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TRIBAL ARTS AND CRAFTS OF ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Abstract:

The purpose of this research paper is to focus on the continuity and change in the arts and crafts of tribes in Andhra Pradesh. Savara, Bagatha and Porja tribes are traditionally excelled in arts and crafts like idising painting and dhimsa dance. Gonds, Thotis, Pardhans and Koya tribes are the traditional inheritors of demsa dance, worjari brass metal crafts, Bison Horn Dance and bamboo crafts. Chenchu tribe is well versed in performing Chenchu Natakas (plays) and making bows and arrows. Almost all the above arts and crafts are prone to sanskritisation and globalization. The reasons for transformation or disappearing of the tribal arts and crafts of Andhra Pradesh need to be studied carefully to protect and proliferate the arts and safeguard them. Key words: Dhimsa dance, Demsa dance, Bison Horn dance, Chenchu Natakam, worjari brass craft, idising painting.

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INTRODUCTION

The Telugu regions viz., Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are the major regions in entire South India with considerable tribal populations. 35 tribal groups are living in the regions with 6.96 % of total population of Andhra Pradesh. While the total population of Andhra Pradesh as per 2011 Census is 8.45 crores, the population of the tribals is 59.2 lakhs.¹ The major tribes among the 35 tribal groups of the regions are inheritors of traditional tribal arts and crafts which are being continued on one hand and being changed on the other hand due to globalization. The said consequences became inevitable for good or bad. The reasons for transformation or disappearing of the tribal arts and crafts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh need to be studied carefully in order to protect and proliferate the arts for safeguarding the diversity of arts in particular and human diversity in general. This paper is aimed at exploring the status prevailing at present vis-à-vis tribal arts and crafts of Andhra Pradesh of India.

The tribals love their forest home lands so much and develop attachment to it. This is revealed by the following lines:

This country is ours

It was full of jungles

Some of the heroes of the past tried to fight against this

We have forgotten those names

You will not get such a beloved mother land, the land of the tribals

Never, nowhere in this world

It glitters like gold or silver

It is inside India

It is precious like copper, mercury or diamond.²

OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the present research paper are:

- To enable all the concerned to take measures towards preservation of the cultural diversity,
- To locate the centers of tribal arts and crafts in the tribal State of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and
- To proliferate tribal arts and crafts in order to market them among tourist centres to fetch the profits to the tribals.

At the outset it is necessary to have a bird's eye view over the localities and general cultural patterns of the tribes who are excelled in continuing their traditional arts and crafts.

Bagata is one of the numerically preponderant and ethnically significant tribes of Andhra Pradesh and distributed predominantly in scheduled areas of Visakhapatnam district. Majority of the former Muttadars 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 1,33,434 as per 2001 Census constituting 2.6% to the total tribal population of the state.³ Literates constitute 40.48% among Bagatas. The percentage of female literacy is low with 25.50% when compared to male literacy rate, which is 55.15% among Bagatas as per 2001 Census.⁴

Porjas are found predominantly in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. Their population as per 2001 Census is 32,669 among whom males are 16,132 and females are 16,537. There are very less number of literates among them i.e., 7172 in total of whom 5062 are males and 2110 are females. The total literacy rate among Porjas is 26.55%.⁵ They are recognized as Primitive Tribal Group. They have their own dialect. In addition to their own dialect, they speak Telugu as well as Adivasi Oriya. **Savara**, a scheduled tribe is found inhabiting the eastern ghats of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram district. The Savara population in Andhra Pradesh is 1,22,979 as per 2001 Census. The total literacy rate among Savara is 34.5%.⁶ The Savaras usually live in exclusive settlements of their own. They build their settlements on hill slopes and near hill streams to facilitate easy access to *podu* and terrace fields, and for fetching water. Savaras speak Savara language which belongs to Kol Munda group of Austro Asiatic family of language.

Gonds are one of the numerically dominant tribal groups in India. They are found in larger areas of Central India known after them as Gondwana. Important sub divisions among Gonds are Muria Gond, Maria Gond (found in Madhya Pradesh), Raj Gonds and Durve Gonds (found in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and sparsely in Orissa). All these sub divisions call themselves as Koitur in their dialect. In Andhra Pradesh, **Naikpod** is mentioned along with Raj Gonds in the approved list of Scheduled Tribes. But in tribal areas of Adilabad district, Naikpod is a separate tribe. The population of Gonds including Naikpods in Andhra Pradesh as per 2001 Census is 2,52,038. Their total literacy rate is 36.39% as per 2001 Census.

Konda Reddis are inhabiting on the banks situated on either side of river Godavari in the hilly and forest tracts of East and West Godavari, and Khammam districts of Andhra Pradesh. Their population as per 2001 Census is 83,096. The total literacy rate among Konda Reddi is 41.06%.⁷ Their mother tongue is Telugu. The **Koyas** are mainly inhabiting the hilly areas of West Godavari, East Godavari, Khammam and Warangal districts and are sparsely found in Adilabad and Karimnagar districts. The Koya population as per 2001 Census is 5,68,019 in Andhra Pradesh. The total literacy rate among Koya is 41.85%.⁸ The Godavari and Sabari rivers which are flowing through their area of habitation exercise profound influence on Koyas' economic, social and cultural life. Koyas popularly call themselves as Dorala Sattam (Lords group) and Putta Dora (original lords). Koyas call themselves "Koitur" in their dialect, like Gonds. Though strongly influenced by neighbouring Telugu speaking people, they retained a typical cultural trait

of Koya culture. Koyas living in Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warngal and some parts of East Godavari have forgotten their own Koya dialect and adopted Telugu as their mother tongue. The rest of the Koyas found in Khammam district (Bhadrachalam division), Polavaram area of West Godavari district speak Koya. It is also called *Chettu Basha* (Tree language) or *Gali Basha* (Air language) in Telugu language as it is spoken by people living under the trees and forests.⁹

Pardhans are inhabiting the tribal areas of Adilabad district. 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 Gond 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.

The **Lambadas** are a scheduled tribe inhabiting throughout Andhra Pradesh. They are also known as Sugalis and Banjaras. Their population according to 2001 Census is 20,77,947. The total literacy rate among Lambada is 34.33%.¹⁰ The Lambadas are the largest tribe in Andhra Pradesh. 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 coloured turbans. The womenfolk wear *langa* of coarse cotton prints, richly embroidered with several folds at the waists. **Thotis** are living in the districts of Adilabad, Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Mahaboobnagar, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Warangal in Andhra Pradesh. The Thoti or Thotti is one of the village communal servants. The name has been derived from thondu, to dig or thott, 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. Testimony borne to the industry of the Thoti in a proverb which runs, "if you work like Thoti, you can enjoy the comforts of a king". **Yerukala** is scheduled tribe found throughout Andhra Pradesh. They call themselves 'Kurru'. They are called 'Yerukala' after their women's traditional profession of fortune telling (*Eruka chepputa*). The population of Yerukala tribe according to 2001 Census is 4,37,459. The total literacy rate among Yerukala is 45.36%.¹¹

The traditional habitat of **Chenchus** is the Nallamalai Hills which spread in the districts of Kurnool, Prakasham, Guntur, Mahaboobnagar and Nalgonda. They are the food gathering and hunting tribe of Andhra Pradesh. They are also found in a few villages of Ranga Reddy district. **Yanadis** are one of the major scheduled tribes of Andhra Pradesh. Thurston noted that these people were natives of Sriharikota Island. He suggested that they derived their name from the Sanskrit word *anadi* denoting those whose origin is unknown.¹² At present they are mainly spread over the districts of Nellore, Chittoor, Guntur, Krishna, Kadapa and Prakasham. They live in symbiosis with non-tribals. Their mother tongue is Telugu. The nuclear type of family is more predominant among Yanadis. The re-marriage of divorcees, widows and widowers is permitted. They worship village deities like *Poleramma*, *Chenchamma*, and *Mahalakshamma*, etc.

PASSION FOR ART, MUSIC AND DANCE

Personal beauty, creation of artistic artifacts, designs, performing melodious music and robust dances are part and parcel of cultural ethos of almost all the tribal communities in India. In the midst of poverty and scarcity, tribals especially women take much care for their personal hygiene, and beauty of their dress, ornaments, hair styles and etc. The womenfolk of Visakhapatnam tribal areas adorn themselves with a *sari* in their traditional beautiful styles almost cover upper part without a blouse. They decorate their homes with different designs with locally available attractive colours. They plaster the walls of the homes with locally available different varieties of earth mixed with ash of burnt grass. These walls appear as if they are plastered with cement. The beautiful art designs on the inside walls of Savara houses reveal their socio-religious belief systems.

These wall paintings are called *edising* in Savara dialect and they don't take food unless they offer a morsal of food to these paintings in houses.

DANCES

The folk dances and the folk-music of tribals inspite of the material advancement in the recent past have preserved and protected the ancient form of dance and music from its total annihilation and have given us ancient legacy in which the country can be proud of this rich heritage. Undeniably the tribal folk dances are a part of their lives and a very important part of their cultural heritage. Today tribal folk dances and festivals are a great attraction all over the country than ever before. An unusually emotional nature is the general characteristic of the folk dances. The major folk dances of tribals are Dimsa, Mayura, Bison-horn, Gusadi, Savara, Lambada and Chenchu.

Mayura Dance

The Khonds are one of the primitive tribes of Andhra Pradesh mostly confined to the zigzag Eastern Ghats of Visakhapatnam district. The Khonds are also known as 'Samantha' and 'Jatapu Dora'. The Khonds have their own dialect called 'Kuvi' or 'Kui' or 'Kuinga'. Only males perform Mayura dance since it is the male peacock which spreads its colorful feathers and dances. All the dancers put on white *dhotis*, the anklets, wear turbans and tagged with colourful rags and fasten bunches of peacock feathers behind at their waists which look like peacock tails whenever they bend forward.¹³

Godugu – Golusu Dance

Jatapus inhabiting the agency areas of Vijayanagaram district perform this dance. About 20 to 25 members participate in it. Only men decorated in their traditional attire and holding one open umbrella in one hand and towel in another hand form into a circle and dance in tune with the music played by musicians. They perform this dance during festivals and marriage occasions. It is customary for the Jatapus to perform this dance during bride-groom's to bride's village. They sing various romantic songs while performing this dance.¹⁴

Jhodianat (Dance)

Porjas, especially Jhodia Porjas, (a sub-group) perform a folk dance called 'Jhodianat' or 'Nandinat' at the time of 'Nandi Devatha' festival. It is also known as 'Jillinat' because the songs sung during this dance performance contain full of expressions of love and romance. "Jilli" in Porja dialect means love and romance. Like Dimsa Folk dance, the women folk of Porja community hold each other hands at the back of each participant and form into a closely knitted circle. Two or three male members stand in the middle of the circle and sing songs by playing 'Toyila' and 'Sarang'. The women folk also sing songs and perform dance. The entire movements of dance resemble the movements of Dimsa folk dance, but the circle is not disturbed and men do not participate in the folk dance except two male musicians who provide music by singing songs and playing rhythmically the two stringed musical instruments while standing inside the circular formation of female dancers. In Dimsa dance, on the other hand the dancers move swiftly in serpentine movements. But these swift movements are not found in the 'Jhodianat' dance. The first and last women take small sticks in their hands and move gracefully while stamping on the ground.¹⁵

Savara Dance

During marriage and festive occasions savara men and women perform dance by singing songs in tune with the musical instruments like Kinnera, Gogadrajan, Thudumu, Daggudu, etc.¹⁶ A male dancer holds an umbrella while he dances.

Gusadi Dance



Gusadi Dance

Gusadi or Dandari is a robust dance performed by only Gond males. This folk dance is performed in the month of Ashada (June-July) on the full moon day (Pournami). The Gusadi dancers wear loin cloth and smear the entire body with ash or white lime. They decorate their bodies with black and red spots. They put on the head gear known as 'Maljalina Topi'. This is made up of long peacock feathers decorated with mirrors and colourful glasses. Goat or sheep horns are also fixed on the front side of the head gear. Jingle bells of different sizes tied to a string are slung around the shoulders. Big bells which are generally tied to plough bullocks are also worn around the waist. The series of long necklaces made out of wild seeds are worn around the neck. Jingle bells

are tied around the anklets also. On left side they put on dried skin of a bear or deer or goat. A small bag across the body is also slung in order to keep the belongings of dancer. The dancers carry a staff called 'Gusadi Rokali' (Rokali is a pestle). All the Gusadi dancers perform rhythmic and robust dance waving their hands systematically to the melodious tunes.¹⁷

Demsa Dance



Demsa Dance

Demsa, a folk dance of Raj Gonds is performed by both males and females. Sometimes the young boys attire themselves as females and perform the dance. This dance is performed independently by the male and female members to the accompaniment of music during the festive and marriage occasions. The musical instruments used during Demsa dance are 'Pepre', 'Dhol' and 'Khalikhom'. During the marriage ceremony the dance is performed by both males and females. The females dance forming an outer circle round the 'lihi', a sacred design drawn on the ground with turmeric, vermilion etc., before the bridal pair in the marriage pandal. On the concluding day of the grand festival in honour of the 'Persa Pen' (Supreme deity) during the month of 'Vaisak' (April-May), the males perform the Demsa dance before the house of the 'Katoda', the clan priest. The Demsa dance is also performed by male members on the occasion of celebrations of the marriage of Chenchi Bhimanna, the God who protects the crops during the month of Chaitra (March-April) before the house of Devari, the village priest.¹⁸

Dimsa Dance

Dimsa dance is one of the popular community folk dances in the agency areas of Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. Young and old, rich and poor people of every tribal community are represented at the usual community folk dance gathering. As one of the significant recreational activities of tribals, it is bringing countless hours of relaxation and gaiety to the tribal communities who face strenuously the challenge of rigorous habitats.



Dimsa Dance

This dance is generally performed on Chaitra festival or Eetela panduga, marriage occasions and on any festive occasion. The men and women gorgeously adorn themselves with traditional ornaments and new clothes. They form into a closely knitted long line by holding the hands of each other and dance in tune with music played by men. They move swiftly in serpents coil and cry 'hey' and 'hooi'. They perform about 7 to 12 types of dimsa dances.¹⁹

Bison-horn Dance (*Permakok ata*)

Koyas perform a robust colourful dance called Bison Horn dance²⁰ *Permakok ata* during festive and marriage ceremonies. This dance is performed by Koyas inhabiting the scheduled areas of Khammam, Warangal, East Godavari and West Godavari districts. The men put on Bison Horns on head and wear colourful dress. Koya dance is performed mainly by the Koya tribes of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Usually both boys and girls take part in this dance but the girls are more prominent. About 30 to 40 persons participate in the dance. The girls engage in beating sticks on the ground, which are fitted with small bells. They form complicated zigzag and unwinding circles and it is the most attractive part of the dance.



Bison Horn Dance of Koyas

Thus, the Koyas take part in the religio-cultural life of their community. Their cultural life makes the Koya community colourful. The Koyas with their dancing costume look colourful and their dancing performance is considered as a significant tribal dance.

Kurru Dance

Kurru dance is performed by Koyas of Warangal district. Only male members of Koya tribe perform this dance. There will be 25 to 30 participants in this dance. They dance according to the tune played by six musicians i.e. three persons playing flute and three persons playing drums. They perform this dance after harvesting of crops, dibbling of seeds and during festival and marriage occasions. Most importantly, they perform this dance during Sammakka Saralamma Jathara which is an important festival of Koyas. Even during certain inauspicious occasions also, they perform this dance.²¹

Lambada Dance

The Lambadas are a colourful versatile tribe inhabiting most of the districts of Andhra Pradesh except Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and East Godavari. During festival and marriage occasions the womenfolk of this tribe perform dance in tune with the musical instruments played by men.



Banjara Dance in a Cultural Fete



Traditional Banjara Dance

During Holi festival womenfolk form into a circle around the fire and perform dance by holding each other's hands. Sometimes they raise hands and dance in tune with the music played by musicians.²²

Keelu Gurralu



Dance with Nayakpod Masks

This is a dance performed by the Yanadis of Nellore, Guntur, Prakasam and Chittoor by imitating the horses. The troupe consists of two men who act as king and queen and some background singers. Musical instruments like Harmonium and cymbals are the musical instruments used in this dance.²³

Puli Vesham or Tiger Dance



Tiger Dance

It is a one-man dance form. An able bodied man with the whole body painted with stripes like those of a tiger and elaborate makeup, sporting a long tail dances like tiger with wild jumps, while a *Dappu* or *Mridangam* provides the rhythm. The Chenchus perform this dance by attaching tiger masks to their faces.

Chenchu Play



Chenchu Natakam

The play takes place in front of the temple of the village during festival period and at the house of the sponsorer during marriage and religious ceremonies. Before starting of the play, they invoke goddess 'chenchamma'. During the play, the singer sings while the woman dances rhythmically. The hero dances by moving semi-circular from right to left and return in the same direction to his original place. During the play the hero and heroine act as lovers or husband and wife or cinema hero and heroine by singing cinema songs. The clown act as villain and tries to seduce the heroine. Sometimes he acts as male animal such as dog, donkey, monkey or buffalo chasing the female animals by making sounds. He behaves like a joker and tries to make the audience laugh through his actions. He comes quiet frequently during intervals and behaves like joker to relax the audience. The actors perform the play by charging some money on the sponsorer. At the end of the play the troupe goes to the house of the sponsorer sing the concluding song and receive their due payment.²⁴

Melam

Yanadis inhabiting the plain areas of Nellore, Prakasam, Guntur and Chittor perform a street play called Melam during religious ceremonies like 'devudi karyam' (worship of god), puberty, marriage and death. The actors consist of hero, male dressed as woman, heroine and a clown. There will be four or five persons called 'pymelagallu' who repeat the songs sung by the hero.

TRIBAL SONGS

Music constitute to be an integral part of the tribal aesthetic life. The aesthetic value of the songs of the tribals can be observed from the songs which they sing on ceremonial occasions as well as other social occasions. Folk music can be broadly divided into solo music and group singing. The tribal folk songs are sung only while dancing and so these songs may be called as "Dancing – Songs".²⁵

The songs sung at various stages in the marriage rituals includes various themes, like affection towards the bride, bride price, teasing the men and women, sentiments on the separation of the

bride from her parents and family etc. Before, during and after the marriage ceremony different songs are sung while dancing.

A Marriage Song of Koyas

Raayaaku Toranalu Raasa Toranalu

*Mamidaku Toranalu Raasa Toranalu*²⁶

Meaning: The Koyas consider it auspicious to decorate the door jambs with Pipal and Mango leaves during marriage occasions.

A Religious Song of Koyas

Some of the Koyas left their religious traditions and adopted Hindu mode of worship and festivals. Some Christian Societies are working for the development of the tribals. Consequently some tribal men and women are embracing Christianity. This fact is known by the following poem.

Pulu Koyandi Pulu koyandi

Kosina Pulanni Mala Guchandi

Guchchina Pulanni Rasipoyandi

Guchchina Pulanni Mariyaku Ivvandi

Amma Mariamma Talupu Tiyamma

Niperu Chepitene Taluputistanu

Naa Peru Yashoda Talupu Tiyamma

Pakkuna Navvindi Talupu Tisindi

Intha Chakkani Mala Evaru Pamperu

*Ni Koduku Yesaiah Niku Pampadu*²⁷

Meaning: The meaning of the song is pluck the flowers, make the garlands and keep them in heap. Yashoda requests mother Maria to open the door to offer her the garlands. Maria opens the door and asks Yashoda who sent that beautiful garland. Yashoda replies that her son Jesus Christ sent it to her. So the poem reveals the spread of Christianity among the Koya tribal community.

Koya Song after Marriage

Relaa Relaa Rerelaa Rerelaa Relaa
Chembudu Nillalo Attaaru Kalipinaanu
Posukove Muttaiah Punneni Kochchi Nillu
Chembudu Nillalo Gaaburu Kalipinaanu
*Posukove Muttamma Punneni Kochchi Nillu*²⁸

Meaning: In a tumbler of water I mixed up scent, Oh! Muttaiah pour this water on your body which is got freely. Oh! Muttamma I mixed up scent and sandalwood powder in a tumbler of water, pour this water on your body which is brought freely.

A Drought Song of Koyas

Vaanamma Vaanamma Vaanamma
Okkasaarannaa Vacchipova Vaanamma
Chelallo Nillulevu Chelakallo Nillulevu
Ninunammina Raitu Kandlalo Nilluchere
“Vaanamma”
Edige Mirapachenu- Endallo Endipoye
Chakkani Mokkajonna Ekkekki Edvasaage
Palu Kanki Palanni Udikipoye
Nillosukunna Chenu Nilladalekapoye
*“Vanamma”*²⁹

Meaning: Oh rain! Oh rain! Oh rain! Come and go atleast once oh rain. There is no water in the agricultural fields and in the *Chelaka* (dry) land. But there are tears in the eyes of farmer, who trusted you. The growing red-chilli land dried up in hot sun, beautiful maize started crying. The milky maizes milk dried up. The ripe crop could not reach the harvest.

A Rangoli Song of the Koyas

Mugguleni Illakada Memollamayya
Uttara Gannika Teppinchemu Muggulu Veyinchi

*Alukulu Leni Illakada Memollamayya**Uttara Gannika Teppinchemu Alukulu Yesi*³⁰

Meaning: The meaning of the poem is that we do not stay in the house without *Rangoli* and plastering the floor. We get Gannika (a kind of tree) and put *Rangoli*. On the walls of the house they put *Rangoli*.

Muggu known as *rangoli* is a folk art. Every village girl put *rangoli* with rice powder or *sudda* (white clay). Its absence is deemed as profaning sacred things.

Gondi Marriage Song – A Welcome Song*Rela s Re s Rela s s s**Udme Makun Chadar Wata**Makun Uddle Khurching Wata**Khurching Aaune Pure Maike Mandana**Aakashi Mandap, Dhartari Mandate Wata*³¹

Meaning:-This song is sung for welcoming the guests, at the marriage *pandal*. The meaning of it is that for our guests spread a bed-sheet (*Chadar*), for sitting our guests bring chairs (*Khurchi*), the sky (*Aakashi*) is the roof and the earth (*Dhartari*) is the base for sitting.

Marriage Song of Yanadis*Yanadolla Pellillu Entho Manchi Pellillu**Bottuto Paniledu Bonalakkaraledu**Mela Telaaloddu Mantra Tantraaloddu**Mungumuru Devudiki Mokkukunte Chaalu**Gotraalu Maakela Gotraalu Maakela**Netraalu Okataite Sutraalendukayya**Mangala Sutraalendukayya*³²

Meaning: The marriages of Yanadis are the good ones. There is no need of Bindi and *Bonalu*. There is no need of band and *mantra* chanting. If they pray *Mungumuru* God, that is enough. Yanadis say that they do not need *Gotras* (clan names). They also state that if two eyes are united i.e., two hearts become one there is no need of marriage badge.

Harassment Song of Yerukalas

Kantiki Kaatuka Betti Talaninda Pulu Betti

Mudduga PENCHAVE Amma NEEVU Muddulichchi PENCHAVE Amma

Pattu Cheera Kattabetti Kaallaku Paaraani Betti

Mudduga PENCHAVE Amma Nannu Muddulichchi PENCHAVE Mayamma

Katnam Evvaledani Kallu Naaramma

Katnam Evvaledani Kallu Naaramma

Mudduga PENCHAVE Amma Nannu Muddulichchi PENCHAVEYAMMA

Nagalemo Pettaledani Naaluka Kosinaramma

Mudduga PENCHAVE Amma Nannu Muddulichhipenchave Amma

Kattukunna Bharatemo Kirasanayilu Posindu

*Kattukunna Bharatemo Kirasanayilu Posindu*³³

Meaning: In Yerukala community the husbands harass their wives to bring dowry and gifts. The meaning of this song is Oh! Mother you brought me up applying eye salve in my eyes, keeping flowers on my head and brought me up lovingly with kisses. You made me to wear silk saree and applied *Parani* (Turmeric mixed with Lime smeared by women on their feet at the time of wedding) to my feet. Oh! Mother you brought me up lovingly by giving kisses. Oh! Mother as you did not give me ornaments they cut my tongue, but you brought me up lovingly by giving kisses. My husband who married me poured kerosene on me, Oh! Mother my husband poured kerosene on me.

HANDICRAFTS

The civilization of mankind started with the origin of handicrafts. The primitive but original handicrafts are still the properties of the tribes in general and tribes of Telugu regions in particular. The record of beautiful and wonderful arts and crafts of Andhra Pradesh goes back to the hoary past. Prehistoric caves and some finds in several districts of Andhra Pradesh amply prove the artistic inclinations of the early inhabitants of this region.

Wall Art of Savaras



Traditional wall painting of Savaras but painted on cloth for commercial sale

The traditional art forms of Madhubani of Bihar, Warlie of Maharashtra State, Bhils and Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, Savaras of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa States possess ancient and rich tradition of wall paintings. The entire painting design is known as *edising* or *ideesung* in Savara dialect. The literal meaning of this word is, what is written in the house. Elwin aptly stated that “the Ittal is now regarded as a little temple within the house. The Soaras have evolved a complex system of appeasement to protect themselves against much supernaturally inflicted diseases, and an important element in their security measure is the making of Ittals which has however to be combined with an animal sacrifice”. The *edising* consists of pictures of hunting, potter carrying pots, tiger, peacocks, banana plant, caryota plam tree, sex act, sun, moon, etc.³⁴

Masks of Naikpods and Gonds

The religious beliefs, mythologies etc., are the foundation and source of inspiration for artistic expressions. Naikpods worship various masks representing Laxmi Devara (Horse Deity), Lord Krishna, five brother Pandavas and their own other deities like pig god, Pota Raju (dog god), Gorrapotu (Sheep god) etc., Naikpods who are also known as Nayaks in the agency areas get these masks manufactured by local carpenters at their guidance and prescriptions.



Traditional Nayakpod Masks



**Savara Masks and Butta Bommalu
(Basket Masks)**

These idols are preserved in their respective village shrines and worship them in their annual festivals. (Some of the pictures of wooden idols of Naikpod tribe are depicted on title page). Similarly Gonds of Adilabad district represents human face (*tapal*) and another tiger (*Kodal*). They depict hunting scenes by putting on these masks during festival celebrations. The Gonds' wooden memorial pillars found mostly in Jagdalpur area of Madhya Pradesh are best representation of innate skills of Gonds in engraving and manufacturing of wooden idols of their gods.³⁵

Comb Manufacturing

Comb manufacturing is found among the tribals of Visakhapatnam district specially among Kammaras. The details of the families engaged in comb manufacturing are as follows (Sample villages).

Sl. No.	Village/Block	Tribe	No. of Families engaged
1.	Sanyasammappalem-Paderu Block	Konda – Kammaras	16
2.	Guntagannela-Araku Block	Valmiki Bhagata Kotia	25

This traditional occupation is not pursued by one tribe alone. In addition to Kammaras, Bagatas, Valmikies and Kotias also are engaged in this occupation. They manufacture more than six varieties of combs. Unlike plastic combs, these combs are useful to remove lice and its eggs in the hair.³⁶

Bamboo Work

The Bamboo is used for making baskets, food grain containers, storage-drums, household articles, gates etc. Bamboo is abundantly available in Mahabubnagar, Kurnool, Prakasham, East

Godavari, West Godavari, Adilabad, Warangal and Khammam districts. This craft is generally practiced by Konda Reddies, Koyas, Yerukalas, Gadabas, Porjas, Kolams and Chenchus. Though this is a traditional craft in the identified villages, it is not a main occupation. In West Godavari District, 258 Konda Reddi families are engaged in this traditional craft of making Bomboo articles at their houses. Basket making is practiced by Konda Reddis and Koyas of Khammam district. They prepare varieties of baskets and mats of different sizes for preservation of food-grains and for partition, faneing and wattle walls, fans, sieves etc. Basket, mats and fans are prepared in Chella, Doli, Chelamala, Pamanur, Makunur, Tadpala, Parugula (Venkatapuram Block), V.R. Puram Chintur, Motugudem, Cherla, Vezeedu, Venkatapuram, Kunavaram, Edurallapalli, Kuknoor, Nagaram and Burgampadu villages. In the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam district, basket making is practiced by Gadabas and Porjas.³⁷ The Yerukalas also make the objects out of bamboo. These people make the different articles, which are mainly used for the peasants. A sub-tribe of Yerukalas known as *Eethapullala* Yerukala used to knitting different tools like *Kodigampalu* (baskets for hens), *Thadikalu* (a kind of walls made up of bamboo) from the leaflets of wild date trees.

Cane Articles

Bamboo, cane articles such as baskets and chairs are prepared by Valmiki of Tajangi colony in Chintapalli block of Visakhapatnam district. This craft is also encouraged among the tribals, by way of providing loans.



Cane Arts



Cane and toddy flip containers

In Chintapalli village, one Valmiki tribal by name Pangi Jogi Raju, is engaged in this craft. He is practicing this craft for 300 days in a year. He has learnt this work through a teacher. The tools or implements used by him are blade and nail. The required raw-material i.e., cane is obtained by him from Narsipatnam.³⁸

Wood Craft and Sculpture



Wood Crafts of Koyas trained in Yatapaka Vocational Training Institute

The tribals also are experts in wood carving, toy making, as sculpture. The sacred idols of gods and goddess are chistled by tribals themselves (Gonds and Kolams in Adilabad district). “The Preliminary case study in tribal areas of Utnoor, Adilabad district reveals that there are four persons engaged in wood craft and sculpture at Kanchanpalli. Saleguda, Umari Ballamput, Kamaipet in Utnoor Taluk of Adilabad district”.³⁹

Kora Grass (Tunga) Mat Weaving

Kora Grass mats are very attractive when compared to other types of mats. Yanadi community is engaged in this craft in Nellore district. The Kora Grass mat is a utilitarian article and has export market.⁴⁰

Colourful Sarees of Gadabas

Similarly Gadaba women manufacture their own colourful sarees on their primitive looms out of fiber collected from wild plants. It is customary practice for a girl to weave her own saree for her marriage. In the past a girl is not eligible for marriage unless she knows the art of weaving of sarees and she has to weave her own sarees. But this art is becoming extinct and they are purchasing only mill made sarees.⁴¹

Tribal Embroidery, Dress Making and Artistic Articles

The women folk of Lambadas of Andhra Pradesh wear colourful dresses and decorate themselves with different varieties of ornaments made out of gold, silver, ivory and beads. The women folk of Lambadas are good at embroidery work and dress making, dresses-skirts, Phettya, blouses, (Chanchulu), Voni (Tukri) for their own use. However, now-a-days the embroidery works are done for sale also. In most of the Tandas the women folk stitch their own cloth and do embroidery work on their dress for decorative purpose. However, the study reveals that only a small percentage of women do embroidery work for commercial purpose.⁴²

SERICULTURE AND TASSAR CULTURE

Sericulture is an age old agro-based industry which is popular in rural areas. This is an income yielding, employment generating industry which can help substantially the small and marginal farmers. The recent experiments and experiences made it possible to extend this activity to the non-traditional areas also. Encouraged by good response, this activity has been extended to the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, in almost all the Integrated Tribal Development Agency Areas of the State. Sericulture Programme has been introduced. This programme has covered 908 acres. The added advantage of this industry is that it is labour intensive and ensures quick returns in short span of time. Though the sericulture involves delicate operations and improved apparatus the tribal households have proved to be capable adopting this industry at household level. The tribals are capable of competing with the traditional sericulturists. Like-wise the Tassar culture is also introduced in the tribal areas. This is a forest-based industry. This is a traditional industry in the tribal areas of Adilabad, Kareemnagar, Warangal and Khammam districts. Tomentisa is locally known as “Nallamaddi” is a food plant for the silk worms.⁴³

CHANGE

The results of globalization and modernization started penetrating into the hinterlands and tribal tracts of Telugu speaking regions also at least from 1990s by providing access to the tribal people to get technically qualitative goods and services in many fields for cheaper rates saving time and labour. This is the case with tribal arts and crafts also. Consequently, since they are not familiar with the main stream society its people started entertaining the arts and crafts of tribes. On the other hand tribals also started copying the technology, goods and services of main stream society which are similar to that of their arts and crafts. As a result of the above consequences two main changes took place in respect of the tribal arts and crafts of Telugu regions. One, spread of the arts and crafts of tribes to that of so called civilized people and two, shrinking or disappearance of tribal arts and crafts due to their unpopularity in the waves of globalization and modernization.

SPREAD

Since some tribal arts and crafts are superior in quality and easily accessible to the common people than that of the mainstream arts, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has been promoting some of the tribal arts. Some Governmental welfare programmes are being publicized through the tribal performances. Non-tribals are also learning tribal arts for their performances. Thus, the tribal arts are prone to a sort of Sanskritisation.

The Department of Information of Government of Andhra Pradesh is publicizing the developmental programmes through Savara dance. Like-wise, the Bison-horn dance of the Koyas also is being used for the same purpose. The Integrated Tribal Development Agency, Paderu of Andhra Pradesh is making efforts for the development of the local tribal dances viz., Kolari Dimsa and Dandari.⁴⁴ Banjara dance is the most famous dance form in Telugu areas and hence is being learnt by cultural performers and Cinema people for their performances in their respective fields. Students are also learning the Banjara dance and performing as part of their cultural events in their schools, colleges, institutions, etc. Another reason for the spread of Banjara dance in its

traditional lustering dress (of women only) is that the Banjara tribe is the predominant and literate community among all the tribal groups of the Telugu regions. Corresponding to their literary levels day by day the Banjara tribals are coming into the main stream society and spreading their cultural arts including their dance.

The ballads of Thoti tribe usually perform the legends of Naikpod tribe in Gondi language in Adilabad district. But now they are migrating to adjoining districts and performing other *puranic* legends also in Telugu apart from their traditional legends for the sake of non-tribal people in the villages. One among the ballads is making up himself as joker (Buddar Khan) imitating it from the story tellers of the villages. Further, the joker is wearing pant, shirt, T-Shirt, cap, etc., imitating them from the counter parts of villages and towns and leaving aside his own traditional wear the tribal ballads are imitating some cine-episodes also during their performances. Their traditional musical instruments like Kinkiri, Pepere, etc., are either replaced in some cases or added with harmonium, plastic *Dappu* (in place of leather *Dappu*), etc.



**Savara Musical Instruments exhibited in
Nehru Centenary Tribal Museum, Hyderabad**

In recent times the Kapu Savaras are dancing wearing colourful basket masks during festivals, marriages, etc., occasions. In fact, in the tribal tracts of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts of Andhra Pradesh the customary “*Prabhalu*” with colourful embroidery flags are used to be taken in processions amidst dances. The *Prabhalu* will be made with long weaved mat of bamboo flaps covered with embroidered cloth. Basket masks (Butta Bommalu) also would be made with weaving of bamboo flaps layered on with the paste of tamarind seeds. These traditions have been now departed with and the masks are being made with paper paste. Further, artificial chemical colours are being used to decorate the *Prabhalu* and Butta Bommalu replacing the earlier traditional natural colours. With the chemicals the Kapu Savaras are decorating their masks and pots with “*Dasavataras*” (ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu).⁴⁵ It is an example for Sanskritisation of tribal culture.

The Integrated Tribal Development Agency, Bhadrachalam has been giving training to the local tribals in Vocational Training Institute, Yatapaka in making bamboo and wooden crafts. The toys such as flowers, houses, ships, pen stands, tea trays, bison-horn dances of Koya tribal pairs etc. made of bamboo flaps and local light weight wood are being sold to the tourists coming in boats on tour of Papikondalu in the waters of river Godavari. Here in Yatapaka training in making decorative stones out of semi-precious stones was also given to the tribals until the recent past. Likewise training in tribal painting was also given. The tribes of Visakha Agency are being given training in making of toys of raw iron, lac, terracotta and are encouraged to sell them to the tourists visiting the nearby sights – Araku, Borra Caves, Anantagiri, etc. The Wojari metal crafts hitherto made for the sake of Gond tribe of Adilabad district are now being made for commercial sale also.



Terracotta crafts



Wojari brass crafts

Some educated tribals are now-a-days transcribing their oral or tradition literature. As such, the story of Gond hero Ankam Raju and the literature of the poet Boya Dharmayya have already been published by now. The Oriental Manuscripts Library, Hyderabad had published recently the *Gondi Bharatam* written by Muni Pantulu in 1742 A.D. The ex-Director of the Library Prof. Jayadhir Tirumala Rao in collaboration with the University of Hyderabad and Integrated Tribal Development Agency, Utnoor has published on World Mother Tongue Day (21-2-2014) the *Gondi Vaachakam* which revived the Gondi script, language and numbers. One scholar named Chilukuri Narayana declared recently that he prepared script for Banjara language.

Edising is the traditional religious wall art of Savaras. But now it is being prepared on paper and cloth and sold in commercial art bazaars. The themes of the painting also are now including the modern concepts such as water sucking borings, scooters, tractors, aero-planes, etc.

DISAPPEARANCE

With the growth of literacy rates, income levels and technology people are preferring advanced goods and services. This is the case with tribal arts also. Aggravating the situation tribals also are preferring the machine made crafts which are cheaper too instead of going for the hand-made handcrafts which involve hard work and long time. Eventually the tribal arts and crafts are prone

to disappearance gradually but at steady pace day by day. One can find many instances of disappearing tribal arts and crafts in all over the Telugu regions.

The tribals of Thoti used to perform “Kinkiri Kathalu” (stories sung in tune with the musical instrument Kinkiri) during rainy season in praise of Naikpod (Padmanayaka sect) tribes in return for a lump sum of cash or kind as a tradition. But now most of the Thotis gave away their tradition of ballads and took to agriculture. Thotis for instance are in thousands in Warangal district but only two traditional troupes of ballads – one in Katakshapuram and the other in Regunta – are performing as ballads. Among these ballads too once there were people who could narrate about 40 types of stories. But by now their excellence came down to narrate only two-three stories such as Sasirekha Parinayam, Keechaka Vadha and Pandava Vanavasam.⁴⁶

Chenchus also used to make up themselves as Singi, Singadu and perform Chenchu Laxmi story, but now they forgot their traditional practice and a very few of them are narrating the story in the form of “Yakshagana” (play) imitating the performance of professional artists. The Koyas living in Adilabad, Warangal and some parts of Khammam and East Godavari districts have forgotten their traditional dance Kommu Nrityam (Bison-horn dance) altogether.

Likewise the Kapu Savaras and the Savaras living in plain areas stopped observing their tradition of “Edising” (painting) laid down to the inner walls of their huts. Similarly the Gonds of Adilabad district forgot their painting system which is still being practiced in the adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

Earlier it was the tradition for Gadaba girls to learn and weave her own sarees to get eligibility for marriage. But now they forgot weaving and are purchasing sarees from the market and marrying without inhibitions. Similarly the literate Banjaras don’t know how to stitch their embroidered cloths and how to make their traditional ornaments. Further, they themselves are treating those backward who wear the traditional clothes and ornaments except in rare traditional occasions.

As already mentioned in the foregoing pages, with the growth of rationalism in resonance with the growth of literacy in the society, people are not showing interest in tribal forecasting by Yerukala women and Koya men. Likewise the tattoo-laying by Yerukala and Thoti women also are not being cared by the literate society. As a result, the above tribal arts are disappearing from the scene. The same fate was met with by the tribal baskets, winnowing pads, umbrellas, measuring utensils – all made of bamboo and wood – and terracotta and bottle-guard pots, etc. The plastic medium replaced almost all of the above.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

As a result of disappearance of tribal arts and crafts due to modernization and globalization, the tribes are resorting to non-tribal occupations for sustenance leaving the diversity of arts and crafts to their fate. In fact, the arts and crafts give the tribals their diversified identity. If they are lost their diversity is lost and gradually human diversity will also be lost. Therefore the people, Government and intelligentsia have to take immediate steps to safeguard the tribal arts and crafts to save human diversity. Such steps were already taken by Prof. Haimendorf in case of Gonds and Koyas, the two predominant tribes of Telugu regions by imparting education in their own

languages about the importance of their immediate environment arts and culture,⁴⁸ so that they would be promoted by the tribes themselves. Such efforts need to be revived extensively now.

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