

FADING RURAL ENTERPRISES OF KODAGU- Special Reference to the Grinding Stones of Paloor Village

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ABSTRACT

Kodagu is the smallest district of Karnataka. It is considered as the Switzerland of the East and Kashmir of India. The district is basically an Agro-based economy. It is the second largest producer of coffee of the country and now added with eco-tourism because of its scenic beauty.

Kodagu doesnot have any large scale industries but only agro based and MSME sector. It is because of its topography and climatic conditions. One such micro sector was the “Grinding stone production of the Paloor Village of Madikeri Taluka of the district. The grinding stones of this village was very famous not only in the district but also in the nearby districts like Mangaluru, Mysuru and also Bengaluru. The production was gradually decreasing and since two years it has come to a standstill due to lack of demand.

Not only the stone grinders but also some of other rural enterprises are in the verge of fading away. This paper makes an attempt to focus on the realities and to find some remedies to the problem.

KEY WORDS: Rural Enterprise, MSME, Stone Grinders

INTRODUCTION

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OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

1. To study the state of Traditional Rural Enterprises of Kodagu.
2. To find the reasons for their present status.
3. To find ways to strengthen them.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

As Kodagu is an agro based economy and large scale industries cannot be set up in the district, it is better to rely on the age old enterprises which makes use of the skill and the Traditional Knowledge (TK) which helps in the long run sustainability.

Modern technological era tends to overlook these Traditional Knowledge but still it has its own strength and is of some use in the long run. No studies has taken up in the district to unveil these knowledge and make the unemployed and unskilled youth employable. This fact necessitated for the study.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology used to gather data is informal and unstructured interview with the respondents.

Sources of data:

For the purpose of study, both primary and secondary sources are used.

RURAL ENTREPRENEURS

Rural entrepreneurs are those who carry out entrepreneurial activities in the rural sector of the economy. It emerges in the local rural areas in the field of rural industry, agriculture and handicrafts. Rural population has a multitude of wants. To satisfy these wants, the rural population requires adequate income. This requires employment and more particularly self employment.

Kodagu is a small district of the state of Karnataka has its own uniqueness. The district is spread across 4102 sq km with only three talukas, Madikeri, Virajapet and Somawarapet. Total population of the district is 554519 as per 2011 census. It has a high literacy rate of 85%.

Kodagu is basically an agricultural district. It grows coffee, pepper, orange, cardamom, coconut, areca and paddy. Almost 88.64% of the land is under cultivation. The main reasons for the lack of industries in the district are,

- Lack of entrepreneurship.
- Lack of power supply.
- Heavy rainfall and cool climate.
- Insufficient transport system.
- Connected only with road transport.
- The topography- more of hilly region.
- Non-accessibility.
- Lack of communication.

There are 2774 MSMEs working in the district. The main activities of these are,

- Flour mills
- Automobile service
- Tailoring
- Wooden furniture
- Coffee curing
- Cement pots, pavement blocks, bricks etc.

Traditionally, the people of Kodagu never used to depend on others for any of their needs except for very few items. They used to have one or the other side business along with cultivation. Some of them are,

- Poultry
- Piggery
- Cattle breeding
- Bee keeping
- Honey and related products
- Vegetable gardening in the summer
- Black smithy
- Pottery
- Mat weaving
- Basket, winnow and sieve making with bamboo and Cain
- Running rice hullers

Rope making, plough making, yoke, beam, tave, bollangi, spade handles, sickle handles etc. were the pass time activity of the people of Kodagu. They never use to buy these materials.

STONE WARE ITEMS

In olden days, different stoneware was used at home. Grinding stones were mainly used for milling plant seeds

into flour. The important among them were grinding stone (Aattukkal or rubbukkal), Ammikkal (Masala Stone), Milling stone, stone mortar etc. aattukkal are the round wedge shaped grinding stones with a pit in the middle and a kuzhavi, a cylindrical rounded stone used to grind- usually used for the preparation of idli and dosa batter. grinding stones have been in use in some of the parts of the world for at least 30000 years. Ammikkal is a flat rectangular piece of stone used to crush chutney and masala. Ammikkal also used to serve another purpose. It was used in wedding ceremonies for a ritual in which the groom places the bride's right foot on the stone to stress that their marriage has a solid foundation. The milling stone was made of two separate round stones which are used to prepare flour and to break the nuts. These three stone wares were domestic must-haves of yester years. Irrespective of the economic status, these were the proud possessions of all families.

Grinding stones represent one of the largest types of stone tools that were used by ancient culture. The level of importance is inferred in Searcy's book titled "The Life Giving Stone" in which he quotes a Maya woman, "The Metate is the reason we are alive". The grinding stones were developed in different forms around the world but the basic technique was fundamentally the same. The process involves two stones. Grinding stones are made from different types of stones depending on the local availability of the stones. Each type of the stone has unique properties that determine how effective it will be for processing food. These stones not only have local traditional values but also social as well as functional importance.

The use of these stone wares ended with the mixes, wet grinders and table top grinders entered the market. Now all these are finding their places in the attic. In Jafna and other parts of Sri Lanka, traditional kitchen equipments are still used. Rather these stonewares used to give a good amount of physical exercise to the women.

Uses of stone ware:

- Gives best exercise, more than the gym.
- Serves the purpose when there is power cut- especially in Kodagu during monsoon.
- No danger in handling.
- Many people believe that food is properly prepared and tastes better only if these traditional stone tools are used- the Ad concept of Everest Kuttialaal.

STONEWARE OF PALOOR VILLAGE OF KODAGU DISTRICT

Paloor village is situated in Madikeri Taluk of Kodagu district. It is 13 km south of Madikeri. The village is famous for the rock/stone available here. It is a kind of Trovants or travertine which grows beneath the earth. The stones are used for preparing the kitchenware and for temple uses at least since 300 years as per the locals. The pavement and compound stone used in the Madikeri Fort was supplied from this village.

VISHWAKARMAS OF PALOOR VILLAGE

Vishwakarma is a community who claim that they are the descendants of "Vishwakarma" the architect of Gods. Vishwakarma community has five sub-groups, the Carpenters, blacksmiths, bronze smiths, gold smiths and stone masons. All these are the artisans who are experts in their own fields who have migrated from Tamil Nadu hundreds of years back and now have their permanent settlement in the village.

There are 30-40 families in Paloor village who were depending on the stone ware production at the village. They mainly used to prepare the grinding stones, chutney stones, and milling stones. In rare cases they used to prepare deepa sthanba (lamp holder), idols of God, etc.

The grinding stones prepared here were of sizes ranging from 13 inches to 22 inches. There used to be a great demand for these in early years and weekly there used to be a sale of 10-15. In a year not less than 300 used to be sold. In the beginning, prices used to be very low. According to a commission agent, the price used to be only Rs 100/- some 40 years back. But now the same grinding stone costs Rs 2800-3000/- It is because of the labour charge and the other equipment used for the production, including the charcoal used to heat and sharpen the chisels used. One grinding stone requires the labour of 3-4 days depending on its size. There was absolutely no competition for these. The stoneware produced here had a name and fame not only in the whole of the district, but also in the neighbouring districts like Mysore, Bangalore and Mangalore.

Since two years, the production is completely stopped due to lack of demand. The introduction of modern electronic gadgets has reduced the demand for the stone ware to the bottom level. The demand used to be mainly from the Hotels, marriage halls and the house hold. But now everywhere machinery is used and there are no buyers. They have a lot of unsold stock waiting for the buyers

Due to the stoppage of work, the workers are left without work and due to the dependence on the profession, they have failed to find any other source of work. Some of the youngsters have shifted to gold smithy and others are left without any work. In the early days minimum 45 people used to work and it had reduced to only two workers two years back. According to an elderly worker, the stone deposits are enough to supply for another 100 years but it is of no use now.

REASONS FOR THE LACK OF DEMAND

- Invention of machinery.
- Lack of time due to dual earners in the family.
- Lack of promotion.

LESSON FROM COIMBATORE

Mr Sabhapathy of Mysore, who migrated to Coimbatore introduced the wet grinder in 1955, which he wanted to gift to his wife as a wedding gift to take away the manual labour of grinding. They started the commercial production of wet grinders in 1963. In the year 1975 tilting wet grinders were introduced and the table top wet grinders followed.

The unit in Coimbatore gives 20000 direct employment and indirect employment of 50000. The yearly turnover was Rs 225 crores in 2011 and it has crossed Rs 3000 now.

Coimbatore has more than 700 wet grinder manufacturers with a monthly output of 75000 units. They have set up research centers and started sales through e-commerce. Coimbatore wet grinders are recognized as a Geographical Indication by the Government of India in 2005-06.

SUGGESTIONS

- Take up more intensive promotional measures.
- Make use of the "Geographical Indicator- GI".
- Diversify- from the grinding stones to some other items.
- Use machines for stone cutting and mining.
- Plan for exports.
- Tie-ups with the bigger units of the other area.
- Start training and consultancy center for the transmission of the Traditional Knowledge.

Start a training centre as transmission of the Traditional Knowledge

CONCLUSION

India is a country of villages. More than 75% of India's population lives in rural areas. Due to huge population and limited number of employment availability in industries, people still depend on agriculture and agro based small scale sectors. Therefore, there is a need to develop and retain the rural industries to solve the rural unemployment and rural migration to cities. It also helps in using and passing of Traditional Knowledge to the next generation, which also forms part of our culture. It can even be a part of "Skill India."

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