

## CHAPTER VIII

### MISCELLANEOUS OCCUPATIONS

Formerly, several places in the district were noted centres of traditional vocations. Musical wire of fine steel was manufactured at Channapatna and its superiority is still remembered by the surviving old artistes playing *veena* and *thamboora*. At the Ramagiri hills in the vicinity of Ramanagara town, blacksmithy (war implements were manufactured) flourished during the reign of Kempegowda. This fact is pointed out by an inscription, found on a rock called 'Kharkane Bande'. Ghattipura in Magadi tq and Uyyamballi in Kanakapura taluk have also been described as former centres of steel production. Magadi and Yelekyathanahalli (Nelamangala taluk) artisans were manufacturing brass lamps, candle stands, household articles and brass and copper vessels. There were some Brahmins at Tirumale, a pilgrim centre near Magadi, who were engaged in the manufacture of stringed musical instruments like *veena* and *thamboora* for generations. These were in great demand in the erstwhile princely Mysore State. New industries have considerably reduced the profit margin of the artisans involved in various crafts. This factor has forced a large number of people living in the villages around Dodballapura town, in a circumference of six to seven kilometres, to opt for weaving job rather than resuming their original professions. Some small callings, the basketry, pottery, lacquer-ware, etc. need only meagre capital and they provide constant work to the artisans depending on it. They have also created employment opportunities to the skilled and unskilled men and women. Of the existing crafts in the district, the colourful lacquerware is noted in the State and outside, whereas gem stones cut with highly sophisticated process is drawing dealers from far off places. In spite of heavy odds, these occupations are still playing vital role in the economic development of the district. This chapter is devoted to the discussion on miscellaneous occupations (traditional and non-traditional in general, and unique of them in particular.

## GEMS CUTTING

Gems cutting has been an unique occupation of Channapatna town and it employs about 100 skilled workers. About 60% of them are Muslims and the rest are Hindus. This vocation took roots six decades back, when some north Indians used to visit this place for purchasing precious raw-stones available in some villages of Channapatna taluk. These were sent to Jaipur for cutting purpose. Thereafter, some persons of this taluk, particularly belonging to Channapatna, got themselves acquainted with all the techniques of gem cutting from the Jaipuris. Later the locals had started their own gem cutting units in the town. The chief raw-material used in this highly skilled gem cutting vocation is corundum rough stone and it is obtained from Honnayakanahalli, Koluru, Thenkanahalli and Marganahalli. The last named village is in Maddur taluk. The rough stones are found in the government lands as well as in private lands. Some of the blocks have been leased out to the private parties by the government. The government has stopped issuing new licence. Corundum stone is a hexagonal one and an alloy of aluminium oxide. After cutting and polishing, this aluminium oxide stone reflects six colours when seen in sharp sun light or sharp electric light. Workers engaged in the gem cutting process have very good knowledge of this mineral and different process are manually operated. Working tools required are grinding plates of various grades, electric motor, diamond cutting plate, bamboo sticks, sandal wood pieces, etc. In the first process, this hexagonal mineral is subjected to diamond cut by operating electric motor. Then the stones are polished into round shapes by the manually operated lathes. Finally, cut stones are further polished by using diamond cutting powder. This powder is a very important element for the gem cutters who get it in three varieties either from Jaipur or from other noted firms. It is imported from U.S.A. and Germany. The ready stones are known as "Indian Star Ruby" and it has replaced "Star Ruby" of Rangoon in Burma which is not available and is also very costly. Indian Star Rubies are having saleable rates of Rs 25 to Rs 200 per tola. These semiprecious corundum rubies are not costly and within the reach of the common people. A gem cutting establishment can be run by investing about Rs 10,000 as capital. Skilled workers employed in gem cutting units are paid wages ranging from Rs 15 to Rs 25 per day. They are provided with advances and other facilities.

There is a society of gem cutters by name "Gem Cutters Co-operative Society", at Channapatna town. It has a membership of 60 gem cutters. It is curious to note that though many firms are dealing in the gem cutting, only two or three of them are duly registered. For the benefit of its members, the society is procuring grinding plates.

cutting powder and other materials meant for various process of the gem cutting. Merchants from all over India will be visiting this town, to make on the spot purchases. Some dealers of this town are visiting many cities in the country to push the sales of these semi-precious stones. This occupation is not seasonal.

#### MANUFACTURE OF LACQUERWARE

Fascinating and impressively coloured lacquerware displayed in the wayside handicrafts emporia attract tourists passing through the highway at Channapatna. In recent years there has been rapid proliferation of lacquerware manufacturing units in and around Channapatna. The lacquer articles produced here are noted for their fineness and gloss.

This craft was started in a small way about eight decades back and the artisans involved in it were the Chitragars. They were stated to be good craftsmen for making wooden masks both in the human and animal attires, besides attending to the painting work in the temples. Somewhere in 1904, an industrial school was started in the town and an Englishman was appointed to manage the school with a view to develop the local crafts and industries. Subjects like *veena* wire and glass beads making were introduced for study. One Bawas Miyan, working as a high school teacher was appointed as the first superintendent of the industrial school which gave a new twist to the future growth of the local lacquerware craft. He saw some potentialities in lacquerware manufacture and coupled with *hale* wood (*Wrightia inctoria*) being the main raw-material, abundantly found in the local forests. He was deputed to tour the lacquerware production centres of north India with a view to improve the existing craft by introducing latest techniques found there. After his return from the study tour, he devised a wood turning lathe which can be operated by the diesel motor since there was no electricity at that time. In the industrial school (the present Industrial Training Institute), lacquerware work was introduced as subject of study for the first time.

Bawas Miyan also carried out experiments and substituted zinc sulphide for pigment of sulphur. For the purpose of buffing, he found screw pine leaf superior in effect rather than the method practised by the artisans. These leaves not only help to spread the lacquer evenly but also make them lucid. Bawas Miyan, the main architect for bringing lacquerware craft into limelight from oblivion, died in 1918. Missionaries working in the local mission hospital then were also

patrons of this craft. They were purchasing lacquer articles and sending them to England. Dewans of the erstwhile Mysore Princely State, have also shown keen interest in the development of this craft. In 1930, a student trained in lacquer work from the industrial school established first power unit with 8 lathes which was run by 2.5 hp motor. He got financial aid from the government in this venture but this unit was wound up in 1946.

After independence, the Design Centre and the Handicrafts Centre of the All India Handicrafts Board, functioning at Bangalore have taken up researches on this craft. They not only have developed designs but also devised the labour saving devices. The Board had conducted workshops, seminars and exhibitions at Channapatna for the development of the craft and the craftsmen alike. Some time back, National Productivity Council, New Delhi took interest in the lacquerware. It conducted training camps at Channapatna for the benefit of local artisans and to acquaint them with the latest tools and equipments with view to double the output. Some artisans selected by it were taken around the lacquerware production centres of north India, for comparative study of the wood crafts. In the course of the tour, they were introduced to the exporters in New Delhi, Bombay and other places who advised them over the brightening of the chances of lacquerware export. Under the Colombo Plan, Syed Nizami, a craft teacher of the Industrial school at Channapatna was sent to Japan in 1959 for six months training in the Japanese techniques for manufacturing lacquers and wood based crafts. After his return, he trained few workers in spray painting, use of *urushi* (sap of tree grown in Bhutan and Assam) and cashew shell oil. These methods were soon adopted by others. All these factors contributed to the expansion and sophistication of lacquerware.

About 2,000 workers are presently occupied in 200 power and hand operated lathes in Channapatna town. This activity of late has spread to the neighbouring villages and many units are functioning at Nilasandra (100), Kariyappana Doddi (200), Harisandra (50), Honganur (20) and Yelikere (20). The number of persons engaged in them are indicated in the brackets. The Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation and a Bombay firm have their production units in the town. The materials needed for producing lacquerware are *halé* wood, lac, lithopone, aniline colours, poster colours, paints, screw pine leaf, turpentine, sand paper and some hardware. An array of lacquer jewellery items, presentation goods, utility articles and rose wood *mantapas* are manufactured in the units. (They include coloured beads, toys, human and animal figures, flower vases, *kolata* sticks, toy vessel set, skipping handles, wall panels, napkin rings, powder boxes,

wooden door curtains, etc.). Some products like lacquer jewellery, powder boxes and napkin rings are being exported to U.S.A. and European and Middle-Eastern countries. This craft fully engages the skilled workers throughout the year.

### CARVING OF METAL IMAGES

The art of metal carving has been kept alive in the district, by some expert craftsmen of the present day. They are known for their artistic work in gold, silver, brass and copper and these carvers are found scattered in the taluks of Devanahalli, Channapatna, Ramanagaram, Hoskote, etc. These craftsmen belong to the Vishwakarma community speaking Telugu and Kannada. As per the customers specifications, metal articles such as *panchaloha* images (five metals), crowns, busts of deities, *prabhavali* (halos), *kavacha* or armour of the presiding deities, *kalasna*, *bagiluvada* (door frame) etc are manufactured by skilled workers. All the stages of metal craft involve manual labour and mostly old type tools are used for carving and its related work. At the outset, the craftsman draws sketch of the required item and then proceeds with the work of casting, moulding, finer carving and polishing. Raw bronze and brass or copper sheets are purchased from Bangalore and the customers pay for it. Some minor items needed are lac, charcoal, bee-wax, wood and a little quantity of hardware. A two feet high *panchaloha* image of good workmanship will cost Rs 15,000 to the customer whereas an ordinary image costs Rs 10,000. The craftsmen are charging altogether different rates for silver articles and it is about Rs 800 per kg of silver image or armour. These artistic products of metal workers are attracting customers from Andhra Pradesh, Hosur (Tamilnadu), Bangalore City, Kolar and Mandya districts. Miniature images used in households for worship are produced in bulk, costing Rs 25 to 100 per piece.

### STONE SCULPTURE

Stone carving is undertaken by several sculptors in the district. One institution unique in the field is the Shilpakala Shala functioning at Devanahalli. It was headed by A.C.H. Acharya, a master craftsman and run on lines of ancient Gurukula system (residential school). The ancestors of A.C.H. Acharya were stated to be talented craftsmen and designers. They built temples and the Devanahalli fort. The trainees at the Shilpakala Shala are taught sculpture in Chalukya, Dravida and Hoysala traditions. Training in drawing, painting and modelling is also imparted. Some American students were also imparted training in the traditional stone sculpture. Both State Government and the Lalithakala Academy have accorded recognition to the school in

1972 itself. An art gallery is being maintained by Acharya and some stone carvings and busts of eminent men are preserved here. Most of the pieces are his own works. A.C.H. Acharya was honoured by the President of India, on the centenary celebration of Victoria Technical Institute, Madras. His contribution to traditional stone carving was complimented with the awards from State Lalitha Kala Academy, State Government, Kannada Sahitya Parishat and a host of other voluntary bodies.

### GOLD AND SILVERSMITHY

The artisans involved in the gold and silversmithy are the Vishwakarmas. In Hoskote and Devanahalli taluks, they speak Telugu language. Most of them are running their establishments in taluk places and urban centres. A number of Vishwakarma families have migrated to Bangalore city in recent years where there is ample opportunity to expand their activity. The highly skilled goldsmiths are engaged in making gold jewellery items like bangles, necklaces, rings, chains, earwear and out of silver ankle chains, images of deities, household articles, etc. The customers have to provide required gold or silver, and on piece rate basis the goldsmiths are getting labour charge. They use traditional tools and buy the tools from Bangalore. During marriage season, more orders will flow and to cope up with the demand they work overtime also. Goldsmithy as a craft is found to be unattractive to the younger generation of the traditional workers.

### SILK WEAVING

Pure silk is being woven in many parts of the Bangalore Rural district, and particularly Dodballapura town is its prime centre from a fairly long time. The economy of the town itself is depending on silk weaving and there are about 8,000 power looms and 350 handlooms functioning at this place. An estimated labour force of 16,000 have been employed in weaving presently. In addition, there is a considerable number of proprietary workers. The Devangas are the traditional workers, and they have surpassed other communities in this field. In the pre-independence period, the credit of introducing first power operated loom at Dodballapura goes to one D. Lakshmaiah. At the time of Second World War, few selected weavers were supplying pure silk cloth for the manufacture of parachutes. The weavers are obtaining raw silk and other materials, chiefly from Bangalore city, to weave pure silk, artificial silk and cotton cloth. And about 2% of the total production is of cotton cloth. Male workers engaged in weaving may earn about Rs 150 to Rs 450 per week and women may get Rs 60 to Rs 120 per week. The wages are paid on piece-rate basis. Weaving

has become a lucrative vocation of late, to a large number of village folk residing in the nearby villages of Dodballapura town. This trend has adversely affected many traditional occupations. Pure silk sarees which are manufactured here are marketed in Bangalore city. Artificial fabrics are sent all over India and also being exported to foreign countries. Some varieties of printed sarees are produced here for external market, in conformity with the changing fashion.

## POTTERY

Traditional pottery workers in the district are the Kumbhars and they are scattered in many parts. Some of them are Telugu speaking. Various types of earthen vessels and country tiles are made by them for domestic market. Among the pottery centres, Ramanagaram town is well known for its artistic pottery for the past several years. The Rural Marketing and Service Centre (Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation) situated in this town, has employed both hereditary and non-hereditary workers in order to prepare an array of artistic pottery such as hanging flower pots, decorative and artistic pots, agarbathi and candle stands, elephants with *howdah*, *brindavana*, Ganesha panels and other terracotta products. Clay is the important raw material for this vocation and it is obtained from the tanks in the vicinity of the town. Later, clay is mixed with the water and mud water is filtered with sieve. Next, the sifted mud is allowed to dry in the open yard and later used for preparing needed items. The artisans use different moulds for making varieties of artistic pottery. Master craftsmen are undertaking cutting, etching and related finishing job of these semi-dried productions. They are baked for about 48 hours in the kilns. Some baked terracotta articles are tastefully painted. The price tag of few decorative articles is upto Rs 800 per piece. The skilled workers are paid wages on piece rate basis and the wheel turner may earn Rs 50 to Rs 100 per day, mould worker Rs 20 to Rs 30, and artists Rs 30 to Rs 60 per day. Artistic earthenware are being sold through the show rooms of the Cauvery Arts and Crafts Emporium, functioning at Mysore and Bangalore. A scheme is in the offing at Ramanagaram to provide living-cum-work sheds to the workers attached to the pottery centre. An enterprising Kumbhar has started Gayathri Pottery Emporium at Ramanagaram. This unit is dealing in varieties of hanging flower pots, bamboo and standing pots, bowles and vases at competitive rates (ranging from Re 1 to Rs 10). The Horticulture Department are his customers and some quantity was earlier exported to Middle-East. Now, flower pots are being sent to Mysore University, K.R.S. authorities, forest department etc.

Kudike Bevir is a village in Channapatna tq, inhabited by 30 to 40 Kumbhar families. These traditional workers are noted for preparing a wide range of tiny earthen pottery. They manufacture earthen lamps or *hanathes* (called *pillu deepa*, *sanna deepa*, *korai deepa* and *kento deepa*), hanging lamps with earthen chains, small pots or *kudikes* (*pillu kudike*, *halu kudike*, *pavina kudike*, *seru kudike* etc.), toy cooking sets for kids and other items. One of the potter of this village, is an expert in preparing earthen bells and when they are rung, their sound is akin to that of a metal bell. A potter of the yester years who displayed his earthenware at the Mysore Dasara Exhibition, had bagged a silver medal. The potters will collect and store needed clay from the nearby tank before the onset of rainy season. In a day, a potter, assisted by one of his family member is able to manufacture about 700 *hanathes*. They are in great demand at the time of Deepavali festival. The small pots are *kudikes* are widely used by the sorecers in the witchcraft and also in religious rites. When the demand is more, the potter may earn about Rs 40 per day. The finished goods are transported by buses to Bangalore city and other urban centres. They are facing the acute problem of getting fuel at reasonable rates for their kilns.

#### BASKETRY

The Medars, Koramas and other backward communities are the basket workers in the district. They are seen in several taluks like Magadi, Devanahalli, Hoskote and Kanakapura. Basket workers enjoy patronage all through the year owing to spread of sericulture. Baskets are also used for packing fruits and flowers in horticultural centres. The economic position of the basket workers has improved to some extent as a result. Different sizes of baskets, *chandrike* (mountage), big bamboo plate (*thatte*), winnow fans, etc. are woven by the workers. During Gowri festival, there is a great demand for winnows (for offering *baginas*). Depending on the quality, the rate of *chandrikes* ranges from Rs 55 to Rs 75 and that of *thattes* Rs 25 to Rs 35. A bamboo worker assisted by one of his family member can earn about Rs 25 to Rs 40 per day. Scarcity of bamboo has forced many workers to secure supplies from far off places in Chikamagalur and Shimoga districts. Under the Special Component Programme, some of the basket makers have been provided with living-cum-work sheds.

#### BIDI ROLLING

Bidi rolling is an important calling for a significant number of people in the district. Chief centres of this occupation are Channapatna and Hoskote towns, and other places where it is found on a



small scale are Medimallasandra (Hoskote tq), Magadi, Vijayapura (Devanahalli tq), Kanakapura, Honganur, Kodamballi (Channapatna tq), Heggunda (Nelamangala tq) etc. A majority of the workers in it are women who perform the rolling work in their houses. Required tobacco, wrapping leaves, thread, etc. are obtained from the manufacturers or their agents. A small quantity of bidis are rolled in the factory premises. The manufacturers are purchasing tobacco grown in Nipani, Hunsur and Gujarat and labels from Sivakasi in Tamilnadu. A skilled male worker can roll about 1,000 to 1,500 bidis per day and he is paid Rs 16 per 1,000 bidis. Wages are paid every week and the workers are getting other benefits like bonus and advance facility.

#### TONGA PLYING

The tongas (horse carriages) are plying at two places only viz., Channapatna and Dodballapura towns. In recent years, the steep increase in the number of autorickshaws has posed stiff competition to the tonga pliers who are mostly Muslims. On occasions, the tongas are hired by the village folk to carry goods or for journey. To travel 3 to 4 miles distance, the tonga pliers charge Rs 10 to Rs 15 per trip. They spend Rs 15 to Rs 20 per day for maintaining the horse (to buy fodder and horsegram). The tonga pliers may earn net income of about Rs 20 to Rs 30 per day. During marriage season, they earn better and on the whole it is a declining occupation in the district.

#### FLOWER SELLING

From a long time, the farmers in several pockets around Devanahalli town are growing Sugandaraja flowers. In some areas of Hoskote, Dodballapura, Kanakapura, Nelamangala, etc., flowers like *mallige*, *kakada*, *kanakambara* and *roses*, button flowers, etc., are grown. The bulk of these flowers are transported by buses to Bangalore city for marketing purpose. The calling of stringing flowers is urban in character and mostly women are engaged in it. Both the traditional Hoovadigas and non-hereditary workers have undertaken it as a side or main vocation. However, strings are sold at bus stands, busy places and weekly shandies. On payment of advance, the flower sellers prepare garlands of ordinary or special variety. The rate of special garland ranges upto Rs 30, and these are mostly prepared by men. Per day, the flower sellers normally earn Rs 10 to Rs 20. On festival occasions and during marriage season, they earn more.

#### MUSIC PLAYING

The village musicians playing instruments from generations are the hereditary barbers and they are scattered all over the district.

Some of them are speaking Telugu. Many of the village barbers have shifted to urban places and established hair cutting saloons. A capital upto Rs 5,000 has to be invested in the hair cutting shops which are mostly rented. The old practice of village barber going round the houses of customers is still in vogue. Playing music (*mangalvadya*) is a subsidiary vocation and each batch will have three to five members and some times more. They are pressed into service during marriages and other ceremonies and to welcome guests or dignitaries during public functions. For the functions of ordinary nature, they may get remuneration upto Rs 100 and during marriages Rs 200 to Rs 300 or even more.

### STONE QUARRIES

In the stone cutting and dressing, the Telugu speaking Voddars and some others are working. A number of places like Koira (Devanahalli), Kallugopanahalli (Ramanagaram), Savanadurga (Magadi), and other places in the district quarries are worked. Size stones, pillar stones, slabs, structural materials of various sizes and dimensions are quarried by inexpensive fire splitting method. Out of them, road rollers, stone mortars, grinding stones, etc. are wrought for household and other purposes. The pink granites available at Magadi, Kanakapura and Channapatna taluks and chlorites and epiolote granite exposures near Ramanagaram are formed into impressive ornamental stones, after proper dressing and polishing. Such polished ornamental stones have an overseas market also, being exported through Mangalore port. At present, there are about 40 mines working at different places of the district, employing hundreds of workers.

### CARPENTRY

The artistic touch of the old carpenters can be seen in the doors, windows and roofs of the Timappa Raje Urs mansion (now in dilapidated condition) at Channapatna and scores of other temples across the district. In tune with the changing fashions, the style of carpenters work has also undergone complete change. The present day carpentry is in full bloom due to the construction boom in both the Government and private sectors. Their profit margin has also gone up. Large number of non-hereditary workers have taken to this profession. Woodcraft items like toys and *mandasanas* are made by few Harijan carpenters in Channapatna town. They are directly sold to the customers or else supplied to the dealers. Besides several varieties of wood, impressively coloured laminate sheets are widely used by them

for interior and exterior decoration. The carpenters work either on daily wages or on contract basis. Some of them are working in Bangalore by accepting orders.

Considerable number of people are also engaged in the following economic pursuits in Bangalore Rural district, and they are :- tin-smithy, hiring and repairing bicycles, loud speakers and patromax lamps, brass and copper vessel repairing, dry cleaning and laundering, vegetable and fruit selling, bangle selling, tailoring, painting, wiring, installing and repairing water pumps, photography, agarbathi rolling, shoe making, horse and bullock shoe fixing, lock repairing, umbrella repairing, lime stone burning, photo framing and the like. Some of these are hereditary professions. Separate statistics for the district on such professionals are not available.

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