



## Social Structure and Natural Resources of Kondareddis: a Primitive Tribal Group in Andhra Pradesh

Dr. P. THIRIPALU

ACADEMIC CONSULTANT, DEPT. OF ANTHROPOLOGY, S V UNIVERSITY, TIRUPATI, AP

Dr. C  
VENKATSRARLU

ACADEMIC CONSULTANT, DEPT. OF ANTHROPOLOGY, S V UNIVERSITY, TIRUPATI, AP

### ABSTRACT

*In the realm of social structure, research questions arise as to the role of traditional system in mediating human interactions with nature. the division of labour between the sex in different peasants and tribal communities give rise to fundamentally the responsibility of caste and tribe pattern in regulating the use of forest, water and other resource. the study covers all the process of change occupation, life style, customs in factors and development in respect of the kondareddi.*

*The kondareddi are primitive tribal mostly concentrated in Papi hill areas of Andhra Pradesh. The kondareddi have also adopted other sources of livelihood like forest labour, which includes bamboo cutting, horticulture and basket making. Although the kondareddi dependent upon the traditional shifting cultivation, their constant interaction and contact with non-tribes have made some of the Kondareddi settlements in the hills take to plough cultivation. This ecology and social organizations plays role towards control of the social and economical and ritual permits, this study also examine how the kondareddi have been able to retain their tribal identity under the impact of external process of their community.*

**KEYWORDS :** Kondareddi, social structure, resource, ITDA

Mostly Kondareddis inhabit on the hills which are covered with dense forest of East Godavari, Khammam and West Godavari districts. Few families are also found in the districts of Warangal and Visakhapatnam. According to 1961 census the populations of Kondareddis was 35,444 (17,898 females and 17,546 males), and that of Hill Kondareddis was 3,894 (1,951 females and 1,943 males). As per 1981 census the total population of this community is 54,685. Highest population of Kondareddis are found in East Godavari (40,685) followed by West Godavari (4,521), Khammam (4,093) and Visakhapatnam (2,715). In remaining districts there are only few families eking their livelihoods (Integrated development plan for Kondareddis of Andhra Pradesh, TCR & TI, 1978).

### Natural resources

The rocky terrain, the uncontrollable forest growth, and lack of sufficient flatland for cultivation forced these primitive people to eke out their livelihood by collection forest produce and raising millet crops on the hill fields. The luxuriant forest endowed with rich flora and fauna, however largely catered to their food needs, while the 'podu' cultivation fetched them food grains to supplement the forest produce. In course of time the Kondareddi developed the artifacts, socifacts and mentifacts suited to his way of life, environment and according to his creative genius.

The formidable hills and the impenetrable forest walled off the Kondareddi from the rest of the society. The influence of outsiders on social and cultural life of the Kondareddis is superficial. Their meager and primitive material cultural possessions and weakly developed non-material cultural traits indicate that the Konda reddy remained uninfluenced by the currents of change in the rest of the country. Until Christoph Von-Furor-Haimendorf explored the Papi hills to discover this tribe in 1941 they were to be incognita's. The Kondareddi were not known ever to the non-tribal population in the neighboring plains. The Kondareddi have not changed much since 1941 when Haimendorf first studied the tribe.

### Settlement Pattern

In their eternal pursuit for food from the jungle and of the suitable locations for 'podu' the Kondareddi lead a non-sedentary life; their range of peregrination is determined by the availability of flora and fauns. Locations of suitable locations for 'podu' and forest coupes are also important factors in determining the peregrination pattern. The non-sedentary Kondareddi builds simple huts with locally available material. They are mostly thatched huts.

Bamboo is used for rafters and even for walls. Thatching grass is used for thatching the huts in the interior areas of the project area, while the palm leaves are used in the lower agency, where Palmyra are grown in

considerable number. The undulating hilly habitat has low carrying capacity. Kondareddi settlement pattern is determined by these factors. The settlements are small in size and are often exclusive. At the foot of the hill lie other tribal settlements. Fifty percent of the settlements in the project area have less than 200 populations. Villages with less than 10 households constitute 17% of the total study villages.

### Ethnographic profile:

The Kondareddi community mother tongue in Telugu, but they can speak in Odia also. Etymologically, the name kondareddi appears to have been derived from the words Konda meaning hill and redid meaning chief. Kondareddi men are generally scantily dressed. A loin cloth and generally a turban constitute the dress of the adult male, while the women wear a sari and a loin cloth as under garment. In the hills the women wear short, narrow saris, which they wrap several times round the hips throwing its loose end over the left shoulder. In the lower hills and valleys the women started wearing bodies. In the hills some women wear necklaces of painted cane and strip are uncommon now and are replaced now with bead necklaces and cheap metal bracelets. They wear glass bangles. Stones studded pendants for septum (Addabasa), nose rings and studs; earrings and toe rings are common ornaments for Kondareddi women.

During the year 1961, Kondareddis were classified under Scheduled Castes and Tribes and are notified as two independent tribes known as Kondareddis and Hill Reddis. However, literally both these two groups are in fact one tribal community called Kondareddis. In Telugu literature "Konda" means hill and "Reddis" means the leaders. Since these peoples are mostly living on the top of the hills they are called as "hill reddis" and more popularly as "Kondareddis".

### Social Structure and Natural Resources

By and large the Kondareddis are having traditional and ancient social structure. Their economy is major based on ancient methods. Podu cultivation is one of the major sources of economy. Even though they have settled houses in these villages these people tend to live in their farmhouses in the high/ low slopes of their podu fields during the cultivation season, which will be from July to January. For preparing podu fields each family cuts down plant mostly trees and large shrubs in areas of 1 to 2 acres of forestland. According Thammudu Raja Reddy and Kathula Lachi Reddy of Doramamidi approximately two acres of forest needs to be cut down every season for podu cultivation. According to this practice, each year approximately 3,000 acres of forest area is cleared in around Tadepalli panchayat area for cultivation. A detailed survey is indeed necessary to assess the actual forest area (in acres) in and around Tadepalli area to look at the percentage of forest area

cleared which would help in assessing the impact of podu on standing vegetation and to develop strategies for alternative towards better utilization of podu areas.

They generally cultivate local and traditional varieties of cereals, millets, pulse and vegetable crops. Once the fields are cleared off vegetation they will set fire to the fallen logs and branches, the ash of which will supply the soil with fallen logs and branches nourishment (potassium). This land will be used for cultivation for two years and this depends on the height and girth of the trees that were felled. The yield of the crops will be good in the first year and it will decrease in the subsequent years. Podu cultivation will be started by gradually clearing the forest from the bottom of the hill.

They cultivate in the cleared forest for two years and gradually go upward with an interval of two years. By the time they clear the top most portion of vegetation the bottom part of the hillock having sufficient vegetation ready for further cultivation. It will take near five to six years for rejuvenation. Again this land will be used for cultivation in a cyclic manner. If the tribe feels that the vegetation is not sufficient for slash and burn, then he will choose another area, however far the place may be. Generally it is the same family that returns to the place where they had cultivated. But at times it will be taken over by other family of the community. The yield of the crop depends on the timely sowing of the seeds. The sowing period is between June and July when there are rains. If the forest area consisted of large trees before it is slashed and burnt, the cultivation could continue for three types. Of course it is a natural phenomenon. Suggestions to increase the yield for podu cultivation: During the fallow period if the tribes are encouraged to grow fast growing leguminous crop species of economic value, they can start cultivation in the same field within a span of five to six years.

The tribe should also be encouraged to do cultivation alternatively leaving fallow and natural vegetation. This will decrease the chances of soil erosion and allow vegetation growth in a better way. Further plan of Research work on podu cultivation: would include the studying of the flora of the entire area; inventories the virgin forest vegetation not cleared so far for podu cultivation and to record the diversity and density of the local plant species; survey the fallow field diver of podu an to record the leguminous species available in the forest area; plan strategies to improve the soil fertility in the podu fields and to prevent soil erosion; and take up the cultivation of leguminous herb, such as *Tephrosia* pursuers and shrubby species of short life cycle in podu fields. Podu cultivation needs to be taken up in alternative areas. This is in order to prevent soil erosion and percolation of nutrient manure in the left out vegetation

### Political Organization

Kondareddis have very good administration capacity and practise well-defined democratic methods. The system is called panchayat. Every family head in the village is a member of this panchayat, and

these members are held in high esteem. Every village has a headman known as peddakapu (Telugu, pedda = big = elder) (Dr. M.V.Krishna Rao, 1993) He presides over the deliberations of this panchayat. However his decisions have to be approved by the society. The post of peddakapu is hereditary and belongs to the family that established the clan. Since his authority is mainly religious, he appropriates as the chief priest also. Peddakapu is assisted by his brother or close relative, who perform the duties of peddakapu in his absence. This assistant is known as chinnapedda (Telugu, chinna = small, pedda = elder = leader) the younger headman.

Adultery, divorce and dining with prohibited castes are all social crimes and these are deliberated in the panchayat and judgments pronounced. The dispute between villages and the disputes that cannot be decided by village panchayat are submitted to the head of the clan, whose authority and decision are considered above that of the village headman. They have a good communication network through a messenger designated by the community itself. Any message of good or bad is communicated by him to others.

### Occupation pattern

The main occupation of Kondareddis is agriculture and allied crafts. They practice payment field agriculture as well as shifting agriculture. They cultivate cereals, millets, vegetables and pulses in the podu along hill slopes and in plains. Godavari River is very famous and well known. Working, as laborers in the forest works, fishing and collecting small forest produce and selling it are the other means of living for these people. Ancient types of plough, a digging stick with a steel tip, iron hoe, different type of knives, axes bar and arrow are the main household implements. Kondareddis are also very skilful in cloth weaving and in making of hand fans.

Multiple uses of *Borassus palm*: Leaves are used for thatching houses. Fibre from leaves is used for house construction. The fiber has commercial value and is sold @ Rs.7 to 8 Kg. Fruits are edible. Tender fruits are highly relished. Tender sprouts are cooked and eaten. Toddy is extracted from mature trees and forms more like staple diet for the local people. It takes nearly 20 years for a plant to reach maturity. The population of *Borassus* trees needs to be increased to meet the requirements of local populace.

Kondareddi now understanding it in the perspective of change and persistence, one find that while changes have occurred in certain areas, at the same time some traits are being retained for which the internal forces are responsible.

Group structure represent the kind of reality into which we find work and recreation, rewards and punishment together comprise the complex pattern of social structure.

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