



'CHAPPARBANDS' A MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT :

Community beliefs in Islam are found in the states of Karnataka and Maharashtra in India. A community way back to history connects with thatching of roofs which is an occupation no longer is been practiced today. In Hindi language the word *chappar* means roof and the Persian suffix *band* means binder and maker. Different scholars have different opinions about Chapparbands. Chapparbands are known also as Fakir Comers. Chapparbands claims their origin from Rajput soldiers in the armies of the Mughal Empire, as said to have originated from Kathiawar and Rajasthan. In the book *Criminal Tribes in Bombay Presidency* their occupation was said to be Thatching of huts, and making counterfeit coins. Sufi Saint Pir Bhai Phir Makan has converted them to Islam. Their language is *Bathali* a Dakhani dialect of Urdu and they are Sunni Muslims. Their main habitat is found in districts of Bijapur, Bagakot, Dharwad, Gadag, Uttara Kannada in Karnataka and Kolhapur and Sholapur in Maharashtra. Present status of Chapparbands are largely they are landless community, many employed as agricultural labourers in rural settlements and daily wage labourers in urban settlements. They have got their own *Chapparband Jamat* like any other Muslim communities which acts as an instrument of social control. They practice endogamy and two main groups Badebhai and Nannebhai are been found along with 44 clans found in both the groups. Chapparbands usually have their surnames as Chapparbands itself, along with the names are originates from the occupation they do in earlier days or the first settlers groups from where they belongs or the village from where they migrates. Chapparbands are so called special community with practicing Hindu cultures along with Islam faith. Present research about Chapparbands points out that about their history and development and adjustment with present lifestyle of people.



KEYWORDS : *Islam, Karnataka, Criminal Tribes, Badebhai, Nannebhai .*

INTRODUCTION :

Islam religion is an integral part of India and its history and has number of sub communities under it. As the Indian subcontinent remains today a multi-ethnic and multi-religious place, it is important to understand the position Islam and its sub-communities in this region. History claims that some making regarding Islam as if it is an invading religion and foreign to the people of India need to be defied with the truth of Islam's peaceful spread throughout India. Present research about Chapparbands points out that about their history and development and adjustment with present

lifestyle of people. Today these Chapparbands inhabit different villages and towns in Karnataka and they are concerted mainly in Bijapur, Bagalkot, Dharwad and Gadag districts. Even they found in major cities in Maharashtra state and also in many cities of Karnataka in a smaller group.

The Chapparbands are small endogamous Muslim community mainly settled in Bijapur, Bagalkoti, Gadag and Dharwad districts in Karnataka. They are also found in many places like Belgaum, Dandali town in Uttara Kannada as well as they found in Bangalore city also. They follow Islam as their culture. Different scholars have different opinions about Chapparbands. They are known also as Fakir Comers. In a report submitted to Government in the year 1850 it is stated that among themselves Chapparbands are known as "Bhadoos" and up-country as Khulsooryas also called as false coiners. The community is divided into two major classes "Baragunda" and "Chhegunda". Kennedyⁱ opines that "Chapparbands are Sheikh Mohammedans and originally belonged to Punjab, more especially the country surrounding Delhi. Enthovenⁱⁱ says that "They claim Rajput origin and appear to be immigrants from Upper India, and speak Hindustani at home employing Upper India Brahmins as their priests ". Mean while in Bombay Gazetteerⁱⁱⁱ of 1884 states that Chapparbands who came from Gujarat as immigrants in search of work during the period of Adil Shah Period and settled in Bijapur. As per Eaton^{iv} they are Hindu converts from Gujarat during 16th and 17th centuries. As per certain views of Chapparbands that said that they are from the Chapra a city headquarters of the Saran District in the Indian state of Bihar, which is situated near the junction of the Ghaghara River and the Ganges River. In Criminal Classes of Bombay Presidency it is mentioned that the Chhapparband, like the Bhampta, travels all over India. As they move from one place to other. They have been encountered even in Ceylon. As per the figures returned by the Bombay Presidency census of 1901 give the obviously incorrect total of 7 females and no males in the Bombay Presidency. The explanation lies probably in the fact that all but the 7 honest females who enumerated, returned themselves as Mahomedans.

In Criminal Tribes of Hubli, 1920-1930 by C. M. Edwards^v states that a Chapparbands are interested group whose name can be derived from the Chapparband means hut-builder, along with their substantial features, confirms the belief that they came to south India as hangers-on and hut-builders to the Mohammedan armies when they moved from place to place. As they moved from here towards North India Chapparbands were left behind along with the Hindu society where they find it difficult in adjusting with them. As they feel that as outsiders with the situation and started trading as their main business. As they started counterfeiting coins as most successful on those days to prepare false coining. As the process continuous population of Criminal Tribes in India was increasing. As the Chapparbands in passing base metal for gold, which has been followed by him the story on police authority : Chapparbands prepares an alloy of tin and copper, and made it look like an slab of gold. He then dropped it on the road and lurked close. Presently an unsuspecting riot came by, and picking up the ingot proceeded with great joy to tuck it into his pouch. The Chapparband then sprang out of his hiding place and demanded a share of the treasure. The riot refusing, he threatened him with the police, but finally, with a show of great magnanimity, consented to allow his victim to keep the gold, and to accept the comparatively small sum of ten rupees instead of his share. The unfortunate riot hurried home congratulating himself on his luck, and was only disillusioned when he presented the ingot for sale to a goldsmith As far as human judgment can see, the results of the work of the past few years are encouraging beyond all expectation, and full of a great promise.

In the Book published in The Missionary Herald^{vi}, The American Marathi Mission took over the charge of the Criminal Tribes Settlement at Sholapur (Present Maharashtra state) on June 1, 1917. As many of the tribes including some classes in India are habitual practice of committing crimes which is appreciated by their caste groups. In that tribe Chapparband is also has a peculiar type of criminal activity is observed with the making of false coins over 400 years. As the settlement

work is initiated to them it is not at all possible to stop them in making false coins along with stealing as degrading that is only during daylight. Women go out for begging and stealing materials. Most of the families go along with groups and return at intervals with some of the stolen materials. They move from village to village in committing such criminal activities in a gang like stealing food grains and goats or anything else which is desired including liquor. While committing these types of crimes if they caught then those members are charged with commission of offenses and perhaps sent to jail. Until the arrested persons will release the gang is split-up and scattered in far in distant places. To avoid these types of tribes' efforts were made to deal with them till 1908. In 1911 a new Criminal Tribes Act was passed in mane of the Indian providences especially in United, Punjab and Madras Provinces have made those tribes to come under one settlement under Government auspices. Those days there are roughly 9000 persons inclusive of women and children. As Bijapur district comes under the regime of Bombay Presidency the work of settling those tribes less than one settlement has started in 1909. As an effort a roughly 8000 persons were comes under these settlements. The said work filled with great potential. The education for the children was made compulsory. Adults were employed in Sholapur mills as labours. Health has given preference. Night schools were opened where in that institutions first aid, elementary hygiene, temperance, drills were taught and same way suitable games are organised. Settlement workers those who worked in mills were taken special care regarding the working hours is concerned. Some of the younger generation youths were taught trades so that they can came up in their life with some of the suitable works. Even most of the settlement peoples are from different caste, groups and class them are very cooperative and self-supporting and they are much happy in the settlement. A settlement in Solahapur where Chapparbands are living with other tribal groups are much happy and they said that they are much happy in the settlement and tired of their wandering life and going so often to jail where nearly around 4000 persons are settled. In this way he has planed settlement in Bombay also where nearly 30000 numbers of persons can be placed.

Like other wandering criminal classes, Chapparbands have a jargon of their own. Generally observing their language it seems to be deccani Urdu but they speak different dialect. They said that their language is Batheli language only spoke by Chapparbands. They identify their community as Batheli also. There is in their language there is no plural is used when addressing to elders. In special occasions they sing their traditional folk songs like in marriage ceremonies etc. Generally their song's lilt is coincidence with the Kannada folk songs as they are adopted from Kannada language. Their language is considered as mixture if 16 languages as told by elder persons of the community. Mainly their language is adopted from the Urdu, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, Lambani, Parsi, Hindi, Bojpuri, and other languages. According to K. S. Singh "They speak a dialect of the Marathi Language among themselves and Urdu and Kannada. The Kannada and perso-Arabic scripts are used, to has been reported that they have a secret language of their own for their communication^{vii}".

As said in this chapter there are two sects are there in Chapparbands. Baraganda and Cheyganda also called as Badebhai and Nannebhai. Badebhai's are Baraganda and Nannebhai's are Cheyganda. Marriage cannot happen among these groups. Exogamy is practiced among Baragandha and Cheyganda. Similarly there are several sub clans also called as *Gaddas* in Chapparbands, as Gotras (in Sanskrit) or Bedagu (in Kannada). They are as shown below:

1. Achchagarewale	16. Dhatuwale	31. Pirbhaiwale
2. Addagarewale	17. Garewale	32. Pirpeejarwale
3. Aagawale	18. Ghoriwale	33. Pungiwale
4. Aledwale	19. Guduwale	34. Ragdewale
5. Badegare	20. Hariyawale	35. Rawalwale
6. Bakkawale	21. Jaduwale	36. Satbaiwale
7. Ballarywale	22. Jotiwale	37. Sayyadwale
8. Bangaliwale	23. Kambliwale	38. Shavigarwale
9. Banniwale	24. Karawale	39. Sheikhwale
10. Bassiwale	25. Kedigewale	40. Sujiwale
11. Bhandarewale	26. Lambuwale	41. Talatigarewale
12. Bholewale	27. Malwale	42. Tigadiwale
13. Biradiwale	28. Mutudwale	43. Tigalewale
14. Chodankiwale	29. Nachiwale	44. Titiwale
15. Chowklewale	30. Pirjadewale	

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

As the present study focuses mainly on the history and developmental aspects of the Chapparbands published in written records in form of like research articles, daily news paper publications, books before and after India's Independence, Government Gazetteers and information from the different websites in the internet. The main aim of this research is to understand history of Chapparband community and their development in present scenario with other communities. The books published about the settlement programs about the criminal tribes were also recorded and referred in this study. It is study where various methods have been adopted to conduct the study. A descriptive, analytical and comparative method adopted for the study including participant observation, focus group discussion and non-scheduled interview with key informants etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Origin of Chapparbands is not clear. As per some of the scholars they belong to Punjab and Delhi nearby areas, they are from Gujarat and came to Bijapur District in search of work, or as per their origin of name it tells that they are constructionist of tents. They came to South India though Mohamadians group as helpers to built or assist temporary sheds made up of grass. As per many scholars of about two centuries back only Chapparbands have come with Moghals to assist their army to build *chappar* (thatch). When war ends they came out of their jobs and became small traders move from place to place. They also work as medicinal healers and at the end they work as counterfeit coin makers and started cheating innocent peoples. Due to these types of activities British Government declares them as criminal tribes in Tribal Act of 1897. They are captured in settlements of Dharwad and Bijapur districts and also in some other cities. In the settlements Chapparbands are the first communities included in the settlements later on other communities also included in settlements. We can see those settlements in Dharwad, Gadag, Bijapur cities who reside near to railway stations. They have their own dialect by the name "Batheli". This language is identified only

to Chapparbands. Among the two groups in Chapparband the Baraganda and Chygandha they speak Chapparbandi or Bhateli language in their house. While outside their house they speak Urdu mixed, Kannada and Marathi. Out of the many families in present situation most of them cannot speak Chapparbandi language due to influence of other languages. Both the groups rarely speak Chapparbandi language. As from the above research most of the words are taken by Urdu, Hindi, Kannada and Marathi language. As some of the words are either slightly altered that may be due to the influence of local languages or the assent of languages spoken in those regions of Karnataka and Maharashtra. As per present scenario they migrate outside their village and they speak mostly Kannada and Hindi, Marathi, Konkani (Chapparbands living in Dandali and coastal regions of Karnataka and Maharashtra). Some of the persons migrate for work and other purposes to Poona, Mumbai, Ahmadabad, and Solahapur and also they marry Chapparbands of those places. Girls marry from Maharashtra they speak Chapparband language along with Marathi and Kannada. Some men's speak Marathi for business purposes is been seen. Most of the Chapparbands speak Chapparband language among themselves and Kannada language with others. Even till today in all the settlements we can observe the existence of Chapparband language even till today.

The consanguineous marriages are said to be common among Chapparbands. Even two sisters may marry two brothers of another family. Even marriage exchange is allowed. Marriage with deceased wife's younger sister is also allowed, but marriage with one's own sister's daughter is prohibited. In this manner they differ from local Hindu customs in practicing marriage traditions. Even some of the Chapparbands those who are economically fit in society prefers marrying muslim sects. But when it comes to marrying among two main sects of Chapparbands like Baraganda and Cheganda and marrying among same clan i.e., *gadda* is tabooed. As there are two endogamous subgroups in Chapparbands known as Baraganda and Cheganda and are also known as Badebhai and Nannebhai but they trace their origin as Chapparband as one group and they are living harmony till today. While practicing or circulating counterfeit coins they are in need of small boys and girls for that they used to bring boys and girls for their help from other community by kidnapping and made them to teach their skills to circulating counterfeit coins. Boys are trained in circulating coins and girls are made to work in houses. When both grownup marriages were arranged between then and such couples and their offspring's are called as Cheganda community. In spite of all the intermingling these two endogamous groups they have still maintained their marriage endogamy even till today. We didn't find a single marriage alliance among these two groups in our study. This type of maintenance of endogamy over such a long period has resulted in significant genetic distance between these two groups and by analysing DNA polymorphisms about their origin the detail study may disclose their origin and migration.

As they are originally belong to Hindu group earlier and converted to Islam in 16th and 17th centuries and they are 'Sunnis' of Hanafi School. In this manner they practice both Hindu and Muslim religion beliefs and practices. They offer prayers five times a day in their Chapparband mosque where they believe in the mystic powers of 'Fakir' and 'Pir'. One of the special characteristic feature of Chapparbands was they celebrate Dasara, Naga Panchami, Yellamavavashye festival like Hindus along with other Muslim festivals like Moharrum, Id-ul-Fitr (Ramzan), Id-ul-Dua (Bakrid).

While some scholar's claims that Islam's huge population in India is a result of violence and forced conversion, the evidence does not back up this idea at all. Although Muslim leaders replaced Hindu kings in most areas, where the society living in those areas are left as is. Stories of forced conversion are very few where in Chapparbands are also one of them and often not credible enough to warrant academic discussion. If Islam spread through violence and warfare, the Muslim community today in India would exist only in the areas closest to the rest of the Muslim world. Thus

only the western part of the subcontinent would have any Muslim population at all. What we see instead is pockets of Islam throughout the subcontinent. For example, Bangladesh and its 150 million Muslims are in the Far East, separated from other Muslim-majority areas by Hindu lands in India. Isolated communities of Muslims exist also exist in western Myanmar, central India, and eastern Sri Lanka. These communities of Muslims are proof of Islam spreading peacefully throughout India, regardless of whether or not a Muslim government existed there. If Islam spread by force as some claim, these communities of Muslims would not exist.

There are signs some sort of progress in many directions in Chapparbands. The Chapparbands have taken definitely too honest ways of earning their living having become wire-fencers to Government, and they seem to have entirely given up organised dishonesty as a trade. Small groups of Christians are to be found in the older settlements, and the younger generation are growing up in an entirely different atmosphere to that which surrounded their parents. Christian standards of morality, of decency, of self-respect, of industry, of honesty, of kindness and unseal Dshness are set before them and because of the Divine spark that is in every human breast, they are responding increasingly to the Divine Call. They need a helping hand, and we, the workers of to-day (and even to-day we are short-handed) call upon the Church to see to it that the workers of tomorrow shall be ready to take their places-for the need is great.

Similar to other members in the present society Chapparband in general are leading a law abiding life. Most of the Chapparbands are educated in literacy and completed higher secondary school. Some of the educated Chapparbands are engaged in different private and government institutions. These educated Chapparbands are trying their best to educate and best to get one or the other jobs for them. Most of the uneducated are engaged in working class as a labours. Some of the skilled workers such as masons, carpenters, bar-benders in construction work and other type of household workers are leading their life very miserably. After leaving their criminal activities they have come to mainstream now but still they are economically unfit to lead their life. Presently they hate crime and criminality like other law abiding members and acts in the society.

PROBLEMS FACED BY CHAPPARBAND COMMUNITIES:

Before independence in the time of British Government there are around 24 communities are been held in settlement. After the 1952 Act around 1950's to 1970's around 18 communities are went away from these settlements as they are treated inferior by other communities. In this regard they have moved from settlements and resided in different places. But communities like Bhoovi, Gantichor, Kanjarbhat, Pardhi, Chapparband, Korama are still continue to reside in settlements. Earlier in British period Chapparbands are allocated houses in settlements and beside to that lands are also given for agriculture in reasonable rates hence they are not moved out of the settlements. Hence these communities still continue to reside in settlements as their parental properties still exists. As the families grows and place of residence has became problematic for them. Area of 10 to 20 feet's around 2 to 5 families reside in Huballi, Bijapur, Gadag and Dharwad settlements. This is not a problem of only Chapparbands but most of the other communities who continue to reside in these settlements till now. Even most of the communities are not having land rights in their names.

With health related issues British government was taking care of the people residing in these settlements by establishing hospitals near to their settlements along with many of the missionaries have opened their hospitals nearer to their settlements and they are conducting regular health checkups. Then after the independence these hospitals came directly under the state government and these are converted to some other offices. Like in the case of Gadag settlement there have been a hospital is existed near to settlement and presently this hospital is converted to *aurvedic* hospital and

the hospital is lacking doctors, staff and many basic facilities. This hospital now only meant for maternity purpose. Similar type of situation we can observe in other settlements also.

With education system is concerned British government has opened schools meant for children's of settlement in their settlement itself. Even till today these schools are functioning along with other private schools nearby. Even though Chapparbands education is not up to that mark after implementing government programs like Compulsory Education, *Sarva Shiskana Abhiyana* (SSA), Mid-Day Meals, *Shikra Bhagya* (Milk facility), distribution of school uniforms to government schools, *Shoe Bhagaya* (Shoe) and other such programs to encourage children for education along with scholarship programs. These have not made any changes in their education aspect in Chapparband community.

Even after ending the Criminal Tribes in 1952 Police and Excise Department's views on these communities remain as it is. Other communities and the communities residing in these settlement are been treated differently and still these communities residing in these settlements are been arrested with concerned to crime. Each individual requires basic facilities like food, education, health, residence. Even main requirements like food and water must and should. In these settlements water facilities is so poor that water is supplied on once in 10 to 15 days. In this issue the wells in these settlements are drained and they are lacking necessary water supply regularly. Even the rate of food commodities increasing to sky and most of the persons in these settlements do not have Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration cards where government supplying ration in a reasonable price. Apart from these they have to purchase other requirements for food preparation which is uncatchable to them. In most of the settlements the fair shops in these settlements in Dharwad, Gadag, Bagalkot and Bijapur are been maintained by other persons and Chapparbands and other communities persons are not having access to fair shop as owners. Even they don't having proper education facilities they are still intact with employment opportunities.

The colonies in these settlements lack many basic facilities like water, drainage, hospital, toilet facilities. The population is also increasing year by year and simultaneously facilities are not been provided by the government as compared with other colonies in the urban and rural areas. Under the Nirmal Karnataka Scheme individual toilets are been constructed and it is not reached for all communities in the settlement and even the toilets are not up to that mark of quality. Hence most of the Chapparbands using those toilets for cooking food, bath room, for storage of fuel woods or leaving as it is without using them. Community toilets are also constructed in some places but still uses of those toilets are not proper and mainly the cleanness of those toilets are not maintained properly. British Government has provided agriculture land for the communities residing in settlement in some places but after the independence the schemes like Ganga Kalayan (digging and providing bore well) is not provided to Chapparband communities for irrigation facilities.

As the present study focuses mainly on the history and developmental aspects of the Chapparbands have revealed that the journey of Chapparbands from the North India to South is not a bed of roses either they have coup up with other communities and social norms that they have faced. In general this research will help researchers in better understanding of the people.

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