CHAPTER-V

CHANGING SOCIETY
The Societies in the world are undergoing changes. Thus tribal culture is also in a transitioned phase and it is passing through the process of acculturation and assimilation. These changes can be seen in every aspect of life, both social and cultural. Social change does acquire irrespective of the type and location of a human society for it continues to be an essential law of social life. The transformation of a Society may be characterized by the incorporation of new traits with or without rejection of old elements. The technological factor has immense influence on social change. Technology changes society by changing environment to which we, in turn, adapt. The change is usually in material environment and the adjustment we make to the change often modifies customs and social institutions.

The Sugali Community as a part of wider tribal population is also experiencing the process of change, though the level of acculturation is different when compared to other tribal people. One of the unique features of this Community is that they are seen in almost all parts of India. In Andhra Pradesh, the level of acculturation is so much so that it has even become difficult to identify them from the majority population. A change once achieved never ends and it is a continuous process. Hence the Sugali society is also introduced to modernity.

This chapter examines the changes in their economy, society and religion. Normally, the life of Sugalis or Banjaras has been conditioned by the limitations of the Physical environment, technology and economy, their turbulent history, their subjugation to almost 200 years of colonial rule, etc.
At present, the Sugalis of Pampanuru thanda have to depend on Pastoralism as the primary occupation because of the prevailing ecological constraints, i.e., hilly nature of the surrounding area and limited cultivable land. On the other hand, the Sugalis of the Singampalli thanda had to take up agriculture, as primary source of livelihood as their pastoral economy had almost been destroyed by the gradual decline of the cattle such as cows and bullocks. Their number is reduced in the last two decades mainly due to fatal diseases and lack of sufficient fodder. At the same time, exploitation of the forest for firewood both for domestic consumption and selling, over grazing are intensified. Cultivation of hill slopes by the local population has caused rapid detraction of the fodder and vegetation has been totally reduced to scattered shrubs.

The reduction in tree growth, in forested tracts also led to inadequacy of water resources and grazing ground for cattle in the dry season. All these difficulties have compelled the Sugalis to seek other means of livelihood such as cultivation, goat keeping and other economic pursuits.

Weakening of this tribal community resulted in class formation and competition for source resources. This had adverse consequences on all Sugalis, mainly on those from poorer classes. Their workload has increased and led to the deterioration in all walks of life. Thus the Sugalis were forced to choose agriculture and they started adopting other occupations of neighboring caste societies. Thus the forest policies led Sugali women to take up alternative works such those of as wage labourers.
During the last 10 years, Sugalis purchased land, both wet and dry located in the respective adjoining villages. They also started irrigating their lands with the help of electric motors and their methods of cultivation are in no way different from those of other agricultural Castes.

Through the demonstrating effect of pioneering Sugali cultivation, the non-cultivating Sugalis have also desired and tried to achieve the status of a cultivator.

Today, the needs and aspirations of the Sugalis in Anantapur district have increased within a typically peasant frame of mind. In this respect the peasant Sugalis are far more advanced than those of western Rajasthan who need a fresh orientation and persuasion to take up agriculture.

The Sugalis of the thandas have contacts with the non-tribals of their adjacent territories. Small groups of artisans in the surrounding villages provide them with such items as pots, metal implements and certain ornaments. But the relations between cultivators and craftsmen were basically on an exchange basis and their mutual interdependence operated outside the market economy of neighboring areas.

Majority of the Sugalis are subsistence farmers. They grow monsoon crops during the so called kharif season. Because of the failure of the monsoons, they could not rise the crops every year. Hence they are compelled to resort to other occupations like liquor selling, sale of lime mortar, casual labour, etc.
Their chief crops are sorghum, rice, ragi, pulses and other millets. In Sugali folk literature, the millets and pulses figure prominently.

A fundamental change has occurred in the agricultural pattern of the Sugalis in the first half of the 20th century. Owing to the scarcity of rainfall, the entire cropping pattern of Anantapur district underwent a dramatic change. The people in these areas grew the cash crops like Groundnut and Sunflower. Groundnut crop is extensively cultivated because of the possibility of the speedily moving large quantities of this crop by tractors and lorries to the Groundnut market at Challakere in Karnataka. One of the new commercial centers owing its rapid growth to the groundnut boom is Challakere, which is nearer to the Kalyandurg Taluq.

The replacement of food crops by groundnut affects most parts of Anantapur district and this reflected in the substantial imports of millets and pulses into the district which once was self-sufficient in these crops.

The Sugalis of Singampalli thanda because of the failure of the crops, borrows money from Groundnut merchants and moneylenders dwelling on the periphery of the settlement. Thus had started the vicious circle of repaying borrowed money by delivering the crop to the creditor, one and half times the borrowed money as the next harvest was reaped. Unless that harvest was exceptionally good, the repayments usually resulted in the recurrence of the need to borrow money to meet their expenses.
It is not surprising that Sugali men often tried to live a parasitic life on the labour of Sugali women. The anxiety of man to monopolise his skill in plough culture is reflected in the taboo that is observed almost all over India, against the woman's handling the plough. But woman's work load has by no means decreased.

In almost all the traditional peasant societies, cultivation by plough is considered to be the master operation in agriculture. This gives a decisive domination to the man in the whole agricultural complex. A few sections of the Sugali community are intended to introduce the innovations in agriculture. But technological change in agriculture has not radically altered the social arrangement. There are two aspects of technological change. These are mechanization and introduction of high yielding varieties along with ancillary inputs, particularly assured water supply.

Mechanization has reduced the workload of man in preparing the soil. Power operated irrigation has also reduced the workload of Sugali men. But these two together have contributed to the increase in the total workload in agriculture where the time gap between two crops is short, mechanization has made multiple cropping possible.

Multiple cropping increased the quantum of work in sowing, transplantation weeding, harvesting, transport and threshing. It can be stated that while the new strategy in agriculture displace the man's workforce to some extent, it increases the work load of the woman. But their culture factors
intervene. Owing to their inability to arrange the inputs required for modernized agriculture the marginal Sugali farmers frequently operate in the same fields as agricultural labourers. It is not socially derogatory for the Sugali woman belonging to small farmer households to work in their own fields. It is derogatory to work in the field of others as paid labourers.

Thus a scarcity of labour comes to prevail during the peak period. To meet the shortage, seasonal migration of labour from other regions takes place on a massive scale.

Saving has become an important aspect and earning more has become a status symbol. Consequently in turn to save more, they have taken up growing cash crops such as chilies, tomatoes, sugarcane, etc. The majority of them are engaged in dry farming. Some Sugalis are aware of the Co-operative Banks and Government subsides for agricultural development. Women are using DRDA loans for improving their traditional crops also. But one of the main problems of Sugalis is their dependence on traditional moneylenders who lend money for high interest rates. As the Sugalis are often unable to pay the amount with its high interests, the private moneylenders resort to mortgaging their lands. This leads to further exploitation of the Sugali community, as literacy rate is very low among them.

The severity of the drought in Anantapur district is leaving many a scar on Sugali life. Life in the thandas as well as in villages has been engulfed by a bundle of problems revolving around lack of work and food. The two basic problems have a snowballing effect on all aspects of life. Migration of wage
seekers including small and marginal farmers, facing continuous
crop failure, struggle to earn meal a day, distress sale of cattle
due to shortage of fodder, scarcity of drinking water and ill
health in the absence of nutritious food mark the drought in the
district. Many of the Sugali in Kadiri and Nallamada areas
migrated to Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chittoor and Kerala this
year.

ADAPTIVE RESPONSES OF THE SUGALIS TO THE
MODERN AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGY

The agricultural and rural development essentially
depends upon a system of related functions. The main
components of the functioned system are:

1. Technology – agricultural innovation
2. Farmer – his background
3. Marketing
4. Irrigation
5. Governance and
6. Extension of education

These are all interrelated. The utility of agricultural
innovations depends very much upon the large-scale addition of
these innovations by the fillers of the soil. Owing to the failure
of the monsoons for the last five years the Sugalis are supposed
to utilize the water resources with the help of modern
agricultural technology in the farming. Although the farmers are
becoming more and more aware of modern agricultural
technology, the degrees of adoption of the innovations varies
from farmer to farmer. It is significantly less in the case of the
Sugalis. The peasants take their decision based on their knowledge and attitude which again is connected with socio-economic status and value orientation.

Keeping these facts in view, the researcher made an attempt to find out agro-economic characteristics of Sugalis and their adoption of modern agricultural technology. The concept of value orientation is very essential for knowing the psychological characteristics of the Sugalis. The value orientation (fatalism – Scientism) is a dimension of values in the Man-Nature Orientation. Here the concept of fatalism has been defined of values that human situation and acts are predetermined by some supernatural power and can never or little is influence by individual violation or by act of any one else. On the other hand scientism has been defined as a belief that situations are the result of natural and or social forces, which can be understood and changed by human volition or by human action. And the value orientation of Sugalis was studied on fatalism–scientism dimension developed by Chattopadhyay.¹

The information on personal characteristics of the Sugalis namely age, educational status, occupation, family type and family size were collected through structured schedule from selected respondents N=50. The Survey is conducted in the thandas of Pampanuru and Singampalli.

Majority of the respondent Sugalis (58%) belong to the age group of 36 to 50 years and almost all of them illiterate (98%) 64% of them belong to the single family and 54% of them are having 6 and more of family members each. Regarding
occupation, 48% mentioned both agriculture and agricultural labour as their occupation, whereas only agricultural labour and only agriculture are occupations of 28% and 24% respectively. 32% of them are having medium socio-economic status. Thus might be due to their lower annual income, less and ownership and lower educational status.

Sugalis' attitude agricultural innovation and their adoption of the same, the two most important psychological and agricultural attributes respectively have been studied.

The survey revealed that majority of the Sugalis have favourable attitude towards modern agricultural practices.

Further, it indicates that the majority (70%) of the Sugali farmers are having low scores as regard to their adoption of agricultural innovation. The lower rate of adoption might be due to their insufficient annual income, lower socio-economic status and lower educational status.

The perception of Sugalis about their value orientation was studied. It is observed that majority of the respondents have very low values of orientation. It reflects that most of the Sugalis solely depend on their fates and they are not scientific in their outlook and approach. Rather it may be said that majority of the Sugalis believe, "every man's life has already been settled and determined by his fate" or "a basic tragedy is that man proposes but god disposes."

The selected respondents in both the thandas were asked to mention important duties, which are important in their
economic and overall development. They were further asked to rank their duties according to the degree of importance they attached to each one of them.

The Survey reveals that the Sugalis perceived 'provision' of educational facility/primary school as the most important duty the Government must perform for social, economic and overall development of Sugalis. Other duties perceived as important are: "to provide medical facility/health center, provision of loans with subsidy for house construction; to provide better road transport facility and to provide electricity facility. So it might be stated that education, health, house and road communication are most important to the Sugalis for their overall development.

Now-a-days, the Sugalis who belong to the age group of 35-40 years, are adopting the modern agricultural techniques, under the guidance of the agricultural officers at Mandal level. Because of the scarcity of water for agriculture, they are using the sprinklers and drip irrigation system in their farming. The Naik of the settlement (thanda) buys the tractor and hire it to other Sugalis.

Other implements like iron ploughshare dragged by the tractor, sowing the seeds through the pipes of the tiller, machines, which are used to separate the groundnut from the plants, are used by the Sugalis.

Land and forest are the twin major sources of living of the Sugalis and they have become so close a part of their life that it became a philosophy and prime mover of their civilization.
Large scale tree felling and deforestation apart from all its attendant effects such as the imbalance in the eco-system, denudation, dissatisfaction of the lands and so on, had led to serve strain on the Sugali life. The loss of the forest resources and decrease in the average rainfall and all its subsequent results in their economy and agriculture, the role of the Sugalis further difficult as their families as a whole are subjected to the serve and adverse effect of drought. The ill effects of the deforestation resulted in destroying the vital resources of soil and water. As a result the Sugali women has to spend twice her energy for domestic labour as she has to spend nearly 6 to 9 hours in household work, fetching water, collection of fire wood, collection of limestone and manufacturing of the lime in the kilns, etc.

Sugali men are instructed with the work of harvesting. The animal power has been harnessed in cultivation. It is taboo for the women to handle the plough or even to touch it. It is observed that the taboo on ploughing reaches far more constraints over land. In the absence of male member in the family, a male from outside was approached for ploughing. This is because it is too arduous and physically exhausting for women. While ploughing has become man’s monopoly, women’s work has by no means reduced. Transplanting, weeding, winnowing and dehusking are exclusively done by women.

Hence, the traditional life of Sugalis has changed entirely in a different socio-economic set up which differ from other tribals as well as non-tribals for they lived totally in the
exclusive settlement called Thandas and experience entirely a different life.

FAMILY ORGANISATION

The family as the basic social institution had been found at almost all levels of cultural development. Patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence and patriarchal authority characterize the family among the Sugalis. Their family is usually composed of a husband, wife and unmarried children who lived together and for all practical purpose constitute one single economic unit.

In all the families of the Sugalis, very small children and the aged and economically inactive members in a family are left to the care of generally a young girl called nanikachori. Children in the age group of 8 to 10 years who do not go for wage labour, occupy themselves in grazing sheep and cattle. The direct economic need of the families makes them either enter into a wage earner or to be involved in productive activities as non-wage earner.

The families in traditional pastoral Sugali settlements are predominantly similar in size than in the peasant settlements. But the large families are more in peasants settlements than in the pastoral settlements.

The family organization among the Sugalis is mostly tradition-oriented. The husband commands superior position and has always the primary say in the family matters and the wife enjoys a subordinate position in relation to her husband. However the relationship between husband and wife is of partners in all social, economic, domestic and emotional
activities and it does not mean that her position is low in the family. The parents give complete freedom to their children in selecting their partners. After the marriage, the son never completely ignores his family. Hence we can say that the Sugali family members have very strong kinship ties with their parents.

The nomadic life of the Sugalis during their trading days could not permit the maintenance of large joint families, because family size was determined by the level of technology and economic resources. It is stated by the Sugalis that the emergence of the joint family is a consequence of set back to their nomadic trading and transport as a result of sedentarisation and mechanization. The preference for joint family is due to changes in their economy as well as borrowing the joint family ideal from the peasant communities. But now again with increasing individualization and the increasing poverty among the poor and wage earning Sugalis, the number of joint families is disappearing. The borrowed agricultural economic pursuit among the Sugalis has a strong tendency to influence the family, which is a basic unit of the social organization.

**CHANGES IN THEIR CUSTOMARY LAW**

In any society, a change in the material environment often modifies customs and social institutions. But in the Sugali society, the transformation is characterized by the incorporation of the new traits without rejecting their age-old social and political institutions. A careful study of the customary laws in the changing scenario reveals the fact that their economic status exerts its influence over their social status. Though polygamy is
an accepted form of marriage in Sugali society, now-a-days owing to the poor economic conditions, the Sugali men are not interested to practice polygamy. The exogamous clans have their totemic names which serve to express distinction between different social groups within their society. This regulates the social behaviour of the individual in their society. The educated Sugalis who have settled down in the urban areas are easily identifying themselves with their fellow men in their caste society and this is made possible by the clan names. This helps them to keep their society to themselves, and avoid mixing with other castes, especially with lower ones.

The Sugalis in urban areas though rarely adhere to the rule of endogamy, the elders in their families insist them to follow it, so as to ensure tribe separateness. Some of the educated Sugalis like Cheenya Naik of Anantapur district and Sesharam of Nandyal have been striving for the preservation of their customary laws relating to clan exogamy by propagating the rule of clan exogamy and so on.

At present, the younger generations are not able to trace the exact generation of their clan initiators. After the sedentarisation, the Sugalis confess that they do not remember their ancestors beyond the second ascending generation. Only a few older people who have something to do with rituals connected with ancestors, with fixing of marriages, etc., knew the names of their ancestors up to four generations.

Hence the adoption of clan names as family surnames by the literate and modernizing Sugalis is an indication of their
desire partly to preserve the knowledge of their ancestry and partly to conceal their Sugali identity which signifies low social rank in the main stream of the society.

However, a remarkable change can be seen in the inheritance rules. Earlier the property was shared only among the sons. Now-a-days, the educated Sugalis are partitioning a part of their property to their daughters. A person who has no son, his property will be passed to his daughter which was not permitted by their customary law and it is specific to the nomadic communities like Sugalis.

The co-operation of the clan elders is still insisted on some important occasions like the marriage ceremonies, ancestral worship, and the Got ceremonies.

The Sugali women are underprivileged with regard to their right to marriage. The bride price has been replaced by dowry and the girl’s parents are not able to spend huge sum of money on the marriage of their daughters. Hence they are resorting to the sale of female babies to outsiders, so as to lessen their economic burden.

MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The marriage system of the Sugalis during their nomadic trading days was very peculiar. Since the Sugalis were nomads, had no permanent settlements, their koorees or moving thandas were based on clan exogamy. The nomadic Sugali has no permanent housing to children. Their movements were seasonal. Their marriages were held in the rainy season, because in the dry season they are usually traveling from one place to another.
place as traders and transporters of provisions to all corners of the district.

Marriage by negotiation is the popular mode of acquiring bride though, now and then, love marriages and elopements take place. Love marriages are very popular among the educated Sugali boys.

The boy’s father, with the permission of the Naik of the Thanda send a Hajiam to the girl’s Thanda, asking his daughter in marriage. The Panchayat fixes the marriage.

According to the elderly Sugalis, previously they used to celebrate marriage for about eight days and sometimes it used to extend upto 3 months. At present the duration of marriage celebrations are only for three days.

Among the Sugalis, marriage within the same gotra or clan is prohibited. Cross cousin marriage is practiced in all parts of Andhra Pradesh among Sugalis. No restrictions or taboos are placed regarding marrying inside or outside their thandas or villages. Marrying one’s own sister’s daughter is also becoming more common now-a-days.

According to the Sugalis, in the past consanguineous marriage were not allowed in their community, but during the last three to four generations, they have adopted the customs of their neighbours among whom they have permanently settled down.² It seems that now not only have they adopted practices of the neighbours, but also they have absorbed the value system.
For instance Sankarayya of Singampalli thanda cites many advantages in marrying a girl from among blood relations. It strengthens bonds among families and helps to establish harmonious relations between the husband and the wife.

Now-a-days, some of the Sugalis celebrate the marriages in the traditional manner and they strictly adhere to the clan exogamy and tribe endogamy in selecting their mates to their children. The rules of endogamy compel the Sugali to select a spouse within tribe and with in a sub-tribe. But the rules of exogamy prescribe that an individual must find a spouse outside the surname group. Now-a-days the Sugalis encourage cross-cousin marriages because the marriageable persons are known to each other and when they marry better understanding is supposed to develop among them. However, a boy is free to marry partrilineal or matrilineal cross cousins.

Now-a-days, the Sugalis do not favour their children marrying unknown relatives. The marriages are contracted within their settlements. The economic position of the two families are taken into consideration for the selection of marriage partners. Now-a-days, the practice of giving bride price is gradually disappearing but in its place, the Sugali of both the groups are demanding dowry. In fact, they borrowed this custom from the traditional Hindu classes.

It is noticed that since a decade there is an increasing tendency among the Sugalis to perform their marriage in a manner more or less similar to that of agricultural Hindu
communities, followed by Sanskrit rituals like tying of ‘Tali’ and presence of a Brahmin priest.

Now-a-days the ideal form of marriage for them is monogamy.

DIVORCE

Divorce is very common among the Sugalis and it is very easy to obtain divorce and no social stigma is attached to a divorced Sugali. The main reason for the dissolution of marriage seems to be extra marital relation, excessive drunkenness, ill-treatment, importance, prolonged ill health, sterility also cause divorce among them. At present these cases of divorce are settled by the Gor Panchayat.

CASTE DIFFERENCES

By taking up non-Sugali pursuits of economy and by improving their standard of living considerably, the Sugalis of either Thanda consciously sought a prominent place in the caste hierarchy in the respective revenue villages basing on the concepts of purity and pollution. Hence the new claim of the Sugalis helped them maintain Jajmani relationship with the service rendered artisan castes. The change from tribal status to caste (Kulam or Jathi) status, thus is an important structural change which integrate them into the civilization of wider society.³

The Sugalis are divided into Jatis and Gotras. They are endogamous within the Jati and exogamous between Gotras. Theirs is a patrilineal system permitting cross cousin marriage. Traditionally the largest debts are incurred due to “bride Price”
payable in live stock, land ornaments, etc. However this tradition is fast changing under the influence of the wider society that they from the past of now in these Thandas girls pay dowry in order to get married.

As stated earlier, these are four main gotras, which include rathores, the pawars, chouhans and Badavath gotras. Among these any one choosing to be, say, tradesmen or artisans may do so, that will remain within his gotra irrespective of their occupation. All gotras have their own origin myths, rituals and legends which are still strongly believed in. The customs of today are built on the traditions of yester years.

The Brahmins, represented by a few sub-divisions of the Badavath, are the customers of local legends. They perform all life cycle rituals among the Sugalis. The remaining gotras of the Badavath and other gotras are free to follow any occupation. But the common occupation is agriculture.

Concerning relations between gotras, it should be noted that the four main gotras interact quite freely. They marry across gotras, and all except the few sub-gotras of the Badavaths (Brahmins) interline. These Brahmins accept cooked food only from a limited number of gotras who considered themselves and are considered by the community as Brahmins. They give cooked food to all served on leaves and not from the vessels from which they themselves eat. The Rathods, Pawars, Chouhans, Badavaths and Vadatiyas will not accept cooked food from the lower caste Sugalis. The lower caste Sugalis marry exogenously among the lower castes only.
CLASS DIFFERENCES

It is a well-known fact that a society that is a whole by itself is a misnomer these days and different societies have different degrees of interdependence. Economic mobility among the Sugalis from semi-nomadic life towards domestication of cattle and dependence on agriculture have also led them to maintain some economic relationship such as grazing the cattle of caste farmers, working for the non-Sugalis as attached agricultural laborers of casual laborers and share-croppers, borrowing of money and agricultural implements, etc., with the caste peasants of neighboring villages.\(^4\)

Once the Sugalis settle (thanda) in the peripheral areas (always outside villages), they provide the landlords with protection against marauders and in return were given land for common use. Hence class differences now brought into shaper focus. It was to the Naiks and Kharbaris (deputy to Naik) that land was awarded and though the understanding was that the land be used for the Sugali tribes as a whole, often the land was entered in the pahani (land record register) in the name of the Naik, thereby giving legitimacy to private property. Here the Naik is the person who owned livestock and land (chief of a thanda). Traditionally, the duties of a Naik were to settle the disputes of the Sugalis and be the intermediary between the Sugalis and the outside world, the government, the non-Sugalis or the landlords.

With migration came the acquisition of land; with land came domination over the common Sugalis. Domination is being maintained by various means.

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All the members of the thanda worked collectively on the common land for a share of the crop. However the Naik and Kharbari invariably are able to manipulate affair by inflating costs of production, thereby taking a larger share of output for their families.

In the same way, by acting as intermediaries, the Naiks and Kharbaris, while negotiating with government agencies for loans, land and irrigation facilities land registration, etc., have managed to keep the best for themselves while distributing the rest only under public pressure.

A direct misuse of Naik and Kharbari power can be discerned in their relationship with the Sugali land less and poor peasantry. If given an option, wage labourer would prefer to work for a rich peasant. The rich peasant does not work with his jeetha but only supervises his jeetha personally. The labour extracted is therefore less than extracted by the Naiks, Kharbaris and middle peasantry. The Naiks and Kharbaris demand in some exception cases that labourers work first for them and then for any one else. (Sugalis or non-Sugalis).

The Naiks and Kharbaris also work on their land personally as they are in a better position to extract the maximum amount of labour from wage labourers, both Sugalis and non-Sugalis.

Politically, we find that the Naiks and Kharbaris are able to manipulate the thanda affairs to their advantage. Each Sugali thanda has a Gram Panchayat consisting of the Naik, Kharbari, a messenger and two others.
The function of the Panchayat is to settle disputes about land, marriage, divorce, etc. Each family has to be represented at the Panchayat. Discussions take place and all opinions are taken into consideration ultimately. The Naiks and Kharbaris are the decision makers. The persons responsible for a Panchayat meeting called are fined from Rs.25-2000 and if the fine is higher than this, or if the meeting is of an extraordinary nature, the chief Naik is called in. Some Naiks take bribes from both parties to the dispute to prevent it from giving to the chief Naik and keep the penalty to the minimum as long as it remains a local issue.

This shows that the pattern of land holdings is a factor to be considered while making attempts to highlight class differences.

The traditional office bearers of the Gram Panchayat have been overshadowed by the emergent leaders with requisite leadership qualities such as empathic ability, some education, dynamic nature, shrewdness, exposure to the outside world rapport with dominant caste leaders as well as.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH NON-SUGALIS

To understand economic relations between various Sugali socio-economic groups the best course is to make a comparison between the Sugalis and non-Sugalis. Here the researcher made an attempt to compare the Kammas, Reddys, Kurubas who are the traditional land owners of the Pampanuru with that of the Sugalis of the adjoining thanda. All the other castes, other than
the above mentioned castes are obliged to give free labour to the landlords.

In the Sugali society, the relationship between the landlords and other castes is not quite rigid. The Sugali landlord does not accept free labour nor does he expect potter, carpenter, barber, goldsmith, toddy tapper, etc., to serve his interests first and their own thereafter.

The Naiks and the Kharbaris generally pay for all goods and services provided by both the non-Sugalis and the Sugalis. The artisans are paid by the Naiks and Kharbaris. They do not give free labour. This is because the Sugalis are conscious of their rights and if a Naik becomes over demanding he will be forced to give up his Naikship and dragged to the Panchayat.

The tribal artisans are expected to work free for the non-Sugali landlords, and the situation is the same as that of the non-Sugalis.

In the other words, the non-Sugali landlords extracts free labour from Sugali, but Naik and Kharbari hire labour from non-Sugalis, as the Sugalis are considered lower than non-Sugalis in the Hindu caste hierarchy.

In the case of Dhadi, Dhapadiya and Bhat who are the low and out caste people, work free in the Naik and Khabari households. A Dhadi messenger, for example would work for four days and carries message from one thanda to another to organize marriage ceremonies, death rituals and other gatherings. Yet he is paid a meagre amount of Rs.5 for his
efforts for the entire period. Meals in all thandas is free for him. The Jangads are at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, but it should be noted that economic oppression is not the reason for this position. It is possible for the Jangads to move up in the caste hierarchy through a system of adoption. The Jangads are given the gotra of the family into which they are adopted after seven or eight generations.

Various factors – social, economic, technological and demographic have inclined the Sugalis of both the thandas to adopt neo locality as the most ideal and the multi locality as the actual type of residence. Growth of population, agriculture economy, economic status are the decisive factors in the adoption of multi-locality. Those families of wither thanda which depend on pastoralism or wage labour or firewood selling as the mainstay of their economy have opted for neolocal pattern of residence, other families with good landed property and huge number of cattle, the management of which require much manpower, practice patrilocal type of residence.

Nuclear families are predominant at Pampanuru thanda than at Singampalli thanda mainly due to the difference in their primary occupation. At Pampanuru, a young man immediately after marriage can very easily set up his independent household unlike at Singampalli thanda where setting up an independent family involves division of land, house and other assets of the family. On the other hand, extended families occur more frequently among cultivators where the task of cultivation and the pursuit of secondary occupations, especially pastoralism require a large force.
Furthermore, changing economic structure has influenced not only family but also its organization. The organization of a peasant family at either thanda is entirely different from that of a family among the pastoralists. The daily income of that a nuclear family derives from some pursuits as cattle rearing, liquor selling, firewood selling, casual labour, etc., is just enough for a day and this type of economic system does not require any complicated organization of family.

On the other hand, a peasant family has to organize itself properly according to the time schedule to get better yields from agricultural and other occupations like cattle rearing and firewood selling. Each member of the family has to be entrusted with a specific duty to be completed within a prescribed time, which will be conducive for the productive work of the family.

FERTILITY BEHAVIOUR

As the Sugalis are fully aware of the changing social and economic conditions they are very conscious of the family planning, which is the resultant adopting in checking the population growth.

It is not true to say that Sugali women are uninterested in planning their families. At awareness camps, health education is often a subject. They are interested in how to limit their family size. Inflation, increasing pressure on land, high prices and other factors have all contributed to a desire to favour less children. But the fear of the hospital, and unknown procedures, is the barrier.
Lower fertility and mortality are due to the higher adoption of family planning. Definite changes in reproduction performance are clearly observed among Sugalis.

Sugalis are conscious about the consequences of overpopulation it is noted that women started adopting family planning measures.

Social changes can be connected to land, where it has given rise to class differences among the Sugalis, which divided them into landowners and the landless class. A small portion of landowners are considered rich peasants, a slighter larger proportions belongs to the class of middle peasants. The Naik and Karbari look after all the land transactions and disputes. Sometimes even Naik exploit the Sugalis by taking away their lands.

The Sugalis are divided into jatis and gotras even today, where they are exogamous between gotras and endogamous within the jati. Earlier, Sugalis used to give bride price. But of late this tradition of giving bride price has been replaced by giving dowry in large amounts. This change is seen in Sugalis mainly as they interacted and adopted the local customs of non-tribals which were new to them. Four earlier gotras can be seen even today with strict endogamous rules. These four important gotras are rathods, pawars, chouhans and the vadatiyas. Badavaths who are considered equal to Brahmins and perform all the life cycle ceremonies among the Sugalis. The other subcastes such as Dapadiya, Jangad, Dhadi and Bhat are considered as lower castes and therefore treated as out castes. Though
Dapadias do not eat beef they are still considered as dalits. The word Jangad means an “outsider”. Their origin is shrouded in mystery. These gotras have their own myths, rituals and legends regarding their origin. The Dhadis and Bhat are considered as beggars and messengers. They provide music for ceremonies in the thandas. All except Badavaths interact and inter-dine freely and accept food from a limited number of gotras. But Sugalis never accept food from dalits as they eat beef, whereas Sugalis worship the cow. Sugalis can marry outside the gotra and these rules are followed even today. They never allow dalits into their houses and will not touch them and do not allow them stay with them. But in towns this practice is slowly reducing due to the change in economic status where they obey harijan officers, inter-dine though rarely, in functions like marriage, parties, etc. Basing on personal observations as well as experiences one can say that Sugalis are treated better when compared to harijans, and they are allowed into the other caste houses freely though not into the puja room which they consider as a holy place. But in the case of illiterate Sugalis the close relationship is not seen. Thus basing on these experiences one can say that caste feelings are whipped up among the general categories in a fairly lesser degree is the case of Sugalis when compared to the Scheduled Castes. Still one cannot say totally that there is no tribal exploitation or oppression and they do exist in terms of economic and physical exploitation. This form of exploitation is mainly due to their lack of education and their innocence where they can be easily cheated by the counterparts as well as by their own tribal heads, etc. Another important feature of Sugalis is that they never do free service as in the case of non-tribals.
They are conscious of the rights. If a Naik overreacts, he will be forced to give up the Naikship and dragged to the Panchayat. According to Shyamala Devi, even outsiders can attain the status of Sugalis. The jangads to become Sugalis, have to pay money in large sums for the conversion ceremony held by the traditional Panchayat. This ceremony is called Jangad dawat, where jangad are accepted as Sugalis and given the Sugali status after they have offered in cash and kind to the gathering consisting of Sugalis and also two tulas of gold and clothings to the Naik, etc. The jangads serving in the house of Rathod, was called a Rathore jangad. Similarly Chouhan Jangad, Pamhar Jangad, etc. The marriages among them also were based on their waster clan exogamy. There were included into the main stream of Sugali community after 7 segments.

Thus social discrimination is seen the Sugalis existing in the thandas and as they look down on the sections of their own community and sometimes even verbally abuse them. Once the jangad is accepted as a Sugali no one can refer to him or his family as jangad can become respected members of Sugali community is, as is evident closely. Besides, the same opportunity is not available to the lower castes such as Dapadya, Dhadi and Bhat. In spite of these observations we can say that Sugali social set up is fairly flexible and the potential for change exists. One should explain that among the Sugali community, the castes and classes are men made and the customs and traditions according to their own convenience. We should educate them that all men are equal. Then only these stringent social evils can be ousted from the Sugali society.
It may be noted that the whole profile of Sugali set up has undergone a change, such as their system of marriage, their thinking pattern, living pattern, their food habits, drinking habit dress, ornament patterns and many other connected systems. At present the Sugalis are mostly interested in earning money.

**WOMEN'S ROLE IN FAMILY LIFE**

As the Sugali community is patriarchal and patrilineal, property is shared equally among the sons. It is an accepted tradition for Sugali women to divide clothes and ornaments among the daughters. Sons are favoured in the community to daughters. Even in the traditional set up, property was not shared equally among all the children. In this scenario boys were preferred over girls but over the years this preference is becoming more promoted. Parents prefer sons to daughters, as they feel that the daughters belong to some other’s family after getting married. And even after giving dowry in large amounts, it is difficult to get a suitable husband. Sons are preferred as they perform the death rituals after their parent’s death. In urban areas it is seen less compared to the thandas. The Sugalis in the towns are educated mostly and they can easily realize the importance of treating equally both girls and boys, and are offered education, in technical and professional fields.

Economic conditions also play a major role as traditional marriages require a lot of money and most of the Sugalis feel that this type of marriage is outdated and Hindus will degrade them.
Once the marriage takes place the bride does not belong to her parents' family. Then onwards she is included in the husband's family. The feast that is arranged for the wedding is now similar to that of Hindus. But where as earlier they used to serve both meat and sweets on these days. Thus one can see that changes have occurred in the marriage customs also. Traditionally, the married women never wear thali, kumkum on the fore head or toe rings. But of late the Sugali married women have started wearing all these things thali, kumkum on their fore heads and toe rings which are Hindu customs.

Among the Sugali women widow remarriage and polygamy are said to prevail freely and it is customary for even divorced women to remarry during the lifetime of the husband. Widow remarriage is common. The widow is recognized by the absence of the symbolically significant ornaments worn by the married women.

Widow Marriage

The custom of widow marriage is also seen both in the traditional setting as well as in the modern setting. The divorced women are allowed to marry and in such remarriage ceremonies, marriage parties provide the thandas a special feast. The women are also allowed to marry their husband's younger brother after the husband's death. However, they have discarded this custom and even marrying husband's younger brother is not considered an obligation on the part of the widow. The Sugalis seem to have struck a golden mean between the two extremes. At present if the widow is not willing to marry her husband's
younger brother she can marry any other person from their caste provided the person pays some compensation in cash to her deceased husband’s younger brother. If any person wants to marry a widow, there are two ways, one is to approach the Naik of the thanda. If a person approaches a widow for marriage, and if she agrees, both of them together inform their decision to the Naik of the thanda who formally gives his approval. The conditions of widows are found sorrowful in the society. The widows are not allowed to attend any functions whether religious or non-religious. Seeing the face of a widow early in the morning is considered to be a bad sign. Widows are asked to cover their faces for eleven days with a big cloth. But in the towns these superstitious beliefs are comparatively less than compared to the thandas.

**Women and Decision Making**

In the past husbands used to dominate in all fields over women. According to Shankar Lal of Anantapur, women were not given any position regarding the matters of decision making but slowly the advices by the wives is being accepted as they found it useful. This enabled the wives to participate in all important matters such as admitting children in schools of their choice and matters relating to property disputes.

**Moving Images**

A group of Sugali tribal women of Pampanuru thanda sat huddled beneath the tree, an old woman sewing the saree. “This is the root cause of the community’s deterioration. The saree has spelt doom for us”.

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The old lady went on the voice full of bitterness, even as a saree-clad Sugali woman tried in vain to put forth her point. The children frolicked in the need and a cloud of dust rose above the place.

And the mist in the researcher's mind melted slowly. The old lady was making the most striking point about the Sugali community. "I never planned it in my spirit and it was a revelation to me too," the researcher observed the scene. The saree, in other words, the Hindu way of life, as the symbol of the community's erosion was traced out by the old lady, full of wisdom in the most pity way. "The saree has weaved a vicious circle in the community. With it comes Hindu influences and with them dowry. And with dowry the problem of money. And for money the sale of girl babies." What is striking is the absolute lack of remorse among the Sugalis about the entire affair. Babies continue to be sold, middlemen continue to make money.

There is an extraordinary contradiction in perception between the outsider's stereotype of the Sugali women, and the ideal behaviour expected of her by the Sugalis themselves, but the two are more closely connected than the conventional opposition between fact and fantasy, the real and ideal. The relationship is reflected in the Sugali's beliefs in female pollution. This cannot be satisfactorily explained through the Sugalis' internal organization alone, but can be properly understood only when set in the context of the Sugalis' external relations and of the more general pollution taboos between themselves and outsiders or (to use the name given by Sugalis
to all non-Sugalis), the Sugalis have their own ideal for women. A Sugali woman must remain a virgin until lawful marriage. Traditionally girls were inspected by married women. After marriage, a wife must remain sexually faithful to her husband. To maintain her reputation she must even avoid being alone with another man or being seen in conversation with him on the camp, lest she risk the accusation of infidelity. The presence of a child old enough to relate events was also considered a protection. A woman should ideally remain with one husband for life and, although divorce or separation are not rare among those groups, the researcher knew, a woman was condemned if she initiated a separation. Within marriage, a wife is supposed to be subordinate to her husband. In addition, her deportment and dress are dictated by certain restrictions which go further than the tenets of modesty associated with house dwellers. Moreover, a Sugali woman is burdened with many domestic duties. A wife is expected to give birth to numerous children and has the main responsibility of child care. Food purchase, cooking and cleaning are also the woman’s domain. The Sugali woman is also expected to do casual farm works. She is even ready to plough the field. Today, thanks to mechanization and the switch to mechanized agriculture, in many cases, the man’s contribution has increased over that of the woman. Some of his earnings are handed over for food and domestic expenses, yet it is considered important that a woman should be able to earn a good living if only in crises.
Contradictions

There is a paradox embedded in the Sugali woman’s role. Within her own society she is hedged in by restrictions, expected to be subservient to her husband and cautious with other men. Yet nearly every day, she is expected to go out of the thanda to sell the lime mortar and other products like fruits, greens, vegetables etc. Making profits will depend on her ability to be outgoing and persistent, and her readiness to take the initiative. She must be aggressive quite the opposite to some of the behaviour required of her in the camp.

Trading Stereotypes

Here the main concern is ethnicity and economic exchange among the Sugalis. It describes the Sugalis economic niche, showing also why it is more appropriate to refer to economic exchange than to “work”, which in an industrial capitalist system is closely associated with wage labour.

A recurrent theme in the literature is that the Sugalis’ traditional livelihood has gone, and that they will disappear with development. This underestimates their continuing ability to adapt to changes in the larger economy. It assumes that the Sugalis have been isolated and cannot survive unless they remain so.

The Sugalis or Banjaras as they often prefer to be described by outsiders, are directly dependent on a sedentary or host community within which they circulate, supplying goods, services and occasional labour. A considerable number of the Sugalis in Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh are still
nomadic, at least for part of the year, living in caravans or trailers towed by lorries or vans. Even those who move into houses are not necessarily permanently sedentary. That the Sugalis shift from ox-drawn wagons to motorized transport is an example of their economic adaptation. Modern technology has actually enhanced their nomadism. Unlike migrant workers who move from place to place for 'settled' and wage-labour jobs, the Sugalis operate largely independently of wage-labour. The greatest opportunities for Sugalis lie in those occupations which others are less able or less willing to undertake.

The Sugali family is both self-employed and actually or potentially mobile with tractors and minimum overheads. With these advantages, the Sugalis can cater for occasional needs where those are gaps in demand and supply and market forces are uneven; and where any large scale or permanent, specialized business would be uneconomic or insecure. The character of Sugali occupations can be summarized as 'the occasional supply of goods, services and labour to a host economy where demand is irregular in time and place.'

The descriptive details and history of a particular occupation become less important than the consideration of aspects common to all. A list of the occupations of Sugalis is indicative. It would include:

1. The hawking of manufactured goods — either small items like cosmetic goods and household articles etc., or agricultural products like ragi, jowar, wheat, pulses and other edible fruits, etc.
2. Seasonal farm work on daily wages like flower picking, weeding, harvesting, etc.

3. The hawking of local made liquor like ‘dharu’, traditional medicine made of locally available plants, fortune telling and sharpening of knife, selling of the lime-mortar, etc.

The number and variety of occupations reveal the Sugalis' remarkable adaptation to changes in the larger economy. But now-a-days the Sugalis, like the dominant sedimentary population, have become concentrated in urban industrialized areas.

Throughout these changes the Sugalis have retained the preference for self-employment which has always been a crucial defining boundary between them and the non-Sugalis. Economic exchanges with non-Sugalis are, as far as possible, on the Sugalis' own terms. Wage labour by contrast would entail working to the orders of a non-Sugali and would put restrictions on the location, times and type of work. The Sugalis regard welfare as merely a modern equivalent to begging and so not degrading. The Sugalis even avoid wage-labour economic relationships amongst themselves. A Sugali may work with, but not for, another Sugali. Economic co-operation occurs in work partnership; two men might enter a temporary partnership to do some tarmaccking jobs together. This often occurs between affines.

Ideally, the Sugalis have a multiplicity of occupations both overtime and at anytime. Given this absence of specialization, the Sugalis wide ranging skills are appropriate
and necessary. The vast majority of Sugalis can neither read nor write. Few have ever attended school. This lack is normally seen only in negative terms.

The Sugalis’ skills include knowing the local economy and the local people; manual dexterity, mechanical ingenuity.

Savings

Sugalis in the traditional set up never thought of savings, because of their irregular and low income. They are well known for their habits of extravagance in matters of food and drink. In the present set up savings have become a status issue. In the traditional set up Sugali women’s earnings were spent totally for household purposes as men used their earnings lavishly on drinking and food. This leads towards their children’s starvation as well as poverty. Consequently dependence of Sugali on money lenders increased for agricultural purposes such as for buying seeds, sowing, etc. Money lenders charged exorbitant rate of interests and this economic exploitation also resulted sometimes in the mortgaging of agricultural land. Quite often Sugali peasants being mostly illiterates, cannot recognize the amount that is written in the records thus heightening their exploitation. Some of the Sugalis even migrated to towns in order to escape from the harassment of money lenders.

CHANGE IN THEIR LIFESTYLE

Dress Pattern

The traditional dress of the Sugali continues to be worn in the thandas. But in spite of being attractive and colorful, it is seen rarely in the case of Sugalis living in the towns. The
unique feature of the traditional dress is that one can make the differences between married, unmarried and widower.

The reasons for the unpopularity of the traditional dress especially among educated urban women can be analysed as follows. The traditional dress takes over three months and labour to stitch together. Further, it is heavy and difficult to wash and is not convenient in the fast paced atmosphere of cities. Besides, when as Sugali women enters the market in her traditional costumes or town, people stare at her as it she was an erotic specimen or a museum piece and do not treat her respectively. So, in order to avoid this, Sugali women began wearing sarees and other kind of accepted dress not so much to imitate Hindu style of dressing as much as to avoid objectification of themselves and to avoid the curious onlookers. Various scholars have failed to explain the underlying reasons in taking up the modern dress and they believe that sanskritization, modernization, etc., are responsible for this. Rama Naik of Anantapur states that the change in the stress pattern came about because they are no longer leading a nomadic life, where they wore the traditional dress which was comfortable, and also protected them from wild animals. But of late, as they are leading a settled life and started wearing other accepted dresses which are comfortable, and lighter. Thus, it has become somewhat difficult to identify Sugali women, where as earlier it was easy to do so.

**Tattoo Marks**

As stated earlier, tattoo marking is very important in the case of Sugali women. This tattoo marks were seen in different
designs on their backs as well as on their hands. The Sugali women can easily be recognized with the tattoo marks mostly in the thandas even today. Men usually get their names tattooed on their body and if the figure of the scorpion tattooed on their body, scorpion will never bite them. It is said that some women even have tattoo marks on their breasts also.

Hair Style

Changes in hairstyle are seen not only among Sugali men but also among women. The changes are mainly due to the fact that they are unable to take bath daily and also it takes lot of time to plait the hair in traditional style. Hence they have changed their hairstyles in order to avoid the objectification as well as to overcome the burden of heavy ornaments.

Food Habits

Changes are also seen in food habits. The reasons for this can be attributed to their earlier dependence on forest food. With the introduction of forest policies, the increasing scarcity of forest products and also introduction of settled living, considerable changes have taken place on the practice of agricultural operations. The food diet, of late consists of ragi, jowar, rice, dal and vegetables and also non-vegetarian food like meat of sheep, goat, chicken and pork.

Drinking Habits

It is a well known fact that drinking serves not one or two or three functions, but a broad spectrum of functions. The Sugali drinking behaviour appear to serve social, ceremonial, economic, nutritional, medicinal, religious, psychological and
integrative functions. The Sugalis drink for social integration and as a token of social solidarity and unity. They drink in friendship and in enmity. Success is to be ensured or celebrated with a drink. Birth, death, ritual, festival and harvest are occasions for drinking. They drink for divorce or reunion, play and dance. The sacred attitudes towards drinking may be established from other striking evidences too. For example, the trees from which drinks are prepared are treated as sacred and hence it is consumed even today also.  

Leisure Time Activities

The leisure time activities include dancing as well as singing throughout the night especially on festival occasions. The Sugali women as well as men dance in groups and these activities are promoted to overcome the burden of tiredness as they work throughout the day. To avoid the tiredness, they also start drinking in the nights along with singing and dancing. Equality of men and women is seen here as both of them dance and sing together. But in practice is almost extinct among the urban settlers as the present day Sugalis have settled down in various professions and have very little time for leisure activities.

In the limited time they watch movies, read magazines, listen to the radio, view television and play games. Women’s leisure time activities include preparing castor oil, ghee, gardening as well as sewing, handicrafts, etc.
A certain laxity in the observance of customary taboos is however noticeable. Thus tradition prescribes that before the celebration of Holi, no one should begin ploughing. Yet men who employ far servants on an annual basis have developed a tendency to make them begin the ploughing even before Holi, allegedly because they do not want to waste labour for which they have paid.

It is interesting to note that the Sugalis are becoming increasingly familiar with Hindu ideas and the practices. They are influenced by the Hindu values and percepts like Moksha (Salvation). The Sugali also make pilgrimage to distant Hindu shrines.

Furthermore, the Sugalis celebrate some Hindu festivals such as Sankranti, Sivarathri, Ugadi, Sriramanavami, Diwali and Nagula Chavati which reflect the Hindu impact in ample measure. That is they now have additional celebrations which were not in vogue until their sedentarization. Change in the realm of economy has brought about changes in the traditional Holi festival of the Sugalis. As the Sugalis of both the thandas were poor in the past they could not afford to celebrate the costly festival of Holi. Hence, hitherto all families of either thanda used to approach caste Hindus for the collection of money with which they celebrate the festival on the grand scale. But, now-a-days, comparatively the rich pastoral as well as the peasant Sugalis have stopped approaching their respective surrounding villagers for fund collection as they consider it beneath their dignity.
Traditionally the Sugalis adopt many customs and rituals from caste Hindus. Normally the unmarried Sugalis dead bodies are buried and married ones are cremated.

With regard to the death ceremonies a change has been noticed at Pampanuru thanda in which the Sugalis have given up the custom of cremation a decade ago and started burying the dead due to the non-availability of fire-wood in plenty and increasing monetary value of the firewood. However, the custom of cremating the dead still persists at Singampalli thanda as firewood is available plenty in the surrounding forest, and also due to better educational status and sex wise literacy levels. Thus with education, their status has risen comparatively in social as well as in the economic matters.

**Life Cycle Ceremonies**

These ceremonies are seen both in the traditional setting as well as in the modern setting. Among the Sugalis child's birth is considered to be impure and the delivery takes place in a separate hut in the thandas. Russel and Hiralal state that the mother is unclean for five days when she lives apart in a separate house. This rule is observed in both the settings and on the sixtieth day she washes the feet of all children in the thanda and returns to her husband's place. Mid-wife or bai performs the delivery in the thanda, but in the modern days most of them are approaching hospitals for safe delivery.\(^6\)

**Name Giving**

Earlier, the giving of a name to the child was not considered very important but, of late, it has become relatively
more important. On the fifth day an elderly person refers the panchang (calendar) and gives a name to the child. Sometimes naming of child takes place even after a month or two. The grand parents of the child play a major role in name giving ceremony. Feasts and tea parties are arranged during the ceremony in the towns. Liquor and non-vegetarian food is arranged in the case of thandas.

**Puberty**

If a girl reaches the age of maturity she is asked to sit at home for seven days outside the house in a shade under a roof of leaves. The girl is given ritual bath on the seventh day, and then onwards she is allowed into the house. In recent years, there are no strict customs regarding the attainment of puberty.

**Head Shaving**

This ritual is performed in the case of both boys and girls, up to five years. They shave heads of two children sometimes and sacrifice goats on this occasion to the clan goddesses such as Maremma and Thulija Yaadi. Of late, most of the Sugalis are visiting the Temple at Tirumala for shaving the heads of their children. In the thandas songs are sung by the beating the thalis (plates made of copper).

**Death**

The unmarried as rule are buried but in the case of married people are cremated. There is an impurity that is associated with death. Impurity is observed for many days and it may vary from five to thirteen. Earlier, impurity was observed only for three days either as a revival of old tradition or an
adoption of the customs for the surrounding community. The number of days have now been increased.

Sraddha or death ceremony is also observed on Divali and Holi festivals as they worship their ancestors who are elevated to the position of gods.

CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS SPHERE

In all human cultures religion exists in one form or the other. Religious plays a major role in integrating the ways of life into a functioning unit. In fact, every religion is a product of human evolution and has been conditioned by social environment. Religion is understood as a part of the world view. Hence, “religion is the cultural knowledge of the supernatural that the people are to cope with the ultimate problems of existences.

Considerable changes are seen in their religious life also. Sugalis in the earlier days were animists. As they were strongly organized in patrilineal clans they had a strong belief in the ancestral spirits. This custom is continuing till today. Sugalis have different customs and believed in a different religion from other than the Hindus. They also worship some Hindu gods and celebrate a few Hindu festivals.7

In earlier days, they confronted with disasters, disease, tornado, lightening, etc., they determined their attitude towards the world and nature so they felt that natural spirits must be propitiated if their good will and protection were to be secured. Therefore they kept faith in magic and rituals and resorted to them frequently. The Sugali community still worship saints such
as Hathiram Bava, Seva Bhaya and goddesses such Maremma Yaadi, Thulija Yaadi who are still considered a malevolent deities and the belief is that they are supposed to have powers over epidemics like Cholera, Small Pox, etc. The Sugalis also believe that if they do not sacrifice a goat in the name of these deities, during the month of April and May, they will get angry and curse them with these epidemic diseases. Thulija Bhavani is believed to have powers over the fertility of various crops and goats.

Festivals and rituals act as a mirror which reflects the images of religion, marital culture, human behaviour, value systems, morals, ethics, etc. Festival is a collection of rituals and rites for public religious observance. The purpose of these rituals is to recall the past, and in a way to make it pleasant by means of veritable dramatic representation.

The Sugalis seek to commemorate the mythic events and recall the legends with which these festivals are identified in order to keep alive the religious traditions connected with them. The festivals like Maremma Jatara, Deepavali, Holi and Dasara provide means of escape from the humdrum and dullness of daily life and labour. When these people periodically assemble to celebrate the rites, inter personal relations are renewed and a new consciousness among the individuals is produced. Their common bonds are reaffirmed. Their group solidarity is reinforced. The Sugalis in both settings worship the Maremma, a local deity. The image of Maremma is found in the form of a large-head like stone. The deity is worshipped in the form of a natural object i.e., a stone. She is not represented as
anthropomorphic icons, i.e., she is not worshipped in human form as deities of the Hindu Pantheon are commonly worshipped.

The deity is enshrined in the temple, under the neem tree. This is clear indication of sanskritization as temple cult is a Hindu tradition. Regular puja is performed by a non-brahmin priest. At the time of jatara both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food is offered to the deity. Buffaloes, goat, cock and chicken are sacrificed objects. Cock and chicken are considered as lowest category of sacrificial objects. Now-a-days, people are inclined to offer more and more vegetarian items like coconuts, etc. Popularity of the deity and of associated rituals is found all over this culture area. She is propitiated and also adorned. Some people attribute to her few reasons of disease famine, etc.

The average Sugali's capacity to enjoy social ceremony, dance, music and their community alike is greater in both the settings. Drinking is a common thing in such social gatherings. The local made wine (sara) and kallu are commonly and extensively used by the thandas. It is to be noticed that manufacture of liquor is an important occupation of the Sugalis in the thandas.

In some cases to celebrate these festivals they were to borrow money from the money lenders. In return they tactfully forced to sell their groundnut crop to the money lender at cheaper rates.
They also worship mantral yaadi as well as kankali. The festivals of Sugalis include three aspects of living i.e., productive, protective and seasonal.

Seetla is an important festival of the Sugalis, which is celebrated even today. This festival is celebrated in the month of June (Ashada) where they pray for the fertility of the soil as well as for the protection of their cattle from epidemic diseases, etc. The unique feature of this festival is that it is celebrated in the outskirts of the thanda. Of late, Teej is another festival that is being celebrated specially by the unmarried girls with the permission of the Naik. This festival is celebrated especially in the month of July or August, where they pray for the perpetuity and fertility of the women. During this festival, the goddess Maremma and Seva Bhaya are propitiated. On the ninth day, animals are arranged for sacrifice to satisfy the goddess Maremma.

The Sugalis also worship gods such as Balaji, Hanuman, Krishna Bhagavan, etc. These gods were worshipped even the earlier days but they were called by different names. But various scholars have explained that with the modernization as well as with the Sanskritization, tribals have come into contact with the Hindu Gods and they have adopted these as well as customs. Though it is partly true, one can say basing on the field work conducted as well as on the personal observations, that these gods were worshipped by the Sugalis many generations though they did not give any form to these gods.
It seems that these people even in critical conditions retain their tradition and culture of drinking, dancing, feasting and mercy making. This became a culture of poverty, degradation and dependency. It can be said that the given exploitative relations of production in a traditional agrarian society partly helped to perpetuate folk rituals and practices. This problem is made worse during drought or other natural calamities. The tradition bound Sugali do not hesitate to get loan at high interest by keeping their household utensils or jewellery with the moneylenders to celebrate festivals like Deepavali and Maremma. Economic mobility brought about some perceptible changes in the brief system of the Sugalis too. Both groups of the Sugalis have borrowed many little traditional deities such as Sunkulamma, Maremma, Manthralamma, Kalamma, Gangamma, Peddamma, etc., and several deities of the Hindu great tradition as Lord Venkateswara, Rama, Krishna, Siva, Anjaneya, Saraswathi, Lakshmi and other deities of Hindu pantheon, especially those of surrounding agricultural castes. It is said that Sugalis started worshipping Balaji as their family deity as early as in the 13th century. Of late they also worship Sevabhaya.

As cultivators they propitiate deities such as Maremma and Gangamma associated with agriculture and rain respectively. They also offer animal sacrifices to please their beloved God. In their community, a particular deity controls a particular human activity such as health, cattle tending, farming, prosperity and so on.
The ritual focal point of the entire celebration of Maremma jatra is a simple shrine, erected on a mound close to a huge neem tree and made of no permanent building materials than a few wooden posts and a low roof thatched with bamboo sticks. Near the shrine, animals were sacrificed through out the night, and they blare shawms and the drums accompanied each climax of a sacrificial rite. On the occasion of the festival, the whole thanda is filled up with cinema tents and make shift restaurants with crude wooden benches and loud speakers blare out film music long before the show begins. There are exhibitions mounted by Government and voluntary organizations like RDT (Rural Development Trust) displaying all the progressive techniques and programmes regarding literacy and family planning. The transformation of the Maremma jatra from a tribal gathering to great fair attended by thousand of non-tribals reflects the submergence of Sugali culture in the ocean of the Hindu practices.

ELDERS COUNCIL AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Sugalis in the thanda are headed by a Panchayat which is called as thanda Panchayat. Naik presides over the traditional Panchayat. He performs judicial as well as religious functions of the Panchayats. But in some thandas only judicial functions are performed by the Naiks. Some people assist the Naik in performing these functions. He also maintains law and order, looks after the general welfare of the community. Earlier in the traditional setting, women were not allowed to attend the meetings of the Panchayats. But of late, they are allowed to attend the meetings and also some times head the meetings as
Panchayat president and Sarpanches. The tradition of the Panchayat and the Naik is coming from the ages, where it is still existing in the thanadas as well as in the towns. Though the functions of the Naik have fairly become less in the modern setup, as people are approaching courts for civil and criminal cases, earlier there was no interference of outsiders in the judicial as well as other matters. The Sugalis are approaching these courts as the Naik is becoming more corrupt and sometimes as he is seen biased in giving judgements. This enabled the Sugalis towards loosing faith in the Naik and started approaching courts. Women are also given freedom to open their voices freely in the Panchayat. Thus the Panchayat became more democratic by including the entry of women into the Panchayat. The Panchayats can also be seen in the town settlements such as Naik Nagar as well as Bapu Nagar busti of Hyderabad. The Sugali approach courts in the minor cases such as regarding dowry, widow marriages, land quarrels and divorces etc., even today. 

As already mentioned the importance of the post of Naik has gone down considerably in recent years. The statutory panchayat set up under the programme of democratic decentralization is providing alternative forces of power. There is thus not only clash of personalities but of systems. In some cases the Sugalis have tried to resolve the conflict by combining the posts of Naik and Sarpanch in the same person.

EDUCATION

Education is one of the important factors responsible for the changes in the Sugali community. Many Sugalis are seen in
the professional courses like engineering, medicine, etc. Sugalis are sending their children to convent schools also. Present day aspirations of Sugalis are changing and they want to take up dignified jobs. Sugalis below the poverty line are sending their children to the Government Residential Schools. However one can see that the majority of the Sugalis drop out from the schools. This is due to the lack of interest, domestic requirements, inaccessibility to schools, inability to meet the travel expenses and lack of schools in the near by places.\(^9\)

However, education totally changed the dressing pattern of Sugali women. Now-a-days they are wearing chudidars, sarees, etc., when compared to the other tribals the Sugalis has a better educational status and sex wise literacy levels.

Though changes are seen in every aspect of Sugali community still they observe their own customs as well as their traditions and they distinguish them from the other tribals and non-tribals.

The aspects of the continuity among the Sugalis include the traditional settlements called thandas which continues to exist even today. In spite of migrations to cities and towns, large sections of the Sugalis continue to live in relative peace in the thandas. The other aspect of continuity is their dialect called Gorbouli which is predominantly the mixture of Gujarathi, Rajasthani, Marathi, Sanskrit and Hindi and bears influence of local languages. The tradition of the Gor Panchayat is continued even today. Moreover in Pampanuru thanda, the office of the Naik has weakened during the past two decades due to the
increased individualistic attitude and unmanifested factionalism. The Sugalis of the other thanda often approach, defying judgments given by the traditional council, other important people such as the ex-village Munsiffs of surrounding villages and the Sarpanch of neighboring village of Singampalli for the settlement of various disputes.

It is to be noted that Sugalis interact with the Hindu Peasantry in many ways and yet retain their exclusiveness, a central feature of Indian caste system this point would suggest that they have to participate in a three tier legal system, namely their own the norms led down by the dominate groups and the norms of the state. It is however true that even though with the minor changes, such as in the case of the functions of the Naik they are relatively reduced now. The strict exogamy is still seen in continuation with the strict endogamy rules. Bride price is seen in some of the thandas such as Addakulapalle thanda as well as Bukkapatnam thanda. But the aspect of bride is very less compared to dowry. Sugalis who settled in cities and towns still maintain their linkages with their native areas by visiting in these places on occasions, of religious importance family problems or by sending money, etc. The taboos of birth, death pollution and of menstruation are still seen today through have become less stringent.

Though educated women have started wearing sarees and other acceptable dress, still Sugalis in the thandas are seen with their traditional dresses. The worshipping of fore fathers and some orthodox Sugali gods are still seen. The goddesses as such
like Tulija, Bhavani, Maremma, Sevabhaya, Hathiram Bhava, Mantralyaadi are still worshipped by the community.

In conclusion, basing on these observations one can say that changes are seen in the Sugali community in all walks of life. The acculturation of Sugalis is different when compared to other tribal communities. The factors responsible for these changes in the community can be said to have started with the arrival of Britishers in India when the whole traditional set up undergone change. With the introduction of modern means of transport such as Railways, roadways, etc., the traditional economy is disrupted. Others reasons an also be seen. To avoid the objectification by local people the Sugalis started changing their thoughts which are totally different when compared to the earlier Sugalis. These changes have enabled the Sugalis to come to the forefront. The Sugalis of Andhra Pradesh, it would seem, have been benefited most when compared to other tribal communities. One can also see the traditional aspects still continued in this community such as the language of Sugalis which is still spoken by them at home as Horer wathe or Gor bol. In the thandas, one can still see the continuation of the office of the Naik.

Though the some traditional factors are still continuing on the whole, this community has experienced great changes in all aspects of their economic and social life. These changes are prominently seen in the town settlements and much less in the thandas.
SALE OF THE GIRL CHILD – A SOCIAL EVIL

A seven year old Spanish-Indian Sugali girl returned to Hyderabad recently to meet her mother, the first of the hundreds of Sugali girls send abroad from 1999-2001. This is based on her story:

Saraswathi was born to a Sugali family in a thanda near Shadnagar in Mahabubnagar district. She was one of the hundreds of Sugali girl babies given away in foreign adoption from Andhra Pradesh between 1997-2001. She was adopted by Anna of Spain. She know that she is born Sugali, and have the typical burn marks on her stomach – a tradition among Sugalis to ensure that children digest the milk they drink, she know that she is adopted. She is always wondered about her family. This year when they came to know that her family was finally located, they traveled to India and came to Hyderabad, in December. Meeting her mother was really a Christmas gift to her from her adoptive mother.

She found that that she is the center of attraction in Hyderabad. Everybody started at her, everyone asked questions about her. It seems that she is the first Sugali child to return to my country and every one is curious about her. She don’t understand the language – English, Telugu, Hindi or Sugali, but she certainly know that the focus is on her. She likes it; it shows that she is loved and wanted, but this was not so seven years ago when she was born.

This is her story as she understands it from her mother Jamini. Her father Bhadru was part of a joint family of four
brothers — Chandur, Bhadru, Bojya and Kalu — and their parents — Seetharam and Jainabai. They have 16 acres of dry land on which they cultivate maize, redgram and castor. They had spent a lot of money, but failed in getting water from borewells. Many years ago, her Sugali ancestors had traversed vast distances trading salt for people, goods for armies. It was a hard life and daughters given in marriage were often never seen again. The tradition then was that daughter’s links with natal families are weak. They don’t go to their mothers’ houses for deliveries, festivals or illnesses.

The Sugali parents had a daughter before her. She was two years older than her. When she was born, her aunt also gave birth to a baby girl; she had a girl earlier, and this brought the total number of girls in her family to four. Her grand mother, Jainabai, railed at her mother and aunt, “what kind of women are you to bring in more girls into the family? For each dowry of Rs.1 lakh, we have to sell 10 acres of land. Where will we get the money from?” unlike other communities, dowry is a very recent phenomenon in Sugali community. Her youngest aunt, Mangli, married 12 years ago to her uncle Kalu, did not bring in a dowry. On the other hand, Kalu had to pay a hefty bride price for her Rs.5,000 a pair of bullocks, and materials and provisions for the wedding. Dowry is a disease that Sugali community has infected the girl with. Its onset has been so rapid that her community has not been able to cope within a humane manner, and has reacted in a knee-jerk fashion. Her grand mother Jainabai, remember is not more cruel nor inhumane — she played with her grand children, fed them titbits, joked and laughed. It
was her concern for the family that made her cruel to its most vulnerable members.

When she was but three days old, grandfather Seetharam poured endrine into her mouth – he wanted to kill her. Much of it poured out of her mouth immediately. While her mother sat weeping in a corner (younger women dare not speak unless spoken to), her uncle Bojya took pity on her. He quickly milked the goat and poured the milk into her mouth to force her to vomit out the poison. Then he went to the Hanuman temple and stood on one leg for three hours, praying to the God that she be saved.

She survived to her parents’ joy, but Jainabai wasn’t defeated so easily. R.Naik, a small-time tout, was roaming the thandas as a commission agent for an adoption agency. He used to boast, when drunk, that he got a commission of Rs.6000 for each baby, and would ask the women who were midwives also to earn money in this fashion. He went around with photographs of girls in expensive dresses in rich surroundings, and approached families with daughters and pregnant women, “If your daughter-in-law gives birth to a daughter, how will you raise her and pay the fat dowry? Give your child to me, she will be sent abroad, and become the Chief Minister of that country.” He would give Rs.100 – 150 to the mother-in-law,” have a drink on her if it is a son, keep him, if it is a girl, send word to her; she will take away the child and pay you more.”

Her mother had begun agricultural work the second day after the delivery. Within a month when she was poisoned, her
mother had gone to the fields and her father was sent to Hyderabad to sell cut grass. A Tata Sumo with two women came to her thanda and she and her cousin (Bojya's second daughter, born a few days after her) were both handed over to them by her grand-mother. She received money enough to buy pesticides for the fields that season. How much was that she wonder. A couple of hundreds, or a couple of thousands? How much was she valued by the baby traders?

That evening when her parents returned, her mother tells her that there was a huge quarrel. Her parents wept and ranted. Her father said, "Could she not have earned enough money to feed her daughter? She would have plied a rickshaw in Hyderabad to earn money. Why did you have to sell her?"

Within a few weeks, racked by grief, he drank endrine and committed suicide. Her mother fell on the ground, she could not get up for six months, so long that termites spread all along one side of her.

Within a year, her grandfather and uncles kicked her mother out of the house. With her elder sister Anita, she left home and went to stay with her maternal grand parents. She lives there even today, working as a daily construction labourer. Her mother tells her that her uncle Bojya's family suffered a second blow. A year after their daughter was sold, a third daughter was born. Her grandmother buried the new born girl alive.

A year after, a son was born, but his mother died immediately after child birth. Three little children were left
motherless, and their father became unhinged with grief. Her maternal grandparents, who raised and are raising six of their own daughters (two of her nieces are younger than her), says, "when such a great sin as killing or selling babies is committed, great punishments, too, are incurred".

She was there in the orphanage for some five months. They were fed only twice a day (this is what her adoptive mother tells her – the adoption agency director had to save money, and they were the saving, because who could they complain to? They were too weak even to cry. She picked up scabies and a whole lot of new diseases her sister never knew of, even a type of rare bacteria from improperly boiled or unboiled milk. The older adoptees recall cringing in corners, as the director would be drunk in the evening and abuse his wife and daughters.

In another orphanage in Tandur, where other adoptees came from, they recall spending the night in the terror when a woman died of child birth – they were afraid of calling for the adults. They recall seeing another woman turned out of the home an instant after child birth, because it was a stillbirth, and the agency director was furious at the profit that had slipped out of her fingers. Here, too, children sat shivering in fear because the director’s husband came drunk in the evenings to abuse his wife and children.

Her sister never had to live through there. If she did, she had our mother close by to cuddle her and explain. Her sister may not be well-fed as She; she may have torn clothes, she may
be studying in a third-rate government school; she may face all 
the problems grinding poverty presents, but she will never know 
the pain that will always stay with her – she was the unwanted 
one, the one to be killed, the one to be sent away.

She loves her country, she loves her people, she loves the 
oisy roads, the people who stare the wondrously beautiful 
clothes, the jewels the sparkling bindis, the hues of the bazaar, 
the quiet of the villages... but she hate the quiet connivance of 
every one at the treatment of girl babies like her. She never 
asked to be born, she never asked to be sent to a country 
thousands of miles away – away from her generic roots, away 
form her people and her country. Why as this inflicted on her?

She knows that she should be understanding about her 
grandmother Jainabai, who herself was raised as a girl in 
vulnerable circumstances, and who quickly understood that if 
she did not internalize the values of the male-dominated culture 
around her, she would be a misfit. She was swept away, she was 
bewildered by the sudden change in traditions – she had to pay 
bride price for her youngest son, and now she was to pay hefty 
dowries for her granddaughters? Was she to sell her dearly 
loved land for their dowries and watch her family sick into 
destitution?

She had been told all this, but she still don’t want to see 
her. She detest her grand father for taking her life so lightly, for 
driving her own son to suicide. She detest R.Naik and S.Rao, 
through whose hands she was sent abroad, for making 
commence out of babies. She detest not just because he paid
commission agents to hunt for pregnant women who already had daughters. S.Rao claims an unblemished social work record (he was charge-sheeted thrice), but he could turn his back on the killing and sale of girl babies? Was there nothing he could or would do? He and his kind are powerful, rich people – owners of chenchus, wives of top officials, people who get abroad for holidays several times a year, people whom chief ministers meet over lunches and dinners.10

Kira, the girl who had been adopted by Spanish couple says that the Government has to organize for educated boys and girls to raise awareness about the practice, organize kala jathas for public awareness push the government and civil society to take action, inform the media to raise a hue and cry.

She also says that in about 10 years time, she would be grown up. There would be several Sugali girls like her who will definitely return to ask this question of every one here – she again questions of why everyone doing nothing when she and others like her were being deprived of my inheritance, her roots, her family, her community, her very name – and sent abroad as “product” labeled, stamped and marketed to attract western sentiment about “Saving lives” and “giving us homes”? [Deccan Chronicle, January 10, 2006].

It is very common among the Sugalis to resort to female infanticide, as they are unable to pay the dowry, because of their abject poverty. By mistake if a female child is born she is sold at a very meagre cost of Rs.100 or Rs.200. This is the
pathetic condition that one can witness in the thandas especially in Telangana region.

SUGALIS: DISHNOURED BY HISTORY

In 1871, the British passed the Criminal Tribes Act. It notified about 150 tribes around the country as “Criminal”. It gave the police wide powers to deal with members of such tribes, including restricting their movements and requiring them to report at police stations regularly. The Sansis, Pardhis, Kanjars, Gujjars, Bawarias, Banjarias and almost 200 such communities are labeled as criminal tribes.

Visit to the thandas where most of the Sugalis drudge out their daily lives may reveal the grossest poverty and want, shocking even to those hardened eyes which daily witness sickly, hungry, unwashed, unclothed children in the thandas. The question then to be asked is this if all members of such communities are merciless robbers, why then, does the community live in appalling conditions of poverty.

Moreover, even educated members of these communities, who constitute a first few generation office-goers or professionals, are subjected to the deep suspicion and insults by the wider society when they set out to look for jobs, and at their work places, there is constant, relentless humiliation they have to suffer at the hands of “respectable” people. Swimming against the tide each day, they struggle to enter the virtuous cycle of education, work and respectability which has eluded them and their children for several generations. Since “Criminal
Tribes" make such sensational head lines so frequently, the phenomenon needs to be examined historically in detail.

The people mentioned above are a staggering 60 million in number, and fall in the category of today's Denotified Tribes. The term "Criminal Tribes" was concocted by the British rulers, and entered the public vocabulary for the first time when a piece of legislation called the Criminal Tribes Act was passed in 1871. With the repeal of this Act (which was condemned by Pandit Nehru as a blot on the legal books of Free India, and a shame to all civilized societies) these communities were officially "denotified" in 1952.

Intensive research on the issue shows that about 150 years ago, a large number of tribal communities were still nomadic, and were considered useful, honourable people by members of the settled societies with whom they came into regular contact. A number of them like Sugalis were small itinerant traders who used to carry their wares on the backs of their cattle, and bartered their goods in the villages through which they passed. They would bring interesting items to which people of a particular village and a little further away spices, honey, grain of different varieties, medicinal herbs, different kinds of fruit or vegetables which the region did not grow and so on.

Almost invariably, nomadic people were craftsmen of some kind or the other and in addition to their trading activity they would make and sell all sorts of useful little items like mats and baskets, brooms and earthen ware utensils. Some like the or lambadies functioned on a larger scale, and moved in
larger groups with pack animals loaded mainly with salt and their women in addition to the salt also bartered the exquisitely crafted silver trinkets with settled villagers. They also became cattle traders, herds people or sellers of milk products, since they bred their own cattle for carrying their merchandise. They were not just useful to the villagers on a day-to-day basis. They were also acknowledged for averting the frequent grain shortages and famine like conditions in villages where crops failed.

On the whole, the Sugalis were considered a welcome and colourful change in routine whenever they visited or camped near a village. There were several reasons for these nomadic communities first becoming gradually marginalised, and finally beginning to be considered useless to the settled societies. First, the network of roads and railways established in the 1850's connected many of the earlier outlying villages to each other also to cities and towns.

The scale of the operations of the nomadic traders was thus drastically cut down to only those areas where wheel traffic could not yet reach. This was the single most important reason for the loss of livelihood of a number of nomadic communities. Further, under newly imposed forest laws, the British government did not allow tribal communities to graze their cattle in the forests, or to collect bamboo and leaves wither which were needed for making simple items like mars and baskets for their own use and for selling. These two developments had disastrous consequently for the nomadic traders.
There was one other major historical factor responsible for the impoverishment of a very large number of nomadic communities. The nineteenth century witnessed repeated severe famines – during each successive one the Sugalis lost more and more herds of cattle which were the only means of transporting their goods to the interior villages. The cattle were in fact becoming more crucial than ever, as with increasing network of roads and railways these communities had to travel larger distances to sell their products. Loss of cattle meant loss of trading activity on an unprecedented scale. The resultant was a large number of nomadic communities had settled down permanently in the rural areas where there was more demand for the sale of their products.

So also the British government gradually began to consider nomadic communities prone to criminality in the absence of the legitimate means of livelihood. The Criminal Tribes Act was born in these historical consequences.

An important point for our purposes here is that the British government was able to summon a large amount of public support, including the nationalist press, for the excesses committed on such communities. This is because the Criminal Tribes Act was posed widely as a social reform measure which reformed criminals through work. However, when they tried to make a living like everybody else, they did not find work outside the settlement because of public prejudice and ostracisation. This curious logic and anomalous situation has continued to this day.
Once more we are at a juncture when the issue of "Criminal Tribes" needs to be reviewed so that the wider public, 130 years later, does not end up supporting measures to "flush them out" of the existing system. The National Human Rights Commission accepted to launch a comprehensive package of welfare measure, including employment opportunities.

However, no welfare measure, or recommendations by a Human Rights Commission can create a more humane public opinion that is an autonomous process which has to begin to take place among thinking citizens on their own. These communities have merely got caught in the web of the relentless historical changes encompassing colonization, modernization and urbanization and they need to be supported in their severe ordeal and distress. The Sugalis still remain on the periphery of society because of the suspicion and active hostility of the average mainstream person. This community wait to regain the honourable place that they once held and lost.
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