



## THE IMMIGRATED PICHIGUNTALAS OF SRISAILAM (AP) AS HELAVA GENEALOGICAL NOMADIC TRIBES IN KARNATAKA, INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

India is a county of immense diversities. It is a land of wide-spread multiplicities of religion, races, classes, languages, sub-cultures, tribes, etc. There are about 400 languages are spoken in allover India. Some of the prominent languages documented by the constitution of India, in its 8th schedule include Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri and Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Telegu and Urdu. The constitution of India declares it as sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic. Notwithstanding its differentiated nature, India remains united. It is having a unique feature of 'Unity in Diversity'. With a plurality of culture, the society of India is conceptually identified with the concept of 'to maintain the unity and integrity of India with a composite culture'. Recently, we come across a community whose native language is Telugu and their primitive occupations are telling genealogical histories for other communities. These people have close relations with those of schedule tribes and nomadic communities in Karnataka. They have scattered all over the southern parts in India with meager populations. These people are referred as Pichiguntalas in Telugu speaking areas, and are also called as Vamsharaju, Helava, Helavaru, Helvi, Helawi, etc., based on their locations and local populations. These Pichiguntalas who were immigrated and settled in Kannada speaking areas in Karnataka as Helavaru or Helava. The Report of the Second Backward Classes Commission, Volume III, by the Government of Karnataka, 1986, in its findings, through the State level listing of castes and communities in Karnataka along with synonyms, sub-castes and related groups as reflected in the Socio-economic-cum educational survey 1984, as listed Helava Community against Serial No.24, a Hindu Group, with sub-castes and synonyms as Helava, Helavaru, Pichigunta and Anadi. The study states that the Hindu Helava population as on 1984 is 24441 in Karnataka forming 0.07% of the total population in the State. The Report, defines Helava as one without a limb or a disabled person. Helava or helavaru is applied traditionally to the class of beggars who were supposed to beg only from Vokkaligas / Agriculturists. Here, an attempt is made to study the Socio-Economic-Educational status of Helavas in Karnataka and their problems, who were immigrated to Kannada speaking areas from Telugu speaking areas of southern India during the periods of Basavanna of Bijjala Rulers during 12th Century, as nomadic genealogists.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

India is multi- cultural country. It is based on a diversity of culture. From its long past, the land is embodied with the multiplicity of caste, colour, religion, language etc. The cultural heritage of India has been incorporated with various ancient magnitudes or times. The present culture is is the result of the traditional cultural heritage, travelled through various stages, ages with a he ample of ups and downs, obstruction and compulsions etc. The causes of diversities in India are seen in her different spheres such as races, religions, castes tribes, languages, social customs cultural beliefs, political thoughts and judgement, social thoughts and judgement, different ideologies and ideological incompatibilities, social mobilities and justice etc. The genealogical nomadic tribes in southern parts of India a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognised leader and ancestor known as Kunti Malla Reddy. The legendary history of the sect of these tribes dates backs to prehistoric reddy kings of southern

India, with sole occupation of telling the genealogy for other communities for the alms, with Telugu as their communication language. These people generally called as Pichiguntala under the list of socially and Educationally Backward Classes synonym to other names such as Vamsharaj, Helava, Helavaru, Pichigunta, Kuntimallareddy, etc. These people are further included in the categories of Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic and Denotified Tribes (DNT), based on their living status, living styles and religious practices. It is observed that their existence is restricted only to the southern states in India with mere number of families in the north. Here, it is aimed to study the demographic distribution and living conditions of these geological nomadic tribes who migrated from Telugu speaking of AP & Telangana to other non-Telugu areas (presently the Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Orissa). The people in non-Telugu states are living with assigned caste and community names, due to lack of recognition and respect for their identity. There is a need for integrated studies on these people whose population is being diluted day-by-day in India. These people have very close relative cultural practices with that of Scheduled Tribes such as Kaadu Kuruba, Kaadu Golla, Erikala, etc., of Telugu and Kannada speaking areas in parts of Southern India. There exists no specific reference information on their living status, distribution, livelihood, associations with other tribes, traditions, cultures, social and educational information in southern India as a whole, which will help these people for retain their identity and against their extinction. In Telugu they are known as Pichiguntala, nothing but an assembly of beggars and genealogists. The legendary ancestors of the present day Pichiguntalas @ Helava @ Helavaru, were Kuntimalla Reddy and Pichamma of Srisailam (in AP), appointed as the Kula Gurus for the Reddy Community by a Jangama (lord Shiva), with work assignments of recording kula - gothra - vamshavali (genealogy) for the Reddy community (?). The Kunti Mallareddy and thereafter his heirs were appointed as advisors to the Reddy Rulers / Kakathiyas. There exists few legends that Kunti Mallanna was instrumental in saving Reddys from enemies and the Nizams of that period.

These Pichiguntalas, who were the immigrants to Kannada speaking areas of today's Karnataka, during the period of Legendary Basavanna the founder of Lingayuth Community to carryout the services of preaching of Shivism (disciples of lord Shiva) and genealogical records for the Vokkaligas and other agriculturists families are commonly referred as Helava @ Helavaru. The legend on their migrations tells that a disciple of lord Shiva and a religious leader known as Basavanna @ Basaveshwara who worked as a Minister in the Kingdom of Bijjal Maharaj of Basavkalyan (the present North West Karnataka or Hyderabad Karnataka) met the heirs of Kunti Malla Reddy (?) at Srisailam. Basavanna was deeply engaged in the formation of new Lingayuth Religion through the members of disciples of lord Shiva against the religious exploitation by the Jain rulers of Basavkalyan. As Kunti Malla Reddy's heirs were practicing worships and preaching on lord Shiva and Shivism in addition to their genealogical works to Reddy families, Basavanna requested them to help him in propagating Shivism in Kannada speaking areas of Basavkalyan and hence to perform genealogical works for the people of Kannada speaking areas such as Kurubas, Gollas and Vakkaligas. Accordingly, some of the heirs of Kunta Mallanna and Pichamma started immigrations to Kannada speaking areas of Rayalaseema and Basavkalyan; and thereafter deeper into the adjoining areas of Marathi speaking population such as Hubli, Dharwar, Belgaum, Gulburga, Solapur, etc. (presently, scattered all over the parts of Karnataka and deep in Tamilnadu). Initially, these Pichikuntalas were visiting the Kannada speaking areas on annual basis during the harvest season (December – January) for telling the Vamshavalli in turn collection of food grains as remunerations, later few groups started their nomadic life from place to place, village to village basis, by way of settlements along with Kaadu Kurubas and Kaadu Gollas in Kannada speaking areas.

As the original Pichikuntalas are Telugu speaking people, they have little knowledge on the Kannada language, they were not good in reading and writing Kannada, however by practice they started speaking Kannada and genealogy / vamshavali telling to communities belonging to Kuruba, Golla and Vakkaliga. These Pichiguntalas of Telugu areas were termed as “Heluvarau” (means tellers) of Vamshavali (Genealogy) by the Kannada speaking communities. The term “Heluvaru” later become “Helava” or “Helavaru” in short forms in the local languages and by practice. In some cases, these Telugu speaking Pichikuntalas used to keeping telling verbally in storytelling and singing folklore formats, about their Kula – Gothra – Vamshavali - family names (genealogies) in Telugu language, and with the help of locally educated Kannadigas, their details were recorded in their Register Books called “Chappudu”. Hence, these Pichikuntalas were referred as “Heluvavaru” (Tellers) by the Kannada speaking people and in the later stages, the word “Heluvavaru” become Helavaru and then to “Helava”. Even today, we observe that the people belonging to this group in northern parts of Karnataka are referred as “Helavaru” and those living in Kolar, Bengaluru Rural, Chikkaballapur, Bidar, Ananthapur, etc., adjoining Telugu areas (of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana) from Telugu are referred as “Pichikuntala” only. As per the presently and last Female Telugu Genealogist Smt. Mallamma of Urvakonda in Ananthapur District, AP, the Telugu genealogists or the “Pichikuntala” do their Kula-Gothra-Vamshavali only in Rayalaseema areas of Karnataka such as Ballary, Raichur, Koppal, Chitradurga and Tumkur. Whereas, the Kannada speaking “Helavaru” do their Kula-Gothra-Vamshavali in other non-telugu speaking areas of Karnataka. One of the variations among these Helavars and Pichikuntalas are that Pichiguntalas do use Holly Bell / Ganta while telling Kula-gothra-vamshavali, whereas most of the Helavaru do not have Bell / Ganta with them. Hence, according to Mallamma of Urvakonda, those with a Bell / Ganta in their hand are the original heirs of Kunata Malla Reddy of Srisailam, and they are commonly referred treated as the adopted children of Adhi Golla, living in association with Kaadu Golla and Kaadu Kuruba Tribes in Karnataka. It is observed that, after their immigration and services to other communities, these Pichiguntalas were cursed by the original Reddy Community as “Chandala”,

loosing their virginity with the Reddy Community and distanced them selves in their rituals such as births, marriages and deaths (which were previously carried out by the Pichiguntalas. Presently, there exists no give and take policy between the Pichiguntalas and Reddy Community, even though there exists a legendary ancestral brotherhood relationship.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

- To study the origin & socio-economic status of the Helava @ Helavaru @ Pichiguntala Nomadic Tribes in Karnataka.
- To study the distribution of Helava @ Helavaru @ Pichiguntalas in Karnataka.
- To Integrate the literature on the Helava @ Helavaru @ Pichiguntala Nomadic Tribes in Southern India

## **3. PICHIGUNTALAS, THE ANCESTERS OF HELAVAS:**

As per the legend, during the ancient times, there was a family belong to Roddi @ Rashtrakuta community in Deogiri (City of Gods) presently in Maharastra near Aurangabad, migrated to the Deccan areas of present Andhra Pradesh. The family members were disciples and worshipers of lord Shiva migrated from Deogiri to Srisailam and settled to serve lord Shiva (Mallikarjun). The family head was known as Maribeth (Maribethi Reddy) and his wife Lakshmi had 12 sons and their family members went in search of plains land on the banks of Krishna River, settled as agriculture farming communities. Whereas, 3 of the childless couples settled at Srisailam and continued their prayers to Mallikarjun and finally the couples were blessed with children. Among them, Pedda Mangamma and Vanamadevi got healthy children, whereas Chinna Mangamma blessed with a lame - physically handicapped son (without a hand and a leg). The lame child born with the blessing of Mallikarjun was named as Malla Reddy @ Kunti Malla Reddy.

The local Telugu speaking community called the lame child as Kunti Malla @ Kunti Malla Reddy (as Kunti means lame – handicapped person in Telugu language). The other children of Pedda Manga and Vanamadevi were engaged in the cultivation and referred as Reddys. Whereas, the lame son born to Chinna Manga was not able to do any cultivation works. Jangamas (Shaivite preachers) trained the lame boy in telling of Vamshavali (Genealogy with 85 lakh house hold names, gothras, titles, thanakas, poems, etc.) and later married to a girl known as Pichamma. The lame boy was also given with a name of Gothrakumara by the Jangamas and was appointed as the Kula Guru for Reddy Community to carryout the Genealogical / Vamshavali activities. Hence, the children born to Kunti Malla Reddy were known as Mallabathullu or Gothrakumarulu. In the later stages, the heirs of Kunti Malla Reddy and Pichamma were given a household name Pichammakuntannavaru @ Pichammakuntimallannavaaru @ Pichakuntintivaru. But the name slowly, becomes Pichikuntala (which was a Household name) with Reddy as their caste name, till 12th Century (?) (Dr.L.Ramakrishna & N.M.Dhanya, 2014). Another, version of the Caste is that the Jangamas (Shaivite Saadhus) who trained Kunti Mallan Reddy gave him a Bull (Ox) for travelling and a Holy Bell (Ganta) named it as Bicchaganta (Bell for Begging and Alms). It become symbol and identity of Kunti Malla Reddy; and his heirs and later referred as Bikshaganti @ Picchaganti to Pichigunti (Lame Beggar) (?) (B.J.Ramakrishna, 2004 and Dr.L.Ramakrishna & N.M.Dhanya, 2007).

## **4. IMMIGRATIONS OF “PICHIGUNTALS” AS “HELAVAVARU”:**

Thereafter, passage of Kunti Malla Reddy and wife Pichamma, their heirs were accepted as Kula Gurus by Reddy Communities and lived harmoniously with other Reddy families (Dr. Chandrasekhar Reddy, 1998), on condition that these Pichiguntalas will serve only the Reddy Community by a written agreement on a copper plate (Raagi Rekha). The services of the Pichiguntalas were highly respected, recognized and remunerated by the Reddy families in the form of a share in their agricultural produce, cloths, gold coins, cows, goats, etc., but no shares in their properties; lived as Reddy family members till 12th century. In the meanwhile, during 12th Century of religious revolutions in parts of Hindustan were started were with wars were happened in the name of religions. The religious leaders and kings of that time started propagating religions of their interest such as Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. Among such religious leaders, Basavanna a minister under the kingdom of Bijjalas (Jains) was a pure believer of Shaivism (work to lord Shiva) was engaged in the creation of a Shaivism Religious Community in the name of Lingayuths (Wearers of Shiva Linga) with the origin at Basavakalyan. Basavanna was a regular visitor to Srisailam for worships to Mallikarjuna Temple (Jyothir Linga). On such occasion, Basavanna come across these Pichiguntalas also the disciples of lord Shiva and preachers of Shaivism with folk songs (starting as Shiva.....Shankara.....Eswara.....Veerabadra.....!!!), he met them with request to help him in propagating Shaivism in Kannada and Marathi speaking areas of Bijjala kingdom. Basavanna also requested these Pichiguntalas to provide genealogical services to the people in Kannada and Marathi speaking areas in Bijjalla kingdom such as

Lingayuths, Kurubas, Gollas, Vakkaligas, Helve, etc. The author of the book titled “Karnatakadha Helavau : Ondhu Janapadhiya adhyana” (Harilal.K.Pawar, 1990), noted that these people were very active during times of Legendary Lingayuth Leader Basavanna in recording the Birth and Death records and also the details of their properties in Kannada speaking areas of southern India.

The words of the Basavanna were attractive to Pichiguntalas, the heirs of the Kunti Malla Reddy, hence started moving to the other areas, in propagating the greatness of lord Shiva and genealogical services to the people other than Reddy Community. Thereafter, the Pichiguntals started migrating to the Non-Telugu areas of Kannada and Marathi, and later into Tamil, Malayalam and Oriya speaking areas. These Pichiguntalas as a first step moved into Bijjala kingdom or Basavakalyan, later deeper into other non-telugu areas and expanded their genealogical services to non-Reddy communities. This act of violation by these Pichiguntalas against the mutual agreements on a copper plate by their ancestors, made the Reddy Community People in boycotting these Pichiguntalas to their families as Chandalas. Further, the people belong to Reddy Community cursed Pichiguntalas that their next generations will live a pathetic poor living for acting against the will of their ancestors and betrayals to their Reddy brotherhood. May the reason, till this day, these Pichiguntalas are living a nomadic and pathetic living as Begging Community. Pichiguntalas are defined in the dictionaries and authenticated by erstwhile writer Syed Siraj Ul Hassan in his book “Castes and Tribes of the Nizam’s Dominion” at page 569, that these people are “Telugu caste of wandering beggars, genealogists and mat-makers who are supposed to derive their name from Bhiksha Kuntala (Bhiksha mean begging, Kunta mean lame) probably an opprobrious epithet denoting a lame beggar”. The power of the curse is such that meaning of Pichikuntala in Telugu language is a Lame Beggar / Handicapped Beggar. Similarly, the meaning of Helava in Kannada language is a Lame Person / Handicap. In any way, these people even in the modern world are referred to lame beggars and handicaps by the local people. Even today, the Pichikuntalas and Helavars, their next generations and children had born as lames, poor, uneducated, living low class, living with other lower castes and masses in slums. The rural, Pichiguntala families do live and share with domestic animals under a common roof. Pichiguntalas as helavas in Karnataka and helvis in Maharashtra Thereafter, joining the religious movements of Basavanna, the Pichiguntalas basically Telugu speaking people migrated to Kannada speaking areas of present day northern districts of Karnataka and Southern parts of Maharashtra as Nomads and Wanderers on narrating jobs of genealogy. Initially, these Pichiguntalas were narrating the genealogical aspects in story telling forms in Telugu, the Kannada speaking people were calling them as Heluvavaru (Story Tellers) and later on the Heluvavaru word become Helavaru in Kannada. Similarly, these Pichiguntalas used their Bulls for travelling distances into Marathi speaking areas of Sholapur and other parts, these people were referred as Panguldadas (Bull Riders) by the Marathi people, since these people were also called as Helavas, the few people who happened wander in Marathi speaking areas have assigned the caste name of Helve (in Maharashtra). Their presence Pichiguntalas as Helve @ Helavaru can be traced in most of the districts in Karnataka such as Hubli, Dharwar, Belgaum, Gulburga, Raichur, Chitradurga, Davangere, Hassan, Chikmagalur, Tumkur, Kolar, Bengaluru, Mysore, Mandya, Ballary, Hospet, etc. Helava on Vamshavali / Genealogy Work Similarly, these Pichiguntalas can traced as Pangul @ Helve in parts of Maharashtra State adjoining the Karnataka State such as Sholapur, Latur, Nanded, Kolhapur, Satara, Pune, Sangli, Miraj, Wadi, Sedam, etc. All these people do speak Telugu in family and other local languages outside. Only, few families are being engaged in the narrating works on genealogy, but most of the others have assigned with other small time works such as agricultural, industrial helpers, construction workers, etc. The Legendary Kunti Mallareddy of Srisailam was referred to as Basavabringi @ Basavabringeeshwar in and around Basavakalyan and similarly to as Mukthinathaiah @ Mukthinatheeswar in and around Bidar (Hyderabad Karnataka), there exists specific followers for all the three legends such as Kunti Mallareddy @ Basavabringi @ Mukthinathaiah for the local Shaivism and Jainism populations in Telugu-Kannada amalgamated distributions (Dr.L.Ramakrishna & Dr.Ramireddy Chandrashekhar Reddy, 2021). Similarly, these set of people immigrated to Tamil speaking areas of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Pondicherry and Kerala are referred to as heirs of Pichayandi @ Pachhatti (Dr.L.Ramakrishna, N.M.Dhanya, L.Ranju Meenakshi & Kannan, 2020). It is observed that in most of the people belonging to nomadic genealogy telling / practicing sects, believes themselves as descendents of Halumatha Kaadu Golla and / or Halumatha Kaadu Kurubu groups belonging to Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka, in terms of their religious and cultural practices? (Dr.L.Ramakrishna & N.M.Dhanya, 2021).

## **5. HELAVAS AND THEIR LIFE STYLES:**

The term “Helava” or “Helavaru” or “Pichiguntala” in Kannada is a synonym of the word “Heluvava” means “the person who tells or speaks”. It is found that these “Helava” or “Helavaru” were the immigrants of “Pichiguntala” community from the Telugu speaking areas of the southern India, during the periods of legendary Basavanna @ Basaveshwara, who is known as a 12<sup>th</sup> century social reformer who was rebelled against the rulers of Bijjala Kingdom of Basava Kalyan, against caste hierarchy and gender discrimination. After their immigrations to the Kannada speaking areas, they were assigned with the work of carryout genealogical practices by way of visiting the village households, narrating their ancestral bloodlines, family histories in the form of lyrical fashions and folklore; and or singing patterns. This distinctive professions are being carried through centuries by these Helava communities. But, in the present days of modernisation and socialisation, their off springs are hesitating to continue their

professions for the reasons of outdated one and shyness to do so, as their caste name and profession means to a lame begging (Amoolya Rajappa, 2019). These nomadic Helava people have their common working culture as wondering Genealogists (recording Vamshavali, Kula-Gotras) for other communities such as Reddy, Golla, Kuruba, Lingayuth, Vakkaliga, etc., spread across the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala and Maharastra. These people have very close relative cultural practices with that of Scheduled Tribes such as Kaadu Kuruba, Kaadu Golla, Erikala, etc., of Telugu and Kannada speaking areas in parts of Southern India. □ Traditionally, these people speak Telugu in their families and speak other local languages in the society, (Dr.L.Ramakrishna & N.M.Dhanya, 2004). □ All the family rituals such as new births, marriages and death ceremonies are associated with non-vegetarian food and alcohol. There exists a practice that even the women in Pichiguntala families do take alcohol and other drinks during festivals and celebrations. □ Multi marriages and polygamy is a common practice, where the males get more than one marriage after settlement of the previous one, and female are free to go for dissolution of marriage by simple procedures and get married another person of their choice.

## **6. GENEALOGY BY HELAVAS AND THEIR LIFESTYLE:**

The Helava person, who practice the recordings of genealogical histories for the other castes, normally migrate from their settlement villages to other villages during the winter months by a tented bullock cart. He makes are a hutment on the outskirts of the village either by himself or in groups or gatherings with other Helavas for the same purpose. They divide the villages for narrations by themselves in practice and go for the purpose in the morning to evening with their safeguarded records and books called “Chappudu”?. These Archival Record Books are wrapped in Flourescent Pink Shawls and carry them on their shoulders with at most care during their travelling.



A typical Helava Genealogist in Karnataka

Normally, their Bullock Carts are used as convertible shelters or tentages. The women take care of their children, collection of fire wood, cooking and serving of food, etc. Some times, these Helava people make group camps in a common place on the outskirts of several towns and villages every year on a prefixed duration or during the harvesting seasons. Each of the genealogy narrating Helava makes foot travelling covering 10 to 20 houses in day. Presently, some of these Helavas are using two wheeler bikes to reach the villages. Even though, they do not have proper living homes for their families, these Helavas preserve their ancestral archives with utmost care (Amoolya Rajappa, 2019).



A typical Tenting Shelter of a Helava Family

It is observed that these Helava @ Helavaru have few number of sub-groups and sub-sects among themselves, normally those who practice the narration of genealogical histories termed as Etihasa Helavaru (History Narrators) are treated with higher values. These Etihasa Helavas do practice reciting of genealogies and record the family histories for other castes; and are believed to be an unadulterated group of Helavas who does not mingle with their other sub-sects and sub-groups. Based on the living and working cultures, these Helavas are regrouped as sub-sects such as Ettina Helava, Gante Helava, Goobe Helava, Kappe Helava, Mandala Helava, Advai Helava, etc. As mentioned earlier, these Helavas elaborate narrations for other caste families such as Vokkaliga, Lingayath, Kuruba, Golla, etc., including the details of family pedigrees, dating back to four or five generations. Helavas also recount the migratory history of families (from one village to another) in a folklore song manner. Their oral storytelling narrative sessions last about an hour and more. Each recital ends with updating new details related to births, deaths,

marriages. Thereafter, these Helavas are rewarded in cash and kind as alms for their services, in the form of food grains, brass vessels, bells, gold jewelry, money, cloths and even some occasions with cattle. Special gifts in cash and kind are given to them during occasions such as births and marriages, whereas, nothing else sometimes such as a death. It is found that during the olden days, these Helavas were given a grand welcome by the villagers during their annual visits and were treated as special guests and gurus visiting their families (Lakshman Helavar, 2019). Whereas, in today's scenario, with the advent of modern technologies and computerisation, the younger generations and children of these genealogical Helava families are hesitating to take the professions of their ancestors as there is a lack of recognition of this profession both by the government as well as the people in the society. The Helavas were treated with at most respect by the kings and rulers of the earlier years, but today like most other tribal heritages, these exceptional genealogical narrating communities are almost fading away into their own histories. The genealogical profession lasted for centuries, is being diminishing and diluting day by day. The children of practicing Helavas are showing little interest in keeping their customs alive. It is observed that most of their younger generations are trying to get education and move towards cities in search of employments and alternative jobs.

## **7. GENEALOGICAL RECORDS:**

The Genealogical Records recorded and maintained by these Helavas are treated as reliable records by most of the villagers of other castes. These Genealogical Record Books as called as "Chappudu" and are preserved as their ancestral achievements with utmost care. Each of these Genealogical record books consists of family details of people in 3 to 4 villages, from other castes. Even though, in the old days, only a single copy was persevered, the present day, Helavas, make more than one copy of each book to avoid or against any theft or damage. It is found that in one of the Court Cases, the Belguam Civil Court has summoned a Genealogy practitioner Mahesh Helavar during the last two decades, in connection with families involved in property disputes. During these occasions, the Judges have questioned and ascertained the ancestral descents of the disputed families through Mehesh Helavar and collected the genealogical records maintained by him. The Courts have accepted the recordings as valid proof in some cases pertaining to family feuds and disputes such as property matters, legal heirships, etc. In some occasions, irrespective of their caste, several villagers still contact these Helavas for collection and clarifications or details about their family deities and their relations between different clans (called Bedagu) for match making for marriages, family relationships of bride and groom, etc. It is further, observed that these Helavas do not record child marriages in their genealogical registers which they treat as against the ethics and rules for the recording (Lakshman Helavar, 2019).



The "Chappudu" Record Book of Helava

## **8. STATUS OF HELAVA @ HELAVARU @ PICHIGUNTALA IN KARNATAKA:**

The Report of the Second Backward Classes Commission, Volume III, by the Government of Karnataka, 1986, in its findings on, through the State level listing of castes and communities in Karnataka along with synonyms, sub-castes and related groups as reflected in the Socio-economic-cum educational survey 1984, as listed Helava Community against Serial No.24, a Hindu Group, with sub-castes and synonyms as Helava, Helavaru, Pichigunta and Anadi. The study states that the Hindu Helava population as on 1984 is 24441 in Karnataka forming 0.07% of the total population in the State. The Report, defines Helava as one without a limb or a disabled person. Helava or Helavaru is applied traditionally to the class of beggars who were supposed to beg only from Vokkaligas / Agriculturists. The traditional caste profession of the Helava community entails recording births, deaths, marriages and other familial issues in an encapsulated manner. Helavas have been recording genealogies since the time of celebrated social reformer, legendary Basavanna @ Basaveshwara in the 12th Century AD. The 800-year-old caste profession of the Helava community in Karnataka is threatened in the recent years. The changing the societal structure, modernisation, dawn of the age of computerisation and the ever-growing need for educating the children have left the future of this community in a state of uncertainty. The Genealogical Telling Profession considered to be a respectable caste profession in the ancient years, is now being given up by many people belonging Helava @ Pichiguntala communities (S. Bhattacharya, 2019). The people in Karnataka, believe that the ancestor for Helava @ Helavaru as Bringeshwar or Basava Bringi (A lame deciple of lord Shiva), referring to the carvings of Lepakshi Temple in the present day Andhra Pradesh (?). It is being told that lord shiva has blessed the Bringeshwar with Nandi and Linga Mudra, and hence the Helavas are referred as the heirs of Bringeshwar. These Helavas were used as advisers to the then rulers in their previous generations, their family details, previous rulers and their rulings, genealogies, programs

for the people, etc. The legendary Basavanna @ Basaveshwar, the founder of Langayuth community may had selected these nomadic people who keep moving from village to village suitable for his objectives of creation of Shivite Community, propagation of Shivism and recording their populations (Dr.L.Ramakrishna & N.M.Dhanya, 2009).

Dr. Harilal Pawar, the then Director of Publishing, Kannada University, Hampi in Karantaka who has written a series of books and papers during 1990s on these Helava community, observed that the next generations of these Helava heirs are not interested in making use of their services and becoming out dated. The work pertaining to census of the people in the States are being carried out by the Government, which were done by the Helavas during the erstwhile kings and rulers. The present day, children are interested in regular education system at par with other communities, which may lead to ending their caste professions. Since, their nomadic lives are making their off springs uneducated or school dropouts. There is need for provision of hostels for the children these type of nomadic communities with free education system keeping in mind their poverty and lower financial income status. Further, previously, the villagers were welcoming and used to usher the arrival of the Helavas with great honour, but the tradition is largely losing its importance due to changing lifestyles and alternatives. In the olden days, the services of these Helavas were required as narrators of family histories since there were no institutional systems in place, the people were interested to know their family trees and such information was used in courts of law previously to resolve the family and property disputes. In the present day scenario, the aspects of Helava Caste Profession such as Government Census, Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates are being drawn through modern techniques by the Government itself. Only some villages with lower literacy rates are entertaining these Helava people as their genealogists. Similarly, people with more literacy, are not giving much importance to these traditions and not regarded as important for their families (Dr.K.M.Metry).

## 9. OBSERVATIONS:

In Kannada language, the Helava is termed as physically handicapped person with walking disabilities. Whereas, the word Helava was derived from the word Heluvara means Teller or a preacher. They started their immigration from Telugu speaking areas to that of the Kannada speaking areas on the religious influence of founder of Ligayuth community the Basavanna. The Helavas practicing Genealogical studies in Karnataka are known for recording of Genealogical histories of the other castes such as Lingayuthas, Kurubas, Gollas, etc., for more than 15 ancestries. Some of the researchers who made observations on these Helava @ Helavaru @ Pichiguntala in Karnataka and their histories are H.L. Nagegowda, Harilal Pawar, M.S.Helawar, Dr.L.Ramakrishna Helawar, E. Es.Prabhakara, Chandrashekhara Reddy, B.J.Ramakrishna, etc. Dr. Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, in his opinion said that these Helavas were appointed by the then rulers to record the birth and death records, property documents, genealogical histories, praising the kula-gothras of the people in their record books termed as “Chappudu” and safeguarding them in their custody, which were also used as evidences in solving the property disputes and court cases.



Dr. L. Ramakrishna Helawar,  
Researcher from Helava Community

Presently, the Pichiguntalas of Karnataka or the Helava @ Helavaru do not have any connections with that of their Reddy Ancestral Communities, but living in association with the Kaadu Golla and Kaadu Kuruba, and are identifying themselves as the heirs of Adhi Golla. Further, these Helava tribes do practice most of the religious and cultural practices that of Kadu Kurubas and Kadu Gollas; and are living among them isolated from the mainstreams in the rural areas in settlements (referred as “Helavara Hatti”). S.B.Joshi, 1991, has interpreted that these people have engaged in the preaching on the genealogical histories, family trees, stories, family names and their background histories.



Dr.L. Ramakrishna Helawar on Research Work at Vamshavalu Halavara Camp, Near Shigaon, Haveri District, 2021

It is observed that, there exists shyness among these Pichiguntalas that they do not want to express their caste names openly in public; and they try to hide their real caste identity. The reasons may be different for different persons, but the common cause for the identify of their caste name in public is that “Pichiguntala or Helava” means to a “Lame Beggar” or to a “Begging Community”. The people from other castes and communities use this caste name for making fun or scolding others in anger or as a Filthy word. So the use of caste name “Pichiguntala” in public is an insult to the members of these nomadic Pichiguntala @ Helava @ Helavaru community. In some case, the school and college going children, the women during socialisations, communal gatherings, religious occasions, etc., do feel shyness to express themselves belonging to Pichiguntala, as their caste name refers to Beggars in the society. The representatives of these community / tribe, feels that the caste name Pichiguntala is being treated with disgrace, disrespect causing considerable humiliation to the members of their caste . So, normally, any person belonging nomadic Pichiguntala @ Helava @ Helavaru community, simply tell that he belongs to other local community where he / she is residing. For example, if the Helava @ Helavaru living in towns and cities in Karnataka, call them selves as Vokkaliga or Helavakkaliga. Similarly, these people in the rural areas call themselves as vokkaliga, kuruba or golla. Few well settled people from this group, always call themselves as Lingayuths, Reddys, Naidus, Balaja, Bhataraju, etc.,

In this regard, the long pending request for the changing of their caste name was considered by the Governments of undivided Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by way of removing the word “Pichiguntala” from the caste lists initially and modifying the same in synonym with that of new name “Vamsharaj” through a Government Orders in 1995 and thereafter. The Government its ruling again reassessed the grievance and passed another to retain the both names such as “Pichiguntala” and “Vamsharaj” synonymous to each other in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States (stating that the original name “Pichiguntala” was deleted vide G.O.Ms.No.27, BCW(M1) Dept., dt 23/06/1995 and again added as synonym in G.O.Ms. No.1, BCW(C2) Dept., dt.24/01/2009) superseding G.O.Ms. No.12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10.09.93 / 12011/96/94BCC dt 09.03.96.

The caste lists of Karnataka, shows that these Pichiguntala are listed under Category-I (as Backward Tribes, BT) containing caste names of Helava, Pichiguntala, Pichigunta, Pichiguntala (in 6 different names for the same caste). But, the fact that the Government of Karnataka has not taken any step to delete the caste “Pichiguntala” from the Caste Lists, and to replace the same with the new name “Vamsharaj” in synonym with “Helava”, in Group ‘A’ under Category I. The Government of Karnataka, in its Government Order No. SWD 225 BCA 2000, Dated: 30th March 2002, after careful considerations, through (1) The quantum of Reservation Specified in G.O. Dated: 17-09-1994 and 31-01-1995 read at Sl. No. (1) & (2) respectively is continued for admission to Educational Institutions and Employment and (2) The revised list of Backward Classes to this order as at Annexure-I, incorporating recommendations of the BC Commission, is brought into force with immediate effect and (3) A new comprehensive Creamy Layer Policy as detailed in Annexure-II to this Government order is brought into force with immediate effect. This creamy Layer policy does not apply to SC/STs and Category-I -of the Backward Classes. Candidates belonging to Category-II(A), II(B), III(A), and III(B) shall be entitled to reservation -in the manner specified in the new comprehensive Creamy Layer Policy. The Helava Caste is listed against Category I, Sl. No.5 (j) Helava (k) Helova (l) Holeva and Pichiguntala is listed against Category I, Sy. No.5 (n) Pichigunta (o) Pichiguntala and (p) Pichiguntala.



Whereas, as per the above Government Order, the Helava and Pichiguntala caste names are being listed under six caste names in Group 'A' and Category I. Hence, the Creamy Layer Policy does not apply to people belonging to "Helava @ Helavaru @ Pichiguntala" in Karnataka State. Since, the same people are being listed with 6 caste names such as Helava, Helova, Holeva, Pichigunta, Pichguntala and Pichiguntala, the people belonging to this group want themselves to be identified with a common caste name as "Helava" in Synonym with that of "Pichiguntala"; and they want replace the caste name "Pichiguntala" with the new name "Vamsharaj" (as that in caste lists of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana). So, there is a need for modifications in the Government Order No. SWD 225 BCA 2000, Dated: 30th March 2002, issued by Government of Karnataka, by way of replacing the 6 castes as "Helava" synonym as "Vamsharaj", by deleting words "Pichigunta", "Pichguntala" and "Pichiguntala", in the Annexure - I.

The Caste name "Helava" an equivalent of "Pichiguntala" Community is listed under Sl. No. 23, of Nomadic Tribes in Karnataka, in Report on "The Draft Lists on De-notified / Nomadic / Semi-Nomadic Tribes in Southern India", by Balakrishna Ranke Commission, 2008, as below:

Nomadic Tribes	
1. Helava	23. Helava
2. Helavaru	24. Helavaru
3. Pichigunta	25. Pichigunta
4. Helova	26. Helova
5. Holeva	27. Holeva
6. Pichiguntala	28. Pichiguntala
7. Helavara	29. Helavara
8. Helavara	30. Helavara
9. Helavara	31. Helavara
10. Helavara	32. Helavara
11. Helavara	33. Helavara
12. Helavara	34. Helavara
13. Helavara	35. Helavara
14. Helavara	36. Helavara
15. Helavara	37. Helavara
16. Helavara	38. Helavara
17. Helavara	39. Helavara
18. Helavara	40. Helavara
19. Helavara	41. Helavara
20. Helavara	42. Helavara
21. Helavara	43. Helavara
22. Helavara	44. Helavara
23. Helavara	45. Helavara
24. Helavara	46. Helavara
25. Helavara	47. Helavara
26. Helavara	48. Helavara
27. Helavara	49. Helavara
28. Helavara	50. Helavara
29. Helavara	51. Helavara
30. Helavara	52. Helavara
31. Helavara	53. Helavara
32. Helavara	54. Helavara
33. Helavara	55. Helavara
34. Helavara	56. Helavara
35. Helavara	57. Helavara
36. Helavara	58. Helavara
37. Helavara	59. Helavara
38. Helavara	60. Helavara
39. Helavara	61. Helavara
40. Helavara	62. Helavara
41. Helavara	63. Helavara
42. Helavara	64. Helavara
43. Helavara	65. Helavara
44. Helavara	66. Helavara
45. Helavara	67. Helavara
46. Helavara	68. Helavara
47. Helavara	69. Helavara
48. Helavara	70. Helavara
49. Helavara	71. Helavara
50. Helavara	72. Helavara
51. Helavara	73. Helavara
52. Helavara	74. Helavara
53. Helavara	75. Helavara
54. Helavara	76. Helavara
55. Helavara	77. Helavara
56. Helavara	78. Helavara
57. Helavara	79. Helavara
58. Helavara	80. Helavara
59. Helavara	81. Helavara
60. Helavara	82. Helavara
61. Helavara	83. Helavara
62. Helavara	84. Helavara
63. Helavara	85. Helavara
64. Helavara	86. Helavara
65. Helavara	87. Helavara
66. Helavara	88. Helavara
67. Helavara	89. Helavara
68. Helavara	90. Helavara
69. Helavara	91. Helavara
70. Helavara	92. Helavara
71. Helavara	93. Helavara
72. Helavara	94. Helavara
73. Helavara	95. Helavara
74. Helavara	96. Helavara
75. Helavara	97. Helavara
76. Helavara	98. Helavara
77. Helavara	99. Helavara
78. Helavara	100. Helavara

The Report of the Second Backward Classes Commission, Volume III, by the Government of Karnataka, 1986, in its findings on, through the State level listing of castes and communities in Karnataka along with synonyms, sub-castes and related groups as reflected in the Socio-economic-cum educational survey 1984, as listed Helava Community against Serial No.24, a Hindu Group, with sub-castes and synonyms as Helava, Helavaru, Pichigunta and Anadi. It is also observed that while explaining the meaning of Lingayatha community in Karnataka, the report says that the Lingayathas or Veerashaivas are a religious community consisting of converts from various castes, held together by the bond of their common religion found by Basaveshwara @ Basavanna and they wear Lingam. As reflected in its survey, it is seen that almost all the major Hindu castes have been reflected under Lingayatha groups as sub-castes in Karnataka, including the Helava or Helavaru. The study states that the Hindu Helava population as on 1984 is 24441 in Karnataka forming 0.07% of the total population in the State.

Dr. Harilal Pawar, during 1990s observed that even though there exist no concrete studies on the present population of the community, the population was around 40,000 out of which a large chunk of people were engaged in the caste profession. He felt that it has reduced to a mere 30 per cent of the total population. However, during 2007, the released by Helava Samaja presents the population of the community as 81,958 in Karnataka. Three villages in Honnali have 168 families with a total population of 635. Whereas, it is observed that these figures are just only estimates and ground reality might differ, and per his predictions, that not more than 4,500 people are engaged in the Helava genealogical profession in the present times. A mixture of changing the socio-economic environment, coupled with modernity and technology has left these semi-nomadic archivists of Karnataka in a state of flux where their future as a tribe is being questioned by researchers and the community itself (Dr. K. M. Metry). The nomadic lifestyles and their seasonal migrations of along with families affects the education of their children. The onus lies upon the people of the community to make efforts of preserving their traditional occupation and centuries of history(Dr.Harilal Pawar). In the present day scenario, these Genealogical nomadic Helavas presently distributed in districts of Karnataka such as Bidar, Bijapur, Dharward, Belgaum, Gulbarga, Raichur and Bagalkote. Presently, most of these Helavas are living nomadic and semi-nomadic life styles without any proper avenues for education, housing, agricultural lands, employment, etc., and are living in socially and economically backward livings, with a predicted population around 3 lakh Helavas living in Karnataka.

There exists a long pending struggle under the leadership of M.S. Helawar, a practicing Advocate belonging to Helava community in Karnataka, fighting for the inclusion of Pichiguntala @ Helava @ Helavaru in Karnataka into Schedule Tribes Lists considering their Socio - Economic - Educational status; and fact that they are living life styles and livings in association with that of Kaadu Kuruba and Kaadu Golla in Karnataka. There is need for declaration of this Helava Community as a Telugu Linguistic Minority Community in Karnataka based on their Mother Tongue and their Meagre Population.

**Some of the problems faced by these nomadic genealogical Helava community are:** (1) Migratory hardships (2) Distinct profession (3) Lack of literacy (4) Preserving the Records (5) Children Education & Hostels (6) Lack of Recognition by the Government (7) Lack of Inclusions (8) Lack of lands for Cultivation (9) Dependency of others (10) Recognition in the Society (11) Fading traditions and heir-ships (12) Lack of Housing (13) Numerical Minority (14) Linguistic Telugu Minority (15) Lack of Government Reservations (16) Lack of Representations in Government Jobs and Politics (17) Lack of Representations in Professional Bodies and Education and (18) Social issues such as Bigamy, Child Marriages, Alcoholic and intoxication, Sexual Abuse, Poverty, Illiteracy, Blind Belief, Street Living habits, Begging for alms, Socially-Economically-Educationally backwardness, etc. It is observed that in most of the people belonging to nomadic genealogy telling / practicing sects, believes themselves as descendents of Halumatha Kaadu Golla and / or Halumatha Kaadu Kurubu groups belonging to Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka, in terms of their religious and cultural practices? (Dr.L.Ramakrishna & N.M.Dhanya, 2021).

### CONCLUSIONS:

India is a land of immense diversities. It possesses unity in diversity. India possesses social and cultural unity in the life blood of Indian social life. Going to the oldest of the 'vedas' is the Rig Veda in which the quest is for finding the ultimate supreme reality, which underlines all diversity. Identity politics is a tendency for people of a particular religion. Race, social background to form exclusive political alliances, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics. Ethnicity is an ethnic group or ethnicity is population of human beings whose members identity with each other, either on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry, or through recognition by others as a district group, or by common cultural, linguistic, religious, or territorial traits. The great services rendered by the Pichiguntala Nomadics of the ancient years are being fading away and their lives are under dilution. There is need for the safe guarding these Pichiguntala folklore living scattered and pathetic lives with any sort of recognition and support by the Government. There is a need for Integrated studies on various aspects of lives of the Pichiguntalas and its equivalent sub-groups. This research work is a unique one which has only one or two previous references which were also made and presented in vague without any in-depth studies on these Nomadic Pichiguntalas who are referred as Helava @ Helavaru in Karnataka State in India. The study is aimed make ground truth record on the status and the problems of the Helava @ Helavaru Genealogical Nomadic Tribes in Karnataka on ethnographically, to form a better reference for the future records and references to the Government for necessary inclusions. The version that most of the people belonging to nomadic genealogy telling / practicing sects, believes themselves as descendents of Halumatha Kaadu Golla and / or Halumatha Kaadu Kurubu groups belonging to Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka, in terms of their religious and cultural practices? (Dr.L.Ramakrishna & N.M.Dhanya, 2021), needs more in-depth studies, on the aspects of their origin and ancient migrations.

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