



The Material Life

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Abstract:

During field investigation not a single village was found which was exclusively inhabited by Kathodies. They generally live in multi caste mixed villages. Their settlements are generally located either on the outskirts or in a corner of the village. In some case they reside in a separate hamlet of their own group which is referred to by the name of the Kathodivas. In most of the villages Kathodies settlement are located on the outskirts of the village. The other tribal groups in the village feel superior to the Kathodies and keep minimum contact with them unless necessitated by circumstances because of living together in the village. This status differentiation can also be proved by the separate settlement of the Kathodies. The Kathodies on account of their abject poverty take their low status for Formerly the Kathodies chose their settlement in the forest to suit their convenience by selecting a spot that promised good hunting or tillage, and left it as convenience dictated. even to the present day, an epidemic or sickness occasionally force the people of a vadi to vacate it and settle elsewhere in the neighborhood. Their settlement is known as Katwadi. Every vadi has a headman called Naik who is the social head of the community and is assisted by a Karbhari or Prardhan . Kathodies settlements are usually situated either on the forest land or wastlend of the village. In Vijaynager taluka their settlement are found on the fringe of a forest. Sometime they select a site near a rivulet or a river. Those having land, secured after working for a long term with the landlord raise their homestead in the field itself, and prefer to stay in the village itself. Kathodies families who migrate to forest coupe or outside the region raise a temporary hut and dismantle it when the work is over. The families return to their original home. It needs to be stressed here that maintain ties with their paternal village. But as most of them do not own their houses, they are a time expelled by other communities.

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1. Introduction

A Kathodi settlement is compact. The hut are clustered together and not scattered. The Kathodi huts are of mud walls with a peaked roof thatched with plam leves or grass. In some huts the roofs are supported by bamboo columns. Usually the hutment consists of one room approximately 15 × 10 or 12 × 8 which is used by the whole family for the purpose of living, slepping, cooking and eating. There is only one door in the hut and there are no windows or ventilators. The doors are made out of bamboo splits.

In Vijaynager taluka a few Kathodi houses appeared to be well- built and of fairly large size. Sometime they bring these material without obtaining any permission. All the members of the family , men, women and children participate in raising a hut and accomplish the task within a few days. The close kins help each other while constructing their huts. A Kathodi house does not have a clean look, Inside the hut, the things are rarelywell arranged and are found lying here and there. Generally, their dwelling speak of their poor and miserable living condition. The details of the housing conditions of the surveyed household are given in table No. 1.

Table No. 1. Details of the housing conditions of the surveyed household

Condition	No of Household	Percentage of total household
	104	59.7
	70	40.3
	174	100.00
	113	64.9
	57	32.7
	4	2.4
		100.00
	166	95.4
Two rooms one for members, another for cattle	8	4.6
		100.00
Ventilation		
No ventilation	170	95.6
Ventilation one window inside	4	4.4

The above data reveal that the grass and bamboo split walls are found to be most common among a good number of house with mud walls. With regard to the types of roofs, those thatched with grass were most common but the use of country tiled roof was also fairly wide.

2. Households Goods

The Kathodi have very few belongings in their homes, e.g, few aluminum utensils and earthen wares, sleeping mats made of jute or date palm leaves, bamboo cost, tin made lamp or lantern, grinding stone, fishing nets and one or two earthen grain bins. Most of the households do not possess costs, because mostly they sleep on the ground.

3. Dress and Ornaments

The dress of the Kathodies male is very simple. In the past, Kathodies males used to wear a Langoti. Now days they use the dhoti which covers the waist down to thighs, leaving the rest of the body completely bare. In the past their women did not wear any cloth on their upper body. Gradually they began to wear cloth and now cover their upper body too. Today Kathodi males wear a short dhoti and shirt, grown up children prefer to wear trousers and shirts. The Kathodis women dress with the traditional Sari in distinct style, very similar to that of the traditional Maharashtrian women. A few educated girls put on frocks or skirts and blouse. The children are mostly ill-clad. Children up to the six usually go about naked. Some children put on bayyan and langoti . Use of foot wear is rare. During investigation it was seen that most Kathodies are not always found in clean dress. Poverty does not allow them to keep many sets of clothes or wash the cloths regularly. An average Kathodi male or female cannot buy more than one dhoti, one phadki or one shirt in a year.

The Kathodi women are too poor to have any gold or silver ornaments. Glass bangle and bead necklaces are in common use. Very few women wear metal bangles. The most common ornaments put on by Kathodi women are Sakali, Jumka, glass bangle and Kada. Some ornaments like Kada are going out of fashion and these days only elderly women are seen wearing them. The main folk do not put on any ornament. Most of the ornaments are manufactured by the artisans in nearby towns and are purchased from them directly, or in the weekly markets from the itinerant traders. Tattooing on various parts of the body is a way of decoration for the Kathodi males and females. The Kathodi women get tattooed on hand, arm, foot, wrist, cheek and forearms. Some old Kathodi women expressed that their tattoo marks protect them from being punished by the accomplices of Yama, the Lord of Death. Tattooing work is done in the weekly market.

4. Food and Nourishment

Most of the Kathodis do not get a square meal in a day. In fact it is not easy to define their staple food because it differs from season to season. Like most of the tribals the Kathodis are also non-vegetarians. According to C Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency "They live chiefly on roots and herbs. Beside porridge and cakes of the coarse grains, they eat almost all animals. The horse, the ass, the cat and the dog they will not eat, and they refuse of an animal found dead". The staple food of the Kathodi is Chappatis which may be prepared either from maize, or jowar or nagli or banti. Some times they prepare a jowar gruel called 'Bhadku' after boiling the jowar flour, when the quantity of jowar is less. The Kathodis hunt and as part of their main occupation and collect herbs and wild fruits and roots to supplement their diet. They are fond of meat, and eat the flesh of animals, with the exception of crow and the brown-faced monkey. They hunt and eat fish, hare, monkey, wild cocks, deer and a variety of birds, but this has now become difficult due to deforestation and the preservation of forests. From summer to the close of monsoon, they eat whatever is easily available in the forest fruits such as bor and guller, wild roots such as kadva kanda (wild onion) a kind of poisonous tuber, wild flowers and even grains of wild grass such as 'sava' to eat the kadva kanda they first cut it into circular pieces and put them in a basket. The basket is soaked in water for the whole night next morning it is washed and boiled with fresh water the boiled stuff is eaten with no other ingredient except salt. In the rainy season they also eat green leaves of kardai and ambadi. But by and large most of the Kathodi families go without sufficient and wholesome food. Most of Kathodis do not use milk. They do not consume milk and not any milk products to drink use the tea is not common although many of them occasionally taste it when they visit the market place.

According to earlier writers such as Sherring and Stephen Fucha, the Kathodis are fond of drinking liquor. But during the field investigation they denied that they were specially fond of liquor or addicted to the same. In fact they don't appear to be liquor addicts. Since they are extremely poor, it is beyond their means to buy liquor off and on.