

KINSHIP AND LINEAGE AMONG THE HALAKKIS: A STUDY IN UTTARA KANNADA DISTRICT

Raghava Naik

Assistant Professor

Dept. of Sociology

Govt. First Grade College & Centre for P.G. Studies Thenkanidiyur, UDUPI.
Udupi TQ & District. Karnataka State Pin Code -576106

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ABSTRACT: *This article has been produced as a part of Ph.D. thesis entitled 'The Role of Halakki Women of Uttara Kannada District in Economic Productivity and Ecological Sustainability'. It's on Kinship and Lineage background of Halakki community. Here the researcher has given simple and comprehensive account of Halakki Kinship and Lineage details. Halakki community is known as aboriginals of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka State. They are mainly distributed in four coastal taluks, Karwar, Ankola, Kumta and Honnavar. Halakki is a combination of two words Halu and Akki. Halakki term may in use because they grow milky white rice (Gazetteer of The Bombay Presidency). Halakkis follow both patrilineal and matrilineal family pattern. Though earlier, Halakkis used to follow matrilineal pattern of family, presently families at Karwar, Honnavar and Kumta have adopted patrilineal system of inheritance. However, the matrilineal system has been declining among the Halakkis. The study shows that 62.67 percent of the respondents live in nuclear family and 37.33 percent live in joint family. The kinship terms among Halakkis refer to status and also it identifies the relationship between the speaker and the person addressed. The kinship term also guides the individual behavior towards other individuals, such as respect, friendliness, co-operation etc.*

Key Words: *Halakki, Matrilineal, Patrilineal, women, kinship*

Introduction:

Every kinship system is significantly a cultural system. There no particular pattern in this world for any kinship system. It tends to vary from one culture to other culture. Every individual has relationships with other people around them. This is the basic system that takes place in all human societies. It organizes people and groups and therefore it is known as the system of kinship. Radcliffe Brown viewed kinship as a part of the social structure and gave importance to the study of kinship system as a part of rights and obligations (1964). Study of Nuer community of southern Sudan done by Evans Pritchard was determined on kinship groups essentially focused on a descent in the male line from the ancestor.

Kinship in India can be seen in families and outside families. Primary relatives focus in kinship within family including initial interfamily relationships containing husbands and wife, mother and daughter, brother and sister, father and son etc. These all are the part of the same nuclear family which is also known as "family of procreation". Outside the kinship of family, there are secondary and tertiary relatives. Murdock showcases primary '8' and secondary '33' relatives. Each of the secondary relatives contains of primary relatives.

In India in general perspective, we have "clan exogamy" and "caste endogamy". There are cases that have different clans and these clans have different lineages. In common ancestor of lineage, member is a common and known person by everyone but in common ancestor of the clan has a supernatural being. All the members of a clan are distributed over different areas and that is why they do not find the common interest among each other. Clans facilitate a foundation for corporate functions, love on the premise of the group, in marriage qualification inside a given standing is resolved.

It is believed that kinship is basically a vital part of social organization also at the same period it set division with regards to the inheritance of property. There is a reason which hampers the lineage unity and results in conflicts between members. The rivalry between brothers or argument between father and son all are been observed.

About Halakki Community:

Halakki Vokkaligas are inhabitants of coastal taluqs of Uttara Kannada district. They are seen on both sides of National Highway 66 that passes through Karwar, Ankola, Kumata and Honnavar taluqs of

Uttara Kannada district and the parts of land touching the water of Arabian Sea. According to the 2011 census, the Halakkis numbering over 1,14,549 dwell in a cluster of villages in coastal four taluks of the district. Halakkis are the one of the largest tribal groups of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka state. Since they have all features of tribes, would have included in list of scheduled tribes. Though they are not included in the list, they maintained their own uniqueness in all spheres of life as a tribe.

The origin of Halakki is concerned for two views. The first is Halakkis are as the aboriginals of Uttara Kannada district. Halakkis are one of the important native tribe of Uttara Kannada district. They settled down in valleys of river and forest area like Toda's of Nilagiri. Halakkis prefer these places to feed their cattle and to get medicinal plants, in which they have abundant knowledge of its use. This area is also good for their traditional occupation terrace cultivation. Later on they shifted to river banks and coastal areas. Now Halakkis are found in coastal taluks between Karwar to Honnavar on river bank, hill areas and coastal areas. The other view is that they are the immigrants of Uttara Kannada. The Mumbai Gazetteer states that Halakkis are mostly migrated from Mysore region and settled down in the coastal area. But there is not any resemblance between the Halakki Vokkaliga of Uttara Kannada district and the Vokkaliga's of Mysore with respect to dress pattern, culture, tradition and dialect. The folk literature, customs and dialects of Halakkis makes some of the scholars to think that they are migrated from Andhra Pradesh, since they are stringent devotees of Thirupathi Thimmappa.

Halakki Family Structure:

Halakkis follow both patrilineal and matrilineal family pattern. Though earlier, Halakkis used to follow matrilineal family pattern, presently majority of them have adopted patrilineal system of inheritance. So, the matrilineal system has been declining among the Halakki. Here the right to property passes through the male line. Both in patrilineal and matrilineal joint families, the eldest male member is the head of the household. The role of the head of the household is most important at the time of marriage, birth, death and other socio-religious activities. He is called by them as Headman and his wife as Head woman. This headship is passed on through male line.

The study shows that 62.67 percent of the respondents live in nuclear family and 37.33 percent live in joint family. Occupation-wise breakup of the data shows that the joint family is more prevalent among those who own agricultural land and practice agriculture as their chief occupation. The nature of family among manual workers, agricultural laborers and those who are working in government service and household industry is by and large nuclear. The agricultural households are having common property—both movable and immovable which binds them together and, as the practice of agriculture also needs more work force during some seasons, this also helps to keep the family and its property united. Whereas in the case of those who are engaged in manual work, household industry, government services etc., they can live in a nuclear family as their work does not need group supports.

The size of the family among the Halakki varies between 2 and 13. The average size of the family is 6.18 persons. The data shows that 8.86 percent of the households have less than 2 members, 38.57 percent have 3-5 persons. Nearly one-third (33 percent) have 6-8 members, and 19.66 percent have more than 9 members.

Kinship Organization:

Nuclear family is a smallest unit, formed on the basis of consanguine (biological) and conjugal (marital) ties of kinship. According to Hammond (1971:165), "Domestic groups, or residential kin groups, are always formed on the basis of the combined principles of consanguinity (socially recognized shared biological descent) and affinity (relationship established by marriage)." Kaur (1977:33) points out, "Kinship is the combination of culturally utilized rules, including marriage, residence rules, rules of succession and inheritance and rules of descent, which place individuals and groups in definite relationship to each other within a society."

The kinship terms among Halakkis refer to status and also it identifies the relationship between the speaker and the person addressed. The kinship term also guides the individual behavior towards other individuals, such as respect, friendliness, co-operation etc. The status differentiation is made through applying certain kinship terms to certain individuals. For example, in a consanguine family the terms like mother, father, son, daughter etc., show the different roles and their status sanctioned on the basis of group rules. At the same time, those individuals who are referred through the same kinship terms may not have similar status and role. For example, the terms referring to elder brother or younger brother may be used to a group of individuals, such as mother's sister son, father's brother's son, to the own male siblings, or

even to a stranger. The status and role of these different individuals who are referred by the same term is different. Hence kinship term may not define in all cases, the status and role of an individual.

The use of two different terms to a single individual is also found among the Halakki. They use one term to address and another term to refer the same individual. The ego may also use these two terms even for some affinal relatives such as, to younger brother's wife or wife's younger sister, he use the common term to refer and use their names to address.

Kinship Usages:

A kinship usage within the households varies on the basis of age, sex and kinship relations. At an early age of the child, the Halakki are lenient towards their children. In adolescence, the child has to follow the rules strictly. According to established customs of the community, he should obey and respect the elder members of the family, avoid talking freely with his father or the elder members of the family. The younger members are not expected to use the names to address the elder members of the family. The siblings behave in friendly way; we can find mutual love and support among them. In the absence of father the eldest son acts as the head of the family. Similarly in the absence of mother the eldest daughter plays the same role as the mother does.

First of all, marriage creates groups, special groupings of kin. Thus, the social invention of marriage assigns each role, a wife, a husband and makes her children as his children, thereby creating special group of father, mother and children which we call family. By use of additional rules and social conventions, larger kin groups are created, such as extended families or lineages or sibs or clans.

The second major function of kinship rules is to govern the role relationships among kins. Kinship provides a sort of social grid. In a society people are joined to one another by genealogical ties and by common kin-group membership. Kinship usage assigns guidelines for interactions among persons in these social groupings. It defines proper, acceptable role relationships, say, between father and daughter, between brother and sister, between young son-in-law and mother-in-law, etc. Kinship usage thus acts as a regulator of social life.

Another important situation where the kins are required to behave in a specific way is death. The pollution will be observed by all the family members. After the death of husband, the 'Uglification' (Making the widow ugly) ceremony for the widow of the deceased is performed by her brother. The close relatives and neighbors also participate during the cremation of the dead. The son has to light the pyre.

Even at the time of child birth and puberty of a girl, the kins gather and help to perform the ritual practices. At the time of birth, the mother, father and other members of the family of a child observe the ritual impurity. The naming ceremonies is performed after the 9th/12th (it varies from place to place) day of the child birth. Gifts are presented to the newly born baby by the guest. At the time of puberty, the maternal aunt (mother's brother's wife), and the wife of tribal head (Head woman) along with other females pour water to the head (of the girl who have been polluted by puberty and invite to the house).

The important kinship usages among the Halakki women is, avoidance, where many sets of kins avoid each other. The other form of kinship usage can be found which is extremely opposite to the avoidance where, extreme degree of familiarity is expressed. The relationship between daughter-in-law and parent-in-law, between son-in-law and his parent-in-law, wife and her husband's elder brother etc. are cramped by certain restrictions.

Lineage:

A group of families having a common ancestor combine to form a lineage. A lineage in the sense in which we generally employ this word is a group of living agnates, descended from the founder of that particular line. Logically it also includes dead persons descended from the founder-and we sometimes use the word to include them also-but these dead persons are significant only in that their genealogical position explains the relationships between the living" Pritchard:1940:216) viewed that, "The lineage is the simplest form of extended unilineal kinship group in that it normally is limited to closely related agnatic (male descent line) or uterine (female descent line) kin and is rarely more than six generations deep." Lowie (1950:236) states that, "...the lineage is made up exclusively of provable blood relatives, i.e., all members are demonstrably descended from a common ancestor or ancestress."

Among the Halakkis the 'linear' relationship is regarded in two ways, either patrilineal or matrilineal. Here bilineal relationship is absent. In patrilineal system linear relationship is recognized through male line and in matrilineal system it is recognized through male line only. The lineage head, the

eldest male in both male and female line is called as family Headman. This Family Headman is honored by the other members of the lineage and he represents the whole lineage.

Clan Organization:

When the simplest type of unilateral group (called lineage) is extended to include all those believed to be related through common descent, then we have a sib or clan. Thus, a sib or clan is often the combination of a few lineages and descent may be ultimately traced to a mythical ancestor who may be human, human-like, animal, plant or even inanimate. The gotra of the Hindus is an example of clan. Obviously, the terms clan or sib describe larger, more geographically dispersed, near-functionless unilineal groups.

Sibs are often bound together by a common totemic name and by a common ritual taboo against eating the flesh of the totem animal. The fiction is solemnly maintained that the sib members are all descended somehow from a common ancestor of the totemic species. Apart from the size, the only essential difference between a lineage and a clan is that the members of a lineage can actually traced out their genealogies of common descent from a known ancestor, while clan members cannot (Hoebel: 1977:448). Mandalbaum (1991:145) says, "Gotra is most commonly used to mean what we have called a clan that is an exogamous category within a jati." Regarding clan system among the tribes, Vidyarthi and Rai (1977:175) said that, "...the clan can be defined as a exogamous division of a tribe, the members of which are held to be related to one another by some common times, may be believed in the descent from common ancestors, possession of a common totem or habitation of a common territory."

The group membership is determined by birth and is defined in relation to an ancestor who remains a fixed point of reference. People related each other because they share descendants of common ancestor. Through recognizing common ancestor, several individuals come together; recognize certain individuals as their head. In both matrilineal and patrilineal descent, they authority is vested in the hands of male members. In matrilineal descent it is the mother's brother or the eldest son of the sisters possess to authority.

Major Findings:

Halakki matrilineal family has been gradually decline and patrilineal tendencies have emerged. Awareness among the Halakki about the need to follow family planning method is emerging. The study shows that 62.67 percent of the respondents live in nuclear family and 37.33 percent live in joint family. Occupation-wise breakup of the data shows that the joint family is more prevalent among those who own agricultural land and practice agriculture as their chief occupation. Another important situation where the kins are required to behave in a specific way is death. The pollution will be observed by all the family members. Among the Halakkis the 'linear' relationship is regarded in two ways, either patrilineal or matrilineal. Here bilinear relationship is absent. In patrilineal system linear relationship is recognized through male line and in matrilineal system it is recognized through male line only.

The most common type of family present in the population is nuclear. A trend has been observed for Halakkis that, after the marriage the sons normally get separate from the parents and establish neo-local family. The parents may stay with any one of their sons according to their wish. Therefore, a Halakki family either consists of two generations or maximum of three generations. Extended families or the families consisting of more than three generations are of rare occurrence. The household size estimated in the present study is 5.86 though the value appears to be moderate. Age at marriage is a noteworthy characteristic of Halakki community. The average age at marriage is estimated 18 years. The females are tied early in the marriage bonds compared to the males.

Conclusion:

Halakkis, are practicing agriculture as their primary source of income along with labour work in the fields of higher caste people. They also carry on smaller jobs like road constructions and firewood selling, growing vegetable etc. Literacy rate and the exposure of the community to the modern way of life are very low. They have a traditional type of community council to solve their disputes. In the present study an attempt has been made to focus this community from cultural, demographic and genetic point of view because, the studies which are conducted on this community so far were dealt with their linguistic, social and cultural aspects. But these people are neither studied from the anthropological nor demographic view points. Some of the results pertaining to the demographic and genetic parameters are compared with different castes and tribes of India. The ravages of time and modernisation have dramatically changed even the community's age-old wedding customs.

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