ABSTRACT

The Lambadas occupy a special place among the tribal population of India. Unlike other tribes they lacked an area of concentration which could be regarded as their ancestral land but where ever they found space or piece of land they lived, scattered all over Telangana. The object of the article is to make an in depth study on Telangana Banjara/Lambada Gwar Panchayat. Its traditional democratic political organization from Thandas to village Gram Panchayat would be noteworthy. The historical aspects pertaining to Gwar Panchayat to evolution of Banjara community in Telangana, the scholar has made earlier an humble effort to study the evolution of Banjaras Community in two districts of South Telangana viz Warangal and Nalgonda

KEYWORDS: Vanachara, Kwar, Gwar, Naik Karbari, Dhaadi, Navi, Kulapedda, Truthfulness Bravery, Nomadism, Clan

INTRODUCTION

Banjaras / Sugali / Lambada are declared as a Scheduled Tribe in Andhra (Andhra area comprises the districts of Srikakulam, Vishakapatnam, Vizianagaram, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore, Chittoor, Kadapa, Anantapur and Kurnool) According to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes lists. Modification Order 1956 and as a Notified Tribes in Telangana (Telangana area comprises the districts of Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Medak, Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Mahaboobnagar, Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam) areas of Andhra Pradesh, as per the Indian constitution (Scheduled Tribe) Order 1950 the SC & STs (amendment) Act 1976, the Telangana region Banjaras / Lambadas are recognized as Scheduled Tribes. The origin and history of Lambadas is very vague and ambiguous. There are many legends who explained their origin. They themselves claim that they are of Rajputs and Kshatriyas origin. Banjaras / Lambadas of Telangana claim that they are from warrior race and have fought against the Mohammadans. Many scholars opined that the word Banjara and Banjara (trader) have been derived from the profession trade. The name may have derived from Vanachara meaning Wanderer in jungles. The word Lambadi has been derived possibly from the word of Lamba meaning tall. The Banjara are very tall and handsome so they have been tall Lambada meaning “People who are tall”. It is common phenomenon among Lambadas have to have their settlements called Thandas outside the main village. They prefer hilly areas for avoiding accumulations of mud which would be creating more problems to their cowherds. They try to raise their Thandas of the careful examination of their security, availability of water fertile land in that area and avoiding insecure atmosphere created by robbers and wild animals almost all Thandas in Telangana Districts are raised keeping all this facts in mind the Lambdas
address each other GWAR and call non-Lambadas as KW AR indicating their sense of entity every Thanda tenaciously maintain their culture and ethnic identity. The political life of Lambadas in Telangana districts reflects a paradoxical situation. They transformed retaining their political system and maintaining political structure among them for very long. But with introduction of universal adult franchise in the country, there has been tremendous change and Banjaras, who were earlier excluded from participation in the traditional polity, have been given a definite role to play in modern democratic process. In Telangana districts there is no dispute between the new leadership based on hereditary and personal qualities. The traditional polity of Banjaras in Telangana observed the new values without losing their identity and tradition.

METHODOLOGY

With regard to methodology the primary data collected by interviewing the concerned. The Lambdas have been chosen from different age group to elicit their views on different social, political, cultural and economic aspects of their community life and living. The scholar has made personal visits to some of the Thandas and stayed there for some days and has collected the relevant data to meet the objectives of the study. The scholar has also made efforts to hold informal discussions with large number of community people and ascertained their views on varied dimensions relating to this topic.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies on the transitional aspects of different tribes have figured in the history of Indian Anthropology. Most of the monographs on Indian tribes written from the beginning of 20th Century were by the British ethnographers, administrators and some Indian anthropologists. Field-work was undertaken after careful examination of the previous literature pertaining to lambada tribe. This has give a fairly distinct picture of the Lambada and their historical past covering more than a century. A few studies with regional bias have recently been made on the Lambadas. One such made by the All India Banjara Seva Sangh presents population distribution of Lambada in different States of India and their Socio-economic condition in considerable details. Census of India 1961 volume I Monograph series (part-V-B(IV) Investigation and draft G.P. Reddy editing by A.M. Kurup and Dr. B.K. Roy Burman which gives a brief description of the community life in thandas of Telangana districts. Prakash Rao R. made an attempt to study some aspects of the cultural life of the Nomadic Banjaras. This work gives some description of the life cycles of Banjanas, their nomadic past and present Dr. Prathap Studied the life of the Lambadas and the impact of the urban environment on the life cycles and ceremonies.

Profile of the State of Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh was formed on 1st November, 1956, with Hyderabad as its capital. It has between bounded by Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in the North, Karnataka in the West, the Bay of Bengal in the East and Tamil Nadu in the South. Andhra Pradesh is the fifth largest state, spreading over an area of 2,75,045 square kilometers and accounting for 8.4 per cent of India’s territory. It has a 974 kilometers coastline, the second longest after Gujarat. Andhra Pradesh is divided into three distinctive characteristics regions viz Andhra area covering 33.78 percent, Telangana area covering 41.5 percent and Rayalaseema area covering 24.47 percent of the total geographical area of the state of Andhra Pradesh. For the purpose of administration Andhra Pradesh is divided into 23 districts. Andhra Pradesh has total population of 8,46,65,533 Males 4,25,09,881 and 4,21,55,652 Females population as per 2011 census of which 67% live in Rural Areas and 33% live in Urban Areas. The density of population is 308 per square kilometer which is below the national average of 382 square kilometers. The literacy rate of male is 75.56 and female 59.74.
The hilly areas cutting across the coastal land Telangana regions are dominated by the tribal communities and can be considered as another region of the State. Owing to its unique set of problem and under development. Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions were part of Madras presidency till 1953, when they were formed as a separate state of Andhra. Telangana was part of the erstwhile Hyderabad ruled by the Nizam and merged with Andhra State to form the second state linguistic lines.

Table 1: SUGALI / BANJARA / LAMBADA Telangana District–Wise Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Adilabad</td>
<td>1,03,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Nizamabad</td>
<td>1,42,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Karimnagar</td>
<td>51,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Medak</td>
<td>1,18,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>17,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Ranga Reddy</td>
<td>1,23,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Mahaboobnagar</td>
<td>2,46,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Nalgonda</td>
<td>3,20,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Khammam</td>
<td>2,71,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Warangal</td>
<td>1,03,303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Total Population** | **14,98,800** |

Source: Tribes and Tribal Areas of Andhra Pradesh published by Tribal Welfare Department Government of Andhra Pradesh

Lambada Administration in the Pre and Post Independence

Every society operates by one principle of organization or combination of principles producing different political systems. The political organization of the Lambada comes under stateless system because it has no formal Government embracing the entire society. The political organization of the Lambada is based on the territorialism and it is not based on geographical or associational units. The Lambada Thanda or settlement is the smallest territorial unit of organization represented by family. There is no headman for every clan. All clan enjoy equal status. In political Lambada organization there is no special association such as military, religious organization etc., from 14th century when the Banjaras first accompanied the Mohammedan armies which invaded Deccan from the North. There were records written by Persian and British historians, travelers, missionaries and administrators between the late 15th century and middle of the 19th century there was considerable political upheavals in India in the form of wars between indigenous kingdoms in the pre –European period and between the Native Kings and British, the French and the Portuguese after 17th century. In these wars the Banjaras played an important role on payment as carriers and suppliers of provisions to the armies. The establishment British rule in India 1858 substantial improvements in the transport system were introduced and was consequence in the last quarter of the 19th century, the Banjaras lost their occupation as transporters of grain and other supplies.

Therefore they resorted to predatory method as way of life which they had acquired while they were serving the Moghul armies. With this change the community magistrate, the chief of hordes all lost their customary importance and the Naik who were heads of the hordes got the prominence

The Traditional of Gwar Panchayat and Naik in Thanda

Every Banjara / Lambada Thanda has got its own traditional Gwar Panchayat consisting of Naik is assisted by Karbani, Dhaddi, Bhattas and Navi and a few experienced elders. The office of Karbari is hereditary and permanent. The Dhaadi, Bhattas and Navi are treated as art castes and they always assisted with Gwar Panchayat social control is exercised
in the Thanda through various sanctions like fine, pressure of public opinion etc. The Naik or headman presides over all deliberations and announces the decisions in all the cases which come under his jurisdiction. He represents the collective good will and authority of the community on occasion like marriage, death and on various festivals without his presence no function or ceremony is complete. He is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the Thanda. Generally he personally knows all the people in Thandas and their affairs. Ideally he is expected to possess the qualities of honesty, truthfulness, integrity, bravery and in addition he must have an understanding of all the problems connected with his Thandas.

The post of Naik and Karbari are hereditary but this rule is applied and flexible manner. Generally the elder son of Naik succeeds the father but if the Naik thinks that eldest son is not capable of shouldering the responsibility, he may name any other son to succeed him. Sometimes the people of Thanda themselves may take the initiative and suggest to the Naik whom he should nominate as his successor. In the past the Lambadas used to perform a special ceremony called “page” during the installation of new Naik. They used to invite all the Naiks of the neighboring Thandas to participate in it. In the presence of those Naiks and the villagers a few Lambadas elders used to place a new turban on the new incumbent to this post. If the Thanda is a very large settlement with many streets each street may have its own Naik and above each of them there is another Naik for the entire settlement called Pedda Naik (Big Naik).

If the settlement contains people of other castes as well as very frequently they have their own heads called ‘Kulapetta’ or ‘Pedda Manishi’ when Panchayat considers any case concerning the village as a whole these heads are also invited to take part in the deliberations. Any person can approach the Nayak to convene a meeting of the Panchayat to settle a dispute in which he is interested. Many Thandas old people commented that in the past even police could never interfere with their internal matters because the Naik and village elders could enforce their decision effectively. The Gwar Panchayat takes important decision to settle the disputes of Thandas in matter related to adultery, elopement, divorce and theft etc.

The scholar has found the following reasons for slackening of the traditional Gwar Panchayat political organization.

- Frequent interference of the non Banjara leader in Gwar Panchayat at delebrations.
- In dispute settlement with Banjaras of the Thanda, the caste leaders take lead in solving disputes and most of the Banjaras do visit caste Leaders instead of approaching Gwar Panchayat at and hence the traditional Naiks have become nominal.
- Due to the increased individualistic attitude and un manifested factionalism that the people have started defining judgment given by Gwar Panchayat.
- Educated young Banjaras do not like to full fill the traditional way of providing liquor and non vegetarian food to the members of traditional council during the process of disputes settlement.

Changing Pattern of Leadership and Constitutional Safe Guards

A provision was included in part IV of the constitution under the “Directive principles of state policy.” According to the articles 40 “the state should take step to organize village Panchayat and endow than with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government.” The government of India in September-1991
introduced two bills one for the Panchayats and another for municipalities. Finally on 20th April -1993 the President of India has gave it has assent. Thus 73rd Amendment of the constitution relates to Panchayat Raj comes into force on 24th April-1993. Hence the 73rd and 74th Amendment to the constitution are described as a major landmarks in the history of local bodies in India 73rd constitutional amendment provision.

- Organization of Gramsabha
- Creation of three – twice Panchayat Raj structure at the district level, block and village levels
- Reservation of seats for scheduled caste / scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population
- Reservation for women in Panchayats (chairman and members) up to 1/3rd seats.
- This includes the number of seats reserved for women belonging to SC, ST and BCs the 74th amendment of the constitution which provided constitutional status is a milestone in the history of urban bodies.

According to this amendment this bill three types of urban local bodies were envisaged. A Nagar Panchayat for a population between 10,000 and 20,000 was the First type. The second type was called as Municipal council for urban areas with population between 20, 000, and 30,000. A municipal corporation was suggested with a population exceeding 3,0 0,000. The other provisions of bill related to elected ward committees adequate representation for women and SC/ST in the urban bodies. Because of the reservation provided by the 73rd and 74th Amendments number of people belonging to SC and ST communities is occupying the position such as Sarpanches, Mandal presidents, Zillah perished chairmen and mayors they emerged as major force in all levels.

CONCLUSIONS

As already mentioned the importance of the post of Naik has gone down considerably in recent years. The statutory Panchayat set up under the programme of democratic decentralization are providing alternative force of power. There is thus not only clash of personalities but of systems. The Naik derives his authority from the moral sanction of the Community the Sarpanch derives his authority from legal sanction of the State spread education has also brought down the importance of traditional leadership in the Thandas. Whenever any Government official visits Thandas the educated young men become the mouth pieces of the communities and explain their difficulties or requirements of the Thandas to such Officials. When representation is to be made to the higher officials at the block, division or district head quarters the assistance of such young men are invariably requisitioned. Thus they attain a vantage position in the village power structure. The introduction of Panchayat Raj System has brought many changes in the traditional structure of the Banjaras and their political participation has enormously increased. This system has affected existing social system of Banjaras, which was hither to free from this kind of socio political institutionalization. This also gave a new dimension to socio political development of the. The Lambada the emergency of Panchayat Raj created a new political consciousness and caused emergency of new leadership styles.

The traditional leadership and the modern leadership exist side by side in some of the Lambada Thandas in Warangal and Nalgonda districts. There is no conflict between the new leadership based on democratic ideas and the traditional leadership based on consideration such as hereditary and personal qualities. There is continuity with the past inspite of changes that are affecting the traditional political system. It is significant to note that traditional political system has acclimatized itself to the new forces of change without losing its identity and command over the people at the
settlement level. However Panchayat institutions have played an important role in bringing about modernization social change and social mobility among the Lambadas. The analysis of political structure among the Lambadas indicates the existence and retention of their traditional political system with the introduction of Universal adult franchise in the country there has been a tremendous change and women Lambadas who were earlier excluded from participation in the traditional polity of Banjara, have been given a definite role to play in modern democratic administration. The traditional polity of Banjaras in Telangana districts imbibed the change new forces without losing its identity and commands.

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