

People of South Kanara

Bunt people

The origins of the Bunts is not clearly known. Whether they were indigenous or immigrants to Tulu Nadu (coastal Karnataka) is shrouded in mystery. They follow a dravidian social system. The community of Bunts (anglicized from Buntas), also referred to as Nadavas, form an important and integral part of the socio-economic culture of Tulu nadu.

It is also postulated that the Nairs of Kerala are originally migrated from the Tulu nadu as noted here: Manual of Madras Administration Vol II (printed in 1885) notes that the Nadavas are the same people as the Nairs of Malabar and the Bunts of Southern Tulu nadu.

Etymology

The word *Bunta* in Kannada implies soldier This is derived from the [Sanskrit](#) word *Bhata* again meaning 'a mercenary' or 'a soldier'. The Tulu equivalent is

Bunte

or

Bunter

(plural).

Geographic distribution

Bunts are mostly found in the [Dakshina Kannada](#) and [Udupi](#) districts of Karnataka, the [Kasa ragod](#)

district of

[Kerala](#)

and in

[Mumbai](#)

. They share Tulu nadu with other prominent religious, caste and ethnic groups like the

[Billavas](#)

,
[Mogaveeras](#)

,
[Brahmins](#)

,
[Konkanis](#)

,
[Catholics](#)

and

[Jains](#)

. The southern Bunts inhabiting Dakshina Kannada, northern Kasaragod and Udupi and

[Karkala](#)

taluks of

[Udupi](#)

districts are

[Tuluvas](#)

. Bunts in

[Kundapura](#)

speak a dialect of Kannada called

[Kundagannada](#)

.

Subdivisions

The Bunts community is made up of several subcastes. The chief among them include Yadav, Bantaru, Nadavaru, Jain Bunts, Masaadika, Parivaara, Setru, Halarusetru, Baraga, Ullaye, Dokkaludethi, Kartharu, Palavaru and Ikkelakalu.

- Maasaadika Bunts are Tulu-speaking Bunts settled in the southern part of Tulu Nadu (Udupi, Mangalore and Kasargod).

- Naadavas or Nadabunts are Kannada-speaking Bunts settled in the northern parts of Tulunadu, i.e from Brahmavar to Byndoor. They are also known as *Badakayeedagulu* in Tulu.

- Parivaara Bunts are similar to remaining Bunts, but do not marry outside the division.

- Jain Bunts are Bunts who still follow Jainism. They share surnames like Hegde, Ajila, Ballal with other Bunts. Many of them are associated with the ruling dynasties of the region, like the [Chowtas](#) .

Society

Bunts are part of unique culture of coastal Karnataka. These cultural aspects along with the dialect of Tulu spoken are common to many non-Brahmin castes in this region.

Rituals and Worship

Bunts usually follow the Tulu(Also, found in [Kerala](#)) traditional rituals of [Bhuta Kola](#) or the spirit worship and

[Nagaradhane](#)

or snake-worship. Bunt households in the villages had earmarked spaces for

Bhootada Gudi

or the rest space for spirits, literally translated it means

Spirit House

. During

[Bhuta Kola](#)

, the eldest male member of the family will be called by name by the

Darshan Paathri

(the person who invokes the spirit),in the presence of villagers and prasadam will be given.