

Fertility and Reproductive Performance of Aramadravida Brahmins of Andhra Pradesh

B.V. Ravi Prasad¹ and B.R. Busi²

1. Anthropological Survey of India, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, Port Blair 744 101, India
2. Department of Anthropology, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam 530 003, Andhra Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT The present paper reports demographic and reproductive aspects of Aramadravida Brahmins of Andhra Pradesh. They trace their origin from 'Brahacharanam Brahmins' of Tamilnadu, who later on amalgamated in 'Vaidiki Brahmins' of Andhra Pradesh. The sex-ratio, on the whole, indicates an excess of male over female. The mean age at marriage for boys and girls are 21.69 ± 0.5 and 15.00 ± 0.4 years, respectively. The mean menarcheal age is 13.98 ± 0.99 while the mean menopausal age is 46.57 ± 0.99 . The pregnancy history indicates on the whole, a low fertility rate. This may be due to high death rate followed by a relatively higher number of individuals not contributing to the next generation gene pool.

INTRODUCTION

The demographic characteristics of fertility, mortality and population growth are generally known to differ among different geographical and ecological regions and communities (Bogue, 1969), as also with time. The demographic profile of few communities were studied (Babu and Naidu, 1989).

Systematic demographic studies on Dravidian Brahmins of Andhra Pradesh are meagre. A sect of *Brahacharanam* Brahmins of Kumbakonam area of Tanjore district of present Tamil Nadu appears to have migrated to Andhra Pradesh during 10th Century A.D. (Singh, 1991). In course of migration they were broadly divided into three endogamous groups- *Pedda Dravidulu*, *Aramadravidulu*, and *Dimili Dravidulu* (Hemingway, 1901). Later on, these endogamous groups have identified themselves under 'Vaidiki' Brahmins, a broad subdivision of Brahmins of Andhra Pradesh.

Aramadravida Brahmins are distributed in north Coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, but authentic records on their population size are not available. The livelihood of early settlers was practice in Ayurveda, poetry, writing of scholarly works besides agriculture. Now majority of them have taken up white collar jobs in public and private sectors as traditional occupation is not lucrative.

Marriage among Aramadravida Brahmins is strictly endogamous. *Pravara* and *Gotra* are followed while fixing marriage alliances. Consanguineous marriages of first cousin type are common but marriage between patrilineal cross cousin i.e., FSD are prohibited. Uncle-niece marriage was not in practice but now some marriages of this type are taking place. Divorce is not allowed, widow remarriages are prohibited but widower remarriages are allowed (Prasad, 1988). Serological aspects of Aramadravida Brahmins was reported earlier (Prasad and Busi, 1988). The present paper attempts to report the demographic and reproductive profile of the caste under study.

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METHODOLOGY

A random sample of 166 ever married individuals of both sexes residing in Visakhapatnam and Anaparthi towns of Andhra Pradesh were chosen for the study. Data on pregnancy outcome of women were collected from 83 ever married women by pregnancy enumeration. Other information like age at menarche and menopause were also collected from women.

The age of the subject is recorded from his/her birth certificates as they are readily available for the individuals of the community. Information on the age of menarche, menopause, etc., were ascertained by interviewing the subjects through the method of recall as well as by checking with elderly persons or old aged people of each family where ever possible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean age at marriage of Aramadravida Brahmins is 21.69 ± 0.5 years for males and 15.0 ± 0.4 years for females (Table 1). This also shows that about 63% of the females and 15% of the males got married before the age of 17 years. The difference of age at marriage between the husbands and wives is about 6 years indicates that women have a wider scope to continue child bearing almost whole of their fertile period (Sarkar and Bhanu, 1990). In the past early marriage was common phenomenon especially for girls to assure maximisation of procreation and helps to remove stigma of barrenness (Nag, 1975). With the passing of time, legislation of various acts by the government, and change in aspiration of girls has resulted to increase in age of marriage for females.

The distribution of menarcheal and menopausal age in the sample population is shown in tables 2 and 3. The mean menarcheal age was observed mostly between 13 and 15 years with a mean of 13.98 ± 0.9 years. In the present study, a larger percent-

age (42.86%) of women reached menopause at 46 years. However, the mean age at menopause of Aramadravida Brahmins is 46.57 ± 0.99 years.

Table 1: Age structure of marriage of Aramadravida Brahmins

Age of marriage (in years)	Husband	Wife
7 - 11	0	18 (21.69)
12 - 16	12 (14.46)	34 (40.96)
17 - 21	25 (30.12)	28 (33.70)
22 - 26	36 (43.47)	3 (3.67)
27 - 31	10 (12.05)	0
Total	83 (100.00)	83 (100.00)
Mean age	21.69 ± 0.46	15.00 ± 0.42

Table 2: Menarcheal age of Aramadravida Brahmins

Age at onset (in years)	Number of women	Percentage
12	7	8.43
13	19	22.89
14	36	43.37
15	12	14.46
16	8	9.64
17	1	1.20
Total	83	100.00
Mean age	13.98 ± 0.90	

Table 3: Distribution of Aramadravida women by age at menopause

Age at menopause	Number of woman	Percentage
45	2	9.52
46	9	42.86
47	6	28.57
48	4	19.05
Total	21	100.00
Mean age	46.57 ± 0.99	

The pregnancy history of all married women is shown in table 4. All women under study had experienced 349 pregnancies. 90.26 per cent of conceptions resulted in live births whereas 9.74 per cent of pregnancies have

Table 4: Pregnancy history of married women

Results of conception	Number	Percentage
A. Pregnancy wastage	34	9.74
Abortions	22	6.30
Still births	7	2.01
Miscarriages	5	1.43
B. Live birth	315	90.26
* Already dead	36	16.05
Still alive	259	74.21
Total conceptions	349	100.00

turned out as pregnancy wastage. Abortions/ miscarriages constitute 7.73 per cent and 2.01 per cent are still born. 74.21 per cent are still alive whereas 16.05 per cent are already dead.

The average pregnancies, pregnancy wastage, livebirths and surviving children in different age groups are shown in table 5. The mean number of pregnancies are found to be 4.26, while the pregnancy wastage for all married women is 0.47. The average surviving children was almost same in the older and middle aged women.

Table 5: Different demographic parameters among Aramadravida Brahmins

Parameter	Mother below 30 Yrs (Young Women)	Mothers 30-40 Yrs (Middle aged Women)	Mothers 45 Yrs and above (Old Women)	All women
Average conceptions	2.23	4.28	5.66	4.26
Average live births	1.89	3.37	5.36	3.84
Average pregnancy wastage	0.2	0.58	0.37	0.41
Average surviving children	1.84	3.21	3.97	3.17

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