Badagas of Nilgiris: Polemics of Caste and Tribe

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Introduction
The Badagas are an immigrant social group that coexisted with the native tribes – Todas, Kotas, Irulas, Kurumbas, Paniyas and Kasavas - and shared their geography and environment in Nilgiris District\(^1\), located in Western Ghats of present Tamil Nadu State for its subsistence and endurance. The journey of Badagas\(^2\) is a long and continuous episode which took nearly four and half centuries to emerge successfully among all native tribes from the status of immigrants to that of a powerful community that drove and determined the socio-economic lives of the people in Nilgiris. Tradition mentions that the Badagas got migrated from the plains in the south of Mysore region to the foothills of Nilgiris during sixteenth century after the fall of Vijayanagara dynasty in the battle of Talikota (A.D. 1565) due to the threat caused by Muslim invasions and famine occurred in that region (Hockings, 2013,p.14). They were set at the foothills of the Nilgiris by temporarily resorting to hoe cultivation and took the similar life of tribals. Thence seeking opportunities and familiarity with the resident tribes of Nilgiris Todas, Kotas etc., moved to the hill tops and survived there by establishing reciprocal relationships with the native tribes. Thus on one hand they emerged as part and parcel of Nilgiri people by sharing both human and environmental resources and on the other evolved as an eminent peasant community that could maneuver agriculture in different ecosystems – hilly (slash and burn, dry (millet producing), wet (rice, sugarcane etc), garden (kitchen gardens etc.) lands for commercial benefits and expropriate forest products up to the maximum extent for ethno medical benefits.

The expertise of the Badagas in the commercialization of agriculture by producing English crops, tea and organization of extensive trade deserve applaud for their optimal knowledge to mold and adopt to changing environment and emerge successfully. The eminence of Badagas among the native tribes on the Nilgiris in different realms of life again kept them on toes to move again to plains from the hilltop. The natural resources of land waters were optimized for agricultural productions carried out in varied ecozones: wet, dry, garden and grass lands on the hills. The opportunities for further ventures in the hilltop are getting saturated. Hence the contour of migration of Badagas appears to have taken a new turn, i.e. from hilltop to plains. The researchers are univocal to accept the Badaga migration from southern Mysore Nilgiris due to the above said reasons (Sullivan, 1819, p.Iv; Ouchterlony, 1848, p.81; Harkness, 1832,p.105-6; Burton, 1991.rpt.p.334). But, there exists a controversy with regard to the caste of Badagas. The issues like whether the Badagas are tribes or millet producing farmers; whether ‘Badaga’ emerged as caste from tribal stature through social mobility; and whether there exists tribe-caste continuum in their practices- are some issues connected with the caste polemics of Badagas, whether they are of caste or tribe or survive in tribe caste continuum? The dilemma of the Badagas whether they should to be considered as tribals or backward community in Indian constitution is still a burning issue.

In the light of above discussion, the current research paper focuses on the following Objectives:

- To revisit the origin myths of the Badagas and bring forth the need for their migration, dispersal and hierarchisation.
- To process the fundamentals of Badaga culture through the traits of castes advocated by veteran social scientists.
- To emerge a logic to establish Badaga community as a tribe or caste or intermediary.
- To show the contour of Badaga migration.

\(^1\)Administratively, Udhamandalam is theheadquarters of the district. Two Revenue Divisions namely Coonoor and Gudalur constituted with 6 taluks such as Coonoor, Kotagiri, Udha gamandalam,Kundah, Gudalur and Panthalur. There were only 4 taluks; Coonoor, Kotagiri, Udhamandalam and Gudalur in 1991. Kundah taluk was formed byseperating some areas of Udhamandalam taluk.Panthalur taluk was formed by bifurcating Gudalur taluk.

\(^2\)The total population of the Nilgiri district according to latest official figures (2011) is 7, 64, 826, of which according to the Young Badaga Association (June, 2010) are around 2, 50, 000 spread in around 370 hamlets and villages ethnically known as hatti.
Methodology
The primary source is field data collected from the community on different socio-economic and cultural aspects of their folklife. The secondary source constitutes the research works conducted in similar aspects on Badagas. Both quantitative (survey) and qualitative methods (observation, ethnographic and dialogical) methods are employed in the research process. The research tools like questionnaires (open ended and close ended), both oral and written interviews (directed and non-directed) were used in data collection. The data is checked for authenticity through the method of triangulation. Analysis and interpretation is done in the light of latest discourses in social sciences.

Discussion
The word ‘Badaga’ means ‘northerner’ indicating that they came from southern part of Mysore region (Breeks, 1873, p.128). So the natives of Nilgiris call them as Badaga, the northerner for the original home of these migrants is situated north of Nilgiri region. Before going into the polemics of Badaga identity as a caste or tribe or something else, the origin and migration of the Badaga community has to be briefly discussed.

With regard to the origin and migration of Badaga community the information is scanty. There is no recorded evidence for their origin and migration. Tradition existing in the form of myths and legends that help to construct the origin and the reasons leading to the migration of Badagas to the Nilgiris (Thurston & Rangachary, 1909, p.67-68) A brief account of the narratives on Badagas is given below:

(i) During the regime of Tipu Sultan, the Nawab of Mysore, there lived seven brothers with their beautiful sister in the village Badagahalli on Talamali hills, near Mysore. On an evening, she was milking her cows. At that time, a calf unknotted the rope to which it was tied and was about to fall. Noticing the danger to take place to the calf, the sister instantaneously uncoiled her long wavy hair and held it back to the tree. Then her brother milked the cow. Then Tipu Sultan who was on his ride to the vicinity of this Badaga settlement watched the whole incident and got attracted to her stunning beauty and courage. He wanted to marry her. Then the seven brothers along with their sister in disguise fled to Nilgiris. In their journey, after they reached the river Moyar, they found the army of Tipu Sultan very close to them. As they were Saivites, they kept a Sivalingam on the ground and prostrated before it. Then the river Moyar got split and gave way for them to cross it while their chasers got in the waters and died. The Badagas took to the disguise and tattooed on their foreheads and forearms to make themselves unattractive and unidentifiable.

After escaping from danger, tradition says that they got settled in the village Bethelhada which is also presently known as Bettllada. For some time, they lived there and then migrated to different regions of Nilgiris. Then the eldest brother asked his younger brother to go behind a deer and settle wherever it stops. Then as per the instructions of his elder brother settled at Kinnakorai (Hiriyasegai), for the deer stopped there only. Two of his brothers, one settled down at Koderi and the other at Hubballai. These brothers were the founders of the Porangad division of the Badagas. The second brother, Hethappa, had two daughters. One day, when Hethappa was not at home, two Todas rushed into his house and overpowered his wife. After knowing about the misdeed of the Toda brothers, Hethappa with the help of two Balayar men took vengeance upon the Toda brothers. The Balayar men killed the Todas on the condition that they should be given in marriage with his daughters. The contemporary residents of the Hulikal village are said to be descendants of the marital relationship between Balayar and Hethappa. The present day Hethappa and Hethe cult is attributed to the migration episode of the seven Badaga brothers and sister.

(ii) Another narrative tells that a few Badagas /Gowda families travelled up to Nilgiris and sought asylum in its deep forests. When they were rushing to move, they forgot to take their boy sleeping in cradle in the cave. A Toda man passing on the way got attracted to the boy and called him out. The boy crawled inside. The Toda man brought his son and sprinkled roasted seeds of amaranth sinfron of them. When the Toda boy began to pick them, the Badaga boy also came out to eat. Then the Toda father took to the disguise and tattooed on their foreheads and forearms to make themselves unattractive and unidentifiable.

(iii) Another narrative on the Badaga migration gives the following information: Tradition attributes the migration of Badagas from Mysore region to Nunthala of two brothers from Gowda group. On their way they were hungry. In this context one of the brothers shot a pigeon. He roasted it to eat. But, the elder brother avoided eating the bird. The brother who did not eat the bird is Hethappa who is considered as the progenitor of the Kundah region of Badagas.

3 The narratives are reconstructed basing on the information from the field corroborated with that of available in the published works.
All these accounts clarify that a group of people migrated from south of Mysore region migrated to the Nilgiris. They were considered as Badagas, the northerner by the natives. In proto-Kannada Badaga means, a northerner. The perception of the native tribes about the immigrant group as northerners clarifies that Badagas are not local but migrants. The origin narrative connects them with cattle rearing, a distinct feature of peasant community. The care and concern of the community towards the livestock got reflected in the attempt of the sister to protect the cow at the stake of life. Uncoiling the hair and using it as a rope to hold the calf though a thick literary expression, it shows the core perception of the community towards their main source of agrarian production.

The migration is said to have been corroborated with the fall of Vijayanagara Empire in A.D. 1565 and onslaught of Muslims during the times of Tipu Sultan the Nawab of Mysore. Rayas of Vijayanagar were most influential rulers in entire South India. They were projected as the protectors of Hindu dharma and strong bulwark against the Muslim attacks. Association of prominent personages and places of historical importance to events and people is very common in the process of folklore construction, exclusively as narratives. Thus the rule of Vijayanagara rule and the final battle of Talikota that ended the glory and fate of the empire emerged as significant motifs in the Badaga origin narrative. Further, the region from which Badagas are said to have migrated is an arid zone wherein the land and people are subjected to vagaries of monsoon which causes floods and famines which turn creates uncertainty to the peasants. Such conditions lead to migrations of peasants along with their livestock during these times. It is natural to have socio-economic and political unrest among the people who are involved in production during the times of anarchy created during war times, and with Muslims/foreign rulers. Such may be the situation that the peasants of Southern Mysore might have been subjected which made them to move. The association of Tipu’s army and episode of marriage depicted in the narrative reveals the threats people experience during the times of journey and strategies the migrants adopt to save themselves from the situation. Worship of Sivalinga and resultant miracle of splitting Moyar river to give them way to escape from the Muslim chasers reveals their staunch affiliation to belief of the Okkaliga peasants of Mysore and miraculous power that Siva exerts in saving his devotees.

The Badaga women tattooing on their foreheads and hands during the course of their migration appears to be an attempt made by them to disfigure their real identity and present to their chasers, the Muslim army as though they are native tribes of the land.

Seven brothers and sister as revealed in narrative (ii), leaving of the cradle child behind when they were hastily escaping from their chasers is symbolic act of remembering their past identity even wherein search of new avenues in their immigrant life. Depiction of a Toda man in the narrative as benefactor to the discarded child who became founder of Tothanadu region of Badagas is noteworthy. Use of seeds of amaranth to negotiate the child through his (Toda) own child is a strategy to identify the people through their food habits. In general paradigm that constructs the identity of people in different cultures. In the narrative, the Todas are also represented as the offenders of Badagas for the former are accused of committing violation upon the wife of Badaga brother Hethappa. The Badaga brothers took to the help of Balayaru, who killed the two Toda offenders. Later the Badagas entered into matrimonial relations with Balayarus of Hulikal. This narrative attributes the origin of Porangad branch of Badagas to Hethappa. The relationship of Badagas with the Todas in this narrative is pessimistic. One as that of usurpers. However, the migration narratives always contain the episodes of adventures, strategies of survivals, heroism, disasters and so on. Badaga migration is no exception to these deeds. Finally the narrative portrays the seven brothers as founders of different Badaga settlements and Hettappa and Hethe whose status got raised from terrestrial (earthly) to celestial (divine) realm. They are being worshipped as village god and goddesses and as memory and thank giving ceremony to the heroes in the form of Hethe and Hethappa.

The narrative (iii) throws flood of light on the classification of Badaga/Gowdas into vegetarian and non-vegetarian clans basing on the paradigm of purity and pollution based on food habit (vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism). Vegetarian Badaga brother Hethappa who did not eat the bird became the founder of Kundharegion of the community. The diet of Badagas determine their hierarchy in the community. The narrative substantiates that the diet of the Badagas determine their distinctive status among the communities of Nilgiris. The Badaga proverbial scholarship illustrates the distinction between Badagas and its co-habitants, Kotas, Todaa and Kurumba based on the food habits. The proverb “ Badagaga bada:se / kotaga po:ta:se; Todavaga hulla:se / kurumagaje:na-se” which meaneth “the Badaga,Kota,Toda and Kurumba want respectively mutton, beef, grass and honey”, suggest the construction of identity based on their dietary traditions.

The Badaga society too has its own peculiar social group system. The diet of the Badagas reveals the position of his social order in the society i.e., either higher or lower in hierarchy. While the social order recognises Wodeya, Haruva, Adhikari, Kanakka, and Gowda or Badaga in the high to low rank, the Toreyas are considered as inferior to all others. Wodeyas are considered as the aristocrats among the Badagas. They are said to be a branch of the ruling family of Mysore (Sherring , 1975 , p.,171). Haruvas are priests, the Adhikaris are strict vegetarians. The
Caste of Badagas

The scholars have pendulous swing with regard to Badaga identity whether as tribe or caste. Paul Hockings basing on the following distinct markers of identity, he arrived that the Badagas are tribes like that of other groups of Nilgiris. They are: (i) Badaga language (ii)legitimate marriage rules of exogamy and endogamy, (iii) bear culture specific marker of their respective sectarian identity – sectarian dress code, tattoo or mark on the fore head (iv) village identity and typical Badaga architecture in house construction and (v) kinship linkages between the members of same phartry. Paul Hockings (1993,p.355) held that Badagas are seen not to be precisely a caste society, but they could still be viewed as a caste or a caste-block in a larger caste society, in that of Nilgiris. Wherein together with the four social systems of Toda, Kurumba, Kota and Toreya formed a social system wherein each group was clearly demarcated and interdependent. They all worked to preserve their reciprocity of relationships which may otherwise threaten the proper functioning of the system that had been articulating them so far. Badagas are considered as the units of larger (caste) society, but has basic features that are considered in India as tribal.

It appears that the caste-tribe confusion is prevalent in the identity construction of Badagas and may be due to the popular and official usage of these two terms in administration. It is because, there exists a controversy with regard to naming the groups of people residing in Nilgiris whether as a caste, tribe or category. Badaga Community is presently treated as Backward Class in Tamil Nadu (OBC under Central Government). The Badagas of Nilgiris were originally treated as hill Tribes. The Badagas were described as 'Primitive Tribe' by the British Government. The State of Tamil Nadu made a recommendation for inclusion of 'Badagas Community' in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Tamil Nadu, vide letter dated 27 July 1990.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs brings forth the earlier proceedings connected to the inclusion of 'Badaga Community' in the list of Scheduled Tribes in the State of Tamil Nadu. The Registrar General of India appears to have raised some objections on the issue of including Badaga Community under Scheduled Tribe. A section nativity community is not in favour of their inclusion in the Tribes. The State Government was called upon to submit a fresh proposal taking into account the observation made by the Registrar General of India. Representations dated 28 October, 2013 and 8 November, 2013 submitted by the Badagas is now pending with the authorities. They were forwarded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, to the Secretary, Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department (Tamil Nadu) for follow up action. The matter is therefore pending with the State Government. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs mentions that the action is pending with the State government of Tamil Nadu. Hence it is considered that the Badagas constitute one among the other ‘atypical mainstream social groups’ of Nilgiris that survive on the subsistence interrelationships (Hockings 1993,pp.347-363).

Depending upon the discourse of Misra (1977, p137-150), Dumont (1972, p.120-122) and Bailey (1961,p.7-19; 1963,p.107-124) with regard to the tribe-caste controversy of Indian tribes, Paul Hockings (1993,p.361) developed a ‘Polar Triangular model of Indian communities and their residential patterns’ basing on

A female informant Micchi (59) of Tuneri village ,Todanadu division from gowda/Badaga sect explained the significance of dietary practices in their families.
his ethnographic data on the Badaga community. His model enables to understand the differences that separate pastoral or nomadic tribes from agricultural tribes for the latter are historical and got assimilated into local caste system with the passage of generations. For him Nilgiris is a case of caste society having several distinct indigenous cultures having origins in pre-caste social formations and the differences amongst them is in their content rather than in the structure of the society. He observes tribe-caste continuum exists in their identity formations. Basing on the works of (Klass 1993), (Dutt 1965), (Blunt 1969), (Ghurye 1961) and (Hutton 1981) Bailey (1963), it is observed that in order to consider a community as a caste, it should fulfill some traits. They are :(i)occultational specialization, (ii)purity scale, (iii)hierarchy of relationship, (iv)commensality and (v)ascriptiveness.

The ethnography of Badaga community when processed through the above criteria that stand as parameters for being a caste,, the caste-tribe dilemma may be solved.

(i) Occupational specialization: The Badagas who were a branch of Vokkaligas migrated to Nilgiris from the southern Mysore region nearly more than 400 years ago. From one of the Badaga proverb it can be inferred that the Badagas are okkalas (dominant peasants group in Karnataka) and they have agriculture as hereditary profession. The proverb okkala ma:ti uttu ariyana / kurumana ma:kole ariyana means that “Wont the okkala son know how to plough? Wont the Kurumba’s son know how to murder?” Though the proverb reflects the perception of Badagas on the Kurumbas whom they considered as participants in their religious rituals, it substantiates that the Badagas are the okkalas. It emphasizes the hereditary nature of occupations in the Badaga society. Their expertise in the appropriation of land, environment and people for their agricultural activities and cattle rearing substantiates that they are seasoned agricultural practitioners in dealing with dry,wet,garden and commercial crops and also skilled in handling managerial functions.

(ii) Purity scale, (iii) hierarchy of relationship, (iv) commensality
The Badagas are in toto are in ten phratries divided into 44 clans including Christians (1980, p.76). Though clan and social hierarchy occurs in the matters of purity and pollution and life cycle as well as communal rituals, breaking of exogamous and endogamous relationships is not uncommon. Moreover, the Badaga economy though appears to be egalitarian, the association of other tribal communities living in Nilgiris in different spheres of Badaga lifestyle, economy and rituals reminds one the reciprocity of relationships that exist in the caste society of South Indian village. Though the Toreya phratry had land and cattle they are treated as lower in their hierarchy, i.e, their role as ‘village servants’ to the hamlet and commune headman. Formally for a minimum payment they are obliged to fulfill many men and hours per year of time consuming tasks like carrying messages from one place to the other. The apex status among hierarchy were the Wodeyas and Haruvas , land owners and cattle keepers who received payments from families or villages for each religious tasks they undertake. The Badagas have totems. The families belonging to their respective totem observes and maintains rules of exogamy and endogamy in their social world. Thus the Badaga community is heterogeneous. But all Badagas share common features in the matters of dress, house architecture, ritual life, economy, social organization and so on that construct the identity of their people as a Badaga folkgroup. The solidarity they build up in the matters of these aspects may be the homogeneity. Thus Badagas as a folkgroup is homogenous and thereby establish their group identity, but as a socio-culturally hierarchized and economically categorized and sustained reciprocity of relationship with other co-habiting indigenous people makes it heterogeneous similar to that of any peasant community of south India. The reciprocity of relationships that exist between Badaga community and the tribes of Nilgiris and vice versa is given in the following Diagrams, I and II.

Diagram: I Relationships: Nilgiri Tribes and Badagas
The above diagram explains how different tribal communities are connected with the Badagas in their socio-economic and cultural life of the Badaga community by participating in reciprocity of relationships and contributed for the stability and sustenance of Badagas. Centrally located in the diagram, the Badaga receives dairy products from the Todas and maintain Badagahundis in Toda sacred dairy temples. From Kota tribe Badagas receive ritual music and artisan services that are required in their ritual ceremonies and agriculture. Kurumbas give forest produces, baskets and take the function of healing through magico-religious practices. The Irulas are professional cattle rearers and wage workers to Badagas and supply forest produces. They further take part in funerals of Badagas as musicians. Kasavas are cattle rearers and livestock incharge of Badagas and supply forest produces and labour to them. In the same way, Paniyas are wage workers for the Badaga society. Thus the Badagas received services from different tribes of the land and augmented environmental resources for exploring new avenues to conduct their agricultural ventures.

Diagram: II. Relationships: Badagas and Tribes of Nilgiris

The above diagram diagrammatically represents the reciprocal relationship of Badagas with the other native tribal groups. The Badagas give Gudu, a gift of grains and other agricultural produce to the Todas in return for their services in the form of dairy products and as a token of gratitude for giving them land for their sustenance when they settled in Nilgiris. Further they extended their services to the Todas by participating in their panchayat system. Badagas provide clothes, agricultural produces to Koatas and participate in their rituals as guests in return for their ritual music services that they render to them. For, Kurumbas, Badagas give salt, crude sugar, grain in return for their services as village guard and ritual services. Badagas provide toPaniyas the clothing, sites and materials for house construction, bear marriage expenses and provide agricultural produces in token for their service as wage workers. Badagas took the services of the Irulas as cattle herders and wage workers in their fields and gave grains, clothing, wages etc. The Badagas had similar exchange services with the Kasavas to maintain their cattle and agricultural activities. Hence, it is evident that the Badagas maintained purity and pollution norms to distinguish their selves with that of the others within their own community as well as with the others who share their environment. The reciprocity of norms and relationships the Badagas maintained with the local tribes in order to continue their profession (agriculture) in the process of give and take reminds of the typical agrarian village polity wherein the communities living in a peasant settlement sustain on mutual services in the form cash or kind in a hierarchy of relationships depending upon the profession they undertake. In the Nilgiris context, the Badagas, being basically the professionals in agriculture, could advance the services that are needed for successful agricultural operations in different eco systems –dry, wet, arid etc., and emerge as entrepeneuring social group.
Such knowledge on environmental management could be possessed mostly by the peasants who could balance the rhythm of agricultural cycle with the environment. The dietary habits, prohibition of interdining and inter-sectarian marriages as cited elsewhere in the paper among the people of Badaga community are typical to any other peasant caste of South India.

(v) Ascriptivevness

It means that a person’s caste was determined by birth. The caste panchayat has the power to excommunicate its members if they violate the custom and norms of the community. Customary law regulates the lives of the people in their respective caste. Badagas are not an exception to such ascriptivevness. At each level - village, commune, division and entire community, the responsible headman or the affected party can call together a council manta where the elders and elder sons of the families will gather. Every case has to pass through this hierarchy of councils. If the lower level of manta cannot solve the issue, only then it will be taken up to the next council. The case cannot be taken up in the highest level of meeting where the whole community is involved, unless it is an issue concerning the whole Badaga Community-all the four bettas. When a dispute arises between two persons or between families or parties the village headman calls a council of head, from each household who inevitably should be the male headman of the family. The whole procedure takes place under his gaundike or headmanship. Another elder of the village who is considered wise will assist him. If the conflict is between the villages then the headmen of both or as many villages involved form the council. After listening to the discussion from both the parties, and the witness the headman will pronounce the punishment after consulting his other members. Even if Kotas or Todas are involved in the dispute, their headmen will also be present.

During the course of council proceedings, there is no entry to women. If they happened to be the witness, they can speak to the headman in private. Toreyas are allowed to attend the council but cannot be active in the discussions. They consider that the male deliberations are faster and reliable. There were occasions when one party was punished, but punishing both the disputants was also in practice. Usual issues for which the council met were; murder, theft, influencing the other for suicide, violation, land dispute, breach in obeying customs and traditions, illegal marriage and also the disputes unsettled in Toda Noim and Kota council, for similar offences find place for discussion in Badaga Council. For minor guilts, the offender may bow down inside the circle of the council to which all members are present. Murder and provocation to suicide are considered as heinous crimes. Though sometimes the above norms were followed in predicting punishments, normally the punishments were not a fixed one. The headman could alter or change the nature of punishment taking into circumstantial evidences. The Todas and Kotas regarded the Badagas superior to them. No other community than the Badagas could achieve such highness in the treatment in day-to-day life of the multicultural environment as in Nilgiris.

Thus the prevalence of all these traits in the community life of the Badagas substantiates that they belong to the peasant community which has undergone a long journey of ups and downs to finally emerge as powerful among its co-inhabitants in Nilgiris.

Conclusion

In the light of above discussion it can be interpreted that the Badagas as known from their distinct origin myths that they are of agriculturalists professionally connected to the dominant peasant group of Vokkaligas in southern Karnataka. They got migrated to the foothills of Nilgiris after the fall of Vijayanagara dynasty in A.D. 1565 on two grounds.(i) Since Southern Karnataka constituting the dry-arid and low lying hilly regions were rainfed regions, they were all subjected to the vagaries of monsoons that resulted in floods and famines in the respective regions. Hence the peasants of this region had no alternative than migrating to a place where they could find new avenues of livelihoods. For them the Nilgiris appeared to be congenial for they are well aware of environment in dry and hilly terrains and they could get acclimatized to their changed ecological conditions. Peasant migrations to long distances were not uncommon in South India on the pretext of famines and floods (ii) Onslaught of Muslim incursions in to the civic life of the populace during the regime of Nawabs of Karnataka, Tipu Sultan, son of Hyder Ali is cited as a cause in the migration legend. Here is a probability of both the conditions occurring together or successively might have contributed for the displacement of the peasants to distant lands. Association of a prominent historical person to the occurrence of an event or an incidence is very common in the construction of folknarratives especially the legends. It is because, establishment of such relationship between the event and the famous historical person would give legitimation to that incidence or event. These two grounds confirm their migration of Badagas to Nilgiris. The migration of the Badagas from southern Mysore

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5The information on customary law of Badagas is gathered from the fieldwork conducted at the villages Kadanadu (Todanadu), Kinnakorai Porangadu, Adhigaretty, Horanalli, (Mekkunad).
region constituting Hasanur Taluk (Chamarajanagar district) can be attested by their prevalence in these regions till date. The migration of Badagas is continuous.

Having been displaced from the settled way of life as agriculturalists, they were compelled to start their new life in hilly environment as herders of the cattle and practitioners of slash and burn agriculture like that of any other tribes of India. After acclimatizing to the new environment by adopting tribal way of life, they got familiarized with the land and people of Nilgiris two centuries before the establishment of British station at Dimbathor (1820s). The Badagas got consolidated as a distinct sub-group in their respective environment - Wodeyas, Haruvas, Adhikaris, Kanakkas, Gowdas/Badagas and Toreyas. They maintained kin relationships by observing the norms of purity and pollution. By that time Badagas emerged as dominant peasants among the other assorted tribal dwellers. Besides bartering their surplus agricultural produces in the Gundalpet (Mysore dt.) Sundapatti (Palghat dt.) and Karamadai (Coimbatore dt.) markets, they entered into reciprocity of hierarchical relationships with the local tribal groups for mutual sustenance. After the intervention of Britshers into the socio-economic life of the inhabitants of Nilgiris, the Badagas grew as land owners and enriched themselves in the cultivation and trade of commercial crops like tea, coffee, potato, carrot, beetroot, cauliflower etc. On the otherhand, Britshers also preferred the association of Badaga entrepreneurship to deepen their administration in Western ghats. Thus the Badagas being the peasants were always innovative in their profession for they could understand and appropriate the dynamics of ecology and environment on one hand and could articulate and consolidate their relationships with other fellow communities wherein they live. It can also be concluded that the Badaga were not tribes and there is no tribe caste continuum. They migrated as peasants with their cattle and molded themselves with the land and people of Nilgiris. For that time being, they adopted the tribal way of life- gathering, slash and burn agriculture, cattle herding- and looked for the opportunities to expand more after their acquaintance with the environment. Thus the journey of Badagas from Mysore region to Nilagiris and thence in the contemporary times has ups and downs. During the formative time of their relocation, they had a temporary setback of living like tribes. Through their professional negotiations with other tribal groups they established reciprocity of norms and relationships with them in their socio-economic and politico-religious lives. Sustenance on reciprocity norms is a clear feature of peasant society which Badagas maintained throughout their life course on Nilgiris and even now in the changed environmental conditions. They never lost the traits of peasant caste. They practiced hoe-agriculture along with the tribes for they knew craft of agriculture. The water resources on the hill-top and monsoonshelped the agriculturist Badagas as a result of their agricultural entrepreneurship in developing agricultural cycle in relation to environmental resources. The Badagas had flourishing commercial crop production and marketing in a variety of agrarian products including tea. The tea plantation for Badagas was very beneficial and theyield was prosperous along with fetching good price upto the year 2000. Nilgiri tea even today has its presence in international market. In due course, the price drop which affected the tea market has impacted Badagas to a greater extent. Though there was an increase in tea production, the marketing was not encouraging due to the competition in the International tea market. Hence, there was a setback in Badaga economy from Tea production. As the Badagas became prosperous due to education and land owning, they developed professionalism in agriculture production. Thus the new generation aims to procure relevant education in plains, other parts of the country and foreign countries. Hence the Badagas are moving from hills to plains again in search of new openings in their lives. It continues to remain in their innate zeal and aspiration to own land and experiment with agriculture; however relocation have begun to Coimbatore region in these times. It is well demonstrated in the long journey of Badagas from the status of migrants to that of land owners and adapting to production of western crops makes one to understand the efficacy of the community with which they could introduce South India to Westernworld. The migration of Badagas is an ongoing process.

References