CHAPTER - II

AREA AND THE TRIBES
MAP OF ANDHRA PRADESH
(Showing the Srikakulam District)

- Maharashtra
- Madhya Pradesh
- Orissa
- Mysore (Karnataka)
- Tamil Nadu

Bay of Bengal

- Srikakulam District
- Seethampet Mandalam
Andhra Pradesh is one of the States in India with substantial tribal population. According to 1981 Census, the population of Scheduled Tribes in Andhra Pradesh is 3.18 millions constituting 5.92 per cent of the total population of the State. There are 33 tribal groups in the State inhabiting the Plains as well as Agency Areas. The Agency Areas are hilly and forest-clad tracts while the Plain areas level-land territories. The tribes inhabiting the Agency Areas are the Koya, the Gond, the Chenchu, the Kolam and the Valmiki etc., whereas the Plains are the Kattunayakan, the Sujall, the Yanadi and the Yerukula etc. The tribal communities are found in the districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari, Adilabad, Warangal and Khammam. However, the Srikakulam district occupies a unique place in the State. It is the first tribal area in the State where the tribals participated in the revolutionary movement, now popularly known as "the Naxalite Movement".

Srikakulam district is situated in the northern most part of Coastal Andhra and lies between 18°21" and 19°10" of the Northern latitude and 83°5" and 84°5" of the Eastern longitude. It is bounded on the North and West by Koraput and Ganjam districts of Orissa, on the East by the Bay and
on the South by Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. The district is divided into two geographic regions, namely, the Coastal Plains and the Hilly regions. The major tribal communities inhabiting the hilly tracts of the region are Savaras, Jatapus, Konda Doras and Manne Doras. The total tribal population of the district is about 1,05,142 and the Scheduled Area in which the tribal population concentrated is about 505 sq.miles, constituting 13 per cent of the total geographical area of the district.

Seethampet Mandal is situated in the Seethampet village. It is bounded on the East Saribujjili, West Veeraghattam and Vizianagaram in the North Bhamini Mandal and in the South Palakonda Mandal. The total population of the Mandal is about 32,080. The geographical area of the Mandal is 157.12 sq.kms. The tribal population in the Mandal is 29,098 and others are 2,982. These tribal communities constitute 90 per cent of the total population of the Mandal. Savaras (56 per cent) and Jatapus (44 per cent) are the main tribal communities living in the area of this Mandal. The tribal population in the Mandal however forms 47 per cent of the total tribal population in the district.

Flora and Fauna

The hills and the forest in the midst of whose picturesque surroundings the tribal villages are situated abound in various types of trees including teak (Tectona grandis),
neredu (Eugenia jambolane), modura (Butea frondosa), etc. Sedge grass (Eyperons rotundus) popularly known as 'dobbagaddi' used for roofing is abundantly found in the forest. Other trees commonly found in the backyards of tribal dwellings are jack, drumstick, guava, papaya, tamarind, etc. The tribals of this area collect tamarind (Tamarindus indica) and 'ippa' flowers (Bassia latifolia) from the forest. The deforestation and the increasing density of population have resulted in the decrease of wild life in these forests, but still some wild life like boars, goats, bears, rabbits are found. Among the birds peacocks and wild fowls are in good number.

**Climate and Rainfall**

The district is benefited by South West and North East monsoons. Most of the rainfall is received during the South West monsoon. The rainy season commences from the last week of May or early June and ends by December. The rainfall during the North West monsoon is moderate and irregular. The average rainfall of the district is 1086 mm. The rainfall received during the South West monsoon is utilised for cultivation of major crops during the Kharif season. The rains during the North East monsoon are helpful for sustaining the crops, which are already sown during the earlier months. In the summer during day time the temperature is slightly higher,
while the nights are comparatively cooler and during the winter it is chilly.

Savaras and Jatapus

The name Savara is mentioned in the ancient Sanskrit literature in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and other epics. G.V. Sithapathi who did research among the tribes of this region particularly of the Savaras is of the opinion that the ancient Sabaras are the modern Savaras (1943: 95-98).

According to him, the ancient Sabaras seemed to have lived on the plains, established kingdoms and dynasties and were in good status. At present the Savaras are dispersed in hilly areas over the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh and the Koraput and Ganjam districts of Orissa.

The elderly Savara informants of the area are aware of three divisions among them.

1) Jati Savara or Konda Savara,
2) Kapu Savara, and
3) Maliya Savara.

Konda Savaras live in the interior tracts of forest, more or less retaining their culture even today.

Savaras of the plains are called Kapu Savaras; they have adopted the customs of the people of the Plains.

Maliya Savaras are the inhabitants of border areas of Orissa State touching Andhra Pradesh. In Seethampet area only Konda Savaras are found.
In the literature very meagre information is available on the origin of Jatapus. Many anthropologists believe that Jatapus and Kondh are one and the same.

While the Savaras still speak their own dialect, the Jatapus have forgotten their original mother tongue 'Kuvi' and at present they speak only 'Telugu' the regional language.

**Settlement Pattern**

Most of the tribal villages are situated at the foothills and are single tribe villages. The tribals construct their houses in two or three rows opposite to each other in a linear pattern. The houses are rectangular in shape; the roof is thatched with 'dobbagaddi' (sedge grass), a kind of grass locally available; and walls are made of mud or plastered with mud. Almost every house consists of living room and a verandah with two doors, one opening to the courtyard and the other to the backyard. No windows are found and inside is generally dark.

**Food Habits**

The staple diet of the tribals of this area is a gruel made from the flour of a variety of millets. Along with the gruel they take either some vegetable curry or boiled tamarind water. Both Savaras and Jatapus are non-vegetarians, but

---

*Kondh is a tribe inhabiting the border areas of Orissa State in Eastern Ghats.*
Savaras eat beef and snakes while the Jatapus do not touch them at all. It is for this reason the latter consider themselves superior to the Savaras.

Dress

The dress of an adult male consists of a 'gavancha' or 'gochi' and a thick coarse white bed-sheet spread over the shoulders locally known as 'dukandi'.

Women use sarees and those who are not habituated to wearing a blouse or jacket usually cover the upper part of the body with one end of the same saree.

Both men and women among these two tribes wear only white clothes of cheaper variety. Children of below 12 years, both boys and girls, wear only rags or cloth called 'gochilu'. Boys aged between 5 and 15 years attending schools wear shirts and shorts whereas girls 'langa' (skirts) and jacket.

Hair Style

Men and women dress their hair regularly with applying coconut oil and combing. The hair style of old men is to keep 'jutty'. After applying oil, they comb the hair with 'Duvvene' (comb) and make a knot at the rearside. But men of the present generation have cropped hair. Some of the tribal women are found applying caster oil. All the elderly women make the plait into a chignon while young women and girls leave it on the back with a coloured silk ribbon or a thin jute twin tied to it at the end. Decorating the plait with garlands of seasonal flowers is common.
Kin Groups

An individual among Savaras is usually identified through his lineage. There is no specific name for the lineage group, the members are called 'Kulam Marangi'. 'Kulam' literally means lineal descent and 'Marangi' refers to a group of male members. All the Kulam Marangi trace their descent to a common ancestor and all the members of a lineage are quite aware of their genealogical relationship with one another. Nuclear family is common among the Savaras. The Savara family is characterised by patrilocal, patrilineal and patrincentral.

Jatapu is broadly divided into 'Ghirna' or 'Vamsas'. It is an exogamous unilineal descent group whose members claim their descent from a presumed common ancestor and can be equated with clan.

Family is the elementary unit of this group. After family 'lohayondi tari' group emerges as an operational unit in the functioning of the society with emphasis on genealogical idiom. This group may be identified as 'lineage' in Jatapu society.

While referring to family the Jatapus use the word 'ma-intivallu'. Extended family is their ideal.

Social Hierarchy

Jatapus are ranked at the top in the social hierarchy because of their wealth, non-eating of beef and high degree of acculturation. Lack of all these characters among Savaras makes them lower in status to the Jatapus.
Life cycle ceremonies are very important among these tribes as they mark a change in the status of an individual.

Pregnancy and Childhood

A Woman in these two tribes prefers her first confinement at her parent's house. Neither a professional mid-wife nor any magico-religious medicine man is present at the time of child birth unless required. Women of their group rub and press the abdomen to facilitate an easy delivery. If it is a protracted delivery, 'Yajjodu' or the magico-religious priest-cum-dancer or magico-religious physician is called for assistance who chants prayers and gives some medicinal herb to the woman under labour both to exorcise evil spirits and as a physical treatment for an easy and early delivery.

The tribes in this area though understand that sexual activity is the cause of child birth, believe co-habitation alone does not produce a child unless supernatural elements are invoked to bless the couple. Because of this belief they say that one should be ritually clean and propitiate the deities regularly to beget children.

Naming Ceremony

The ceremony connected with the naming of the child usually takes place on the eleventh day after the birth. On the day of ceremony, the woman is given a ritual bath. The
entire house is cleaned and decorated. Later the naming ceremony is performed. For the first child, the ceremony is celebrated by inviting friends and relatives for whom a grand non-vegetarian feast is arranged.

Tonsure Ceremony

Tonsure ceremony is performed both for male and female children. For boys, however, there is no other ceremony after the tonsure till they attain adolescence and get married. Tonsure ceremony takes place in the house itself. A barber, if available, is engaged to do the job. Otherwise, the maternal uncle of the child applies the scissors first. He may even complete the shaving of the head if the barber is not readily available. The function is usually celebrated on a Friday and it ends with the entertainment of friends and relatives to a feast.

Puberty

The first flow of menstrual discharge of a girl makes the end of her childhood which occurs between the ages of 12 and 14. A separate enclosure is made for the adolescent girl inside the house and she is secluded from all the male members. Pollution for the girl lasts for 3 to 9 days and during this period she is not allowed to move in the house freely. Food and water are supplied within the enclosure itself. On the final day of pollution she is given a ceremonial bath. Married
women of the family invite the women of the other families
of the tribe in the village to attend the ceremony.

Marriage

There are various kinds of marriages prevalent among the
tribes. They are marriage by elopement, marriage by negotia-
tion and marriage by capture. Marriage by capture is not
practised among the Jatapus, but found among Savaras.

Girls are generally married after the attainment of puberty
and the age group wherein most of the marriages occur is between
15 and 19 years. Nevertheless a few marriages were conducted
and celebrated in the age group of 20 and 24 years. Among men,
marriageable age varies between 15 and 24 years but the optimum
age however seems to be between 18 and 24 years.

Bride price is practised in both the communities. While
it is called 'Oli' among Jatapus, 'Olilebu' is the name given
to this practise among Savaras.

Polygyny is practised in both the communities, but it is
more prevalent among Savaras than Jatapus.

Divorce is considerably easier to get in both the communi-
ties with the help of the Tribal Council.

Death

Death is attributed either to the wrath of the supernatu-
ral being or to witchcraft and magic. When a death occurs in
a tribal household, the dead body is not disposed off till almost all the relatives come and pay their last homage.

Death among Savaras is marked by the observance of pollution. But in Jatapu villages, not only the kinsmen of the deceased but the entire village observe pollution. The tribals generally cremate the dead. But there is also the practice of burying the corpse if the death is due to contagious diseases like cholera, small pox etc. All the relatives assemble together to make the mourning group. All the people go to a nearby hill stream to take bath and return home even before the corpse is burnt completely. On the same day, the relatives visit the cremation ground to see that no remnants of the pyre left unburnt. The first feast is usually arranged about 3 or 4 days after the body is cremated. For this occasion, a fowl is killed at the spot of cremation, some rice or other grain is cooked, and the fowl is eaten by the people of the family along with the consumption of liquor. On the 9th day, a small pit is dug where the body is cremated and the second feast is arranged. For this a pig is sacrificed. It is customary to offer liquor to all the people who follow the corpse to the cremation ground.

Economy

The traditional economy of the tribal communities of this area is dependent on their physical and cultural environment. Their subsistence activities mainly consist of 'cudu'
cultivation (shifting cultivation) and collection of minor forest produce. Jatapu in general are a little more acculturated as compared to the Savaras and long ago they began to adopt the settled cultivation wherever the plain land was available. Savaras are still tradition-bound and they attach high value to shifting cultivation.

Shifting cultivation is the main source of livelihood for Savaras due to lack of sufficient cultivable lands available within their reach.

When the monsoon is about to set in the month of June, the tribals prepare the land for cultivation.

When the monsoon sets in, the tribal cuts a fowl to the "Bhoomi Devatha" (Goddess of earth) and starts sowing the seeds. Mixed cropping is commonly practised. After preparing the soil, they mix 'korra' (Italian millet), 'Ganti' or Bajra (Pearl millet), 'Janumu' (jute) and 'moonna' (great millet) and broadcast them. In the month of August, red gram seeds are sown. Harvesting commences in the month of February.

They harvest 'korra' (Italian millet) in the last week of September and bajra or 'ganti' (pearl millet) in the month of November. After harvesting 'jonna' (great millet) they do not raise any crop in the podu field.

Harvesting starts with the cutting of fowl, and the celebration of harvesting festival is called 'Kotha' (new crop).
In October they celebrate 'kotha' festivals. Each village celebrates the festival separately. For this all the families contribute flour made out of 'ragi' (finger millet) at the rate of 'sola' (local measure) per family. All the families gather at a place near the paddy field to celebrate this festival. They also bring one fowl and one pig. In the corner of the paddy field, the fowl is sacrificed by the 'Janni' (Priest). Likewise the pig is sacrificed. The blood of the pig is mixed with rice and this rice along with water is sprinkled on all the fields. 'Janni' prepares a cake with the flour of ragi and distributes it to the assembled. The flesh of the pig is equally distributed among all the villagers.

No doubt, extensive shifting cultivation in the area by the tribal communities has caused enormous damage to the forest leading to ecological and environmental deterioration. But it does not mean that the shifting cultivators should be summarily evicted without providing them any alternate source of livelihood.

**Settled Cultivation**

Jatapus prepare small plots of flat lands on the hill slopes near water sources. This cultivation is known as terrace cultivation. Paddy is raised in this terrace cultivation. Nursery beds are raised in the month of May - June, transplantation takes place in the month of June - July and harvesting commences in the month of December - January.
For 'chudi' (finger millet) nursery is raised in the month of June - July and transplantation takes place during the last week of July or first week of August. Crop comes for harvesting either in October or November. 'Sama' (little millet) is broadcast in the month of October or November and harvested during December.

Collection of Minor Forest Products

Tribals of this area from the beginning have been collecting forest products both for sale and consumption. Most important items of minor forest produce collected by the tribals are tamarind and 'ippa' flower (mohwa flower). During February, the tribals are busy in the collection of tamarind while in March or early April the children, men and women collect 'ippa' flowers.

Division of Labour

Division of labour in these two communities is mainly based on sex and age. Since man is physically strong he attends to tough tasks. In tribal agriculture while man attends to the work of getting the land ready for cultivation, the woman takes the responsibility of sowing, weeding and harvesting. Like-wise men hunt animals while women collect forest products.

The tribal children within the age group of 5-8 years may not be able to make substantial independent economic contribution, but they do take care of the younger siblings, collection...
of minor forest produce and cattle grazing. Children above this age definitely make substantial contribution to the work within and outside the house.

Tribal Shandies

Shandies-the weekly market places play an important functional role in the socio-economic and cultural life of the local population. Men, women and children of different age groups regularly attend these shandies. To be more precise, the tribal markets not only fulfil certain needs of the buyers and sellers but act as agents of cultural change.

Three shandies are organised in the area. Seethampet shandy (on Mondays) covers about 80 villages, whereas Polla and Kusimi shandies (on Saturdays) cover about 15 to 30 villages.

Tribal shandies serve not only as economic institutions but as socio-cultural institutions. Every tribal, old and young, men and women look forward to attending these shandies. They dress themselves in colourful manner while attending shandies. These are occasions for meeting friends and relatives and exchanging information. Sometimes these places provide an opportunity for boys and girls to choose their life partners.

Religion

The religion of the tribes is composed of three elements namely, the worship of gods and spirits, the death rituals and the totemic ceremonies.
The Savaras have supreme faith in the spirits and deities which are believed to guide their destiny. They believe that all the ailments are caused by the evil spirits whereas good is done by benevolent ones.

The Savaras worship mainly two deities namely 'Sandhidemudu' and 'Jakaradevatha'.

Jatapu worship 'Jakara', and 'Durga', the village Goddesses. Jakara puja is their general mode of worship; pigs, fowls and goats are offered at the time of worship and invariably followed by drink and dance. There is no habit of worshiping the deities at home. The Jatapus join together on special occasions in the year to worship the community deities like 'Tivasaramma', 'Jakara Devatha', 'Durga' and 'Goddalamma'.

The tribal festivals fall into two categories, those which are exclusively concerned with tribal culture and other Hindu festivals. The later include 'Sankranti', 'Ugadi', 'Sivarathri', 'Dasara' and 'Deepavali'. They celebrate these Hindu festivals due to acculturation.

'Kotha' festivals are common among the tribals. After harvesting every crop, before they consume, the whole community celebrates a festival. From the list of 'kotha' festivals one can infer the cropping pattern and food habits. There are 'Dhanyam Kotha' (pertaining to paddy), 'Kandi Kotha' (pertaining to red gram), 'Kondem Kotha' (pertaining to variety of millet) and 'Ippa Kotha' (pertaining to mohwa flower).
Tribal Dance and Music

It is clear from the account of various rituals and festivals, music and dance have a very important role in the socio-cultural life of the tribals. Songs are sung in keeping with the varying seasons. While singing, the drum and other musical instruments are also played upon. They have their traditional musical instruments like 'Tudum' (drum), 'Dankri' and 'Thala' (cymbals), 'Pane' (flute) etc. During the festivals and rituals the tribals prepare special dishes and consume larger quantities of intoxicating drinks and dance. On the whole they spend a very gay time. All the members of the tribal community irrespective of age participate and enjoy.

Social Control

Social control among Savaras as well as Jatapus is maintained through an organised political system. Each Savara village is characterised by the existence of a village headman and a religious head. The 'Gamong' is the village head and the 'Buya' the religious head among the Savaras. The important duties performed by Gamong assisted by Buya are to organise economic activities, festivals and to look after the law and order in the village. In the Jatapu villages, the 'Naidu' is the village head man and he is assisted by 'Barika'.

After the introduction of Mandal system, the importance of traditional village functionaries of 'Gamong' and 'Naidu' has slightly decreased.