

## SOLIGA TRIBES' CULTURE AND IDENTITY

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### ABSTRACT

In society there are different types of social groups and the tribes are referred in with variety of circumstances. There are tribes recognized legally and some are not identified by their culture, identity, locality, medicinal practices and so on. Tribal culture is totally different from others, it varies within them. The identity varies and they keep a unique name which is not similar in meaning when compared to other tribes. Usually tribes keep their identity name on the basis of their traditional work or regarding to their culture. Soliga tribe is one such tribe. They are mostly dwelling in the hill station of Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Tribes doesn't belong to one particular states or nation, tribes are all over the world but the identity of them are less and the research are taking place to identify the tribes who are not recognised legally. The objective of the study is to identify the unique cultures and identity of soliga's which can help to empower economically based on their culture. The social workers intervention is to identify indigenous tribe's like soliga's and empower them by providing them basic education which help them for their survival and improve quality of living.

**Keywords:** Soliga Tribes, Culture, Identity, Empower, Quality Of Living.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Soliga is an ethnic group of India. Soliga, sometimes spelled solega, sholaga, and shlaga, the majority of its members reside in Mysuru and Tamilnadu, districts of Chamrajanagar and Erode, which are located in southern Karnataka's Biligiriranga hills and neighbouring ranges. For the tribal communities, the forest is not just only a source of food but also a part of their identity. Numerous people are also gathered in and around the BR Hills in the Karnataka districts of Chamarajanagara and Yelandur. According to the census 2011, the population of Karnataka soligas was 33,871. In Tamilnadu they were called as sholaga and soligas population was 5,965. The Dravidian language sholaga is spoken by the Soliga. Not only a Soliga they will speak Kannada and Tamil also. The Malaya Mahadeshwara hills in Karnataka are the location of karayya, son of lord Malaya Mahadeshwara Swamy instructed his other son, biliyya, to live in the plains and become the ancestor of the lingayats, whereas karayya was asked to live in forests due to his affinity for wild animals. Soligas are divided into five smaller groups: Male Soliga: residents of Karnataka who speak Kannada. Kannada and Tamil speakers living in Tamilnadu border regions are known as Urali Soliga. Residing in Malaya Mahadeshwara hills is the Pujari community. Live near Bandipur forest are known as Kadu Soliga. Burude Soliga: a resident of Kodagu and heggadadevanakote Taluk, these are the identity of the Soliga.

Soilga and their livelihood: This forest-bound, Dravidian speaking group, lives isolated, practicing subsistence-level agriculture under primitive conditions. Most families believed in democratic and permissive methods of training. The Believes what they have in their culture is so strong and they are still practicing that culture and traditional systems. They believe that more than modernization the traditional works what they have practiced these days are helpful. They don't have intention to be settled in life they think that it is not necessary because they are happy with what they are doing, they do cultivation for their livelihood and they have one major occupation which gives them income through timbering. They are facing problems like lack of awareness about education, not only education they don't have awareness about health, hygiene, value of their work and so on. Among the Soliga tribes now some are showing interest in education apart from their culture. By that traditional occupation some are want to be economically well profitable and they are migrating too. Shifting cultivation was once a practise of the Soliga, but they have now largely abandoned it. For food, they cultivate ragi (finger millet, Eleusine coracana). Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) such as honey, nellikai (gooseberry, Emblica officinalis), bamboo, paasi (lichen), algae, wild turmeric, Indian blackberry, soapnut, andnennari (wild root) are their primary sources of income. They also use bamboo to create baskets.

Soliga and Religious Practices: Along with adhering to Hindu customs, the Soliga people practice naturism, animism, and worship Madeshwara, RangaSwamy of the Biligirirangana hills, Karayya, Kyate Devaru and JadeSwamy as their principal deities. Madeshwara, Basaveshwara, Nanjundeshwara, Sri Alamelu Ranganayaki and Sri Ranganatha are some of the other deities they adore. Their relationship with nature is so intimate that soliga's, believe that were born of the bamboo, and they worship "Bidiramma taayi" (mother bamboo). A 600 years old sampige tree stands tall and wide in the Biligiriranga Swamy hills- "Dodda sampige" is one of their Gods. Soliga's celebrate a rotti habba under the tree, where the community of soliga's offers food to the tree-God and the men dance around it singing "Goru Goruka Gorukana". Women sit around and watch the dance, and select the best dancer for their mate; it was earlier indicated by throwing a pebble at the man, now they throw biscuits and mithai. If both the men and women agree, they go away to live in the forest a few days before they come back to seek the blessings of the chieftain of their groups. He in turn takes their oath that they will be together under all circumstances. During drought they always manage to trace out the neer-matti mara, a tree which has about 10 pots of water stored in its trunk, even elephants come looking for this tree when thirsty. A system unique to soliga's is that they offer the first yield from their farms to animals and birds.

### **Need of the study:**

- This study gives us clear information about the culture of the Soliga tribes.
- This study helps us to know their culture and work that empower economically.
- To know about their traditional culture identity through occupation.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

- Bose, A. (2006). In addition to promoting indigenous and traditional medical systems, the work of doctor H Sudarshan on the primary healthcare of Soliga tribes in the BR hills of Karnataka is a unique illustration of the importance of equality, social justice, maximum community participation, and people's empowerment in a successful community health programme.
- Madegowda, C. The Soliga tribes in the chamrajanagar district of Karnataka's Biligiri Ranga Swamy temple hills have maintained a constant and close relationship with the forest, obtaining the majority of its basic needs from the forests. Up until the BRT region was designated a wildlife sanctuary, the Soligas Engaged in shifting agriculture and gathering of non-timber forest produce that was harvested using an indigenous and sustainable technique. This essay examines the Soliga tribe's indigenous traditional knowledge of ecology, forest conservation, resource management strategies. It also discusses tribal clan systems, harvesting and conservation techniques, and the potential for creating a conservation regime that takes these elements into account when managing forests
- Manju, N. D. The Indian parliament passed the right of children to free and compulsory education Act, 2009, which went into force on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. It is based on the 86<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution, which included an article 21(A) following Article 21. All children between the ages of six and fourteen are entitled to free and compulsory education, according to article 21(A) of the constitution. In order for children to benefit and receive an education, parents must be aware of their obligations to them. This study examined parental understanding of the RTE act in Hunsur Taluk (Yashodharapura, Beeranhalli kavalu).
- Jadegowda M. and Ramesh, M.N, (2008). The interventions began with the communities' most fundamental need, which was health. The soligas were hiding in the jungle at the time because they were quite bashful. Dr. Sudarshan's first assistance in treating dangerous snake bites and deworming people led to the Soliga community's trust and love of him, fostering an enduring tie between the great humanitarian doctor and the innocent, nature-loving Soligas. Dr. Sudarshan supported curative, promotional, rehabilitative, and sustainable health care techniques because he recognised the fundamental medical needs of the populace.
- Sushma, K .S. Jayashankar, M. and Saeed, M. A. (2019). The primary natural source of medicine used to treat a variety of ailments is plants. In the Chamrajanagar district's BR hills, an ethno botanical plant survey focuses on identifying medicinal plants, their families, the therapeutic values of their parts, and the traditional Ayurvedic practises of the Soliga people. Due to overuse, it is necessary to conserve through plant tissue culture and teach the next generation about the ancient medical system. Locals are knowledgeable about how to use the resources that are naturally present in their environment without causing any negative side effects, and they pass this knowledge down to future generations.

• Venkatesh, A. (2015) Displacement caused by conservation has an impact on the Soliga indigenous people, whose daily mobility patterns are crucial to their subsistence. Because the forest and their culture are more important to them than their settled way of life and lack of resources, they do not migrate. The soligas have historically been mobile within the Biligiriranga Swamy temple wildlife sanctuary (BRT) in Karnataka, India. However, due to limitations on the collecting of forest goods, they were compelled to relocate, which increased their vulnerability and created new difficulties both outside and inside the Biligiriranga Swamy temple. The Soliga have been forced below the poverty line as a result of these changes, with women being more vulnerable due to their limited mobility. Outside of Biligiriranga Swamy temple, Soliga women's movements are more constrained than men's because they have less access to information, resources, time, and transit options. This study will advance our understanding of indigenous people's potential for forced mobility v/s the relationships between gender, mobility, and empowerment.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The paper used is secondary in resources which draws conclusion about the soliga's culture, which did not empower them, the importance they place on it rather than achieving economic independence and settling down, their identity as perceived by others, their livelihood practices, including farming and other occupations, mutual support, lack of awareness they are experiencing, basic needs, and a historical mobile from the Biligiriranga Swamy temple, the medical treatment used by soligas, traditional methods of cultivation.

#### Objectives:

- To identify the unique culture and identity of Soliga's.
- To know about their traditional works and occupations.
- To know about the livelihood and the awareness they are having about basic education.
- To know about traditional medicinal treatment of soliga's.
- To know that how their culture is helpful to make them economically empower in future.

#### Problems and causes of Soliga tribes:

- Tribal people have always lived in the forest and rely on its resources for their way of life. Non timber forest products, subsistence farming, and labour are the soliga's main source of income. In accordance with the wildlife protection act of 1972, the collection of non- timber forest products was outlawed in the Biligiriranga Swamy temple wildlife sanctuary in 2006. This had an impact on the soliga's way of life because they lacked alternative employment.
- Childrearing practice among Soliga are they believe more in their old practices that to give training of hunting, cutting trees, honey harvest, wood work etc., because they feel that their culture and traditions are important and helpful than giving them or sending them to schools for the basic education, from this the future citizens of Soliga tribes are not proper knowledge and they are facing a problem of illiteracy.
- Due to lack of education they don't know how to use their culture and tradition to become economically empower. They have a creative works and occupations which can be brought to market but there is no awareness in them and they don't know the value of their work and due to illiteracy they are unable to come in touch with the people other than their community.
- They are adjusted and comfortable with their old traditional practice of ayurvedic medicinal practices, but for small diseases and problems or wound they are following the old tradition but for new diseases and serious conditions and major health issues which are arising now they don't have a knowledge about that and medicinal treatment also, they think it is a normal fever, pain or infection and they ignore that and the situation turn into death, like these unknown danger or serious disease they are suffering and they are not aware about that.
- Soliga's have the health problems like common diseases, waterborne disease, flown from trees, animal attack and genetic diseases of sickle cell anaemia etc. Soliga's are practicing medicinal plants and belief treatments for centuries.
- Even today some of the podus (a group of people who are part of Soliga community stays) still using unsafe drinking water. The health services are not reaching to podu (village) level, they have to walk miles to get medicinal treatments.

- They were using a traditional cultivation method. Inadequate land for cultivation, lack of knowledge about improved agricultural technologies, uncertainty of rainfall, inadequate irrigation facilities for farming and to maintain livestock.
- Inadequate fodder for cattle, lack of market intelligence and improper control over traders in the regulated markets, lack of awareness on government encouragement about the subsidiary enterprises, higher price fluctuation for farm produce, alternative irrigation and wild animals threats were the major problems of tribes.
- They were not having a proper housing facility because of that in rainy seasons some huts were used to fall down and they have to build it again.
- The income what they are getting is not sufficient to feed the whole family.

**Current status of Soliga tribes:**

The soliga's migrated to various locations in Kodagu and Tamilnadu due to wild life protection act. Compared to before, now little percentage of people knows to read and write little. Some are trying to come out of that and trying to become economically stable. Vivekananda Girijana Kalayana Kendra helps the tribes market their harvest from the forests, after processing or value addition. The products are sold primarily in Bangalore and Mysore, with honey topping the sales. The interventions of Vivekananda Girijana Kalayana Kendra and government, they are started to use modern medical treatments because Soligas are also facing health problems which cannot be cured by their traditional treatment. The culture, tradition, customs and practices of the Soliga Community, their education and economic status, their problems and facilities provided by the government and non – government organizations for the development of Soliga community by taking 150 samples in Biligirirangana hills area. Their relationship with the culture of the plains was minimal-they bartered some honey, tubers, fruits and medicinal plants for clothes, utensils and pottery. They spent their lives sowing and harvesting millets, grains and cereals; harvesting millets, grains and cereals; harvesting honey, wild fruits and berries in the forest; foraging for tubers, roots and shoots ; and hunting's small game. However, any person having visited a tribal village will be surprised and thrilled to see a community living close to nature, peace-loving, equitable and with advanced cultural/social forms. There is a progress in Soliga community; they are little bit modernizing which is useful and eco-friendly for them and nature. They are becoming modernized in health related issues like go for hospitals, taking care of health, consulting doctor for the treatment which they unable to solve. Some soliga's are coming out and taking a education and some are selling their baskets (which is made of bamboo), the pottery, honey and some herbs also; so that they are becoming financially independent and they are finding a new way of living too. The lifestyles of soliga's are changing or the way of living has becoming change and modernizing day by day. When compared to old traditional and culture while though they are that old culture and they are adjusting for this new technologies. Some soliga's are currently practicing settled agriculture. They cultivate different types of crops and each crop is used for consumption and for sale. The soligas have different sources of earning like agriculture, forest, livestock and working as labourers. Earlier they used to cultivate crops for their personal consumption but nowadays they have started to cultivate some of the crops to be sold. Initially, the soligas living in the forest depended on forest products for their livelihood but after some time they started to rear livestock for personal consumption which they also started to sell to outsiders. They started rearing livestock like cow, bullocks were used for agriculture purpose and the goat, sheep and poultry were used for self-consumption and for the purpose of selling. In past the soligas had not possessed any assets. They had owned their huts and some vessels. The Vivekananda Girijana kalyana Kendra started to build the soligas a concrete houses because of that they started to buy basic household assets and they started to use a toilets and they learned the basic hygiene which are followed in day to day life. The soligas none of them were having permanent or stable income to lead their life peacefully. Soliga tribe of southern Karnataka has made history by winning a legal battle over their traditional rights to forestland and produce. Traditionally they have been dependent on the forests for their livelihood. In consultation with various organizations, recently the soligas chalked out detailed area specific plans for tiger conservation in Biligiriranga Swamy hills an ecologically important area of over 500sq.km that acts as a crucial link between the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The Soliga tribes living in the Biligiriranga hills of Karnataka states in India has a cultural rich in traditional values and rituals. This secluded tribal community has recently come in contact with modern ideas and new health care approaches which have shaped some of their health practices. At present, primary health care services are being offered to the tribal people by Vivekananda Girijana Kalayana Kendra (VGKK), a voluntary organization. Men and women of Soliga tribe's earned for their livelihood, most of them were food gatherers, few had adopted farming and others worked as peasants. A small percentage of men and women were able to read and write. Mothers took care of the child while fathers were responsible for disciplining; both parents shared the responsibilities. Majority of parents commenced toilet training at 1-2 years of age. Most families believed in democratic and permissive methods for training. All fathers spent time playing and attending with children, while mothers narrated stories. Allopathic and herbal medication was commonly used. The tribal seems to have undergone a radical change in their views and practices. Honey and tubers like Dioscorea, makal and many ceropegia are harvested throughout the year. In hot dry summers, the soligas use leaves and fruits like mango, jackfruit, amla, bel and tamarind. Except rice, another staple food of soligas which they grow, the forests give them everything else. Children's of the Soliga community are initiated into the ways of the forest when they are young-adults go gathering forests products every day, walking for about 10miles. They teach children to identify various tubers. The forest clothes are never washed so that they retain the scent of the trees, flowers, the beeswax they collect; that way animals like elephants don't detect their smell, so they don't attacked by animals. Soliga tribes can sense the smell of elephant or snacks from a distance, and many snakes like food. Soliga's can tell time by the blooming and closing of a particular forest flower, the flower closes up at 4pm, and its time to return from the forest. Their lore helps children understand and relate to the forests. Mainstream schooling often does not provide enough space for such knowledge. A deeper appreciation of the land and forests helps build a stronger conservation ethic and co-existence. Although earlier practicing shifting cultivation, the soligas now in small settlements called podus. After several decades of being disenfranchised in their own lands, most of the podus have now been recognised as villages under the forest rights act. The rich lore of soligas represents a close relationship between their lifestyle and their habitat. The community has made small gains in terms of education, but there still remain many hurdles. The Soliga enrolment into science and math courses is limited. "Though the new generation is trying to make its way into educational institutions, there are boundaries that need to be crossed. Leaving one's home is a challenge, and obtaining an education is not enough," As formal education continues to be promoted in the community, the tribal's practical knowledge about interactions with wild animals and recognising herbs and medicinal plants is being lost. This is in part due to the distancing of young soligas from the forest, as well as the division of their lives between their family homes and the city."The young ones are slowly losing touch with the Gods, the temples, the customs and the forests,".

#### V. SUGGESTION

To make the Soliga tribes economically empower, they need a change, a change which is innovative and environmental friendly, which should not affect their culture or tradition which they are following. The following are the suggestions to make soliga's self empower:

1. The traditional occupation which they are doing have more value in urban area due to lack of awareness and information tribes are unable to know the value.
2. There are health care for them but further advanced health programmes are expected to reach the tribal population.
3. They need support and compulsory quality education at least for the age group of 5 to 14 so that they can get basic education.
4. Organizing the training programmes at village level of tribes on improved farm technologies.
5. Increase the support price and agricultural products and the products which they have prepared.
6. Conducting awareness programme on government schemes at tribe's village level.
7. Establishment and credit facility for small scale enterprises.
8. They should know the value for their works so that they are unable to get cheated by others easily.



## VI. CONCLUSION

This study is done to provide a better understanding of the Soliga tribes in term of their culture and traditional identity. Soliga's are indigenous tribes of Karnataka, inhabiting the peripheral forest areas near Biligiriranga hills and Male Mahadeshwara in ChamaraJanagara district. Traditionally they have been depending on the forests for their livelihood. The soliga's are also called the children of bamboo because the word is believed to mean that they originated from bamboo. Soligas are made themselves comfort with these practices but they are facing a problems economically. To become economically stable they need some knowledge, education, awareness and support. They need a financial education and also an education and awareness about the health issues, diseases and treatment for that, and the most important was precaution, safety measures and first aid treatment methods. By giving a awareness to the parents they can send their children's to get a basic education from that the children's of soliga's by getting basic education they can build the future. They should get a appropriate facilities and support from the government and awareness should be spread to the tribes. They don't know the government schemes and new implementation of technologies which are useful for them. The above suggestions should be implemented by the concerned authorities for improving the livelihood status of Soliga tribe's. Therefore action has to be initiated by the government to provide awareness and knowledge about present situations and support them to become economically empowered.

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