FOREST DWELLERS

Tribals, being Lambada, Naikpod, Yerukalas with very small groups of total district population of Nizamabad.

As per 2001 census the total population of the district is 23.55 lacs. Of these, tribal population is 1.65 Lacs. Lambada, Naikpod, Yerukalas are major tribal groups in the area. Of these, Lambada is found most abundant throughout the area. Besides these tribal groups, several other communities are residing as forest dwellers.

In Nizamabad district Lambada major of the tribal population consists of Naikpod and Yerukalas.

It was observed during various field tours that the Lambada tribe have a good knowledge of plant drugs and they use them extensively. Naikpod and Yerukalas are comparatively civilized and most of the time they prefer regular doctors. Golla, Kurma, Tenugu forest dwellers got the knowledge of plant medicine.

The language they speak is lambada speak ‘lambadi’, Naikpod speak telugu and Yerukalas speak ‘kurru’ and telugu. The main occupation of Tribals in these areas is agriculture which they do without using modern agricultural equipments. Previously the tribal cultivation was generally a ‘shifting cultivation’, but due to determination of the ownership of land, tribals have now confined their activities to limited land.

Besides this, many people from other cast reside in the forests are also use the forest resources for different daily needs.

Forest dwellers know a number of natural products, which they gather without cultivation. Fruits, nuts, tubers, roots, gum, leafy vegetables, etc., are eaten raw or cooked.
Tribals and forest dwellers and ‘Bestas & Gundlollu’ love fishing and often spend whole day for fishing. For poisoning fish they use their knowledge of wild plants, which stuns the fish momentarily and it floats on water surface and is captured.

Some tribal distil liquor for his own use in his house from flowers of *Madhuca longifolia* ver. *latifolia*

The following are tribe wise details:

**Lambadas:**

The Lambadas are a scheduled tribe inhabiting throughout Nizamabad. They are also known as “Sugalis” or “Banjara”.

The Lambadas are the largest tribe in Nizamabad. Lambadas live in exclusive settlements of their own called ‘Tandas’, usually away from the main village, tenaciously maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity.

The traditional dress of the men comprises of dhoti, upper garment and bright coloured turbans. The womenfolk wear ‘langa’ of coarse cotton prints, richly embroidered with several fold at the waists.


These phratries are further divided into a number of patrilineal kin groups called ‘Pada’ or ‘Jath’ (Clan) in their dialect. Bhukya Phratry consists of 27 clans, Vadthiya 52, Chowhan 6, Pamar 12 and Banoth 13.

Each phratry is an exogamous unit, and one has to marry outside his phratry. Clan is a patrilineal kin group. The girl adopts the name of the clan of her husband as soon as she marries.
Traditionally joint family was playing a dominant role in choosing the mates, determining the residence, controlling the property, watching the morals and managing the affairs of the youngsters. The joint family was the norm in the early days among Lambadas but now it is breaking down gradually into nuclear families. Marriage by negotiations is the only accepted way of performing marriages and sometimes marriage by service is also practised. The married women wear ivory bangles or imitation of them above their elbows, which are referred as ‘Balia’.

There are traditional musicians and bards to Lambadas called ‘Dappans’ depending mainly on the gift presented by Lambadas on various occasions and also work as manual labourers. There are three divisions among Dappans viz: 1. Bhat, 2. Dhandi, 3. Dhalia.

Bhats and Dhadis sing songs on family history by playing musical instruments called “Jange” and “Kinjri” during marriage ceremonies. Dhalia or Dapdiya plays dappu. There are traditional barbers to Lambadas called ‘Navi’. There is another endogamous sub-division called Sonar Lambadas who manufacture silver and gold ornaments. All these groups are endogamous sub-division of main Lambada Tribe. These groups also adopted the Clan organization of main Lambada community. But inter-group marriages are strictly prohibited. All these sub-divisions are considered inferior in social status to main group.

The Lambadas believe that the world is protected by a multitude of spirits viz. benign and malign. Hence the malignant spirits are periodically appeased through sacrifice and supplication. The Lambadas also worship and pay reverence to the benevolent Gods such as Vishnu, Rama, Venkateswara and Seva Bhaya. Meraima is believed to protect their females and children and preserve the fertility of their lands and females while Seva Bhaya and Seetala are regarded as the protectors of the cattle. They also celebrate the Hindu festivals like “Ugadi”, “Rakhi”, “Naga Panchami”, “Dasara”, “Deepavali”, “Sankranthi”, “Sivaratri” and “Holi”. The important traditional festivals are “Teej”, “Seetala” and “Tulja Bhavani” and they regularly celebrate them. The dead are cremated in separate cremation grounds.
Lambadas have their own traditional council for each Tanda for the disposal of disputes originating from economic and social causes. This council consists of one headman (Nayak), one advisor (Karbari) and one messenger (Dappan). All the offices of the council are hereditary. They call traditional council as ‘Naiker Ghar’.

Lambadas are expert cattle breeders and largely subsist by sale of milk and milk products. They settled on land and became good agriculturists. Lambadas are giving up their nomadic habits and permanently settling on land. The landless families are migrating to towns and cities and eking out their livelihood by driving auto rickshaws and by rickshaw pulling. They are also engaged as labourers on daily wages in construction work of buildings, roads etc.

**Yerukala**

Yerukala is scheduled tribe found some villages of Nizamabad district. They call themselves ‘Kurru’. They are called ‘Yerukula’ after their women’s traditional profession of fortune telling ((Eruka chepputa).

The Yerukala tribe has a dialect of its own which is called ‘Yerukula basha’ or ‘Kurru basha’ or ‘Kulavatha’. It is derived from Dravidian languages, mostly Telugu, Tamil and Kannada.

The Yerukala tribe is divided into a number of functional and endogamous sub-divisions and each such sub-division is named after the commodity, which they traded in and the occupation they adopted. The sub-divisions are “Dabba Yerukala” (those who make baskets from split bamboo), “Yeethapullala Yerukula” (those who make baskets from wild date leaves), “Kunchapuri Yerukala” (those who make weaver’s combs), “Parikamuggula Yerukala” (sooth sayers and beggars), “Karivepaku Yerukala” (curry leaf sellers), “Uppu Yerukala” (salt hawkers).

The type of family among Yerukala tribe is usually nuclear. Descent is patrilineal, residence is patrilocal and authority is patriarchal, Cross-cousin (menarikam) marriages are preferred. Marriages between the maternal uncle and niece are also permitted.
Monogamy is the common form of marriage. Traditionally, the married women used to wear a bead necklace as the symbol of marriage. But now ‘thali bottu’ or ‘mangal sutram’, the marriage pendent is being worn as a marriage symbol by most of the women. Divorce is permissible on grounds of adultery, barrenness and incompatibility between the spouses. Widows are permitted to re-marry.

Yerukalas worship Hindu benevolent Gods i.e. “Lord Venteswara”, “Narasimhaswamy”, “Narayanaswamy” and “Rama”. The Yerukalas are a spirit haunted and ghost-ridden people and attribute every disease or misfortune to the action of some malevolent spirits and ancestral ghost. The influence of evil spirit is averted by sacrificing goats, pigs, fowls etc. They worship benevolent Gods, which are common Gods in Hindu pantheon and appease malevolent deities such as “Ankamma”, “Kollapuramma”, “Sunkulamma”, “Poleramma” and “Ellamma”. The Yerukalas celebrate Hindu festivals such as “Sankranthi”, “Sivarathri”, “Sreeramanavami”, “Dasara”, “Ugadi” (Telugu New Year’s Day).

The Yerukala tribe has its own social control mechanism at each habitation to ensure proper observance of prescribed codes of conduct. This traditional council (Kula Panchayat) is headed by an elderly man whose office is traditionally hereditary. The traditional council (Kula Panchayat) try and decide the domestic disputes, disputes relating to theft, adultery, loans, property, and land. The characteristic feature of deciding guilt or innocence of an accused among Yerukalas was through trial by ordeal, which was in vogue till recent times such as 1. Dipping of fingers in boiling oil, 2. Picking up the burnt iron crowbar and, 3. Walking bare foot through the fire bed. Apart from solving disputes, the Kulapanchayat is also competent to maintain the solidarity of the community by checking the behavior of the individuals. If a person commit the breach of incest taboo he is excommunicated and denied all community rights. The defaulter is readmitted into the community after the purificatory ceremony is observed.

Yerukalas are non-vegetarians. Rice is their staple cereal. They eat pork.
The traditional occupation of Yerukalas includes basket-making, mat weaving, pig rearing, rope-making etc. The Yerukala women are specialized in sooth saying and fortune telling. Some of them also participate in economic activities like basket making, mat weaving etc, and make baskets with wild date leaves.

**Naikpods:**

Trib Naikpods are very less in number in Nizamabad most of them are civilized and are no more forest dwellers.

Laxmi devata, consort of Lord Krishna, is the chief deity to Naikpods. Naikpods generally put on the colourful masks of Laxmi Devara, Lord Krishna, Lord Siva, five brother Pandavas, Pandi Raju (Pig God), Pota Raju (dog god), Gorrupothu (Sheep god) and Singaboyudu and perform rituals

The occupation of Naikpods includes Agriculture, Cattle breeders, Toddy (Woodsap) cellers & Most of them work as field laboures.