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# A Views on Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Practices of Karnataka's Tribes

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**ABSTRACT:** Karnataka, a state in south India, has a rich cultural and anthropological legacy. It was formerly a component of various kingdoms and princely states on the Deccan peninsula. 42,48,987 Indigenous people call the State home, of which 50,870 are members of the primitive group. Despite making up only 6.95% of the State's total population, the Indian government has identified up to 50 distinct tribes residing in Karnataka, 14 of which are native to the region, along with two aboriginal tribes. Tribal cultures are quite knowledgeable in forest management, sustainable agriculture, and medicinal herbs. Their knowledge of the ecosystem is essential to conservation initiatives. It is interesting to note that many of these tribes, who were originally from the Western Ghats, have a great deal of knowledge about different medicinal plants and how to use them in traditional/folklore medicine. Several scientific studies have focused on these practices. Certain researchers claim that tribes know cancer medicine. It's quite fascinating. The knowledge of foods and medicines for all ailments is quite rich among tribes. To them, the woodland resembles a hospital. This article focuses on examining the distinctive customs and traditional knowledge systems of particular Karnataka tribal communities.

**KEYWORDS:** Food Culture, Dress Culture, Natural Medicine, Scientific Knowledge

## I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional knowledge (TK) is a crucial aspect of a society's cultural identity and has been passed down through generations. It encompasses various aspects such as art, dance, music, medicines, folk remedies, folk culture, biodiversity, knowledge of plant varieties, handicrafts, designs, and literature. TK is a people-derived science that represents creativity, innovations, and skills. It is based on instinct, observation, trial and error, and long experience of indigenous societies. In Karnataka State, traditional livestock practices are location-specific and depend on cropping patterns and cattle breeds. TK has advantages over scientific knowledge, such as being cost-effective and readily available. Traditional livestock management practices, such as dairy herd management and animal health care, are location-specific and can be seen across Karnataka. Using locally available plant resources for plant-based medicines can be an economically sustainable means of animal health care. Studying indigenous knowledge can help identify ideas with potential commercial exploitation and integrate them with modern information systems for efficient resource management.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To have a brief understanding of the Karnataka tribes.
- Understanding the value of traditional knowledge; understanding how tribes and regular people apply traditional knowledge in their daily lives.
- Researching the Traditional Knowledge of the Karnataka Tribes, Particularly in the Area of Medicine

## III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is based on the secondary data collected from different journals, magazines various books, and websites.

### 1. Definition of Traditional Knowledge

- There is no agreed definition for "traditional knowledge".
- The word Traditional Knowledge is itself suggestive.
- Traditional means hereditary or which is given from generation to generation.
- Knowledge means useful information.
- Thus Traditional Knowledge refers to useful information that is passed from one generation to another generation.

## 2.Importance of TK

- The primary goals for Indigenous people and tribal communities are the preservation of their traditional knowledge, the pursuit of fundamental justice, and their inclination to defend and preserve their customs.
- These herbs and traditional ways of creating these medicines are taking an important part of human health; in the globalised world, traditional knowledge somehow gained special importance in the last few years which has seen an explosion in the market for herbal remedies.

## 3. Practising Traditional Knowledge

- Neem is used to treat skin infections caused by fungi of any kind.
- Apply turmeric paste to cuts on our fingers that occur during play or when chopping vegetables; the wounds will heal in a day or two.
- Tulsi, or basil leaves, are used to treat colds and coughs.
- Neem tiny branches are used as toothbrushes by the villagers; grandmothers make a concoction of ginger or lemon to relieve stomach aches and digestive disorders.
- Bone setters use herbal remedies to repair damaged bones.
- Plants and roots are used to treat bug bites, such as those from snakes and scorpions.
- countless herbs can treat a wide range of illnesses in India. People have interacted and grown closer to nature since ancient times.
- The Indians referred to plants and herbs as "Mother Nature" because they recognised their significance in daily life.
- These are only a few instances of the Traditional Knowledge that is used by different Indian tribal and village populations.
- There have been almost 5000 years of this practice.
- The ancient people were aware of the therapeutic properties of plants and the mysteries of herbs.
- Individuals use those secrets in their daily lives.
- These developing nations have an abundance of traditional biological variety.
- The term "biodiversity" refers to this type of biological variety.

## IV. TYPES OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

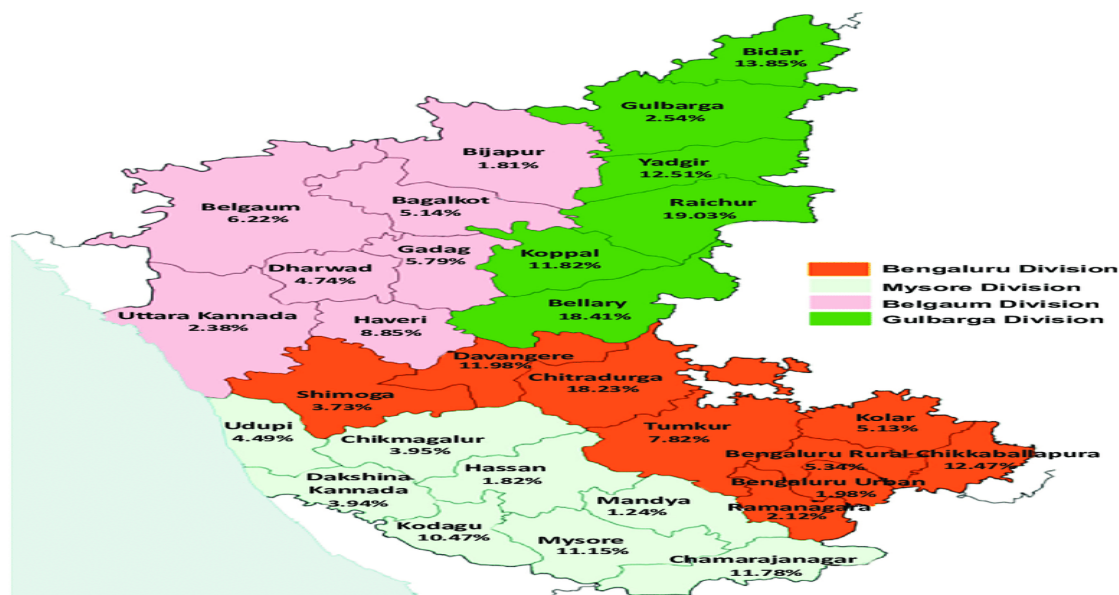
Traditional Knowledge is divided into

1. Cultural Knowledge
2. Artistic Knowledge
3. Medicinal Knowledge
4. Biodiversity/ Natural Resources Knowledge
5. Agricultural Knowledge
6. Sacred Knowledge

## V. KARNATAKA STATE

On November 1, 1956, the Kannada-speaking regions of the former Hyderabad state and Bombay province were combined with the Mysore state to form the state of Karnataka. On the Deccan plateau, Karnataka is located between latitudes 11' and 18' 45' N and longitudes 74' and 78' 40' E. Karnataka's land area is 1,91,791 square kilometres, or 5.8% of the total land area of the nation. The three main geographical zones in the state are viz. The coastal area of Karavali, the steep Malenadu region making up the Western Ghats, and the plateau's plains in the Bayaluseeme region. The majority of the state is located in the northern half of the Bayaluseeme region, which is India's second-largest dry region. Karnataka boasts abundant natural resources, especially animals, and a rich cultural legacy. Farmers in Karnataka have long engaged in integrated crop-livestock production. Numerous livestock breeds created in the state demonstrate their prowess in raising livestock.

## District-wise Tribal Population of Karnataka State



(Source: (District Wise Scheduled Tribe Population in Karnataka - Google Search, n.d.)

## VI. ETHNOMEDICINAL PRACTICES IN KARNATAKA

The various cultures, varied ecological circumstances, terrain, climate, and vegetation in Karnataka have led to a diversification of traditional health practices, much like the ethnic diversity of the state. Each district in the state has its own distinct traditional health practices, which are primarily based on the tribal community's culture and the availability of crude medications, the majority of which are derived from the Western Ghats region's vast biodiversity. The majority of Karnataka's ethnomedical research projects have focused on cataloguing therapeutic plants from particular geographic or tribal regions, for specific ailments, or for certain tribes. Reports from both tribal and non-tribal people are included in research studies on traditional, tribal, and folkloric medicinal practices unique to a region, taluka, or district. Ethnomedicinal practices from several districts such as Raichur, Bidar, Gadag, Mysore, Kodagu, Bengaluru, Tumkur, and Chikmagalur have been reported in a number of these attempts. Additionally, taluka-specific documentation of traditional medical practices has been made, including those for Sagar, Kukke Subramanya, Bhadravati, Sringeri, and coastal Karnataka. (Roy et al., 2015).

**Jenu Kuruba:** Kshirsagar and Singh studied the lesser-known ethnomedicinal usage of plants reported by the Jenu Kuruba tribe in the Mysore district. The paper listed 25 medicinal plants that are traditionally used in Mysore but are less well-known in other areas. It also included information on their scientific and local names, geographical distribution within the district, plant family, preparation, uses, and administration techniques. The traditional medical expertise of the tribe from the Kodagu (Coorg) district was reported in another investigation. Twenty medicinal plant species for the treatment or cure of twenty-one different types of diseases have been documented as a consequence of standardised questionnaires used in discussions with tribal practitioners and patients. The study highlights the tribe's potential for ethnobotanical knowledge and the need for additional documentation and research in this area. (Roy et al., 2015).

**Khare-Vokkaliga:** Located in the Uttara Kannada area of Karnataka, Khare-Vokkaliga is one of the smaller ethnic communities. has out research on the ethnomedical characteristics of these plants and recorded the use of 57 different plant species to cure 39 different illnesses. Of these, six infectious disorders are treated using 20 species, while 33 non-infectious diseases are treated with 44 species.

**Siddis:** They employed 98 concoctions to treat a range of illnesses. These preparations were created using 69 different plant species. (Roy et al., 2015).

**Soliga:** A total of 67 ethnobotanical plants that the Soligas use have been documented. The tribe used 57 different plant species, according to the writers, to treat a variety of illnesses. Later, a description of the Soliga tribe's customs, culture, and way of life in the ChamaraJanagar district was published (68). It was observed that the Soligas had a constant and close relationship with the forest, obtaining the majority of their necessities from it. The Soligas have a holistic view on life and their indigenous knowledge is holistic in nature because of their closeness to nature (Roy et al., 2015).

**Kunabi:** Harsha documented the ethnomedicobotany of the Kunabi tribe. They listed 45 plant species that can be used to treat 24 different types of illnesses. Six species of the plants that have been reported have been used to treat skin conditions and allergies, five have been used to treat sores and inflammations, and four have been used to treat fever, cuts, wounds, and UTIs (Roy et al., 2015).

**Gowlies:** Bhandary listed the plants that the Gowli tribe in Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka, uses traditionally. They recorded the tribe's use of forty-one plant species for therapeutic purposes. The study (Roy et al., 2015) contains information on the parts utilised, the preparation process, the dosage, the length of the treatment, and the botanical specifics of the plants.

Rajasab and Isaq<sup>71</sup> identified 51 common plant species used by Lambanis for medicinal purposes in Gulbarga. It has also been reported<sup>40</sup> that ethnic groups in the Bidar district, such as the Halakki, Kadu Kuruba, and Lambani, can benefit from the use of thirty plant species for primary healthcare concerns. It has been established that ethnic fishermen from groups such as Best, Bovi, Gangamathasta, Mogaveera, and Karvi, who live in 12 localities across three sites on the western coast of Karnataka, traditionally consume 25 types of legumes, including them for health-related purposes<sup>72</sup>. Hiremath and Taranath<sup>73</sup> documented the use of 15 herbs and 12 concoctions as a traditional phytotherapy for treating snake bites in tribes from the Chitradurga district, including the Lambanis, Hakki-pikki, Jenu Kurubas, and Iruligas. In the process of documenting plant remedies for herpes, Bhandary and Chandrashekhar<sup>74</sup> recorded 34 plant species-based formulations for the treatment of herpes, particularly those utilised by the Koraga, Malekudiya, and Hallakki Vokkaliga tribes from the Uttara Kannada district of the State. According to Roy et al. (2015), Bhat et al. (58) have revealed that 102 plant species from the Uttara Kannada district are used to treat skin problems. These species have been documented from a variety of cultures, including tribes like Hallakki vokkaliga, Siddi, Kunbi, and Gowli.

## VII. PHOTOS OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF TRIBES

Figure-01



Source: (Traditional Knowledge of Karnataka Tribes - Google Search, n.d.)

Figure-02



Source: (Traditional Knowledge of Karnataka Tribes - Google Search, n.d.)

Figure-03



Source: (Traditional Knowledge of Karnataka Tribes - Google Search, n.d.)

Figure-04



Source: (Traditional Knowledge of Karnataka Tribes - Google Search, n.d.)

Figure-05



Source: (Traditional Knowledge of Karnataka Tribes - Google Search, n.d.)

Figure-06



Source: (Traditional Knowledge of Karnataka Tribes - Google Search, n.d.)

### VIII. IMPORTANT TREATMENTS FOR DISEASES IN TRIBES OF KARNATAKA STATE

#### Induction of heat

Salt water along with Raagi (*Eleusine coracana*, Poaceae) balls for half kilo grams given for 3 days.

#### Treatment for retention of placenta

1. Agase (*Sesbania grandiflora*, Fabaceae) leaves are fed immediately or within 2 hours of parturition. 2. Flax seeds are fed once or twice.  
3. Mixture of Agase (*Sesbania grandiflora*, Fabaceae), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*, Meliaceae) leaves and Jola (*Sorghum bicolor*, Poaceae) 100 grams each are given once.

#### Treatment of Wounds

Bilwa patre (*Aegle marmelos*, Rutaceae) leaves are crushed and juice is extracted. This juice mixed with Arisina (*Curcuma longa*, Zingiberaceae) and applied on the wounds.

Treatment for post partum uterine prolapse

Equal quantities of Shatavari roots (*Asparagus racemosus*, Liliaceae), Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*, Solanaceae) and Ashoka (*Saraca asoca*, Fabaceae) bark are boiled and thick decoction is given once in a day for 3 days.<sup>i</sup>

Documentation of ITKs in Livestock Treatment for Health Management fracture of the bones Red soil and pulp from Lolesara (*Aloe vera*, Liliaceae) are combined. For fifteen days, this mixture is applied to the fractured bone every day.

#### Yoke gall

Paste prepared from Chavali kai (*Cyamopsis tetragonoloba*, Fabaceae) plant leaves are applied on the shoulder daily for a week.

#### Treatment for retention of placenta

Vatavata (*Triumfetta rhomboidea*, Tiliaceae) plant roots for about 250 grams are given as such or crushed and given along with water once.

#### Mastitis

Chicken egg is mixed with Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*, Zingiberaceae) powder and applied on the udder twice a day for 3 days



#### Therapy for fever and cough

1. The tongue is massaged with a slice of lemon (*Citrus aurantifolia*, Rutaceae) and baking soda.
2. Tea powder, jaggery, and pepper (*Piper nigrum*, Piperaceae) are produced along with the decoction. For two days, this preparation is administered once daily.

#### Treatment of indigestion

1. Nelanelli (*Phyllanthus maderaspatensis*, Euphorbiaceae) plants are crushed and mixed with water and given twice a day

**Treatment of poisonous bites:** Aankale (*Alangium salvifolium*, Cornaceae) tree bark, Bevu (*Azadirachta indica*, Meliaceae) bark along with leaves of Aadu muttada gida (*Adhatoda vasica*, Acanthaceae), Eshwari (*Aristolochia indica*, Aristolochiaceae) and Amrutha balli (*Tinospora cordifolia*, Menispermaceae) in equal quantities are crushed and mixed with in a glass of butter milk. This preparation is given orally once or twice.

### IX. CONCLUDING

In conclusion, the traditional knowledge and cultural practices of Karnataka's tribes represent invaluable assets that enrich the cultural mosaic of the region and offer valuable insights into sustainable living and community resilience. By honoring and preserving these traditions, society can embrace diversity, promote environmental stewardship, and foster social justice for future generations.

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