

Socio-Economic and Cultural Consequences of Occupational Transition in Jenu Kuruba Tribe: A Contextual Study

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ABSTRACT

This current research investigates the socio-economic and cultural impacts of occupational changes among the Jenu Kuruba tribe in the Mysuru district of Karnataka: An Analytical Study. The Jenu Kuruba have long preserved a close association with forests and relied on honey gathering and collecting lesser forest products traditionally. Environmental conditions, alongside the growth of employment income, have led to substantial alterations in their occupational makeup. The community is undergoing transition, with occupational transition now becoming a significant factor. A descriptive research design was adopted, covering 300 respondents, with 150 from Heggadadevanakote (H.D. Kote) taluk and 150 from Hunsur taluk in the Mysuru district. Primary data is assessed via a structured interview protocol, whereas pertinent secondary resources offer supplementary context. It was indicated that occupational transition carry both beneficial and detrimental impacts. In terms of culture, reduced participation in traditional forest-based activities might result in the loss of indigenous ecological knowledge, the erosion of traditional practices, and transition in community connections. At the same time, certain traditional customs and knowledge systems might be modified to fit modern day living opportunities. The research contends that occupational transition shouldn't be viewed merely as a straightforward progression from conventional to contemporary positions. It's a multifaceted approach to reorganizing one's economic and social status, integrating cultural changes through various environmental, economic, institutional, and social influences. This reinforces the importance of incorporating traditional practices and indigenous knowledge into contemporary living conditions. Such a strategy could aid in ensuring economic security, fostering social inclusion, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable development for the Jenu Kuruba community in Mysuru district.

Keywords: Jenu Kuruba, Occupational Transition, Socio-economic Implications, Cultural Implications, Indigenous Knowledge, Livelihood, Forest-based Occupation,

INTRODUCTION

Social change among tribal communities is notably influenced by the transition in occupational roles. Given that occupation is intimately linked to income, social standing, family structure, cultural affiliation, indigenous wisdom, and connection to the natural realm. In the Jenu Kuruba tribe, traditional ways of making a living have traditionally been tightly linked to forests, notably through honey hunting and the collection of forest resources. Recent studies highlighting the Jenu Kuruba community underscore the close relationship between forests and their economic activities as well as cultural practices.

The contemporary period has witnessed changes in the occupational structure of the Jenu Kuruba due to restricted access to forest resources, forest conservation practices, land and livelihood insecurity, poverty, market integration, education, changing aspirations, environmental changes, and increasing dependence on wage labour. A study conducted in the Mysuru district, covering H.D. Kote and Hunsur, reported that agricultural labor is a significant occupation for Scheduled Tribe households, highlighting substantial landlessness and emphasizing the reliance on wage-based livelihoods. Transitioning careers involves

implications both socio-economically and culturally. Economically speaking, it could offer fresh cash inflows, diversify employment opportunities, and enhance mobility prospects. At the same time, excessive dependence on casual labourers can cause inconsistent employment, seasonal unemployment, and instability in people's living conditions. A decline in traditional occupations might impact indigenous ecological knowledge, intergenerational skill transmission, customary practices, and the collective identity of indigenous communities. The study evaluates the social, economic, and cultural impacts resulting from a career shift.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Devadasan's study, "A Study About Life Style of Jenu Kuruba Tribes Working as Unorganised Labourers" (2016), examines the socio-economic conditions of Jenu Kuruba communities and their increasing engagement in unorganised labour. The study explores the historical connection between the community and forests, highlighting the shift towards labour-based livelihoods as a significant aspect of modern tribal existence. It highlights the necessity to examine employment statuses, income levels, housing conditions, literacy rates, and accessibility to social benefits alongside changes in career paths. The research centers on the Masthi Gudi rehabilitation facility near H.D. Kote and links resettlement to alterations in customary ways of making a living, encompassing farming and various other professions. Raju, Saraswathi and Baidya (2004), in their study "Social Aspect of Leisure Among the Tribal Population of Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka," examined tribal communities around Nagarhole and paid particular attention to the Jenu Kuruba. The research document indicates significant transitions in lifestyle, language, dietary patterns, work routines, free time activities, and socio-cultural structures following a move and interaction with external settings. It also delineates wage labor outside the forest zone, which encompasses work in coffee plantations, as a shifting pattern of livelihood.

Research Gap

Although existing research offers useful insights regarding Jenu Kuruba's well-being, forest reliance, relocation, lack of organized employment, and socio-economic circumstances, numerous gaps persist. Initially, numerous researches tend to concentrate mainly on forest reliance, expulsion, or overall socio-economic circumstances, rather than systematically investigating occupational transition as a distinct sociological entity. Secondly, a more thorough comparison is necessary between H.D. Kote and Hunsur. The tribal livelihood conditions in Mysuru district are important to study in both areas. Differences in forest accessibility, agricultural prospects, labour markets, infrastructures, and supportive institutions might lead to varied patterns of occupational transition. Third, considerably more emphasis should be placed on the socio-economic and cultural impacts resulting from occupational transition. Adjustments in income and employment should be considered alongside indigenous wisdom, cultural traditions, communal ties, mobility patterns, and intergenerational transition. This study closes these gaps by analysing responses from 300 individuals in H.D. Kote and Hunsur districts, focusing on how occupational transition intersect with socio-economic and cultural factors.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the socio-economic and cultural repercussions of career transition among the Jenu Kuruba community in the H.D. Kote and Hunsur -Taluks of Mysuru district, Karnataka. To examine the traditional occupational structure, to identify the major factors behind occupational transitions, and to explore the socio-economic and cultural impacts of such changes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study involves a descriptive approach with a contextual sociological focus. A descriptive research design is suitable considering the goal of this study to delineate the prevalent socio-economic characteristics, enduring occupational practices, current employment statuses, and living conditions among the subjects. The contextual facet enables the researcher to comprehend occupational transition within the larger social environment in which the Jenu Kuruba families live and conduct their activities. The geographical area investigated includes Mysuru district in Karnataka, with a focus on H.D. Kote and Hunsur

taluks. The adult Jenu Kuruba is identified as the primary unit for data gathering. Using the contextual analysis thus far, data from 300 Jenu Kuruba respondents were utilized, comprising 150 each from the H.D. Kote and Hunsur taluks within Mysuru district. A multi-stage purposeful sampling method is appropriate for the study. The primary data form the key empirical basis for the research. The respondents' details are gathered directly, through the Structured Interview schedule, personal conversations, and observations, with the participation of 300 individuals. Central to the research are the secondary resources, which are employed to construct the historical, demographic, socio-economic, and institutional setting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Implications of Occupational Transition

Changes in occupational fields affect household earnings, job stability, reliance on land, spending habits, migration, schooling access, institutional involvement, and social mobility. The shift from livelihoods tied to forests into wage jobs and varied employment opportunities could offer more opportunities for earning money. The nature of employment plays a crucial role in deciding if such a change ensures long-term financial stability.

Table 1: Transition in Occupations and Household Income Beliefs

Change perception in Income	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Increased	47	53	100	33.3
No significant change	38	34	72	24.7
Decreased	44	37	81	27.0
Highly irregular income	21	26	47	15.0
Total	150	150	300	100.0

The findings suggest that out of 100 respondents (33.3%), it is believed that household earnings have risen after a job switch. 81 respondents, or 27.0%, indicate a drop in income, whereas 47 respondents, or 15.0%, report inconsistent earnings. Notably, 24.7% of 72 respondents reported no change at all. The findings of the research show that changing jobs does not ensure consistent economic gains. Some households reap cash income from new positions, whereas others face uncertainty because of inconsistent employment. This shift encompasses both economic prospects and susceptibilities.

Transitioning careers and job security

The shift towards farming duties, plantation labor, construction work, and temporary postings could enhance employment opportunities, but it doesn't guarantee job stability.

Table 2: Transitioning careers and job security

Situation	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Regular employment	25	28	53	17.7
Seasonal employment	56	51	107	35.7
Casual/irregular employment	49	54	103	34.3
Self-employment	20	17	37	12.3
Total	150	150	300	100.0

The findings indicate that only 53 respondents, constituting 17.7%, reported regular employment. Among the participants, 107 (35.7%) are classified as seasonal labourers, while 103 (34.3%) depend on casual or irregular jobs. A mere 37 respondents (12.3%) engage in self-employment. This suggests that changing careers rarely guarantees stable employment. In fact, a substantial number of respondents continue to depend on unreliable employment forms. Therefore, occupational diversification should be paired with skill development, social safeguards, and stable and prosperous futures.

Transitions in Occupational Dynamics

Migration might become a significant household tactic if local employment prospects are insufficient. Short-term relocation can offer earnings, yet it might disturb familial and communal bonds.

Table 3: Transitions in Occupational Dynamics

Status	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Regularly migrate	24	29	53	17.7
Seasonally migrate	47	51	98	32.7
Occasionally migrate	31	28	59	19.7
Do not migrate	48	42	90	30.0
Total	150	150	300	100.0

As depicted in the table, 98 respondents (32.7%) indicate seasonal relocation, while 53 respondents (17.7%) report regular migration for employment. Another 59 participants (19.7%) switch locations from time to time. Only 90 participants (30.0%) indicated that they have not migrated. The significant rate of migration suggests that occupational transition can occur beyond local economic changes. Local job scarcity may compel households to migrate as a coping mechanism. Indeed, extended relocation could affect familial bonds, scholastic performance of children, involvement in the community, and preservation of cultural traditions.

Transitions in Occupational Roles and Educational Possibilities

The diversification of occupations might affect the educational ambitions of younger people. Enhanced engagement with labour markets and established institutions can motivate families to regard education as a pathway to occupational advancement.

Table 4: Occupational Transitions and Children's Academic Perceptions

Impact	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Positive impact	52	56	108	36.0
No significant impact	39	34	73	24.3
Negative due to migration/labour	37	40	77	25.7
Mixed impact	22	20	42	14.0
Total	150	150	300	100.0

Results show that 108 individuals (36.0%) view a favourable effect on children's educational outcomes. 77 participants, constituting 25.7%, report negative outcomes, particularly in cases of occupational mobility requiring migration or household labour. The results show that a shift in occupation can lead to conflicting educational outcomes. Higher earnings might fund education, whereas migration and economic struggles could disrupt children's schooling.

Occupational changes and their cultural implications

The cultural importance of career transition stands out notably because traditional vocations are deeply linked to indigenous knowledge and communal identities. Collecting honey and gathering forest resources demand understanding of seasonal variations, plant cycles, insect demographics, animal habitats, and forest topography. Recent researches have accurately identified the link between forest-dependent lifestyles and cultural practices among the Jenu Kuruba communities in H.D. Kote.

Table 5: Occupational changes and Alterations in Long-standing Cultural Traditions

Perceived Change	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Significant decline	58	62	120	40.0
Moderate decline	43	39	82	27.3

No major change	27	25	52	17.3
Cultural practices adapting to new conditions	22	24	46	15.3
Total	150	150	300	100.0

The data reveal that 120 respondents, or 40.0%, hold that traditional cultural practices have notably declined, while 82 respondents, or 27.3%, report a moderate reduction. Of the respondents, 46 (15.3%) believe traditional cultural practices are adjusting to modern conditions, while 52 (17.3%) observe little change. The results show that a career shift could weaken some long-held habits, but a cultural change won't necessarily result in the complete elimination of that culture. Some practices need to be adapted and reorganized due to the demands of contemporary living conditions.

Transition in Occupational Practices and Indigenous Knowledge

The shift from conventional forestry work to agricultural roles, plantation duties, construction, casual wage jobs, and other modern vocations could impact the preservation and passing on of this expertise. As younger groups detach from conventional professions, chances for acquiring indigenous knowledges through elder teachings might diminish. At the same time, occupational transition doesn't invariably lead to the complete disappearance of a culture; indigenous knowledges might be preserved, modified and selectively integrated into current living strategies.

Table 6: Intergenerational Continuation of Occupational Traditions

Traditional Knowledge	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Declining considerably	61	65	126	42.0
Declining moderately	41	38	79	26.3
Continuing substantially	28	27	55	18.3
Being adapted to new occupations	20	20	40	13.3
Total	150	150	300	100.0

The data table shows that 126 respondents (42.0%) believe there is a significant reduction in the transfer of traditional occupational knowledge. An additional 79 respondents (26.3%) report experiencing a moderate decrease. The results indicate that decreased involvement in customary professions might diminish younger cohorts' chances to acquire indigenous wisdom through firsthand exposure. This carries consequences beyond cultural identity and the safeguarding of local ecological wisdom as well. However, 40 respondents (13.3%) indicated that traditional knowledge is being modified for use in new professions. This suggests integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary living methods.

Occupational Transition and Community Relationships

The typical roles of society frequently require collaborative involvement and mutual assistance. Individualized wage arrangements could impact community dynamics.

Table 7: Perception of Social Interaction within the Community

Social Relations	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Strengthened	31	34	65	21.7
Weakened	63	59	122	40.7
No significant change	35	33	68	22.7
Mixed effect	21	24	45	15.0
Total	150	150	300	100.0

Data shows that 122 participants, representing 40.7%, view the decline in community social bonds. This could be linked to changes in occupational status, migration patterns, individualized wage work, and decreased involvement in traditional collective activities. Simultaneously, 65 respondents, or 21.7%, reported enhanced

social connections, suggesting that new professions and communal welfare programs might foster different forms of collaboration.

This transition opens avenues for enhanced cash inflow and professional expansion. Nonetheless, the prevalence of seasonal and temporary employment points to enduring income instability. Evidences from Mysuru district also indicate the significance of agricultural labor and landlessness in tribal households. The decrease in forest-based jobs can impact indigenous knowledge, cultural traditions, and the passing down of these practices from one generation to the next. Given that traditional sources of income and cultural identities are deeply intertwined with forest connections, alterations in employment might also prompt transition in cultural customs. Changing occupations can boost women's involvement in farming and earning jobs, while still keeping their domestic duties. Thus, the economic contribution of women must be accounted for alongside unpaid domestic and care labor. Younger cohorts are likely to favour modern occupations such as education and wage employment, whereas older generations possess greater expertise in traditional, forest-based practices. A generational negotiation is created, focusing on balancing cultural continuity with occupational mobility.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the responses from 300 Jenu Kuruba individuals in H.D. Kote and Hunsur indicates that occupational transition have substantial socio-economic and cultural impacts. The shift from conventional forest-dependent ways of living to agricultural jobs, plantation work, construction, casual employment, self-employment, and other occupations has opened up new possibilities, yet it hasn't reduced the risk of not having a stable income.

The assessment suggests that occupational transition might enhance access to steady income and job variety, yet a substantial number of respondents still face seasonal or intermittent employment. Some households have found migration to be an important livelihood strategy. The cultural ramifications are equally noteworthy. The decrease in involvement with conventional professions might diminish the spread of native ecological knowledge and weaken certain customary practices. Nonetheless, cultural transition isn't invariably linked to the eradication of culture. Traditional wisdom can be tailored to current economic situations via community-driven ventures, eco-friendly honey farming, enhancing the value of forest-based items, upskilling, and better access to markets.

In conclusion, the study posits that occupational transition among the Jenu Kuruba should be seen as livelihood transitions rather than isolated occupational replacements. The outcomes of its impact vary depending on access to land and forest resources, educational opportunities, acquired skills, employment prospects, market access, social support systems, and community structures. A sustainable development strategy should merge modern employment prospects with the conservation and efficient use of local knowledge and traditional lifestyles. It is crucial to concentrate on securing employment, enhancing skills, empowering women's economic participation, maintaining educational continuity, ensuring social security, strengthening market connections, and fostering community engagement. Such a comprehensive approach can help guarantee that occupational transitions contribute more than just economic transition. Moreover, emphasis was placed on securing a sustainable livelihood, promoting social inclusion, preserving cultural continuity, and enhancing the quality of life for the Jenu Kuruba tribe residing in Mysuru district.

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