



Gerontological study among Lamani tribes of Bellary district in Karnataka

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Abstract

An attempt has been made to understand and examine the problems faced by the aged Lamanis of Bellary district in Karnataka state, India. Lamanis in the state claims that they are the migrants from Rajasthan and live scattered over the state, but they are distinctly identified by their dress pattern. In earlier days, the aged Lamanis enjoyed high status, respect, love and support by all. However, the situation is gradually undergoing a change due to acculturation process. Industrialization, urbanization etc, is some of the predominant factors in transforming their traditional way of life. High cost of living, break down of traditional joint families have resulted in the loss of both material and psychological security of the Lamani aged. Family and kinship studies, which are the primary domain of anthropological research, can effectively and meaningfully prescribe certain policies towards the wellbeing of an aged human fitness.

Key words: Settlement, Policy, Fitness, Acculturation, Chang, Lamani and Problem.

Introduction

'Gerontology' (the scientific study of aging), implies as a process it begins from embryo and continues until death (Burgess, 1960). Old age, on the other hand, is a phase like childhood, adolescence and youth. Gerontology has a multi-disciplinary base where, Medical scientists, Anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists and demographers are involved in the area of research in the last few decades. In India, the census figures show a remarkable increase in the number of the old (60+), in the recent decades as shown in Table 1.

	Census figures		
	1971	1981	1991
Total population	550	682	832
60+ Males	16.9	22.0	42.2
60+ Females	15.8	21.2	22.6

According to 1991, census though the percentage of aged population to the total population is so high, but the proportion is steadily increases over the century. The increasing trend is attributed to the higher life expectancy of the aged, which has been possible due to overall scientific and technological developments.

On the other hand, the social scenario in India is changing fast because of rapid industrialization, urbanization and globalization. Under these changing circumstances, the social scientists feel that, the conditions of the aged in our society have worsened. The aged are forced to reject their traditional role and status, and their adjustment to the changing situation has become difficult and stressful. Particularly among Lamanis and in general in all tribal societies, the aged are now transformed into a marginal group. Especially among Lamanis, due to more number of mining industries, in the Bellary District the aged are now virtually thrown in to a life of uncertainty and anonymity.

According to the World Health Organization, (WHO) when a person attains the age of 60 years of age and above have been considered as 'old'. However, the conception of old age among Lamanis is quite different. They feel that a person even at the age of 80 who can work in the field and digest the food can be still considered as young.

Methodology

Fieldwork has been carried out in Sushilanagar Lamani settlement of Sundur taluk of Bellary District. Both primary and secondary methods of data collections are used. Primary data collection involves methods such as personnel interviews, questionnaire and through participant observation. Secondary method of data collection involved reference of books, journals reports, encyclopedia, dictionaries etc., Through participant observational method; I will be able to collect a plethora of literature pertaining to gerontological study among Lamani tribe of Bellary district.

Economic background of the Lamani aged

The study of economic problem and conditions of the aged forms an important aspect of Gerontology. The aged Lamani men and women are not always burden to their family since they do some sort of work. The main occupation of Lamani in the district is agriculture as day labourers with a wage of Rs.60/- for males and Rs.50/- for females. Table 2 reflects the economic status of aged Lamani of Sushilanagar in Sandoor taluk of Bellary District.

Age	Independent		Dependent			
			Partial		Full	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
60 – 64	10	8	2	7	8	4
65 – 69	5	6	2	6	6	8
70 – 74	5	8	-	8	-	8
75 – 79	-	4	-	2	6	2
80 +	4	8	-	7	8	4
Total	24	34	04	30	28	26
% of total aged population(146)	16.43	23.28	2.73	20.53	19.16	17.80

Condition of the Lamani aged

The Lamani settlements in the District are still largely living the traditional way where family and kinship ties are still strong, the aged are not considered as a problem. However, modernization, urbanization, industrialization and migration of young members to the ore industries have created a number of problems and also breaking up of joint family system etc., have made the condition of the Lamani aged vulnerable. The research reveals the fact that now in almost all Lamani settlements the problems faced by aged are health, economic,

Gender	Living with family members		Live separately with spouse		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Male	48	85.72	8	14.28	56
Female	84	93.33	6	6.67	90

socio-psychological etc. in the changing situation. So an attempt has been made to assess the aged Lamani's understanding, feelings and attitude towards their changing situation.

It is clearly observed that the Lamani irrespective of male/female continue to work as long as their health permits them to lead a better life, i.e. to make them free as far as possible from the poverty. Lamani feel that a person become only old when he loses his / her capability to work and earn for the family.

From the above Table 3 it shows that Lamani aged population of 146, out of which 16.43 percentage of aged Lamani men are independent (i.e. those who do not depend on the other members of the family for livelihood), while in the case of aged female it is 23.28% so, the total percent of independent aged Lamani who do same kind of work are 39.72.

Again, it is evident that 19.16 of aged male and 17.80 of aged female fully depend on the other members of the family for livelihood i.e., (those who cannot work at all). It is further noted that 2.73 of aged male and 20.53 of aged female partially depend upon their family for livelihood i.e. (those who do work occasionally or get old age pensions). One important feature observed from the Table 4 is that no economically independent aged Lamani varies between the age group of (60-64), (65-69) and (70 - 74) and with majority being between 60-64; with further ageing they slowly lose capacity to work and hence became dependent on others for livelihood. Active participation of women in the work is another important character noted from Table 2. Unlike the traditional Hindu society, the Lamani women including the aged go out to work. There are no savings. In order to meet several essential expenses during marriage of

children, personal medical treatment etc., and many respondent are of the opinion that they take loans from the local money lenders who are also the owners of the agricultural fields. So, the Lamani old age is characterized by economic insecurity. They continue to work as long as they are physically capable and retire only when the advancing age has its full grip on them.

Those who depend on agriculture for their livelihood do not have worthwhile schemes for economic security during their old age.

Living condition of Lamani aged

Lamani family can be divided broadly into two categories, i.e., Nuclear and Joint families. Houses may be self or inherited. Lamanis, have their own houses, but the condition of their houses are extremely poor. They are mud built, thatched roofed without ventilation and which cannot provide enough space and comfort.

Male aged Lamanis (48) show their desire to live with married sons and grand children while only 8 expressed their willingness separately with the spouse. Similarly in the case of females (84) of them desired to live jointly with the complete family members, while only 6 desire to live separately with the spouses.

Thus living with family members is the intense desire of all the elderly people, as expressed by them, and on that count, those living with family members may be considered as better off as compared to those who live alone. It also implies the acceptance to live with the family members as regard to availability of basic facilities like food, shelter and security.

Leisure – time activities of Lamani aged

The leisure time activities of the aged of Lamani include taking off cattle or buffalo to graze in the fields, looking after the grand children. Spending with television and gossiping with neighbors etc. Those who are immobilized owing to ill health or poor vision, passing time become all the more difficult.

Health condition of Lamani aged

Health is a major concern for the aged Lamani. They do not take much care about their health. During the old age, power of resisting a disease diminishes. They become ill due to the frequent attack of various diseases and no medicine can cure them completely. They often become home bound due to their dim eyesight, hearing deficiency and poor physique. Health practices are not well developed here. Most of them follow the traditional method of treatment, i.e., consulting the traditional healers for herbal medicines and spiritual care. They feel that their disease or ill health is their physical disabilities and often pray to their deities for curing these diseases. Many of them now do consult the hospital doctors, but cannot continue their treatment due to their extremely poor economic conditions.

Table - 4 gives us an idea of health condition of the aged Lamanis. The health conditions have been classified into four general categories like, overall good, minor problem, major problem and incapacitation.

It is observed that out of the total aged Lamani population 146, 6.85% of males and 17.81% of females overall have good health.

This data also shows that in comparison to the

Table 4. Health conditions of the aged Lamanis

Age group	Health condition								Total
	Good		Minor problem		Major problem		Incapacitated		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
60 – 64	10	18	10	24	6	6	-	-	74
65 – 59	-	8	8	10	10	8	-	-	44
70 – 74	-	-	-	02	10	6	2	2	22
75 – 79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	02
80+	-	-	-	02	-	-	-	2	04
Total	10	26	18	38	26	20	2	6	146
% of Total population 146	6.85	17.81	12.34	26.04	17.80	13.69	1.37	4.10	100.00

aged males, that aged females are more physically fit. Also in between the age-group 60-64 good health is very common, and it gradually deteriorates with increase in age. Minor health problem i.e., pain in head, pelvic region, backbone, arthritis, acidity, fever is present among 12.34% of males and 26.02% of females. In comparison to other categories in which the health condition of the aged Lamani has been classified, minor health problem is found in highest percentage among them. In addition, the Lamani females have more minor health problems than the Lamani males. Major health problem i.e. (Tuberculosis, Paralysis due to cardiac arrest, ulcer, respiratory problem etc.) are found among 17.80% of aged Lamani males and 13.69% of aged Lamani women. The males, as seen from the data have more major health problem in comparison to the females. The incidence of major health problem increases with age. Incapacitation due to age is found among Lamani 1.37% males and 4.10% females. Incapacitation as it is observed is much less among the men than among the women. On the other hand, disease worked greater havoc with Lamani men than with Lamani women.

Conclusion

India being a rich and welfare country, the welfare of all her citizens including the aged

becomes the primary concern of a state. However, there is no separate welfare scheme for the Lamani aged, in particular, by the Government. In addition, the aged Lamani deserve special attention. Now the time has come to think seriously on Lamani old age problem in particular and other aged in general, so that they can spend life with self-respect and dignity.

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