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IMPACT OF THE CASHEW NUT INDUSTRY ON YANADIS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

This paper will attempt to study the extent of participation, and the socio-economic impact of this on members of the Yanadi tribe as a result of their participation in the cashew nut industry. This paper will bring out that the initiatives taken to ensure their greater involvement in this industry have helped in improving their social status. The study was carried out at Vetapalem village in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

Introduction

The data for this paper was obtained from an in-depth study undertaken in Vetapalem village in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh during January-June 2016. In this village, due to the impact of cashew nut industry, the socio-cultural life of the Yanadis has changed significantly. As a result, more and more people are tending to lost interest in their traditional institutions. The researcher has collected data from 176 households in Vetapalem village, in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh, with the help of household schedules.

This village, which has 25 cashew nut industries, is located about 60 km north east of Ongole, the district headquarters, between Chirala and Ongole towns.

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The sources of primary data included household surveys and observations (both participant and non-participant). The data collected from the primary sources mainly relate to the experiences and opinions of respondents. The secondary data was collected from: journals, newspapers, census reports, periodicals and reports of committees and commissions. Around one hundred Yanadis (including Challa Yanadis and Reddy Yanadis) were interviewed in the study village. All these interviews were conducted in the evenings, when the respondents had returned to their homes after the work. Schedules were used to collect socio-economic information about the households. The information included: characteristic like family size, income, occupation, education level, etc., of the family. With the help of these schedules, data was also collected on the following aspects of the life of the Yanadis: changing social organisation, family, types of family, economic production like food gathering, fishing, and small game hunting, marketing, implementation of government policies and tribal welfare programmes. The observation method was also used for collecting information on the participation of family members at different levels in activities like dress-making. This method also helped the researcher to get an idea about the status of women in the family. The key informants were mostly the elder members of the tribe, having in-depth extensive knowledge of the traditions and culture of their society. The key informants were found to be useful for cross-checking the validity of the data collected. The researcher selected four old Yanadis as key informants for learning about the traditional Yanadi society. Case studies on the persons engaged in the cashew nut industry helped the researcher in gaining a better understanding of how the Yanadis have been moving from their traditional occupations towards modern occupations. Group discussions were conducted in view of the objectives of the study, with the help of informal discussions with few groups of men and women separately in the field and at places where people normally gather. Issues like, the economic status, beliefs and traditions, occupational change were discussed with the Yanadis in these group discussions. In these discussions, tools like the camera and voice recorder were effectively used for collecting information from the respondents.

This paper will attempt to examine the impact of cashew nut industries on employment and wages and on the socio-economic

conditions of the Yanadi workers in the study area.

Workers of the cashew nut industries. There are twenty five cashew nut factories in Vetapalem and a number of Yanadi families are working in these. We will now analyse the life of the families dependent on the cashew nut industries. The cashew industries were set up some 40 years ago. The worker couple wakes up early at 4 am, prepares food and leaves for work. The Yanadi workers bring out the burnt cashew seeds in oil cans and pour these on the sand. After the seeds get dried, these are cleaned up. After this, the seeds are broken for getting the cashew nuts. For breaking the cashew seeds, a wooden piece, known as 'kodi', is used and the breaking is done on a stone slab. For twenty-five workers, there is a lady in charge, known as the 'maestri'. Her duty is to see that the cashew nuts are not stolen. The remuneration for the workers is Rs 5/- for breaking one kg of cashew seeds. Each Yanadi worker breaks about 15 kg per day and gets 75/-. The work goes on till 7 pm. in the evening. The wages are given on a daily basis at the end of the work. The management gives bonus to the workers after every three months. Sometimes, when a worker takes Rs 1000/- as advance, every day Rs 10/- is deducted from his or her salary until the amount taken is fully repaid. However, since most Yanadi workers are uneducated, they do not know properly how much money is being deducted from their daily wages. In this cashew nut industry, there are fifty child workers. When the labour officer comes on a visit, on that day, these child workers are given a holiday. One of the problems faced by these Yanadi cashew workers is that no proper medical facilities are available for them. If any of the workers dies, an amount of Rs 1000/- is given to the family to carry out the funeral rites, but this too only when the union asks the management.

Social dimensions of economic change

Traditionally, the economy of the Yanadis was mainly subsistence in nature. They mainly depended on fishing and hunting. Sometimes, even this was not sufficient for their minimum dietary requirements. The establishment of the cashew nut industries began to transform their subsistence economy to cash economy. The money economy not only changed the economic status of the Yanadis, but its can also be seen from the improvement of their social status, inter-community relationship, changing political organisation, food habits, customs, traditions and their life styles. Along with the changes in occupation structure of Yanadis of Vetapalem village, changes in social and religious practices have been noticed. The cashew nut industries provided scope for labour mobility and majority of people started working as industrial labourers. Other occupational avenues provided employment for those who could not find a place in the industrial labour sector. Apart from this, availabilities of transport facilities, proximity to the highways and continuous urban contact also speeded up changes during the last fifty years. The observed changes that have taken place in Vetapalem among Yanadis under study are as follows.

Changing structure of family: Family is a social group in which parents and children live together. In all human societies, there are groups whose members are bound together by ties of kinship. There are varieties of groupings, of which the family is the most

important one. Many changes are taking place in the Yanadi family structure due to the impact of various forces. Nuclear family, which consists of parents and their unmarried children, is the predominant one in the Yanadi society. Out of the total 176 families in the village, 170 belong to nuclear families and the remaining six are extended, or joint, families. Many parents generally get their children married at the age of 16-17 years. Most of the couples, after their marriage, prefer to set up new families. Yanadis in Vetapalem have experienced a lot of changes in their life style since the setting up of cashew nut industries in that village. Prior to that, many of them used to depend on catching fish, crabs, etc., as their main sources of livelihood. Initially, they had to struggle very hard for their survival. It was a subsistence oriented economy. After the cashew nut industries were established in Vetapalem, many Yanadi families started working in these industries. As a result, their economy changed from subsistence oriented to cash economy. This also impacted the life styles of many Yanadis. They started purchasing radios, bicycles, iron chairs and TVs etc, from their surplus cash. Some of them also started constructing their own pucca houses. The cashew nut industry has left its impact on their family structure also. From the earnings from the cashew nut industry work, the married men started purchasing saris, jewellery, etc., for their wives. Young Yanadi women working in these industries have started purchasing gold, cosmetics etc. In the Yanadi families, the eldest male member is the head of the household and all the family members have to obey him. He takes all decisions, including financial ones, in the family.

Expenditure Pattern. Many Yanadis have shifted to cash economy from subsistence economy. The cashew nut industrial workers are earning considerable income, because of the steep rise in their wages from the end of 1954. The income of people of Vetapalem who are solely depending on agriculture is not on par with that of cashew nut workers.

Many persons employed in the cashew nut industries have started constructing spacious multi-roomed pucca houses. Some of the Yanadis have acquired luxury goods such as TVs, music systems, double cots, etc. Some of the Yanadis are sending their children to convent schools in Chirala after completion of their primary education in Vetapalem. With the increase in income, cashew nut industrial workers are spending more on some social obligations like marriages, festivals and death rituals. All the above factors can be attributed to the increased income that industrial workers are earning and also because of urban contact.

Change in prestige values. The engagement of people in the cashew nut industry has led to greater economic differentiation and thus to the development of more and more refined criteria of prestige, arising out of the contact with the town people. Dress has become an important criterion of prestige. The Yanadi cashew nut industry workers are now wearing fine, clean shirts. Many male Yanadi workers in cashew nut industries have started smoking cigarettes and frequently visiting the Vetapalem centre for coffee or tea and to buy sweets.

Change in drinking and smoking habits. On social and religious occasions, consumption of alcohol is customary among the Yanadis. Presently, in Vetapalem Yanadis drinking is a widespread common habit. The traditional drink of the Vetapalem Yanadis has been Kallu (toddy). However, more and more Yanadis are being drawn towards wine. Majority of the people consume wine supplied by the government. It is observed that considerable part of their income is spent on alcohol. Traditional home made cigars are being replaced by modern tobacco filled cigarettes and beedis.

The Yanadis of Vetapalem still consume liquor as a tradition, and also on occasions when they have money. Respondents smoke homemade chuttas (cigars) and beedis. Yanadi elders of Vetapalem told that previously they used to consume kallu (toddy) for fun and enjoyment. Presently, people are habitually consuming liquor. This is rising in this village.

Cashew nut industrial workers who shifted from fishing to this line of work said that they drink because of the hard labour they do. They are forced to consume liquor for the sake of relief.

Changing Marriage System. Changes have occurred in the institution of marriage. Even though the Yanadis have their own rules such as a tribal endogamy sub-tribe endogamy and payment of bride price, many of the customs and traditions have undergone changes in the modern times. Both boys and girls are given freedom to choose their life partners. Nowadays, in the selection of mates, income, education, and salaried employment are looked upon as preferable qualifications. However, for the Yanadis at Vetapalem, a marriage among relatives is very common. Though the marriage through negotiation is now the most respected, other forms too are in vogue. In each form of marriages, the girl is given full freedom to choose her mate. The Yanadi marriages are being increasingly marked by the use of Sanskritised rituals, presence of Brahmin priest, tying of 'Tali,' etc. The payment of dowry is a recent phenomenon. The custom of bride price is slowly being replaced by the dowry system. Here, however, the amount of bride price paid Rs 1001. Yanadis marry at an early age. The average age of marriage for the sample was found to be 18 years for women and 20 years, for men. The age difference between the spouses is not very great compared to that among other castes. The money spent on the marriage of the daughters is significantly more than that spent on the marriages of the sons. This is mainly because the expenditure for performing marriage of a daughter has to be borne by the bride's father.

In their attitudes to widow remarriage and divorce the Yanadis are being influenced by their caste neighbours.

Changing Political Organisation. The political organization of the tribals of India reflects a paradoxical situation in which democracy and tradition co-exist. In the early period, Yanadis had a rudimentary political organisation, because they had to depend on collecting food from the forests. They led a nomadic life. During the semi-nomadic period, the political set up of the Yanadis was confined to institutions like the Sangha peddalu (village elders) institution. Since independence, however, due to democracy, adult Yanadis have become politically active. Hence, the traditional institutions started gradually fading away. Presently, the Yanadis have an elected president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. But the elections of people depend on some qualifications, i.e., age, education, intelligence the economic status. The entire powers vest in the hands of president, who commands majority in the village. He has to look after the betterment of his followers. The president performs several political, economic functions, including, adjudication of disputes.

The power to impose penalties and enforce the decisions vests with by the village elders. In case of divorce proceedings initiated by the husband, he has to return the bride price money in the presence of the village elders. But, on the other hand, if the wife the wife initiates the divorce proceedings, he does not have any financial obligations towards his wife. In these matters, they do not approach courts or the police. The decision given by the village elders had to be obeyed, even if it is not in favour of the woman and weaker sections. But they have to obey the decision, or else they would be excommunicated. The money got from the fines is utilised for the general welfare purpose like digging of wells. During elections, the Yanadi people have to vote for the party, which the village elders suggest. If there is any problem in their "sangam" like adultery, elopement and divorce, the village elders give their verdict. In case of adultery, the bride price has to be given back by a woman to her husband.

Status of Yanadis Women. Traditionally, Yanadi women have enjoyed a higher status than non-tribal women. They enjoy greater personal freedom. There is greater social equality between men and women in the Yanadi society. Instead of dowry, there is bride price, which indicates the high social status of the Yanadis women. A Yanadi woman enjoys the right to decide about her marriage. Yanadi women can divorce and remarry easily. Yanadi women earn and are therefore, to a great extent, economically

independent. In addition to their crucial role in domestic and child rearing activities, they contribute a major part of labour in agricultural activities. They also supplement the family income through wage labour. The impact of cashew nut industries have different on different selection of Yanadi women. Yanadi women have taken advantage of education and new opportunities for employment and self-fulfilment.

Changing inter-community relationship. Earlier, Reddy Yanadis treated the challa Yanadis as untouchables and they do not inter-dine or inter-marry with them. But now, the situation has changed. The reason cited for the earlier 'untouchability' was that the Challa Yanadis were supposed to be unclean as a result of eating to refuge. Reddy Yanadis are comparatively richer than Challa Yanadis. Yanadis do not take food in the homes of Malas and Madigas. In this context, we can quote Thurston (1909), "The sub-tribes of the Yanadis do not eat food from the hands of the Scheduled Castes, and violation of this rule leads to excommunication." On the other hand, Yanadis invite Malas and Madigas for dinners during the time of marriage. Yanadis and Yarukula tribes are considered as brothers. Yanadis have marital relations with Naidu, Reddys, Kammas, and Balijas. They have separate burial grounds in the village. They mingle freely with Reddys, Pallekars, and weavers and we can see that Yanadis are contesting for the posts of Panchayati ward members and Mandal Parishad members and holding important positions. The Yanadis become united if they have any problem, and with the help of elders, go to the district collector for further action. Yanadis work in the homes of Reddys and Naidus and these people help Yanadis in financial matters. They do not maintain commercial relations with Malas and Madigas. In some cases, we see Naidus marrying Yanadi women. Upper caste people (Naidu, Reddy, and Kammas) fetch water from the wells which are in the area of Yanadis. Marriage with non-tribal people is a new trend, emerging out of the contacts with the non-tribals and the Yanadis are allowing their daughters to marry non-tribals. It is observed that a few Yanadi women have married non-tribal men. Non-tribal grooms are running "Kirana Shops", which were allotted to their tribal wives by the government.

Educational aspirations of the Parents Relating to the Education and Occupation of their Children. The influence of modernisation and greater contact with non-tribals has had its impact on the religious practices, system of marriage and the rituals, dressing pattern and utilising of health services. A similar influence can also be seen in the area of education of the Yanadi children.. A majority of the parents stated that they wanted to their wards up to higher levels. A few wanted their children to become teachers, and a few others, officers. Earlier, the Yanadis seemed to be reluctant to educate their girl children. This is no longer the case. A possible reason for the positive change is the improved economic status, especially of those engaged in the cashew nut industry. Despite the change in perceptions towards education, the overall literacy rate of the Yanadis is still low. The concerned agencies, whether governmental, or private, need to put in more efforts to improve the literacy levels of all such people.

Conclusions

This study was primarily undertaken to study the impact of employment in the cashew nut industry on the members of the Yanadi residing in Vetapalem Village in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. Special focus was laid on how the change from traditional occupations, like primitive agriculture, collecting forest products and fishing, to the present one has affected their socio-economic conditions.

It became clear that this relatively new occupation has made their financial conditions more secure and moved many out of the 'hand-to-mouth' type of existence. At the same time, contact with non-tribals has exposed the Yanadis to fresh ideas and living styles. This can be particularly seen in their system of marriage, change from 'bride price' to the dowry system; adoption of many Hindu customs and rituals; ways of dressing, greater participation in the political process, accessing modern healthcare facilities and increased interest in education of their children.

On a positive note, it can be concluded that the Yanadis in the study area have not totally discarded their traditions. The women continue to have independence in the choice of their life partners and regarding divorce and the village elders continue to have an important say in resolving disputes and that the residents do not normally have to approach courts of law or the police regarding their personal disputes.

References

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