

## **LIFE THRU' THAT BEAUTIFUL TERRAIN AND HILLOCK**

**By**

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**Nilgiris, the century old dwelling of the predominant Badaga community is a heaven on earth, for most of us who hail from that wonderful land of God's creation. Sun-rise on a winter morning when the night temperature goes sometimes below zero (olden days) and the sunset in the evening is a package delivered by the so called creators for the kind hearted human beings who constitute the length and breadth of this nature's paradise.**

**The word Badaga, I suppose would mean,**

**BA- come; DA- be; GA-part (Come and be part of us-the community)**

**Badagas- The people who actually exhibit some characteristics of hospitality and accommodation is to be experienced to put it in the right perspective rather than a mere acknowledgment.**

**Let us take a quick introspection of life in this serene district for the last 25 years.**

**1) Infrastructure building has completely changed the phase of this district; be it a terrace house with multi-coloured paintings, in a hitherto considered to be a tiny village or the apartments which have sprung up in the towns outsmarting the old aesthetic British structures, the infrastructure has brought considerable amount of changes in people's lives.**

**2) Roads have been laid to interior villages and transportation network has actually given freedom of movement to people from one point to another (I don't think to-day you can name a village in the district where there is no public transport, be it a mini bus or a shared services transport arrangement).**

**3) Many of the villages have English medium schools to send their children for education. It is amazing to see the young siblings going to the school with a disciplined bright colour uniform and a school bag on their shoulders to compete with each other in the field of education.**

**4) Statistics show that there is a steep hike in the number of people from the community seeking employment elsewhere to lead a normal and decent life, in the last ten years. Therefore, there is a paradigm shift in their thought process to look at opportunities and explore them unlike the**

**earlier days of “Live Life and be Fed” – Changing the model to work, feed yourself and feed others too.**

**The community produced some brilliant Engineers, Doctors and other Professionals who are good and competing with the rest of the world (eg. IT / ITES Sector). The woman folk of the community also taking part very actively in this changing face of employment driven life styles.**

**The development such as infrastructure, transportation network, education and employment have brought us on a platter to compete with any one around to occupy some key positions in various professions. Yet, the true potential is still not explored completely, because we are content at times with what we are and what we have achieved.**

**We have to move ahead and continue to learn and work hard to build those skills to achieve greater heights. Confidence building is no more an issue, I think we have proved them in certain pockets, but scanning the opportunities around us and reaching those is THE NEED OF THE HOUR.**

**Though education and employment have changed the life styles of many, the community building has not been given the kind of attention which ought to be, helping each other to share the prospects. Keeping pace with the changes in surroundings has become inevitable, otherwise we will perish over a period of time. The 80s and 90s have taught us enough lessons and reasons to quickly adapt to changes that are constantly demanding us to be vigilant.**

**Community building and social service activities are today an integral part of our life and I think, it is time for us to have a closer look at some of these issues. The phenomenal growth that we have seen atleast in the last decade though brought a substantial change in the lives of many in the community, I still feel a large chunk of the population is dependent on tea plantations and agricultural produce. We have to make a concerted effort to reach and help them in their developmental processes.**

**Some of the declines, I personally see in the community are :**

**a) Not too many old people are seen in the villages unlike the 70s and 80s (AIYYAS and ETHAIYS). Therefore, the average life span is declining, though WHO statistics say otherwise**

**b) The KOLANGANANNU, JAKKALLANNU, THAUTEANNU, MOLLANNU and POTLAANNU have extinguished in the last two decades without a trace. Mind you, no new ANNU has been spotted, which means the nature Matha, is depriving us of those natural condiments.**

**c) Ego and disrespectful to elders have been increasingly noticed among the younger generation which is not a healthy trend.**

**d) Infighting among us and exposing our weaknesses would pave way for others to interfere in our traditional way of living. "Competency" is the buzz word in today's context, but lets not be very complacent about what we have achieved / done so far. A LONG WAY TO GO.**

**50% of the world's population is below the age of 25. The youth of BADAGA Community has to break the barriers to keep the community flag high and shining.**

**"Ignorance brings in Unity of thinking"**

**"Intelligence brings in diversity of thinking"**

**Let us strike a balance between these two and live happily together.**

**JAI HETHAIAMMA**