

TRIBE CULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

India had always been known as the land that portrayed cultural and traditional vibrancy through its conventional arts and crafts. The 29 states and 7 union territories sprawled across the country have their own distinct cultural and traditional identities and are displayed through various forms of art prevalent there. Every region in India has its own style, culture and pattern which makes it distinct. The tribal groups of India are known to be the autochthonous people of the land. Tribal of Andhra Pradesh are indicators of cultural heritage of state with their roots from the centuries of Indian society. They give true distinctive picture of their lifestyle, living culture and ceremonial practices. The Major Hill tribes are Bhagatha, Kondadora, Khond, Valmiki, Kammara, Gadaba, Kotias, Porja and Nookadora. Regional and ethnic diversities among various tribal groups can be seen with different clan and social structures. Human groups change slowly or rapidly under the pressure of internal and/ or external forces. As a result, different tribal societies at present moment are also going through the critical state of transition. The tribes of Andhra Pradesh, whether they dwell in the forest-hilly regions or on the plains, represent a fascinating diversity, with their variegated socio-cultural traditions, multiple occupations and diverse linguistic heritage. The present study is an attempt to understand and highlight the characteristics and factors that have and are being contributing to the respective primitive tribes of Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh.

Key Words: Traditional vibrancy, Transition, Ethnic diversities, Socio-cultural traditions

Introduction:

Tribe has been defined as a group of indigenous people having common name, language and territory tied by strong kinship bonds, practising endogamy, having distinct customs, rituals and belief etc. Such definitions are not very helpful because we find lot of variations in life styles of different tribes. Tribal communities are known to be residing in forests with their environment. All living cultures change. Neither isolation nor simplicity of technology produce complete stagnation and even in the most conservative culture, change does take place. Human groups change slowly or rapidly under the pressure of internal and / or external forces. As a result, different tribal societies at present moment are also going through the critical state of transition. With modernisation, the tribals are slowly but surely becoming aware of and assimilating some of the modern values while continuing their traditions and conventions. The tribal cultural heritage is endangered due to modernization and globalization. The tribes are resorting to non-tribal occupations for sustenance, leaving the diversity of arts, crafts, culture to their fate. In fact, the arts and crafts give the tribals their diversified identity. The tribals are having their own culture and customs. The Scheduled Tribes who are scattering the hilly region usually assemble at the weekly shandies. It is at these places they exchange information of their welfare with conducive local conditions prevailing and at times they use these places to fix up alliances. The shandy points are also benefitting the tribals for their natural interest.

Ethnographic Profile of Major Tribes of Andhra Pradesh

Bagata: Bagata is one of the numerically preponderant and ethnically significant tribes of Andhra Pradesh and distributed predominantly in the Scheduled areas of Visakhapatnam district. Majority of the former Mutadars and traditional village headmen in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district belong to this tribe. They occupy highest rung in the local social hierarchical ladder. It is a Telugu speaking community with a population of 1,32,577 as per 2011 Census constituting 2.7% to the total tribal population of the State. This tribe is divided into a number of unilateral agnatic kin groups called "Gothrams" or "Vamsams" such as Korra (Sun), Killo or Bagh (Tiger), Gollari (Monkey), Pangi (Kite), etc., and the members of each gothram presume that they have descended from a common ancestor. These gothrams are further divided into a number of surnames (Intiperlu). Agriculture is the main stay of their livelihood while agriculture labour and collection of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) are subsidiary occupations.

Konda Doras: Konda Doras are found in the Scheduled Areas of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh. Their population according to 2011 Census is 2,10,509. They call themselves as 'Kubing' or 'Kondargi' in their own dialect, which is called 'Kubi'. The Konda Doras of Vizianagaram, Srikakulam and East Godavari have forgotten their own dialect and adopted Telugu as their mother tongue while those living in Visakhapatnam district speak both Telugu and Adivasi Oriya. Konda Dora tribe is divided into a number of clans such as Korra, Killo, Swabi, Ontalu, Kimudu, Pangi, Paralek, Mandelek, Bidaka, Somelunger, Surrek, Goolorigune, Oljukula, etc., They are basically shifting cultivators and also adopted settled cultivation collection of non-timber forest produce.

The Khonds: Khonds are predominantly distributed in the densely wooded hill slopes in the Scheduled Areas of Visakhapatnam district. They are also known as 'Samantha', 'Kodu', 'Kodi', 'Kodhu', 'Kondu' and 'Kuinga'. They have their own dialect called 'Kui' or 'Kuvi' and they call themselves as 'Kuinga' or 'Kui Dora' in their own dialect. They are recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). Their population according to 2011 Census is 1,02,378. The Khonds

are divided into various sub tribes like Dongria Khond, Desya Khond, Kuttiya Khond, Tikiria Khond and Yeneti Khond. Each sub tribe is divided into a number of clans. Each clan has a distinct name and matrimonial alliances are permitted basing on clans' names. The consumption of beef and pork is not traditionally forbidden. Khonds mainly subsist on cultivation and they are experts in Podu cultivation. They are adept in hunting and fishing also specialized in basket making, mat weaving, oil extraction, etc. Khonds perform a folk dance called 'Mayura' (peacock dance) which is an imitation of movements of peacock on every festive and marriage occasions.

Valmik: Valmiki is 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 2001 Census, their population is 70,513. as per 2001 census. The Valmiki tribe is divided into various 'gotrams' in order to regulate the marriage institution in Visakhapatnam tribal area. The gotrams are "Nagabowse (snake)", "Matsyabowse" (fish), "Pangibowse" (kite), "Jillabowse" (tiger), "Vantabowse" (monkey), "Korabowse" (sun), "Bhallabowse" (bear), "Poolabowse" (flower) and "Chillabowse" (goat). But these clan names are absent in tribal areas of East Godavari district. Marriage by mutual consent, marriage by elopement, are the methods of acquiring mates. Widow remarriages and divorce are permissible. Valmikis 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.

Gadaba: Linguistically, people of Gadaba tribe belong to the Mundari dialect. The Gadaba Tribal people are distributed in the Jey-pore, Malkangiri, Koraput and Pattangi taluks. They are, like the Savaras, farmers, but hunting and fishing make additional contributions to their food supply. The Gadaba women are good at weaving bark fiber cloth on miniature looms of their own manufacture and the woven fabric is dyed by them with various vegetable dyes. In fact no Gadaba girl is considered qualified for marriage until she has acquired the requisite skill on the loom. The enormous wire rings worn by Gadaba women as ear ornaments have also attracted considerable notice.

Kotias: Kotias are predominantly found in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district. Their population as per 2011 Census is 45,291. Kotia tribe is divided into various sub groups like Bodo Kotia, Sano Kotia and Putia Poika. In Visakhapatnam agency, Bodo Kotias are also called Doras and claiming equal status with Bagata - a tribe with higher social status. Bodo Kotias do not accept cooked food from Sano Kotias as they are considered inferior in social status. Similarly, Sano Kotias also do not accept food from those of Putia Poika. Kotia tribe is divided into various symbolic clans and each clan is further divided into different surnames. All the sub divisions of Kotia tribe speak corrupt form of Oriya. Kotias are agriculturists and collect non-timber forest produce.

Porjas: Porjas are found predominantly in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district. Porja tribe is recognised as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group in Andhra Pradesh. Their population as per 2011 Census is 36,143. They are recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. They have their own dialect but also speak Telugu as well as Adivasi Oriya. Porja tribe is divided into various endogamous sub-divisions like Parangi Porja, Jhodia Porja, Gadaba Porja, Banang Porja, Pangu Porja, Kolloi Porja and Didoi Porja. Each endogamous sub-group is further divided into totemic clans which are popularly known as 'bowsu' in local parlance such as Killo (tiger), Kimudu (Bear), Korra (millet), Rambi (bird), Pangi (kite), Ontala (snake), Gollori (monkey) etc. Clan names are pre-fixed to the individual names. The woman gets the clan name of the husband after marriage. Porjas perform a folk dance called Jhodianat or Nandinat at the time of Nandi devatha festival. The entire movements of the dance resemble those of Dimsa dance but swift movements which are found in Dimsa are not found in Jhodia nat. Most of the Porjas who are living in the interior places are largely subsisting on podu cultivation and collection of non timber forest produce. They practice podu cultivation on hill slopes and use primitive implements like weed cum digging stick, hand axe and sickle. The landless sections work as agricultural labourers. The Porjas are non-vegetarians and consume beef and pork.

Mukhadhoras: Mukhadhoras are found in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and East Godavari districts. They are also known as "Nookadora", 'Racha Reddy', 'Muka Raja' and 'Sabarlu'. Their population according to 2011 Census is 42,357. Mukhadhora is divided into several exogamous clans such as Korra, Gammela, Kakara, Sugra, Kinchoyi, etc. The name of the clan is prefixed to their names. The elders of Mukhadhora community wear sacred thread and Tulasi beads. Their mother tongue is Telugu but they also speak Adivasi Oriya. Mukhadhoras abstain from eating of beef and pork. Most of the Mukhadhoras depend on agriculture for eking out their livelihood and they supplement their economy by collection and sale of minor forest produce. They claim social status just below the Bagatas in the social hierarchy of tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district.

Culture and Language Rights of Tribal communities

Tribal communities have been unable to safeguard and promote their language and culture; even though Article 19(5) of the constitution states that a cultural or linguistic minority has the right to conserve its language and culture. This means that Tribal as individual and groups have right to use their own language, to practice their own culture, to study their own history, tradition and heritage etc. The state cannot, by law, impose upon them any other culture or language. While the state may not have enforced any language or culture on them, neither has it taken any positive steps worth the name towards meeting this provision of the constitution. Rather, the steps taken are far from being in consonance with the provisions laid down in the constitution. The posture that they adopted has invariably been in the direction of assimilation into the language and culture of the major community, rather than protection and promotion of the distinct language and culture of the Tribal communities. Schooling extended to Tribal communities for example, has invariably been made in the language of the dominant regional community of the respective states or in English. The result is that Tribal communities are increasingly losing knowledge of their own language and culture. Indeed, the promotion of language and culture has been left to Tribal communities themselves. Yet, because of lack of control over human, organizational and financial resources, the Tribal communities have not been able to take effective measures in this direction. Only where such support has been made available in some form or the other the Tribal communities have been able to protect and safeguard their culture. The

tribal cling to their identity despite of the external influences that threatened the tribal culture especially after their post-independence turbulent period. The traditional knowledge of indigenous communities give us the another dimension of most problems faced today. From ecosystem management to traditional medicine, their knowledge can help us in coping up with resource depletion. Many of the folk narrative traditions kept alive by tribal communities in Telugu-speaking areas are fading away. The number of people telling such stories is getting reduced with the passage of time.

Conclusion

If tribal lose their diversity, gradually human diversity will also be lost. Therefore, the people, Government and intellectuals have to take immediate steps to safeguard the tribal arts and crafts to save human diversity. There is an immediate need to constitute Tribal autonomy councils so that the Tribal communities themselves can look after the rules, implementation and development of the localities. The distinctiveness of the tribes lies their rituals, cultures, beliefs and above all the harmony in which they survive in unison with nature. Their living perfectly depicts a well-balanced give and take procedure that in no way disrupts the ecological balance.

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