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Dr. D. Suresh



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND INITIATIVES

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STATUS OF GOTTI KOYA TRIBES IN TELANGANA STATE



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Abstract: *The Telangana state is not providing any identity to the Guttikoya and the forest officials are clearing the houses by torching to force them to leave the place. But still, Guttikoyais bearing these kinds of conflicts and are not going back to their origin. What could be the reason which frightened or pushed the people from their origin to destination? What are the factors that pulled Guttikoya to this particular state and not another? The favourable conditions could be physical factors or socio-cultural or economic factors. What factors are responsible for the adjustment and what could be their impacts on livelihood and natural resources management? The study adopts a holistic approach to migration and development. The presentpaper gives an idea of the present living condition of the Guttikoya tribe in Telangana state. The outcome of the study can help understandthe problems of the Guttikoya tribes.*

Keywords: *Guttikoya, Migration, Ethnography, Living Condition, Relationship with villagers, Government Initiatives*

Introduction

Gutta or Guttikoyas are one of the endogamous functional sub-divisions of the Koya tribe. This subgroup Gutta Koya live on the hilltops, hence they practice Podu cultivation. They have since time immemorial been migrated from border states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa how found along the Godavari belt of Mulug (erstwhile Warangal district) and Bhadradri Kothagudem (erstwhile Khammam district) districts. They are also known as *Muriya Koya* or *Muria Gonds*.

Guttikoya or *Gottikoya* is the term used by the local people which remained as the name of identification for the migrant group. There is no particular historical background

to the name *Guttikoya* or *Gottikoya*. Tribal people from Chhattisgarh were migrating as seasonal agricultural labourers due to political conflicts. They used to work in a Gutta. It is a Telugu term that means contract-based work, where migrated tribal groups work in a group in a particular field area and return for their service ask food grains or chilly or pulses instead of money. Especially in dry chilly fields, they are contacted by the local landlords of Telangana during March and April to work. It is said by the outsiders that during the summer season working in chilly crops is difficult, as temperature soars up and the dry chilly creates the burning sensation. In Gutta after completion of work, these internally displaced persons engage in a barter system for goods in return for their service or work in a field.

Some of the local tribes feel that because of the language they speak, which is the Gondi language that is quite different from the local Koya language, they are distinguished from the local tribe. Hence, they are known as the *Guttikoya* tribe who comes for work as agricultural labourers. This has remained in everyone's mind and thus the name *Guttikoya* is used by the locals for easy identification.

The *Guttikoya* speak their mother-tongue Gondi, a south-central Dravidian language. The other dialects they are conversant with are *Dorla*, *Koya*, *Maria*, *Muria* and *Raj Gonds*. The northwestern and southeastern are separated based on some phonetics in the language. The villagers learned to speak Telugu which became necessary in the host region to communicate. The school-going children and adults can speak and write but old age people above forty-five years are unable to speak the local language, Telugu.

Guttikoya tribe described them as highly skilled people who can live deep inside the forest, where they are completely isolated from the outside world. They go in search of a suitable place close to a water body, clear the forest, construct houses and start farming.

Marriage among *Guttikoya* is through betrothal. They practice tribe endogamy and clan exogamy. Cross-cousins are the preferred mates.

Guttikoya believes in Gods and Goddesses. They do worship nature first which provides food and livelihood to them. Most of the festivals of villagers are related to agriculture, and important festivals to them are *BijjamPanduga* or *VittanamPanduga* which is celebrated just before the monsoon. This festival is celebrated by all the villagers on the same day in which they offer the sacrifice of animals and consume *Landa* liquor.

Chikkudu Panduga is celebrated in September, the festival is celebrated to eat a new crop of vegetables. The villagers follow rituals and festivals seriously. Until and unless the ritual is performed, they are not supposed to eat new crops or vegetables. *Gadi Panduga* is performed in February, this was celebrated before the collection of *Mahua* flowers. Even for the collection of palm tree liquor *Guttikoya* perform rituals. The ritual performances are conducted by the pujari and head of the village. In the ritual performance, the villagers pray to the mother goddess earth and nature, followed by animal sacrifice, it could be hen or goat or buffalo. All the villagers gather at the ritual

performance spot and after finishing the ritual performance they consume *Landa*, both men and women sing songs and dance which indicates a festive environment. There are taboos relating to menstruation and a woman is not allowed into the kitchen and also in rituals. Men will perform the tasks of women during this period.

Study Area

GothiKoya tribals living in remote villages of Gummadidhodi, Wazade, Tupakulagudem, Cherukuru, Penugodium, Eturunagaram, Mangapet, Tadvai, Venkatapuram, Govindaraopet, and Wazed areas of Mulug District of Telangana State. Most of the ITDAs migrated into the jurisdiction of ITDA, Eturunagaram of Mulug district during the political conflicts.

Objectives of the Study

1. To trace out the factors that are responsible for the migration of Guttikoya
2. To understand what are favourable factors that are responsible to adjust to the host region.
3. To understand what kind of relationships are maintained by Guttikoya with the local people.
4. To explore the development programmes that are implemented by both Government and Non-government organizations to support Guttikoya

Research Methodology

For the study, the primary and secondary sources of data were collected and used and also observation and interview schedules were employed for gathering primary data. The secondary sources of data were gathered from the government publications, records that are maintained by the non-government organization on the census, histories and personal details.

Findings of the Study

1. The main reason for the migration of Guttikoya was fear of SalwaJudum, as mentioned by the respondents. However, the settlement of Guttikoya is raising doubts. Internally Displaced Person definition itself tells people are forced to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residences. If so why everyone in the village did not flee or vacate the place.
2. Fear is fear for everyone; any individual in the world will be afraid of his/her death, but in the case of MuriaGonds of south Bastar, Dantewada and Sukuma districts, few are having fear in listed villages of the district and few haven't migrated from the village and they are continuing their stay even after conflict. In every family, it is observed that half of the family members are in Chhattisgarh and do their daily activities. Then a doubt arises whether the

reason is only because of the fear of SalwaJudum or Naxalites. In Chhattisgarh, Naxalites could be the reason for not doing poducultivation because clearing forests could expose them.

3. The availability of land to do podu cultivation in the forest is one of the important factors that facilitated them to migrate. The cases of a few families' show that from each family one member is distributed into different villages in the destination as the pressure on land will be less in one place. Also, the local tribal and non-tribal communities invited them for agriculture labour and also helped them to settle in the places of destination. Thus, the availability of labour works with good wages pulled Guttikoya towards Telangana state.
4. The inter relationship between the two villages and the local community can be said as good. The local and non-local tribal people need labourers to work in their agricultural fields. Till now there are no disputes, though in the past there was an incident that happened but was resolved through the intervention of NGOs. Both groups invite each other during marriages, festivals, etc. The Guttikoya, especially the younger generation have learnt to speak and understanding Telugu. This helped them in communicating with the local communities quite easily. The children who completed their tenth class and are unable to continue their studies further due to caste certificate, residential certificate, and income certificate.
5. There are newspaper reports on ITDA about the problems they are facing for shelter, food, and health. The UNHRC, HRC Solidarity committees together reacted to the news and appealed to the state government for sanction of emergency relief camps to IDPs. The state government sanctioned funds and provided basic facilities, like ration cards, voter ID, Aadhar cards, and MGNREGS cards to work and earn from 2011 onwards. The forest department also did not disturb the IDPs who are settled in reserved forest areas doing podu cultivation. In between, when they are not supported by any officials, they went for agricultural and non-agricultural labour works. Now the IDPs are living without any fear of SalwaJudum in the Mulugudistrict of Telangana state.

Suggestions

The finding from the ITDA, Eturunagarm administrative area cannot be generalized to all the Guttikoya migration. The study was undertaken only at the destination. There is a need to carry out a study in the place of origin to find out the other factors behind the Guttikoya migration. This can provide us with complete information concerning the facts from both the places of origin and destination. There is a need to conduct an in-depth study at both places simultaneously so that some amicable policies and programmes can be evolved.

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