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**TRIBES IN NIZAM DOMINIONS: HYDERABAD STATE**

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**Abstract:** *The present paper deals with the condition of the tribes in Nizam Dominions or Hyderabad State.*

**Keywords:** *Hyderabad State, Administration System, Tribes in Nizam Dominions*

**Introduction**

The erstwhile Hyderabad state, which was endowed with rich biological diversity besides varied and rich cultural spectra. The Hyderabad State was the centre of the Deccan Plateau situated between 15° 10' and 20° 40' north latitude and 74° 90' and 80° 35' east longitude. It was surrounded by the Central provinces in the North, the Andhra area of the undivided Madras Presidency in the South and the East, and the Bombay Presidency on the Western side. The Hyderabad State, which was the largest among the native states of the pre-independence period, covered an area of 82,698 sq. Miles. It had a population of 98,45,594 in 1981 with a density of 119 persons per sq.mile and raised to 186.55 Lakhs in 1951 with a density of 227 persons per Sq. Mile.

The average altitude over the sea level was 1250 feet and certain summits were even well above 2500 to 3000 feet. The state was traversed by several hill ranges like the Balaghat range, the Sahyadri Hills and Jalna Hills in addition to numerous clusters of hills of minor importance. There were, however, certain undeluded portions of a series of the flat-topped plateau (locally known as hills) belonging to the great tableland of peninsular India, now forming watersheds between the different drainage areas. There was one main watershed traversing the state from northwest to south-east dividing the country into two nearly equal basins, which were drained off, by the

Godavari and the Krishna rivers. The important rivers were the Godavari, the Krishna, the Penganga and the Tungabhadra besides more than 45 streams that could be harnessed for irrigation.

The entire state was divided into two large equal divisions geographically and ethnically known as Marathwada and Telangana and a small division of Karnataka. These divisions were separated from each other by the Manjira and the Godavari Rivers. The portion to the north-west formed the trappean region and the granitic and calcareous (Limestone) regions of the south-west. Ethnically the trappean region was inhabited by the Maratha race and the granite region by those of Telugu and Kanarese speaking population of the south-east. The difference between these two natural divisions in respect of soils, vegetation and hill features had its direct and profound influence on cropping, pattering, type of cultivation, habits and the economic well-being of the people of these regions.

The main river systems of the Hyderabad State belonged either to the Godavari River in the north or to the Krishna River in the south. The Godavari is the most important river of the state with a total length of about 700 miles running through the districts of Aurangabad, Parbhani, Nanded, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam in the state and enters the Godavari district of the Madras Presidency. The Krishna is next in importance to the Godavari with a total length of 400 miles, flowing through the districts of Raichur, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda and Warangal.

There were no natural lakes in the Hyderabad State. The undulating nature of the country helped in the construction of artificial tanks or dams across the valleys of small rivulets and streams, to intercept water during the rainy season for irrigation purposes. The total number of tanks, large and small, in the state was 20,476. Such artificial tanks are particular to the granite country (Telangana) and whenever groups of granite hills occur, tanks are sure to be found associated with them. They are not generally found in the trap regions such as Marathwada, as the soil is too porous over there and the Bunds thrown across become much cracked and fissured in the hot season so that they are easily breached on the burst of rains.

A large area of the state consisted of rocky soil rich in mineral resources such as coal, iron, limestone, mica, graphite and gold. Iron ore deposits of varying quality were widely distributed in the Godavari and Wardha valleys. Hematite was found in the Krishna and Tungabhadra valleys. Even diamonds, in the Kurnool series and gold in Raichur, were mined. The only mineral of great economic value that was being worked in the state was coal. The coal mines were situated at Singareni, Sasti and Paoni. Some other minerals were also found in the state like mica, corundum and garnets in Warangal district, graphite in Karimnagar and limestone in Shahbad. The Shahbad stone was widely used for flooring and manufacture of cement.

The region had a tropical climate and the mean temperature was about 27 degrees Celsius, the maximum in summer often rose to above 48 degrees Celsius in some low-

lying parts of Telangana. It received an average rainfall of 33 inches in the East to about 29 inches in the west, mainly brought by the south-west monsoon according to the figures of rainfall from 1900-1940. The distribution of the rainfall is capricious. Some of the Telangana tracts in the northeast corner receive an average of 40-50 inches of rain. While Karnataka with an average rainfall of not exceeding 25 inches, suffers from the frequent occurrence of drought. The chief crops produced in the state were rice, wheat, cotton, oilseeds and millets. The region had 9,357 sq. miles of forest constituting 11.7% of the total area.

### **Administrative System of the Hyderabad State**

The administration is the device through which the Mughals controlled their territories efficiently and it evolved gradually. The credit for the centralized government and administration goes to Akbar who made significant changes in the existing system and give it a new dimension. It was Akbar who divided his Empire into 12 provinces for better administration and the governors of these provinces look into the maintenance of the administrative machinery. *Nizam-ul Mulk Asaf Jah* who became the governor of Deccan thrice is said to have established an independent rule there but a study of the regional sources shows that even after taking possession of the Suba Nizam followed the set pattern of administration as evolved by the Mughals, he only introduced some reforms needed due to the geographical and political conditions. The Nizams followed the same administrative machinery until the British domination became more and more in the region during the later phase.

### **Administrative Divisions**

Until lately the whole State, excluding the *Sarf-i-Khas* or Crown District of *Atraf-i-Balda*, was divided for administrative purposes into four Subahs or Divisions, 15 Districts, and one *Amalddri* or sub-District. In 1905 certain changes were made in the constitution of the districts; and though the number of Subahs remains the same, one District (Lingsugur) has been broken up, and the *Amalddri* has been made a District so that there are still 15 Districts. Each Subah or Division is under a Subahdar (Commissioner), and each District is under a First *Talukdar* (Collector). The latter officers have two or more assistants, known as Second and Third Talukdars. At the head of each *Taluk* is a *Tahsildar*. Excluding the *Atraf-i-Balda* or Crown District, but including all the *Jagirs* and *Samasthans*, each of the four *Subahs* had an average area of 19,825 square miles and an average population of 2,567,993 in 1901. Exact details of the areas as reconstituted are not available, and the following particulars are based on the statistics of 1901.

The average District area and population were 4,956 square miles and 641,998 persons respectively. These were sub-divided into 117 taluks, with an average area of nearly 678 sq. miles and 87,794 persons. The *Tahsildar* has charge of the revenue and the magisterial work of his *Taluk*, with a *Peshkar* (assistant) and a *Girddvar* (revenue inspector) to assist him in his work. The last class of subordinates is found only in the Telangana

Districts, where remissions are given on 'wet' cultivation in case of excessive or scanty rainfall, or breach of tanks, the revenue inspector must verify and report the extent of the injury thus caused.

Again, certain changes have taken place during the decade in the administrative divisions. The four *Subahs* into which the State had been divided were abolished in 1922 (1331 Fasli) and *Talukdars* were in charge of district administration directly under the Revenue Secretariat. Two Inspecting Officers, one for each natural division, were also functioning. As the latter had no executive powers the arrangement was done away with. Then the two natural divisions, Marathwada and Telangana, under two Directors-General of Revenue, came to be regarded as convenient units in 1925 (1334 Fasli). These, however, were subsequently found to be unwieldy and not conducive to efficient administration. The four *Subahs* were therefore reconstituted in 1929 (1338 Fasli). They are: Aurangabad, Gulbarga, Medak and Warangal. Under this arrangement, Nizamabad, which had formerly been under the Medak division, was transferred to Warangal. The area of the Warangal subah is the largest with 24,225 sq. Miles; then come to Gulbarga, 21,956 sq. Miles and Aurangabad, 19,240 sq. Miles, the smallest being Medak, 14,573 sq. Miles. The districts comprised in the four divisions are:

Sl. No	Subhas	Districts
1	Aurangabad	Aurangabad
		Nanded
		Parbhani
		Bir
2	Gulbarga	Gulbarga
		Raichur
		Bidar
		Osmanabad
3	Warangal	Warangal
		Karimnagar
		Adilabad
		Nizamabad
4	Medak	Medak
		Nalgonda
		Mahabubnagar

Thereafter, in 1941, once again the administrative divisions are changed in the Nizam VII regime. A little change in the administrative division took place during the decade except that Nizamabad District was retransferred from Warangal Subah to Medak Subah. A new district, N1aghat, was constituted under Medak Subah; it was

formerly a *Taluq* round about the city of Hyderabad in Medak district. A new *Taluq* of Banswara was formed in Nizamabad District with some of the villages from Bodhan and Yellareddi *Taluqs*. The rest of the *Taluq* of Yeilareddi was transferred from Nizamabad to Medak district. Thus, there are in all 17 districts including the *Sarf-i-Khas* (Crown Lands) district of *Atraf-i-Balda*, and so 17 divisions. The Subahs and the Districts at the end of 1941 were as follows:

Sl. No	Subhas	Districts
1	Medak (Gulshanabad)	Atraf-I-Balda
		Nizamabad
		Medak
		Baghat
		Mahbubnagar
		Nalgonda
2	Warangal	Warangal
		Karimnagar
		Adilabad
3	Aurngabad	Aurangabad
		Parbhani
		Nanded
		Bir
4	Gulbarga	Gulbarga
		Raichur
		Osmanabad
		Bidar

### Tribes in Nizam Dominions

In Nizam Dominions, the tribes are considered Animists means no idea to which religion they belong. Animism is the primitive religion, the religion of the illiterate people of the rudest culture. By it, one understands that gods are either ghosts or shadows of men. As

Risely puts it in his book, "The People of India," "the Animist worships and conciliates a shifting, shadowy company of unseen powers or tendencies making for evil rather than good-powers which reside in the primaeval forest, crumbling hills, rushing river, spreading tree, which gives its spring to the tiger, its venom to the snake, which generates jungle fever and walks about in the terrible guise of cholera, small-pox, etc." A clear conception that spirit-worship is a religion and that that religion is distinguished from others by the word Animism, the primitive man cannot be expected to have. So, the enumerator was required to state in column "Religion" the name of the tribe. This method, designed to separate Hindus from Animists, has been in vogue



since 1891 but it is by no means without flaws. For instance, Banjaras and Pardhis are tribes and their religion is not on all fours with that of the Chenchus, one of the unsophisticated tribes in the forest regions of Amrabad or of Gonds in the Adilabad district. Gonds are very largely permanent settlers in the plains and have not been impervious to influences from without, resulting in changes in customs, beliefs and the material arts of life. Aboriginal tribes coming under Hindu influence, are prone to adopt Hindu ideas and prejudices and take part in Hindu festivals and thus the difference between the aborigines and their Hindu neighbours as regards social customs and religious observances gradually fades away and they ultimately come to be regarded as Hindus. For instance, the case of the Chenchus, who are believed to be one of the purest of aborigines, in the Amrabad Hills. Hindu cowherds have access to the abode of this tribe and the path of Hindu pilgrims to Sirsalam, on the other side of the Kistna, lies across the hills. The pilgrims engage Chenchu men as burden-bearers. Itinerant minstrels and mendicants also visit the outlying Chenchu villages. At harvest times some Chenchus go down the hills for labour. Such frequent means of contact with Hindus in the plains have made the Chenchus copy some of the social customs and religious observances of their civilised brethren. The vermilion mark on the forehead, a distinct insignia of a caste Hindu, the use by women of strings of glass beads around the neck and glass bangles for the wrists and the worship of Lingam are some of the unmistakable signs of social and religious evolution. The primitive mind is as receptive as that of the Adi-Hindu or Brahmanic Hindu of modern conditions. It is a silent but sure process of evolution and, as Sir Edward Gait remarks in his All-India report for 1901, "the practical difficulty is to say at what stage a man ceases to be an Animist and becomes a Hindu." Therefore, as time goes on, the procedure of drawing a line of demarcation between Animists and Hindus would serve no useful purpose. Animism is the antechamber of Hinduism.

According to the census of India 1941 (Volume XXI), 678,149 persons of tribal origin were enumerated in Nizam Dominions. Of the thirteen major tribes, Lambadi, Gond, Yerkala, Koya, Andh and Bhil are numerically important. Lambadi's and Yerkalas are fairly well spread over the Dominions. Gonds are the most numerous of the tribes. They live in that part of Gondwana which lies within the Adilabad, Karimnagar and Warangal Districts, along the eastern border of the Dominions. Koyas a branch of Gonds is found in the forest regions of the same districts. Andhs and Bhils are confined to the northern hilly tract of the State which includes parts of Aurangabad, Bir, Parbhani, Nander and Adilabad. Of the total Chenchus numbering 3865, as many as 3280 are inhabited in Mahbubnagar district. The Farhabad Hills of that district are their abode; they are a continuation north of the River Krishna of the Annamalai Hills which are the Madras home of this tribe. The total population represents 42 per mile of the total population. Though Telangana claims nearly 75% of the tribal strength, Marathwara has recorded a percentage. The variation in the number of selected tribes and their proportion per mile of the population is given in the below table:

Sl. No	Census Year	Tribal Population	Percentage Variation	Proportion per Mile
1	1941	678149	24.5	42
2	1931	544789	26.5	38
3	1921	480748	50.8	34
4	1911	285722	337.5	21
5	1901	65315	00	00

### Condition of the Tribes

Agriculture formed the principal occupation of these tribes' men who mostly cultivated Kharif crops and oil seeds on light soils that were found on plateaus and slightly inclined slopes. They practised shifting cultivation by changing the plots for every two or three years, on this latter getting exhausted of their fertility. Depending on the rainfall. The crop yields were not meagre to the effect that a generation before, cattle, thereby indicating their days of prosperity.

The Tribe population is the most backward and disadvantaged group in the Hyderabad State and is faced with a severe economic exclusion, as the most oppressed and exploited elements at the hands of the immigrant and non-aboriginal landlords and forests contractors as well as forest, revenue and police officials. Until the formers hilly and riverine habitations had been, during the second and third decades of the present century, concerted by road and rail links with the plain and non-tribal areas of both internal and external jurisdiction, there were enjoying a happy, peaceful and even a reasonably prosperous life, both employing shifting and plough cultivation, cattle-breeding and also exploitation of the forest produce. With this opening up of the tribal areas and at the same time, Government as a policy measure to being more lands under cultivation for enhanced revenue and also agricultural production, encouraging the arrival of new settlers into them, a flood of land-hungry ryots from densely populated districts of the state and areas of the neighbouring provinces, along with rapacious forests contractors. The capturing of Patwari and Patel Watans by the immigrants in the settled villages which, in some cases embraced and their consequent and easy influencing of higher revenue, forest and police officials, even with huge bribing, enabled the former to easily evict the innocent tribesmen from the lands that they had been already cultivating since a pretty long time, even by the change of entries in revenue records and also acquire monopolistic rights in timber cutting and its export. The aboriginals, on the other hand, were not issued under the former regimes, land Pattas irrespective of the periods of ownership as the concept of State or Kingly ownership prevailed and as a result, with their meekness and ignorance, they were found to be at a loss to prove their land claims in the present regime when they got

ranged against the wily and resourceful immigrant non-aboriginals. The situation became so worse for the former that not only had they been dispossessed from their lands, but they were not even allowed to continue as tenants on their former lands, nor did the forest department permit them to take up the cultivation of new lands at sites of their choice. The new absentee landlords preferred to let their lands to non-aboriginal cultivators in expectation of higher rents and also better cultivation on one hand, and the forest officials, on the other hand, resorted to reservation of forests in such a way and so close to cultivated lands that little fresh land was available for the Podu or the Plough Cultivation of the dispossessed tribals. The inevitable consequence that followed was that the latter were forced to fall back on forest labour to eke out their livelihood. But, even in this calling also, they had been subjected to severe exploitation at the hands of the immigrant's forest contractors who, either under the cover of supply of grain or the payment of land revenue on behalf of the former, handed over only paltry amounts for labouring all native but to receive them, failing which they were either put to starvation or even physical violence was used by the exacting merchants' contractors. On the other hand, it is worth noting that a considerable number of tribes in Samasthan, immigrated to the other side in the agency tract, when they found that the conditions there in respect of cultivation and forest labour were very much better. But those who had deep feelings of sullen resentment and frustration that they were neither allowed to lead unfettered a life of their own nor were they cared for which prompted the Government towards ameliorative measures. Prevention of tribal land alienation into non-tribal hands, grant of land to tribesmen under Laonikhas, establishment of schools and hospitals in tribal areas and co-operative exploitation of forest coupes, etc., had been undertaken since 1944-45, but rather it became too late and further, the magnitude of those measures was not at all in commensuration with the need. By the time government commenced its remedial action, the non-aboriginal settlers had already become the dominating force in the once tribal zones and the tribals very much got resigned to their fate. Allotment of founds was so inadequate with a total tribal population. Similarly, land distribution touched only 50% and less than 10% of their number respectively. Among hill tracts tribes, it was completely nil, 1948-49 convulsions put a stop to even these meagre operations. Tribal life thus during the period, excepting that of the non-aboriginal who proved equal to the situation, never, since 1920s and 30s remained free from non-aboriginal and official exploitation and became one of want and destitution. Their discontent in turn, formed a source of communist exploitation during the latter stages of the Telangana Struggle.

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