TRIBES IN TELANGANA

Telangana is the only southern Indian state with tribal population of 9.34 percent out of its total population as per 2011 census. The presence of tribal communities is more in and around the river valleys and forests of Telangana. As such their socio-cultural conditions can be understood better by identifying their regions as follows:

1. The Gond-Kolam Region falls in the hills and forest region of Adilabad district north of Godavari river. The main tribes inhabiting the region are: Gonds and Naikpods and their dependent communities Pardhans and Thotis. Kolams, Andhs and Bhils also live side by side to the above communities.

2. The Koya-Konda Reddi Region is spread from district further south east side along the river Godavari through the districts of Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam giving shelter to the Koyas and Konda Reddis.

3. Chenchu Region is the forest belt of Nallamala Hills north of Krishna river in the districts of Mahaboobnagar and Nalgonda. The Chenchus also live in and around the Vikarabad forest region of Rangareddy district.

4. Communities such as Lambada (Banjara/Sugali), Yerukala and Yanadi living in the plain areas have also been being treated as tribes from 1976 onwards. In the year 2003 the communities of Nakkala and Dhulia were also treated as Scheduled Tribes.

Tribes:

1. Andhs:
   Andhs are recognized as Scheduled Tribes in Madhya Pradesh, Telangana (erstwhile Andhra Pradesh) and Maharashtra as per provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Amendment) Act, 1976.
   Andhs are a cultivating and hunting tribe.
   Andhs sparsely settled in tribal areas of Adilabad district.
   Their population according to 2011 Census is 13,197. Their mother tongue is Marathi.
   Nuclear family is commonest from among Andhs.
   Institutionalized form of marriage among Andhs is monogamy. Polygamy is also practiced and is also allowed and only a well-to-do man can afford to obtain more than one wife and those who have more than one wife are held to be wealthy and treated with respect.
   They celebrate mostly Hindu festivals like Dasara, Deepavali, Sankranthi, etc. and employ Brahmans for religious and ceremonial purposes. Their household gods are Khandoba of Jejuri and Bhavani of Mahur. Ancestors embossed on metal plates are also honoured. In addition, they celebrate Rola festival in which they worship only bulls. Hanuman is chief deity to Andhs.

2. Bhils
   Bhils are recognized as Scheduled Tribe in Telangana, but their population is negligible. As per 2011 Census reports the population of Bhils in the state is only 604.

3. Gonds
   Gonds call themselves is Koitur or Koli in their Gondi. As per 2011 Census Gonds constitute one of
the most prominent aboriginal tribe of Telangana, both in numbers and historical importance. The word Raj Gond, most obviously, originated from the descendancy that the Gonds claimed from the ancient families of the Chanda Rajas.

Pardhans, Thotis, Kolams and Naikpods have been living in symbiosis with the Gonds in Adilabad. The Pardhans are the hereditary bards of the Gonds and they are responsible for the preservation of the epics, folklores, myths and stories of the Gonds that have been handed down from generation to generation by oral transmission.

The Thotis are another tribe of bards and minstrels who play a role similar to the Pardhans. In the social scale the Thotis rank lower than Pardhans and they would beg from Pardhans just as a Pardhan would do from Gonds. Thoti women are expert in tattooing. Naikpods their traditional method of agriculture is shifting cultivation or podu on hill-slopes.

Gonds were ruling tribes. Considered as aboriginals of today they have enjoyed the status of a superior class of rulers and feudal lords.

Marriage by capture is still practiced, although in a much modified form and with the consent of the parents.

Widow re-marriage is freely permitted and special preference is given to the deceased husband’s younger brother.

Divorce is permissible on grounds such as adultery on the wife’s part, a quarrel some disposition and sterility.

4. Naikpod

The Naikpods are listed along with Gonds and Raj Gonds in the list of Scheduled Tribes by the Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976.

Laxmi Devata, consort of Lord Krishna, is the chief deity to Naikpods.

Naikpods generally put on the colourful masks of Laxmi Devra, Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna, Lord Siva, five brother Pandavas, Pandi Raju (Pig God), Pota Raju (dog god), Gorrapothu (Sheep god) and Singaboyudu and perform rituals.

5. Kolam

Kolams are one of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) found in tribal areas of Adilabad district. The Telugu speaking people call them as ‘Mannervarlu’ meaning people living in the forest areas. Their population according to the 2011 Census is 45671.

Kolams trace their descent to Bhima and Hidimbi of Mahabharata.

Kolams are cultivators and agricultural labourers.

They grow Jower, black gram, cotton, red gram etc. Their staple food is Jowar.

6. Thoti

Thotis are also Primitive Tribal Group living in the districts of Adilabad, Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Mahaboobnagar, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Warangal in Telangana. They were 4,811 in number as per 2011 Census.

The Thoti or Thotti is one of the village communal servants.

Thotis are recognized as primitive tribal group by Government of India in 1983.

The mother tongue of Thotis is Gondi.

Monogamy is generally practiced by Thotis. Widow marriages are permissible.
7. Pardhan
Pardhans are inhabit the tribal areas of Adilabad district.
Payment of bride price is practiced.
Polygamy is allowed by polygamy is strictly prohibited.

8. Koya
The Koyas are one of the predominant autochthonous people of the southern region of the country.
The present habitat of the Koyas comprises the area of Mulug (Etturnagaram) Taluka of Warangal
district and Bhadrachalam and Nugur Taluks of Khammam district.
The Koyas popularly known as ‘Dorala Sattam’ are believed to be the section of the Gondi speaking
race, and though strongly influenced by neighbouring Telugu speaking people, they retained a good
many of typical cultural traits of Koya culture.
According to 2011 Census, the total number of Koya population in Telangana including the present
Andhra Pradesh is 5,90,739. They are chiefly inhabiting the agency and plains villages of Khammam,
Warangal and a few in Adilabad district. About 70% of total Koya population is found only in
Khammam district.
Two ways of securing mates are very common among the Koyas; one is by negotiations and the other
by marriage by capture. Koyas practice bride price
The main occupation of Koyas is agriculture.

9. Konda Reddis
Konda Reddis recognised as Panitive Tribal Group on either side of river Godavari in the hilly and
forest tracts of Khammam district of Telangana.
Their population as per 2011 Census is 1,07,747 including several thousand inhabiting the
neighbouring East and West Godavari districts.
Their mother tongue is Telugu.
They are recognized as Primitive Tribal Group.
The Konda Reddi family is patriarchal and patrilocal.
Monogamy is a rule but polygamous families are also found. Marriage by negotiations, by love and
elopement, by service, by capture and by exchange are socially accepted ways of acquiring mates.

10. Chenchus
Chenchu is the first recognized Primitive Tribal Group in Telangana.
In the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) is 64,227 as per 2011 Census.
The upper and lower plateau of Amrabad in Mahbubnagar District and the Nallamalai hills are the
home of the Chenchus.
They also reside is Nalgonda District and Rangareddy.
Chenchus claim that the lord Mallikarjuna of Srisailam is their son-in-law and hence they celebrate
Sivarathri Festival in a grand manner.

11. Lambada/ Sugali/ Banjara
The Lambadas are a scheduled tribe inhabiting throughout the state of Telangana and of Andhra
Pradesh.
They are also known as Sugalis and Banjaras.
They population according to 2011 Census is 24,07,637.
The Lambadas are the largest tribe in Telangana. Lambadas live in exclusive settlements of their own
called Tandas, usually away from the main village, tenaciously maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity.

12. Yanadi
Yanadis are one of the major scheduled tribes of Telangana. Thurston (1909) noted that the people were natives of Sriharikota
Their population according to 2011 Census reports is 5,37,808 in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana).
Their mother tongue is Telugu.
Marriage by negotiations, by mutual love and elopement are usual modes of acquiring mates. The remarriage of divorcees, widow and widowers is permitted. The nuclear type of family is more predominant.
Yanadis mainly subsist on agricultural labour. They are traditionally inland fishermen and are also engaged as watchmen to the field and orchard of farmers.

13. Yerukala
Yerukala is scheduled tribe found throughout Telangana. They call themselves ‘Kurru’.
They are called ‘Yerukula’ after their women’s traditional profession of fortune telling (Eruka chepputa).
The population of Yerukala tribe according to 2011 Census is 5,19,337 in the erstwhile.
Basket wearing is also traditional profession of Yerukulas.
The type of family among Yerukala tribe is usually nuclear. Descent is patrilineal, residence is patrilocal and authority is patriarchal. Cross-cousin (menarikam) marriages are preferred.

14. Nakkala
Nakkala Community was recognized as schedule tribe in 2002-03.
Nakkalas are traditionally a wandering community, nomadic hunters and traders, sporadically distributed in most of the districts of Telangana, as well as in other neighbouring States.
Nakkalas are not permanent dwellers of one place; they usually migrate from one place to another in search of livelihood i.e., to hunt small animals and birds for consumption and sale and sale of petty articles etc. Their concentration is usually seen in holy places.
Nakkalas are also called by other people as ‘Guvvalavullu’ (Dove catchers), ‘Pittalollu’ (Bird catchers) and ‘Shikaris’ in Telangana.
Marriage by negotiation is the popular way of acquiring mates. Both sororate and levirate marriages are permissible. Remarriage is permissible for both the widowed and divorced of either sex. Bride-price is common and it is termed as ‘chobayak’. Divorce is permissible. Nuclear family is very common. Authority, Descent and Residence are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal respectively among Nakkalas.