cooked and eaten fresh. The food eaten at night would be somewhat more sumptuous and is taken around 8 O' clock in a leisurely manner. There is no prescribed order in which food is to be served to different members of the family. Most of them live in simple family households and the woman of the house who cooks the food serves first to her husband and children and she herself would eat later.

8.23 The everyday food consists of rice and *curry*. *Curry* is a simple side-dish prepared out of vegetables or fish and would be mild in taste. The *masala* required is prepared every time by grinding a few chillies, a few grains of coriander, an onion etc., with a little quantity of water into a paste which is then added to the cooked pieces of vegetables or fish at an appropriate time and the cooking is continued. Thereafter a little quantity of water in which tamarind is soaked and squeezed as well, and salt are added and the entire mixture is cooked for a little while to obtain consistency. Whenever they do not have either vegetables or fish they prepare a soup using a little quantity of tur dhal in an almost similar manner. Occasionally *chutney* is prepared as a side-dish. The general habit is to consume a large quantity of rice with a small quantity of *curry* or soup or *chutney*. They avoid eating excess of chillies. Eggs are boiled and consumed whenever eggs are available at home. Whenever they have guests or when they feel like having a change they kill a fowl and prepare soup of its flesh. They are fond of pork and regard it as a highly nourishing food. They catch and eat crabs. Usually they buy fish from vendors who move about on bicycles in the neighbourhood or when they visit the local market place. *Payasam* is the only sweet dish which they know of and prepare on festive occasions. This is prepared out of rice or green gram dhal as the main ingredient. They do not know the art of preparing pickles and such other items of food which can be preserved over a period of time.

8.24 Nowadays the habit of preparing *dosai*, *uppittu* etc., at home for the morning breakfast is said to be catching up. Black coffee is the popular beverage. It is brewed early in the morning and also during evenings before commencing to cook the food. They use jaggery instead of sugar and milk is a luxury which they usually dispense with. They just cannot afford to buy milk.

8.25 Food is cooked twice a day by the housewife herself and in this task she is assisted by her children, if any. Firewood is the only fuel which they use regularly. A few families possess kerosene wick stoves for occasional use. Usually the male members gather the requisite quantity of firewood, twigs and faggots from the nearby wooded areas. The womenfolk fetch water from the nearby stream or well and in this task they may occasionally be helped by their menfolk. On occasions like marriage, funerary feast, etc., when a large number of people are to be fed the responsibility of cooking food is shouldered by the men. Though not all, quite a good number of men are trained in the art of preparing rice, *curry* and *payasam* which are the main dishes for such occasions.

8.26 Generally each household has a small kitchen garden wherein some vegetables are grown in small quantities for household use. With the exception of onions and potatoes, normally they do not buy any vegetables from the market. Similarly, they spend next to nothing on fruits. In their own fields and kitchen gardens they would have a few banana plants and one or two papaya plants. This apart, jack, jambolana and mango trees are also occasionally found in the vicinity of their huts and from these trees they do gather the fruits. They collect and consume honey whenever they can do so and also gather roots, tubers and mushrooms for household consumption.

8.27 The Yeravas do not have any social inhibitions regarding the consumption of alcoholic and intoxicating drinks. Social custom permits their womenfolk and also adolescents to indulge in drinks on a moderate scale on social and other occasions. Formerly, they used to get the toddy tapped from the *baine* palm through toddy vendors. But now arrack is the most popular and more easily available drink in which they find enough satisfaction for their urge to drink. In this neighbourhood illicit liquor is said to be available in plenty. Thus, many are used to consume this liquor in preference to the arrack sold by the licensed vendor. The illicit liquor, it is said, consists of two varieties: the ordinary one brewed out of fruits, jaggery etc., and the special variety called *battada kallu* and prepared out of paddy. The latter is twice as costly as the former. Brandy and rum are also popular beverages.

8.28 It is quite usual for a man to go along with his wife to the arrack shop and have a drink near the shop itself. On the other

hand, it is also common for them to get a bottle of arrack through an youngster to their home and then drink unmindful of the presence of their children. The adolescents are also given a little quantity each. A large proportion of the Yeravas, it is said, consume arrack almost everyday at least in little quantities. Their customs regarding hospitality demands that a guest be served with some arrack to drink along with the food.

8.29 The alcoholic drink, generally known as *kallu* or *charayam* in their own language, has an important place in their rituals and at the social gatherings. During the funerary rites, the dead are to be appeased by the offerings of alcohol. The tribal deities which they worship, with the exception of *Pookari Mage*, are also to be placated by such offerings. When once the marriage of a man is settled, custom demands that he visit his would-be wife's home periodically with a bottle or two of arrack for her. Such visits would continue till their marriage is duly solemnised.

8.30 It is rather hard to assess the expenditure incurred by an average family on drinks. An informal enquiry during this study revealed that the amount spent usually works out to about 20 per cent of their earnings. During an obsequial ceremony which the Investigator witnessed, out of a total expenditure of Rs. 1094 an amount of Rs. 250 was spent on alcoholic drinks. Though both men and women are accustomed to drinks they are known for thier moderation. In other words, there are very few chronic alcoholics, and the general opinion is that there are very few cases of drunken brawls, fights and unruly behaviour among their men and women.

8.31 Almost every adult male Yerava smokes beedies, and everyone regards this habit as quite natural for a man. Chewing pan with bits of tobacco leaf is common among women. Several men are also accustomed to this habit of chewing *pan* and tobacco.

8.32. Other Household Articles : The material wealth of the Yeravas consists of a few pots and pans, some clothings other than those found on their bodies, a few implements and sundry articles. None of their houses is electrified and as a matter of fact most of them are not very particular about lighting. The hearth which keeps burning till 8 or 9 O' Clock in the night provides enough light inside the kitchen *cum* living room. Generally, they

have earthen oil lamps and kerosene oil *buddi* or burners. Very few possess lamps with chimney. For cooking food and also for preparing coffee they use aluminium vessels. These apart the household would usually have a few earthen pots, three or four brass utensils and dining plates, and of late, a few stainless steel plates, tumblers and small water pots. Water is fetched and stored in large brass utensils. But it is also common for them to have plastic pots and plastic buckets for purposes of fetching and storing drinking water. For storing other food items small tins are used. Almost every household will have a small granary or a large bamboo basket for storing paddy. A pestle and a mortar, and a pair of grinding stones (one flat and the other rounded) are the other common items seen in most of the households. As already indicated every member of the household will usually have two sets of clothes and in addition there would be a couple of towels and rugs. Some households possess metallic or wooden boxes to keep their so called valuables. They do not possess any items of furniture. At the most, a few households have wooden benches made in a crude manner. The more common item met with is the wooden plank which too would be very rough and made at home using crude implements. Visitors are offered such improvised planks or else a gunny sack or a mat as a seat. Those having lands usually keep a plough, a yoke and other simple agricultural implements. Almost every household has a few *Kuduḡolu* (harvesting sickles), a *Kadkatti* (chopper), a felling axe, a pick-axe and such other implements which the members need when they go out for work. A few households have bullock-carts, which they have been lucky enough to get from the Government as a gratuitous grant, for earning their living by plying the cart for hire. The other sundry items commonly seen in Yerava households are small bows, fishing traps called *kulaimbe* and baskets. The bows are used for shooting small marble sized mud balls in order to drive away birds and animals and thus protect the standing paddy crop.

8.33 Some men do flaunt wrist watches and transistor radio sets. But their number is quite negligible at present. Much of their earnings are squandered away on drinking and on chewing pan besides buying the essential food articles and their minimum requirement of clothing. They are practically left with nothing for investment on durable and semi durable goods. Their material culture is indeed very poor.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION, HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

Nature has provided Kodagu district, the home of Yeravas as well, with a beautiful landscape which is well drained and a climate that promotes the general health of its residents. With practically no effort on the part of the man the excess sullage water is drained away from his house and its surroundings. The house or hut itself is usually built on a slope by levelling out the house-site and the yard in such a way that there would not be any scope for stagnation of water. Since there is no congestion and the houses and huts have enough open space all around and are set in sylvan surroundings the atmosphere is quite refreshing and healthy. There is almost always an adequate supply of water all through the year in the small streams that criss-cross the fields and in wells found in or close to the settlements of the Yeravas. In several colonies there are bore wells which have been provided with handpumps and are capable of supplying enough quantity of water throughout the year. Since the Yeravas are accustomed to the habit of answering the calls of nature in the open fields and do not provide their houses or huts with modern facilities like water-closets, disposal of night-soil is not at all a problem in their settlements. Dogs and pigs which roam about in their settlements do not allow the night-soil to remain on the fields for long. The courtyard is swept clean as often as required and the unwanted waste material if any are thrown away at some distance. Peelings of vegetables, bits of fish or meat, bones, grains, husk etc., which may sometimes be found thrown about in the courtyard are eaten away by poultry birds and dogs and what remains is swept and the dirt so collected as well as the wood ash that accumulates each day in the kitchen are dumped in a shallow pit nearby. This heap melts away whenever it rains or else gets mixed up with earth and gets transformed into manure. In this matter of keeping one's surroundings clean, the Panjiri Yeravas are more meticulous than the Pani Yeravas. They tend their kitchen gardens well and take some extra care to keep their huts and courtyards clean.

9.1 Cleaning one's teeth and tongue as well as washing one's face in the morning is an universal habit among both Panjiri and Pani Yeravas. They do not use any particular brand of tooth-powder or tooth paste available in the market. Nor do they use any tooth-brush or its equivalent. They usually rub their teeth with the

forefinger and the thumb using powdered charcoal or wood ash as the cleaning agent. This habit is inculcated among children when they are still very young. Bathing too is a common habit among men, women and children. But the frequency of taking a bath varies from person to person and also depends on the seasonal conditions, proximity of a perennial stream to the settlement, nature of work done and one's predilections. Children, especially those below two years of age are, it is reported, bathed everyday in hot water. The general habit in the community as such is to bathe at least once a week. Several among them are nowadays accustomed to the use of toilet soaps. However, they also use large pieces of soft stone for scrubbing off the accumulated sweat and dirt from their bodies. Since their houses and huts are not provided with bath-room facilities they bathe in the open, that is either at the water source itself or in their own kitchen garden where some bushy plant would provide a little privacy. During the cold season they prefer to use hot water for bathing purposes. On occasions like marriage, puberty rites and obsequial rites bathing assumes a ritual significance. Otherwise it is left to one's whims and fancies. If a person feels so he may take a bath every day. Or else, he may bathe once a week or bathe only once a month.

9.2 Clothes are washed once a week or more often depending upon individual circumstances. Though most of the Yeravas use *antuvalada kayi* (soap-nut berry) which they gather from the surrounding jungles during the season and preserve for subsequent use, they are also familiar with the use of washing soaps. After washing and drying, the clothes are put on without being folded and pressed with iron. They do not generally avail themselves of the services of professional washermen. However, some of their young men, nowadays, get their clothes like shirts and trousers neatly pressed for occasional use in imitation of the others in their neighbourhood.

9.3 The hut in which they live is usually kept clean. The floor of the hut is swept clean at least twice a day. Every 3rd or 4th day the entire floor as well as the lower portion of the walls are smeared with cowdung emulsion to which powdered charcoal is also added. The court-yard in front of the hut is also kept clean and tidy. The cooking vessels are cleaned every time after use and so also the plates, tumblers and other utensils are cleaned frequently.

9.4 Formerly, malaria was an endemic disease in Kodagu and the Yeravas were also quite susceptible to its attack. They have never been, nor are they at present, accustomed to the use of mosquito nets. This incapacitating disease is more or less under control from the late fifties due to the intensive campaign of DDT spraying and such other measures launched under the National Malaria Eradication Programme. This apart, the general health conditions of the Yeravas are stated to be quite satisfactory. They are not known to be vulnerable to any particular disease, even though they are an under-nourished lot. Like others they too occasionally suffer from common ailments like headache, cold, fever, cough, diarrhoea and dysentery. They have their own home remedies which they try at first. For instance, for all kinds of fever they administer the decoction of a particular berry known locally as *nanjina beeja*. In most families the Yeravas could name one old man or the other of their kin - group who knew the medicines for the common ailments and could administer the same effectively. Nowadays very few have confidence about the efficacy of these home remedies. When these fail to help one to recover within a reasonable period of time and the illness assumes a severe form they resort to divination for purposes of diagnosis. In their own community there are a few men who are well-versed in the art of divination and are known to get possessed by certain deities. The general remedies suggested by such magico-medicine-men would be the sacrifice of a cock to appease a dissatisfied spirit or a deity, payment of some contribution for a festival and worship of a certain deity, performance of a funerary rite which might have been inordinately delayed etc. When even these measures fail to produce the desired results they seek the help of professional doctors in government hospitals or of the private medical practitioners. An important point to remember is that they live in huts that are far off from the main roads and for a sick person to reach the main road and from there take a bus to the nearest town to meet a doctor would be really very difficult especially when the financial position is none too sound. Secondly, even if they go to a hospital or health centre, once they get some prescription or medicine for a couple of days they would not usually care to continue the visits and the treatment. They just cannot afford it, even though they are aware of the benefits that could be derived

by taking recourse to modern medicine. Another important factor that restrains them is reported to be the manner in which such poor rustics are treated in public hospitals and health centres or dispensaries. They feel that they do not get either the sympathetic treatment or the words of consolation from the doctors and their assistants, when forced by circumstances they would rather prefer a private medical practitioner.

9.5 Some idea regarding their attitude towards disease, treatment and death may be had from the following instance. Bachayya, is a retired peon who has served in some of the hostels maintained by the Social Welfare Department and had an opportunity of knowing the world beyond that to which an ordinary tribal is confined. His wife is also employed as a helper in a *Balawadi* and his daughters are matriculates. One of his daughters has married a man of higher caste and another is studying in a college at Mysore. Recently his son Mani, aged about 24, died after a brief illness. Mani had completed primary level of education and, having become friendly with some immigrants from Malabar, had learnt the craft of sawing timber. In fact, he had picked up the work and was earning considerable sums of money prior to his illness. A few months ago a girl was betrothed and his marriage was to take place shortly. But, during this intervening period he suffered severe attacks of cough and began to vomit blood frequently. He was taken to the doctors at Tithmathi and also to the hospital at Gonikoppal, the nearest town. In spite of medical treatment Mani died during January 83. While narrating these incidents Bachayya, instead of mentioning malnutrition, health hazard associated with the nature of work or inherent weaknesses in his son, preferred to ascribe his son's disease and death to the misfortune that befell his son and his family because of the betrothal involving an unlucky girl. He firmly believed that, but for this association with an unlucky girl, Mani would not have died. If the attitude of a fairly forward and progressive man of the tribe is of this nature one can easily visualise the depth of superstition that pervades those who have very little contact with the educated.

10. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Since the Pani Yeravas, the Panjiri Yeravas, Badaga Yeravas and Kage Yeravas, have all along been regarded as endogamous

groups of a single tribe, the languages spoken by each one of them at home also seem to have been assumed to be the same. The name of the tribe itself appears to have been found most convenient to designate the language spoken by its members. Thus, the very first census in 1871, mentions Yerava as a separate language. But, on account of its affinity with Malayalam, the 1901 census categorises Yerava as a dialect of Malayalam. According to Grierson's Linguistic Survey also Yerava is a dialect of Malayalam. In the 1921 census however Yerava is mentioned as a 'peculiar language' of Kodagu. In 1961 also Yerava has been treated as a separate language. But in 1971, since this language has been considered as a part of Malayalam language separate details are not available. Thus, a cursory appraisal reveals that at times the language spoken by these tribals has been classified as an independent language and at times this has been regarded as a dialect of Malayalam. No attempt seems to have been made at any time to ascertain the identity of the languages spoken by the different groups among themselves and to find out the definite inter-relationship subsisting between these languages and any other language of the region including Malayalam and those spoken by the Paniyans and Adiyans of Wynad.

10.1 The present study has thrown up the fact that the Pani Yeravas and Panjiri Yeravas are two distinct communities and, despite certain broad similarities, the languages spoken by them among themselves are also separate. Both are undoubtedly of Dravidian origin and both contain several words (in their pure or corrupted form) which basically belong to other Dravidian languages like Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Certain words of Kodava language are also in use among the people of both the groups. It would perhaps be fallacious to conclude that the languages spoken by each group are completely independent or that all these are different dialects of a single language namely Malayalam, merely on the basis of the presence or absence of a few words of one language in the other. An in-depth linguistic study of these languages in relation to one another and also in relation to the other regional languages alone can provide satisfactory answers. It may be mentioned in passing that a linguistic analysis of the Yerava language has been carried out

recently (Mallikarjuna, 1983). While speaking among themselves the Panjiri Yeravas generally use their own language having its own idiomatic expressions, accent, intonation and vocabulary. In a similar manner the Pani Yeravas use their own language. By way of illustration the Panjiri Yerava, Pani Yerava and English equivalents for a few words in frequent use are furnished below:

English	Panjiri Yerava	Pani Yerava
Mother	Amma, Avva	Amma
Father	Appa	Appa
Mother's Father	Achcha	Chacha
Father's Father		
Mother's Mother		
Father's Mother	Ithawa, Avva	Chachi
Elder Brother	Anna	Anna
Younger Brother	Ileya	Thamma
Mother's Brother	Mama	Mama
Elder Sister	Akki	Akka
Younger Sister	Ilevu	Thangi
Wife's Father	Mama	Mama
Wife's Mother	Mami	Mami
House	Kullu	Pire
Hut	Palli	Pire
Firewood	Pure	Kolu
Fire	Thee	Theeyu
Water	Neeru	Neeru
Hot Water	Benge Neeru	Kanja Neeru
Sun	Nera, Chooriya	Nera
Moon	Nilavu, Chandra	Nilavu
Earth	Boomi	Boomi
God	Devaru, Pagava	Thayya
Hill	Betta, Male	Male
Forest	Kadu	Kadu
Cooked rice	Curry	Curry
Milk	Palu	Palu
Meat	Rechi	Irechi
Arrack	Charaya	Kallu

English	Panjiri Yerava	Pani Yerava
Toddy	Kallu	Bolle Kallu
Marriage	Kanjala	Kanjala
Death	Savu	Chavu
Birth	Puranda	Pechazhainju
Light	Bulaku	Boli
Day time	Pagelu	Pagelu
Night	Andi	Iravu
Cloth	Sinde	Battenje
Come	Ba	Ba
Go	Po	Po
Eat	Thinnu	Thinnu
Drink	Kudi	Kuti
Sit	Ulesu	Ilecha
Sleep	Urang	Urangu
Stand	Nil	Ninja

10.2 Among the Panjiri Yeravas an appreciable proportion of over 50 per cent are bilingual as they are conversant with Kannada also. Several among them may in fact be regarded as multilinguals since they can converse in Malayalam and Kodava languages as well. Among Pani Yeravas, most of whom live on the lands of their landlords, the proportion of persons who are fully conversant with Kannada is comparatively less. Several among them too, it is reported, can speak Malayalam and Kodava languages well. The local landlords, coffee planters and managers, the business men etc., have learnt the spoken languages of the Panjiri and the Pani Yeravas so that they can deal with them more effectively. The language so spoken would have a generous mixture of words in common use belonging to the other languages, namely the mother tongue of the landlord or the businessman concerned. If a man and his wife, or either of them, have received some formal school education and if their children are also attending schools then the common tendency among them is to speak Kannada at home rather than use their own language. The parents feel that by doing so they are helping their children to learn the language which happens to be the medium of education.

10.3 The following table indicates the data on mother tongue and bilingualism among the Yeravas as revealed at the 1961 Census. According to this census data the incidence of bilingualism is rather low, a feature which seems to be contrary to the general impression that one gains through field enquiries and group discussions.

Table-2 Mother Tongue and Bilingualism among Yeravas, 1961

Mother tongue	Number of speakers			Subsidiary languages spoken (Number of speakers shown in brackets after the name of language)
	Males	Females	Persons	
1	2	3	4	5
1 Yerava	7621	6867	14488	Kannada (572M, 449F), Coorgi (Kodava) (151M, 185M), Malayalam (8M), Tamil (1M).
2 Kannada	318	319	637	Coorgi (Kodava) (20M, 6F), Malayalam (4M, 8F), Tulu (1F).
3 Coorgi (Kodava)	59	23	82	Kannada (3M, 4F)
4 Tulu	8	40	48	Kannada (2M, 7F)
5 Malayalam	—	30	30	Kannada (11F)
6 Telugu	—	5	5	Kannada (5F)

10.4 The Pani Yerava as well as the Panjiri Yerava are both spoken languages. While the traditions of Panjiri Yeravas do contain some references to writings on palm leaves, those of Pani Yeravas are devoid of any such references, allusions or even myths. The language and the script employed by their elders are only to be imagined since remnants of any such writings are not

available. No written literature using any other script either is existing in these languages. In recent years a few educated persons are said to have developed the habit of writing personal letters etc., in their own language using the Kannada script.

10.5 Both the groups are quite poor in oral literature also. They do not have any folk-tales and folk-songs of their own in their own language. All that they have is a treasure containing a few songs prescribed to be recited during funerary rituals as part of offerings to tribal deities and a few songs to be sung during marriage rites. Priests alone are entitled to sing these songs and they may in turn teach those who are aspiring to serve the community as priests. The novices accompany the priests on such occasions to keenly watch the rituals, listen to the songs intently and learn gradually. These songs cannot therefore be equated with the folk songs. These songs, in addition to being in their own language and known to a few elders only, are to be recited only when the occasion demands. Mere recital without the necessary ritual is believed to cause displeasure to the spirits and to bring forth bad luck to the one who sings and also the other members of his kin group. The elders are therefore very reluctant to sing for an inquisitive visitor. Among the Pani Yeravas as also the Panjiri Yeravas their women are not entitled to learn their ritual songs or to sing these or any other special songs even on social occasions like marriages.

10.6 Men and women are fond of dancing and make use of the opportunities that arise when they congregate to celebrate social occasions. There would however be no singing while dancing. Pipers and drummers among them provide the necessary music.

11. EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Particulars about their customs and manners and the expected behaviour patterns with reference to different categories of relatives and others are gradually learnt by the members of the community in an informal way. To teach someone something particular in the normal sense in which the term is used is an alien concept among both the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas.

Children observe their elders and are encouraged to learn, but they are not compelled either by threatening or by inflicting punishment. Scolding and beating children are said to be very rare among both the groups. Life as a child is quite enjoyable, for every child is loved and cared for and allowed to spend the time as the child pleases. Children generally present a happy look and both boys and girls are allowed to play together, there being no attempts by the elders to impose sexual segregation at this stage. By the time a boy or a girl is about 9 or 10 years he or she would start learning about house-keeping, gathering of faggots and dead wood for use as fuel, fetching water, working in fields as a helping hand and the like and by 12 would have learnt much about life. Girls would have learnt the art of cooking by regularly helping their mothers. When a boy reaches adulthood, say when he is about 18 or 20 he is ready to start the life on his own. Similarly, when a girl is 16 or 17 she would have developed the capacity to manage a house on her own. Among both the groups boys above 18 and girls above 16 are regarded as eligible for marriage. They do not have any special craft or economic activity associated with their tribe. Most of them work as ordinary agricultural labourers in paddy cultivation and in coffee plantations during peak seasons.

11.1 As regards their traditional knowledge in the form of rituals and associated songs certain amount of training is necessary. This is the domain of the males, especially those who are functioning or, are aspiring for the position of tribal priests. The person well-versed in this knowledge usually picks up one or two of his own sons or sister's sons for imparting the training. Whenever the elder priest engages himself in priestly duties the youngmen, that is the novices, would attend on him and learn the ritual as well as the singing aspect by keen observation and imitation over a period of years. The initiative rests on the one who is keen to learn. Among Panjiri Yeravas, for example, Amase has in recent years trained two of his own sons and one of his sister's sons. At present these three men are noted *Kanjneladi* (priests) in the Panjiri Community. Among Pani Yeravas too the art of priesthood is learnt in the same manner. Whether or not a person is suitable to receive the training is determined by resorting to divination. Apart from priests, there are a few men who are known to get possessed by certain deities

and function as soothsayers. This trait also runs in certain families and one of the sons or sister's sons of the soothsayer generally receives the necessary initiation and training so that he can carry on the tradition either during the life time or after the demise of the present incumbent.

11.2 Bolla, a Pani Yerava aged about 50, has for long been functioning as a *chemmi* and knows the ritual aspects well. Since he did not learn the songs while young he could not become an *attali* (priest). Now, because of an inner urge, he is determined to learn all the relevant songs and thus rise himself to the status of an *attali*. His first wife's father, Kariya is an *attali* of considerable reputation in the community. Bolla has therefore enlisted the help of Kariya in his endeavour and has for quite some time been attending all the functions at which Kariya is the priest. By careful observation and by rendering assistance at the required moments he has already learnt much. He hopes to become a recognised *attali* quite soon.

11.3 Basava and Ganesh are two Panjiri young men of Nanachchi village. Basava's father who was residing at Hanasoge was a soothsayer and used to get possessed by a certain deity. Now, Basava's elder brother is functioning as a soothsayer whereas Basava is not. However, he has of late been feeling a strong inner urge to take on the role of a soothsayer. While witnessing divination ceremonies, which he does quite often, he involuntarily starts shivering and begins to dance and moves into a state of trance. At present he does not know how the predictions are to be made and how the prayers etc., are to be said. He has just started to learn these vital aspects as well. Ganesh's father's father Chatha, was likewise a soothsayer. But his own father was an ordinary man. Now, like Basava, he too has got the inner urge and easily moves into a trance while witnessing divination ceremonies. Both these youngmen are now learning the art of soothsaying and divination under the patronage of one such functionary.

11.4 In the traditional method of learning there is no hurry, there is no time table nor are there any formal teaching sessions. Things are learnt over a period of time in the most informal way. The art of

playing on *dudi*, the percussion instrument, is also learnt in a similar manner.

11.5 The Yeravas have been exposed, though in a peripheral form, to modern scholastic education for over 4 decades. They have however never been subjected to any intensive propaganda nor has anybody worked among them with a missionary zeal to provide them with the necessary motivation to take to modern education. Belonging as they do to the economically and socially weakest group in this region and being mostly introverts they have remained meek, submissive and in a way disinterested. Very few old men among them can remember having ever attended any school during their childhood. There are however a few old men around or above sixty who can be categorised as literate in Kannada. One such case could be seen in Balarama, a Panjiri Yerava who is a Village Panchayat member and remembers his school days quite well. He can read and write Kannada fairly well. He has not passed any examination even though he attended a school for a couple of years. His brother Javana did not attend any school at all. But, even then, because of his own interest he has managed to learn reading and writing simple Kannada. Among the youngsters however there is sprinkling of literates and in recent years there has been a perceptible change in their attitude towards education, mainly because of the efforts put forth by extension workers, opening of *Ashram* schools and hostels for Scheduled Tribes and such other measures undertaken by the Government. Thus, several Yerava boys and girls are now attending primary schools, while a few are studying in high schools and colleges.

11.6 According to the data revealed at the 1961 census, only 482 persons out of the 15,290 Yeravas returned themselves as literate. The general literacy rate thus stood at 3.15 per cent and the sexwise break up indicated that the literate among males and females hardly formed 5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. A vast majority of these literate persons i.e. 97.5 per cent among males and 98.7 per cent among females were literate without any educational level. Only one person had reported himself as having crossed the matriculation level. Thus, a large proportion of the literates appear to represent the young children attending primary schools.

11.7 By 1971, the number of literate persons in the community increased to 611 and correspondingly their proportion in the total population also moved up from its 1961 level of 3.15 per cent to 4.44 per cent. Though the rate of increase is unimpressive, that there has been some improvement is in itself a gratifying feature. The sexwise break up shows that among males and females 6.3 per cent and 2.6 per cent respectively were literate. Amongst the literate as many as 9 that is 1.50 per cent, consisting of 5 males and 4 females, reported themselves as having completed the matriculation level. The literate with primary level accounted for 76.57 per cent while those without any education level formed 21.93 per cent.

11.8 An important factor which affects the enrolment of children in schools is the attitude of the particular landlord for whom the Yerava works. This is especially the case among Pani Yeravas, the bulk of whom are even now dwelling on the lands of their landlords and virtual masters. Passive or negative attitudes of their masters is something that these people do not like to put up with. Open encouragement or at least a reluctant permission is very essential for a Yerava to enrol his children in school. Among those who are living in tribal colonies and their own settlements such a feeling of utter dependence is however absent. But here, the services of children aged 9 or 10 years are badly required for the family: while girls remain at home and take care of the younger siblings the boys are drafted for work in the fields. The landlords and the estate owners have a vested interest and therefore do not care much to enlighten and guide these labourers regarding the importance of literacy and education. If boys and girls who can be engaged for work at lower rates start going to school regularly the landlords would stand to lose and the concerned Pani or Panjiri Yerava family also has nothing much to gain economically. These attitudes are however changing slowly. They are nowadays enrolling their children in the *Anganawadi* (nursery schools) and *Ashram* schools which are being run for the benefit of those belonging to Scheduled Tribes. The students are provided with a little food everyday, a set of clothes and some books and writing material during the year. The medium of instruction is Kannada. The *Ashram* schools provide hostel facilities also but the women-

folk, it is said, do not like the idea of keeping their children away from home.

11.9 The main reasons cited by a large cross-section of informants during this field study for non-enrolment and non-attendance of children in schools including the *Ashram* schools are summarised below. The most common reasons offered are (i) children are not interested in learning and in going to school (ii) the schools are located at considerable distances from their homes and (iii) cannot afford to send their children to schools. The school-going children of Jenukuruba tribe fetch an annual sum of Rs. 250 by way of compensation to their parents since they are regarded as belonging to a Primitive Tribe. Such a classification is beyond the comprehension of Yeravas and since they do not get any such payment they feel that they are being discriminated and are not therefore interested in sending their children to schools. The other reason is that when the boys and girls are around 10 or 11 years old they are expected to work in fields and at home, and start earning to augment the family income and to help the parents in housekeeping. That is, they are more useful in fields and at home rather than at classrooms. The few that have by now acquired some education do not carry any special prestige or recognition within the community. Nor have they achieved any spectacular success in their social or economic life. The educated are treated at par with the illiterate. The few that are educated and have secured some salaried jobs are living in distant places away from their kith and kin. Thus, according to them, education does not provide anything better that one can aspire for, especially it does not secure for them any immediate economic returns. As a result the elders are not inclined to enthuse or coax their children to attend the school. In fact the parents exhibit a feeling of total indifference and children too share the same feelings to a larger measure.

11.10 Most of the informants did not know of any member of their community who has completed studies in a degree college and is a graduate. A few could however cite the case of a single Panjiri Yerava who is a graduate and is reported to be working as a clerk in a research station. Those who have completed the Pre-

University Course could at best be counted on finger tips. According to the informants there are in all about a dozen or so who have passed Secondary School Leaving Certificate examination (equivalent to matriculation) and of them while a few are youngsters studying in colleges the others are employed. Among the female matriculates one is said to be working in a bank in Dharwad district and is married to a man of an upper caste. Another such matriculate is currently working in Health Department at Hassan and she too is said to be living with a man of an upper caste. Yet another girl is studying in Mysore. Among males, the educated are working in low paid jobs and have not been able to secure any of the jobs that carry prestige and power, like that of even a police constable for instance. There are non-matriculate literates who have been able to get some work as cooks and servants in the institutions maintained by the Social Welfare Department and a few are working as Forest Guards. Thus, the educated class among the Yeravas has not yet emerged as a model for the larger section of the population to emulate. This is especially so among the Pani Yeravas.

11.11 During the last decade, among the Yeravas also while a few young men have been sponsored for undergoing training in crafts such as bee-keeping (at Madikeri centre), fisheries (at Kabini Reservoir) and carpentry (at Ponnampet) a few young women have been trained in tailoring (at Kutta). Those who have been trained thus have not been able to find suitable employment or to start their own enterprise. Carpentry has been a little different, for some of them can occasionally find work. But they are paid much less than their compeers of the traditional caste of carpenters. Likewise, the women who are trained as tailors and provided with money to buy a sewing machine as well can put their learning to use to some extent in the initial stages. However they are unable to build up a clientele of their own in competition with the professional tailors. The Yeravas have not evinced any interest in learning technical trades and jobs associated with machines of any type.

12. ECONOMIC LIFE

As a community neither the Pani Yeravas nor the Panjiri Yeravas have the tradition of ever exercising any form of supremacy over any territory. When viewed in the historical perspective, ownership of land, either as a community holding or as individual holdings,

seems to be quite alien to their culture. Basically, from the stage of food gathering in forests their ancestors seem to have passed to the stage of agricultural labourers and cardamom pickers. This is especially so in the case of Pani Yeravas, whose tradition reveals that their ancestors were enslaved by the landlords and were then taught to work on agricultural fields by their masters. The Panjiri Yeravas however seem to have passed through the stage in which they were practising shifting cultivation in dense forests. Their ancestral songs bear references to such a practice of clearing jungles, burning the wood and raising crops by sowing the seeds. They also believe that the lands that their forefathers thus developed were taken away from them by the other dominant tribes, particularly the Betta Kurubas.

12.1 With the advent of the British rule, Government control over land, including forests, increased considerably and the concept of land ownership took deeper roots. The Coorg Land Revenue and Regulations Act 1899 is an important landmark concerning this aspect. The Act contained a provision for granting of occupancy rights over lands distributed to tribals and others. As a result, in Kodagu, several persons including some Yeravas secured lands from the Government for cultivation. But, as could be ascertained through this study, the Yeravas have not been able to retain possession of such lands. For instance, out of about 30 hectares of land granted to Yeravas under this Act in the early 1900's in the neighbourhood of Nanachchi (near the Nagarhole Game Sanctuary) as much as 24 hectares stand transferred to others and only 6 hectares are now held by the Yeravas. The story as to how two families have been able to retain possession of the original allotment is quite interesting and throws light on the way in which the local forces operate to the disadvantage of the weaker groups. These are recounted here in brief.

12.2 In about 1910, 'A' of Panjiri Yerava tribe secured 1.6 hectares of paddy fields by way of a grant from the Government. Being unable to take up self cultivation, like several others, he too leased out the land to a landlord for an annual rent. As in the past, he and his family members continued to eke out a living as agricultural labourers. Towards the end of 1940's there were numerous cases of land grants, especially to the discharged personnel. Once they settled down and developed their properties there was a sudden spurt in the demand for agricultural lands. The process of

depriving the under-privileged of their valuable possessions by fair or foul means slowly gathered momentum. Several of the Yeravas who owed money to the landlords were easily induced to part with their lands and those who resisted initially had to cave in after much persuasion and even intimidation. However, 'A' and a few others did not comply and the landlords waited for a suitable opportunity to intensify their pressure. It so happened that at this juncture a toddy shop of this neighbourhood was set on fire by some miscreants. The Yeravas were falsely implicated and the sons of 'A' as well as a few other Yeravas still holding on to their lands were taken into police custody for interrogation. The panic stricken 'A' and the other Yeravas requested the landlords to intervene, use their influence and obtain the release of all those taken into custody. The landlords readily obliged and the Yeravas were released. Deriving an advantage through this act of good-turn, the local landlords persuaded 'A' and the other Yeravas to sell away their lands. Thus, the lands held by 'A' since about 1910, were sold away to two landlords 'X' and 'Y'. Later, the sale deeds were also got duly registered on 20.4.1969. The entire family of 'A' then moved away to Kanthoor Forest and soon forgot the episode. But for a strange turn of events the matter would have rested at that. In course of time bitter enmity developed between the Landlords 'X' and 'Y'. One of them, say 'X', thought out a strategy to teach a lesson to his opponent and in his scheme, the sons and grandsons of 'A' had an important role to play. He consulted an advocate and discovered that the 1969 sale deeds could be invalidated on the grounds that these had overlooked the interests of the son's sons of A. So, in 1977 he met the sons of 'A', volunteered to transfer their property to them, offered work in his own estate, and promised all help if they returned to their ancestral home. Overwhelmed by this generous offer they readily moved with their families to live under the protective umbrella of X. This event itself was enough to hurt the image of 'Y'. Then, under the instructions of 'X', a case was instituted against 'Y' by the son's sons of 'A' demanding that their parental property be made over to them as the sale deed executed in 1969 stood null and void as their interests had totally been ignored. In the legal battle that ensued, the necessary financial and moral support were extended to them by 'X' and finally, in 1981, the judgement was passed in their favour. Thus, 'X' could score a victory over 'Y' and in the process a family of the Yeravas derived benefits in an unusual manner.

12.3 'K' secured a grant of 1.2 hectares of paddy fields around

1920. He has three sons and several grandsons now. Despite several odds he has not parted with these lands. Even his own sons, it is reported, have pressurised him on several occasions to hand them over their shares. 'K' is a relatively knowledgeable man and carries some amount of prestige in his community and also in the neighbourhood. This old man expressed his fears that as soon as the property gets divided and passes on to the hands of his own sons they would be quite eager to sell it away at the very first offer to buy. He has also subsequently obtained an 8 acre plot which can be developed into a coffee plantation and is struggling to raise the necessary funds.

12.4 In yet another instance, another Yerava who also got 1.2 hectares of land as a grant around 1920, retained possession till 1975 against several odds. The land was finally sold in 1975 to a local landlord. But, now in view of the provisions incorporated in the 1978 Act prohibiting transfer of certain lands, he and his son are hopeful of getting back their lands.

12.5 As at and around Nanachchi, at several other places also, lands have been granted to the Yeravas for cultivation. In almost all cases the story is very much the same. It is only a few that have been able to retain their hold on the lands assigned to them. As a class they have always been quite poor and do not possess the necessary capital for investment on agriculture. They are utterly dependent on the local landlords for their work and wages. Being extremely fond of intoxicating drinks they are not accustomed to save any money for the future. The lands that they got by way of grants were quite often leased out to the local landlords who would organise cultivation of the plots using the self same Yeravas as labourers. The general impression gathered through this study is that the Yeravas were, and even now are, regarded as capable of working well under the guidance and orders of a master and that they feel miserable when they themselves have to use discretion and judgement in carrying out agricultural operations. Secondly, they did not have the where-withal to take up self-cultivation of lands granted to them. They did not have livestock animals. Nor did they have the necessary tools and equipments and the economic stability to wait for the fruits of their labour in their own fields. Theirs was a day-to-day existence and they could hardly forego even a day's wages. Added to this they would frequently borrow from the local landlord to meet their daily needs. As a

result the ownership of land also changed gradually. Thus, they have all along remained a class of landless labourers. There are however a few exceptions.

12.6 Formerly, a few Yeravas were share-croppers and their main contribution was manual labour. Two types of contracts were in vogue. The landlord would supply all the material inputs and the Yerava's responsibility was to put in the necessary labour. The produce would be divided equally between the landlord and the Yerava after deducting the cost of material inputs. In the other type, the landlord would assign a small plot of land to the Yerava who could cultivate the fields on his own and pay one half of the produce as the landlord's share at the end of the year. The Yerava was in addition obliged to work on the landlord's estate whenever called upon to do so and for this work he received the regular wages. However, in view of the recent land reform measures including the proposal to transfer the ownership of land to the actual tiller of the soil, all such agreements have disappeared. Most of the Yeravas have now become purely daily wage earners.

12.7 In view of their residence in the forest zones, the Yeravas have for long been considered as suitable for work in the forests by the Departmental Officers. They have been allowed to live in the forest tracts and to cultivate suitable plots of lands here and there without any liability to pay any tax whatsoever. They do not however enjoy any right over the lands which they cultivate. On their part they are obliged to work as labourers for the Forest Department and receive regular wages whenever their services are required. There are quite a few among the Yeravas who belong to this category and have been living in forests and cultivating small patches of land for years. One of the main problems faced by these cultivators is the constant threat posed by wild elephants and wild boars to the standing crops. Another problem is that of untimely and uncertain rainfall. Both these are attributed to the denudation of the dense forest tracts of the district.

12.8 At a few places where the Government has set up tribal colonies, *paisary* lands have also been granted to the tribals. With a view to ensuring that such lands are not transferred to others, the title to the land is vested in the District Social Welfare Officer and the individuals are given only a *Saguvali chiti* (letter of permission). According to the data compiled by the ITDP, in and around

Tithmathi (i.e. Nokya village), there are 28 tribal settlements covering a total population of 2445 persons living in 430 households. A considerable number of these tribals belong to the Panjiri Yerava tribe. The total extent of land held and cultivated by these tribals is stated to be 276 hectares of paddy fields and 155 hectares of dry land. In addition to lands and the houses, the tribals have received material support in other forms too. For example, a few of them have been supplied with bullocks while a few others have been supplied with bullock carts also. Those who have taken up cultivation have been supplied with seeds and fertilisers at subsidised rates. In this zone, the Yeravas can be regarded as practising self cultivation to a significant extent. They supplement their income by working as forest workers, seasonal agricultural labourers as well as plantation workers.

12.9 The Yeravas do not enjoy any special rights in the collection of forest produce. They work as labourers in the activities like felling, logging, raising nurseries, planting of saplings etc., under the departmental staff for wages. Some among them work for licensed contractors and gather minor forest produce on piece rate basis. In Makutta tribal colony for example, collection of minor forest produce for the contractors is an important economic activity for several of the Pani Yeravas. Like others, Yeravas are also permitted to gather firewood and faggots as headloads for use as domestic fuel and also to gather thatching grass for construction and repair of their huts. They also gather the edible mushrooms, roots and tubers for personal consumption.

12.10 Fishing is an occasional sport particularly indulged in during the rainy season in streams, ponds and other water-logged areas. They do not use fishing nets. Instead, they catch fish using basket-like traps. The fish and crabs which are caught are usually consumed as a delicacy at home. Fishing as such is not an activity of any economic or ritualistic significance for the Yeravas.

12.11 Animal husbandry too is an activity of marginal significance. Very few among them keep cows and buffaloes. Being landless labourers they have been facing the problem of providing food and accommodation to the larger heads of livestock like cows, bullocks and buffaloes. As wage earners they tend the cattle of their landlords and masters. Recently, under the Integrated Tribal Development Programme, cows, buffaloes and bullocks were supplied to a selected few and these persons are said to be

evinced keen interest. Cattle do not play any significant role in their social, cultural or religious life either. The Yeravas consume pork and among them piggery is somewhat more common. The general practice is to keep just two or three pigs at a time. Since, in this region, pigs straying into paddy fields and estates are liable to be shot at and killed, the Yeravas find it difficult to maintain even this small number.

12.12 Though poultry keeping is an universal practice among the Yeravas, this activity is not viewed as a commercial enterprise. Every household keeps a few birds to ensure a supply of eggs and chicken for periodical consumption at home and an occasional sale in the neighbourhood. Any Yerava householder impulsively feels obliged to kill a bird or two to treat his guests to a sumptuous meal accompanied by a good measure of toddy or arrack. The efforts of the extension workers attached to the Integrated Tribal Development Project to introduce improved breeds of poultry and to induce the Yeravas to start poultry farms on commercial lines have not yet borne fruits.

12.13 By tradition, the Yeravas (both men and women) are unskilled manual labourers. Their ancestors are not credited with having ever possessed any special skills or craftsmanship associated with the manufacture of tools and equipment in common use or of any artefacts. Recently a few young men have undergone training in carpentry, smithy etc., while a few young women have likewise undergone training in tailoring. These persons underwent the training not because they had any inner urge or inherent liking for the craft but because they were persuaded by the extension workers to acquire new skills which may open up better avenues for them to earn a living. As a matter of fact, however, these persons have more or less been disillusioned for they have not been able to find suitable opportunities to use their newly acquired skills. In this particular field there is acute competition from the traditional and experienced craftsmen and all that the Yeravas can do is to work as semi-skilled assistants. Even the young women who have secured sewing machines after their spell of training, seek the help of the experienced tailors to cut the cloth properly and are more than satisfied if they can neatly join these pieces.

12.14 Activities connected with trade and commerce are totally

alien to the Yeravas in as much as none among them has ever been known to have taken up the profession of even that of petty shopkeeper. Likewise, none among them operates any transport vehicle. A few men and women are engaged in service occupations, mostly as servants and cooks in schools and hostels run by the Government and as domestic servants. Very few are known to have secured jobs such as that of clerks, peons and para-medical workers.

12.15 The Yeravas are thus mainly labourers who work in paddy fields and coffee estates. They work as casual labourers or contract labourers for wages in cash and kind and the traditional master-servant relationship with their landlords is no longer in vogue. A few among them have secured small plots of lands by way of grants from the government and are also actually cultivating the lands. Quite often they too work as labourers in forestry occupations. Animal husbandry and fishing are of some marginal economic significance. But trade, transport and commerce are not of any significance at all. The recent establishment of Ashram schools and hostels for tribal children has helped a few Yeravas to secure salaried jobs. Generally, all the able-bodied men and women as also adolescents work in the fields and earn their living by hard physical toil.

Analysis of Census Data :

12.16. The latest available data on aspects of economic life of the Yeravas relate to the 1971 Census. A classification of persons into workers and non-workers on the basis of their main activity shows that 59.1 per cent of the Yeravas are economically active and also that the proportion of workers is comparatively high amongst the males. Similar set of data available for the 1961 Census indicates that in 1961 the proportion of workers in the total population of Yeravas stood at 58.6 per cent. Over the decade there has thus been a marginal increase in the proportion of workers and a corresponding decline in that of non-workers. In the following table, details revealed at the Censuses of 1961 and 1971 are set out sexwise and sectorwise i.e. rural and urban, with a view to permit a comparative assessment of the situation.

Table-3 Sexwise and Sectorwise Proportion of Workers and Non-Workers, 1961 and 1971

Census Year	T R U	Population of Yérvas		Percentage of										
		P	M	Workers						Non-Workers				
				F	P	M	F	P	M	F				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11				
1961	T	15290	8006	7284	58.6	62.5	54.3	41.4	37.5	45.7				
	R	15258	7986	7272	58.6	62.5	54.3	41.4	37.5	45.7				
	U	32	20	12	68.8	70.0	66.7	31.2	30.0	33.3				
1971	T	13743	7087	6656	59.1	67.8	49.8	40.9	32.2	50.2				
	R	13689	7060	6629	59.2	67.9	49.9	40.8	32.1	50.1				
	U	54	27	27	42.6	48.2	37.0	57.4	51.8	63.0				

T : Total R : Rural U : Urban

It may be observed that the urban segment of the population forms a negligibly small proportion of the total Yerava population and also that even in terms of absolute numbers the urban-dwelling Yeravas are too few to deserve any special recognition. Therefore the percentage figures for urban areas, which incidentally disclose a remarkable drop in work-participation rate during the decade 1961-71, need not be viewed with any undue concern. Generally, the proportion of workers in urban areas tends to be lower than that in rural areas. This was not the case among Yeravas in 1961. However, in 1971 the position changed and the Yerava population also conformed to the general trend. By and large, the proportion revealed for the rural areas may safely be assumed to be applicable to the whole population of Yeravas. In broad terms, about two-thirds of the male population and about one-half of the female population are economically active. In the rural areas, as between 1961 and 1971, there is a significant increase in the work participation rate among the males and a decline in the proportion of workers among the females.

12.17 A comparison of the work-participation rate among the Yeravas with the corresponding figures for the general and Scheduled Tribes population of the rural areas of the State, the district and the taluk throws some light on the general economic conditions of the Yeravas. The proportion of workers is indeed very high. The following table furnishes the relevant details.

Table-4 Comparative Statement Showing the Proportion of Workers in Rural Areas among the Yeravas, General Population and Scheduled Tribes Population - 1971 Census

Proportion of Workers among the Rural Resident							
Sex	Yeravas	General Population of the			Scheduled Tribe Population of the		
		State	Kodagu Dist.	Virajpet Tq.	State	Kodagu Dist.	Virajpet Tq.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
P	59.16	36.39	41.33	43.64	43.11	53.73	55.41
M	67.90	56.43	55.72	56.82	56.52	60.81	65.42
F	49.86	15.77	25.63	29.01	29.22	44.75	47.15

12.18 The industrial classification of workers among the Yeravas discloses that about 95 per cent of the workers are engaged in the agricultural and allied sectors. In 1961 as well as in 1971, while other services accounted for the remainder, sectors such as manufacturing industry, construction, trade and commerce had only a nominal representation. Work in agricultural and horticultural fields as also in plantations constitutes the backbone of the economic life of the Yeravas. A percentage distribution of workers according to the industrial classification is furnished in the following table.

12.19 As between 1961 and 1971, there has been an increase in the proportion of workers engaged as cultivators and this phenomenon is perceptible to a greater extent among the males. This change may in part be attributed to the land-grants that some of the Yeravas have been able to secure during the decade and to the fact that they have taken up self cultivation of such land as their main activity. It is quite possible that among the other categories of workers also there is a sprinkling of cultivators for whom it happens to be a secondary occupation. This observation appears to be of greater relevance to the female workers among whom a sharp decline in the proportion of cultivators is noticed in 1971. Broadly speaking, one may safely conclude that in the recent decades there has been a marginal increase in the number of persons reporting themselves as cultivators and that this may be attributed to the land distribution policy being implemented by the State. The labourers among Yeravas work in agricultural fields as also in plantations depending upon the availability of work and the seasonal demands. A probing enquiry would be a must if one were to classify each worker as belonging specifically to the one category or the other. Those who are exclusively estate labourers on a more or less permanent basis do not pose any problem at all. But the number of such workers among the Yeravas is said to be quite low. The phenomenon of the shift from category III to category II noticed in the above table may be attributed to the difficulties faced by enumerators in their attempt at classification of these workers who work in plantations as well as in paddy fields. Several men and women work in forestry occupations also during certain seasons. Thus, for an accurate classification, one has to ascertain the total number of days worked and the break up according to the days worked as unpaid family worker in household cultivation, for wages in paddy fields as agricultural labourer, as worker in coffee

Table-5 Industrial Classification of workers-1961 and 1971 censuses

Industrial Category of workers	Proportion of workers in each category to total workers									
	1961					1971				
	Rural		Urban			Rural		Urban		
	M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
I As Cultivators	4.05	3.04	—	—	5.76	0.78	7.69	—		
II As Agricultural labourer	61.03	63.37	28.57	—	71.95	80.97	15.39	20.00		
III In mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantations, orchards and allied activities	30.59	28.52	7.14	—	*	*	*	*		
IV In livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantations, orchards and allied activities	*	*	*	*	17.32	12.68	53.85	40.00		
V At Household Industry	0.18	0.05	—	—	*	*	*	*		
VI In Mining and quarrying	—	—	—	—	*	*	*	*		

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
V In manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs									
(a) Household Industry		*	*	*	*	0.09	—	—	—
(b) Other than Household Industry		—	—	—	—	0.02	—	—	—
VI In construction		0.04	—	7.14	—	0.02	—	—	—
VII In trade and commerce		—	—	—	37.50	0.04	—	15.38	—
VIII In transport, storage and communication		0.06	—	—	—	0.04	—	7.69	20.00
IX In other services		3.99	5.02	57.15	62.50	4.76	5.57	—	20.00
Total		\$ 100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
		(4991)	(3948)	(14)	(8)	(4794)	(3305)	(13)	(10)

\$ Figures in brackets indicate the number of workers.

* In 1961 industrial classification, while category III included mining and quarrying, household, industry was reckoned as a separate category. In 1971 however, mining and quarrying is also reckoned as a separate category and household industry is treated as a sub-category under manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs.

and such other plantations, as worker in forestry occupations etc., and then determine the category to which the worker has to be assigned on the basis of maximum time spent. It has been pointed out that the Yeravas are agricultural labourers by tradition. In current practice too this seems to be quite true. This position, as reflected in the 1971 census, conforms to the general opinion prevailing in the area about the nature of economic activity of the Yeravas. They do work in coffee plantations. But this is more in the form of casual labourers during the peak seasons than in the form of permanent estate workers. A sprinkling of cultivators and workers in other services that are noticed are indicative of the changes that are slowly taking place in the community during the recent years. Some of them have been benefited by the liberalised land grant rules and, on coming to possession of land, have taken up cultivation. A few men and women have secured salaried jobs in hostels and *ashram* schools, which have since come up in these areas. A few who have been fortunate enough to acquire some educational qualification have secured clerical and such other jobs. Besides, some of the women find employment as cooks and domestic servants in the semi-urban or urban atmosphere prevailing in certain pockets. A detailed classification of the male and female workers coming under category IX would have permitted a deeper analysis. But such details are not forthcoming.

12.20 In summing up it may be observed that among the Yeravas of both the groups it is considered very natural for almost every able bodied man and woman, every adolescent and most of the children aged 12 years or above to engage themselves in economically productive work. In almost all households most of which are of the nuclear type, the female members work as much as the male members, may be for a fewer number of days in the year and for a lesser wage. But their contribution to the family income is quite substantial and is regarded as a must. Of course, during severe sickness, advanced stages of pregnancy and for a couple of months immediately after childbirth they do abstain from work and are taken care of with due consideration by the male members. The existing wage rate and their habits regarding food and drinks are also contributive factors that almost compel the womenfolk to work for wages. The expenditure on toddy or arrack is an essential part of their day to day expenditure and the earnings of only one male member of the family at current rates would not be sufficient to meet even their basic food requirements. Yet

another factor is that these people usually go to work in small groups. This is particularly true during peak seasons and in the case of coffee plantations and also paddy fields. On these occasions much of the time is spent in gossip, jocular conversation and the like and work goes on amidst peals of laughter. Thus, the atmosphere under which they work is quite enjoyable. To stay back at home would, under such circumstances, be to invite loneliness and miss the chance of spending a cheerful time even while working. Girls and boys too eagerly join these teams. It is quite often during such working sessions that social contacts are strengthened between the Yeravas living in different villages and hamlets, friendships are developed and possibilities of matrimonial alliances are also explored. Their tradition does not inhibit their womenfolk from working shoulder to shoulder with men. In fact it encourages them to go to work and the economic necessity too is quite often compulsive.

12.21 The non-workers category consists mainly of infants and children besides those who are unable to work due to some handicap or the other or due to extreme old age and, a few women who may be exclusively attending to domestic duties and child care. According to the 1961 census data, of the 3001 male non-workers and 3328 female non-workers, only 768 males and 125 females reported themselves as full-time students and another 8 males and 6 females returned themselves as seeking employment. An examination of the age group data reveals that in the total population of 8006 males and 7284 females, as many as 3175 males and 3037 females were below 15 years of age. The 1971 census data also discloses that while there were 2280 male non-workers and 3341 female non-workers, the number of persons aged below 15 years in the total population stood at 2854 and 2612 respectively among males and females. Obviously, a significant proportion of boys are economically active. The same cannot however be assertively stated in the case of girls. During this age-period in the neighbourhood of 15 most of the girls would be devoting more time to learn the household chores like cooking, washing and taking care of younger siblings at home as preparatory to their adult life. The young adults too abstain from work for quite some time due to reasons such as pregnancy and child birth. It is on account of this natural reason that a significant proportion of females temporarily abstain from work and thereby swell the ranks of non-workers. Life is hard for both men and women. In

order to survive they have to work and, work for wages as most of them do not have any income-generating assets and cannot therefore engage themselves in self-employment.

Wage rates and general conditions of work :

12.22 The current practice is to pay wages to the labourers in cash once a week, usually on the eve of the weekly market day in the neighbourhood. In the case of each labourer the total number of days worked during the week will be considered, the accumulated wages calculated as per prevailing rates, the cash advanced if any is deducted and the net amount due is paid by the employer or his representative. Since Sunday is the weekly market day at Gonikoppal and Polibetta, the labourers are paid their wages on every Saturday in the neighbourhood of Tithmathi, Polibetta and Gonikoppal. On the other hand, in the neighbourhood of Kutta, Monday is the pay day and Tuesday is the market day. In these parts, the weekly market day is a non-working day devoted for rest and relaxation. The labourers would spend their time in attending to domestic chores and in visiting the market to buy their weekly requirements. On this day it is quite common for both men and women among the Yeravas also, to indulge in intoxicating drinks, especially during the late afternoon and evening hours.

12.23 During coffee picking season the casual labourers are paid on the basis of work turned out, that is at the rate of 12 paise per kilogram of coffee berries picked. An ordinary worker can easily earn Rs. 10 to Rs. 12 per day. Cutting branches of trees and such other hard work for which men are engaged, fetches a wage rate ranging between Rs. 11 to Rs. 15 depending upon the local circumstances. For the ploughing operation also men are engaged and the wage rate is Rs. 11. For all other types of work the prevailing minimum wage rate is Rs. 7 only. Female labourers as also the adolescents receive wages at the same rate. In case the work involves carrying of loads, as for example while manuring the fields, the wages paid are raised to Rs. 8-50. Thus, for every day worked, a labourer earns a minimum of Rs. 7.

12.24 Generally, the labourers can find almost continuous work throughout the year except during the lean months of March and April and for brief spells during the rainy season due to incessant and heavy downpour. These are the occasions which compel

them to borrow money in the form of advances from the landlords with a promise to work off the loans at a later period.

12.25 At present, transport to place of work is not posing any problem for the simple reason that most of the estate owners and big landlords permit the use of the tractors, tillers and trailers as well as jeeps for transportation of labourers over short distances. Generally, transport is provided free of cost in so far as the worker is concerned. At the most, some nominal charges may be levied. The labourers are thus enabled to work at places which are 10 to 12 kilometres away from their homes. Near the workspot there would usually be a tea shop or a mobile unit which serves tea and snacks. The landlord usually makes some arrangements to ensure that credit slips are issued to the needy labourers so that the amount thus advanced could be recovered at the end of the week.

12.26 Casual labourers are recruited by the landlords and estate managers usually through the local leaders amongst the labourers, in whom they have gained confidence over the years. They would indicate their requirements and the particular place of work to such leaders (who on their part would be in regular touch with the landlords) who take upon the responsibility of organising the supply of labourers. Among Yeravas also there are a few such leaders who have gained the confidence of the masters on the one hand and the esteem of their own fellow tribesmen on the other.

12.27 The system of working for a landlord on annual contract basis is also in vogue in this region. Since there have been several instances of such labourers deserting their masters without fulfilling the contract, it is customary to involve an elderly relative of the labourer also as a party to the agreement. In order to meet his urgent needs the labourer seeks heavy cash advance and undertakes to work for the landlord during the ensuing year. Marriage and setting up of the household, performance of obsequial ceremonies, chronic illness of a family member etc., are some of the reasons for which the Yeravas are prone to borrow and entangle themselves as contract labourers which in due course may render them into virtual bonded labourers. Since most of the landlords are nowadays aware of the legislative and administrative measures regarding the abolition of bonded labour system, they are also very cautious in this regard and prefer to engage casual labourers according to their seasonal requirements or to have purely informal understanding with the workers concerned.

12.28 However till about the mid-fifties, it is reported, it was common for most of the Yeravas to work as contract labourers. According to this system, known as *Kambala*, the landlord would pay a retainer to the family of the Yeravas at the rate of 3 *Bhattis* of paddy (240 kg) per adult male worker and 2 *Bhattis* (160 kg) of paddy per adult female worker. In addition he would supply two sets of clothing, namely a dhoti and a shirt for the man and a saree and a blouse for the woman. This retainer apart, the landlord would pay daily wages to the workers at the rate of one and a half kilogram of paddy per worker besides providing the midday meal and some chillies, salt and castor oil. If a pig were to be slain at home, the labourer would also get a small share of pork. Further, the labourer was entitled to a small cash allowance every week for his drinks. Since it was the responsibility of the landlord to provide work and the labourer was not free to seek work elsewhere on his own, whether the labourer worked actually or not he was assured of his daily food all through the year. Perhaps because of this security and the inborn tendency among the Yeravas to live in the present without a thought for the morrow most of them used to borrow money from the landlords to meet their urgent needs. At the end of the year when the accounts would be drawn up for settlement they would invariably find themselves heavily indebted to their master. The dues had to be paid off from out of the retainer for the next year and thus they tended to become perpetually attached to a single landlord as labourers. Though theoretically they could change their master, in reality they could hardly think of such a prospect unless they lived a very careful and frugal life.

13. LIFE CYCLE: BELIEFS AND PRACTICES CONNECTED WITH BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH

13.1 The Yeravas are aware of the physiological causes that lead to pregnancy and child birth. It is considered quite natural, and also desirable, for a couple to beget a child within one or two years after the marriage. They do believe that a mere wish does not produce a child and also that even the physical act of mating culminates in conception only if the woman is pre-destined to bear children. They share the common belief that children are a gift of god. Barrenness is regarded as a curse. When a young woman fails to conceive even after a couple of years of married life she and her relatives take vows and make sacrificial offerings of fowls to appease their family gods and other favourite deities. When pray-

ers fail them, they consult mediums to divine the cause and perform the prescribed rituals to placate their ancestral spirits and such other supernatural elements. If, even after this, the woman does not conceive within a reasonable period of time, the couple seek a divorce which is easily granted by the community. Both of them find different partners and remarry. When even this last resort proves futile, the woman blames her fate and reconciles to the situation by adopting a philosophical attitude that she is not destined to bear children during her present life. Miscarriages, still births and infant deaths are also attributed to one's misfortune. The practice of having a fosterchild is also prevalent.

13.2 Soon after marriage the normal practice for the newly married young man is to set up a new household and start living with his wife in a separate hut, built in the proximity of his parental home. The newly married girl manages the household on her own and gradually builds up a good personal relationship with her in-laws and receives an affectionate treatment from her mother-in-law. She also maintains close contact with her own mother and sisters by mutual exchange of visits. Thus, though she lives alone with her husband, she does not get the feeling of loneliness. Cessation of menstrual flow for more than two months and the subsequent onset of morning sickness are regarded as sure signs of pregnancy. If the nausea is intense and the bouts of vomiting are very frequent, the elders advise the pregnant woman to remain at home and take rest. Otherwise, she continues to attend to her daily chores including fetching of water and pounding of paddy—the two items which are considered as heavy work. There are practically no restrictions or prescriptions regarding either her work or her diet. The phenomenon of first pregnancy is also treated in a most matter-of-fact manner. The girl however receives a kind and affectionate treatment from her elderly female relatives with whom she confides her problems if any and seeks advice. According to the established practice, among the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas as well, during her first pregnancy the girl is invariably taken to her mother's home for delivering the child and spending a couple of months thereafter in confinement. The second and subsequent deliveries occur at the usual place of residence or at the mother's place according to one's convenience and circumstances in the family. The Yeravas do not have any

specific rites or rituals either to recognise the state of pregnancy or to mark the occasion of her journey to her mother's place which usually comes off during the seventh month. There are no social or religious celebrations that are specifically associated with pregnancy.

13.3 After the seventh month, the girl usually abstains from doing any heavy work and spends much of her time in a leisurely manner by engaging herself in some light domestic chores and in gossip. Normally the pregnant girl does not receive any medical care. Nor does she undergo any pre-natal check up. However if such facilities are available locally they have no reservations regarding utilising the services offered by the public institutions. The girl's mother and other elderly female relatives living nearby boost up her morale so that she retains her poise and gets ready to face the travails of child-birth. As soon as the pregnant girl begins to feel the labour pains her mother and a couple of other elderly female relatives rush to her side and make immediate arrangements to provide her with the necessary privacy in a portion of the dwelling unit in which she has been residing all along. In other words, they do not put up a separate hut to serve as a labour room. Similarly they do not generally requisition for the services of any trained midwife or nurse. More often than not it is the pregnant girl's mother that attends on her at the time of her delivering the child. Once the child is delivered, with the aid of a new safety razor blade or a sharp sickle the attendant carefully cuts off the umbilical cord, lifts the infant and hands it over for being washed in hot water and swathed in warm clothes. Placenta is then gathered in a large plantain leaf and kept aside in a broken pot. The woman in the post-natal condition is also bathed in hot water and helped to clean herself. The bed for the parturient woman consists of a gunny sack or a mat which is spread out on a thick layer of paddy straw. During the post-natal period also the mother and the baby sleep on a bed of straws. The placenta is disposed off by the attendant who takes it out sometime later and buries the same under a milk-oozing plant or the dunghill or at any other convenient spot in the wooded area nearby. They do not have any specific beliefs regarding placenta and its disposal. When the delivery is conducted by a *dai* or a relative other than the mother it

is customary to compensate her for her services by the payment of some cash (Rupees ten or fifteen depending on whether the newborn is a female or a male), a little quantity of rice, salt and chillies, a few pieces of areca nut and a few betel leaves. Other food items like meat and arrack are also offered as a token of gratitude. Information about the birth is informally conveyed to the girl's husband and in-laws through relatives and friends.

13.4 During the first five days following the delivery, the woman is required to drink every day one or two cups of *Karijeerigeneeru*, a medicinal decoction prepared out of pepper, cummin seeds, garlic and the leaves of *nagadali* plant. Her diet consists of rice and the soup made out of horsegram. A couple of days later she is allowed to eat meat. All through this period she may consume little quantities of arrack if she so desires. Thereafter, as also during the period of confinement, her diet consists of rice, soup, eggs and little quantities of meat or pork. In the case of the infant, for a couple of days after its birth, it is fed by coaxing it to suck a bit of cotton or cloth dipped in cow's milk to which a little castor oil is also added. It is also a common practice to request any other nursing mother of their kin-group to suckle the baby in the initial stages. Usually suckling starts on the third day and the child is breast-fed for about 18 months, by which time the availability of milk would have considerably dwindled. The child is gradually weaned away by the mother who smears the teats of her breasts with the juice of neem leaves. By this time however the child would have been accustomed to solid food also. When the child is about nine months old breast-feeding is usually supplemented by little quantities of porridge made out of the marrow portion of ragi. A couple of months later, well kneaded and salted cooked rice is also given to the child as a substantial item of food.

13.5 Usually the infant is named and put to cradle on the eleventh day of its birth. On this day the house is swept clean and is washed with cow dung. The tribal priest, (*Kanjneladi* or *Attali* as the case may be) or any other elderly kinsman is invited to offer worship to the ancestors and family deities at home. After burning incense sticks and offering prayers the priest dips a bunch of mango leaves in the *tirtha* or the water used for worship and sprinkles it all over the house and the courtyard to remove the ritual impurity. The close relatives who have been invited for the occasion are treated to a feast. Before the guests are fed it is

customary to offer food to the crows. A lump of cooked rice mixed with a pinch of turmeric dust is kept on a plantain leaf along with a couple of betel leaves and pieces of areca and a wick lamp. This leaf is then taken out and deposited at a place some distance away from the house. In the evening the baby is put in a bamboo cradle and conferred with a name. In the case of a boy it is customary to name him after his great grandfather or grandfather, if he be no more. Among the Panjiri Yeravas any of the elderly kinsmen or kinswomen present on the occasion may be asked to name the baby. Among Pani Yeravas however this privilege is reserved for the mother's mother. The names which are in common use for boys are : Belli, Bolaka, Ayyappa, Choma, Kavala, Kuliya, Kashi, Tammu, Asoka, Mani, Krishna, Chandru etc. Similarly the common names for girls are : Bhoji, Bombe, Chomi, Chippili, Cauvery, Mare, Muthi, Pillaichi, Gowri, Geetha, Parvati and Saroja. If the services of a Brahmin priest are available at any nearby place the Yeravas also consult him to ascertain the proper name which may be conferred on the baby. With a view to warding off the evil spirits and to counter the effects of evil-eye, amulets are procured from priests and tied around the neck of the infant. Till the infant is one year old it is customary to massage its body with castor oil every-day and bathe it in hot water. In the case of the first delivery the period of confinement and rest for the mother lasts for three months. In the case of subsequent deliveries this period gets reduced to two months.

13.6 As could be gathered during the field study, the Yeravas do not have any pronounced preference either for boys or for girls. Though they generally accept that they are more fond of boys they do not entertain any dislike for girls. A couple would like to have a small number of children consisting of boys as well as girls. Among the Panjiri Yeravas, who are matrilineal the mother and her brothers would be very happy if the first-born is a girl. In bringing up children they do not discriminate between a boy and a girl. The idea of personal cleanliness and about the need to go out of the dwelling to answer the calls of nature are gradually imbibed into the child after it reaches its third year. About this period, irrespective of its sex, the ear-lobes are also pierced. This ear-piercing operation is done by any experienced kinswoman and does not call for any celebration. During the third year, the baby boy would have his first hair cut and this too does not involve the performance of any rites or rituals. In the case of baby girls however the head is shaved only by way of fulfilment of any vows which might have been taken earlier by the parents.

13.7 The Yeravas lead a simple life and they do not perform any rites or rituals for initiating their boys into adult life. In the case of girls however when they attain puberty the event gets some publicity among the relatives and a ceremony called Nireinjna kanjnala is performed. The earlier practice required the segregation of the girl for 16 days in a separate hut erected for the purpose. During this period it was customary to feed her with nutritious food. On the 16th day, the girl was to be ceremonially bathed and adorned with new clothes and ornaments and then blessed by the elders who were asked to throw rice on her as a mark of their best wishes and blessings. Her parents were regarded as duty-bound to present her with a new saree and a blouse. Accompanied by a few women of the family the girl would then visit a stream or a well nearby, offer *puja* to the well and break a coconut after burning incense sticks and offering prayers. She would then draw three pots of water, have these pots arranged on her head one above the other and carry this water to her home. Among the Panjiris, it was necessary for their *Kanjneladi* to officiate on this occasion and sing the specified *sobane* song whereafter the assembled elders and the *Kanjneladi* himself would bless the girl by throwing a few rice grains each on her head. Custom enjoins that the parents give her a new saree and a blouse and that the other invited relatives offer her some presents in kind or cash. All these details have now been given up on account of what the elders term as 'lack of faith in traditional customs—a trait which is becoming more and more manifest in recent years'. Nowadays the event of a girl attaining puberty does not receive public recognition and the matter is treated as a purely family affair. The services of the priest are also not requisitioned. The girl is allowed to stay in the same dwelling unit, but the other members of the family avoid physical contact with her for a few days. She is fed with nutritious items of food like copra, fruits, fish, meat, pork, etc., and is advised to keep indoors and rest. She is asked to massage her body with a mixture of turmeric dust and oil every two or three days and is bathed immediately thereafter in hot water. As in the past, nowadays also she gets a saree and a blouse from her parents and is not allowed to go out for work in the fields for at least 6 to 8 weeks.

(b) Marriage :

13.8 Among both Pani Yeravas and Panjiri Yeravas it is considered quite natural for a grown up person to get married and raise

a family. By and large the Pani Yeravas marry only among themselves. Similarly the Panjiri Yeravas also marry only among themselves. In both the groups however there have been stray instances of transgression of the norms laid down by tradition. The Yeravas do not follow any strict rules regarding segregation of sexes. Boys and girls and young men and young women feel free to talk with each other. In social gatherings or on occasions such as marriage etc., when people of the community congregate, usually men and women form separate groups. While girls try to help in items of work such as serving of food, the adolescent boys and young men engage themselves in singing and dancing or else in discussing matters of common interest. Among the Pani Yeravas, men dance in a separate group and so do women. In the day-to-day life men and women work together in the fields and in coffee estates. On such occasions nobody looks askance if a young man is talking with a young woman. Friendships develop and in some cases end up in matrimonial bonds. Marriages occasionally take place outside the tribal group also, as can be made out from the following instances reported during the enquiries. Kulla, aged 70 years, reported that his father Kariya belonged to Toreya caste by birth and hailed from Piriapatna while his mother belonged to Panjiri Yerava tribe. Mallige of Karekandi Colony of Panjiri tribe is married to Rachiah, a Madivala by birth (washermen caste). Mara of Panjiri tribe is married to a Kodava woman and is therefore known in the neighbourhood as Kodagati Mara. In these cases it was further mentioned that the person of the other community was adopted into the Panjiri Yerava tribe by the observance of certain simple rites. Between the Panjiri Yeravas and Pani Yeravas also there have been a few instances of intermarriage. Kitta, son of Pola is a Pani Yerava while his wife Chomi the daughter of Tolsi is a Panjiri Yerava. Bodda and his wife Pale likewise belong to Panjiri Yerava and Pani Yerava groups respectively. In the former case the elders of the Pani Yerava group ensured that a Panchayat was convened and that Chomi was duly admitted into their fold. As between the Panjiri Yeravas and Pani Yeravas, it is said that it is easier among the former to regularise such affiliations. Though some amount of freedom is prevalent, by and large, among both the groups pre-marital sexual relationships and extra-marital affairs are both looked upon as most undesirable. But if such a thing were to develop and come to light, instead of condemning the erring person all attempts would be made to regularise the union by inducting the other person to the tribal fold

and allowing the couple to marry each other. The general view is that the community takes a somewhat tolerant view in cases of sexual misdemeanour and does not inflict any heavy punishment such as social boycott.

13.9 Among both Pani Yeravas and Panjiri Yeravas, the informants asserted that child marriages were never in vogue among them and that in the case of girls, post-puberty marriage has always been the rule. The marriageable age for girls is about 17 or 18 and that for boys is about 22 or 23. By this time both boys and girls would have become economically active and also trained to start an independent life. Divorce is allowed. So also, custom permits divorcees and widows to remarry. Though polygyny is allowed rarely does a man take a second wife while his first wife is living with him. Polyandry is unknown. A widow may remarry. But levirate is very rare. So also, sororate is not in vogue. As indicated earlier, the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas are organised into exogamous clans called *tharanas* and *chemmas* respectively. While choosing a bride for a Pani Yerava it is necessary to ensure that she belongs to a different *tharana* and also that she is not his parallel cousin or his own sister's daughter. The same rule holds good for Panjiri Yeravas also. There is an additional factor which has to be taken into consideration: as the *chemmas* are pooled together to form larger exogamous groups one has to ensure that not only the *chemmas* are different but also that these belong to different groups. Among both the Yeravas while parallel cousin and avuncular marriages are taboo, cross-cousin marriages are very much preferred.

13.10 The Yeravas regard marital bond more as a social contract than as a sacrament. The first marriage, called *Kanjnala*, is of special significance in that it accords a higher social status. As a rule youngmen and women marry at a tender age and start living independently. Very few persons such as those afflicted by severe physical or mental disorders for example, remain un-married throughout their life-time. Though monogamy is the norm, the Yerava society does not demand a high level of moral standards. Though they do not encourage promiscuity, extra-marital affairs are tolerated to some extent. If a man is not satisfied with his wife and her behaviour he is free to seek a divorce or simply desert her to marry someone else of his choice. So also when a woman is not satisfied with her husband and his behaviour she also feels free to

look out for another man. In the case of widowed persons, the society expects them to wait till the expiry of the mourning period of about one year before they may remarry. In the case of divorcees however there is no such waiting period. Remarriages known as *Kudavali*, are allowed and are freely indulged in. This does not involve any loss of face. It is not uncommon to come across cases of aged widowers marrying equally aged widows. As a result the proportions of widowed and divorced persons to the total population of the community tends to be comparatively low. Data on age and marital status of Yeravas based on the 1961 and the 1971 Census returns are presented on the following page.

13.11 According to the 1961 Census, among the Yeravas 50.04 per cent are never married, 43.21 per cent are married and 5.45 per cent are widowed and 1.30 per cent are divorced or separated. Sexwise details show that the corresponding figures for males and females are:- never married: 52.85 per cent and 46.95 per cent; married: 41.57 per cent and 45.02 per cent; widowed: 4.28 per cent and 6.73 per cent; and divorced or separated: 1.30 per cent and 1.30 per cent respectively. An important point which may be noticed is that all the boys and girls below 15 are reported as never married. Though widow remarriage is in vogue, widows outnumber the widowers. The 1971 data reflects a slightly different trend, for as may be seen from the table a couple of stray instances of child marriages have been reported among girls and, at the same time, the proportion of the never married has increased among males as well as among females and in respect of 2 persons- one of each sex- the marital status has not been reported. According to 1971 data, 51.92 per cent are never married, 42.07 per cent are married, 5.19 per cent are widowed and 0.81 per cent are divorced or separated, the remaining 0.01 per cent being of an unspecified status. The corresponding figures for males and females are:- never married: 56.38 per cent and 47.16 per cent; married: 39.95 per cent and 44.34 per cent; widowed: 3.09 per cent and 7.42 per cent; divorced or separated: 0.57 per cent and 1.07 per cent and unspecified status: 0.01 per cent each. The three cases of marriage of girls below 15 are perhaps of an extraordinary nature and these cannot be regarded as trend-setters. On the other hand, the rise in the proportion of the never married which is noticed among males as also females suggests that there has been a slight increase in the age at marriage. This phenomenon may be partly attributed to the increasing awareness about

Table-6 Age and Marital Status

Age group	Marital Status	Sexwise population as per					
		1961 Census			1971 Census		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All age groups	NM	4230	3420	3996	3139	(56)	(47)
	M	3328*	3279	2831	2951	(40)	(44)
	W	344*	490	219	494	(3)	(8)
	D/S	104	95	40	71	(1)	(1)
	Un	—	—	1	1	(N)	(N)
	Total	8006 (100)	7284 (100)	7087 (100)	6656 (100)		
0-14	NM	3175	3037	2854	2609	(100)	(100)
	M	—	—	—	2	—	(N)
	W	—	—	—	1	—	(N)
	D/S	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Un	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Total	3175 (100)	3037 (100)	2854 (100)	2612 (100)		

15-44	NM	1036	(31)	381	(11)	1128	(37)	515	(16)
	M	2156	(64)	2802	(83)	1787	(59)	2485	(79)
	W	115	(3)	113	(4)	82	(3)	89	(3)
	D/S	74	(2)	82	(2)	29	(1)	62	(2)
	Un	—	—	—	—	1	(N)	1	(N)
	Total	3381	(100)	3378	(100)	3026	(100)	3152	(100)
45+	NM	19	(1)	2	(N)	14	(1)	15	(2)
	M	1171	(81)	477	(55)	1044	(87)	464	(52)
	W	228	(16)	377	(43)	137	(11)	404	(45)
	D/S	30	(2)	13	(2)	11	(1)	9	(1)
	Un	—	—	—	—	1	(N)	—	—
	Total	1448	(100)	869	(100)	1207	(100)	892	(100)

NM : Never Married; M : Married; W : Widowed;

D/S : Divorced/Separated; Un : Unspecified.

Figures in brackets denote percentages to total under each age-group.

* Includes a person whose age is not stated.

the social and economic burdens that are linked with marriage and the growing aspiration levels manifest among the younger members of the community.

13.12 The Yeravas accord equal treatment to their boys and girls and are not particularly rigid about segregation of the girls from the boys. They are allowed to mix freely with each other. Their day-to-day economic life and occasions such as fairs and festivals, visits to relations and friends and to weekly markets provide ample opportunities for boys and girls including the adolescents to mingle with each other and engage themselves in conversation. By the time a youngman reaches the marriageable age he would know about a few girls, belonging to exogamous groups other than his own, from among whom he may select a bride for himself. If there is an eligible cross-cousin, normally he would prefer her to anybody else. Anyway, he develops a little more intimacy with the girl of his choice and finds out whether his own feelings are reciprocated. Thereafter, he confides with his elder brother or sister or such other relative so that the latter may move the matter with his parents. Generally there would not be any dissent. Once the matter is decided at family level, his parents send words to and call on the parents of the girl to make a formal proposal. After discussions about matters of mutual interest they decide upon a convenient day to have the betrothal ceremony. This is arranged at the girl's home and is attended by their priest and a few elderly relatives of the boy as well as the girl. On this occasion, in token of the agreement, the boy's mother presents a saree to the girl and slips a silver finger ring also. Formerly, instead of the ring it was customary to offer a *Kadaga* (silver wristlet) and it was also compulsory for the boy's mother to tie a *thali* (pendant) round the neck of the girl thereby putting a seal to the matrimonial agreement. The assembled guests are then feted. Once this ceremony is held it would become binding on the boy to pay frequent visits to his parents-in-law and please them as well as his fiancée with gifts of eatables and other consumer goods and trinkets. He has to offer his manual services also by carrying head-loads of firewood. In former times he was expected to stay with the family of his fiancée and also hand over his earnings to her parents. This custom appears to be a survival of the tradition of 'pre-marriage service' among them. Nowadays, if the youngman finds it difficult to fulfil this obligation in full he has to pay a cash compensation to his parents-in-law. The custom of payment of bride price is also

prevalent. Among the Panjiri Yeravas, this amount of Rs.200 or Rs.300 (as may be agreed upon after mutual discussions) is to be paid to the mother's brother of the bride or the headman of the *chemma* to which she belongs. Among Pani Yeravas, this amount is payable to the bride's parents. This apart, among both, the bride's mother is entitled to receive some cash, called *madipalambu*, from her son-in-law. She squats on the threshold of her house and blocks the way when, after the solemnization of the marriage, the young man sets out with his bride on his homeward journey.

13.13 The foregoing description corresponds to an 'arranged marriage' which is the widely prevalent form of marriage at present, particularly regarding one's first marriage. There are, however, the elements of individual choice in the matter of selection of the partner and also of pre-marriage service. Elopement is the other form of marriage which is socially approved and is said to have been quite popular in the past. Nowadays also such occurrences are not uncommon. Marriage by elopement is of two types. In case either the boy or the girl who have taken to each other feel that their union would not be approved of by their elders they just run away and return with a *fait accompli*. In the other case, if, after the betrothal ceremony, the marriage is being unduly delayed they take recourse to elopement. In both the cases the connivance of some close relatives is solicited and secured by the boy beforehand. On their return home the marriage is formalised without much ado by arranging a simple get together of the close relatives of the boy and the girl. Marriage by elopement is less expensive for both the parties. Quite often, extra marital affairs and liaison with widows or divorcees culminate in such elopement and remarriage. When a man starts living with a woman, the Yerava society regards them as man and wife irrespective of the fact whether or not their marital bond has been duly solemnized. The Yeravas take a lenient view of sexual misdemeanours. Initially, the elderly relations mildly rebuke the indulgent youngsters and advise them to mend their ways. But when the affair acquires publicity the aggrieved person pressurises the elders to convene an informal meeting so that the erring partner can be punished. At the meeting, the concerned persons are allowed to explain their positions by questioning and cross-questioning and, if found guilty of the charges, the accused is asked to pay a small fine. If the man or the woman is adamant and insists on continuing his or her relationship with the

lover or the paramour as the case may be then such relationship itself is regularised and the duly married couple are granted a divorce. The approach is quite the same even when a person of some other community is involved. However if they are allowed to marry each other the person is duly affiliated into their own tribal group.

13.14 Marriage season commences during February and lasts for nearly three months. This corresponds to the post-harvest slack season when there is very little work in agricultural fields and coffee plantations. The auspicious day for the marriage is fixed up to suit mutual convenience. Quite often, for this purpose, a Brahmin priest officiating in one or the other temple of the neighbourhood, is consulted. Tuesdays, Fridays and New-moon-days are regarded as inauspicious. Marriage ceremony mainly consists of three parts, namely *Moortha* (corrupt form of the Sanskrit word *muhurtam*), *Dibbana* and *Dampati Moortha*, which are spread over two days. The first day's deliberations, which are similar, are held simultaneously at the respective homes of the bridegroom and the bride. A pandal resting on twelve wooden poles is put up in front of the house and this is decorated with green leaves and flowers which are available in the neighbourhood. The assembled relatives also actively participate in this work. The *Kanjneladi* among Panjiri Yeravas and the *Chemmakara* among the Pani Yeravas takes the lead in this matter and it is his duty to fix one of the poles which should be of the jack-fruit tree (or any other plant which yields a milky juice when it is struck with an axe). If a full-length pole be not available it would be enough if a branch of such a tree is tied to one of the poles. Late in the afternoon, by which time most of the invitees would have arrived, the bridegroom puts on good clothes and is ready for the *Moortha*. He is asked to sit on a mat that has been spread out for him under the pandal and 2 plates are placed by his side - one empty and the other containing rice. The elders including their priest, come to him one by one, deposit a little cash by way of presents in the plate which was empty, pick up a handful of rice grains from the other plate and throw the same on the bridegroom as a mark of their blessings. Afterwards the guests are treated to a sumptuous feast. At the bride's home also a similar function is held to bless the bride and feed the guests. At the very early hours of the following morning, the bridegroom sets forth along with his relatives and friends for the bride's residence where the marriage would be solemnized. They adjust the time of their departure in such a way

that they reach the bride's place at dawn or thereabouts. This journey is called *dibbana*. The men and women accompanying the bridegroom form a noisy group and one among them plays on *cheeni* (pipe) while a couple of others play on *dudis* (small percussion instruments). In former days, it is said, the relatives and friends used to literally carry the bridegroom on their shoulders by turns and ensure that he did not strain himself by walking the entire distance. This custom is not in vogue now. Along with the bags and baggages they carry with them, they also carry a gunny bag filled with paddy. Enroute, if the bridegroom feels exhausted or wants to rest a while, he may sit on this paddy bag and relax but he should not sit on the bare ground. On reaching the neighbourhood in which the bride's house is situated, this party stops at a pre-determined convenient place with enough shade and space for their members to sit and relax. A couple of persons related to the bride would usually be awaiting the arrival of this party. They receive the relatives of the bridegroom and after exchanging pleasantries offer fried gram, gur, plantains and coffee decoction to all the members. The piper and the drummers intensify the musical notes and soon groups of men and women begin to dance in separate formations. After they spend some time in a gay mood, they send words to the bride's parents about their arrival. A little later, a large group of persons related to the bride reach the spot to formally welcome the bridegroom and his relatives and to lead the party to the venue of marriage. Later, the bridegroom and the bride are ceremonially bathed separately, duly dressed in new clothes and adorned with ornaments. The dress of the bridegroom consists of a white *dhoti* (of 8 cubits length folded double and worn in the usual *datti* style), a white shirt, a white turban and a red upper cloth which is folded into pleats and put on on his left shoulders. He also wears necklaces of silver or imitation gold and holds a bamboo or cane staff in his hand. Among the Pani Yeravas it is customary for him to wear a necklace of beads containing a *Kokkethali* (anchor-shaped pendant). The bride is dressed in a red saree and a red blouse. Her forehead is adorned with a red scarf and she is bedecked with numerous bead necklaces of different colours. Among the Pani Yeravas one of these necklaces would be of milk-white beads and this is called *Pal kalle* (literally 'Milk-stones'). When both are ready for the occasion, the bridegroom is first lead into the *pandal*. As he enters, two elderly female relatives of the bride wave an *arathi* (coloured water) before him to ward off the evil-eye. A large plate containing a heap of paddy, a coconut,

betel leaves and betelnuts as also a burning wick-oil-lamp is handed over to him along with a bamboo cylinder in the hollow part of which are put the seeds of several types of vegetable plants. He holds these articles and moves to the place where a mat has been spread out for him to sit. The articles are later deposited on the mat or the floor by his side. In the meantime the bride is also brought to the *pandal* and in her case also an *arathi* is waved to ward off the evil-eye. Then the bridegroom sits on the mat and the bride sits on his left hand side. The *Kanjneladi* keeps on singing the *sobane*—a song prescribed for the occasion. The couple are now ready for *Dampati Moortha*. The tribal priest and the elders file past the couple one after the other, offer some presents and shower the couple with a handful of rice grains each. These elders are in turn given a few betel leaves and betelnuts each, on behalf of the couple by some relative standing closeby. When all the assembled elders have thus blessed the couple, the bridegroom stands up and offers his right hand to the bride so that she clasps it with her own and stands up. This concludes the *Dampati Moortha* rite. Among the Panjiri Yeravas, the bridegroom now ties the necklace of black beads containing the *thali* (disc-like pendant) around the neck of the bride. Among the Pani Yeravas on the other hand, the necklace is usually of white beads and the *thali* would be larger and would also contain a red stone in the centre. Further, among them it is the mother's brother of the bridegroom that ties the necklace around the neck of the bride. Once this *thali* tying ceremony is over, the ends of the garments put on by the bride and the bridegroom are joined together by a knot and the couple proceed inside the house and prostrate before the gods and follow it up by bowing before their parents and other elders to seek their blessings. Thereafter all the guests are treated to a good feast. The items served include cooked rice, vegetable curry, *payasa* (sweet dish) and porkcurry. Quite often the menu includes arrack as well. There would be an adequate supply of beedies and pan also. After resting for a while, accompanied by his bride and other relatives, the bridegroom sets out for his home. At this juncture the bride's mother symbolically blocks his way. The bridegroom then satisfies her by paying a small amount of cash (called *madi palambu*) and thus secures permission to take his wife to his own place. During this journey a few close relatives of the bride also accompany her. On reaching the bridegroom's house, the couple stop at the threshold to allow elderly women to wave a plate containing coloured water before them and then enter the house. A little later,

accompanied by a few women, the bride proceeds to a well or the nearest source of water, offers *puja* and carries home three pots full of water which are arranged one above the other on her head. Later in the day a feast is held to honour the bride's relatives and the others who are about to depart for their homes. This in a way concludes marriage celebrations. No separate ceremony is arranged to consummate the marriage.

13.15 The foregoing is a brief account of the essentials of the marriage practices associated with arranged marriages which are regarded as the norm at present. The major part of the expenditure is borne by the bridegroom and his parents and the money is spent on buying new sets of clothes for the bridegroom and the bride besides ornaments and trinkets for the bride, payment of bride price and *madi palambu* to bride's relatives and providing a feast to the relatives on the day of *Moortha* and on the day after the marriage rites are completed. On the bride's side the main expenditure is towards providing a feast to the large number of guests that attend the *Dampati Moortha*. On both sides, the tribal priests like *Kanjneladi* or *Attali* and the *Chemmakara* are paid some nominal amount in cash besides rice, plantains and coconuts for their services. It is also customary for the bride's parents to give away a few utensils for daily use to the bride when she departs for her husband's place. Since the Yeravas are not in the habit of saving enough money in advance most of them resort to borrowing to meet the marriage expenses. Those who fail to raise the requisite funds finally take recourse to elopement and start living as man and wife. Later, the elders are treated to a simple feast by the parents of the bridegroom or the bride and the marriage which has actually been consummated is duly solemnized. If a man is dissatisfied with his wife's conduct and vice versa and the situation worsens, either of them may prefer a complaint before the elders including their *Kanjneladi* or *Chemmakara* or *Attali*. An informal meeting is then held to discuss the whole matter and hear the complaints and counter-complaints. An attempt is made to reconcile their differences and remove mutual misunderstandings. If the couple disagree to forget and forgive each other, they are allowed to terminate their marriage bond.

Among the Pani Yeravas, if the couple have any children, the normal course for the children is to remain in the custody of the mother or her relatives such as her parents and siblings. Among

the Panjiri Yeravas however a man may occasionally prefer to bring up his children under his own care or that of his parents or brothers. These matters are taken in a light manner and one may even come across cases where a man with his children from first wife and a woman with her children from her first husband are all living together. Once the divorce is permitted, the woman removes the *thali* given to her at her marriage and it is handed over to her now-estranged husband. If the demand for divorce has come from the woman, quite often she and her relatives are asked to pay an agreed sum of money by way of compensation to her former husband. Remarriage of a widow or a divorcee is less expensive. They do not put up a pandal nor do they indulge in music and dance. On the evening of the day fixed up for the marriage a few elderly relatives, including the tribal headman or priest, are invited to witness the event and bless the couple. The bride gets a new saree and a blouse besides some tawdry ornaments in the presence of the elders. The couple put on new clothes and prostrate before the elders who bless them and say a few words of advise. The invitees are then treated to a simple feast whereafter they depart for their homes. Among the Yeravas, all types of marriages such as the first marriage- (either arranged by elders or accomplished with or without their approval) remarriage of widows and divorcees and the fact that a man and a woman are simply living together as husband and wife are all equally acceptable and the couples of different categories enjoy the same ranking in the socio-cultural life. There is practically no question of humiliation. Because of such a tolerant attitude, the Yeravas do not have the problem of illegitimate children either. Nowadays educated girls find it hard to come across equally if not better educated young-men within their own tribal group. Consequently there have of late been a few cases of disregarding the rule of endogamy and marrying or living together with men of other communities and still continue to remain in their tribal fold. The children borne by such women are regarded as Pani Yerava or Panjiri Yerava according to the group to which the mother belongs.

(c) Death:

13.16 Among the Yeravas, of all the events of one's life, it is the last, that is death, and the obsequies associated with it that have all along been receiving an elaborate treatment. Death evokes a feeling of respectful fear among the surviving members of the family

and the kingroup. As a result, much attention is paid towards the proper performance of the funerary rites so as to enable the spirit of the dead to reach its after-life destination in peace. Much of the traditional oral literature preserved by the tribal priests and leaders consists of songs and verses which are to be recited as part of obsequial ceremonies. The spirits of their ancestors are treated at par with their deities, though in a general way. It is regarded as the duty of the living to periodically appease the spirits of the deceased. Failure to perform the funerary rites at the proper time and in the prescribed manner, it is believed, tantamounts to inviting upon oneself a chain of misfortunes and calamities. It is this moral fear which motivates the ordinary Yerava to adhere to the traditional practices and thus protect himself and his family. As between the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas, though there are some similarities, the rites and rituals associated with death and funeral are not quite the same. These are therefore separately described, in brief, in the following paragraphs.

13.17 PANI YERAVAS

13.17.1 : Death is accepted as an inevitable event which overtakes one and all. It is attributed to physical causes such as old age, grievous injury, fatal illness, accident etc., and also to the machinations of the malevolent spirits. Conceptually, they hold that the life span of every one of them is one hundred years. Irrespective of the chronological age at the time of one's death, he or she is regarded as having lead a life of hundred years. The introductory part of the funerary song narrates the progress of deceased from the moment of conception through stay in mother's womb, birth, childhood and the worldly life of a hundred years till the moment of death. When the person completes hundred years he or she appears like a mist, becomes ill and emaciated. The herbal medicines administered by relatives as well as the sacrifice of hens and breaking of coconuts to appease the malevolent spirits and deities would be of no avail when the moment of death arrives. The sufferings of a person on death bed are likened to those of a rat that has fallen into a pot containing boiling *Kanji* (porridge) and also that of a fully ripe mango which falls from a height into a bush full of thorns. Finally, breathing subsides, the vital heat evaporates and the body falls down like a felled tree. This in essence is the picture of approaching death and death itself as traditionally conceived by the Pani Yeravas. Thus when a

person dies, despite the physical causes that are evidently noticeable, death is attributed to the extraneous cause which is that the 'person has completed his or her hundred years span'.

13.17.2 When a person is seriously ill, efforts are made to provide relief and medical treatment to the extent that the family can afford. Such a person is looked after with all tenderness by the other members of the household and other close relatives staying nearby. As soon as a death occurs words are sent to the concerned *Chemmakara* (headman of the clan or lineage). Immediately on being informed, the *Chemmakara* rushes to the place, consoles the bereaved members of the family and takes control of the situation. With the help of the relatives and friends already assembled he arranges to send messengers to fetch the close agnatic and affinal kinsmen of the deceased from the nearby settlements. *Attali*, the tribal priest is also sent for. The *Chemmakara* organises two teams from among the available men and entrusts one with the preparation of the bier and the other with the task of digging the grave at any convenient place in the near-by jungle. In the meantime he gathers the requisite articles for use on the occasion. These include several strips of the bark of plantain plants, a few plantain leaves, a pot to hold cow dung water, a bundle of twigs, a piece of unused white cloth about 7 cubits long, bamboo poles, splits, rope etc. The corpse is washed and shifted to a mat (crudely made out of the strips of plantain bark and plantain leaves) which is spread out in the courtyard. The body is then dressed and decorated in bridal dress and its face is smeared with a paste of turmeric and oil. By now the bier made out of bamboo poles and splints (resembling a stretcher with a back-rest in the middle) would be ready and one of those who had accompanied the team of grave-diggers would be back to lead the funeral party to the spot. The body is transferred to the bier and placed securely in a sitting posture against the back-rest. The *Attali* holds a handful of grains and a small coin in his hand and offers prayers to the ancestral spirits as if he is communicating to the spirits the news of death that has just occurred. Thereafter four men lift the bier on to their shoulders and carry it to the burial grounds. With a bundle of lighted twigs in his hand, the *Chemmakara* walks at the head of the funeral procession which consists of mourning men, women as well as a few children. The corpse is usually carried by the agnatic kinsmen including the sons of the deceased. There is, however, no rule that prevents others from functioning as pall-

bearers. Generally, the burial takes place at or immediately after dusk. The grave-pit is usually 7 feet in length, about 2.5 feet in width and 4 feet in depth. That the pit used to be 7 feet deep may be assumed from the fact that despite the actual depth it is conventionally reckoned as 7 feet only. Before commencing digging operations, the leader among them lights a wick dipped in oil and offers prayers. When the pit has reached the requisite depth, a lengthwise niche (measuring about one cubit broad and one cubit high) is carved out at the bottom inner side wall of the pit, for it is in this niche that the body is laid to rest. The men who assist in digging the grave are compensated by payment of some cash which is later spent by them on arrack.

13.17.3. On reaching the burial ground, the funeral party halts at a spot close to the pit. The bier is laid on the ground. The cow-dung water brought along in a pot is sprinkled all over the place including the pit and the earthen pot itself is then broken into pieces by dashing it on the ground. The corpse is freed from the bonds with which it is secured to the bier, stretched out, undressed and rolled over in the white sheet of cloth. The assembled men and women walk around the corpse thrice and touch its feet as well as the head at the end of each round. The bearers lift the body, replaced on the bier, take it round the pit thrice and slowly lower into the pit while a couple of men get into the pit to receive and properly deposit it in the niche. At this juncture, if the deceased is survived by his wife she has to remove the necklace with the *thali* and hand it over for safe keeping and also take out the glass bangles adorning her forearms and break them into pieces by dashing the same on the ground. She pulls out a few hairs from her head which she throws on the corpse to be buried with it. The corpse is then laid to rest with its head towards the south and face turned to the east. The *Chemmi* who throws the first 3 handfuls of earth is joined by the others and the pit is soon filled up with the loose earth. Between the layers of loose earth it is customary to place layers of thorns. When the pit is completely filled up a few branches of a thorny plant, locally called *Sivani gida* are spread out on the spot.

The contour of the grave-pit is marked off by planting four sticks, each one cubit in length, called *change-kolu*, at the four corners. At the place below which the head of the corpse is resting, the *Attali* places the *change-bale* (a brass bangle or wristlet of ritual

value that every *Attali* possesses) moves over to the place where the feet of the corpse are resting, stands still for a moment and then addresses the ancestral spirits to communicate the following message, "Today we have deposited a dead body at this place. Do not disturb it. Do not frighten it, because being afraid, the spirit of the dead may run away and hide itself elsewhere. We will count seven days and then come back here to take the spirit of the dead with us and perform the prescribed rites to enable it to join the spirits of *Appemuthi* and *Ammemuthi*. Till then keep a watch and protect it. We need your favour. Please help us". This concludes the burial rites and the participants turn back. Enroute home, if there is a stream or any other source of water they have a bath and cleanse themselves. Most of the relatives return to their respective abodes the same night after consoling the bereaved members. The few who choose to stay back are provided with food which they eat and then relax for the night. On the following day if the deceased is survived by sons they have their heads and face shorn bald and neatly shaven. If the deceased is survived by the husband, custom requires him also to have his hair-cut and face-shaven. The *Pani Yeravas* invariably dispose off their dead by burial and they do not resort to any subsequent exhumation of the body or its remains and secondary disposal.

13.17.4 Close relatives are invited to participate in *Eyi*, the funeral rites which begin on the evening on the seventh day from the day of death and conclude on the afternoon of the ninth day. Accompanied by the *Chemmi*, the *Attali* and a few relatives, the sons of the deceased reach the grave, offer prayers and sacrifice a hen. The *Attali* places a few leaves of the *baine* tree and a coin along with the bangle on the grave and addresses the deceased thus "You come out through the mud, I will go through water". When these words are uttered thrice, the *niyalpadi* (spirit of the deceased) is supposed to have come out of the grave and entered the bangle. The bangle is picked up and the group moves to a nearby field, where the *Chemmi* performs the rites, known as *chere budaticichu*, so that the spirit is rendered free to accompany them. The *Chemmi* cuts a plantain leaf into 4 parts, sets out these on the ground and keeps a few pieces of coconut kernel and rice, a little quantity of milk and some flowers on each one of these four parts. He prays and invokes the spirit of the deceased to reveal through the medium of the *Attali* whether any force is preventing it from going along with the funeral party. The *Attali* gets possessed

and spells out the name of some spirit or the other which is then requested to release the spirit of the deceased so that further rites could be held. The bangle which is now possessed and represents the spirit of the deceased is reverentially brought to the house. Before entering the courtyard of the house, those returning from the burial ground wash their feet. The *Chemmi* takes hold of a handful of dry grass and lights it up. This burning sheaf of grass is deposited at a place that has been purified by a cow dung wash. The grass is completely burnt and the charred stalks are crushed to obtain black powder with which the *Chemmi* marks the contour of a large circle. Then, the *Chemmi* places seven plantain leaves on this outline in such a way that it is divided into seven segments called *ei-kumbali*. On each plantain leaf he keeps a crystal of common salt and one red chilli and walks around the circle thrice. In the meantime one of the daughters or the younger sisters of the deceased is selected to function as *Kulikarati* and she is lead to the place where the *Chemmi* is performing the rites. Standing on the eastern side of the circle and facing west the *Chemmi* prays and offers obeisance thrice. Likewise he moves to the southern part of the circle, stands facing the north and offers obeisance. The ritual is repeated from the western and northern sides of the circle as well. Thereafter, the *Chemmi* takes a final walk around the circle, stands on the northern side facing south, offers obeisance in the southern direction and calls out for the *Kulikarati*. In obedience to his call the *Kulikarati* moves and stands behind him. The *Chemmi* holds out a new earthen pot for her which she collects from behind his back for the purpose of cooking a meal. She too offers prayers to the spirit of the deceased and then proceeds to discharge her duties. She bathes first and then kindles a fire and cooks a little quantity of rice in the pot given to her by the *Chemmi*. When the meal is ready she cuts a plantain leaf into three pieces and after spreading these on the ground serves little quantities of rice on each part of the leaf. Then, she herself consumes the rice that is left behind in the pot. Thereafter, the *Chemmi* offers a few betel leaves and betel nuts to her indicating thereby that the ritual functions assigned to her are duly completed. The relatives and other invitees are then provided with a sumptuous meal. After the feast, the elders and the sons of the deceased gather at a convenient place and sit down to listen to the funeral song which would be recited by the *attali*. This recital is accompanied by the sound of the jingling bells which are fastened to a new winnowing basket and so manipulated as to produce a rhythmic sound. By now it

would be around midnight and the singing continues throughout the night with periodical breaks when someone or the other from among the assembled men plays on *dudi* (percussion instrument) and provides respite to the *Attali*. On the following day, before the relatives are served with food, the rite called *Kakekku Kanji Bekki-jeyi* (feeding the crows) is performed. The song prescribed for the occasion is quite lengthy and the *Attali* continues to sing, though intermittently, on the eighth day also. In the concluding part of the song the following sentiments, which are evidently of a high moral standard, are expressed. The spirit of the dead is addressed thus: "Though you might have harmed or injured us by your acts of omission or commission we have no anger towards you and we do not have any dispute with you either. Nor do we have any ill-will. When four persons mingle and live together there will naturally be some short comings which we implore you to ignore. You go ahead and join the *Pattole* of *Anjilath Muthi* in peace". The song alludes to the bond of unity which has brought the kinsmen together for the occasion and exhorts the assembled members to lead a life of mutual cooperation. The conclusion of the song marks the end of the funeral rites and the assembled are rendered free to return to their respective homes at their convenience. The *Attali* and *Chemmi* are paid Rs. 10 each in addition to a little quantity of rice, coconuts and plantains besides a few betel leaves and betel nuts by way of compensation for their services.

13.17.5: The relatives of the deceased perform the *Panderu* rite usually after the eighth month but before the completion of one year from the day of death. Literally, the word *Panderu* connotes a *pandal* and custom demands that a *pandal* of *baine* leaves (palm-tree) is put up for the occasion. A daughter of younger sister of the deceased is chosen in advance to function as the *Kulikarati*. For a period of 12 days ending on the day of *Panderu*, she has to observe several restrictions. Everyday she bathes twice, cooks food for herself, eats separately and feeds the crows with whatever food that is left over by her. During this period she should not even speak with or go near her husband. She should lead a life of strict continence and also abstain from fish, meat and intoxicating drinks. The relatives, the *Chemmi* and the *Attali* assemble in the *pandal* on the 12th day and after the feast, the singing of the funeral song commences. As on the earlier occasion of *Eyi* the singing continues all through the night with periodical breaks and concludes on the following evening. This marks the end of the

formal mourning and the wife of the deceased gets back the ornaments including the *thali* which she had discarded on the day of death. She is free to put on these ornaments and to marry again. So also, if the rites are being held for a woman, the surviving husband gets his freedom to remarry after the conclusion of *Panderu*. The Pani Yeravas do not perform death anniversaries for the individuals. On the other hand, on any convenient day in July after the paddy transplantation is over, the spirits of the ancestors are invoked and placated by a feast, called *Shattavang Undicheyi*. Several families join together for the occasion and share the expenses.

13.18. PANJIRI YERAVAS :

13.18.1 : The Panjiri Yeravas regard death as an event which overtakes one and all at the moment predetermined by one's fate—usually when a person is sufficiently old and has had a full life. However, when a person is sick and bed-ridden the other members of the family extend the tender care and provide medical aid to the extent that they can afford. They take recourse to divination and appease their gods and the malevolent spirits as well by suitable sacrifices. When these efforts fail and the person dies they attribute the event to the fate of that person rather than to the patently discernible causes such as disease, old age etc. As soon as a death occurs words are sent out to *Kunjukara*, the headman who usually loses no time in reaching the scene. Messages are also sent to the *Kanjneladi*, *Karmi* and the close relatives residing in the nearby settlements. Most of these persons gather within a matter of hours. The *Kunjukara* organises two teams of men and entrusts one with the task of digging the grave and the other with that of preparing the *chattam* (bier). While doing so he ensures that the persons chosen by him belong to a different *Chemma* with reference to the one to which the deceased belongs.

Since Panjiri Yeravas are matrilineal, when a man dies his own sons and brother's sons can attend to these tasks whereas in the case of a woman her brother's sons and the relatives on her husband's side like his brothers etc., can discharge these functions. The grave pit is prepared in the same manner as among the Pani Yeravas and the grave-diggers are compensated by a cash payment. The stretcher like bier is prepared using bamboo poles and strips and at its four corners one or more brass bangles are

tied. If the corpse to be carried is that of a *Kanjneladi* it is customary to fasten as many as 8 bangles at each corner. In the meantime the corpse is washed and covered with a new sheet of white cloth. Flowers are strewn on the corpse, incense sticks are burnt and two coconuts are broken, one near the head and the other near the feet. The dead body is then transferred to the bier. A few coins and handfuls of puffed rice are strewn over the corpse and then the bier is lifted on to their shoulders by four men. A functionary known as *Karmi* (he who helps the *Kanjneladi*) heads the funeral procession holding a brass bangle in his hand. Most of the assembled relatives including the women as also the wife of the deceased accompany the dead body. After covering a short distance from the settlement, the party stops for a while. The bier is placed on the ground whereupon by turns the accompanying womenfolk sprinkle water from a pot on the face of the corpse. The wife of the deceased has to remove the bead necklace containing the *thali* and hand it over to the headman of her husband's *Chemma*. The glass bangles adorning her forearms are also removed and dashed on the corpse. Thereafter, the womenfolk return home and the journey to the burial ground is resumed only by men. On reaching the grave yard, the bier is lowered at a spot close to the pit. The *Kanjneladi* offers prayers and then addresses the ancestors of the *Chemma* thus: "So and so is dead and is joining you. Please take proper care and do not allow him to be devoured by jackals and vultures". Thereafter the dead body is slowly lowered into the pit with its head to the south. The men standing in the pit receive and properly arrange the corpse in the niche. The shroud is removed and is later cut into two pieces of which one is taken away by the *Karmi* and the other by the *Kanjneladi*. Though the dead is laid to rest in the south-north axis with its head to the south the face is turned towards the east. The *Kunjukara* throws the first handful of earth on the corpse and over that he puts a thorny twig of a plant, locally called *sivani gida*. He repeats the action twice more and is then joined by the sons of the deceased and others who shove the loose earth into the pit. When the pit is duly filled, a brass bangle is placed in the centre and a few branches of the thorny plant are spread all over the grave. Thereafter, the assembled members disperse and most of the relatives and the functionaries return to their homes. However, a few men and women choose to remain with the bereaved members of the family and try to console them in their own way. Unlike among the Pani Yeravas, among the Panjiri Yeravas, the burial rites are usually

completed before the nightfall. After the burial, the next important funeral rite is the *Pani* or the *Padimoondu*, for which oral invitations are sent out to close relatives and a *pandal* is put up in the courtyard using leaves and branches of a *nerale* tree (Jambolana fruit tree).

13.18.2 : Activities connected with *Padimoondu* begin on the evening of the eleventh day from the day of death and conclude on the morning of the thirteenth day. The eldest son of the deceased proceeds to the graveyard along with a few close relatives, one or more *Kanjneladis*, a *Karmi* and the *Kunjukara*. A coconut, a few betel leaves and betel nuts, joss sticks, cotton wicks dipped in oil, turmeric dust, puffed rice, a little quantity of raw rice and also paddy as well as cooked rice, wheat cakes, meat and vegetable curry, water, a little quantity of arrack, etc., are also taken to the graveyard by the eldest son and those accompanying him. On reaching the spot, one of the *Kanjneladis* sprinkles water on the grave, lights the oil-dipped wicks and joss-sticks and breaks a coconut. Then he invokes the spirit of the deceased to accompany him and partake of the food which would be served to it shortly. The other *Kanjneladis* who are present on the spot speak out on behalf of the spirit and communicate its assent. Thereafter, the leaves of a *muthuga* plant (bastard teak) are spread out on the eastern side of the grave and the articles of food brought along are served on these leaves. Thereafter, the thorny-twigs are removed and the brass bangle which had been deposited on the grave is picked up. This bangle is now regarded as being possessed by the *peyi*, that is, the spirit of the deceased person. The accompanying members excluding the *Kanjneladis* and those belonging to the *Chemma* of the deceased then share and consume the food offerings. Thereafter, along with the spirit contained in the brass bangle, the group returns home and stops at the place where the deceased had breathed his last. In the meantime the house and the courtyard would have been cleaned and washed with cowdung and all the members would also have had a bath. In the room where the death occurred an earthen pot containing rice grains would have been placed at a corner and covered with a lid. On reaching this place the *Karmi* lays out a plantain leaf and spreads on it the rice grains which he takes out from the earthen pot. The *Kanjneladi* then deposits the brass bangle on the layer of rice grains. Three strips of the bark of the plantain tree are placed around this leaf and their top ends are joined so as to form a

canopy over the bangle. This structure is called a *gudi*. An earthen wick-lamp is then lit and placed below the canopy and prayers are offered. A lighted wick is waved before the *gudi* and also the earthen pot that contained the rice. A hen is also likewise waved and then killed in sacrifice. Rice and wheat cakes are served on a leaf and offered to the spirit along with a tumblerful of arrack. After a few minutes the *Karmi* takes away the sacrificed hen to a place at some distance from the house, lights up a campfire and cooks the hen into a palatable dish. Other men, with the exception of the *Kanjneladis* and the sons of the deceased, gather round the *Karmi* and when the dish is ready all of them share it along with the other items of food and drink served earlier as an offering to the spirit of the deceased. During this period, the earthen lamp in the *gudi* and the *gudi* itself are shifted carefully to the courtyard. The *Kanjneladis* begins to sing the funeral song and at the same time draw the caricatures of 12 human beings in rice grains—7 in one row and 5 in another. These figures are believed to represent the direct ascendants of the deceased on his or her mother's and father's side. The seventh figure on the first row and the fifth figure in the second row represent the deceased for whom the rites are being held. When the song is about to conclude, five female relatives belonging to the *Chemma* to which the deceased belonged, come out of the house wailing loudly and virtually fall over these figures and mix up the entire set. This event marks the conclusion of the rites prescribed for the eleventh day and the time by now would be nearing the midnight. The men who had gone out for the funerary feast arrive on the scene after washing their hands and feet. Thereafter, the other relatives are served food and drinks. As it happens, quite often the assembled men and women take up old disputes if any among them and utilise the services of the elders to resolve the same. Once such issues are taken up there would be long arguments and counter-arguments and till these are amicably settled the food would not be served. After the feast, the *Kanjneladis* sit in a central place underneath the *pandal* and get ready to sing the funeral song. Two men get ready with their *dudis*. The *Kanjneladis* hold *mani* or small bells in their hands and start ringing the same in a rhythmic manner as an accompaniment to the funeral song. Other men and women gather round the *Kanjneladis* to listen. The introductory part of the song is a general address to the ancestors of the tribe, called *Kanemaru*, and enumerates how these ancestors moved from place to place, cultivated the lands, set up *Kunjus* or settlements at several places,

lived upto their ideals and buried their dead as per traditions. The names of 33 *Chemmas* to which the tribe is supposed to be divided are also mentioned. So also several place names find a mention in this part. The main theme of the song is an episode relating to two men named Aryai and Banyai. The singing continues with occasional breaks till the afternoon of the following day. As the final part of the song is reached the *Kanjneladi* would be shedding tears and would appear as if he is in a deep trance. The spirit of the dead person is now pictured as ascending the four steps of mud, thorns, winnowing fans and copper and then joining the group of ancestors. In the meantime a plantain leaf is laid out in front of the *Kanjneladi* and a little quantity of cooked rice mixed with turmeric dust is served on the leaf. When the *Kanjneladi* concludes the song, incense sticks are lighted and a lighted wick-lamp is waved before the leaf on which the rice is served. Thereafter, the *Karmi* removes the leaf with the food and deposits the same at a selected place near the house so that the food may be consumed by the crows. Thereafter, he washes his hands and feet and returns. The guests are then treated to a good feast consisting of rice, pork curry, fish curry, vegetables and *payasa* (sweet dish prepared out of greengram dhal and jaggery) and are served with arrack also. Once the feasting is over, the men relax and quite a few engage themselves in dancing to the tune of *cheeni* and *dudi*. Gradually the relatives take leave and depart for their respective homes. The functionaries like the *Kanjneladi*, the *Kunjukara* and the *Karmi* are each given a little quantity of rice, coconuts, betel leaves and betel nuts as well as some cash by way of compensation for their services. There is however, no fixed fee which one can demand or even expect to get. In this matrilineal community also when a man dies the responsibility of performing the burial rites and the *Padi moondu* devolves on his sons. It is only at a later stage that the mother's brothers or headman of the *chemma* to which the deceased belonged are required to perform the rites known as *Koota*. When a woman dies, her own sons and brothers belong to the *Chemma* of which she herself was a member and as such they cannot actually perform the burial and *Padimoondu* rites. Her surviving husband and his brothers as well as her own brother's sons and such other relatives render the requisite physical assistance while the financial burden is usually borne by her sons. In respect of both, the funeral rite known as *Koota* has to be performed any time after the lapse of about 6 months from the day of death. The main responsibility for arranging this function rests

with the mother's brothers of the deceased or else the head of the *Chemma* to which the deceased belonged.

13.18.3 : The ritual aspects of the *Koota* are more or less the same as those associated with the *Padimoonda*. However, on this occasion there is no need for anyone to visit the place of burial to fetch the spirit of the deceased to the place where the rites are held, for this spirit can be invoked by the officiating *Kanjneladi* at this very place. The deliberations like putting up the *pandal*, arrival of guests and other preliminaries start towards the evening on the appointed day and the rites last through the night and extend well into the following day and may even get prolonged depending upon familial circumstances and the outstanding disputes which the assembled relatives may like to rake up for being resolved by the elders. The ritual aspect consists of offering food and drinks to the departed soul and the ancestors as well as a ceremonial gift of wearing apparel etc., to the surviving spouse. There would of course be feasting and the assemblage of men utilise the occasion to indulge in music and dance. Generally, if the deceased has left behind any property, it is divided amongst the heirs in the presence of the elders. Thus *Koota* is an occasion of considerable social significance and its timely celebration is a matter of vital importance to the surviving spouse and his or her close relatives. From the time of death of one's spouse till the *Koota* rites are completed, the surviving partner is subjected to several restrictions. The most important condition is that he or she should not remarry during this period. Some of the other restrictions are: he or she should not eat good food such as meat and such other tasty preparations and should also abstain from arrack and other intoxicating drinks; should not put on new clothes; should not participate in social gatherings; should not chew pan and tobacco; if a widower, he should not shave off his beard and should not have a hair-cut either; in the case of a widow she is expected not to anoint her head with oil and she should not comb and gather her hair into a plait. In other words, the period between the occurrence of death and the observance of *Koota* is the period of mourning for the surviving spouse. After the *Kanjneladi* sings the concluding part of the funeral song, food is offered to the ancestral spirits and this is followed by a feast. Thereafter, the headman of the *Chemma* formally offers certain gifts to the surviving widow or the widower as the case may be. This gift consists of wearing apparel (like saree and blouse or dhoti and shirt), a small bag containing betel leaves,

betel nuts and tobacco leaf as well as the *thali* and any other ornaments that were removed on the day of death. The person receiving these articles is then given a ceremonial bath whereafter he or she puts on the new garments and is thus freed from the restrictions. In return, the mother's brother or the headman of the *Chemma* to which the surviving spouse belongs gives away a dhoti, a shirt, a bronze plate and a brass tumbler along with some amount of cash to the headman of the *Chemma* to which the deceased belonged. This exchange of gifts is therefore one of the most important elements of *Koota*. Once these rites are held, no more rites— not even the death anniversary— are performed. However, the spirits of the ancestors of various *Chemmas* are placated by the offerings of food and drinks, once every year, usually during February-March. For this purpose, in any locality, the heads of households belonging to the same *Chemma* consult each other, fix up a day and a place so that they can jointly offer worship and seek the blessings of their common ancestors.

14. RELIGION

According to the 1961 as well as the 1971 census returns, all the Yeravas are Hindus. In other words, there are no Christians, Jains or Muslims among the Yeravas. In the matter of religious beliefs and practices, by and large, they do not differ much from the dominant Hindu caste groups amidst whom they have taken up residence. The gods and goddesses popular among the Yeravas are: Venkataramana of Tirupati, Nanjappa (Nanjundeshvara) of Nanjangud, Madappa (Madeshvara) of Maranageri, Basappa of Bettadapura and Siddappaji of Gadduge on the one hand and Kuttada *Amma* (also called Karungali; *Amma* means Mother and *Kutta* is a village on the Kodagu-Kerala border), Piriypattanada *Amma*, Kannambadi *Amma*, Dandu *Maramma*, Kunthur *Maramma*, Mavathur *Maramma*, etc., on the other. The Yeravas have access to the local temples. However, they visit these local temples only occasionally, that is during fairs and festivals. Generally, each family or group of families has special attachment to one or two particular deities. But, there is no rigidity and when in distress they invoke the help of various deities and make sacrificial offerings as prescribed by the concerned priests. They have also been influenced by *Bhuta* worship which is popular in the neighbouring districts of Malabar and Dakshin Kannad. They revere Panjurli, Gulika, Kuttichatan and Muthappa and attend the festi-

vals periodically held in honour of these *Bhutas* at places such as Tithmathi, Ponnampet, Gonikoppal, Virajpet etc., to make votive offerings. Shaneshvara (representing planet Saturn) is also worshipped by most of the Yeravas and a few ardent devotees of this Lord profess to get “possessed” and move into a trance when they act as a medium. Several men have learnt the songs associated with Piriypattanada Amma, Kannambadi Amma, Madeshvara etc., and sing the same to the accompaniment of the *dudi* and cymbals on occasions. In a general way it may be observed that in their everyday life the Yeravas spend very little time or resources on worship and prayers. When in distress they turn to gods and goddesses as also ancestral spirits and seek the assistance of such supernatural powers to overcome their material problems. The fact that they have adopted the deities which are popular in the neighbourhood in which they have settled is indicative of the catholicity of their world view and their eagerness to secure help from whatever source it is promised. The Pani Yeravas, and the Panjiri Yeravas as well, have in addition, their own deities and forms of worship which are detailed below.

14.1. The tribal deities exclusive to the Pani Yeravas are : Thambira and Thambiratti of ‘Ippimalai’ (the pair who ensnared the progenitors of the tribe, but brought them up with kindness and taught agriculture), Anjalathu Appe Muthi and Papalathu Amme Muthi (the progenitors of the tribe), Neermalai Muthachi, Ippimalai Muthachi, Kalimalai Muthachi and Ponmalai Muthachi. All the eight are benevolent by nature and as in the past they would do good to those who remember and worship them and seek their help through prayers. While Thambira and Anjalathu Appe Muthi are male deities the other six are female deities. Most of the Pani Yeravas state that these deities have been enshrined in temples in Wynad area of Kerala State, but none seems to be aware of the exact location let alone claiming to have visited any such temple so far. These deities can be invoked and worshipped at all places with the services of *Attali*, their tribal priest. Offering worship at the household level is a simple affair which can be done on any convenient day. The *Attali*, who is invited for the occasion, sets out a large plantain leaf at a cleansed spot in the house. Then, he takes a measure of rice and spreads out the rice grains thinly all over this leaf. At the four corners of this leaf he places four small pieces of a plantain leaf and on each such bit he keeps a lighted wick lamp. The emblems of deities kept in the house are then

brought out and placed on the plantain leaf. The *Attali* would then invoke their deities and offer prayers which are in the form of songs and light a few joss sticks which he waves in front of the deities. A coconut is then broken and along with its two halves, puffed rice and jaggery are placed before the deities as an offering. All the members of the household then throw a few rice grains each on the deities and stand with folded hands. Finally, burning camphor is waved before the deities. Then all the members prostrate and seek the blessings. Puffed rice, jaggery and coconut are then consumed as consecrated food. This could be rendered into a little more expensive event by those who can afford and would like to invite their relatives also for the occasion. A low rectangular earthen platform is erected and duly decorated with flowers and green leaves including the mattings made out of the strips of the wet bark of a plantain tree. It is on this platform that the plantain leaf is laid first and the deities kept thereon. The food offerings consist of rice puddings and *avalakki* (beaten rice) rather than mere jaggery and puffed rice. The *Attali* is paid a little cash, rice and jaggery for the services rendered. The worship offered at the community level is called *Thera* and involves elaborate arrangements. This is similar to *Bhuta* worship and a person, chosen for the purpose, gets possessed by the specific deities invoked on the occasion. The deities so invoked are to be appeased by the sacrificial offerings of fowls and arrack. Such community level festivals are however not a regular feature but are held on rare occasions only. For their day to day worship the Pani Yeravas keep the colour pictures of one god or the other of their choice and the daily worship takes the form of burning an incense stick before such pictures and praying with folded hands. In some of the households there would be the facsimiles of goddesses. The Pani Yeravas do have temples of their own at a few places where they are found in larger concentrations. This temple is quite often a small hut or it is an open site at the foot of a large shady tree. The objects of worship are kept on a raised platform. These consist of one or two small stones of an irregular shape, framed pictures of one or more gods and goddesses, *kadtale* (swords), *trishulas* (tridents with prongs decorated with glass bangles), a bell, a pair of brass lamps and plates. The main deity here is usually Maramma of some particular place and the priest, who in fact is the sole manager of the temple, would get possessed by the deity and functions as a medium. *Puja* is usually offered on Tuesday evenings.

14.2. Mel Arachai and Keel Arathi, the mythical couple supposed to be the progenitors of their tribe are the principal deities exclusively worshipped by the Panjiri Yeravas. The neighbourhood of Tirnelly in Wynad of Kerala is regarded as their abode and that place is referred to as *Pada maru thile muthadi* in their mythical accounts. At Kudure Kode, a place about 6 km distant from the famous Narayana temple at Tirnelly, there is a dilapidated temple at the rear portion of which there are a few round stones and tridents struck upright in the ground. The Panjiri Yeravas believe that these stones and the other objects at this place represent their progenitors as also *kari kala* (the earthen pot) and *belli-muram* (the winnowing basket) associated with them. The Panjiri Yeravas regard Kudure Kode as a sacred place and aspire to pay a visit at least once. Some among them have in fact been to that place. The idols at this temple and the above-mentioned objects are however not being worshipped every day. It is said, once a week, people belonging to certain other castes living in the proximity of the temple visit the temple and offer *puja* by way of lighting lamps and placing flowers on the idols. As has been already mentioned, the Panjiri Yeravas are divided into three *Mandyus* or groups. Each *Mandyu* has its own tutelary deity: Pakathayya (Tirnelly Mandyu), Karichathai Mariammai (Podar Mandyu) and Pookarimage Kariyappa (Badak Mandyu). Of these three, Pookarimage is conceived as having been born in a flower and as a bachelor who rides a horse and abstains from non-vegetarian food and intoxicating drinks. There are no temples for these deities. Whenever required, the deities are invoked and offered worship with the help of their own priests or *Kanjneladis*. The manner in which the deities are invoked and worshipped is similar to the one already described in the case of Pani Yeravas. The *Kanjneladis* sing the prescribed songs to the accompaniment of *dudi* and *gejje* (bells). The notable difference is that the plantain leaf of which the symbols of deities are placed is set out in a winnowing basket instead of placing it directly on the floor or the earthen platform. As among Pani Yeravas, among Panjiri Yeravas also community level festivals are organised on rare occasions only. In their homes, the Panjiri Yeravas keep a few colour pictures of gods and goddesses as well as fascimiles. In addition, most of them keep one or two cane or bamboo sticks called *Achchande badi*. The temples of Panjiri

Yeravas are also similar to the ones met with among the Pani Yeravas and unlike the latter, these shrines would have several cane and bamboo staves in addition. The Panjiri Yerava priest also gets possessed and functions as a medium to divine the causes for illness and misfortune and suggest suitable remedial measures.

14.3: The Pani Yeravas as well as the Panjiri Yeravas believe in the existence of soul or spirit which, according to them, dwells in the heart of a person so long as he or she is alive. Death implies the departure of the spirit from the body which is rendered lifeless. During its existence in the body the spirit does develop attachments to other family members and relatives. Once it leaves the mortal body it is dismayed and finds itself in state of confusion. So, the spirit hovers around the place until it is enabled, by those whom it has just left behind, to join the horde of the spirits of ancestors. The Yeravas do not have any specific beliefs regarding concepts such as rebirth, heaven and hell. Once a person is dead, his or her spirit is enabled to join the ancestral spirits and there ends the matter. They do believe that the spirits exist in a bodyless form and can be called upon to temporarily take possession of the officiating priest, accept their offerings and suggest remedies to their problems. Apart from their annual ancestral worship the Yeravas do not observe any festivals in their homes. They take pleasure in visiting the fairs that are periodically held at places such as Kutta, Irupu, etc., and festivals like Muthappa Thera held at Ponnampet, Tithmathi, Gonikoppal and such other places in their neighbourhood.

15. LEISURE AND RECREATION

The Panjiri Yeravas as well as the Pani Yeravas both represent a class of people who eke out their living by physical labour. They are wage earners among whom very few own lands and such other productive resources. From morning till evening their men and women toil in paddy fields, coffee plantations or in forests. Their waking hours are divided between working for wages on the one hand and attending to their personal needs and domestic chores on the other. Since they live in nuclear household it is imperative for the man to help his wife in running the household and in

looking after the children. Normally, the Yeravas get up around 6 in the morning and leave for work by about 8. Within the span of about two hours they attend to brushing of teeth, washing their limbs, cleaning the house and the courtyard, fetching water and cooking food. They finish their breakfast and move out in small groups to the place of work. By the time they return home it would be nearing 6 O'Clock. Again, the routine activities like washing, pounding paddy, fetching water and cooking keeps them busy. This is particularly so in the case of women, for the men can somehow manage to snatch a few moments to smoke a *beedi* in a relaxed mood or spend some time in chitchating with a neighbour. They finish their dinner by about 9 O'Clock and, after a while, go to bed. Thus, they find little leisure in their every day life. However, while they are in the company of others, that is while going to and returning from work in small groups and while working in groups too they freely indulge in gossip and petty talk, which in a way generates a mood of relaxation. In accordance with the common practice prevailing in the neighbourhood they too observe a weekly holiday - usually on the day on which the popular weekly market gathers. It is on this day that they have some time to have a bath, wash their clothes and attend to other household chores demanding immediate attention. Depending upon the distance they have to cover to reach the venue of the weekly market, they start at noon or a little later and proceed to the market in small groups. After purchasing their requirements they stop for some time at the arrack shop to enjoy a drink and reach home by dusk. Drinking liquor in the company of a couple of friends or in the company of one's own wife is regarded as one of the best ways of enjoying an evening. Social visits to the homes of close relations provide an occasional break from the routine. They also enjoy visiting the fairs and festivals organised by the Hindu religious institutions at nearby places. They do not have any organised form of recreation that distinguishes them from the rest. They do have a folk-lore which chiefly consists of songs that are to be recited by their functionaries only on specific occasions. But when people of their own community congregat  on such occasions they do entertain themselves by dancing in groups to the accompaniment of the rhythmic beats of the *dudi* and shrill sounds of *cheeni* (pipe). Among the Panjiri Yeravas it is generally the men that dance

whereas among Pani Yeravas it is quite common for women also to dance, though in separate groups. The dance session lasts for hours and those who wish to join the group may do so whenever they want to and likewise slip out of the group without any formality. Occasionally the dancers shout 'Ho Ho Ho' in unison and this apart there is no other element of singing or clapping. In former times, it is said, dancing used to be more frequent and that their men and women used to assemble at some convenient place in their settlements on moonlit nights and spend an hour or two in a gay mood.

16. RELATIONSHIP AMONG DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Panjiri Yeravas and the Pani Yeravas are two separate and distinct endogamous groups. They are of an equal status and accept food and water from each other. As has already been mentioned there have, of late, been a few cases of intermarriage also. But such unions involve induction of the man into the tribal group of his wife or vice versa. The Panjiri Yeravas are divided among themselves into several *chemmas* (exogamous groups), all of which are regarded as equal in status. There is no hierarchical order of clans and division of labour and gradation thereof. Thus, no one inherits any special claims to superiority over his compeers. The situation is very much the same among Pani Yeravas who are divided among themselves into several *tharanas* which again are all of an equal status. Acquisition of a little property by a few, a little education by a few others and both these by some among the Panjiri Yeravas as well as Pani Yeravas has not so far produced any cleavages in the community. Such individuals do not command any special recognition and are treated at par with the rest. Perhaps the cleavage has not manifested itself till now because of the fact that numerically those who have acquired landed property or higher education or both are quite insignificant. Such few persons as are currently found in the Yerava community freely mix with their landless and illiterate or semi-literate brethren and eke out their living in the same manner by working as wage earners.

17. INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Local tradition identifies Yeravas with agrestic serfs—a system which became defunct a few decades ago. But as in the past, at present also, economically the Yeravas are almost entirely dependent on the local landlords and coffee planters, particularly the Kodavas. The relationship which now subsists between a landlord and a labourer has assumed economic overtones and has more or less lost its moral and social implications. In accordance with the settlement pattern of the region, the Yeravas also live in small clusters of houses or isolated homesteads built close to the paddy fields on which they usually work or else live in small groups in government built colonies. There is no element of isolation or segregation and the Yeravas also form part of the local village communities. They are regarded more as belonging to a lower caste-group than as a tribe. According to *Pattole-palame*, compiled in about 1924 by Nadakerianda Chinnappa, the Nairs, Bunts, Vokkaligas and Vellalas enjoyed equal social status with the Kodavas. The Tiyyas, Billavas, Agasa, Heggade etc., formed the next lower group. Members of these castes had access to all the parts of a Kodava's house except the kitchen, the *Kannikom-bare* (room where family deities are kept) and *Nellakki Nadubade* (central hall where the family light is kept). The Yeravas, Kurubas and the Pales ranked next and members of this group would come up to the *jagali* or the raised platform of the Kodava's house but no further. The fourth group consisting of Holeyas, Medars etc., had to stop at the courtyard. Persons belonging to the third and the fourth group had no right to mark their foreheads with sandal paste or vermilion dust and so also their men had no right to suffix their names with the honorific suffixes like Appa, Anna and Ayya. It may be noted that most of the middle aged and elderly Yeravas totally conform to these customary restrictions though they are aware that the rigidity which marked the social life in rural areas has more or less vanished and that very few Kodavas are now interested in enforcing such rules. They are aware of the changed politico-social system. Numerically, economically as also socially the Kodavas are the dominant community in Virajpet taluk, that is, in the area where the Yeravas are found in large numbers. In all matters the Yeravas consider the Kodavas as a model worthy of emulation. Since generations, the master-servant relationship has

been subsisting between the Kodavas and the Yeravas and this is particularly so in the case of Pani Yeravas. The Kodavas have come to regard the Yeravas as a part of their economic life, as a set of their own people and to treat them with consideration. They view the Yeravas as trust worthy, honest, sincere and hardworking. In the rural areas, apart from Kodavas, there are a few Gowdas (hailing from Dakshina Kannad and other adjoining districts) who also own agricultural lands and coffee plantations, the relationship between the Yeravas and the Gowdas is quite similar to that between the Yeravas and the Kodavas. In the colonies set up at various places and in forest settlements it is often noticed that the Yeravas reside in the close proximity of Betta Kurubas and Jenu Kurubas. There are no feelings of hostility or antagonism among these tribals and each regards the other as an equal but separate tribe. The Yeravas have amicable relations with all the other castes and communities including the Holeyas, the Moplabs and the Christians, found in the neighbourhood. They do not require the services of Brahmin priests either for solemnizing their marriages or for performing funerary rites. However they revere the Brahmins and their priests. The Yeravas have access to the tea shops, restaurants, local stores, barber's saloons and other public places, including the places of worship. They have their shrines and media-men (*Thammadi*) attached thereto and visit the temples patronised by the others only on occasions like the annual fairs and festivals. On the whole, it is ascertained that the Yeravas have good and cordial relations with the other castes and communities met with in this neighbourhood. As between the Panjiri Yeravas and the Pani Yeravas themselves they are found to be on very cordial terms with each other. Mutually they consider themselves as equals in socio-economic status and they are both treated likewise by the other communities of their neighbourhood.

18. STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE, AND LEADERSHIP

Interpersonal and social relations among the members of the community are marked by informality. As already indicated, among the Panjiri Yeravas as well as the Pani Yeravas, nuclear

family household is the norm. The husband-wife relationship is usually that of mutual respect, consideration and understanding rather than that characterised by a total subordination of the latter. Children are brought up in a relatively free atmosphere which is devoid of violence. When a child commits an act which is unpleasant to its parents or elders or behaves in an offensive or belligerent manner, the punishment generally assumes the form of advice mixed with a mild rebuke. By and large, right from their infancy, the children are taught to conform to the wishes of their parents and elders. There is however no element of compulsion or any overt attempt at enforcing total obedience. The Yerava parents are quite tolerant towards the follies of their children and as such they rarely get worked up or go into a rage and beat up the erring child. The same congenial atmosphere prevails while the child passes through the stage of adolescence and grows up into a young adult. Thus, from the very early infancy, a sense of tolerance and a willingness to mend one's ways to please the elders are imbibed among the Yeravas. The parents, the elder siblings and other elderly members of the community are respected. This sentiment of respect is however devoid of any fear complex. Respect does not prevent a person from expressing his or her own views relating to matters under dispute. The disputes which are not resolved at intra-family or interfamily level are generally brought up before a council of elders for adjudication. Such a council consists of the local leader, the tribal priests and a few elders from among the assembled men. Generally, the disputants abide by the decisions arrived at by the council and those declared guilty of an offence pay up the fine imposed by the council. This organ of social control is operating effectively at the locality level. For resolving disputes involving persons residing in different localities, a joint council of elders consisting of leaders of both the areas is constituted. These informal councils function independently of each other. In other words, the Yeravas do not have any apex body followed by councils of elders at regional and sub-regional levels for enforcing conformity with the tribal traditions and customs. The Yeravas have considerable faith in divination and the good results that would materialise if they were to scrupulously follow the instructions given by the *Thammadi* (media men). Generally, *Thammadi* also forms part of the local council of elders. Quite often, the ailments and misfortunes are traced to the wrath of ancestral spirits and tribal deities arising out of non-fulfilments of traditional social obligations (example undue delay or non-

performance of funerary rites). Naturally the remedy consists of discharging these obligations at the earliest. Thus, divination, that is the institution of *Thammadi*, also forms an important part of the social control organisation. As between the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas there are some differences which may be made out from the following paragraphs.

18.1 Pani Yeravas: Each locality or a cluster of small settlements of Pani Yeravas usually has a local leader termed *Chemmi* or *Chemmakara* and an *Attali* (tribal priest). In addition, the locality may also have a *Thammadi*. These men enjoy considerable social prestige and are deemed to be members of the local council of elders. The informal council consists of a few other elderly Yeravas of the locality as well. The disputes usually brought up before the council relate to the misdemeanours of a man or his wife and the resultant feelings of estrangement. After a careful and patient hearing, these elders advise the couple, try to clear the misunderstandings and bring about a rapprochement on the principle of forgive and forget. If the man or the woman were to take up highly unreasonable attitudes the elders may order that the man or the woman be beaten up a little by his or her parents or siblings so that the concerned person understands the situation in its true perspective. When all these efforts meet with failure and reconciliation is ruled out, the request for a divorce is granted. Other cases that are brought up before the council sometimes relate to alleged extra marital affairs, failure to take care of or render help to one's aged or incapacitated parents and delays or refusal to perform the funerary rites. By and large, the disputants honour the decisions arrived at by the council and abide by the advise of the elders. Those found guilty promptly pay up the fine which may be imposed by the council. The amount so collected is usually spent on drinks. Non-conformity leads to ridicule and loss of face among the compeers. A total defiance of the authority of the council of elders may lead to continued wranglings and may finally end up in the ex-communication of the guilty. When an incestuous marriage is contemplated the consequences of such an action are explained to the concerned and it is ensured that no such marriage takes place. Such an union is a grave offence for which ex-communication is the only punishment prescribed.

However, none of the informants spoken to during this survey could recount any specific instance of this type.

18.2 In all matters relating to the economic and social life of the Yeravas of any locality, the *Chemmakara* functions as their accredited leader and spokesman. Whenever a loan has to be raised, a contract has to be entered into with an employer (landlord or planter), a child has to be admitted to a school or a hostel or an application has to be submitted to any office of the government, the ordinary Yerava seeks the help of the *Chemmakara* who would normally accompany him and speak for him. When a death occurs in the family the first thing to do is to send words to the *Chemmakara* and have him on the scene. It is he who makes all further arrangements for the disposal of the dead-body. Likewise on the occasion of a marriage too his services are required. Thus, the *Chemmakara*, enjoys a position of prestige and influence within the community and is likely to have wide contacts with several important people of the village and its neighbourhood. The *Chemmakara* holds his office mainly on the strength of his personal abilities and, if found wanting, yields place to anyone else who is more competent. The principle of hereditary succession is not rigidly observed. Ability to mobilise his fellow-men and mould a common opinion, besides a capacity to understand the various dimensions of a problem and to represent the common interests before the outsiders are the chief traits which help a man to acquire this position of leadership. The incumbent is generally chosen through informal group discussions and by arriving at a consensus. As ascertained during this study, the dominant sentiments reported among the Pani Yeravas in this regard are those of cooperation and coordination rather than those of competition, conflict and confrontation. The *Chemmakara* cannot, and usually does not, function as an autocrat. He is accessible to all, listens to various view points put forth and finally takes a decision regarding the course of action to be taken. In Bhadragola colony of Pani Yeravas for instance Bollappa is the *Chemmakara*. He is also a member of the village panchayat at present. Recently, when the authorities of the Tribal Development Block granted loans to Yeravas for the purchase of milch cows and came forward to supply material for the construction of cow sheds it was this Bollappa

who functioned as the local leader and the chief spokesman. The beneficiaries had to make several trips to Ponnampet, the Block headquarters and also had to represent their difficulties to the veterinary surgeon during his visits to the colony. Instead of each beneficiary proceeding to Ponnampet on his own and explaining his problems to the concerned officials and the surgeon individually the beneficiaries met each other under the auspices of the *Chemmakara*, discussed among themselves on each occasion in detail so that finally Bollappa would lead them to the concerned officials and speak on their behalf. Bollappa is maintaining good contacts with the managerial staff of the plantations, small planters and landlords of this neighbourhood. Quite often he meets these persons on behalf of his fellowmen. Occasionally he visits Sai Sankara Ashrama at Ponnampet to take the advice of its chief who is a social worker and is devoted to the propagation of spiritualism. Every settlement or a cluster of smaller settlements of Pani Yeravas has its own version of a leader like Bollappa.

18.3 *Attali*, the tribal priest also enjoys a position of considerable prestige within the community. He is the custodian of the traditional lore and his main function is to ensure that the customary practices, especially those that are associated with death rites are duly adhered to. An *Attali* may select his own son or sons or any one else to assist him in his profession and to eventually succeed to his own position. *Thammadi* commands the respect of his fellow men on account of his uncommon ability to become possessed by his patron deity and function as a medium. In each locality there would be one or two elderly men who take the lead in case of need. Though there are a few literate and educated persons most of them are comparatively young and have not been able to establish themselves as leaders of the community. Education as such does not confer any special respectability or positions of prestige within the community. The number of educated persons is itself quite small at present and it is only during the past couple of decades that the Pani Yeravas are evincing some interest in sending their children to school regularly.

18.4. Panjiri Yeravas: Informal councils of elders, consisting of the *Kunjukara* (headman of the locality), *Kanjneladis* (tribal pri-

ests) and heads of different *Chemmas*, constitute the chief organs of social control. These are of a purely local nature and are not arranged in any hierarchical order. As between the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas, the latter are more vociferous and are said to evince a keener interest in the effective functioning of these councils. Their kinship network is wider in terms of its spatial configuration and coverage of persons regarded as one's relatives and among them exchange of social visits is also much more common. As a result, misunderstandings and disputes arise somewhat more frequently and as if by necessity the councils are functioning with greater vigour. The complaints dealt with are mostly concerned with disharmony in the family, extra-marital affairs, delay in performing *Kota* the funerary rite and failure to give away the prescribed gifts to the concerned persons on such occasions. Generally, these issues are raised by the aggrieved when people assemble to participate in a marriage ceremony or a funeral feast or in any other social or religious function. The aggrieved persons seize such an opportunity to put pressure on the elders to have a council of elders convened so that their pleas are heard and their problems are resolved. If their requests are ignored they, along with their supporters, resort to social withdrawal, that is they refuse to take part in the feast until they are heard. The *Kanjneladis* present on the occasion are thus compelled to take the initiative and constitute an informal council by inviting a couple of neutrally disposed elders also to sit with them and hear the case. The offended as well as the offenders present their own versions and after a prolonged debate the issue is resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. The guilty are asked to mend their ways and to pay the nominal fine which the council may deem fit to impose. Usually, the fine is imposed as so many brass bangles (a ready stock of which would be available with the *Kanjneladis*) and levied in the form of cash (being the imputed value of the bangles, each bangle being priced at 25 paise or a little more). The amount so collected is spent on drinks by the members of the council. While minor misdemeanours are viewed lightly, the demand for a divorce is granted when it is realised that the differences are irreconcilable. Occasionally, rather than of excommunication the issue of admitting a person of another caste into the tribal fold comes up before the council. The Panjiri Yeravas are somewhat

more liberal in their outlook and are more accommodative in this regard. At the locality level, the *Kunjukara* functions as the leader and chief spokesman of the community. If there be a *Kanjneladi* within the locality he too is regarded as a leader and the two leaders coordinate their activities. The ordinary Yeravas explain their problem to these leaders and seek their assistance in securing work, raising loans, submitting applications or representations to offices of the government and in such other matters. As a result, these functionaries enjoy a position of prestige within the community. They move about with comparative ease among the field level officials of the government and other outsiders and have a wider circle of acquaintances covering local leaders, landlords and coffee planters. They wield considerable influence and because of their helpful and compassionate nature the generality of the Panjiri Yeravas follow their advice. In other words, the traditional forms of social control and leadership are enjoying wide acceptability. The Panjiri Yeravas also have considerable faith in divination and the institution of *Thammadi*. These functionaries are succeeded by their own sons or sister's sons depending more upon personality traits than on any inherent right. Educated persons and those in salaried jobs (who however are not quite numerous) are also respected so long as they continue to mingle freely with their kinsfolk and retain a helpful temperament. As yet they do not constitute an elite section of the society.

18.5 During the past couple of years, it is reported, a new type of leadership is emerging within the community. For example, in the neighbourhood of Tithmathi, three young men affiliated to a national political party are evincing interest in mobilising their fellowmen with the intention of forming an association with an elected body to manage its activities. They visit the venues where marriages are being celebrated or where *Koota* rites are being performed, move around among the assembled men and expound their own views on social and economic matters as well as educate the people about the welfare measures undertaken by the Government agencies and solicit support for their plans of action. The leader of this group is a matriculate and a village panchayat member. Of the other two, while one is a village panchayat

member, the other is not an office bearer of any organisation. Incidentally, the former is an illiterate and the latter has completed primary level and has secured a piece of land wherein he wants to raise coffee plants. So far, this team has been operating on a low profile and has not posed any threat either to the traditional leadership or to the continuance of their social customs. As a result, in most of the places visited by this team, it is said, there would be a sympathetic audience which would include the *Kanjneladis* and *Kunjukaras* as well. The general feeling seems to be that there is an urgent need for organising their people on modern lines so that they can be more vigilant and thus derive the maximum benefits from the programmes initiated by the government for the upliftment of the Scheduled Tribes. Though this has not achieved any tangible results so far, it has undoubtedly stirred up a new wave of thought and has paved the way for changes in the near future. On account of their earnestness, these three men have earned the esteem of a sizeable section of the Panjiri Yeravas.

19. SOCIAL REFORM AND WELFARE

As societal groups the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas are not being subjected to any form of ill-treatment or social discrimination by the Kodavas and other dominant communities among whom they have been living from generations. Since they are mainly landless labourers their socio-economic status is quite low. Either by tradition or in actual practice they are not associated with any unclean or demeaning occupations. By and large they are adherent to their customs and practices and are leading a social life of their own without undue interference from others. As in the past, at present also, most of their men and women are very fond of alcoholic drinks and non-vegetarian food including pork. As communities they do not seem to have ever been chosen as target groups for social reforms by any voluntary agency. So far they have not come under the influence of movements propagating vegetarianism, temperance, prohibition, change of faith and such other social reforms aimed at the elevation of one's social status. A passing mention may however be made of the activities of the volunteers of Sri Sai Shankara Ashrama, Ponnampet among the Pani Yeravas of Bhadragola colony during 1976 and the next

couple of years. A band of social workers frequently visited the colony, mingled with the tribals and educated their men and women about the need to maintain personal and environmental cleanliness, about the importance of modern education and the need to send their children to schools, organised a *Bhajane mandali* and finally started a kindergarten school (at present managed and controlled by the Social Welfare Department of the State Government) This exposure seems to have had a beneficial effect on the local leaders and youngmen in that it has infused in them a certain amount of self confidence and boldness in their dealings with the outsiders. These persons, it is reported, occasionally visit the *ashrama* and seek the guidance of the *Swamiji* in resolving their problems.

19.1 Social welfare is closely linked with economic welfare. As has been mentioned earlier, about a century ago most of the Yeravas were agrestic serfs and were virtually under the mercy of the landlords. This situation has undergone a radical change. A majority of the Yeravas are no longer attached to the landlords. They are more or less casual agricultural and plantation labourers working for different masters with whom they do not have any patron-client relationship. A few among them have acquired lands and livestock while a few others have taken up salaried jobs and have thus been leading an economically independent life. In this region, from the very beginning, Government is the only agency which has been working for the upliftment of the tribal groups including the Yeravas. A beginning was made in this direction more than a century ago when the then government initiated measures to put down slavery and agrestic serfdom and adopted a liberal land grant policy towards the tribals and other down-trodden sections of the society. Over the decades, obviously Yeravas too have derived some benefits from such welfare measures either directly or in an indirect manner. The government-sponsored welfare programmes were considerably intensified after the attainment of independence. In view of the relative concentration of Scheduled Tribes, Virajpet taluk received greater attention and during the 1950's colonies were set up at several places. Most of the tribals who moved into the colonies were allotted lands for cultivation and supplied with bullocks and agri-

cultural implements. Some of the Yeravas too were induced to take up residence in these colonies and work as labourers in plantations, forestry occupations and agricultural fields and also clear the jungle and cultivate the lands granted to them and raise livestock animals. At or near these colonies *ashram* schools were started for the benefit of tribal children and this was followed up with the establishment of hostels for Scheduled Tribes at important centres. Because of the governmental policy of reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the local bodies, several Yeravas have been enabled to serve the community as members of village panchayats. A couple of them have served on the Taluk Development Board and have contested the legislative assembly elections as well. The developments during the past three decades have undoubtedly broadened the outlook of the Yeravas, generated in their youth a new set of aspirations, modified their world-view and, to some extent at least, eroded their deep-rooted sense of seclusion. The literacy level is on the increase and with the passage of each year more and more of their boys and girls are being enrolled for secondary and post-matric education.

19.2 Implementation of welfare programmes gained further momentum in 1976 with the launching of the Tribal Sub Plans in selected areas. In Karnataka, five compact areas where the population of the Scheduled Tribes exceeded the ten thousand mark were chosen and, as envisaged in the Sub Plan, Integrated Tribal Development Project Blocks were set up with headquarters at Ponnampet (covering the tribal pockets in Kodagu district), Mudigere (covering the tribal pockets in 4 taluks of Chikmagalur district), Puttur (covering the tribal pockets in the 4 southern taluks of Dakshina Kannad district), Udupi (covering the other 4 northern taluks of Dakshina Kannad district) and Heggeda-devankote (covering 8 taluks of Mysore district). Ponnampet Block covers the area where the Pani Yeravas and Panjiri Yeravas are mainly found. As a first step, a bench mark survey was carried out to identify and prepare a list of all the households belonging to Scheduled Tribes, including the Yeravas. According to this survey the population of Scheduled Tribes in the area under the jurisdiction of the ITDP Ponnampet added up to 25,985 and that of the Yeravas amounted to 14,321. Apart from the Yeravas who have been listed under the

three sub divisions of Panjiri Yeravas (4487). Pani Yeravas (9730) and Badaga Yeravas (104), the other Scheduled Tribes enumerated in this area are Jenu Kuruba (6897), Betta Kuruba (1806), Maratha (1341), Meda (315), Koraga (61), Kudiya (863) and Soliga (354). After the completion of this preliminary work, from 1976-77 itself benefits began to flow in different forms to the Scheduled Tribes and their colonies under various heads of expenditure such as agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, housing, education, health and nutrition etc. Since tribewise and blockwise statistics are not available, the magnitude of benefits accrued to the Yeravas as such during the period 1976-80 cannot be assessed. A rough idea about the implementation of the Tribal Sub Plan in the State as a whole may be had from the following. (Pages 140-141)

19.3 Actual expenditure during the four year period falls short of even fifty per cent of the allotted funds. Administration is the only item on which money has been spent much in excess of the allocation. Successful implementation of the formulated plan is obviously beset with a multiplicity of problems. In order to provide an insight into the nature of annual programmes drawn up under the Tribal Sub Plan the details relating to the year 1980-81 are furnished in Appendix 3. In so far as the impact of the Sub Plan among the Yeravas is concerned, in a general way it may be observed that several students have received scholarships, sets of dresses and text books; quite a few students have utilised hostel facilities; a few youngmen have been imparted training in fishing, bee-keeping, gardening and carpentry; a few young women have likewise been trained in tailoring; a few households each have derived benefits under the schemes to grant lands, house-sites, houses, material for construction of houses and sheds, agricultural implements, bullocks, bullock carts, milch cows, pigs, poultry birds and animal food. If each item of grant or subsidy is counted separately in accordance with the usual practice the total number of beneficiaries would be quite substantial. It is indeed rare for the same set of individuals or families to continue to receive benefits under all or most of the schemes all at a time or in quick succession. The benefits are generally distributed in a dilute form to a larger section of the population. This larger coverage has however resulted in an awakening among the masses and a feeling that the government should do much more to improve their socio-

**Statement showing itemwise allocation of funds and actual expenditure under the Tribal Sub Plan during
the 4 years from 1976-77 to 1979-80.**

Sl. No.	Head of account	3	4	5
		Alotment (Rs. in lakhs 0.00)	Actual expen- diture (Rs. in lakhs 0.00)	Total No. of beneficiaries (P : Persons F : Families)
1	2	3	4	5
1	Administration	24.50	43.38	—
2	Agriculture & Soil Conservation	105.00	34.75	9945 F
3	Horticulture	29.20	20.93	1120 F
4	Animal Husbandry	73.00	34.26	1357 F
5	Fisheries	11.00	3.60	382 P
6	Minor Irrigation	50.00	30.89	1639 F
7	Forestry	45.00	22.76	8679 F
8	Cooperation	23.00	10.42	9488 P
9	Rural Electrification	74.00	8.50	—
10	Industries and Commerce	40.10	22.81	877 P
11	Sericulture	27.50	8.72	363 F
12	Communications	43.00	36.60	—

13	Education	83.00	36.23	60076 P
14	Health	43.00	8.24	—
15	Housing	57.00	38.22	2212 F
16	Water Supply	83.00	36.92	—
17	Employment and Training	9.50	4.17	135 P
18	Information and Publicity	3.50	1.75	165 P
19	Nutrition	15.00	13.31	18087 P
20	Primitive Tribes (Jenu Kurubas)	8.00	7.10	4153 P
21	Small Farmers Development Agency	22.00	0.71	174 P
	Total	869.30	424.27	

economic conditions. Their level of aspiration has risen considerably and many among them are hopeful of a better future. Their primary desire is to have a house of their own either in a tribal colony or on a plot of land granted to them so that they need no longer be dependent on the mercy of the landlord. Their plea is that when they themselves have no place of their own to stay where can they accommodate a bullock, or a cow or a pig which the government may like to give them gratis. They feel restrained by the very fact that they are under the mercy of the landlord and send their children to school or seek work elsewhere only after obtaining the permission of the landlord. Their other desire is to secure land where they can either cultivate paddy or raise coffee plants. They feel that the lands granted to them should be fit for immediate occupation and that such a grant should be supplemented by the grant of necessary inputs such as bullocks, agricultural implements, livestock animals and, more than all, by maintenance subsidy at least for one or two years so that they may devote their full attention to the development of the lands granted. In the matter of vocational training, the general feeling is that the present programme to impart short term training in fishing, carpentry, smithy etc., are not beneficial as these have not enabled such persons to seek employment elsewhere or take up self employment on their own. They feel that their children should be trained in such trades as would enable them to secure jobs in large factories. Apparently the Yeravas are not fully satisfied with the various welfare measures taken up by the government. But, they do agree that it is mainly on account of the intervention of the government during the past three decades that there has been some improvement in their socio-economic status and their living conditions. According to the elders of the community, as compared to the pre-independence days their people are now living in an atmosphere of greater freedom with regard to their movement in villages, in their dealings with people belonging to other communities, in their choice of work and also in their choice of dress material. Perhaps more tangible results could have been achieved if a much more comprehensive plan for simultaneous all round development were to have been drawn up at the very initial stage and implemented continuously in selected tracts covering small areas or fewer families rather than trying to reach a larger section of the population covering a wide area. However, it has to be conceded that every approach has its own advantages as well as disadvantages and whichever approach is chosen there is always enough scope for

comment, for no plan can be perfect both in its formulation and implementation.

20. CONCLUSION

The general impression that one could gather from the available published material on Yeravas is that the Yerava tribe is a homogeneous unit consisting of people speaking a common language, having a common origin and identity, and sharing the same set of socio-cultural traditions and customs. The Yeravas of Kodagu have all along been regarded as a single tribe consisting of the four sub-divisions of Pani Yerava, Panjiri Yerava, Badaga Yerava and Kage Yerava. The language spoken by them has at times been treated as a dialect of Malayalam and at other times accorded the status of a separate language. The present study has revealed that the field situation is totally different. The Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas are separate tribes having their own distinctive identities, speaking their own languages and having distinct sets of socio-cultural traditions. The most striking difference between them lies in their social organisation: while Pani Yeravas represent a patriarchal group the Panjiri Yeravas represent a matriarchal group. In fact, there appears to be considerable evidence to support the view that the Pani Yeravas and Panjiri Yeravas are identical with the Paniyans and Adiyans of the Wynad region of the adjoining Kerala State. The Badaga Yeravas met with in Virajpet taluk too belong to two distinct groups, and except for the name they have nothing in common. One of these groups claims identity with the Soligas of Mysore district and the other, which hails from Heggadadevankote of Mysore district, claims to represent a group of the original Panjiri Yeravas settled in the villages of that taluk. Both these groups are patrilineal and speak Kannada both at home and with outsiders. The Kage Yeravas are said to be quite indistinguishable from the Pani Yeravas inasmuch as that it is difficult to trace out people who describe themselves by this group name. The main thing that these groups have in common is that they are using the term Yerava as an appendage to their proper tribal names and have therefore been regarded as belonging to the Scheduled Tribe notified under the nomenclature 'Yerava'. There are similarities in their historical past and economic backgrounds. They are generally viewed as the descendants of the one-time denizens of forests who were enslaved and subsequently enlisted as agrestic serfs of the yester years. They are not associated with any unclean or defiling professions or habits.

Consequently, they are free from social stigmas like untouchability and unapproachability. However, their status in the hierarchical structure of the local castes and communities is quite low. This is mainly due to their economic plight. They belong to the class of landless labourers who are totally dependent on the local landlords and coffee planters for work and wages. Both men and women, including the old persons, toil in the fields to earn what may be termed as a hand-to-mouth living. They have their customs and beliefs regarding the rites and rituals associated with the life cycle and their gods and other supernatural beings. They have been leading a quiet and unobtrusive social life of their own since generations. The impression gained during this field study is that, when viewed as societal groups, the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas both represent tradition-oriented societies which are reluctant to undergo sudden or radical changes. So far, they have not been chosen as a target group by any social or voluntary organisation engaged in promoting reforms. Nevertheless, changes are taking place at a slow pace in all the spheres of life due to natural forces in an almost imperceptible manner. The rate of change is of late however picking up momentum and this phenomenon may be attributed to the dawn of independence and the concomitant changes in the politico-administrative set up and the ushering in of the Welfare State ideal. During the past three decades, officials of the various welfare and developmental departments of the government have been frequently approaching these people with schemes designed to provide them with a variety of material benefits. An important off-shoot of this activity is that the Yeravas have, by and large, shed their characteristic inhibitions and their intuitive urge to keep aloof from the main stream of the society. Nowadays, they are more prone to freely mix with the outsiders including strangers and give outward expression to their thoughts and feelings. The general literacy level among them is gradually increasing. They have been evincing a keener interest in sending their children to schools and in encouraging the students to continue the studies beyond the primary and secondary levels. Economically, their conditions are improving and their levels of aspiration have risen. Unlike in the past, they have now begun to entertain the thought of the morrow. Socially and culturally, they are more exposed than ever before to external influences and naturally they are being conditioned to accept changes in these spheres too. Adherence to their traditional customs and practices may soon become a thing of the past.

APPENDIX-1

Badaga Yeravas of Kutta and its Neighbourhood

There are a few families of Yeravas in and around Kutta village who style themselves as Badaga Yeravas but claim that they are basically Panjiri Yeravas. They are in-migrants from Heggadadevankote taluk of Mysore district and are even now maintaining social links with their kinsmen in their parental villages. Kutta is situated close to the borders of Kerala State and lies in the south-eastern corner of Virajpet taluk. On its eastern side there is the Nagarahole Forest belonging to Virajpet taluk itself and beyond that lies the vast expanse of forest lands belonging to Heggadadevankote taluk which too is on the borders of Kerala. The route from Heggadadevankote to Kutta passes through Kerala State and the entire tract comprising the western most portions of Heggadadevankote taluk, the adjacent territories of Kerala and the southern portion of Virajpet taluk share the same physiographical features. The version regarding the origin of this group of Yeravas is that a couple of centuries ago their forefathers moved out of their forest habitats eastwards and settled in villages now forming part of Heggadadevankote taluk. In order to overcome the difficulties they encountered in obtaining the sanction of the local officers like Nadu Shetty and Desha Shetty, for celebrating the marriages in accordance with their own primitive practices they are said to have adopted the local customs and practices. In course of time they severed their links with their parental groups completely and became a part of the village community like any other caste Hindus by assuming the name Yerava Gowda. Even in the past, it is said, during the peak seasons a few among them used to migrate to Wynad and Kodagu areas in search of work in paddy fields and coffee plantations. During the post-independence period, having learnt that the Yeravas are notified as a Scheduled Tribe in Kodagu district these people gave up the suffix Gowda and instead began indentifying themselves as Badaga Yeravas in

order to distinguish their group from that of the Pani Yeravas and the Panjiri Yeravas. On this basis these people could secure the benefits earmarked for the Scheduled Tribes. Except their claim that they are known as Yerava Gowdas in their natal villages of Heggadaevankote taluk they have no other explanation to substantiate that they are basically Yeravas. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that according to the Bench Mark Survey carried out in 1976 by the Integrated Tribal Development Project authorities, in Heggadadevankote taluk as many as 914 persons identified themselves simply as Yeravas while another 150 and 108 persons returned themselves as Panjiri Yeravas and Pani Yeravas respectively.

This group of Badaga Yeravas speak Kannada both among themselves and with outsiders. They constitute a separate endogamous group and are divided among themselves into eight clans. These clans bear the names of geographical territories or villages and perhaps refer to the original settlements set up by different families of their forefathers when they moved into the villages of Heggadadevankote taluk. These clans are formed into two groups known as *Kattemane* and *Gadimane*. While the clans belonging to the *Kattemane* are named after Begur, Beeremalli, Moolehosalli and Maganahalli-Kadu, those belonging to the *Gadimane* are named after Magge, Kote, Saragur and Mullur. All these clans are supposed to be of an equal status in social and religious matters. They are patrilineal and, like the other Yeravas, are said to be in favour of living in nuclear family households.

Among the Badaga Yeravas cross-cousin marriages are preferred. The initiative for a marriage proposal comes from the parents of the boy and such forms of marriage as elopement service etc., are not in vogue. It is however customary to pay a bride price of Rs. 25 and paise 25. Once the alliance is found acceptable, *Veelye Sastra*, the betrothal ceremony is performed at the boy's residence. The marriage proper consists of the main rituals known as *Chappara*, *Devara taruvudu*, *Kankana kattuvudu* and *Dhare*. The marriage feast should consist of vegetarian dishes only. Serving of alcoholic drinks is taboo. The marriage rites are held underneath a pandal put up in front of the bridegroom's

house. The marriage expenses are generally borne by the parents of the bridegroom in full. Though they consult Brahmin priests to ascertain an auspicious day and time for the marriage they do not require the services of such priests for solemnization of the marriage. Divorce is permitted after the efforts of the elders for a reconciliation meet with failure. Divorcees and widows are free to marry again and such a marriage is known as *Kudavali*.

The dead are buried. It is customary to place the dead body in an oblong niche provided for on one side at the bottom of the deep grave in such a way that its head is pointed towards the south. On the third day a rite known as *halu-thuppa* is performed by the sons of the deceased. They visit the burial ground and pour a little quantity of a mixture of milk and ghee on the grave and place a plantain leaf on it and serve some cooked rice, ghee and snacks to be later eaten away by the crows. On the eleventh day the spirit of the deceased is invoked at a temple and pacified by serving food and drinks. On the 12th day the funeral feast is held and close relatives are invited to participate on the occasion. It is customary to prepare non-vegetarian dishes for this occasion.

The Badaga Yeravas offer worship to the gods of the Hindu pantheon and occasionally visit the local temples. Madeshvara of Bheemanakolli in Kollegal taluk is said to be their chief deity. The other deities they worship in particular are Deshada Maramma, Dandu Maramma and Chikkadevamma. These deities are propitiated by the sacrificial offering of hens. The Badaga Yeravas also have their own temples (small shrines) in their settlements. They believe in soothsaying and divination. For this purpose they have their own mediums who easily move into a trance, listen to the problems narrated and communicate remedial measures which include propitiation of the deities and ancestral spirits by the sacrificial offerings of hens. They sing the traditional songs associated with specific deities. The musical instruments in use are the large bronze cymbals (*Kamsale*) and a dried up gourd shell (*Sore-burude*) filled with gulaganji seeds which produces a rattling sound when held in a hand and shaken with vehemence. For learning this art of singing as also that of handling these musical instruments to produce the rhythmic sounds in the prescribed

periodicity one has to put in several years of practice and should have a sense of dedication.

Both men and women among them work as casual labourers in coffee plantations and paddy fields. A few cultivate the small plots of lands that they have been lucky enough to secure from the government. Their economic conditions are similar to those of the Panjiri Yeravas. In the matter of dress and dwellings as also food habits they do not differ much from the Panjiri Yeravas of this neighbourhood. They are also found residing in tribal colonies and are found to have received benefits extended from time to time by the government under various schemes being implemented for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. However, it has to be conceded that sufficient evidence is not forthcoming to substantiate their claims that they represent a group that branched out from the main community of Panjiri Yeravas. They have their roots in Heggadadevankote taluk and their exact identity is not known.

APPENDIX-2

Badaga Yeravas of Northern Parts of Virajpet

Badaga Yeravas are chiefly found in the neighbourhood of Maldare forest which is located in the northern parts of Virajpet taluk. There is a spill over of these persons across the border, for a few of them are also met with in areas belonging to Piriapatna taluk of Mysore district. According to the knowledgeable elders of the community, the prefix *Badaga* is a derivative of *Badava* (a poor man) and denotes their poverty-stricken conditions. They are also of the opinion that since *Badaga* is an independent Kannada word connoting the north, the prefix may denote their northern origins. It is possible that the term *Badaga Yerava* may have come into use to distinguish these people from the Yeravas hailing from or domiciled in the southern parts of the Virajpet taluk and further south in areas now belonging to Kerala State. They believe that they are the descendants of some of the Soligas who in the past used to accompany the armies of the Mysore Kings during their campaigns in Kodagu region and were stranded on a particular occasion and were thus forced by circumstances to settle down here. They are however unable to explain how and why their real tribal name was given up in preference to another one, namely *Yerava*. Perhaps it is the local people who assigned a name with which they were more familiar to this group of settlers who enlisted themselves as agricultural labourers. It is also probable that these men married *Yerava* women in course of time and raised their families.

The *Badaga Yeravas* are patrilineal and patrilocal. They are organised into lineage groups which in turn form part of their clan organisation. In any village or its neighbourhood where they are met with, there would generally be two sets of households related to each other by marital bonds. Marriages are arranged by the elders and generally the boy's parents take the initiative and also bear the marriage expenses. Among them cross-cousin marriage

is almost a rule. Like the other caste-Hindus of their neighbourhood, the Badaga Yeravas too utilise the services of Brahmin priests (or Lingayat priests) for fixing the date of marriage and also for its solemnization. *Dhare* is the chief rite associated with marriage. Divorce is allowed as a last resort, that is when the efforts of the elders to effect an amicable settlement prove futile. Divorcees and widows are free to marry again. Such a remarriage, known as *Kudavali*, does not involve any loss of face for the woman or her children. The dead are disposed of by burial. On being informed about the death, their headman and the other relatives assemble at the house of the deceased and ensure that the customary funeral rites are duly performed. The corpse is carried on a bier to the grave yard where a few of the relatives would have dug out a deep rectangular pit with a niche at the bottom to accommodate the body. It is the duty of the eldest son to throw the first fistful of earth on the corpse of his father after it is lowered into the grave. But, in the case of the corpse of his mother, this duty devolves on his mother's father if alive or one of her brothers. On the third day, the sons of the deceased have their heads shaved, visit the graveyard and pour a little quantity of ghee and milk at the spot of burial. Ritual pollution is observed for 10 days. On the 11th day every member of the household takes a purificatory bath and the washerman purifies the premises as well by sprinkling the water in which Fullers' earth is dissolved. The assembled relatives visit the grave and offer cooked food to the deceased. This food is consumed by the crows. After their return from the grave the relatives are treated to a sumptuous feast which includes non-vegetarian food and arrack.

The Badaga Yeravas speak Kannada among themselves as also with others. Most of them are unlingual. Their oral literature consists of songs in praise of the deities they hold in reverence. They are Hindus and their main deities are Biligiri Rangaswamy, Basava, Siddheshwara, Veerabhadra, Madiah, Honnuru Devaru and Piriya-pattanada-amma. They also propitiate spirits of a lower order such as Gulika, Kuliya, Chowdi and Chamundi by the occasional offering of hens in sacrifice. They have faith in divination and believe that problems can be solved by propitiating the spirits, including their ancestral spirits. Once a year, on an appointed day

the headman of the lineage arranges for offering a sacrifice to the ancestral spirits. The expenses are met by contributions and male members of the lineage participate in the rites which include a sacrificial offering of hens and a feast thereafter. Apart from this, the Badaga Yeravas observe Ugadi (the lunar new year day) and Deepavali, the festival of lights.

Both men and women mainly work as agricultural labourers. They also work in forestry occupations. A few among them who work regularly as forest workers cultivate small patches of forest land in the forests near Avaragunda. None among them owns any agricultural land. Their livestock possession and material wealth are very scanty. In general they may be grouped among the class of casual labourers who are leading a life of hand to mouth existence.

APPENDIX-3

Brief note on Tribal Sub Plan in Karnataka

The Tribal Sub Plan was launched in the State during 1976. In order to review the progress achieved by various development departments in the Tribal Sub Plan areas, the Government constituted a State Level Committee under the Chairmanship of the State Chief Secretary. The Director of Social Welfare and two of his assistants, namely a Joint Director and a Research Officer were placed in charge of implementation of the plan at the State level and, to function as a Liaison Officer, a Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Project) was also appointed and stationed at Mysore. Project Level Authorities, comprising the Deputy Commissioner of the district (Chairman) and the implementing officers of the development departments (members), were constituted at the district level. The actual implementation of the plan was entrusted to the Project Coordinator and his team of Welfare Inspectors.

In Karnataka, according to 1971 census, the districts of Chikmagalur, Dakshin Kannad (South Kanara), Kodagu (Coorg) and Mysore have a relatively heavy concentration of the Scheduled Tribes. But, even in these districts, none of the taluks satisfied the norms prescribed for selection under the Tribal Sub Plan, namely at least 50 per cent of the population should belong to Scheduled Tribes. However, these areas satisfied the relaxed norms, for these districts comprised concurrent administrative areas having a Scheduled Tribes population of 10,000 or more. Accordingly five Integrated Tribal Development Blocks were constituted to cover such areas in these four districts.

Sl. No.	Location of head quarters of the ITDP	District/ taluks covered under the ITDP	Bench Mark Survey 1976		Numerically dominant Scheduled Tribes
			House-holds	Population	
1.	Heggada-devankôte	All the taluks of Mysore district	5125	22892	Soliga, Jenukuruba and Bettakuruba
2.	Mudigere	All the taluks of Chikmagalur district	1555	7965	Gowdalu and Hasalaru
3.	Ponnampet	All the taluks of Kodagu district	6066	25958	Yerava and Jenukuruba
4.	Puttur	The taluks of Puttur, Sulya, Bantval and Mangalore of Dakshina Kannad district	5218	31602	Marati and Koraga
5.	Udupi	The taluks of Udupi, Karkal, Beltangady and Coondapur of Dakshina Kannad district	6759	41656	Marati, Koraga and Malekudia
TOTAL			24723	130073	

The funds allotted under the Sub Plan for the years 1976-77, 77-78, 78-79 and 79-80 stood at Rs. 125 lakhs, Rs. 150 lakhs, Rs. 231 lakhs and Rs. 363 lakhs respectively. The actual expenditure however added up to Rs. 58.04 lakhs, Rs. 48.72 lakhs, Rs. 109.79 lakhs and Rs. 207.71 lakhs during the corresponding four years. As may be noticed, the allotted funds have not been fully utilised at any time. The total outlay for the year 1980-81 is of the order of Rs. 338.17 lakhs. Sectorwise programmes drawn up for implementation during 1980-81 are indicated below with a view to providing a deeper insight into the nature and scope of the proposals.

1. Agriculture (Allotment : Rs.29.17 Lakhs):—

Supply 250 pairs of bullocks to 250 households possessing agricultural lands (Rs. 5 lakhs); supply equipments like sprayers etc., (Rs.3.80 lakhs); supply agricultural inputs like High Yielding Variety of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides (Rs. 6.91 lakhs); supply bullock carts to 466 households; sink irrigation wells in selected tribal colonies which are lacking in such a facility (Rs.3.17 lakhs); conduct field days at 120 places (Rs.6000); impart training to 150 persons in improved methods of cultivation (Rs.8000); 250 farmers to be taken on a guided tour to various parts of the State to have a look at the fields where improved methods of agriculture have been adopted successfully (Rs. 25,000).

2. Soil Conservation (Allotment : Rs.8 lakhs):—

Supply soil conservation implements to the tribal farmers (Rs. 1 lakh); re-shape about 150 hectares of paddy fields belonging to tribals (Rs.2.25 lakhs); take up contour-bunding of about 900 hectares (Rs.2.25 lakhs); take up graded bunding work in about 100 hectares (Rs. 25,000) and take up bench terracing work in about 50 hectares (Rs.75,000).

3. Horticulture (Allotment : Rs. 10 lakhs):—

Supply saplings of fruit-yielding plants to about 1400 households (Rs. 46,000); maintain the model orchards developed in about 132 hectares (Rs. 3.78 lakhs); impart training to 50 persons in the field of horticultural development under the Leadership Training and Worker Training Programme (Rs. 2.13 lakhs).

4. Animal Husbandry (Allotment: Rs. 13 lakhs):—

Supply 84 milch cows to 84 families (Rs.3.78 lakhs); establish 80 poultry units (Rs.2.97 lakhs), 75 piggery units (Rs.3 lakhs) and 125 breeding boar units (Rs.2.25 lakhs) for the benefit of 80, 75 and 125 families respectively; supply of drugs and medicines and extend medical care to livestock animals and birds (Rs.1 lakh) through veterinary institutions established in tribal areas.

5. Fisheries (Allotment: Rs 7 lakhs):—

Impart training in fishing operations to 220 persons; supply equipment such as nylon nets etc.,to 4 groups.

6. Minor Irrigation (Allotment : Rs. 22 Lakhs):—

Construction of new tanks and pick-up channels; expansion of the storage capacity of existing tanks by desilting and such other processes.

7. *Co-operation (Allotment : Rs 10 lakhs):—*

Extend the facility of managerial subsidies to the existing large sized agricultural multipurpose societies (LAMPS) (Rs. 1.55 lakhs); invest on share capital in 9 LAMPS (Rs. 3 lakhs); render financial assistance to 8 LAMPS for the construction of 8 godowns (Rs. 1.19 lakhs); open 200 purchase points at selected places in the project areas (Rs.2 lakhs); and extend financial assistance to LAMPS in order to ensure that larger and larger number of tribal people are enrolled as members of these societies (Rs.2.26 lakhs).

8. *Forests (Allotment : Rs. 15 lakhs):—*

It is proposed to raise trees which bear edible fruits in and around tribal areas (Rs. 15 lakhs).

9. *Rural Electrification (Allotment : Rs. 22 lakhs):—*

Electrification of 38 tribal colonies by providing street lights and house to house connections free of cost.

10. *Industries and Commerce (Allotment : Rs. 10 lakhs):—*

Continue to maintain the 12 Industrial Centres which were started during 1977-78 and 1978-79 (Rs.7 lakhs); continue to maintain the Carpentry Training Centre at Heggadadevankote and the Bee-Keeping Centre at Belthangadi (Rs. 3 lakhs).

11. *Sericulture (Allotment: Rs. 10 lakhs):—*

Establish one tassar silk grainage farm at Basavanahalli (Rs.2.83 lakhs); establish mulberry nurseries at 8 places (Rs. 3.80 lakhs); establish 24 common cocoon rearing houses (Rs. 2.40 lakhs); supply cocoon rearing equipment to 25 farmers (Rs.37,000) and continue the special staff posted for implementation of Tribal Sub Plan Schemes (Rs. 60,000).

12. *Communication (Allotment : Rs. 25 lakhs):—*

Complete the 16 road-works which were taken up during 1977-78.

13. *Education (Allotment : Rs. 37 lakhs):—*

Construction of 2 high schools started during previous years (Rs. 1.75 lakhs); grant-in-aid for construction of 110 class rooms (Rs.11 lakhs); attendance scholarships to 5000 students (Rs.2 lakhs); supply of text-books, stationery and uniforms to 16000 primary school children (Rs.2 lakhs), appointment of 50 School Mothers (Rs.12.50 lakhs) and appointment of 300 additional teachers (Rs. 7.75 lakhs).

14. Health (Allotment : Rs. 18 lakhs):—

Continue to maintain the existing Primary Health Centres (Rs. 2.15 lakhs) and 6 Mobile Health Units (Rs. 4.86 lakhs); establish a new mobile dispensary at M. Chikathelalu (Rs. 1.83 lakhs); appointment of additional Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wives (Rs. 4.12 lakhs); strengthen the staff attached to 6 Mobile Health Units (Rs. 74,000); appointment of special staff (Rs. 24,000); grant of special allowance to staff working in Tribal Sub Plan areas (Rs. 1.34 lakhs); continue the maintenance of two mobile dispensaries (Rs. 2.42 lakhs) and continuation of the diet and nutrition survey (Rs. 30,000).

15. Housing (Allotment : Rs. 30 lakhs):—

Construction of 1200 houses for being granted to the houseless tribals.

16. Water Supply (Allotment : Rs. 28 lakhs):—

Sinking of 280 drinking water wells in tribal colonies.

17. Employment and Training (Allotment : Rs. 5 lakhs):—

Maintain the 5 Training Centres established during the previous years.

18. Information and Publicity (Allotment : Rs. 1 lakhs):—

Organise *Karnataka Darshana* tours covering important places in the State for the benefit of the tribals; produce one documentary film depicting the socio-economic conditions of the tribals.

19. Administration (Allotment : Rs. 15 lakhs):—

Continuation of the establishment of the Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Projects) at Mysore and the establishments of the five Project Coordinators as also that of the Officer on Special Duty (Primitive Tribes).

20. Nutrition (Allotment : Rs. 8 lakhs):—

Take up special nutrition programmes to cover about 18000 children and expectant mothers.

21. Small Farmers Development Agencies (Allotment : Rs. 15 lakhs):—

Sinking of irrigation wells, organising demonstrations of improved methods of cultivation etc., and popularising sheep rearing activity.

22. Primitive Tribes (Allocation : Rs. 6 lakhs):—

Jenukurubas have been declared as a Primitive Tribe and for their exclusive benefit the following programmes are drawn up: grant of special incentives to the school-going children @ Rs. 10 per month per student for 10 months, grant of cash stipend of Rs. 10 per month per student to the parents by way of compensation for the loss incurred by sending the child to the school; supply of warm clothing, stationery articles and other miscellaneous items and maintenance of one Women's Welfare Centre and one Ashram School.

A SHORT NOTE ON THE YERAVA OF COORG, KARNATAKA*

The Yerava are mainly distributed in the Coorg district of Karnataka. They are primarily agricultural labourers and are believed to have migrated from Wynad of Kerala. They speak a dravidian tongue and bear the traits of dravidian culture. The Yerava society is segmented into four endogamous groups, viz. the Panjiri, Paniya, Badara (sic) and Koli (sic). Unlike other three groups, the Panjiri Yerava do not take beef and consider themselves superior in social hierarchy.

Though there are some information on the cultural aspect of the Yerava, the data on the physical aspect are far from adequate. There are only a few studies, such as, on anthropometry (Holland, 1901; Bhattacharjee 1984), blood groups, colour blindness (Sastry 1977) and demography (Bhattacharjee 1984).

The demographic study as conducted by Bhattacharjee on the Panjiri Yerava of Coorg indicates a considerable lower household size (4.32 member per family). The medium age of the population appears to be 20.35 years and the proportion of male and female in the population is almost equal. About 58 per cent of the population may be considered as active population (15-64 years). The fertility potential as expressed by child woman ratio appears to be fairly high. It is about 532 children (upto 4 years of age) per 1000 women of reproductive age group (15-44 years).

Holland (1901) conducted an anthropometric study on the Yerava of Coorg and reported the mean stature, cephalic index and nasal index as 1587 mm, 73.6 and 89.6 respectively. He further observed that the Yerava are in average short in stature (64 per cent) having long head (56 per cent) and flat nose (80 per cent).

*Note contributed by Dr G.C.Ghosh Anthropologist (P) and Shri S.K. Bhattacharya. Assistant Anthropologist (P) of the Anthropological Survey of India

The mean stature and body weight of the Panjiri Yerava as reported by Bhattacharjee (1984) are 1598 mm. and 45 kg. respectively. Thus the Panjiri Yerava are somewhat taller than the Yerava as observed by Holland (1901).

In the distribution of ABO blood groups (Sastry 1977) the Yeravas show a higher frequency of O blood group (41.18 per cent) followed by A (35.29 per cent) and B (15.69 per cent). Sastry also reported a fairly high percentage of sicklers (32 per cent) and low percentage of colour blindness (1.96 per cent) among the Yerava.

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