



A study on Land and Forest Resource protection of Koda Reddi Primitive Vulnerable Tribes at Chintur Mandal East Godavari district A.P. India.

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the livelihood conditions and issues of Konda Reddi Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) living in 19 habitations at Chintur Mandal of East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, India. They live, away from the main stream, in the dense forest on hill tops and hill slopes. Their habitations do not have road facility. They travel distance from the habitation to the nearest road point can be measured only by hours of time taken for walk. The geography of forest is hill slope lands covered with rocky plateau, broken chain of rocks, pebbles, gravel and red soil. The Konda Reddi Tribes are becoming increasingly vulnerable due to loss of their customary habitats and the livelihood resources which sustained them due to non-recognition of their rights. This is leading to hunger/starvation, malnutrition and ill health and erosion of traditional occupations, which is threatening their very survival, some of them are even on the verge of extinction. Overall study reveals importance to respect and recognize the rights of Primitive Tribes, especially to their land and customary habits.

Keywords; Primitive Tribe, Konda Reddi, Tribes, Vulnerable, habitation, Shifting cultivation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tribal communities live in about 15% of the Country's landmass in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains to forests, hills and inaccessible areas. They encompass a wide diversity of cultures, systems of self-governance and livelihood systems and are provided special protection by Schedules V and VI of the Constitution. While some tribal communities have adopted mainstream way of life at one end of the spectrum, there are tribal groups, at the other end who are characterized by (i) Forest-based livelihoods, (ii) Pre-agriculture level of existence, (iii) a declining Population (iv) extremely low literacy and (v) a subsistence economy. Such 75 Tribal groups are residing in 17 States and 1 Union Territory have been identified and categorized as Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

As per 2011 census and accounts for 8.2% of the total population, 4.26 Crores are Men and 4.17 Crores Women, accounting for 8.1% and 8.40% respectively. Andhra Pradesh is now the largest concentration of Tribes in South India. The Forest clad hill ranges and checkered Valley traversed by hill stream of Eastern Ghats and Forest flanking the mighty Godavari Krishna rivers constitute the traditional habit of as many as 30 Forest Tribes. Total population of Tribes in Andhra Pradesh are (16.58 lakhs) spread in 29,683 Square kilometers. The geography of forest is hill slope lands covered with rocky plateau, broken chain of rocks, pebbles, gravel and red soil. Hence these communities are practicing podu (shifting) cultivation during the rainy season in small patches of suitable land far away from their habitations to eke out their livelihood. Jowar and dry paddy are the common crops seen in the *podu* cultivation. Konda Reddis collect Minor Forest Produces and available florals in the region are like Nuts & Fruits are used for their consumption and the rest of the products like Wild Honey, Bamboo, and Tamarind used for marketing in weekly Santa (Market).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

After independence, the basic principles for the development of the Scheduled Tribes were clearly enunciated by **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru**, the first Prime Minister of India in the form of five principles known as "*Tribal Panchasheel*". Which was later endorsed by the **Renuka Roy team** (1959), **Dhebar Commission** (1961) and **Shilu AO Committee** (1969), starting from the special multipurpose Tribal Blocks of 1956, the measures taken for development of Scheduled Tribes are multifarious. The creation of separate Tribal Development Blocks in the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) and of a Tribal Sub-plan (TSP) within the State plan in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) and formation of the Large-scale Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS), Tribal Development Agencies, Integrated Tribal Development Area Projects (ITDA), Modified Area development Approach (MADA), and Micro Projects for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) reflected the course of Tribal development administration in the Country (**Rao**, 2001).

A variety of approaches and strategies, like top-down approach, regional planning, target group approach, integrated development participatory development, Joint Forest Management, Watershed Management, and Poverty alleviation programmes have formed part of development approach (**Oraon Vijay** 2012:10).

The Scheduled areas which are included in the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Article-244) declares certain Tribal areas as Scheduled Areas in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Bhuddhadeb Chaudhruri (1991) he defines that 'Forest development and Community participation' and explained about the policies related to Forest and Scheduled Tribes where there are both positive and negative impacts.

Billie R De Walt's (1994) in his paper 'Indigenous knowledge to improve Agriculture and Natural Resource Management' and discussed about the strength and weakness of both indigenous and scientific knowledge systems. The examples are drawn from different situation for an understanding of the importance of indigenous knowledge practices.

K.S. Wiersum's (1997) an evolutionary continuum of Forest-people interactions explained the need to understand the diversity and dynamics of indigenous Forest Management. He identified three major categories of Forest Management practices are, controlled utilization of Forest Products, Projection and maintenance of forest stands, and Purposeful regeneration.

Rao (2001) says the course of Tribal development administration in the Country reflects through micro projects initiated for the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) **V. Sudarsen and Susmita** (2003) point out that the Tribes who depend on the natural resources in their environment develop their skill for a proper utilization in a sustainable way.

Mahendra Karma (2005) points out that in the present scenario Tribes of Sout Chhattigarh who are from the districts of Dantewada, sulkuma and Bijapur, which are the boders districts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The Main reason for migration is Salwa Junctiion, a peace hunt founded.

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE WELFARE OF SCHEDULED TRIBES

In pursuance of the Article 46 of the Indian Constitution, the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes is being looked after the State Government, in order to protect the interest of the Tribes and to curb exploitation at the hands of others. The scheduled Fifth of the Indian Constitution empowers the Governor to modify the State and Central Legislations regarding their applicability to the Scheduled Areas and to frame regulations for the good Governance in these areas. Accordingly Government of Andhra Pradesh has framed Andhra Pradesh State Agency Land Transfer Regulation (APSALTR) of 1959 and the regulation 1 of 1959 protects the Tribal interest regarding land issues. In 1963 this regulation was amended by regulation 2 of 1963. It was again amended in the year 1970 by regulations 1 of 1970 of 1970.

In exercise of the powers confirmed by sub section 1 of section 8 of the Andhra Pradesh State Agency Land Transfer Regulation (APSALTR) 1959, the Governor of AP made rules called the Andhra Pradesh State Agency Land Transfer Regulation Rules (APSALTRR) in 1969 (4). In addition to the above safeguards, there also existed, the other protective regulations and Acts such as: Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Money Lenders Regulation (APSAMLR) of 1960, Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Debt Relief Regulation (APSADRR) of 1960, National Forest Policy (NFP) of 1894, 1952 and 1988: Panchayatraj Extension Act to Scheduled Areas (PESA) of 1996 besides several Government Policies and Government Orders and Judgments, pronounced by different Courts from time to time. The Panchayat Extension of Scheduled Areas Act 1996, (the PESA) the Forest Rights; Act 2006 (FRA) empower the Scheduled Tribes to exercise some influence on the disposition of natural resources in the areas where they live. According to Section 4 (i) of the PESA, the Gram Sabha or Panchayat must be consulted before land acquisition for development in Scheduled areas. However, the views of the Sabha or Panchayat are not binding on the government. Simultaneously, section 3 of FRA recognizes the rights of live hood within forest land even without legal title. However, serious governance and implementation failure plague both the PESA and the FRA.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Particular Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTGs) like Konda Reddis are threatened in the name of Wild life Sanctuaries, Development Projects, and Industries at Scheduled areas of Andhra Pradesh. The Ministry of Environment and Forest and the National Tiger Conservation Authority must ensure that no relocation of Vulnerable Tribes and other traditional Forest dwellers takes place from protected areas without recognition of rights under Forest Rights Act, and prior informed consent of the Gram Sabhas of the particular group of Tribes. Wherever displacement and relocation becomes absolutely essential, appropriate strategies are evolved for providing them facilities support and rehabilitation. In such cases there is a need to recognize that PVTGs, unlike the rest of the population are particularly vulnerable to sudden instructions or changes in their life. The purpose of the study is to identify the

Land issues and steps to be taken to make PVTGs aware of their rights under Schedule V of the Constitution, the Provision of the Panchayat Extension to the Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act and Forest Rights Act (FRA) to address the issues.

AREA OF STUDY

The present study is conducted at following 8 Konda Reddy Habitations on hill tops of Chinthuru Mandal of East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, India. The Researcher opted to Eight Konda Reddy habitations namely Baai Bokka Vaagu, Chintna Paaka, Vegisa Gandhi, Thada Guppa, Maddi Banda, Oota Bokka, Velaga Guppa, Thadamara Guppa Villages which are under Reserve Forest of Eastern Ghats.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to explain what the factors responsible for the Land issues of Primitive Tribes in the name of the development. To understand the scheduled Land rights and customary habitats among Konda Reddis of reserved Forest. And to explore the financial resources generated from the livelihood strategies. To understand and explain what are the favorable factors responsible at the host region for the survival of natural resources which will be a trade mark in upcoming generations.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Qualitative Method is used for Primary data collection such as Case Study and conducting Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). Initial field visit was made for selection of the Primitive Vulnerable Tribal groups for the study during March 2022. In this regard Researcher approached different key persons like Patel, (acts as Head of the Konda Reddys Group) and other Konda Reddi groups at Hill tops, Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) staff, Girijan Co-operative Corporation (GCC) A.P Forest Dept. Officials, local Leaders, NGOs working with Scheduled Tribes were contacted to seek the information regarding PVTGs and in particular with Konda Reddi Tribes. The initial field visits gave an idea and helped to find out a way to approach Konda Reddis on Hill tops in Reserve forest. And it was a challenging task to reach the targeted habitations as they do not have road facility. However, the habitations are linked with foot paths through the dense forests. The travel distance from the habitation to the nearest road point can be measured only by hours of time taken for walk. Based on the initial field visit after a gap of 10 days the actual data collection was planned. Two different Qualitative tools namely Case Study and Focused Group discussions were used in gathering the information at field.

MAJOR FINDINGS

It is observed the basic unit of Social organization, which is an exclusive group of people who share a close relationship, a unit typically, composed of a couple and their dependent children in same place. Among the Konda Reddis primitive tribes, both nuclear and joint families are common, although the nuclear families are preferred. It is reported that Nuclear families are 79% and 21% of Joint families are seen in Konda Reddi tribes. During the study Gender distribution in 8 Habitants shows 61.2% of respondents are male and 38.8% are females.

Tab.1 Population of Tribes in India

Indicator	Absolute		Percentage		Growth Rate (2001- 11)
	2001	2011	2001	2011	
Total	8,43,26,240	10,42,81,034	8.2	8.6	23.7
Rural	7,73,38,597	9,38,19,162	10.4	11.3	21.3
Urban	69,87,643	1,04,61,872	2.4	2.8	49.7

Source: Census 2011 of Andhra Pradesh.

The type of House is usually considered as a proxy indicator for wellbeing, the houses of Konda reddis habitants are Thatched houses dispersed mostly near the foot hills and running streams. Most of the walls of a house are made of tree branches and bamboo, which are thickly plastered with mud.

Majority of 76% Konda Reddi Tribes are skilled workers of Bamboo crafts and gathering forest products like Wild Honey. And some people acts as members in Vanasamrakshana Samiti to safeguard the mother Forest from smugglers in the Reserve forest, these members helps to support Andhra Pradesh Forest Department. 82% Drinking water is utilized through running Streams from Hill corners, 10% River Water and 8% on Well water.

In the overall study maximum number of Surviving Children reported by the present study Konda Reddi women are 8, Two Women (0.3%) had no children surviving at the time of study. About 39% of Women reported only one living Child. 32% reported 2.20% reported 3 and 6% reported a total of 4 Children surviving. The percentage of Women reporting 5 or more surviving Children is about 3. The mean number of surviving Children reported by Women is 2.03 per Women.

Among Primitive Vulnerable Tribes there is extremely low literacy rate to overcome the issue, it is very impressed to identify that Chintur ITDA PO Mr. Venkata Ramana, succeeded in establishing a Konda Badi Residential School providing Primary Education for Konda Reddy Tribes on the hill top at Maamilla Banda habitation for Out of School Children, respondents reported that it was first School established by in June 2020. It covers 9 Habitations would walk for one and half hour to reach their School located on the hill provided with Food, accommodation, education for Children including OSCs up to Class III, after that Children will be placed at nearest Ashram School to continue their education.

In the study it is observed that Forest Department and ITDA officials requested the habitants to come near plain areas out of the forest, so that they can provide land, housing, water and electricity but these Konda Reddi families refused to utilize their offer every time, because they treat forest as their mother. For ex: Case Study at Velaga Guppa the incident was happen in the year 2019 as the Tribes were clearing the forest for shifting cultivation, in the process Forest Dept. staff entered into their habitations and destroyed some huts to clear the habitations immediately, the nearby habitations Konda Reddis on hills all were gathered and opposed the Forest Dept.. Finally Forest Department officials along with ITDA staff finally arranged a meeting between hill top habitations groups not to destroy Forest and boundary of land was drawn to PVTGs and present living in harmony without any conflicts.

The major occupation of the respondents is depended on Forest products like Wild Honey, Tamarind, Nuts, Bamboo, etc. It is found that Shifting Cultivation (Podu) in exists at all the Konda Reddi habitations on hill tops. Mainly cultivate Jowar, Seseam, and dry paddy on hill slopes 76% of crop is utilized for own household consumption and remaining 24% is used to exchange for other household groceries at local Sanata (Market).

A few families go for daily wage works, whenever such works are available. The daily wages and income from bamboo basket etc., making gets them an average family income of Rs. 5,000/- per month. Occasionally, the Konda Reddi families go for fishing in the nearest river called Godavari. Pig rearing is also observed in these habitations. However, both the fish and pork are meant for domestic consumption.

SUGGESTIONS

There is a need for creation of awareness in the PVTGs (Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups) like Konda Reddis about their Rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) needs to be generated. Recognition and protection of Primitive Vulnerable Tribal communities' tenures over their habitats should be secured.

Respecting and protecting the diversity of Tribal livelihood systems including rotational Cultivation involving rich knowledge of agro-biodiversity and ensuring food security to all members of communities through allocation of communal land on the basis of total families on hilltops. Development of livelihood strategies for Konda Reddi tribes should factor their often nomadic lifestyle and their unique skills and indigenous knowledge.

Conservation and enhancement of their traditional skills and rich indigenous knowledge need to be recognized and strengthened, such as Collection of Wild Honey, Irulas in snake catching, venom extraction, Dairy and horticulture, Rope making, Bamboo crafts, Metal works etc.

Regarding minor forest products collection, as PVTGs depend substantially on cash income from collecting and selling this produces could be ensured by requisite training and capacity building can be given by Griijan Co-operative Corporation so as to enhance their income. Assistance in changing to an agricultural economy needs to be provided.

Assurance of protection of land and resources that they are able to remain self-sufficient, however in lean season or rainy season employment could be provided, if requested, and if not free ration could be given to protect them from mal-nourishment and starvation.

ITDA should initiate or engagement of ethno-agriculture scientists who specialize in the crops, botanical plants and medicinal plants which are cultivated by the Primitive Vulnerable Tribes should be commissioned.

And it is to be recognized that top-down Government development efforts targeted at enhancing Tribal live hoods have not been successful as people do not have stake and ownership in them. There is need to develop a comprehensive framework to assist the Tribes in a manner that empowers them to determine their own development path at their own pace. Good and effective development frameworks for the Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups can be prepared only by allowing them to articulate their own priorities and demands based on their needs in a diverse socio-cultural aspect.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study there is a need to initiate effective measures by Govt. of AP Tribal Welfare and Forest Dept. to safeguard the livelihood conditions of Konda Reddi who are residing on the hilltops of Chinturu Mandal of East Godavari District. As each PVTGs living in small number, culturally different from one another lives in remote habitats with poor administration and infrastructure, more over they are becoming increasingly vulnerable due to loss of their customary habitats and the livelihood resources which sustained them from past decades.

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