

Gender Development And The Status Of Tribal Women: A Case Study Of Telangana State

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Abstract

The scheduled tribes (Tribal) constitute, according to 2011 census about 9.3 % of the total population in Telangana. Moreover, this tiny southern state presents a bewildering collection of tribal groups. Out of the 9(Nine) enlisted tribes found in the state, (i.e, Lambada,Koya,Gond,Yerukala,Pardhan,Kolam,Chenchus,KondaReddi and Thota) are regarded as the original settlers. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. They constitute about half the total population, but in tribal society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family economy and management depend on them. Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role. Mostly women and children do collection of minor forest produce. Many also work as laborers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. However, tribal women are still marginalized and deprived group in Tribal society. Gender equality among tribal groups is a complex phenomenon that needs to be addressed in the context of various issues of tribal life. The Gender dimension

of the tribal communities of India also has a bearing on the need for tribal development. This Research work focuses on the nature and dimensions of change in the lives and status of tribal women in Telangana and also focuses how the Socioeconomic changes during the last few decades have introduced new gender and class issues into the purportedly egalitarian society of the Tribal's.

Keywords: Gender equality,Gender discrimination,Tribal community,Development and Tribal Women in Telangana.

Introduction

Telangana is the only southern Indian state with tribal populations of 9.34%, and having boundaries with neighboring states of is bordered by the states of Maharashtra to the north and northwest, Chhattisgarh, Odisha to the northeast, Karnataka to the west and Andhra Pradesh to the east and south^[1]. It has a geographical area of 112,077 sq. km. The population of our State is 35, 193978, out of that, the population belongs to Tribals is 30, 66,802 of the total population according to 2011 census^[2]. The scheduled tribes (Tribal) constitute about 9.3 % of the total population in Telangana^[3]. Moreover, this tiny eastern state presents a bewildering

collection of tribal groups. There are 9 (Nine) notified Scheduled Tribes in the state. They are Lambada, Koya, Gond, Yerukala, Pardhan, Kolam, Chenchus, Konda Reddi and Thota^[1]. A large number of them are still following the primitive practice of shifting cultivation. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial^[4]. They constitute about half the total population, but in tribal society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family economy and management depend on them^[5]. Even after industrialization and the resultant commercialization swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role. Mostly women and children do collection of minor forest produce^[6]. Many also work as laborers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. However, tribal women are still marginalized and deprived group in Tribal society^[7]. Gender equality among tribal groups is a complex phenomenon that needs to be addressed in the context of various issues of tribal life. The Gender dimension of the tribal communities of India also has a bearing on the need for tribal development^[8]. This Research work focuses on the nature and dimensions of change in the lives and status of tribal women in Telangana. The Research work also focuses how the Socioeconomic changes during the last few decades have introduced new gender and class issues into the purportedly egalitarian society of the Tribal's.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this paper are: 1. To highlight the Gender roles among Tribal

society, 2. To find out the role and status of Tribal women in development and 3. To focus on the nature and dimensions of changes in the lives of tribal women in Telangana.

Methodology

The present study has been undertaken based on secondary source data. The Secondary data include books, journals, newspapers, Governmental report, Census report, websites etc.

Profiles of Tribes

Telangana is the only southern Indian state with tribal populations of 9.34 percent 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 asunder.

1. Gond – Kolam Region, 2. Koya – Konda Reddi Region, 3. Chenchu Region and 4. Plain Areas.

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 their dependent communities Pardhans and Thotis. 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 give 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 Mahaboobnagar and Nalgonda. The Chenchus also live in and around the Vikarabad forest region of Rangareddy

district. Communities such as the 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 sociocultural aspects of each tribe^[1].

i.Lambada / Sugali / Banjara

The Lambadas are a scheduled tribe inhabiting throughout the state of Telangana. They are also known as Sugalis and Banjaras. Their population, according to the 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 colored turbans. The womenfolk wear 'langa' of coarse cotton prints, richly embroidered with several fold at the waists. Lambada tribe is divided into five phratries viz.,

1. Bhukya (Rathod), 2. Vadthiya (Jadhav), 3. Chowhan, 4. Pamar and 5. Banoth (Ade).

These phratries are further divided into a number of patrilineal kin groups called Pada or Jath (Clan) in their dialect. Bhukya Phratry consists of 27 clans, Vadthiya 52, Chowhan 6 Pamar 12 and Banoth 13. Each phratry is an exogamous unit, and one has to marry outside his phratry. A clan is a

patrilineal kin group. The girl loses the name of the clan of her parents as soon as she marries and acquires the clan of her husband. The traditional joint family was playing a dominant role in choosing the mates, determining the residence, controlling the property, watching the morals and managing the affairs of the youngsters. The joint family was the norm in the early days among Lambadas but now it is breaking down gradually into nuclear families. Marriage by negotiations is the only accepted way of performing marriages and sometimes marriage by service is also practiced. The married women wear ivory bangles or imitation of them above their elbows, which are referred as 'Balial'. There are traditional musicians and bards to Lambadas called 'Dappans' depend mainly on the gift presented by Lambadas on various occasions and also work as manual laborers. There are three divisions among Dappans viz: 1. Bhat, 2. Dhandi, 3. Dhalia. Bhats and Dhadis sing songs about family history by playing musical instruments called "Jange" and "Kinjri" during marriage ceremonies. Dhalia or Dapdiya plays dappu. There are traditional barbers to Lambadas called 'Navi'. There is another endogamous sub-division called Sonar Lambadas who manufacture silver and gold ornaments. All these groups are endogamous sub-division of the main Lambada Tribe. These groups also adopted the Clan organization of the main Lambada Community. But inter-group marriages are strictly prohibited.

All these sub-divisions are considered inferior in social status to the main group. The Lambadas believe that the world is protected by a multitude of spirits-benign

and malign. Hence the malignant spirits are periodically appeased through sacrifice and supplication. The Lambadas also worship and pay reverence to the benevolent Gods such as Vishnu, Rama, Venkateswara and Seva Bhaya. Meraima is believed to protect their females and children and preserve the fertility of their lands and females while Seva Bhaya and seetala are regarded as the protectors of the cattle. They also celebrate the Hindu festivals like Ugadi, Balaji, Raki, Naga Panchami, Dasara, Deepavali, Sankranthi, Sivaratri and Holi.

The important traditional festivals are Teej, Seetala and Tulja Bhavani and they regularly celebrate them. The dead are cremated in separate cremation grounds. Lambadas have their own traditional council for each Tanda for the disposal of disputes originating from economic and social causes. This council consists of one headman (Nayak), one advisor (Karbari) and one messenger (Dappan). All the offices of the council are hereditary. They call a traditional council as 'Naiker Ghar'.

Lambadas are expert cattle breeders and largely subsist by sale of milk and milk products. They have settled in modern times on land and also became good agriculturists. Lambadas are giving up their nomadic habits and permanently settling on the land. The landless families are migrating to towns and cities and eking out their livelihood by driving auto rickshaws and by rickshaw pulling. They are also engaged as laborers on daily wages in construction work on buildings, roads etc^[1].

ii. Koya

The Koyas are one of the predominant autochthonous people of the southern region

of the country. The present habitat of the Koyas comprises the area of Mulug (Eturnagaram) Taluka of Warangal district and Bhadrachalam and Nugur Taluks of Khammam district. The most outstanding physical feature of the Koya country is the Godavari and this river exercises a profound influence on Koyas' economic, social and cultural activities, living on its banks and in the hills as well as plain areas on both sides of the riverain tract. Koyas generally restrict to the foothills and adjoining plains and in some areas penetrated far into the hills and in many of villages on the Godavari banks, there is a mixed Koya-Reddi population. The Koyas popularly known as 'Dorala Sattam' are believed to be the section of the Gondi speaking race, and though strongly influenced by neighboring Telugu speaking people, they retained a good many of typical cultural traits of Koya culture.

The Koyas are generally studied and medium in stature, with a short flat nose with spreading nostrils thick and projecting lower lips and the complexion varies from light copper brown to dark chocolate color. Their hair is usually wavy but almost straight. Like many other tribes, they are noted for truthfulness and simplicity. They excite contempt by their drunkenness, and want of thrift and vision in future life. Koyas live in symbiosis with Konda Reddis in the hilly and riverian tract of Koya land. They are as a whole more progressive than other tribal groups in the field of economic activity. They initiated Plough cultivation in the tract. Both Koyas and Konda Reddis produce same food stuffs and they exchange certain house-hold articles, and agricultural implements through the Barter system.

Some Koyas work as Blacksmiths and furnish the Konda Reddis with iron implements and some Konda Reddis manufacture baskets and winnowing fans and supply to Koyas. Koyas characteristic settlement is groups of hamlets scattered over the village land in places convenient for cultivation of their fields and seldom are the houses concentrated in a large compact village.

The houses are of rectangular and square shaped with thatched roofs and invariably with wooden fencing. If the village is frequently attacked by epidemic diseases and causes many deaths. The entire community will desert the village and settle at some other suitable place.

According to the 2011 Census, the total number of Koya population in Telangana including the present Andhra Pradesh is 5,90,739. They chiefly inhabit the agency and plains villages of Khammam, Warangal and a few in Adilabad district. About 70% of the total Koya population is found only in Khammam district. The major population of the Koyas is covered by Tribal Development Blocks viz., Eturnagaram of Warangal District; Bhadrachalam, Kunavaram, Vararamachandrapuram and Ashwaraopet of Khammam district; Polavaram and Buttayagudem of West Godavari district; Addategala, Rampachodavaram and Maredumalli of East Godavari district^[9].

iii. Gonds

The name by which the Gonds call themselves is Koitur or Koi in their Gondi and the derivation of the word Gond is uncertain. It is surely a name given to the tribe by others. As per 2011 Census Gonds including Naikpods are 3,04,537 in the state

of Telangana. Gonds or Raj Gonds constitute one of the most prominent aboriginal tribe of Telangana, both in numbers and historical importance. The word Raj Gond, most obviously, originated from the Descendancy that the Gonds claimed from the ancient families of the Chanda Rajas, but now even the forest laborer when talking to non-aboriginals and outsiders will give himself as Raj Gond. There are,

However, a few Gonds, quite insignificant in number, who is known as Dhur or Dhurwe Gonds and considered inferior in social status. They cannot intermarry with Raj Gonds^[9].

iv. Yerukala

Yerukala is scheduled tribe found throughout Telangana. They call themselves 'Kurru'. They are called 'Yerukula' after their women's traditional profession of fortune telling ((Eruka chepputa). The population of Yerukala tribe, according to the 2011 Census is 5,19,337 in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana). The Yerukala tribe has a dialect of its own, which is called 'YerukulaBasha' or 'KurruBasha' or 'Kulavatha'. It is derived from Dravidian languages, mostly Telugu, Tamil and Kannada. The Yerukala tribe is divided into a number of functional and endogamous subdivisions and each such sub-division is named after the commodity, which they traded in and the occupation they adopted. The sub-divisions are Dabba Yerukala (those who make baskets from split bamboo), Yeethapullala (Date twigs) 'Yerukula (those whom make baskets from wild date leaves), Kunchapuri Yerukala (those who make weaver's combs),

ParikamuggulaYerukala (Sooth sayers and beggars), Karivepaku (curry leaves) Yerukala (hawkers of curry leaves), Uppu (salt) Yerukala (salt hawkers). Each subdivision is divided into four phraties viz., Sathupadi, Kavadi, Manupati and Mendraguthi. The first two phratiries Viz., Sathupadi and Kavadi are considered to be superior to the other two. Each phratry is further sub-divided into a number of exogamous intiperlu (surnames). Some of the intiperlu are Kumbha, Mogili, Katta, Devara, Sreerama, Palaparthi, Meda etc, Endogamy at community level and exogamy at phratry and intiperlu level are observed. The type of family among Yerukala tribe is usually nuclear. Descent is patrilineal, Theresidence is patrilocal and authority is patriarchal, Cross-cousin (menarikam) marriages are preferred. Marriages between the maternal uncle and niece also permitted. Monogamy is the common form of marriage, but polygyny is also socially permitted. Marriage through negotiation and exchange are the common modes of acquiring mates. Traditionally, the married women used to wear a bead necklace as the symbol of marriage. But now ThaliBottu or MangalSutram, the marriage pendent is being worn as a marriage symbol by most of the women. Divorce is permissible on grounds of adultery, barrenness and incompatibility between the spouses. Widows are permitted to re-marry. Yerukalas worship Hindu benevolent Gods, i.e. Lord Venteswara, Narasimhaswamy, Narayanaswamy and Rama. The Yerukalas are a spirit haunted and ghost-ridden people and attribute every disease or misfortune to the action of some malevolent spirits and

ancestral ghost. The influence of evil spirit is averted by sacrificing goats, pigs, fowls etc. They worship benevolent Gods, which are common Gods in Hindu pantheon and appease malevolent deities such as Ankamma, Kollapuramma, Sunkulamma, Poleramma and Ellamma. The Yerukalas celebrate Hindu festivals such as Sankranthi, Sivarathri, Sreeramanavami, Dasara, Ugadi (Telugu New Year's Day). The Yerukala tribe has its own social control mechanism at each habitation inhabited by Yerukala to ensure proper observance of prescribed codes of conduct. This traditional council (Kula Panchayat) is headed by an elderly man whose office is hereditary traditionally. The traditional council (Kula Panchayat) try and decide the domestic disputes, disputes relating to theft, adultery, loans, property, and land. The characteristic feature of deciding guilt or innocence of an accused, among Yerukalas was through trial by ordeal, which was in vogue till recent times such as 1.Dipping of fingers in boiling oil, 2.Picking up the burnt iron crowbar and, 3.Walking barefoot through the fire bed. Apart from solving disputes, the Kulapanchayat is also competent to maintain the solidarity of the community by checking the behavior of the individuals. If a person commits the breach of incest taboo he is excommunicated and denied all community rights. The defaulter is readmitted into the community after the purificatory ceremony is observed.

Yerukalas are non-vegetarians. Rice is their staple cereal in coastal Andhra Pradesh, while Jowar is the staple cereal in Rayalaseema and Telangana regions. They eat pork. The traditional occupation of

Yerukalas includes basket-making, mat weaving, pig rearing, rope-making etc. The Yerukala women are specialized in soothsaying and fortune telling. Some of them also participate in economic activities like basket making, mat weaving etc, and make baskets with wild date leaves^[9].

v.Pardhan

Pardhans are inhabiting the tribal areas of Adilabad district. 2011 Census puts their number at 24,823. Pardhans or Pradhans 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 traditional bard. Gonds call them 'Patadi' meaning singer or genealogist. Pardhans claim that they are called Pradhans because they served as ministers and advisors to Gonds kings in the past. But some Pardhans opine that they are Pardans who used to accept 'Daan'(Charity proceeds) from Gond in return for their bard services.

Their mother tongue is Marati but they recite Gonds mythology and folk tales in Gondi. Pardhans registered highest literacy rate among all the tribal groups in Telangana. Pardhan community is divided into four phratries (Paadis) and they possess similar clan name like Gonds.

1) Sath Dev (seven deity group) (or Yeduwen saga in Gondi), 2) Saha Dev (six deity group) (or Sarwen saga in Gondi), 3) Pach Dev (five deity group) (or Siwen saga in Gondi) and 4) Char Dev (four deity group)(or a Nalwen saga in Gondi) Each phratry is further divided into exogamous clans similar to Gonds. The numbers

associated with these phratries will occur in ritual and ceremonial context.

Monogamy is highly preferred among Pardhans though polygamy is in vogue. They are following 6 types of acquiring mates i.e.1) Marriage by negotiation (Khaja), 2) Marriage by capture (Dharun Takna), 3) Marriage by service (Chaarjavac Lagan), 4) Marriage by intrusion (Seewar Jana), 5) Marriage by mutual love and elopement (Dharun Parna) and 6) Marriage by exchange (Seelad Choding), But as of now only the 1st, 3rd and 5th types of marriages are in vogue. The Pardhan get their children married, both before and after puberty. The marriage invariably takes place in the bridegroom's house. Payment of bride price and seven saries is prevalent. But nowadays dowries also entered into the Pardhan society. The Pardhan man may undergo more than one Lagna (marriage with full rites) whereas a woman will be married with full rites only once in her lifetime. She may be subsequently whether divorced or widowed. Then she marries any number of times. Divorce is permitted by the village council 'panch'. The remarried widow is not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies. The staple food of Pardhans is jowar and they are also traditional beef eaters like the Gonds. Pardhans attribute the cause of death to witchcraft and evil spirits. The dead are either cremated or buried. Their obsequies are identical with that of Gonds.

The Pardhan's economic conditions in the past were linked up with the prosperity of the economic conditions of their Gond patrons. Each Pardhan family used to serve a minimum 30 to 50 Gonds families and visits

them whenever there is some ceremony very often and receives various gifts in various functions. Gifts are Pal Dhan, Sade Dhan, Marming Dhan, Pat Dhan, Munyar Dhan, Tangedule. The Institution of social control among the Pardhan tribe at the village level is known as Panch. The village council consists of Mahajan (religious head), Devari (priest), Hawaldar (messenger) and Kaarbaari (record keeper). The Pardhans consider that the Gonds occupy the highest position and the Thotis the lower positions. The Pardhans serve as genealogists and bards to the Raj Gonds. No marriage of Raj Gonds is celebrated nor are their death rites performed unless a Pardhan is present to receive the marriage presents or to claim the remnants of the dead. Their attitude towards formal education is purely favorable. For their development ITDA was established in Utanoor, Adilabad district^[9].

vi. Kolam

Kolams are one of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) in Telangana and predominantly found in tribal areas of Adilabad district. They live in exclusive settlements in interior forests and mountainous tracts. The Telugu speaking people call them as 'Mannervarlu' meaning people living in the forest areas. Their population, according to 2011 Census is 45671. The total literacy rate among Kolam, Mannervarlu is 24.51 as per 2001 Census. They speak their own dialect called 'Kolami'. Kolams trace their descent to Bhima and Hidimbi, the well-known characters in the epic Mahabharata. Kolams treat Hidimbi as their patron Goddess and Bhima as supreme deity. The four tribal groups, predominantly living in

the tribal areas of Adilabad district, namely Gonds, Kolams, Pradhans and Thotis are maintaining symbiotic relations and possess identical clan systems and associated practice. The Gonds and Kolams possess an identical social structure. The four-phratry system of Gonds is also found among Kolams but with different nomenclature i.e., Yedu dayalkher (seven spirits group), Aru dayalkher (six spirits group), Idu dayalkher (five spirits group) and Nali dayalkher (four spirits group). Kolams have not adopted or borrowed all the clans of Gonds, but only one or two clans under each phratry. Kolams generally acquire their mates by negotiation, by capture, by mutual love and elopement, by service and by the intrusion. The levirate marriages are practiced among them. Divorce is permitted. Kolams are cultivators and agricultural laborers. They grow Jowar, black gram, cotton, red gram etc. Their staple food is Jowar. In addition to Lord Bhima, who is their Chief deity, the village deity called Nandiyamma is worshipped by them and it is found in the center of every Kolam settlement. They also worship Sita Devi, Laxmi, Indumala Devi (Hidimbi), Pothuraju and Jangubai. They celebrate Pokke Kotha Panduga (ceremonial eating of new mohwa flowers), Mondos (new year festival and ceremonial ploughing) Bhimayak lagna (marriage of lord Bhima), Akhandi (deities for protection of cattle and Kothalu (eating of new food grains). They perform Gusadi and Dimsa dances. Each Kolam settlement is controlled by a traditional village council (Kula Panchayat) which consists of 'Naikon' (headman), 'Delak' (priest), 'Mahajan' (messenger),

‘Tarmaka’ (cook) and ‘Gatiya’ (distributor of food) as members. The village headman and priest settle various disputes and other members to assist them in discharging their duties. In case of inter village disputes the Naikon and Delak of respective village assemble and settle them^[9].

vii.Chenchus

Chenchu is the first recognized 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 are 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 stature and emaciated. Several thousands of Chenchus are living on the northern bank of river Krishna in Nalgonda district and a few thousands in Rangareddy District (Vikarabad Area). The Chenchus are of dark complexion, long head, prominent eyebrows, broad nose and slight built with coarse and primitive features and wavy or curly hair and according to their appearance come under the group called Australoid. The men grow their hair as women and dress it in a knot either at the back or on the upper left of their head. They do not comb their hair and just prune it with their fingers. The

falling hair is plaited and wound round the knot. Women grow their hair, but do not cut or comb them. The use of castor-oil and the wooden-nit comb are recent innovations.

Man’s garment has been just a strip of loin cloth, and those who have come in to contact with other advanced people may wear a shirt or turban but they would still prefer the loin cloth to a dhoti or any other garment. A waist band is also worn made of a double piece of hide crudely cut from goat skin. Flint stones are usually carried in this pouch and sometimes a knife. The chenchu women wear the usual sari, touching the knee and a choliof the upper part of the body. The use of the thread and needle is not very well known. The Chenchus are by nature quiet and peace-loving, and there are no records or even folktales to show that they have ever indulged in armed conflicts or minor wars. The only equipment of self defence and small game is the bow and arrow. The stave is of a single piece of wood, cut, trimmed and shaped with notches at both ends. Fibre of a certain plant. Chenchus claim that the lord Mallikarjuna of Srisailam is their son-in-law and hence they celebrate Sivarathri Festival in a grand manner. Still a Chenchu Pujari can be seen in the chief strine of Srisailam^[9].

viii.KondaReddis

KondaReddis are inhabited on the banks situated on either side of river Godavari in the hills and forest tracts of Khammam district of Telangana. Their population as per 2011 Census is 1,07,747 including several thousands inhabiting the neighboring East and West Godavari districts. Their mother tongue is Telugu.They are recognized as a Primitive Tribal Group.

Konda Reddy tribe is divided into exogamous septs for regulating matrimonial relations. Like other Telugu speaking people their surnames are pre-fixed to individual names. Generally, each sept is exogamous but certain septs are considered as brother septs and marriage alliances with brother septs (agnate relations) are prohibited. They are primarily shifting cultivators and largely depend on the flora and fauna of the forest for their livelihood. They eat a variety of tubers, roots, leaves, wild fruits etc., They collect and sell non timber forest produce like tamarind, adda leaf, myrobolan, broom sticks etc., to supplement their meager income. They cultivate largely Jowar, which is their staple food. They also grow Chodi, red gram, Bajra, beans, paddy and pulses. They eat pork, but do not consume beef. The Konda Reddi family is patriarchal and patrilocal. Monogamy is a rule, but polygamous families are also found. Marriage by negotiations, by love and elopement, by service, by capture and by exchange are socially accepted ways of acquiring mates. Levirate is vague. They worship Muthayamma (Village deity), Bhumi Devi (Earth Goddess), Gangamma Devi (River Goddess) etc., and celebrate festivals like Mamidi Kotha, Bhudevi Panduga, Gangamma Panduga and Vana Devudu Panduga.

Konda Reddies have their own institution of social control called 'Kula Panchayat'. Each village has a traditional headman called 'Pedda Kapu'. The office of the headman is hereditary and the headman is also the Pujari (priest) of his village deities. The younger brother or nearest male relative of 'Pedda Kapu' acts as his assistant and substitutes in

case of absence of PeddaKapu from the village and he is called Pinna Pedda'. The offenses like adultery, incest and cases of divorce and inter dining with persons of other community are dealt by the village panchayat. The men and women folk jointly perform the traditional colorful dance viz., Bison horn on festive and marriage occasions. One of the men folk wears headgear made up of bison horn and one or two among them carries big drums and Konda Reddy men and women dance together rhythmically to the tune of the drums^[9].

ix. Thotis

Thotis are also Primitive Tribal Group lives in the districts of Adilabad, Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Mahaboobnagar, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Warangal in Telangana. They were 4,811 in number as per 2011 Census. The Thoti or Thotti is one of the village commune servants. The name has been derived from the word Thondu meaning to dig or Thott meaning to go round as the Thoti is the surveyor of news and has to summon people to appear before the village council. The Thoti is one of the most trusted of the humbler servants of the village community. A testimony borne to the industry of the Thoti in a proverb runs "if you work like Thoti, you can enjoy the comforts of a king". Thotis are recognized as a primitive tribal group by Government of India in 1983. They are divided into 4 exogamous phratries just as sagas of the Gonds. All the phratries or sagas are sub – divided into exogamous clans; Among Thotisclan name precedes the personal name and is treated as surname. Every clan is strictly exogamous.

The mother tongue of Thotis is Gondi. Gonds call the Thotis as Birdal (receiver) and the latter call the former as Dhani (Donar). Besides Gondi Thotis speak Telugu, Marathi, Urdu and Hindi. The traditional occupation of Thotis is acting as bards to their Gond patrons, but presently the majority of Thotis earning their livelihood as agricultural and casual laborers. The women folk also sing along with their husbands while engaged in rituals and functions at their respective Gond patron's houses. But women folk exclusively attends to tattooing (singar) and most of the tattooing designs and marks on the bodies of women folk belonging to Gonds, Kolams, Pardhans are works of Thotis. Monogamy is generally practiced by Thotis. Widow marriages are permissible. As far as marriage is concerned Thotis prefer consanguineous marriage. The type of consanguinity among them is first cousin, second cousin and third cousin marriage. Among 1st cousin marriage, they generally prefer maternal uncle's son and paternal anti's son. Generally they prefer maternal more than once due to the barrenness of his first wife. Families among Thotis are generally of nuclear type. The Thotis are Hindus by religion. They worship Gond Gods: beside these they also worship Hanuman and other Hindu Gods and celebrate a Hindu festival. They enjoy social status a little lower than that of the Gonds. Compared to other tribal populations living in Adilabad district Thotis have a higher literacy rate, though they are socioeconomically backward compared to the other tribal population of this area.

Reasons for higher literacy: Thotis have very less land; as a result Thoti children get sufficient time to study since they do not have to work much in the field in order to help their parents. Where in the area Thoti villages are situated schools are easily accessible. Since Thotis are living with other superior tribal populations like Gond and non tribal population, they are trying to increase their social status in order to make them equal to other tribal and non tribal population. A Political organization at the village level among Thotis is known as panch. It consists of Patla, Mahajan, Devari, Ghattiyala and Havaldar. During the religious ceremonies Thotis sing songs in praise of Gond Gods and recite the stories of mythical origin of Gond and their clan Gods. These recitations are accompanied by the music of Kingri or Keekri or three stringed musical instruments. For this service they are paid in cash or kind. The Thotis are more akin to Gonds in their mode of dress, dietary habits and in observation of marriage customs, funeral rites and other ceremonies than that Pardhans^[9].

Status of Tribal Women in Telangana

The status of tribal women can be judged mainly by the roles they play in society. The status of women in any society are a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women's status is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as their roles within the family, the community and society.

Interestingly, tribal life in Telangana is marked by some striking commonalities. Most of tribal people have their own tribal customs and beliefs, but in the broader sense of religion, they are believed to be the followers of Hinduism, and some people of the different community have retained themselves as Christians in Telangana. Even today, some communities living in the hills have not departed from this traditional production process. There is also some homogeneity regarding marriage rules, property rights, food and drinking habits, dress patterns, housing patterns and other such activities among different tribes^[9].

Gender roles in Tribal society

Gender is a constitutive element in all social relations. The term 'gender' refers to the social classification of men and women as 'masculine and feminine' and their expected behavior based on their assigned social roles (Basin, 2000). The different roles that are ascribed to men and women are socially and culturally determined and influenced by traditional practices, institutions, customs and beliefs. Most of the society in northeast India is patriarchal, a society where men dominate and exercise control over most of the resources and are considered superior to women. So far as the question of gender roles and more particularly the place and the image of women is concerned, in spite of being followers of the Hindu tradition of patriarchy, Tribals of Telangana have provided a place of considerable socioeconomic importance to their womenfolk. Women constitute the economic backbone in each of the tribal communities. Several studies on tribal women of northeast India reveal that like all hill women, they are

physically and socially fitted to lead a life of extreme hardship. Social relations between the sexes in most cases are easy and natural; men and women generally meet freely on an equal basis. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. Mostly women and children do collection of minor forest produce. Many also work as laborers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. Despite the exploitation by contractors and managers, tribes are more sincere and honest than non-tribes. However, tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders^[10].

Gender Equity and Empowerment of Tribal Women

Empowerment of women is one of the concepts that have developed in connection with improving their status. Empowerment includes higher literacy levels, education, better healthcare, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of rights and responsibilities, improved standards of living, self-reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence. Raising the status of tribal women is not just a moral imperative, but also a strategic one. Within the framework of a democratic policy, our laws, development policies, plans and programs have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as a central issue in determining their status. Tribal women, while being a disadvantaged and vulnerable

group are, nevertheless, better placed, in many respects, than their counterparts in the general population and are, in certain areas, more empowered. They do not suffer segregation or lower status^[10].

Development and Status of Tribal Women

The strategy for tribal development, and especially women, needs improvement, betterment, development and upliftment to effect their empowerment. Tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional lifestyle in the local environment and follow occupations based on natural resources. Undoubtedly, the programs, oriented towards the empowerment of the tribes, particularly women, have improved their socioeconomic conditions and status. However, there are wide variations across regions and tribes in terms of work participation, sex ratio, economic productivity and social life. The impact of development planning needs to be evaluated in terms of desired and unanticipated consequences. The development process should be perceived as an involvement and reorganization mechanism of not only the socioeconomic system but the entire ecosystem.

One major consequence of these developments is the growing gender disparity among tribals, a phenomenon quite unheard of in the traditional set up. As such, settled or Plough cultivation has marginalized the traditional role of women in agriculture because they now face a taboo on handling the plough. On the other hand, too much crowding on the restricted amount

of jhumland available forced particularly those Jhumias who live in remote forests to eke out a bare living. Both these factors have negatively influenced the work participation rates, particularly among rural tribal women^[10].

Conclusion and Suggestions

The above discussion clarifies the concept about the Gender, development and status of Tribal women in Telangana. It is clear that gender equality among tribal groups is a complex phenomenon that needs to be addressed in the context of various issues such as family structure, fertility, child mortality, literacy, sex-ratio, labor force participation, economic worth generated within the household, religion, culture, and exposure to the mainstream population. It is tempting to conclude that general development programs are sufficient for the reduction of levels of gender inequality; this study does not necessarily show this to be the case. With regard to policy formulation, the present study shows that for the scheduled tribe groups in India, gender Equality should be conceptualized as an integral part of the development process. The role of tribal women is important, but their socioeconomic development is poor. More needs to be done. The problems of tribal women and tribes are largely common. Lastly, we would suggest some recommendations to strengthen and empower tribes as well as tribal women are:

- For Social justice, it is needed to be the elimination of all types of discrimination against the socially disadvantaged groups with the strength of Constitutional Commitments, legislative support, affirmative action, awareness generation,

The conscientiousness of target groups and change in the mind –set of the people.

- The government should focus, empowerment of schedule tribe women and allocate separate Funds throughout the five year plan. Health, education and nourishment should be selected Key focus areas, besides; women should be provided ample opportunities for economic development, based upon the traditional skills, women should also be provided additional skills for valuable additions to the produces.
- The tribal women workers, who are engaged in agriculture, construction, brick kiln etc, are un-organized; the government should protect their labor rights. And the government should make special allocations for implementation of labor laws for the schedule area to prevent the exploitation of the workers.

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