



THE RICH HERITAGE OF DEVANGA WEAVERS COMMUNITY IN RAMDRUG TALUK, BELAGAVI DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the vibrant world of saree weaving in Karnataka, exploring the heritage, craftsmanship, and challenges faced by Ilkal saree weavers in the Ramdrug taluk of Belagavi district. Through a combination of historical perspective, insightful research, and on the ground research of weaver's community, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the traditional skill, socio economic condition and traditional significance of the Ilkal saree in Karnataka. By putting light in the experience and ambitions of these weavers this article highlights the need of weavers for support, preservation, and empowerment of Ilkal saree weavers.

KEYWORDS: Devanga community, history, culture, challenges, problems.

INTRODUCTION

The weaver's community, known for its rich tradition of weaving saree, has played a significant role in the cultural of Karnataka, with a history dating back, the Devanga weaver's community is recognised an oldest weaver's community in South India, they have preserved and enriched the art of weaving from old days. And their contribution to the state's vibrant textile heritage. This article explores the historical background, traditional weaving techniques, and the status of the Devanga community in Belgaum district, Ramdrug taluk, Karnataka.

The Devanga caste traces its historical roots back to Hindu mythology, where Devala Maharshi, believed to be the ancestor of the Devanga people, is credited with introducing cotton weaving to humanity. According to legend, Devala Maharshi received threads from Lord Vishnu and was attacked by demons on his return. Seeking protection, he prayed to Devi Sakthi, who vanquished the demons, allowing Devala to weave clothes from their blood-soaked threads. Devi Sakthi, also known as Chowdeswari or Sowdeswari, instructed Devala to worship her regularly. Today, the Devanga community, predominantly found in South Indian states like Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, continues the tradition of weaving. Despite being considered the oldest weaving community, they share similar weaving cultures and traditions with other communities like Padmasali, Kurvishetty, Namdevshimpi, Jadar, as well as Muslim, Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC), and other Other Backward Classes (OBC) weavers in Ramdrug taluk. This article delves into the traditional weaving techniques, challenges, and societal status of the Devanga weaver's community in Ramdrug taluk, highlighting the rich tapestry of weaving traditions in the region.

Mahesh Tippashetti, (2000): He tried to analyse the historical context and enduring appeal of the Ilkal saree in his book, "Ilkal Saree." He has seen that sarees are woven in a traditional and revered method using local water and natural dyes. He has determined that the primary occupation of castes like Devanga, Swakulisali, Padmasali, etc is weaving.

Shaik Faruk Najir (2012): Malegaon's power loom industry struggles with frequent closures due to various issues. These closures, while necessary, lead to lost production and financial strain as wages for permanent workers continue. Additionally, workers often lack training on modern machinery, hindering overall productivity. Despite these challenges, opportunities exist, such as reducing downtime and improving worker skills through training incentives. By addressing these issues, the industry can move towards a more sustainable future.

Somnath Kolgiri (2018): examines occupational health risks for power loom workers in Solapur, India. The research investigates the specific hazards faced by these workers in terms of their health and safety. The study focuses on workers in Solapur City, Maharashtra, highlighting potential risks associated with their profession.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the historic and cultural significance of the Devanga weaving community.
- To study the challenges faced by the Devanga community in the modern world.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the primary data. The data of 300 weaver's was collected through interviews, schedules, in-depth interviews, and case studies of power loom weavers among the five villages of Ramdrug taluk. To study Devanga caste historic



background and challenges faced by weavers in the Ramdurg taluk of Belgaum district.

SCOPE AND PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Ramdurg is a taluk in Belgaum district of Karnataka state. The royal state of Ramdurg, founded in 1799, was one of the non-salute princely states of British India under the Bombay Presidency and later the Deccan States Agency. Ramdurg is known for its hills, sugar factories, river, and trekking. There are many important places near Ramdurg, such as Shabari Kolla, Godachi, Navilu Teerth, Big Shiva Statue, Hoovina Kolla, Sunnal Hanumappa, Megundappan Kolla, Ramdurg Forts, and Toragal Forts. Almost all villages that come under Ramdurg taluk are historic places.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DEVANGA COMMUNITY

The Devanga community, primarily engaged in weaving, holds a unique position in the socio-cultural fabric of Karnataka. Historical records suggest that the Devanga community has been involved in the weaving profession for several centuries, passing down their skills from generation to generation. Their expertise in the intricate art of power-loom weaving has been crucial in shaping the traditional attire and fabrics of Karnataka.

The Devanga weavers are known for their proficiency in various weaving techniques, creating exquisite fabrics that reflect the rich cultural heritage of Karnataka. Sarees, dhotis, and other traditional garments produced by the Devanga weavers often feature intricate designs and vibrant colors. They use a variety of materials such as cotton, silk, and blends to craft their textiles. One of the distinctive features of Devanga weaving is the use of traditional power-loom. This requires skilful manipulation, and the weavers demonstrate a deep understanding of the craft to produce high-quality textiles. The community is renowned for its mastery of tie-and-dye techniques, intricate patterns, and motifs that are passed down through generations.

As Weaving is an art of looping several threads together to weave a beautiful saree, these weavers are the artists of this art. To weave a saree there are many pre preparation's like, buying raw materials, making a raw material capable yarn for weaving a saree, then rolling the beam, then drafting work is done (joining each thread of beam to heddles in the beater), then inserting pirn in shuttle (weft thread), when these both warp and weft yarns start interlacing, this process starts weaving a pattern by which the weaved lines starts forming and as a process goes on the than the saree is weaved.

In power loom weaver can weave one saree in 2-3 hours, as in a day he can weave 2-3 saree, without any power cuts, if there is a power cut it makes him difficult to even weave a single saree in a whole day. Despite this the weavers face several challenges in the modern era. Such as Industrialization, globalization, and the influx of machine-made textiles have impacted the traditional weaving industry. The younger generation, influenced by changing economic trends, often

finds it challenging to sustain the traditional weaving practices, leading to a decline in the number of skilled artisans. As this article focus on the challenges on weaver's community few challenges are stated below.

CHALLENGES FACED

Modernization and competition: developing of the textile mills and influences of western cultural in the modern society, is a competition for these power loom and handloom saree weavers with the old tradition, culture, and design.

Lack of market access: less exposure of modern market and limited access of world market, has made the old tradition and products to lack back by being exposed in the current market due to unaware of modern market system and online marketing.

Skilled labour problem: younger generation of weaver's community are drawn to other profession has the reason is, no proper recognition of the product in the market, no benefits for the products, as it is leading to a shortage of skilled weavers in the profession.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND REVIVAL EFFORTS

Recognizing the importance of preserving the unique heritage of the weavers, the governments of Karnataka and India has initiated various schemes and programs. These initiatives aim to provide financial assistance, skill development training, and market exposure to the weavers. By promoting the use of handloom and power loom products and creating awareness about the cultural significance of weavers weaving, these efforts aim to revitalize the community and ensure the continuity of their craft.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the article sheds light on the vibrant world of saree weaving in Karnataka, particularly focusing on the heritage, craftsmanship, and challenges faced by Ilkal saree weavers in the Ramdurg taluk of Belagavi district. Through a blend of historical insights and on-the-ground research, it delves into the traditional significance of the Devanga weaving community, highlighting their pivotal role in Karnataka's textile heritage. The study underscores the rich cultural legacy of the Devanga community, whose intricate weaving techniques and traditional practices have been passed down through generations. However, it also illuminates the modern challenges faced by these artisans, such as industrialization, globalization, and a shortage of skilled labour. Despite these obstacles, the article points towards government initiatives aimed at preserving and revitalizing the weaving tradition. By providing financial support, skill development training, and market exposure, these efforts strive to empower weavers and ensure the continuity of their craft. In essence, the article advocates for the support, preservation, and empowerment of Ilkal saree weavers, emphasizing the need for collective action to safeguard Karnataka's rich textile heritage for future generations.



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