

"Jenu Kuruba Tribe's Occupational Transition: A Contextual Analysis,"

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ABSTRACT: Transitioning between professions is a crucial factor in the socio-economic, cultural, and ecological shifts faced by tribal societies. Forestry practices and conservation initiatives have modified, while forest resources are now limited. Various influences such as poverty rates, educational backgrounds, market engagement, climatic changes, structural enhancements, and an uptick in wage-related positions have altered the typical employment structure of the community. The present study "Contemporary Occupational Transition of the Jenu Kuruba Tribe in Mysuru District of Karnataka: A Situational Analysis," examines how traditional occupations are evolving and what new earning methods are being adopted by the Jenu Kuruba. Using a detailed research approach, the investigation looks at responses from 300 participants, comprising 150 from the Heggadadevanakote (H.D. Kote) taluk and 150 from the Hunsur taluk, all located within the Mysuru district. Primary data should be collected through a structured interview schedule, direct one-on-one conversations, observations, casual dialogues, and relevant secondary resources. The study reveals that improving livelihood diversity, skill development, expanding market opportunities, increasing financial inclusion, securing living conditions, ensuring equitable resource access, and backing traditional forest products has a notable impact. Essentially, culturally aware development projects are crucial for enhancing economic stability. A plan that combines new employment opportunities with the preservation and enhancement of local expertise. Traditional ways of existence can also aid in the socio-economic advancement of the Jenu Kuruba community in Mysuru district.

KEYWORDS: Jenu Kuruba, Occupational Transition, Traditional Occupation, Livelihood, Forest-Based Livelihood.

INTRODUCTION

A transition in occupation signifies the shift experienced by individuals or groups away from traditional sources of income. To expand employment opportunities with new or diverse sectors due to societal, economic, political, technological, and environmental shifts. Within tribal societies, occupation is closely intertwined with values, identity, traditional knowledge, social structures, and natural resources. The transition signifies economic changes alongside significant social transformations. The Jenu Kuruba tribe of Karnataka has traditionally maintained a close relationship with forests and depended on occupations such as honey collection, gathering of minor forest produce, collection of medicinal plants, fishing, small-scale cultivation, and other forest-based activities. These positions not only guaranteed a source of income but also enabled the sharing of local ecological knowledge and helped maintain cultural customs.

In conceptual terms, occupational transitions highlight the dynamics between enduring professions and advancing socio-economic contexts. Examining modernizations and structural changes highlights the shift in workforce patterns aligned with market demands, while Political Ecology emphasizes the effects of forest management and resource control. The goal of the Cultural Ecology research is to study alterations in the Jenu Kuruba's interaction with their natural habitat. A study is underway to explore changes in access to fundamental resources including natural, human, social, physical, and financial assets necessary for well-being. Consequently, this investigation portrays occupational transitions as a complex endeavour that includes economic readjustments, expansion of income streams, and elevation of social status, modification of cultural values, and heightened exposure to novel challenges. A comprehensive review of Jenu Kuruba households in the Mysuru district is therefore essential to understand how changes in occupational patterns affect livelihood security, traditional knowledge, cultural identity, and social inclusion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies on tribal occupational shifts reveal that alterations in income streams are closely intertwined with fluctuations in indigenous community engagements, natural resource stewardship, commercial relationships, and governmental structures. As Ghurye (1963)

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noted, examining alterations within Scheduled Tribe situations highlighted the significance of amalgamation, social shifts, and economic transitions in tribal communities. His research founds the sociological foundation for understanding how traditional tribal societies adapt their fundamental living patterns into broader economic frameworks. Elwin (1964) emphasized the distinctive cultural and ecological traits of tribal societies and stressed the imperative of safeguarding their traditional lifestyles. His perspective is relevant to Jenu Kuruba, whose traditional lifestyle rooted in the forest is closely linked to indigenous knowledge and cultural identity. Vidarthi and Rai (1977) explored tribal social structures, cultural habits, economic frameworks, and their adaptability to the environment, revealing that tribal existence is inseparable from the ecological context in which these communities live. This perspective aids in assessing Jenu Kuruba's shift from incomes linked to forests to earnings via wages.

Sociological Perspectives on Occupational Transition

Modernization theory views career shifts as part of a larger pattern encompassing education, market forces, technology, formal systems, and modern work practices. This framework offers partial comprehension support for Jenu Kuruba's transition. Adjusting the core structure enables shifts in employment arrangements in light of changes in the overall economic situation. Labour shifts from fundamental survival tasks to agricultural fields, plantations, building sites, service sectors, and other commercially-oriented areas. Eco-cultural studies are characterized by the combination of environmental and cultural factors. With the adaptation of forests, traditional Jenu Kuruba practices underwent gradual transformation. Alterations in resource consumption and environmental shifts therefore influence occupational and cultural practices.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the traditional and ongoing practices within the Jenu Kuruba tribe.
2. To identify the crucial factors affecting job shifts, and to investigate the relationship between these changes and financial stability.
3. To evaluate occupational changes among Jenu Kuruba participants from the H.D. Kote and Hunsur regions.
4. To investigate the socio-economic and cultural outcomes of profession changes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach selected for investigating occupational shifts among the Jenu Kuruba tribe in the Mysuru district was descriptive. The study took place in the taluks of Heggadadevanakote (H.D. Kote) and Hunsur. Selecting 300 in total, 150 respondents were chosen for each. Primary data were gathered via a structured interview schedule, direct personal conversations, and observation. Secondary data were drawn from Census reports, official government documents, indigenous welfare records, books, and scholarly studies. Frequency, percentage, and cross-tabulation were used to classify and code the data initially for analysis. The dimensions evaluated were conventional employment, persistent employment, career shift, economic stability, and well-being.

Major Factors Responsible for Occupational Transition

The Jenu Kuruba tribe's occupational position shifts are intricate, influenced by alterations in the community's ecological, economic, social, cultural, and institutional environment. Gradually, the Jenu Kuruba have established a profound relationship with forests, relying on honey harvesting, forest resources other than timber, medicinal plants, subsistence farming, fishing, livestock activities, and other pursuits that depend on the forest. These roles didn't merely offer a way to make money; they also provided a cultural sense and insight into indigenous ecology.

Enduring occupational structures have undergone changes due to recent factors. Restricted access to forest resources, changes in forest conservation practices, declining availability and economic returns from forest products, poverty and economic insecurity, changing market conditions, education, new occupational aspirations and environmental changes. The growth in wage opportunities has incentivized or compelled households to diversify their sources of income.

Table 1: Taluk-wise Present Occupation of Respondents (N=300)

Present Occupation	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total
Forest-based work	24	20	44
Agricultural labour	54	50	104
Plantation labour	28	35	63
Construction/casual labour	24	28	52
Self-employment/other	20	17	37
Total	150	150	300

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Table 2: Taluk-wise Major Factors Responsible for Occupational Transition

Major Factor	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Restricted forest access	42	38	80	26.7
Poverty/economic insecurity	32	35	67	22.3
Availability of wage employment	27	31	58	19.3
Changing market conditions	18	20	38	12.7
Education/new aspirations	13	12	25	8.3
Environmental changes	11	9	20	6.7
Government programmes	7	5	12	4.0
Total	150	150	300	100.0

The results indicate that restricted access to the woods is the most frequently reported problem, chosen by 80 participants (26.7%). Reports of poverty and economic instability followed, with 67 respondents (22.3%) citing them, and 58 respondents (19.3%) mentioning the accessibility of wage-based employment. The responses of 38 individuals (12.7%) were influenced by market transitions, whereas educational changes and new goals affected 25 respondents (8.3%). The data show that 6.7% of respondents, or 20 people, can be attributed to environmental changes, while 4.0% of 12 people, or respondents, can be linked to government programmes.

The findings show a significant link between shifts in occupation and alterations to the traditional forest-based earnings model, which means acquiring new revenue sources is necessary.

Socio-Economic Implications of Occupational Transition

Changes in occupational sectors impact household income, employment steadiness, land dependence, spending habits, migration, educational access, engagement with organizations, and social mobility. Transitioning from income reliance on forests to salaried roles and a variety of employment opportunities could offer extra avenues to make money. The type of employment significantly influences whether this change guarantees lasting financial security.

Table 3: Occupational Transition and Perceived Change in Household Income

Change Perception in Income	H.D. Kote	Hunsur	Total	Percentage
Increased	48	52	100	33.3
No significant change	39	35	74	24.7
Decreased	43	38	81	27.0
Highly irregular income	20	25	45	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. However, 81 respondents (27.0%) note a reduction in income, while 45 respondents (15.0%) experience significantly fluctuating earnings. An extra 74 respondents (24.7%) indicated no significant change. The study reveals that moving to a new career rarely results in comparable economic advantages. Households sometimes benefit from new occupations, earning cash income, but for others, employment is unpredictable. This transition includes both economic opportunities and vulnerabilities.

Occupational Transition and Employment Security

Agricultural labor, plantation jobs, construction, and temporary posts could open up more employment opportunities but do not guarantee job security.

Table 4: Occupational Transition and Employment Security

Employment 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 workers, while 103 (34.3%) depend on casual or irregular jobs. A mere 37 respondents (12.3%) engage in self-employment. It indicates that a career switch usually doesn't ensure reliable employment. Indeed, a significant portion

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of respondents still relies on unstable employment forms. Therefore, occupational diversification should be paired with skill development, social safeguards, and stable and prosperous futures.

Cultural Implications of Occupational Transition

The cultural importance of career shifts stands out notably because traditional vocations are deeply linked to indigenous knowledges 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 Transition and Change in Traditional Cultural Practices

Perceived Cultural 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 certain established habits, but a cultural shift isn't guaranteed to completely erase that culture. Revising and rearranging certain practices becomes necessary with the current lifestyle.

Table 6: Major Factor and Level of Occupational Transition (N=300)

Major Factor	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Restricted forest access	55	20	5	80
Poverty/economic insecurity	43	19	5	67
Availability of wage employment	35	18	5	58
Changing market conditions	20	13	5	38
Education/new aspirations	12	9	4	25
Environmental changes	10	7	3	20
Government programmes	5	5	2	12
Total	180	91	29	300

The table shows that respondents restricted from accessing forests have a significantly higher occupational transition rate, with 55 out of 80 participants falling into the high-transition category. In a similar vein, forty-three out of sixty-seven respondents who label poverty and economic insecurity as issues report major occupational changes. In the group that reported wage employment, 35 participants were classified as high-transition. The study reveals a strong connection between occupational shifts and financial strain as well as changes in traditional economic supports. Education, environmental adjustments, and governmental efforts also contribute to occupational shifts, even if their recognized influence is typically minor in this depicted scenario. Sociologically, the transition transcends the confines of a personal choice. It includes the interaction of environmental elements, forestry practices, economic volatility, employment outlooks, educational provisions, market trends, and governmental interventions.

Contextual Analysis

Navigating the occupational shift among the Jenu Kuruba entails moving from forest-centric jobs to a broader range and more monetarily oriented ways of making a living. Historically, traditional professions such as honey harvesting and forest resource extraction depended on the availability of natural assets. When access to these activities is restricted or their economic benefits decline, households are increasingly compelled to seek agricultural work, plantation labor, construction jobs, temporary employment, and other sources of income. Poverty compounds this issue as households with limited economic means require constant and urgent financial support. Thus, wage employment transforms into a substantial income source, albeit the positions might be seasonal or unstable. The younger generation is being shaped by education and career ambitions. Younger individuals might seek employment beyond traditional forestry sectors because of aspirations for stable work, higher wages, learning opportunities, and social progression. Therefore, occupational shift encompasses not only an economic dimension but also a cultural one.

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Sociological Contextual Analysis

The occupational transformation of the Jenu Kuruba must not be understood solely as a change from a "traditional" to a "modern" profession. It's an action involving modifying, broadening personal revenue streams, reconfiguring the framework, and transforming the culture. In Political Ecology, adjustments to forest management and resource sharing are known to influence the career opportunities available to the community. In the context of Cultural Ecology, alterations in occupational fields influence the way a community relates to its forest environment. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach underscores how households reprioritize their natural, human, social, physical, and financial resources based on changing circumstances. Therefore, modern shifts in employment present an opportunity for economic diversity alongside possibly providing incomes and, concurrently, enhancing cultural vulnerability.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the context shows that occupational shifts within the Jenu Kuruba community in Mysuru district are a multifaceted, intricate process that is shaped by structural, economic, environmental, and social factors. When analysing the 300 participants, it is clear that restricted access to forests is the most reported issue, alongside poverty, economic instability, and the availability of wage employment. The findings indicate that occupational shift goes beyond moving from traditional to modern positions. It reflects a change in living arrangements as a result of changing socio-economic and environmental conditions. Although new opportunities may bring financial benefits and prospects for social progress, depending on temporary and seasonal employment can result in financial instability.

The study shows that a comprehensive approach to livelihoods, which includes diversifying occupations for sustainability, is required. Boosting skill development, protecting employment entitlements, increasing market prospects, facilitating financial inclusion, and reinforcing traditional forestry-based expertise and offerings. When developing initiatives, they should recognize the cultural and ecological significance of traditional Jenu Kuruba practices to ensure secure integration into modern industries. A well-balanced approach can guarantee that occupational transitions serve as a pathway to economic and social stability, cultural continuity, and sustainable development, instead of leading to economic and cultural marginalization.

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