Indigenous Knowledge and Economic Institutions Among Nomadic People in Tirumala Foot Hill Villages

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ABSTRACT
Nomadism is one of the ways of life has been practicing in particular communities from hunting and gathering stage to life evolution. Such type of nomadic people still practicing traditional way life in the villages adjacent to Tirumala foot hills in Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh. The main aim of the paper is to explore the traditional knowledge systems and economic organization of the selected nomadic people in the villages adjacent to Tirumala foot hills. It is also discusses the natural resource utilization for shape up their economy.

KEYWORDS: Traditional Knowledge, Nomadic People, Economic Institutions

INTRODUCTION
Nomads are known as a group of communities who use to travel from place to place for livelihood. Nomadism is a special way of life and experience (Rao 2003). Nomads are visually found in small kin bands (Tylo, 1991). The nomads largely depend on rural communities for their livelihoods. Each nomad occupied a particular socio-economic niche, fulfilling a specific need of the village. The nomadic people worship their own pattern of nature gods and goddesses and have continued to practice in their ancient customs and manners. The place occupied by most of the nomadic caste in the local and regional caste hierarchy is low. According to Sociologists and Anthropologists, before the advent of transportation and communication, these people served as useful adjuncts to sedentary societies. The nomads shared a symbiotic relationship with settled people as occupational groups of hunters, trappers, blacksmiths, acrobats, fortune tellers etc. The nature of their wandering and means of livelihood differs in accordance with their occupation (Misra 1971). They have an occupational description to define a caste or a community. Nomadic way of living is not necessarily a year long activity, some communities do it for a given period of time and they slip back to their village of origin.

In the past, there are several types of nomadic cultures were abundant especially in rural India. Due to the milieu of globalization, the changes occurred in terms of economic, education, livelihood and social awareness. In this regard these nomadic cultures gradually disappearing, but some of the people still practicing ancient nomadic way of life. Generally, the nomadic people visit the villages during November-June months, because the farmers are busy with the works of harvesting the first rainy (kharif) crop and transporting the grains from their threshing grounds to their homes for fill up the granaries or set heaps in their homes. This season is also the end of crop harvesting and the granaries of the houses are full of harvested grains. After harvesting of kharif crop the villagers are very free from agricultural works but a little bit engaged in cattle rearing. In that time the nomadic communities wandered across the villages by providing their services or exhibiting their arts. Instead of their services/entertainment shows, the villagers donate food materials/grains, old clothes etc.

Nomadism or wandering way of livelihood strategy of mobile population has observed in two modes at the villages adjacent to Tirumala foot hills in Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh. In one type of nomadism, the total family involved in wandering; they do not have any permanent settlements/houses. They halt in the villages by making temporary tents (gudaram) with old clothes at some distance of the farm village and wander door to door in surrounding homesteads of their camps for alms or provide their service to the villagers. Some times the people practice barter or goods exchange system. In this practice the nomads give their own made products to the villagers and get return the grains instead of their products. Another type of wandering people; one or more persons have leave from their villages/homes seasonally and move towards their respective territorial directions and then return back to their homes after some period. Different communities of nomads and their traditional occupations are described below:

Budabukkala: The Budabukkala are traditionally fortune-tellers and beggars. They are one of the sub groups in Dasara. In certain time, they travel from one village to another village. They go villages and play a traditional musical drum known budabukka and singing a song or chanting the spiritual prayer song devoted to the Amba Goddess. The musical drum which is used by the Budabukala is made by the wood of the tree Sandra; both sides of the drum are wrapped in the skin of goat or beer. It also contains a thick thread with drip of iron, attached to the middle of the drum. They wear the attire like white colour shirt and dhoti, red colour turban and black coat. They always apply black mark on their forehead and also apply sandal wood stick mark. They wear ornaments like big ring in the ears. The people of the Budabukala do not just sing or pray and beg, but they also make predictions which are taken seriously by the village people. They play their traditional musical drum ‘budabukka’ while forecasting the fortune of the people. Initially the budabukala person walks across the streets at early morning, before sunrise, when the people were not waked-up. In that time the budabukala man play the musical drum and sing a song, which includes upcoming forecasted bad or fine events that the villagers will be faced. After sun rise he again walks across the streets door to door and supplicate alms through telling fortune of each household.

Dommaru: They are the nomadic acrobats. The traditional occupation of Dommaru is showing performances on pole or ropes in the public, which includes rope-dancing, somersaulting, acrobatic feats, ascending high poles and walking on ropes. In the public performances male, female and children are involved. Musical instruments such as dula or keerukeeru dula are used to make a great deal of noise to attract the spectators.

Dhokkalolu: This people visited only the villages of madiga caste. They eat the food cooked by madiga only, but, do not consume the food cooked by the caste other than madiga. They move only to the habitations of madiga community and stay there for 10-15 days by erecting gudaralu (tents). The kin groups of 1-3 families visited together. The people do not beg while entering the village. They sit at the entrance of the village by keeping food bowls. The households of entire village bring the food and give it to them in the bowls. At the time of leaving to another village, the entire households of village give some amount of money and grains to them.

Katipapadu: These people visit villages in a predetermined fashion and bring with them human bone, specially skulls, femur and other large bones. All these are put in aunny bag or box and carried. These people make a stay at a remote place from the village and send message to the villagers about their arrival. The villagers come to them and make negotiate a deal by giving them some amount of grains or money on the condition that they never enter the village. According to
the villagers, if these people if bring the human bones into the village, the human bones could cause the locals supernatural dangers. For that reason, the villagers do not permit them to enter the village.

Mondivaru: The Mondivaru are a semi-nomadic community, move from place to place for begging. They are identified by the iron bangles worn in the right hand and an iron knife held in the same hand. They beat themselves with cudgel and also beg by showing their blood by scratching their hands with iron knife.

Mallaiagaru: They are seasonal nomadic entertainers. They move 3-10 persons as a group from their native villages to their respective territorial direction for show their performances. These people wear headgear stitched with bear skin consisting of black hair. The group of people dance and sing a song by playing damarukam. According to the people some 20 years ago the elders of the village gave them food for 3 to 4 days and gave them at least one chata of paddy or saaja and also cooking materials such as tamarind, salt and chillies etc. But now-a-day some money in the form of change is given by the villagers when performing. Now days this tradition is following only because it is the occupation of their fore fathers in this regard they are keeping respect on their ancestral traditions.

Machevullolull: They are the nomadic carpenters. Generally they visit the village before the starting of kharif season (summer months). They stay in the village for few days and make new agricultural implements and also repair the old wooden implements like plough, cart, cots etc. They take some grains/cash from the villagers for providing service. The farmers also provide food for them for utilizing their service. They move on to the next village after completions of all the repair works of certain village.

Pichiguntla: These are the mobile swine herders. They stay for some days in the village and beg around the habitations besides growing their pig herds and move to next village. They sold the pig to the villagers whenever need money. They make a temporary tent under the shadow of trees or open place in fallow agricultural lands at the outskirts of the village. They grazed their swine herds at the agricultural fields and tanks around the village. They beg for food in the villagers at around their camps. Thurston (1909) stated that the name pichiguntla literally means an assembly of beggars, who are described as a class of mendicants.

Pamulollu: Snake charming is the traditional occupation of pamulollu. These people beg by seeing or playing Pythons, cobras and dasaram-pamu with different musical instruments known pamulaburra, drums etc. Pamula is also known by the synonyms like Jogula, Garadicivallu, and medicheyu valli. The pamula lead a nomadic way of life in a particular territory by perusing snake-charming and pig rearing occupations, besides performing a magic show called modi or garadi. The garadi at presently is disappeared.

Pagatimala: They play monkeys or bears in the village and beg around the village for grains and food. They make a gudarams ( tents) with clothes outside the village. They also perform kanikattu a kind of magic to entertain the villagers such as making chick from egg, producing snakes from the outskirt of the village. They offered amulets and also give some herbal medicines to the victims. The people present gifts to the men who head loading reddemmathali such gifts like chick, sheep, cloths and ornaments which is for expressing their devotion on reddemmathali.

Gangireddula varu: They are the semi-nomadic people distributed throughout Andhra Pradesh; most of them are travel all over the country staging the bull performance locally known as Gangireddulata. The people visit the villages every year; a month before Sankranti and exhibit the skills of their bulls for over two months before returning to their villages which are adjacent to Nallamalla forests. They perform gangireddulata (bull event) with gangireddhu; a bull harnessed with colourful clothes, woolen flowers and bells. It bites the hands of its master and then places its legs on his chest without hurting him even as his aides play Nadaswaran and drums in unison. The woman of the house offers grain and cloth to the bull. The people donate money for bull performance. The farmers, who unable to tame their ferocious bulls and make them work in fields, donated to these people, they train the animals and make them perform a variety of feats.

The traditional occupations of gangireddulas are vanishing gradually and there are not many Gangireddulas left these days. Most of the people could not follow their family tradition due to modernity in lifestyle. Gangireddulas are now limited to just a few pockets in the state and the tradition is fast dying with the new generation shifting to other occupations.

Nethimeedharemavaru: They are the seasonal mobile visitors to the villages. They belong to the caste valmiki. They have permanent settlements in Cherlopalli of Gurrakonda mandal in Chittoor district. Only the men move around villages by head loading specially decorated effigy of the goddess ‘reddemamma’. They treat bad evils by tying amulets and also give some herbal medicines to the victims. The people present gifts to the men who head loading reddemmathali such gifts like chick, sheep, cloths and ornaments which is for expressing their devotion on reddemmathali.

Change and Continuity in Nomadic Traditions
Once upon a time in rural areas, the nomadic cultures are very common. But now this nomadic cultural visibility is very rare. A few people are still practising such type of nomadic way of life because, they sentimentally keeping respect on their ancestral traditional occupation. The nomadic communities are disappearing due to several reasons such as changes in cropping pattern, introduction of modern agricultural systems, disappearance of traditional systems, increase of education, increase of social awareness, industrialization, westernization and globalization. Farmers in the past mostly cultivated food grains for their own consumption. Due to the introduction of market economy the cropping pattern is changed and now cultivating commercial crops instead of traditional crops. Due to the changes in the cropping pattern, the products and services of nomadic people are devalued. Nomads or traditional communities on the move are today a worried lot. Their livelihoods are threatened due to a multiplicity of factors-be it factory-made goods, modern means of entertainment or strict wildlife laws which are altering their traditional way of life. They built sedentary settlements and shifted to other occupations with the support of government development schemes.

Due to the globalization, people around the world are more connected to each other today. International travel and communication is caused to changes in lifestyles, political, economic and cultural atmosphere of the indigenous communities. Majority of the nomads are the agricultural-centered. Now the farming systems are changed and the cultivation is also decreasing due to un-seasonal rainfall hence, the nomadic lifestyle is also altered. The nomads gradually transforming from indigenous way of life to modern lifestyle and also have adopting modern livelihood systems for increase their lifestyle sustaining.

Acknowledgements
The Authors are very thankful to Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) for providing financial assistance as Post-Doctoral Fellowship.

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