

## CHAPTER III

### PEOPLE

**T**HE total population of the Coorg district according to the **Total**  
Census of 1961 is 322,829 ; 173,338 are men and 149,491 women, **Population**  
the ratio between the two sexes being 1000 : 862. This total  
population is distributed over an area of 1,590 square miles. In  
area, Coorg ranks last among the districts of the Mysore State.  
From the point of view of population also, it comes last. If the  
density of population is considered, it is 203 per square mile in  
Coorg, and in this, it beats North Kanara which has 173 persons per  
square mile. Coorg, being a hilly district with abundant rainfall,  
has thick evergreen forests on the hill slopes and deciduous forests  
(Kanive Kadu) on the lower levels of the passes. The area under  
forests is about a third of the total area of the district. Therefore,  
it is no wonder that the density of population of Coorg falls below  
that of the Mysore State as a whole, which is 319. Coorg is mainly  
an agricultural district producing food crops like rice, cereals, ragi  
and pulses, and commercial crops like coffee, cardamom, rubber  
and tea, and that is also one of the reasons for the sparsity of  
population in Coorg. But, it is significant that the population of  
Coorg has been increasing considerably during the past three  
decades from 1931 onwards.

In the 18th century, during the times of the Rajas, the  
sanguinary and relentless persecution of the people of Coorg by  
Tippu Sultan and the deportation of a large number of them to  
Mysore resulted in diminishing the population of Coorg. Later,  
after the fall of Tippu Sultan, the Rajas of Coorg made attempts  
to bring people from outside the district and encouraged them to  
settle in Coorg by granting them lands free of assessment for some  
years and on low assessment during the subsequent years ; but  
these people could not stand the rigors of the cold climate of Coorg  
and the scourge of malaria, and so either perished or left the  
district. The Rajas too were said to have exterminated whole  
families of people suspected of treason against them. All these  
facts retarded the growth of population till the annexation of Coorg  
by the British in 1834.

The first official estimate of the population of Coorg was made in 1839-40 and then it was found that there were 81,437 people. The regular census of the population in Coorg, as in most other places in India, began in 1871. The total population of Coorg, according to the census taken on the night of the 14th November, 1871, was 168,312. From that time up to the Census of 1961, the population has shown an increase except during the decades 1901 to 1931. The following figures show the population from 1871 to 1961.

1871	..	168,312	1921	..	163,838
1881	..	178,302	1931	..	163,327
1891	..	173,055	1941	..	168,726
1901	..	180,607	1951	..	229,405
1911	..	174,976	1961	..	322,829

There has not been much variation in the population of Coorg from 1871 to 1941, the little that is in evidence being due to the presence or absence of the immigrant labourers working in the plantations, who return to their places after they finish their work in the estates. But from 1941 to 1961, there has been a phenomenal increase due to various reasons. After 1941, malaria which was the scourge of Coorg and which deterred the people from outside from settling in Coorg was almost eradicated in the course of a decade. Business and trade grew rapidly as vehicular traffic increased between Coorg and the districts of South Kanara, Malabar, Mysore and Hassan, owing to the improvement of communications. Coffee plantations and cardamom plantations also have increased in number, owing to the prevalence of attractive prices for both these commodities. This increase in the number of plantations has drawn a large number of labourers from the neighbouring districts and even from Coimbatore district. From 1941, there have been more births than deaths in Coorg, as it is in other parts of India. The span of life of the people has become longer. All the above factors have contributed to the increase in population from 1941.

The increase of population in Coorg from 1941 to 1951 works out to 35.96 per cent and that from 1951 to 1961 to 40.72 per cent. Among the districts of the State, Coorg takes the third place, while Shimoga and Chikmagalur take the first and the second places with an increase of 53.38 and 43.05 per cent, respectively. The total population of the whole State has increased only by 21.57 per cent during the inter-censal period from 1951 to 1961.

**Taluk-wise  
population.**

In the case of Coorg, it is not possible to find out taluk-wise percentage of increase of population from decade to decade, as the number of taluks has varied during each census period. The population of taluks for 1951 and 1961 is as follows :—

Taluk	1951	1961
Mercara ..	57,128	79,540
Virajpet ..	69,912	133,872
Somwarpet ..	102,365	109,417

Of the three taluks in Coorg, Mercara has the smallest population because it is smaller in area than the other two taluks, has less number of coffee estates and cardamom plantations and has more hill ranges and uncultivated valleys between the hill ridges than the other two taluks. Rainfall also is heavier in Mercara taluk. But it is significant that in this taluk the percentage of increase over the population of 1951 is 39.23. The Virajpet taluk has recorded a big increase of 91.49 per cent of population in 1961 over that of 1951.

Of the total population of 322,829 of the district, 42,689 live in towns and 280,140 live in villages, the percentage of the urban population to the total population being 13.22. The urban population in Coorg in 1951 was only 16,255, comprising the people of only the two municipalities of Mercara and Virajpet, but in the 1961 census, the notified areas of Coorg (small towns with an elected administrative body) have been treated as urban areas and the population of these areas has been classified as urban. The population of all the notified areas comes to about 20,000. The population of the two municipalities of Mercara and Virajpet together with the population of all the notified areas in Coorg being treated as urban population, shows a 162.6 per cent increase over the urban population of 1951. According to the census of 1951, the population of the district and that of the urban and rural areas, respectively, was 229,405, 16,255 and 213,150. The rural population in Coorg shows an increase of 31.43 per cent during the period from 1951 to 1961.

**Urban and  
Rural  
Population.**

Towns have been divided into six classes according to their population as follows :—

Class I ..	1,00,000 and above
Class II ..	50,000 to 1,00,000
Class III ..	20,000 to 50,000
Class IV ..	10,000 to 20,000
Class V ..	5,000 to 10,000
Class VI ..	Under 5,000

There are ten towns in Coorg and 277 villages, according to the 1961 census. There were only two towns in 1951. As stated earlier, the inclusion of the notified areas in the category of towns has raised the number of towns to ten from two. The number of villages which was 297 in 1951, has come down to 288 in 1961 of which 277 are inhabited villages.

**Towns.**

The number of households in 1951 and 1961.

The number of households in Coorg in 1951 was 50,348. In 1961, it had risen to 65,540. The number of households in rural areas and in urban areas for 1951 and 1961 is as follows :—

	1951	1961	Increase over 1951
Rural areas ..	47,275	57,229	+9,954
Urban areas ..	3,073	8,311	+5,238

The taluk-wise details of households in the district in 1961\* were as follows :—

Taluk	No. of households		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Mercara ..	12,355	2,649	15,004
Somwarpet ..	20,078	2,957	23,035
Virajpet ..	24,796	2,705	27,501
Total ..	57,229	8,311	65,540

The number of households in the urban areas in 1961 shows an increase of more than 170 per cent over that of 1951 because, as stated earlier, in the 1961 census figures households in all the Notified Areas have also been included.

In Coorg, as elsewhere, there has been an increase of population both in the rural and urban areas. The increase in the number of households and in the population of the Municipalities of Mercara and Virajpet and of the Notified Areas is a clear indication of the drift of population from the rural to the urban areas. In the rural areas in Coorg, the increase of population by 31.43 per cent falls below the percentage of increase in the urban areas.

The reasons for this drift of population from villages to towns are many. Educational facilities available in the towns have made many parents settle in the towns. Secondly, Government servants prefer to live in the towns after their retirement. Private medical practitioners, lawyers and other people who come to eke out their living either as petty businessmen or wage earners naturally prefer the towns. Of late, small planters also have chosen to live in towns as there are amenities like club life, quick means of communication to all places in the district and outside and proper medical aid. The new Government policy towards

\* The corresponding figures for these three taluks of Coorg for 1951 have not been given in the Handbook of Coorg Census, 1951, separately.

land tenure does not affect the Coorg raiyats to the point of deterring such of the people as want to settle in the towns from doing so. Their lands which are held on jamma tenure are inalienable and are generally looked after by their own family people. Therefore, there is no fear of their losing their lands by living away from them.

Emigration and immigration figures in the censuses are arrived at on the basis of the places of birth and the places of enumeration of the persons concerned. According to the 1951 census, out of the total population of the district, birth places could not be recorded in the case of only two persons. Out of the 229,403 persons whose birth places have been returned, 229,308 were born in India, 48 in countries in Asia beyond India, 40 in Europe and seven in countries of Africa. Out of the persons born in India, 163,257 were born in Coorg and 66,051 were born in other districts or States. Of these immigrants, the largest number, i.e., 52,384, has come from the then Madras State. The then separate State of Mysore supplied 10,061 and the then 'B' State of Travancore-Cochin 3,234 ; 294 came from Bombay and 78 from other States or places in India. The immigrants born in India numbering 57,214 live in rural areas and the rest live in urban areas. The reason for such a large number of persons living in the rural areas is that they are either labourers in coffee estates or cardamom plantations, or workers engaged by the P.W.D. contractors. Of the immigrants from countries in Asia beyond India, 22 were found in rural areas and 26 in urban areas but of the immigrants from countries in Europe, 39 out of 40 were in the rural areas. They were either proprietors of coffee plantations or managers appointed by the owners of estates.

**Movement of  
Population.**

Emigration from Coorg on any appreciable scale is not in evidence, because the majority of the persons born in the district are agriculturists and, as such, closely attached to their cultivated lands. The bulk of this population consists of Coorgs by race and has no social or marital relationship with people outside the district. The few emigrants found outside the district either in India or in countries outside India are either employees of Government or private agencies or students prosecuting their studies.

The following table will give an idea of the number of persons born in the State and of the immigrants from outside the district and from outside India, according to the 1951 census.

District, State or country where born	The then Coorg State								
	State Total			Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Men	Women	Persons	Men	Women	Persons	Men	Women
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total population .. ..	229,405	125,327	104,078	213,150	116,040	97,110	16,255	9,287	6,968
A. Born in India .. ..	229,308	125,263	104,045	213,089	115,997	97,092	16,219	9,266	6,953
1. Born in Coorg .. ..	163,257	84,253	79,004	152,888	78,783	74,105	10,369	5,470	4,899
2. States in India beyond the State of enumeration.									
Madras .. ..	52,384	33,868	18,516	48,085	31,032	17,053	4,299	2,836	1,463
Mysore .. ..	10,061	4,521	5,540	9,129	4,053	5,076	932	468	464
Other States .. ..	3,606	2,621	985	2,987	2,129	858	619	492	127
B. Countries in Asia beyond India .. ..	48	30	18	22	15	7	26	15	11
C. Countries in Europe .. ..	40	28	12	39	28	11	1	..	1
D. Countries of Africa .. ..	7	4	3	..	..	..	7	4	3
Birth place not returned .. ..	2	2	..	..	..	..	2	2	..

The 1951 census gives a list of 25 languages returned as mother tongues in the Coorg district. Of these, persons speaking Kannada as their mother tongue numbered 80,410. Though Kannada is the mother tongue of the largest single group and the language taught in schools, persons speaking Kodagu, Malayalam, Tulu, Tamil, Urdu and Konkani are considerable in number. Given below is a table of languages spoken as mother tongue by more than 1,000 persons.

## 1951

Kannada	..	..	80,410
Kodagu	..	..	66,642
Malayalam	..	..	32,683
Tulu	..	..	21,009
Tamil	..	..	13,824
Telugu	..	..	3,927
Urdu	..	..	3,818
Konkani	..	..	3,515
Marathi	..	..	1,558
Hindustani	..	..	1,210

Only in the South-West, Coorg has a common boundary with Kerala, but as the labourers and artisans like carpenters and masons are mostly from Malabar, people of the southern half of Coorg can speak Malayalam. Non-Coorg Hindus, Muslims and Christians can also speak the Coorg or Kodagu dialect, as the majority of people in the villages are either Coorgs or communities speaking in the Coorg dialect. People in Coorg are mostly trilingual in speech. Kannada, Hindi and English are taught in schools and the younger generation have a good knowledge of Kannada, the regional language, and a fair knowledge of Hindi and English.

Even people who speak languages other than Kannada at home, can speak, read and write Kannada. Only the labourers in estates who come seasonally to Coorg from outside and the Mapilla traders from Malabar do not know Kannada.

As for the script, if we leave aside the Roman script, Kannada is the only script used for all official business and commercial purposes. But, some Tamil merchants, Mapilla traders and other Muslim cloth merchants from Bhatkal or Honnavar keep their shop accounts in their own languages and scripts. School-going children have learnt the Devanagari script but it is not used for any business.

Of the total population of the district, Hindus form the majority, their total number in 1951 being 199,465. The next largest community was Muslims numbering 23,062 persons. The third

largest was that of the Christians numbering 6,788 persons. Other communities in Coorg in 1951 were 54 Jains, 16 Buddhists, 9 Sikhs, 8 Zoroastrians and one non-tribal. The 1941 census figures for Hindus, Muslims and Christians were 130,753, 14,730 and 3,440, respectively. In the 1941 census, a big number of 19,803 persons are shown as "others". Except some Jains, a few Buddhists and a few Zoroastrians, all these not exceeding one hundred at the most, the persons shown under "others" in the census report should really be treated as Hindus. The community that conspicuously added to its population during the ten years from 1941 to 1951 is the Christian community with its 97 per cent increase; Muslims have increased by a little more than 56 per cent.

**Scheduled  
Castes and  
Tribes.**

The Scheduled Castes of Coorg comprise the following communities of people :—(1) Adi Dravida, (2) Adi Karnataka, (3) Adiya, (4) Balagai, (5) Holey, (6) Madiga, (7) Muchi, (8) Mundala, (9) Samagara, (10) Panchama, (11) Paraya and (12) Pale. The Scheduled Tribes are (1) Korama, (2) Kudiya, (3) Kuruba, (4) Yerava, (5) Meda and (6) Martha.

Persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes in Coorg numbered 23,690 in 1951. The number of persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in 1951 was 21,084. The following table gives the details as reflected by the 1961 Census.

<i>Tract</i>	<i>Scheduled Castes</i>			<i>Scheduled Tribes</i>		
	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Rural ..	27,907	15,031	12,876	27,063	14,329	12,734
Urban ..	2,703	1,405	1,298	39	24	15
Total ..	30,610	16,436	14,174	27,102	14,353	12,749

The term 'Hindu' is a wide term. It cannot be defined as a belief in this or that doctrine. A common definition is that all persons who worship orthodox deities, the incarnations of Vishnu or Shiva, their wives or their off-spring, divine mothers, spirits of trees, rocks and streams and who are governed by the Hindu Law are Hindus. Gandhiji says that the beauty of Hinduism lies in its all-embracing inclusiveness.

Classified as Hindus, the following communities come under it :  
(1) Brahmins, (2) Coorgs, (3) Gowdas, (4) Lingayats, (5) Devangas, (6) Bilimaggas, (7) Bants, (8) Amma Coorgs, (9) Vokkaligas, (10) Heggades, (11) Scheduled Castes and (12) Scheduled Tribes.

**Brahmins.**

Brahmins, though very small in number, have been in Coorg from the early centuries of the Christian era. They have been



priests in the temples of Talakaveri, Bhagamandala and other temples of Coorg from early times. Later, Brahmins were brought by the Rajas of Coorg from the districts of Shimoga, Hassan, South Kanara and Mysore and induced to settle in Coorg by grants of lands and the like.

Among the Brahmins in Coorg, there are the Smarthas and **Smarthas.** the Madhvas, the number of others being negligible. The Smarthas derive their name from Smriti, the code of revealed or traditional law. They look upon Shiva and Vishnu as the different aspects of the supreme godhead. Philosophically, they hold the Vedanta doctrine of Advaita or non-dualism. The founder of the Smartha sect was Shankaracharya. The distinctive marks of a Smartha Brahmin are three parallel horizontal lines of pounded sandalwood or ashes of cowdung on the forehead. The Smartha Brahmins in Coorg belong to a sect called the Havikas who owe allegiance to the pontiff or Guru of the Sri Ramachandrapura matha of Nagar in Shimoga district.

The Madhvas follow the teachings of Madhvacharya, the **Madhvas.** founder of the sect. They profess the doctrine of Dvaita or dualism. A Madhva Brahmin is known by a black perpendicular line from the junction of the eyebrows to the top of the forehead with a dot in the centre. The followers of Madhvacharya in Coorg are the Shivalli Brahmins who speak the Tulu language. They owe allegiance to one or the other of the eight religious heads of the mathas of Udupi.

The Coorgs are the major compact community in Coorg. A detailed account of the Coorgs is given under the section "Castes and Communities".

Lingayats in Coorg number only a few thousands. They **Lingayats.** numbered 5,018 in 1931. The Lingayats seem to have decreased in number during the succeeding decades. They came to Coorg from the neighbouring districts in the times of the later Changalvas and the Haleri Rajas of Coorg. They follow the teachings or writings of Basaveswara and other Shivasharanas. The wearing of a Linga on the person is the distinctive external mark of this religion.

Among the people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and **Scheduled** Scheduled Tribes, the gods and goddesses worshipped are Kuttadamma, Karingali, Chamundi, Mariamma, Siddeswara, Basaveswara, Parindra, Kolappa and Someswara. In almost every village **Castes and** in Coorg, there is a place dedicated in a jungle under some big tree **Scheduled** to these gods and goddesses. There is no priesthood attached **Tribes.** to these shrines but the headman of each community of people in a village officiates as a priest and prays to the God, making the necessary offerings. Goats, fowls, pigs and occasionally he-buffalo

calves used to be killed in the past and offered to these spirits and demons.

#### Muslims.

The main sects of Muslims in Coorg are the Hindustani or Urdu-speaking Deccani Muslims, the Jamma Mapillas of Coorg, the Malayalam-speaking Mapillas of Malabar, the Labbais of Tamil Nad, the Konkani-speaking Nawayats of North Kanara and the Byaris of South Kanara and North Kanara speaking a mixture of Tulu, Kannada and Malayalam. These Muslims belong to four sects, Sheik, Sayyad, Mogul and Pathan. The Sheiks denote properly a lineal descent from Prophet Muhammad through his successors and sayyads, a descent through his son-in-law.

The essential Muhammadan beliefs are six in number—(1) in one God, Allah, (2) in angels, (3) in the Koran, (4) in the prophets of Allah, (5) in judgment, paradise and hell, and (6) in the Divine Decrees. The five primary duties called “the Five Pillars of Islam” are: (1) repetition of the creed, Kalimah, everyday, (2) prayer, (3) alms-giving, (4) fasting during the month of Ramzan and (5) pilgrimage to Mecca. Their principal festivals are Ramzan, Bakrid and Shab-e-Barat.

#### Christians.

Among the Christians of the district, there are both Catholics and Protestants, but the Catholics number a few thousands whereas the Protestants are only a few hundreds. As already stated before, the number of Christians has increased in Coorg during 1941 to 1951 by 97 per cent. This increase is not due to conversions alone, but partly due to immigrants from the neighbouring districts and partly owing to the increase in the number of the previously settled Christians. The Catholics of Coorg consist of Konkani-speaking, Tamil-speaking and Malayalam-speaking Christians. Konkani-speaking Catholics settled in Coorg during the Rajas' times. The Tamil-speaking Catholics came to Coorg during British times and the Syrian Christians from the former Travancore-Cochin State are immigrants during the past three decades. Protestants in Coorg speak Kannada. They are descendants of people who were converted in the last century and also of people who came from South Kanara and settled in Coorg towards the end of the last century and the beginning of this century.

#### Jains.

The Jains in Coorg are very small in number. They are traders and businessmen. They belong to the Digambara sect.

### CASTES AND COMMUNITIES

The principal castes and communities of the district are the following :—

#### Agasa.

Agasas or washermen are divided into Kannada and Kodagu-speaking washermen. The Kodagu-speaking washermen are called

Madivalas. They are descended from Malayalam washermen. They follow Coorg customs and dress in the Coorg fashion.

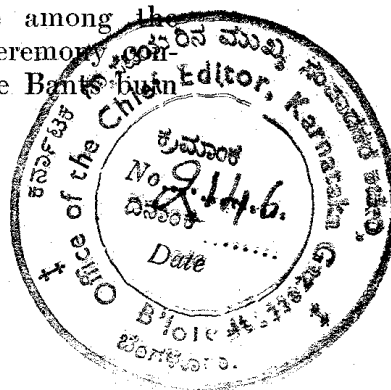
Airis are carpenters and blacksmiths. They came to Coorg Airis. from Malabar during the Rajas' times and settled in Coorg. They follow Coorg dress, customs and manners.

The following communities were immigrants from Malabar during the time of the Haleri Rajas. They were given lands on jamma tenure by the Rajas. They have adopted the Coorg language, Coorg dress, customs and ceremonies. Though originally they were following the vocations noted against their names, most of them have now taken to agriculture.

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|--------------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| 1. Heggades              | .. | Cultivators.                    |
| 2. Kavadis               | .. | Cultivators.                    |
| 3. Kollas                | .. | Blacksmiths.                    |
| 4. Tattas                | .. | Goldsmiths.                     |
| 5. Koleyas or Kolairs    | .. | Builders of earth walls         |
| 6. Koyavas               | .. | Potters.                        |
| 7. Bannas                | .. | Demon dancers.                  |
| 8. Bine Pattar           | .. | Musical mendicants.             |
| 9. Malayas and Panikas.. |    | Demon dancers and medicine men. |
| 10. Kanyas               | .. | Astrologers.                    |

Three communities of people who originally came from Hassan or Mysore and settled in Coorg and who conform to the practices of Coorg in their mode of life, dress and customs are (1) Eimbokklus, (2) Gollas and (3) Ganigas.

Bants are a community of people belonging to Tulunad or Bants. South Kanara and also to Kasargod taluk of the Kerala State. A large number of Bants were brought from Manjeshwar, Kumbla, Bantwal and Puttur during the Rajas' times and made to settle in Coorg. Among the Bants who have settled in Coorg, there are two sects, the Masadika Bants and the Parivarada Bants. Both these sects speak Tulu. Masadika Bants follow the matriarchal form of inheritance, but the Parivarada Bants follow the patriarchal form. There are two forms of marriage. One is known as Kaidari which is performed between bachelors and virgins and the other Budhare, between widows and widowers. The marriage ceremony is performed in the house of the bride or bridegroom as may be convenient. The bride is given to the bridegroom by the 'dhare' ceremony as is done among the Brahmins. Widows are allowed to remarry. The ceremony consists simply of joining the hands of the couple. The Bants bury their dead.



The Billavas who were formerly toddy-drawers have also come from South Kanara and settled in Coorg. Their number is small.

#### Brahmins.

As already mentioned, the important sects of Brahmins in Coorg are the Havikas and the Shivallis. Though they are Smarthas and Madhvas, respectively, they eat together. Inter-marriages between these two sects and among other sects of Brahmins, though not common, have taken place in some cases without any sect objecting to it. Sagotra marriages which were forbidden till a few years, have now begun to take place though they are not common. All the Brahmins of all the sects go through the sixteen samskaras or religious rites observed by the Brahmins elsewhere in the State and in other States in India. The Brahmins of Coorg are related to their community people in other districts of the State or other parts of India by matrimonial connections. The Sandhya services, the Pancha Mahayajnas, marriage ceremonies, thread ceremonies and funeral ceremonies are performed in the same manner as by other Brahmins outside the district.

#### Coorgs.

The Coorgs are a community of people whose customs, ceremonies from birth to death, festivals, dress, language and mode of life are quite different from those of other communities among the Hindus. As the homeland of the Coorgs is Coorg, it is necessary that a detailed account of this community should be given.

The Coorgs, though they are peculiar to Coorg, are not indigenous to Coorg. They are said to have come from the north-western part of India in the early centuries of the Christian era to the west coast regions of the peninsular part and penetrated into Coorg which was then a jungle and settled there. The origin of the Coorgs is shrouded in mystery. Father Henry Heras of the St. Xavier's Historical Research Society says that the name of the Coorgs was found in an inscription at Mohenjodaro and \* Dr. Hutton gives strength to this view by saying that "it appears to be a much simpler and more satisfactory view to regard the brachycephalic stock (Coorgs) as preceding the Aryans. We may suppose them to have entered into the Indus Valley during the Mohenjodaro period and to have extended down to the west coast as far as Coorg, forming the physical basis of several of the brachycephalic or mesocephalic castes of Western India". Professor Ghurye of Bombay says that the Coorgs belong to the Indo-Scythian race. Richter, the author of the Ethnographical compendium on the castes and tribes found in the Province of Coorg, 1887, writes that the Coorgs as well as other Hindu castes and tribes found in Coorg belong

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\* "The Census of India" Part 1, 1931.

to the Dravidian race, but as Sir Thomas Holland describes in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal of 1901, the Coorgs are the finest race without any exception, in Southern India. We may perhaps conclude that they are an ancient North-Indian or Indo-Scythian race who, under some unknown circumstances, settled in Coorg. In the course of centuries, these immigrants from the north got mixed up with the people of this district and the neighbouring districts but retained their peculiar customs and ceremonies and absorbed other people into their fold. The Coorgs do not have a caste system among them. They easily admit into their fold non-Coorgs belonging to fairly high castes. Dr. Moegling wrote in 1855 that, "strangers are received among them and naturalised without difficulty, and such as have been excommunicated are received without much ado".

The Coorgs have some characteristic religious practices. They have no caste system among them and, as stated already, easily absorb people of other communities, specially of high caste Hindus, into their fold. They do not owe allegiance to any religious head inside or outside the district. They do not require Brahmins to officiate as priests in any of their ceremonies, except on very special occasions. The Coorgs are Shaivites, having come under Lingayat influence during the times of the Lingayat Rajas, but they do not take the services of the Jangamas of the Lingayat sect. In Coorg, every village has a temple in which local deities of the village like Aiyappa, Povvadi and Kalamma have been installed. These deities have been assimilated to the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. In addition to these deities, almost in every village south of Suntikoppa where the Coorgs predominate, there is a temple of god Mahadeva or goddess Bhagavathi. Mahadeva is god Iswara and Bhagavathi is his consort. During the Cauvery festival and the Huttari festival, the Brahmin worshipper in the village temple visits each Coorg house in his village and purifies the house by sprinkling it with a little sacred water which he carries in a vessel. He also gives each member of the house a tiny spoonful of this water to drink. Besides the village deities, the Coorgs worship the river goddess Cauvery and god Igguthappa who is an incarnation of Subramanya, as their patron goddess and patron god, respectively. During the Thula Sankramana at Talakaveri and Bhagamandala and the annual festival at Padi Igguthappa's temple near Kakkabe in Nalknad of the present Mercara taluk, thousands of Coorgs, men, women and children, resort to the temples at Talakaveri, Bhagamandala and Padi and give offerings. At Bhagamandala where the Cauvery and the stream Kannike meet, it is customary for the Coorgs to offer 'pinda' or balls of rice to their departed parents or ancestors, under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

**Religious  
Practices of  
the Coorgs.**

The Coorgs are also ancestor worshippers. Each Coorg house has a Kaimata (a small building close to the house) under a tree

in the fields or in the yard close to the house. This is a raised mud platform with a roof where carved stones representing the images of their ancestors are placed. The original ancestor of each family is called the Karana, corresponding to the Malayalam 'Karannan'. The Coorgs also worship some minor deities in their village temple or in their houses.

As soon as the Coorg boy is born, a little bow made out of a stick of the castor oil plant with an arrow made out of a leaf stalk of the same plant is put into his little hands and a gun is fired in the courtyard. He is thus, at taking his first breath, introduced into the world as a future hunter and warrior. On the twelfth day after its birth, the child, whether boy or girl, is laid in the cradle by the mother or grand-mother, who on this occasion gives it its name. Boys are given names like Belliappa, Ponnappa, Mandanna, Chinnappa, etc., and girls are given names like Puvamma, Muthamma, Ponnamma, Chinnamma, etc. Recently, the Coorgs have taken to name their boys Ramakrishna, Ramesha, Parthasarathy and girls as Kasturi, Leela, Rukmini, like other Hindus.

#### **Funeral Ceremonies**

Coorgs both bury and burn their dead. When a man or a woman dies, two shots are fired from a gun in close succession. This is the first information to the villagers. Then messages are sent round to every house of the village community. The Aruva of the family has the direction of affairs at the ceremonies.

#### **Social Organisation.**

The Coorgs have a council of elders called "Thakka Mukyastaru" who act as the moral censors of their social affairs though they are not invested with magisterial power by Government. The authority of the village Thakkas extends over offences against social customs, non-attendance at public feasts, and improper conduct during the same, as for example, drunkenness and obscene conduct. The authority of the Thakkas was effective in the past, but after the advent of the British and the spread of English education and increasing knowledge of the law, their authority has almost disappeared.

#### **Gowdas.**

The Gowdas are quite a big community in Coorg. They are mainly cultivators. They are settlers from the regions below the ghats in South Kanara. During the time of the Rajas, the taluks in South Kanara below the Western Ghats up to Puttur and a little beyond belonged to them. At that time, the Gowdas from that part of South Kanara were brought and made to settle in Coorg by grant of lands on jamma tenure. They are largely found in Padinalknad and Yedenalknad of Mercara and Virajpet taluks, respectively. The Gowdas belong to 18 balis or clans. Members of the same clan cannot intermarry.

Formerly, the Gowdas had two headmen called the Grama Gowda and the Gottu (ಗೊತ್ತು) Gowda in every village. Their duty was to settle the caste disputes. But just as the authority of the Thakkas among the Coorgs has declined after the advent of the British in Coorg, the authority of these headmen also has disappeared.

The Gowdas worship Venkataramanaswami to whom they make offerings once a year in September. They also perform ancestor-worship.

The Vokkaligas are an agricultural community in Coorg. The Vokkaligas. ancestors of this community came from both Mysore district and Nagar taluk of Shimoga district. There are three sub-divisions and there is no inter-marriage among them. They dress as other Hindus do in the district. They bury their dead.

The Devangas, who are principally traders, settled in Coorg Devangas. during the period of the Rajas. Their number is decreasing now.

The Bilimaggas who were originally weavers by profession are Bilimaggas. a prosperous community in Coorg. They are found in North Coorg, north of Mercara. They are now mostly coffee planters and traders.

The Amma Coorgs or Amma Kodagas are said to have been Amma Coorgs the indigenous priesthood, but when exactly they were priests and how they lost their priesthood are shrouded in obscurity. They wear the sacred thread and abstain from meat and alcohol. The Amma Kodagas donned the sacred thread in 1834 at the instance of a Havika Brahmin who was the treasurer of the Coorg Rajas. The name of an Amma Coorg man has the suffix 'Amma' like Aiyappamma and Muthannamma. It is said that, formerly, Amma Coorgs, who were concentrated in South Coorg used to claim kinship with a similar group of people in Wynad in Malabar. Lewis Rice says that the Amma Coorgs seem to have originally come from Malabar.

There are two gotras among them, the Bharadwaja gotra and Viswamitra gotra. They marry within the same gotra.

In dress and marriage customs, they follow the Coorgs. They worship Hindu deities and observe Hindu festivals.

They are fast dwindling in number, their number in the Census of 1931 being 666.

The Vaishyas are also called Komatis and Telugu Shettis and Vaishyas. are found in Coorg in small numbers. They are all traders. They

follow the customs of their community people in the other parts of the State.

**Scheduled  
Castes.**

The Holeyas in Coorg are composed of the following eight endogamous groups :

1. Kembatti Holeyas
2. Kapala Holeyas
3. Maringi Holeyas
4. Edagai Holeyas
5. Balagai Holeyas
6. Martha Holeyas
7. Adiya Holeyas
8. Malaya Holeyas

Of these, the Kembatti Holeyas are the indigenous Holeyas and Kapalas and Maringis and Malayas are immigrants from Malabar. They speak the Coorg language and follow the Coorgs in their customs, dress and food habits. They have temples of their own. Marthas are from Malabar. They speak Malayalam. Edagai and Balagai Holeyas are from Mysore and speak Kannada. They worship Mariyamma. Adiyas are a very small community numbering about 200.

Medas and Madigas come under Scheduled Castes. The Medas speak the Coorg language. They are engaged in basket making. They are also agricultural labourers.

Madigas are workers in leather. But most of them have taken to agriculture for want of regular work in leather. Some of them speak Kannada and some Telugu.

**Scheduled  
Tribes.**

The Yeravas are the aborigines of Wynad from where they gradually migrated to the forests of South Coorg. They are the lowest of the jungle tribes. The Yeravas are composed of four endogamous groups, the Pangiri, the Pania, the Badava and the Kaji Yeravas. There is no inter-marriage among these groups. They worship Kuttadamma and Kali and also their ancestor spirits. They believe in magic, sorcery and witchcraft. Agriculture is the chief occupation of the Yeravas. They have no land of their own, but work for wages. They are short in stature, very dark in complexion and have curly hair, much softened by combing. The hair is tied into a knot at the top of the head, which gives them a wild and savage aspect. They have thick lips and flat noses. They conform as much as possible to the mode of life and worship of the Coorgs.

**Kurubas.**

The Kurubas are divided into two endogamous groups, the Jenu Kurubas and Betta Kurubas. There is neither interdining nor intermarriage between them. The Jenu Kurubas are good at



collection of honey and the Betta Kurubas are good at bamboo crafts. They speak a dialect of their own. They follow the customs of Kannada Vokkaligas. The Kurubas are dark in complexion, and have curly hair which, through neglect, becomes matted. In stature, they are middle-sized, well-proportioned and nimble in habits. Their women dress like the Kannada Vokkaligas with the folds of their sari in front. They tie their hair into a knot at the back of the head.

The Male Kudiyas are a jungle tribe. Originally, they were the toddy-drawers in Coorg. They are composed of two endogamous groups, the Umale or Uru or Village Kudiyas and Temale Kudiyas (honey-gathering Kudiyas). Each group claims superiority over the other, with neither inter-dining nor inter-marrying. Cross cousin marriage is in vogue among them. Their disputes are settled by a few elderly members of their community. The elderly men and women are cremated. The Male Kudiyas worship the spirits of ancestors. They also worship all kinds of spirits and minor deities called Bhutas. In the past, they used to have their demon dances and sacrifices in the dark recesses of the forests called 'Mala Tirike', or jungle shrine, their Bhutas being Thammayya and Malatampuran. Once a year, they have a feast in honour of their ancestors. They now work as labourers in paddy fields, cardamom plantations and coffee estates. They are found in Bhagamandalanad, Napoklunad and Virajpetnad. They conform as much as circumstances permit, to the mode of life, dress, dialect, and social and religious customs of the Coorgs to whom they look up as their masters. **Male Kudiyas.**

Inter-caste relations are very cordial in matters like village festivals, agricultural operations and in festivals like the Keil Muhurtha and Huttari. Almost every Hindu community in the village has some work entrusted to it in the conduct of the village festival. In the transplantation and the harvesting of crop in the paddy fields, people of all the communities in the village from the highest to the lowest work side by side. Coorg gowdas eat in each other's houses and other communities socially considered inferior to these communities eat in the houses of the Coorgs and the gowdas. People of all communities and the native Christians eat in the houses of the Brahmins, but in places assigned to them. They eat separately from the Brahmins. In festivals like the Keil Muhurtha and Huttari, all the villagers join together on the village green and participate in the festivities. In case of death in a family, all the villagers irrespective of caste or creed render whatever assistance they are capable of to the members of the bereaved family. **Inter-caste relations.**

There have been no great religious leaders in Coorg, but some people belonging to the Hindu communities have become disciples of Sri Sai Baba of Puttaparthi in Ananthapur district and some of Sri Rama Devi of Mangalore. **New religious leaders and movements.**

**Caste  
Government.**

In the old days, every community had its headmen called by various names—Thakka, Yejamana, Gurikara and Gottu Gowda, who were settling caste disputes in their assembly. But the spread of education and the advent of the official class in every community and the non-recognition of the headmen's authority in case of appeals to the Government against their authority, have all undermined the status and the hold of the headmen over the communities. The headmen's authority is only nominal now.

### SOCIAL LIFE

**Property and  
Inheritance.**

All the Hindu communities in the district are governed by the Hindu Law, inheritance being wholly in the male line. But the Coorgs, though Hindus, are governed in some respects by their law called the Coorg Civil Law. Among the Coorgs, permanent tenures of land, mortgages and terminable leases are all classified in the same manner as in the Hindu Law. Property is distinguished according as it is ancestral or self-acquired. The Yejaman or managing head of the house is called Koravakara. Other members of the family are called 'Kikkararu'. All property acquired by them without any aid from the ancestral funds is considered self-acquired. Any property so acquired by the head of the house is not allowed to be considered self-acquired, in order to prevent abuse of his position as head of the house. Self-acquisitions among the Coorgs and the communities following their customs did not exist in the old days. The very concept of separate property of a member of the joint family is of recent growth. In the past, no separate property was inherited by the members of the family. But now, the Coorgs acquire property from their own earnings. They have the right to alienate such self-acquired property without the consent of the Koravakara or other members of the family. The children inherit his self-acquired property.

As regards the right of inheritance, there was a peculiar custom among the Coorgs. If there was no male heir to succeed to the property, a daughter was retained to represent the name of the family, and a husband was secured for her from another house. The husband did not become alienated from his own family, but could take a wife from his own family also, thus raising seed for both houses. These marriages took place expressly for the purpose at the time and the arrangement could not be made after the marriage. This was termed amongst the Coorgs as "Makka Parije"—marriage for the rights of the children. The children of such a marriage possessed only the rights of inheritance in the family of the mother and none in the family of the father, unless no heirs whatever were to be found in his own family. The wife of such a marriage could not be forced to leave her own house and reside in

the family of her husband. In like manner, the children born to such a husband by the wife of his own house possessed rights in that house unless there were no heirs in the other house.

The Coorgs do adopt sons but not for the same reasons as **Adoption.** the other Hindus. The married Coorg has no idea or dread of the place of torment 'Putt', he has to go to, if he has no son to perform his funeral obsequies. He merely adopts to prevent the extinction of his house or for the inheritance of his self-acquired property. This adoption is not called 'Dattu' (ದತ್ತು) as amongst the other Hindus, but is termed 'Sambandha Koduvudu' (ಸಂಬಂಧ ಕೊಡುವುದು) which signifies the giving the rights of joining or of inheritance. The married Coorg who has become sonless by the death of his son or sons may also adopt without prejudice to the rights of any male relatives in the family. Near relations include the divided members to the third generation.

Under the Coorg Customary Law, a daughter had only the **Rights of a daughter.** right of maintenance from the properties of her father till her marriage, and after her marriage, she had no right either of share or of inheritance in the properties of her father.

Ancestral property ordinarily cannot be alienated among the **Alienation of Property.** Coorgs. The consent of all the major members of the family and the permission of the Government are necessary for such alienation. And even the Government generally does not accord permission, unless it is shown that such alienation is for some valid purpose. Therefore, in order to overcome all such difficulties, most of the Coorgs release their rights in favour of one or more of their family members. For such release, neither the consent of the family members nor the permission of the Government is necessary.

Wet lands in Coorg were granted by the former Rajas and the early British administration of Coorg on jamma tenure or umbli tenure at half the usual assessment and one-third assessment, respectively. But these lands were given on condition that the raiyats should render free military and other services to the rulers. Jagir lands were given to people for some meritorious service to the Rajas or the British; jamma, umbli and jagir lands were given to all the communities in Coorg irrespective of caste or religion. These lands are not alienable without the permission of the Government and all the members of the family should consent in writing for such alienation. Generally, however, such alienations do not take place.

The other communities in Coorg, whether Hindus, Muhamadans or Christians, follow the laws followed by their co-religionists in the other parts of India in the ownership of property, its inheritance and alienation. In the matter of adoption too, they follow the practice prevailing in the other parts of the country.

### **Joint Family System.**

During the rule of the Rajas and during the early British times, the joint family system was common among all the communities in Coorg. Big family houses with an open square in the middle, inside the building, and with habitable quarters on all the sides except the front portion of the house reserved for an open verandah, were the pattern in those days. Even now some such old houses exist in Coorg. Tradition has it that sometimes twenty to thirty babes in the cradle were found in these family houses. In the old days, it was not customary among Coorgs to acquire or hold land and houses separately. Since about 1805, however, some families quarrelled and appealed to the Rajas who directed that they should, in accordance with the Hindu Law, be allowed to divide. Subsequent to British assumption of the Government of Coorg, several other families applied to the courts, and obtained decrees for partition. But in 1858, the Thakkas and headmen of the Coorgs represented the loss and ruin occasioned to their ancient houses by this innovation, and the Judicial Commissioner, in additional Special Appeal Suit No. 117 of 1858-59, passed a decree, declaring that the division was contrary to the ancient custom of the Coorgs and, ever since, division (legally) has been strictly interdicted.

But almost from the beginning of this century, the joint family system among all the communities in Coorg is losing its hold on society. Reasons for this state of affairs are obviously many. The spread of English education among the people and the employment opportunities among young men made them leave their ancestral houses and reside in the places of their work. The individualistic and selfish tendency of the male members of the joint family and the inability of its female members to live under the same roof are the common and age-old reasons for the break-up of the joint families. But the ignorance of the people had kept the people of the same family together and when they became enlightened with the spread of education, this tendency became prominent even among the people living in the villages. They began to live separately with their wives and children near their fields, cultivating their share of the family lands, but allowing the head of the family to be the pattedar or document-holder of the whole family land. This practice continues to this day.

### **Marriage and Morals,**

Before giving an account of the marriage and morals among the different communities, it may be appropriate to give an idea of the traditional restrictions on marriage among the communities. A man must not marry outside the limits of his caste and if he is a member of a sub-caste, he may not marry outside the particular sub-caste. In the same caste where gotras or septs prevail, the rule is that the bride and the bridegroom should not belong to the same gotra (or sept). As elsewhere in the State and outside, many of these exogamous groups among the Brahmins

are generally eponymous, each group or gotra being supposed to consist of the descendants of one or the other of the Vedic Rishis. Gotras with similar names are found among a few other castes like Vaishyas and goldsmiths.

In Coorg, among the Brahmins and communities like Vaishyas and Devangas, who follow Brahminical customs in certain things, the maternal uncle has the right to ask his sister's daughter for his son, but the practice of asking for his sister's daughter for himself is not in practice in Coorg. Among the Brahmins and some other castes, the bride is brought to the marriage pandal by her maternal uncle.

**Maternal  
Uncle's  
Place.**

Pre-puberty marriage was in practice only among the Brahmins before the passing of the Sarda Act in 1930. Since then Brahmins also marry their girls after they have attained puberty. Among the Coorgs, Gowdas, Vokkaligas and other communities, girls were being married generally after the age of sixteen. At present, girls are marriageable upto any age, and no reflection is cast upon them for not marrying. Those who prefer it, may remain old maids. But usually, parents prefer to give their daughters in marriage between the years 18 to 25. The marriageable age for boys in Coorg is now between 25 to 30.

**Marital Age.**

The principal Brahmin communities who have lived there for generations and who own landed interests are the Havika Brahmins and the Shivalli Brahmins. The former originally came from Shimoga district and the latter from South Kanara district. There are a few Madhva Brahmin families living in Coorg whose original home was Hassan district. Among the Brahmins of all sects and the other communities following them, the universal rule is to give away the bride as a gift to a suitable bridegroom. There was only a nominal *varadakshine* or dowry of one to five rupees; but among a few sects of Brahmins, the dowry system as it existed in the neighbouring districts of Mysore and Hassan was prevalent to a certain extent. Rich parents may help their sons-in-law to pursue their higher studies or to settle in life.

**Forms of  
Marriage.**

Among the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes of Yeravas, Kurubas, Male Kudiya and different sects of Harijans in Coorg, it is the bride that has to be paid for. The amount of bride-price varies with each caste from one 'Hana' or about three annas to eight rupees. This bride-price is fixed by age-old custom.

Among the Coorgs, there is no bride-price as such, but the bridegroom presents the bride a small bag containing silver or gold coins before he takes her to his house.

**Marriage ceremonies—  
Yeravas.**

A man marries the daughter of his mother's brother or father's sister. The Yerava youths have no voice in the choice of a maid for a wife. The parents negotiate for the marriage of the sons. When a boy attains marriageable age and a suitable girl is found, the boy's parents and the headman of the tribe (Kanaladi) take the marriage badge (೨೨), a sari, and the articles necessary for their food to the hut of the bride-elect. They prepare the food, light an oil lamp and offer sacrifice to the gods, Kuttadamma and Gulikan, with coconut and bananas. Some rice is also placed in a sieve. The maid's Kanaladi asks them the object of their visit. The young man's Kanaladi says that they have come to propose the marriage of their young man, and the maid is produced before them. They then pray to God to help them in the celebration of the marriage. The Kanaladi of the bridegroom-elect ties the 'tali' around the girl's neck, and gives the sari to her with one 'hana' (three annas). The maid's Kanaladi fixes the date of marriage (Mangala Kurippu). The betrothal takes place a month before marriage to the celebration of which both the Kanaladis should consent.

On an auspicious day prior to the celebration of the marriage, the relatives of the bride and bridegroom assemble in the respective families. Ancestors are worshipped. The night is spent merrily by beat of drum and the tuning of pipes for dancing. On the day of marriage, the young man is bathed, neatly dressed and adorned and is conducted in procession to the marriage pandal. He is seated on a tripod a foot high. A lamp is lit before him. His mother and other married women throw rice on him as a token of blessings and present him with a few coins. Then other guests give him presents. In the evening, the bridegroom's party starts in procession to the bride's hut so as to reach it before day-break. They halt near the residence of the bride-elect, where they are welcomed by the bride's party with light refreshments. They are conducted to the marriage pandal in front of the hut of the bride. As the bridegroom-elect enters the pandal, an elderly woman washes his feet. He is then seated on a tripod. The gods of both the parties are propitiated with parched rice, coconut and bananas. The bridegroom and bride are then made to stand together and the gods are invoked to witness the ceremony and bless them, when the assembled guests throw rice on them and give them presents. The Kanaladi then asks the bridegroom to hold the hand of the bride. After a festive meal, the bridegroom and his party return to their place with the bride. Consummation takes place the same night.

**Jenu Kurubas**

Among the Jenu Kurubas, the boy's party goes to the girl's hut with betel leaves, coconuts and bananas to settle the marriage. After settling the terms of the agreement, the date of marriage is fixed. The boy's party pay a 'hana' to the girl's party and take leave of them.

There are two forms of marriage among Jenu Kurubas. One is similar to that of the Vokkaligas. The marriage pandal is constructed with twelve poles on an auspicious day. The ancestor worship also takes place the same day. On the following day, the bridegroom is bathed and dressed and led in procession to the marriage pandal, where he is seated on a tripod. Presents are given to him by his parents, friends and relatives after which all are treated to a grand feast. The bridegroom and party then start, in procession, to the hut of the bride-elect, where they are warmly welcomed. The bridegroom is seated in one room and the bride in another. The *Dhara* (ಧರಾ) ceremony then takes place after which the bride is tied with a 'tali' (marriage badge) round her neck. They are then allowed to live as husband and wife.

The other form of marriage is the simple one of exchange of betel leaves and arecanuts which concludes the nuptials. The bride is also presented with two wedding costumes and a few necklets of glass beads.

The marriage ceremonies are simple, sensible and orderly. **Betta Kurubas.** On the wedding day, the bridegroom's party go to the bride's hut, eat there, and the parents bless the young couple by putting raw rice on their heads. They then return with the bride to the bridegroom's hut and this concludes the ceremony.

On the wedding day, the bridegroom is bathed, and adorned and is conducted in procession to the marriage pandal where he is seated on a tripod, when his mother and other relatives throw rice on his head and give him presents. After the wedding meal, the party of the bridegroom goes in procession to the bride's hut with a basket of rice, betel leaves, arecanut, coconut, milk, jaggery and one 'hana'. They first sit near a place where the bride's party plants stumps of plantain trees. The bridegroom has to cut the plantain stumps with a broad sword. Then the bridegroom's party is served with light refreshments after which the bride and the bridegroom are seated in the marriage pandal side by side, on tripods. After the presents are given by the assembled relatives and guests and they are fed, the bridegroom stands and gives a purse of coins to the bride, and clasping her hand, helps her to stand up. Then the bridegroom returns with the bride and his party to his house. On the same night, the nuptials take place and this concludes the ceremony. **Male Kudiyas.**

The Kembatti Holeyas are the indigenous Harijans of **Harijans.** Coorg. The Kapalas who are a little higher than the Kembatti Holeyas in the social hierarchy, were originally immigrants from Malabar. Both these communities have their marriage customs and ceremonies just like those of the Male Kudiyas.

The Paleyas or Harijans, who have come from South Kanara and settled in Coorg, have very simple marriage customs. The bride is presented with a piece of cloth and money. On donning the cloth, she is considered married and goes to the bridegroom's house.

The Kannada-speaking Harijans of Coorg observe the '*dhara*' ceremony and other customs which prevail among the Vokkaligas of Mysore.

#### Coorgs.

The marriage customs and ceremonies of the Coorgs are peculiar and are not found among any other community in the State. When a young man expresses his desire to marry, his father or his elder brother with a friend of the family who is called 'Aruva' (ಅರುವ or ತೇದವ) goes to the house of the young woman, where their arrival is expected. A lamp is lit, when the Aruvas on both sides, with prominent members of the two families, stand before it facing each other and shake hands in token of an inviolable contract having been concluded. The day for the wedding is fixed in consultation with the local astrologer. On the day previous to the wedding day, the marriage pandals are put up in both the bridegroom's and bride's houses. On the wedding day, in both the houses, the bride and the bridegroom will be bathed and dressed in their national dress.

In the bridegroom's house, the wedding party proceeds to the Kaimata or the place where the ancestors are worshipped, which will of course be near the house, carrying a light which has been kindled at the sacred house lamp and ignites an earthen lamp there and invokes the blessings of the ancestors. On returning to the house at the auspicious hour, the bridegroom is seated on a low three-legged stool placed upon a carpet between two lighted lamps. On the bridegroom being seated, the master of the house takes a handful of rice and strews it over his head and shoulders uttering the words "live well, and prosper well by God's favour", gives him a sip of milk and drops a piece of money or other present in his lap. Four men closely related to him do likewise. Then five of the nearest female relations including the mistress of the house repeat the same formalities. The other assembled guests and friends give presents to the bridegroom. The same ceremony is gone through in the bride's house at about the same time. Nearest relations, guests and friends on both sides are invited for the day's function and are sumptuously fed.

In the afternoon, the bridegroom's party go to the bride's house, which may perhaps be some miles away. Sometimes, the bridegroom's and the bride's houses may be in the same town. When the bridegroom comes to the gate of the bride's house, he has to cut through a plantain stem with one blow from a large Coorg war-knife. The bridegroom is then received by his parents-



in-law. After refreshments, the bride is conducted by her maids over an out-spread cloth into the bridal chamber where she is seated on a low stool. The bridegroom's party approach her and repeat the ceremony of rice-throwing which was performed at noon by the bride's relations. The bridegroom, who is seated on a low stool all along, is conducted to the bridal chamber and is seated to the right of the bride, when the assembled elders strew rice on their heads. Then the bridegroom stands in front of the bride, strews some grains of rice upon her head, gives her a little milk to drink and, taking her hand, bids her rise. He leads her into the outer room of the house. Thus, the daughter takes leave of the house of her birth. After this, the bridegroom's party returns to the bridegroom's house with the bride. The guests are again feasted. Then the Aruva of the husband's party conducts bride and bridegroom into their own room and the marriage ceremony is over.

Among the Gowdas, Devangas and Bants, there is the 'dhara' ceremony which is performed in the house of the bride. They observe ceremonies observed by the people of their community in the other districts of the State.

The following communities of people were immigrants from Malabar during the period of the Rajas. They have adopted the Coorg language and follow Coorg customs. These communities are Heggades, Airis, Kavadis, Kollas, Thattas, Koleyas, Koyavas, Bannas, Malayas, Gollas, Kanyas and Ganigas.

Among the Brahmins, there is practically no difference in the customs and ceremonies observed and performed in Coorg and outside, for they have their relations outside the district and have matrimonial alliances with them. The marriage takes place usually at the bride's residence or occasionally in a temple. After the arrival of the bridegroom at the bride's place, the important ceremonies are Varapuja or the honouring of the bridegroom by the bride's parents, Nandi or inviting the ancestors of the bridal couple, Kankana Dharana, symbolising the couple's entry into the married state, Akshata or the throwing of a few grains of reddened rice by the couple on each other's head and also by the assembled relatives over the couple, giving of the bride by her parents to the bridegroom and the tying of the Mangalasutra followed by Lajahoma and Saptapadi which marks the completion of the marriage.

**Brahmins.**

Among the Lingayats, there is no use of fire as is the case among the Brahmins, but the place of fire is taken by the *Panchakalashas* representing the five gotrakaras of the Lingayats. The marriage is performed in the house of either of the parties. All the details of the marriage ceremony including the Varapuja take place after the *Kalashasthapana* is over. The most important part of the marriage ceremony is the tying of

**Lingayats.**

the *Mangalasutra* by the bridegroom round the neck of the bride. The priest then invokes divine blessings and all the relations and guests present throw grains of rice on the couple and bless them.

Among the communities and castes professing Hinduism, marriage customs and ceremonies which were very rigid, formal and elaborate till one or two decades ago, are becoming simplified. Marriages which were being celebrated for full five days among many communities, particularly among the Brahmins, are now being completed in one day or at the most two days.

#### Muslims.

Formal proposals for marriage come from the bridegroom's father and if accepted, the bridegroom's people discuss and settle with the bride's party, details of the marriage gifts to be given on the occasion. The *mahr* which is a special gift to be given by the husband to the wife varies according to the status and financial position of the bridegroom. Then the formal engagement ceremony takes place, generally at the bride's place in the presence of friends and relatives and the day of marriage is fixed.

On the day of the marriage, the groom goes in procession to the bride's house and is received with every mark of respect. The *Kazi* brings the marriage register in which an entry is made of the contract. Two witnesses, one from each side, have to be present. The *Kazi*, after ascertaining the consent of the bride asks the people present whether they agree for the *nikha* to be read. After obtaining the signatures of the bridegroom, the bride's father and the witnesses, the *Kazi* reads out the *nikha* and invokes the blessings of the Holy Prophets. Sweets are distributed to the assembled people and the relatives and friends are treated to a festive meal. The *nikha* is followed by another ceremony which is called *Jalwa* when the bridegroom sees the bride for the first time. Later, that night the groom after receiving presents from the bride's parents, takes his wife to his house where the assembled guests are treated to a dinner and the nuptials are held.

The Jamma Mapillas are the descendants of the people of Coorg who had been carried away to Srirangapatna by Tippu Sultan and converted to Islam. A few thousands of these people escaped from Srirangapatna during the British attack and returned to Coorg. They, besides the Islamic rites, continue to follow many of the marriage customs which their forefathers had followed before their conversion.

Though divorce is allowed among all sects of Muslims, cases of divorce are rare.

#### Christians

The number of Konkani-speaking Catholic Christians in Coorg is considerable and among them proposals for marriage come from the boy's parents generally, but occasionally from the girl's

parents. After agreement is reached and preliminaries about the dowry and other details are settled, a formal betrothal ceremony takes place in the bride's house when the groom pledges his troth and both are blessed by the priest and the elders. An announcement of this engagement is made on three successive Sundays in the parish churches of the bridegroom and the bride and valid objections, if any, to this marriage are asked to be made known. On the eve of the wedding day, the groom and the bride are applied with coconut-milk and oil and are given a bath in their respective houses.

On the wedding day, the bridegroom after receiving the blessings of the elder members of his household and guests, reaches the church accompanied by his bestman and party, a little before the bride's party reaches it and sits on a seat near the altar. The bride clad in white after similarly receiving the blessings of her elders leaves her house accompanied by her party and goes to the church where she is led to the altar by her father or any other elder male member of the family. The priest asks both the groom and the bride separately whether they wish to be married according to the rites of the Catholic Church. When both answer in the affirmative, the ring is blessed and given to the groom who puts it on the ring finger of the bride. The priest joins the right hands of the couple saying "I join you in matrimony in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Ghost" and sprinkles holy water. This ceremony is followed by the Mass during which two special prayers are recited invoking God's blessings on the couple. The couple sign their names in the register and two witnesses for each side also affix their signatures. Meanwhile, the church bells peal joyfully. Later, a reception is held at some suitable place to celebrate the occasion.

Among the Tamil Christians, the auspicious necklace or *thali* is tied by the bridegroom round the neck of the bride in the church during the marriage ceremony. Other customs followed by them are similar to those followed by the Konkani Christians except that the brides from orthodox Tamil families are led to the altar by the elder ladies of the family and not by the father as in the case above.

Among the Protestants, after the proposals are accepted by the girl's parents and the marriage is agreed to, a day is fixed for the engagement. On that day, the prospective bridegroom comes to the house of the girl and there, in the presence of the pastor, puts the engagement ring on the third finger of the girl's hand and the girl also puts a ring on the boy's finger. The guests are treated to a dinner by the girl's parents. The engagement is announced in the church on three successive Sundays and the marriage is fixed on a day after the third announcement. On the day of the marriage, after the parties have arrived at the church,

the ceremony begins with a hymn and at its conclusion, the pastor addresses the couple and asks them if they are willing to wed each other. After they have given their consent, the pastor reads an appropriate passage from the Bible. The groom puts a gold ring on the bride's finger. The right hands of the couple are joined and the pastor blesses them saying "I now pronounce you man and wife, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen" and preaches a little sermon of advice to the couple in particular and the congregation in general and invokes God's blessings. Hymns are sung followed by the final prayer and benediction. The couple then go to the sacristy and sign their names in a register. These are witnessed by friends or relatives from each side. The pastor also puts his signature as a witness or as one who conducted the marriage. The couple leave the sacristy and walk down the aisle of the church, hand in hand, while the wedding march is played. Later, the wedding reception is held at a suitable place.

The Tamil Protestant Christians use the *thali* instead of the ring.

**Inter-sect  
and Inter-  
caste  
marriages.**

Inter-sect marriages among the Brahmins have now begun to take place without much frowning on the part of the heads of the families.

Inter-caste marriages among non-Brahmin Hindus in Coorg and particularly among the Coorgs are becoming common. Men and women who have gone out of Coorg either for employment or education have some times married persons outside their community. Among the Coorgs, if a male member marries a non-Coorg woman, she is freely accepted as a member of the Coorg fold.

**Civil  
marriages.**

Civil marriages under the Special Marriages Act of 1954 have also taken place in Coorg, though such marriages are not common. The figures given below show the number of civil marriages in Coorg from 1954 to June 1963.

Year	Number of Civil Marriages
1954-55	5
1955-56	22
1956-57	11
1957-58	20
1958-59	18
1959-60	15
1960-61	8
1961-62	13
1962-63	13
April to end of June 1963	7

It is significant that civil marriages have been registered only by persons belonging to the Hindu religion. There has not been a single case of registered marriage among the Christians or Muslims.

Marriage being a religious sacrament among the orthodox Hindus, divorce as such does not exist amongst them. Among the Coorgs, Gowdas, Kurubas, Harijans and some other non-Brahmin communities, divorce is both simple and easy. Divorces may be brought about for infidelity on the part of the wife or incompatibility of temper between the parties or loss of caste by either party. In either case, the wife has to give back to her husband the *thali* tied round her neck on the occasion of the marriage and also the jewels presented to her by her husband. Now, the law also provides for divorce among all Hindu communities. But, though custom permits and the law provides for divorces, it may be said to the credit of the people living in this district that divorces are rare. **Divorce.**

Monogamy is the practice among the Hindus and the Christians. But there have been cases among the high caste Hindus of some of them taking a second wife in the life time of the first wife, mostly for the failure of the first wife to bear a child. Such cases have been rare and after the enactment of the Hindu Marriages Act in 1955, bigamy or polygamy has been prohibited by law. **Monogamy and Polygamy.**

Though taking more than one wife is allowed among the Muslims, they too practise monogamy.

There is no marriage of widows among the Brahmins, Vaishyas, Devangas, Bilimaggas and Telugu Banajigas who consider marriage as a religious sacrament. Among the Coorgs and many other Hindu communities in Coorg, widows are free to remarry. Among the Coorgs and other communities following their customs and speaking their language, if the deceased husband's brother chooses to marry the widow, he may do so or she may be married to any other man in the community. She acquires rights of the second husband and relinquishes all interest in her late husband's property, but not in her children. The second marriage is celebrated in a quiet manner and only the nearer relatives and some of the villagers are invited to the marriage feast. The strewing of rice and other ceremonies are dispensed with. After the removal of the signs of widowhood, the bride appears in the apparel of a married life. **Marriage of Widows.**

Among the Yeravas and Kurubas, on the day fixed for the remarriage of the widow, the man goes to her hut with relatives and friends and invokes gods for blessings, and ties a *tali* round her neck and gives her one 'hana' or three annas. Thereafter, they become husband and wife.

Polyandry does not exist in Coorg.

**Economic dependence of women and their place in society.**

Generally speaking, the women of Coorg, except perhaps the wage-earning workers in the coffee, rubber and tea plantations, are economically dependent on their men. Recently, however, educated women have taken up employment in large numbers either as clerks, teachers, hospital nurses or doctors. They retain their employment even after they get married and supplement their husbands' earnings with their own.

Female literacy in Coorg according to the 1961 census is about 28 per cent, the highest among all the districts in the State. Therefore, women occupy an important place in society. They run Mahila Samajas successfully almost in every important village of Coorg. They are members of the Village Panchayat committees. They take keen interest in all progressive movements.

**Prostitution and traffic in women.**

Social evils like prostitution and traffic in women are not in evidence in Coorg. There has not been any community of prostitutes in Coorg at any time. As the general level of culture and education among the women of Coorg was higher than that in the neighbouring districts and as the people were economically well off, women knew their rights and were treated well in the family. Therefore, traffic in women was an unheard of thing in Coorg.

**Drinking and Gambling.**

Drinking and gambling have been prohibited by law, but these evils exist to a greater or lesser extent in almost all parts of the district. Gambling is found mostly in towns and coffee estates, among the petty traders and estate mazdoors.

**Martial traditions of the people.**

The people of Coorg are known for their martial traditions and valour. In the times of the Rajas, they distinguished themselves in the depredatory wars against the neighbouring countries or districts and in the hunting expeditions within the district. Coorg being a hilly and forest district, wild game was abundant in the old days and Chikka Vira Rajendra says in an inscription of 1822 that he killed large numbers of elephants, antelopes, deer, wild boars and cheetas. Linga Rajendra says that in one year the number of tigers he killed was more than the number of days in the year. People who followed the Rajas in the hunting expeditions and depredatory wars showed great valour. Two Male Kudiyas, Chetti Kudiya and Kartu Kudiya, were known as the best marksmen at the time of the last Raja of Coorg.

A large number of men from this district has now been serving in the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force with distinction, besides many men in other high ranks. Coorg offers a good recruiting ground for the Army, Navy and Air Force. In the time of the Rajas, Coorgs, Lingayats, Brahmins, Gowdas

Vokkaligas and Muslims successfully led the armies to the battle fields.

The women of Coorg are not wanting in physical valour. They go alone to their fields away from their houses, talk to strangers boldly when spoken to and manage their households and servants firmly. They are good workers in the fields and the gardens and walk long distances without signs of exertion.

### HOME LIFE

Comparatively speaking, the standard of life in Coorg is fairly high. The houses of the people, except of the very poor classes, are tiled and spacious with well-lighted and well-ventilated rooms. In the villages, houses are located in the midst of plantations or near the paddy fields. A paved courtyard is surrounded by cattle sheds, store rooms and out-houses in front of which is the main building, sometimes quadrangular in shape and is raised about three feet from the ground. There is an open square hall in the centre known as '*nadu mane*', the four sides of which are provided with rooms for the inmates. In front of the building, there is an open verandah which is the reception hall. It is raised and covered with a wooden plank called *Aimara* in the Coorg dialect, two or three feet broad, so as to form convenient seats for the male members and visitors. The floor is well-beaten with mud and cleaned with cowdung. In recent times, the floor of the house is being concrete cemented. The ceiling is of wood arranged in small compartments. In some houses, the verandah is separated from the inner hall by a wall, with a sort of window or lattice made of wood. On the right side of the verandah, there is a main door leading into the inner hall.

**Types of dwellings:**

The houses of the poorer classes of people are smaller with thatched roofs but the rooms though small are well-lighted and ventilated.

The houses of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are low-roofed and dark. But, the Government are giving them tiles and money for the purchase of housing materials and enabling them to build decent houses. Government have colonised some Scheduled Tribes in groups of tiled houses built for them in their own villages.

Each village has a temple dedicated to Mahadeva or Bhagavathi. In North Coorg, where Lingayats are in larger numbers, temples dedicated to Basaveswara or Virabhadra are found. In the temples of Mahadeva or Bhagavathi, Brahmins are the priests, while in the Lingayat temples, Lingayats are the priests. In the villages where the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled

Tribes live in fairly good numbers, temples dedicated to Mariamma, Kuttadamma and Karingali are found.

In the towns, well-built tiled houses have been constructed. As the district has a heavy rainfall, terraced buildings are very rare. Most of the buildings are roofed with Mangalore tiles. The houses in the towns range from small low-roofed dwellings of the poor classes to the well-designed and elegantly constructed bungalows of the rich. The middle class and rich people have sufficiently big houses, often with an upper storey roofed with Mangalore tiles.

#### **Furniture.**

Excepting the houses of the poorer classes, those of the other classes are well-furnished with chairs, tables, sofas, almirahs and wooden cots with supports to hang mosquito curtains. Every house has a drawing room furnished with a round table adorned with a flower vase, cushioned chairs and some times sofas. Wooden shelves are fixed to the walls in every room to keep ornamental ware and utensils. Excepting the Brahmins and Lingayats, others take their tiffin or lunch from plates placed on tables and seated either on benches or chairs. Brahmins and Lingayats sit on wooden planks called 'mane' in Kannada, on the floor and eat from plantain leaves or plates placed on the floor in front of them.

#### **Decorations.**

Old houses have door frames and shutters decorated or carved with flowers and creepers. Modern houses have plain door frames and shutters. Brahmins and other non-Coorg Hindu communities decorate the yard in front of their houses with 'Rangavalli', generally on festive days and ceremonial occasions.

#### **Dress.**

The Coorgs have their own characteristic dress, both for men and women. The dress of a Coorg man consists of a long coat of dark coloured cloth, open in front and reaching below the knees. The sleeves end below the elbow and show the arms of a white shirt which is generally of the English pattern. This is folded and confined at the waist by a red or blue sash of cotton or silk, which is several times wound round the waist, and knotted at the left front. On the right front, the Coorg short knife is stuck to the sash, showing an ivory or silver handle and fastened with silver chains. A peculiarly fashioned turban, which is large and flat at the top and covers a portion of the back of the neck forms the head dress. This is the dress of the Coorg men on festive occasions and at marriage ceremonies. In the old days this was their daily dress, but instead of a turban, they used to wear a big kerchief, one end of which covered a portion of the back of the neck and reached up to the upper part of the back. After the advent of the British planters in Coorg during the middle of the last century, the upper class of Coorgs came in contact with them and began to dress themselves in European



fashion. Gradually, other Coorgs and other people began to wear the shirt, coat and trousers of the English pattern as also shoes or boots with socks or stockings. At home, they wear a shirt and trousers or shorts and put on light sandals to protect their feet.

The Coorg women's dress consists of a white or coloured cotton or silk jacket with long sleeves fitting tight and close up to the neck. The skirt is white muslin or any coloured cotton or silk stuff wrapped several times round and tied at the waist by a string. One end is brought over the bosom and knotted on the right shoulder. The other end is arranged into folds which, contrary to the fashion of other Hindu women, are gathered behind. The head is covered with a white muslin or coloured kerchief, one end of which encircles the forehead and the four corners are joined together at the back, allowing the ends to fall over the shoulders.

Communities described in the section "Castes and Communities" as following the Coorg customs and mode of life, dress in the Coorg fashion.

English-educated people of all communities including the Muslims and Christians wear clothes in the European fashion when they attend offices or go out on business. The older generation of the non-Coorg Hindu communities wear the dhoti in *kachche* style, a shirt and close coat and put on some sort of turban or cap on their heads. Brahmins wear the dhoti in *kachche* style and put on shirts and coats and wear turbans on their heads on festive occasions. At home, many of them wear a white cotton dhoti in lungi style and a shirt.

Women of all communities in Coorg who do not follow the Coorg mode of dress and life, dress in the Mysore Kannada fashion with the folds of the sari gathered in front. They wear a tight-fitting short bodice called 'Kuppasa' which covers the upper part of the body leaving the arms, neck and throat bare. The 'sire' or sari, a long sheet of cloth in different kinds of colour, with borders, is wrapped round the lower part of the body coming down to the ankle. One end of this is gathered into a large bunch of folds in front while the other, passing across the bosom, hangs freely over the left shoulder or is taken over the right shoulder also, so as to cover the upper part more fully. The dress of the girls consists of a 'langa' or skirt and a blouse.

Among the Muhammadans, the Mapillas and Labbais, who claim descent from the Arab traders of old, wear a white or striped cloth in lungi style and put on a shirt and cap. Mapilla women put on a jacket covering the upper part of the body and arms up to the wrist and tie a red or other coloured cloth round

the waist and reaching up to the ankle in the lungi style. They wear silver ankle chains.

The Urdu-speaking Muslim men wear shirts and long loose drawers. Some wear coats. They have as headwear fez caps or fur caps.

The Yeravas and Kurubas wear a loin cloth reaching up to their knees and shirts often given by their employers. The women dress in the Coorg fashion.

#### Ornaments.

Ornaments are worn by women of all communities, according to their status and economic position. The richness of the ornaments worn by a woman is indicative of the status of the family. Coorg women and women of all other communities including Muslims and Christians wear glass, silver or gold bangles. Their necks are adorned with necklaces or chains of coral, pearls or gold. The chains worn by Coorg ladies sometimes have old Portuguese gold coins attached to them. But, these are now going out of fashion. All women have ornaments for the nose and the ears. They wear gold rings or rings set with precious stones on their fingers and silver rings on their toes. The bridal dress of a Coorg maiden adds to all this finery a many-coloured shawl which covers the body, and, in the absence of a kerchief, golden hair ornaments like the Chaurigubbi and Shavantige flower are worn. Coorg women adorn their head kerchiefs with skilled embroidery work. They use red marking cotton or silk and their patterns are very complicated and elegant and are equally visible on both sides of the dress. The young Coorg women do not wear head kerchiefs except on festive occasions. They prefer to go with their long soft black hair plaited and tied beautifully at the back of their head. Silver ornaments or beads strung together as necklaces are worn by the poorer classes of women. All classes of women now prefer light and modern patterns of ornaments. In every village and town, gold-smiths, mostly from South Kanara, ply their trade.

#### Food.

The staple food in Coorg is rice and is eaten by the people of all the communities. Wheat is used sometimes on festive or ceremonial occasions.

Brahmins in villages take their food in plantain leaves. Other classes of people eat from plates of enamel, brass, stainless steel or silver according to their status and wealth. In the towns, the people generally eat from plates. The Coorgs and others, excepting Brahmins, place their plates on tables or on low three-legged stools.

Coming to the items of food, the normal Brahmin meal consists of rice, ghee, dal curry with vegetables or butter milk

curry with vegetables, pickles and curds or buttermilk. The Havika and Shivalli Brahmins use coconut oil, coconuts and buttermilk daily in their cooking. These two sets of Brahmins prepare several kinds of curries which are characteristic of South Kanara. In the vegetarian hotels, rice, ghee, dal, vegetables, pickles and curd or buttermilk are supplemented by happalas. On festive occasions, the meal is embellished by sweets and savoury dishes. The Coorgs, in addition to the above items of food, eat meat, fowl, and also fish. Non-vegetarian food is used by all the communities of Coorg, except the Brahmins, Lingayats, goldsmiths, some sects of Vokkaligas, Amma Coorgs and Vaishyas. Pork is not eaten by some Hindu communities. As elsewhere, beef is not eaten by the Hindus and pork by the Muhammadans. Wild hogs, antelopes and deer are shot and eaten by some of the non-vegetarian communities of Coorg.

The people of the district take tiffin with coffee in the morning, a meal with rice at noon, light tiffin in the afternoon and a meal again at night. Orthodox Brahmin widows do not take a meal in the night, but have light uncooked food like parched rice and plantains or other fruits.

The poorer classes of people take *kanji* or rice gruel in the morning instead of coffee.

The people of the district are known for their hospitality to guests and strangers. This may be due to their economic self-sufficiency and the surplus production of foodgrains. Europeans who had occasion to visit the houses of the Coorgs in the last century have remarked that every householder received them warmly and would not be satisfied unless the visitor partook of the food or the drink offered to him. Even to this day, whether in the urban or rural areas, no visitor to any house in Coorg goes back without partaking of the hospitality of the householder. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Lingarajendra Wodeyar, who ruled Coorg from 1811 to 1820, passed an order of hospitality when he issued a series of 53 orders to his subordinate officials, dealing with a variety of administrative matters. The order of hospitality confirmed the practice previously obtaining in Coorg. This order runs thus: "When any traveller or stranger comes to a man's house either by day or night, or because he is hungry, let him be given of the food partaken of in that house, if he scruple not to eat it. Otherwise let him receive all the necessary materials for making a ready meal. If further, any such wayfarer be sick, let him be fed once or twice and tended, for this is ordinary civility. It is left to the pleasure of the host to give or to refuse more than this. If food and drink have been twice given, his conduct will not be subject to question".

**Hospitality of  
the people.**

In Coorg, the houses are situated in the villages far away from one another and guests and even strangers do not carry even a bed-roll. Almost every householder in Coorg has extra beds, blankets, bed sheets and such other necessities to offer to his guests.

### FESTIVALS

The Coorgs and other communities who have adopted Coorg customs and mode of life have three major festivals; the Bhagavathi festival is observed in the villages where temples of Bhagavathi are situated. Every village has a temple in which the festival of the village deity is held once a year. In some villages, the deity installed in the temple is Bhagavathi and in some Mahadeva or his son Subramanya.

#### Keil Muhurta.

Of the three festivals of the Coorgs, first comes the Keil Muhurta or the auspicious day for the worship and the use of arms. This is celebrated either in the last week of August or in the first week of September, after the hard labours of ploughing, sowing and transplanting of rice are over. On the morning of the joyous day, the whole armoury of the house consisting of guns, swords, knives, and bow and arrow and spear, if remaining from early days, is placed in a big room or in the verandah. When the auspicious moment arrives, incense is burnt before the weapons, sandal paste is applied to them in profusion and an offering of delicacies prepared for the festival is made. After the festive meal, the men proceed with their arms to the village green (uru mandu) to spend the afternoon in shooting matches and other athletic sports. In former days, when game was abundant in Coorg, people used to go hunting in the jungles from the next day, for two or three days. Such hunting after Keil Muhurta has become rare now.

#### Cauvery Festival.

The Cauvery festival is held on the Tula Sankramana day, the time of the sun entering into the sign of Libra, which happens generally in the month of October. On this day, the people of Coorg and particularly the Coorgs do puja and offer special prayers to Mother Cauvery (Lopamudre) who, according to the legend, took the form of a river for blessing the people with her bounty. The river is looked upon as the patron goddess of the Coorgs. It is generally believed by the devout that by taking a bath in the river their sins will be washed off. On the Cauvery Sankramana day, thousands of people gather at Bhagamandala, a place about three miles from Talakaveri, where the Cauvery and another stream Kannike join together and after bathing at the confluence, go to Talakaveri, take their bath again in the holy tank at the source of the river and offer special prayers. At Bhagamandala, persons who have lost their parents offer 'pinda' or balls of rice to their departed ancestors.

People who cannot go to Talakaveri offer prayers to Mother Cauvery in their homes.

The Huttari festival is held in honour of the annual rice harvest. It is the great national festival of the Coorgs and others of their mode of life. This festival takes place on the full moon day in the month of 'Vrishchika' and it falls between the 20th of November and 20th of December. On that day, at the auspicious moment in the night, the head of the family dressed in the Coorg costume goes to the fields with his family members, relatives and servants, with music and drums and shouting prayers for abundance, cuts a few paddy stalks and brings the sheaf to the threshing yard and then to the house shouting "Poli, poli Deva" (Increase, increase O ! God). The ears of the crop decorate various places of importance inside and outside the house such as cradle, safe and granary. Afterwards all the members partake of a sumptuous dinner. During three or four days following this, there is dancing in the village common with short sticks being beaten in rhythm and this dance is known as 'Kolata'.

**Huttari  
Festival.**

As already stated above, in addition to these festivals, festivals are also celebrated in the temple of the village deity Bhagavathi, Mahadeva or Subramanya, in almost every village at different times of the year and in different forms. In some of the temples, there are special dances known as 'Bolakatu', 'Kombatu', 'Peeliatu', 'Chopatu', etc.

The Brahmins in Coorg, as in other districts, observe the following days as festivals : *Yugadi*, the first day of Chaitra. On this day, neem leaves with jaggery are eaten and the new year's panchangam (Almanac) is read. *Ramanavami*, the ninth day of Chaitra, is celebrated as the birth-day of Rama. *Sowra Yugadi* or Tamil New Year's Day is celebrated by some sects of Brahmins and by the Hindus who have come and settled in Coorg from South Kanara and Tamil Nad. *Krishna Ashtami* is celebrated by the Brahmins in August on the eighth day of Sravana. This day is observed as a day of fast and in the evening special pujas are performed and a festive dinner is taken. *Ganesh Chaturthi* falling on the fourth day of the bright half of Bhadrapada is an important festival in Coorg observed by all communities among the Hindus. Many Coorgs get Ganesha *homa* performed in their houses by Brahmins on this day. *Mahalaya Amavasya* is a day dedicated to offering 'tharpana' to the departed ancestors. *Navarathri* which begins from the first day of Asvija is known for the worship of Shakthi in her various forms such as Durga and Chamundi. The tenth day known as *Vijayadasami* marks the end of the festival. On the night of the tenth day, a procession of idols in decorated mantapas is taken through the important towns of Mercara and Virajpet. After the creation of the new Mysore State, this festival has assumed national importance. *Deepavali*, the festival

of lights, is observed on the 13th day of the dark half of Asvija. *Tulasi Puja* is performed by Brahmins on the 12th Lunar day of Kartika. *Makara Sankramana*, on the fourth Lunar day of Pushya, is observed by Brahmins. *Mahasivarathri* on the new moon day of Magha is an important festival to the Smartha Brahmins and other devotees of Shiva. On this day they observe a fast and worship Shiva at home or in a temple. The whole night is spent in performing puja or in singing devotional songs of Shiva. The next morning, the god is again worshipped and a feast is held. *Holi* or *Kamana-habba* is observed in Coorg only by the Rajputs and Telugu Shettis who have settled here.

The Lingayats observe Basava Jayanthi, Nagara Panchami, Gowri and Ganesha festivals, Deepavali and Mahasivarathri.

In addition, people undertake pilgrimages to the temples of Manjunatha of Dharmasthala, Subramanya, Venkateswara of Tirupathi, Pemmiah of Tirunelli in Wynad and Baiturappa of Baitur in North Malabar. Some people visit holy places like Gokarna, Rameswara, Palani, Kasi, Prayag and Gaya.

Important places of pilgrimage in Coorg are Talakaveri and Bhagamandala during the month of Tula (October-November) and Irpu in Srimangalanad in South Coorg on the Mahasivarathri day. People go in large numbers to the annual festival at Padi Igguthappa Temple in the month of March. Igguthappa is identified with god Subramanya. Coorgs of Srimangalanad in the extreme south of Coorg and the Yeravas, Kurubas and Harijans of those parts go to the jatra or festival of Kuttadamma or Karingali at Kutta on the border of Wynad.

#### COMMUNAL LIFE

The communal life of a people is expressed in their group games, general means of recreation and their festivals.

The children as elsewhere are fond of playing different types of games with a soft ball or with marbles. Hockey is now very popular in Coorg and has become almost a national game. It is played both in the villages and in the towns. Cricket is another major game played by the students in the High Schools and Colleges. Volley ball, badminton and basket ball are also played by students and other young men. Girls play badminton and ring tennis. Kabaddi has been recently introduced in schools.

The people of Coorg had come under European influence much earlier than those of the other districts in the State. More than a hundred Britishers and other Europeans had opened coffee plantations in Coorg in the second half of the 19th century. Therefore, the people here took to English education earlier and also began

to play western games. Young men and women play carrom and cards as indoor games.

As the houses of people in the villages are situated by the side of their paddy fields, away from one another, it is not possible for many of them to gather together in the evenings. So, they spend their evenings in their own houses, reading religious or secular literature or singing songs.

Office-goers, retired officials and planters who have settled in towns sometimes spend their time in the clubs which have been formed in almost all the towns. There they play cards or billiards. In some clubs, members play tennis in the evenings.

In all the big towns, there are cinema theatres which attract the people in large numbers.

During the festivals of the village deities, the Coorgs have special dances in the temples. The performers who are in their national costume form a ring, in the centre of which stand the musicians. A song on god Mahadeva aided by the music of some small drums, regulates the movement, the whole party joining at intervals in a rude chorus. Each performer carries a chowree or bunch of hair or some substitute for it, which he moves in unison with his body. This is changed in the second part of the dance, for two small canes, which each strikes against those of his neighbour, the movements getting gradually brisker and more animated.

During marriages and on other joyous occasions, boys and young men of most of the communities dance, keeping step to the sound of the drum and making appropriate gestures with their hands.

In the towns, there are dramatic and other associations which put up dramas or other shows.

In addition to the above recreations, people go to some important festivals or jatras in the district. The following are the important jatras in the district :—

(1) Nandishwara jatra held for two days in the last week of January or the first week of February at Kodlipet.

(2) Gudugalale jatra held for two days in February or early March at Sanivarasanthe.

(3) Jatra at Iripu in Srimangalanad during Mahasivarathri.

(4) Festival in Igguthappa temple at Yavakapadi Village near Kakkabbe in Mercara taluk in the month of March.

(5) Festival in Mahalingeswara temple at Palur in Mercara taluk.

(6) Ganesh procession at Virajpet on Anantha Chathurdasi day.

(7) Dasara procession at Mercara on Vijayadasami day.

(8) Cattle fair at Kushalnagar in the month of October.

(9) Festival in Kakotparambu Kalabhairava temple in Virajpet taluk in November or December.

(10) Festival in Bhadrakali temple at Kukloor near Virajpet in the month of March.

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