



RESEARCH ARTICLE

LIFE CYCLE RITUALS AMONG HALAKKI VOKKALU COMMUNITY OF UTTAR KANNADA DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

This article has been produced as a part of Ph.D. thesis entitled "*A Study of Health Seeking Behaviour among Halakki Vokkalu Community of Uttar Kannada District, Karnataka*". Halakki Vokkalu is a community mainly found in Uttar Kannada district and distributed densely in four taluks; Ankola, Honnavara Karwar, Kumata. This article focuses on life cycle rituals exist in the community. It's an abstract ethnographic account of the Halakki Vokkalutribes. In this article author furnished details about the life and rituals celebrated in different stages of life within the community. Here author has given simple and comprehensive account of Halakki Vokkalu community Lifecycle rituals.

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INTRODUCTION

HalakkiVokkalu community is known as aboriginals of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka State. They are mainly distributed in 4 taluks. Those are Ankola, Kumta, Karwar, and Honnavar. Halakki is a combination of two words *Halu* and *Akki*. In Kannada *Halu* means Milk and *Akki* means Rice, *Vokkalu* means Agriculturist. *Halakki* term may in use because they grow milky white rice (*Gazetteer of The Bombay Presidency*). In Karnataka, they are considered as very backward community and placed in the category I group (Government "Order No. SKE 225 BCA 2000, dated 30-03-2002"). Life cycle rituals are contributions of culture along with other entities in cultural life of a person and in turns the society. One could easily identify the changes occurs within and with the person in a society.

METHODOLOGY

Present article has been produced out of Ph.D. thesis entitled "*A Study of Health Seeking Behaviour among HalakkiVokkalu*

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Community of Uttar Kannada District, Karnataka". Mixed method technics have been adopted to conduct the whole research for thesis. Whereas present article is purely an output of qualitative methods used in the broad study. Secondary data sources were also used especially books, thesis, journal articles, and ethnographic report etc.

Brief about Life Cycle Rituals

This section deals firstly deals with the brief of Life cycle rituals and then discusses particularly among HalakkiVokkalu community in Uttar kannada district. Lifecycle ritual is that rituals pertaining to the life in different stages and its consequences. The very name itself says that it is a cycle, means it is having a momentum, momentum results changes, as changes happen there will be a set of roles to play and status varies. Role and Status are dependent and interrelated with other facts and Vice- Versa. In general terms, it starts with *Birth* of an individual and completes with that individual's *Death*, but in practice rituals start before the individual's birth and continues after that individual's death. Birth, Puberty, Marriage, Pregnancy, Child Birth, and Death are some stages in human life. One other new cycle starts out or in the process of once lifecycle. We could make some milestones in this cycle for the sake of better understanding. Those are; Birth, Puberty, Marriage, Pregnancy, Delivery (Birth), and Death.

Birth

HalakkiVokkalu take the help from *Bejagitti* (Mid wife), a traditional birth attendant during delivery. Even today non-institutional deliveries carried out by Bejagitti in rural and tribal setting. Gradually institutional deliveries are taking place but not as expected by government, it takes some more time to attain the expected level of institutional deliveries. *Notagaris* one other person whom HalakkiVokkalu consult during delivery to avoid attack of ghosts and evil eyes on labour women and infant. They worship *Aamedevi or Aamedevtha*; one who is the goddess of birth for safe delivery, and protection of new born child. Soon after cutting the umbilical cord baby will be cleaned and bathed with warm water then that baby will be kept in *Gerasi* and thy put *Jaggery or Butter* into the baby's mouth. Mother also get bath with warm water and both will be sleeping on *Kambali* (woollen blanket) spread on the paddy hay. It keeps warmer both mother and new born baby. One very interesting practice they have that is mother must keep and carry or tie a *sickle or a mettle tool* to her west all the time even if she is going out from the place. The belief behind it is no ghost and evil eye will try to attack on her or harm her while a tool is with her. I feel it is a traditionally given a scientific and pragmatic technique to protect herself and new born baby from any animals. Five days later they perform *Hokkalu Pooje (Umbilical/Naval worship)*, *Turtle worship*, *Naming ceremony*, *Cradle ceremony* etc. Halakki Vokkalu name their children with their elder's or ancestor's names, family deities names etc. Some of the male name are; Somu, Sukru, Bommu, Buddu, Munglu, Sannu, Beera, Gouda, Huliya, Giriya and female names; Somi, Sukri, Tulasi, Naagi, etc

Puberty

Puberty is a period of life everyone passes through it. In this period both boy and girl attain maturity particularly sexual maturity. This stage of a girl has culturally and socially made notable or marked in every society. Invariably every society has a costume of celebrating this period of girl as a puberty ceremony, but boys enter and lead the state as usual without any ceremony and costumes, even in HalakkiVokkalu community. The first *Menstrual Cycle* of girl will be celebrating as puberty ceremony. There will be separate arrangements for that girl to live. She supposed to not enter even into the house other than place arranged for her. She will be banned to enter into *Devarmane* (Worship Room), Kitchen and also perform pooja. This is the very important period after which a girl considers eligible for marriage and procreation. Puberty ceremony is not only cultural

Marriage

Marriage is the fundamental force to uphold the social institutions existence and function. It is very essential and have elements of social institutions within it. There are five basic type of social institutions; *Family, Government, Economy, Education and Religion*. HalakkiVokkalu community is also not excluded from it, because it has its own setup and system. Many myths and tales explain that Halakki girl should get married before she attains puberty otherwise she uses to blindfold and sent into the forest. Which directs me to interpret it as they practiced and always tried to marry a girl in early age means before she attains puberty, presently HalakkiVokkalu community is not practicing it but even today we can see that it has an early marriage practice. They have one certainly

appreciable practice compare to the present days so called civilized and modern society that is they don't have *Dowry* practice rather *Bride Price*, a boy one who wants to marry he must pay to bride's parents for marrying their daughter. The marriage process starts with the *HennuNododu/ VaraNododu* which we call it anthropologically as *Selection of Mate, Nishchitartha - engagement, Ile madodu- reception, Maduve-Marrige*. These all steps together complete the Marriage process, all the steps have their own costumes and practices. There is no restriction on Widow Marriage. It is left to her if she wants to marry she can otherwise no, both are given equal respect in the society.

Dindu

HalakkiVokkalu call first night as *Dindu*. It is also a prime ceremony which has a set of procedures and practices. As mentioned in earlier section they marry a girl before she attains puberty. Hence, they arrange *Dindu* after a year of her puberty in husband's house. Till *Dindu* ceremony there will be gap of a year and more during this period there will be exchange of food, objects and cloths between both the families commonly. HalakkiVokkalu people opine that if couple allowed to have physical relationship soon after her puberty, she may conceive within no time which is not good for her health and also baby's health. In some case she, baby or both may die during delivery. On the day of *Dindu* someone will go to bride's house from husband's side to bring her to groom's house. There will some costumes performed by bride's parents and 2 or 3 members from bride's side will come with them to groom's house. They bring *Butti* (Variety of food including Roti, Chatni, Sweet, Curd rice etc.) from bride's house. That will be distributed by groom's house to neighbours. The members come with bride will stay there for quite a time and they go back after some time. I propose this as traditionally given chance to her for adapting to the environment of husband's house.

Funeral Ceremony

Biologically death is the end of organism that will be going to decay naturally but, culturally it has also got importance because it is also a very important part in lifecycle rituals. There are many different culturally driven funeral ceremonies exist among the societies. HalakkiVokkalu is also not out from it, they have their own set of procedures and costumes to conduct this particular event. Soon after them aware about the death of a person in family they call elders from locality, nearby relatives and neighbours then further works happen under their guidance. Due to the death, the house of the person and even whole locality turn out to be mourning environment. One group clean the corpse by bathing, dress and decorate it then keep that in sitting posture at the house. Other group arrange for cremation at graveyard, another group arrange to take the corpse to graveyard, some will inform to friends, relatives and concerned persons. A group starts beating drums, in this way it becomes a social event. In this time society stands with the family of dead one, voluntarily take part in the episode to complete ritual. A person comes with garland, coconut and pooja (worship) materials to see dead one for last. In presence of all family members, relatives, and friends, corpse will be taken to graveyard and cremated. The cremation process will be performed by elder son preferably or son of the dead. After lit the pyre people starts moving from graveyard some people remain there until head burst, then they will also move to houses. People participated in this funeral ceremony

take bath outside the house and leave cloths out itself before entering their houses. Family members will go to graveyard after five days of cremation, they collect the ash at one place and keep stones around it. Some people plant a *Tulsis* apling in that place. On eleventh day, they will perform purification ceremony invite relatives, neighbours, friends and family members. Conduct pooja to his portrait, cook his lovable dishes, all eat and conclude the ceremony. This ceremony will be continued to be celebrated every year on the day of death.

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