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TRIBES IN TELANGANA STATE

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Abstract: *Telangana is the only south Indian state with a tribal population of 9.34% out of its total population as per 2011 Census. The presence of tribal communities is more in and around the river valleys and forests of Telangana. As such their socio-cultural conditions can be understood better by identifying their regions as Gond – Kolam Region, Koya – Konda Reddi Region, Chenchu Region, and Plain Areas. This article presents the profile of the Scheduled Tribes of Telangana State.*

Introduction

The Gond–Kolam Region falls in the hills and forest region of Adilabad district north of Godavari River. The main tribes inhabiting the region are Gonds and Naikpods and their dependent communities Pardhans and Thotis. Kolams, Andhs, and Bhils also live side by side to the above communities. The Koya – Konda Reddi Region runs down Adilabad district further south-east side along the river Godavari through the districts of Karimnagar, Warangal, and Khammam giving shelter to the Koyas and Konda Reddis. The Chenchu Region is the forested belt of Nallamala Hills north of Krishna River in the districts of Mahbubnagar and Nalgonda. The Chenchus also live in and around the Vikarabad forest region of Rangareddy district. Communities such as Lambada (Banjara / Sugali), Yerukala and Yanadi living in the plain areas have also been being treated as tribes from 1976 onwards. In the year 2003, the communities of Nakkala and Dhulia were also treated as Scheduled Tribes. Further, the new Government of Telangana has announced that it would consider whether the communities such as Boya Valmikis and Mathura Lambadas can be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes. Let us now try to know their socio-cultural aspects of each tribe.

Andhs

Andhs are recognized as Scheduled Tribes in Madhya Pradesh, Telangana (erstwhile Andhra Pradesh) and Maharashtra as per provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Amendment) Act 1976. Andhs appear to be a very remarkable people, with dark bones. They show, on the whole, a marked aboriginal type of features resembling that of the Gonds, while the fact of their entire occupation of many villages indicates traces of savage independence.

Beyond a faint recollection that their forefathers came from Mahur and the adjoining districts, the Andhs have no tradition which will throw light upon their origin. It seems highly possible that the word Andh is only a corruption of the Sanskrit word 'Andhra', a designation given by the ancient Aryans to an aboriginal tribe dwelling in the Andhra Desh (present Telangana).

Andh is a cultivating and hunting tribe confined to the western part of the Adilabad district apart from the hilly tracks which include the northern parts of Parbhani and Nander in Maharashtra.

Andhs sparsely settled in tribal areas of Adilabad district. They are found in Dasnapur, Harkapur, Mamidiguda, Arjuni, Ratnapur, Lokari, Adhme, and Kamguda, Karanzewada villages of Utnoor area and Gudabag village of Boath Taluk.

Their population according to 2011 Census is 13,197. Their mother tongue is Marathi. But they can speak fluent Telugu also.

Andhs are divided into two exogamous groups' viz., vartali (pure) and khaltali (illegitimate). The people belonging to vartali section is considered superior to khaltali section and such they do not inter-marry.

Andh tribe is further divided into a number of exogamous septs or surnames known as Adhnam. Each Adhnam is an exogamous unit. The surname is a unilateral, patronymic and patrilineal kin group.

The nuclear family is commonest from among Andhs. Joint families are also in existence and usually consist of a man and his wife, his sons, and daughters-in-law. The head of the family listens to the advice of his elder on important and crucial issues. The wife of the family head is in-charge of issuing provision for the day and sells the grain. If they are caught red-handedly while selling the grain they will be severely punished.

Andhs celebrate their wedding in the Maratha fashion. Among Andhs the marital relationship is life-long but divorces also can be granted on certain grounds. The institutionalized form of marriage among Andhs is monogamy. Polygamy is also practiced and is also allowed and only a well-to-do a man can afford to obtain more than one wife and those who have more than one wife are held to be wealthy and

treated with respect. Marriage is called as Laknam and marriage by negotiation is known as panvah in Andh dialect. It is a long-drawn ceremony of rituals and drinks and fests.

Bhils & Gonds

The Gonds call themselves Koitur or Koi in their Gond. As per 2011 census, Gonds including Naikpods are 304537 in the state of Telangana. Raj Gonds are prominent aboriginal tribes of Telangana and they claim that they are dependents from ancient families of the Chnda Rajas. Few Gonds very few number, called as Dhur or Dhurwe Gonds and are considered inferior in social status. They cannot intermarry with Raj Gonds.

Pradhans, Thotis, Kolams and Naikpods have been in symbiosis with the Gonds in Adilabad. The Pradhans are the hereditary bards of Gonds. The Thotis are another tribe of bard's minstrels who play a role similar to pradans. The Kolams are a small tribes of primitive racial characteristics and the Naikpods to whom the Gonds refer as Mache are today often found in the same jungle settlement as the Kolams.

Pardhans

The Pardhans are the hereditary bards of the Gonds and there serve the epics, folklore, myth and stories of the Gonds that have been handed down from generations by oral transmission. The Pardhans functions as musicians playing fiddle and trumpet in religious rites.

Pardhan inhabit the tribal areas of Adilabad district. According to 2011 census put their number at 24,823. Pardhans are traditional bards to Gonds and recite mythologies, folk tales songs of their gods and goddesses at various festival ceremonies and fairs for which service they are paid in cash or kind. Each Gond family possesses a Pardhan family as a traditional bard. Gonds call them Patadi meaning singer or genealogist. Pardhans became they send as ministers and advisors to Gond Kinds in the past and come open that they are Pardans who used to accept Daan from Gond in return for their bard services. Their mother tongue is Marati but they recite in Gonds mythology and folk. Their literacy is high in Telangana State. Pardhan community is divided into four Phratries and they possess a similar clan name like Gonds. Each Pardhan family used to serve a minimum of 30 to 50 Gond families visits them in ceremonies and receive gists. Pardhan, Sade Dhan, Marming Dhan, Part Dhan, Manyar Dhan, Tangedule are the gifts they receive. No marriages of Raj Gonds are celebrated nor their death rites performed unless a Pardhan is present. Regarding their all normal development, ITDA has established at Utnoor, Adilabad District.

Koya

The Koyas are one of the predominant autochthonous people of the southern region of the country. According to 2011 census, the total number of Koya population

in Telangana including the present Telangana and Andhra Pradesh is 590739. They chiefly inhabit the agency and plains villages of Khammam, Warangal and a few in Adilabad district. The major population of the Koyas is located in Eturunagarm Bhadrachalam, Khammam, Vararamchandrapuram, and Ashwaraopet.

Koyas generally respect to the foothills and adjoin plains and in some far hills and in many villages on the banks of Godavari. There is named Koya-Reddi population. The Koyas popularly known as Dorala Sattam. They speak Gondi, though strongly influenced by neighbor Telugu speaking people.

They live in symbolizes with Konda Reddies in the hilly and reverie bank of in Koya land. Both Koyas and reddies produce the same food shift and exchange certain house hold articles and agricultural implements through barter system. Some Koyas work as Blacksmiths and furnish the Konda Reddies with iron implements and some manufacture baskets, winnowing fans and supply to Koyas.

The houses are of rectangular and square shaped with thatched roofs and invariably with wooden fencing. They evaluate villages if epidemic diseases spread and search for suitable place. The Koyas could not improve their economic conditions and their level of living is as poor as it was before a few decades before.

Konda Reddis

Konda Reddies are recognized as Primitive Tribal Group. They are inhabitant's hill and forests situated on either side of the Godavari River. According to the 2011 census, their population is about 107747 including neighbouring east and west Godavari districts along with Telangana district Khammam. Their mother tongue is Telugu. Konda Reddy tribe is divided into exogamous septs for regulating matrimonial relations. Surnames are fixed before their names. Marriage alliances with brother septs (agnate relation) are prohibited. They are primitively shifting cultivators and largely depend on flora and fauna of forest for their livelihood and sell tamarind, adda leaves, byrobolan, broomsticks etc., to supplement their meager income. They cultivate largely jower, chodi, red gram, bajra, beans, paddy and pulses. They eat pork.

Chenchus

Chenchu are the first Primitive Tribal Group in Telangana. Its population in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) is 64,227 as per 2011 Census. The upper and lower plateau of Amrabad in Mahbubnagar District and the Nallamalai hills are the home of the Chenchus. Several thousands of them live in forests of upper plateau of Amrabad area and are generally known as Jungle Chenchus. The Jungle Chenchus of the upper plateau even to-day is comparatively little influenced by recent contact with other populations of the neighbouring villages. They are essentially good hunters and food gatherers. The physique of the Jungle Chenchus is distinctly superior to that of their brethren in the lower regions who are comparatively short in stature

and emaciated. Several thousands of Chenchus are living on the northern bank of river Krishna in Nalgonda district and a few thousand in Rangareddy District (Vikarabad Area).

Lambada/Banjara

The Lambadas are a scheduled tribe inhabiting throughout the state of Telangana and of Andhra Pradesh. They are also known as Sugalis and Banjaras. Their population according to 2011 Census is 24,07,637. The Lambadas are the largest tribe in Telangana. Lambadas live in exclusive settlements of their own called Tandas, usually away from the main village, tenaciously maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity. The traditional dress of the men comprises of dhoti, upper garment, and bright coloured turbans. The women folk wear 'Langa' of course cotton prints, richly embroidered with several-fold at the waists.

Yanadi

Yanadis are one of the major scheduled tribes of Telangana. Thurston (1909) noted that the people were natives of Sriharikota Island and suggested that they derived their name from the Sanskrit word "anadi" denoting those whose origin is unknown. Now they are predominantly spread over the districts of Nellore, Chittoor, and Prakasham and are concentrated in the Nellore district. Yanadis live in symbiosis with non-tribals. Hence, they are also found here and there in Telangana. Their population according to 2011 Census reports is 5,37,808 in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana). Their mother tongue is Telugu. Yanadis are non-vegetarians and eat the meat of rabbit, fowl, goat; sheep fish etc, but abstain from eating beef. Yanadis mainly subsist on agricultural labour. They are traditionally inland fishermen and are also engaged as watchmen to the fields and orchards of farmers. Collection of firewood, rickshaw pulling, rodents catching etc., constitutes secondary occupation of the Yanadis. With a view to settling these poverty-stricken Yanadis, Land colonization schemes were started during the British period and continued after the Post-Independence period for the rehabilitation of Yanadis. The State Government has also introduced land assignment schemes to provide land for cultivation to the landless Yanadis and the development schemes under the sectors like education, housing, women and child development, medical, health and nutrition, roads etc., are also under implementation for the benefit of the Yanadis.

Yerukala

Yerukalas Scheduled Tribe is found all over Telangana. They call themselves Kurru. Because of women's future telling profession (Erukachepputha), they are called Yerukala. According to 2011 census a population of 519337 constituted in Andhra Pradesh including in Telangana as at now. They have their own dialect Yerukalabasha or Kurrubasha or Kulavatha. They are divided into number of fictional and endogamous subdivisions as per their occupation they adopted.

1. Dabba Yerukala : make baskets from bamboos
2. Yeethapullala : make baskets from wild date leaves
3. Kunchapuri Yerukala : make weavers combs
4. Parikamuggula Yerukala : sooth sayers and beggars
5. Karivepaku Yerukala : hawkers of curry leaves
6. Salt hawkers: hawkers of salt.

Yerukalas are vegeterins and rice is their staple careal in costal Andhra Pradesh, while jowar in Rayalaseems and Telangana region. They eat pork.

Nakkala

Nakkala tribe is wandering tribe, nomadic hunters and traders located in most of the Telangana districts as well as in neighbouring states. They have been recognized as ST in 2002-03. They normally migrate from one place to another by hunting small animals and birds for consumption and sale petty articles. They are also called Guvvlavallu (Dove Catches), Pittalolu (Bird Catchers) and Shikaris in Telangana, Narikorva (for hunters) Oosikorva (Needle sellers) and Kurvikaran (Bird catches) in Tamilnadu and Hikkipikki in Karnataka. They speak Nakkala basha and it has no scipt. They also sell plastic flowers, needles, mirrors, toys, synthetic pearls, combs catapults etc. Some of the Nakkalas are engaged in Municipal works by catching dogs, pigs, and monkeys as they are expected in catching. Some of them are working in shops and also as agricultural labours. The women play a major role in economic activities.

Dhulia

Dhulia claim that their origin from soil/dust (dhuli in Oriya). The community is land dependents either as farmers or a farm labours. The village deity Nisani Devatha is represented by a small boulder normally installed under tree, located on the outskirts of village. They were recognized as scheduled tribes SC&ST Order (Amendment) Act 2002.

Valmiki

Boya Valmiki are not recognized as Scheduled Tribe in Telangana, but the Government declared that it would consider the proposal of including them in the list of Scheduled Tribe. Valmiki living in the Agency tracts of Andhra Pradesh are only notified as Scheduled Tribes. They are found in the agency areas of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts. They claim that they are descendants of the famous sage Valmiki, the author of Ramayana. According to 2011 Census, their population is 70,513 in Andhra Pradesh which did not include the Valmiki of Telangana. The total Literacy rate among Valmiki is 58.22 as per 2001 Census. Valmiki are agriculturists and forest labourers. Some of them became traders and petty moneylenders. They sell the earthen pots also in the shandies. They practice podu cultivation on the slopes of hills.²

Conclusion

The tribal population in the Telangana State and in the country as a whole is the most deprived and vulnerable community that faces severe economic exclusion. Although certain constitutional safeguards are provided, there has been no economic, social and political mobility across these communities. Contrary to Scheduled Castes and other Backward Castes who witnessed certain degrees of progress because of protective discrimination policies of the government, the Scheduled Tribes remain abysmally backward and socially excluded, still living in harsh environs.

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