



PRESERVING ROOTS, EMBRACING CHANGE: THE RICH TAPESTRY OF KONDA DORA CULTURE IN THE AGENCY AREAS OF VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT.

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Abstract

Tribes in India confronts different problems including definition, integration and development. There is no clear definition of tribes because indigenous population in India doesn't constitute a uniform race. Cultural and traditional practices vary among Plain and Hill tribes. Each tribe has a rich repository of Traditions, and cultural heritage which evokes curiosity. Verrier Elwin holds the view that Tribes have exotic culture and live in harmony with nature. Modern society can learn the values of love, compassion and care from them. Their culture must be preserved from the mainstream. Whereas for GS Ghurye tribes are Backward Hindus who must be assimilated into mainstream Hindu society for their development. This research paper aims to explore the cultural and traditional practices of the Konda Dora tribe in Ananthagiri Mandal, Alluri Sitharama Raju District. The study was conducted in Dandabaadi and Taatiguda villages, with a purposive sampling of 50 people who were interviewed using a semi structured questionnaire. The study reveals various aspects of the tribe's culture and traditions, including their traditional beliefs and superstitions, clothing, arts and crafts, dance and music. The findings indicate that the tribe has a deeply rooted cultural heritage that values traditional knowledge and practices. The research also highlights the tribe's traditional medicinal practices, which are based on the use of medicinal plants and herbs found in the local forests. Knowledge about the cultural practices of Tribes can help in the preservation of heritage and people centered development

Keywords: Tribes, Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Population, Development

INTRODUCTION

Tribe means a group of people of common descent. It usually stands for a community, a race, a breed, or a class of people. It represents a specific form of social organization with its unique features. It also denotes a particular stage of development in human society. Tribes are classified based on cultural contact, religious beliefs, linguistic, racial, and economic criteria. The definition of Tribes as Adivasi (Aboriginal), Vanavasi (forest Dwellers), Girijan (Mountain Dweller) has political significance too. The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific groups of indigenous people in India who have been historically disadvantaged and marginalized. The government of India recognizes these Dwellers and provides them with various social, economic, and political benefits to improve their standard of living.

According to the 2011 Census of India, 5.3 million people in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh were classified as Scheduled Tribes. Araku Valley is a region in the state of Andhra Pradesh, and it is home to several tribal communities, including the Dhurwa, Kondadora, Kondareddi, and Porja tribes. The region exhibits archaeological evidence indicating the existence of the Konda Dora Tribes during the Neolithic era. The Konda Dora community once subsisted as hunter-gatherers, exhibiting a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding forests and natural ecosystem of their locale. Nevertheless, as agriculture emerged and animals were domesticated, there was a gradual shift towards a pastoral lifestyle. The geographical location of their native land encompasses the Konda Kamberu mountains of the Eastern Ghats, which are situated in the southern regions of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. The concentration of individuals in Odisha is primarily observed in the districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Raygada, and Kalahandi, while a lesser presence is found in the Balangir and Bargarh districts in western Odisha. The term "Chinna" represents the Telugu adaptation of a tribal group. The community is organized into various exogamous totemistic septs, including Sodalu (ragi), Bidikolu (earthen vessel), Palakolu, Boralu (Cobra), Koku (cow), and Kotra (wild goat).

Within their societal context, it is observed that while polygyny and child marriages are not explicitly outlawed, the prevailing norms predominantly favor adult marriage and monogamous unions. Cross-cousin weddings are commonly favored, but parallel cousin marriages are generally forbidden. The marital arrangement known as "Unigulu Purugulu Peli" is often regarded as the most esteemed form of matrimonial union. Various other methods of marriage exist, including elopement (referred to as udulia), marriage by capture (known as Jhika), marriage by exchange (referred to as Kunda Marpu), and marriage by service (referred to as illarikam). The practice of bride price, also known as Chintam biyam, is prevalent in various forms of matrimonial unions. Divorce is sanctioned upon obtaining the consent of the traditional council known as the Kulam Panchayat. The prevailing family structure primarily adheres to a nuclear patrilineal and patrilocal system. Individuals who pass away from natural causes are commonly subjected to the process of cremation. In instances of non-natural fatalities, interment is conducted. The community maintains a traditional village government known as the Kulam Panchayat, which is overseen by a leader known as the Kula Peda. Assisting the Kula Peda is a designated individual known as the Pillipudamari, who fulfills the roles of both a bearer and a messenger. In addition, there exists an inter-village community council known as Jati Panchayat, which is led by an individual referred to as Jati Peda. These councils are responsible for managing their customary affairs within their respective jurisdictions.

Every tribe possesses its own distinct sub-tribes, which have successfully preserved their individual identities during the passage of time. The tribal communities are renowned for their abundant cultural legacy, distinct languages, and customary practices. For example, the Konda Dora community exhibits proficiency in the creation of bamboo baskets, mats, and several other handicrafts. In contrast, the Chenchus are renowned for their adherence to traditional hunting techniques and honey-gathering activities. Similarly, the Savaras possess a remarkable aptitude for pottery and the creation of terracotta art. The study aims to examine the cultural and traditional practices of the primitive tribes who live in Dandabaadi and Taatiguda hamlet, which is located in the Ananthagiri hills of Araku. This research would emphasize the critical difficulties that the tribes are dealing with today, which are related to their cultural lives. Thus, we investigate the concept that the indigenous people's beliefs and customs gain a historicity of their own, which we ought to value and comprehend.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1. This research envisages to study of the Cultural and Traditional Practices of the Konda Dora Tribe
2. It aims to understand the changes in Cultural Practices with the advent of Modernization
3. To record and document the indigenous agricultural, and medical practices of Konda Dora Tribe.
4. To assess the socio-economic changes in the Konda Dora tribe due to their interaction with the mainstream Society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tribal culture is a mosaic of traditions, customs, Values, practices and beliefs. Tribal culture in India is understood using different Perspectives. Historical Perspective studies tribal life in Intellectual, emotional and cultural contexts. This perspective which was led by the colonial administrators studied Tribal economy, land rights, cultural practices and interaction among Tribes and castes. They saw tribes as people with exotic Cultures and unique lifestyles which need preservation. Proponents of this Perspective Include Verrier Elwin who studied Baiga, Muria, Agaria and Bondo Tribes. He advocated for the development of Tribes without disrupting their Culture.

Another framework which studies Tribal culture is the Integration perspective. GS Ghurye is the staunch proponent of this perspective. They see tribal culture within the broad framework of Cultural Diversity and pluralism in India. Tribes are seen as Backward Hindus and they need to be assimilated to the mainstream for the sake of national Integration. These perspectives explore the relationship between Caste and Tribes in India. N K Bose believed that barring small differences, the economic and cultural life of peasants and Tribes is similar. There is a larger difference between the cultures of Rural and Urban areas. To understand Indian Culture, it is important to include the cultural heritage of tribes. But. With the constant cultural contact with the castes of the Mainstream society, elements of the Caste system are penetrating into the tribal lives.

Institutional Perspective examines the tribal culture within the dynamics of different institutions. Virginius Xaxa studied about the differential rights held by the tribes and how institutions govern the lives of tribes. This perspective focuses on the development of Tribes by catering to their needs and fulfilling their demands.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current investigation was conducted in two distinct villages located on the periphery of Ananthagiri Township. The geographical regions that were examined in this study are Dandabaadi and Taatiguda. The research was specifically limited to a prominent indigenous community, namely the Konda Dora tribe. The research project will employ a descriptive research approach, facilitating the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data. The study employed a purposive sampling technique and a sample size of 50 individuals was chosen, comprising both male and female participants across various age categories. The current study utilizes primary data obtained from individuals to examine several characteristics of socio-cultural status, as well as cultural practices pertaining to religious customs and traditions. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire, as well as face-to-face interviews. The study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative elements in its analysis. The research approach employed in this study was conducting a survey using a questionnaire among the indigenous communities residing in the chosen areas. The survey comprised 20 items that encompassed different facets of the research, such as tribal religious customs and traditions, community involvement, intergenerational transmission of practices, folklore, customs, myths, superstitions, traditional arts and crafts, medicinal practices, and the continuation of daily activities like agriculture, hunting, and gathering within the respondents' families. Additionally, the questionnaire collected demographic information from the participants.

DATA ANALYSIS

Traditional Beliefs and Superstitions:

Konda Dora tribes believe in ghosts and ancestors, creating a strong connection with nature. They say every natural object has a spiritual character and deserves devotion. Many believe sacred places in forests or hilly areas should be preserved without disturbance. Avoid approaching these areas, which are often marked by rocks or trees. There are cultural bans on births and menstruation. Cultural practices include barring menstruation women from the kitchen and food because they are considered impure. The protection amulets and charms provide against evil spirits and ailments. Amulets made from leaves or animal bones are worn around the neck or wrist. Astrology and star alignment are also

their beliefs. The configuration of celestial bodies before birth is thought to affect a person's personality and future. They believe that their ancestors and the environment shape their lives and help them connect with the spirits above.

Traditional Clothing:

Konda Dora's clothing reflects their culture and society. Women in many traditional cultures wear sarees, long pieces of fabric draped around their bodies and over their shoulders, with a blouse. Traditional sarees are made of cotton or silk and decorated with stitching or printing. In addition to men, women wear necklaces, bangles, and earrings made of silver or gold. Men have traditionally worn a dhoti, a long fabric draped over the waist and lower limbs, with a shirt or vest. This tribe also wears turbans or caps. Men also wear necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. In recent years, younger tribe members have preferred Western attire. However, many Konda Dora people wear traditional clothes to festivals, weddings, and other ceremonies.

Traditional Art and Craft:

According to the data acquired, 11 respondents weave gorgeous textiles, 18 Wood carving experts and 15 basket makers weave exquisite baskets and other containers from organic materials. In the tribe, 6 people make clay pots by hand. Since the Konda Dora tribe has passed down its crafts for generations, they are important to their culture. Their society values weaving, which involves skillfully interlacing cotton and silk threads. Textiles with intricate designs and organic colours are common. They use local clay to make pots, jars, and other vessels. These objects often have intricate patterns. Basketry uses locally available bamboo, cane, and grass to make baskets. Multiple items can be stored and transported in these baskets. The culture traditionally carves intricate designs and patterns into wooden doors, furniture, and household items. A large number of Konda Dora people still pursue these historical arts and crafts. Despite modernization's impact on their lifestyle, people have always valued traditional arts and crafts as part of our cultural heritage. Data shows that the Konda Dora tribe in Ananthagiri Mandal values traditional arts and crafts. The tribe's people are skilled in weaving, wood carving, basketry, and pottery. These abilities are important to the tribe's culture because they've been passed down for generations. The data shows the tribe's commitment to cultural preservation and skill acquisition.

Traditional Dance and Music:

Dance and singing from the Konda Dora tribe are important in the culture of Kondadora. Dimsa, a traditional group dance, is often performed at celebrations. The dancers move in a circle while singing and playing dappu and thappeta. Jodi Kudukula is a traditional dance performed at weddings and other celebrations. Male and female performers participate in it. The performers wear traditional clothes and dance together while singing and playing instruments. Along with dance, music is important to their culture. Musical instruments like the dappu, thappeta, and changu are made from indigenous materials. These instruments create a variety of rhythmic and melodic rhythms, often with vocalization and movement.

Stories, Myths, and Legends of the Konda Dora Tribe:

The Konda Dora tribe uses oral storytelling to pass on their culture. Narratives, myths, and legends often reflect community ideals and protect and spread its culture. Konda Dora myths emphasize human-nature interaction. Numerous narratives emphasize the need to coexist harmoniously with nature and the consequences of disregarding this responsibility. Forest spirits can harm people who disrespect nature, according to many stories. There are also reports of people who suffered after harming animals or the environment. Community and social solidarity are common themes in Konda Dora's stories. Many stories focus on compassion, magnanimity, and teamwork, often featuring heroes who embody these values. Individuals show selflessness for the community or empathy for those in need. Konda Dora's mythology often emphasizes honesty, bravery, and determination. These stories

often include protagonists who overcome obstacles or endure difficult trials and gain wisdom. Konda Dora's narratives, folklore, and traditional tales preserve their cultural norms and beliefs while revealing their overall perspective and way of life. These cultural items are valued in their histories and passed down through generations.

Traditional Medicinal Practices:

In their culture and beliefs, the Konda Dora tribe has a rich medicinal legacy. The role of traditional healers is crucial to society since they diagnose and treat a wide range of maladies. The Konda Dora tribe treats patients holistically, including their emotional, spiritual, and social well-being. Healers use herbal treatments, massage therapy, and spiritual ceremonies to restore bodily and mental balance. The Konda Dora tribe uses neem, turmeric, aloe vera, and tulasi for medicine. The above plant specimens are often collected from their natural environments and used to create various medical treatments. The Konda Dora tribe's healers improve community health and welfare. The personnel must teach community members about health and cleanliness. They often work with community leaders to promote public health programs. Traditional Konda Dora medicine is deeply ingrained in their culture. These activities have changed over time due to social and economic changes. However, they continue to improve community health and welfare.

Traditional Konda Dora knowledge and habits are passed on through oral traditions, narrative storytelling, and experience learning. Because of their wisdom and life experience, the elderly are appreciated for teaching. The tribe is known for weaving, ceramics, and basketry as well as oral traditions. Through experiential learning, these artistic skills survive. Children gain these skills by seeing and participating in older peers and cultural events like festivals and ceremonies.

Recently, Konda Dora tribal members have been concerned about losing their traditions and ceremonies. Younger generations' increased exposure to external influences and embrace of modern lifestyles may explain this. The tribe's traditional history is being preserved and developed in various ways. One example is tribal museums and cultural institutes that maintain their arts, crafts, and rituals. Community members can celebrate their cultural history at these institutes. Supporting traditional educational and training programs guarantees newer generations can acquire and use traditional skills. Indigenous communities collaborate with colleges and non-profits on these programs. More emphasis is being placed on Konda Dora's cultural preservation. Several layers of preservation are undertaken for this unique cultural asset.

Despite the fact that the tribal communities have largely neglected their longstanding customs such as dance, music, songs, folk tales, and their native dialect when queried about their preference for preserving their religious customs and traditions for their offspring and future generations versus embracing modernization in all aspects, which would inevitably lead to the disappearance of numerous traditional practices, the response was clear. They have expressed a desire to uphold their traditional values while also embracing modernization in order to adapt to the significant societal changes and overcome the persistent sense of stagnation. The current scenario presents a paradoxical position wherein the process of modernization has yielded both favourable and unfavourable transformations. Efficient and effective implementation of developmental programs is crucial for achieving successful advancement. Preserving a nation's culture and tradition is of paramount importance for the holistic development of the country.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Konda Dora tribe must balance their traditional practices with modern civilization. This requires preserving their rich cultural heritage while embracing modern change. Traditional beliefs and superstitions help the Konda Dora tribe connect with nature and ancestral spirits. Their devotion to nature influences their daily lives, including spiritual rites in nature and cultural limitations on births and menstruation. Protective amulets and charms show a generation-old belief in

protecting against evil. Traditional dress, like sarees and dhotis, helps preserve cultural identity. Even though Western attire dominates, traditional clothing still has cultural value, especially on important cultural events. The Konda Dora tribe's weaving, wood carving, basketry, and ceramics show their commitment to preserving their culture. These crafts not only beautify daily life but also show the tribe's dedication to preserving its cultural legacy despite modern advances. The Konda Dora tribe values cultural transmission. Despite external challenges, the community's efforts to preserve traditional knowledge through oral traditions, experiential learning, tribal museums, and educational projects show its commitment to cultural preservation. The Konda Dora tribe embraces modernity while preserving their culture. The paradoxical situation highlights the need for a sophisticated policy that balances growth and cultural identity. The Konda Dora tribe's journey shows how tradition and modernization shape their culture.

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