

BOOK REVIEW

Kindreds of the Earth: Badaga Household Structure and Demography

by Paul Hockings, *Sage Publications, New Delhi* (1999) Rs. 395/- (Hardbound).

The book under review is an account of the recent development of Badaga society and its household. It deals with demography and anthropology, focusing on demographic transition and on social change. Hockings reports a longitudinal study covering 26 years of measurement and culture change. Bringing together the knowledge of anthropology, demography and linguistics, he focuses on the transition in kinship, household structure, marriage, fertility and modernization. He views modernization as a process of communication wherein traditional peasant populations acquire and use higher levels of education and information about the nation-state in which they live. As a result their orientation towards the outside world changes. Their attributes towards urban Indian culture raise new possibilities in their minds. The modernization of the Badaga has not been dependent on industrialization so much as on the commercialization of agriculture and plantation. The Hockings provides evidence of how fertility transmission actually gets underway through his censuses and by the age structure recorded in the latest age pyramid. In four villages where he carried out his study, the average age at first birth has crept up to around 21 years and that of the last birth has fallen dramatically to under 34 years. These processes have gone so far that in the two villages, women's average reproductive span halved over the last two decades and consequently fertility has also been halved. By the beginning of the 1990s, the Badgas were competing with, and even surpassing, the demographic achievement in the Indian State of Kerala and neighbouring country Sri Lanka. The birth rate was under 14 the death rate under 6, and infant mortality below 22 per 1,000.

Hockings discusses the underlying reason and main mechanism in achieving the small family size.

This book is laid out in four parts. The first (Chapter 1-3) serves to introduce Badaga society and describe the methodology used. Chapter 3 is devoted to the Badaga household structure and kinship. The second part (Chapter 4-5) attempts Kinship analysis by demonstrating different aspects of Badaga households in operation. Chapter 4 presents life history of one particular informant and thus is followed (Chapter 5) by an analysis of how mortuary rites are performed. Third part (Chapter 6-9) deals with major quantitative findings which form the demographic core of the book. The part fourth (Chapter 10-12) explores selected aspects of contemporary Badaga life – the economy, the mass-media, schooling, migration and farming etc.

The appendix given at the end of the book provides useful information. The book is written in a readable easy going style which gives clear impression of author as one with a wide range of experience in this area.

This is an excellent and unique endeavour of the author in the field of longitudinal study. Although some good studies have been reported on this subject, like that of Caldwell (who has contributed a foreword to the book), but these are few in number. However, the major findings of Hockings are similar to those of Caldwell in Karnataka. The study is almost certainly a reliable guide to an explanation of what will eventually happen in other parts of India. This well presented book with an unusual title dealing with anthropology and demography will help researchers in both the fields. This significant book is a contribution to the ever-expanding anthropology/demography literature.

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