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ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE YANADIS IN NELLORE DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH



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ABSTRACT:

Yanadi's are one of the major scheduled tribe in Andhra Pradesh. Thurston (1909) noted that the people were natives of Sriharikota island and suggested that they derived their name from the Sanskrit word "Anadi" denoting those whose origin is unknown. Now they are predominantly spread over the districts of Nellore, Chittoor, Kadapa and Prakasam and are concentrated in the Nellore district. Yanadi's live in symbiosis with non-tribals. They live very close to the forest. Their population according to 1991 census reports is 3,95,739 in Andhra Pradesh. The total literacy rate among Yanadi is 15.78. Their mother tongue is Telugu.

KEYWORDS: Yanadi, island, population, predominantly, occupation, natives, habits..

CLASSIFICATION OF YANADIS

Yanadi's are broadly divided into 4 endogamous groups on the basis of occupations and dietary habits. The sub divisions are:

- * Manchi Yanadi's (or) Reddi Yanadi (cultivators & servants)
- * Adivi Yanadi's (those living in forest)
- * Paki Yanadi's (scavengers) and
- * Challa Yanadi's (those who collect left out food from leaf plates in the dustbins).

The Challa Yanadi's and Paki Yanadi's are considered to be unclear and low among Yanadi's. Each division of the Yanadi is further divided into a number of patrilineal exogamous groups representing their lineage names (intiperlu). Marriage by negotiations, by mutual love and elopement are usual modes of acquiring mates. The re-marriage of divorces, widowers is permitted. The nuclear type of family is more predominant. They propitiate some village deities like Poleramma, Chenchamma, Mahalakshamma, Kamakshamma, Chengalamma etc. In addition to these, they worship Hindu gods and goddesses like Venkateswara, Vinayaka, Sri Rama, Penchalaswami. They elaborate hindu festivals such as Sankranthi, Ugadi, Dasara, Deepavali, Shivaratri, and Penchalaswami godugu festivals...etc. and worship the ir deities. Each Yanadi habitat invariably consists of traditional village council (kula panchayat) for setting the disputes crop up among the Yanadi's due to adultery, theft, land disputes etc.

The hold of traditional council is still stronger. Generally, the culprits are admonished by way of imposing simple fines followed by feast. Yanadi's are non-vegetarians and eat the meat of rabbit, fowl, goat, rats & rodents, goat, sheep, fish etc. but abstain from eating beef. Yanadi's mainly subsist on agricultural labour. They are traditionally inland fisherman and are also engaged as watchmen to the fields and orchards of farmers. Collection

of firewood, rickshaw pulling, rodents catching etc., constitutes secondary occupation of the yanadis.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE YANADI

The social scientists suggested that the Yanadis were live in Sriharikota island. The recorded history of Sriharikota island dates back to the period of Tamil sangam literature which is generally attributed to the sixth or seventh century commencing from 300 B.C. at that time it was called Palaverkada or Vadugarmunai. Tradition has it that an aboriginal tribe called yanadi inherited the forests of this island. From these tribesmen, the island appears to have passed into the hands of chola kings in the 11th century and it was under the sovereignty of the chola kings till 1310 when they lost it to the Mohammedan emperors from whom it passes on to the Vijayanagar dynasty and finally through the Mohammedan rulers of Golconda to the Nawab of Carnatic who rented it to the early Zamindars of Venkatagiri. On the 31st July 1801, Azeedmoon Dowlab, the Nawab of Carnatic, ceded the island to the British. The island was then added to Chingleput District and formed a separate revenue division, of the district and the whole island was assigned as a Zamindari. In the year 1835, in an auction, the British purchased it. The island was called a Muttah and its administrative head was a Peishkar. The Peishkar stayed at a village called Beripeta. In 1863, the island along with the other four islands was transferred to Nellore district, and was abolished and in his place a Revenue Inspector was posted. The 49 villages were recognized into 11 revenue villages. This revenue administration continued from 1863 till 1970. In 1970 it was formally handed over to the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). The islanders were a mixed population consisting of several Hindu castes, a single Muslim group and two tribal groups. Among the Hindu castes, the Reddy, the Mala and the Madiga were found invariably in most of the villages. The Brahmin the Barisetti, the Kamma, the Baliija, the Karnam, the Golla, the Eramalla, the Kamsali (blacksmith), the Kummari (Goblet), the Mangali (barber) and the Rajaka (washermen) were found in varying numbers in a few villages. The lone group of Muslims was known as Labbi. The Tribal stratum included the Yerukala and the Yanadi.

ORIGIN OF YANADI

Various views have been expressed by various people about the origin of the Yanadi. Thurston (1909) says that "it is the subject of etymological speculations". According to one derivation the word, Yanadi is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word "Anadi" (A= not: adi=beginning) which means 'without a beginning.



Photo no1: The researcher taking photos of yanadi's colony.

It indicates that the tribe is aboriginal (Ranga Rao 1901). Another derivation is based on the Sanskrit word "Anadi" (grammatically the word is a compound of naadi; na=privative, adi= beginning) and it means "those whose beginning is not traceable. It reveals that the tribe is an indigenous group (Ranga Rao 1901). Some derive the term yanadi or Enadi from 'Anatha' or 'Anathalu' which mean helpless, 'orphan', destitute' or unprotected. This seems to be the most plausible interpretation given to the word yanadi, which is supported by mythological and historically (Thurston 1909). The existence of cultural similarities between the Yanadi and Chenchu led to

the inference that both the tribes were originally one and the same but later the Chenchu got down the hill and became a Yanadi (Ragavaiah 1962). It is also argued that the original name of these people might have been the Chenchu by which name also they are still known taken (Raghavaiah 1962). The Yanadis are distributed both in coastal and plateau regions of the state. The principle habitat of Yanadi lives between river Ponneri in the extreme south of Andhra Pradesh and river Godavari in the north of the Andhra Pradesh its western boundary is the Eastern Ghats and eastern boundary of Bay of Bengal.

The Yanadi and the immigrant groups

The Yanadi formed the original inhabitants of the island. The folk traditions also support that the yanadi were the autochthones of the island. Indeed, the yanadi were an area very ancient and one of the largest tribes of South India. All other groups were migrants into the island. The yanadi islanders were originally known as Adivi Yanadi or the yanadi of wilderness. They were described as the "wild race", "wild tribe", and "rude class of people" "who" were in a state of complete barbarism" prior to the establishment of British administration. The Yanadi islanders were of the same stock as their counterparts on the mainland. "short" described the Yanadi as the tribals having broad and more or less prominent cheek bones. Pointed chin, scanty moustache and no whiskers, and a poor straggling beard over the forepart of their chins. They were pretty tall and lanky in appearance. Their muscles were soft and flabby. The men were generally dark-colored, but the complexion of their women varied from dark color to that of a brown bamboo.

Traditional culture of the yanadis

Prior to the establishment of British administration, the yanadis were described as 'a rude class of people' (Shortt 1864) who were in a 'state of barbarism' (Stokes 1867). The British officials described the yanadis as "wild" and a peculiar tribe or race.



Photo no 2: The researcher with yanadi young boy.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The yanadis are characterized by the dark skin color among the males, while the skin color varies from dark to brown among the female. They are predominantly long headed with a scanty hair, pointed chin, no whiskers and scanty scraggy beard over the front part of their chin.

DRESS PATTERN

Traditional dress of the yanadi was the scantiest. The men had seldom any thing but a long strip of cloth called Gochipatha, one end of which is fixed to cover the male organ in front and the other end drawn behind the legs and fastened to the loin string at the back. The women wore the merest rag of a cloth. The men tied their hair

in a knot, usually on the top of the head, the women had their hair flying loose (Strokes 1867). Yanadi men some times wore nose rings and women wore bangles and ear rings.

The women endeavored to imitate the cast women in their vicinity by smearing saffron on their persons and over a forehead, putting a spot (Bottu) of red precipitate between the eye brows (Shortt 1864, Strokes 1867).

ECONOMY OF YANADIS

About four hundred years ago the Yanadi had the best environment, surrounded by thick jungles, sparsely populated peasant villages and mostly cultivated land (Gazeter of Nellore district 1938). This environment remained undisturbed for two and half centuries. The Yanadi enjoyed his traditional way of life. He used to live on forest produce by honey collection, fishing, hunting fowl and collecting roots and fruits. In those days they were not properly clad. They were far from the civilized way life. At that time they were very primitive.

They used primitive implements. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Yanadis continued to be primitive. The animistic nature of their religion, the production of fire by friction the primitive hunting and fishing stage in which a large number remain, the almost raw animal food which they eat, after merely scorching or heating the flesh of the game they kill, indicate that the yanadi have not emerged from a primitive stage of culture (Thurston, 1909). The technology used in exploiting the environment was characteristically simple and was almost entirely dependent upon human energy plus fire. The yanadi had no definite occupation of their own when they settled in the plains. The caste system bolted the against them. Coming from the tropical forests where they sub sited on fruits, roots etc.... which they could get without much exertion. The yanadis found themselves in a peculiar environment, where there was no scope for primate occupations and bread could not be earned without manual labour. They came across people with similar cultural status, and adopted thieving as a profession. Though ostensibly they pretended to fellow some other occupation. Most of the yanadis worked as domestic servants; some of them became watchers of agricultural crops and horticultural gardens. And a few turned as scavengers, yanadi women worked as household maid servants all these afforded them lost of opportunities for obtaining information which was use for the commission of heft. Under the provisions of the preventive sections of the Indian penal code, it was thought that registration of the yanadis as donga yanadis are thieving yanadis will help the tribe to gradually settle down to honest living.

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

The traditional occupation of the yanadi consisted of food gathering, hunting and fishing. Apart from the collection of forest produce the majority of the yanadi collected roots, tubers, fruits, leaves, vegetables from the forest for their own consumption. The yanadis had great knowledge of the forest flora of the use of the various trees and scrubs which yield good fire wood.

COLLECTION OF FOREST PRODUCE

The following list of minor forest products chiefly collected by Government yanadis is given in Nellore district gazette:

- + Kanuga (*Pongamia glabra*)
- + Vepa (*Azardirecta indica*) (Neem)
- + Musti (*Strychnos nuxvomica*)
- + Tangedu (*Cassia auriculata*)
- + Chinta (*Tamarindus indica*)
- + Neredu (*Enginea jombonala*) Nageti gaddalu (*Gloriosa superba*)
- + Manga Chekka
- + Kunkudu kayalu (Soap nuts)
- + Maredu (*Decalepis hamiltonii*) (Swallow roots)
- + Sugandha pala (*Hemidesimus indicus*)
- + Usiri (*Emblica officinalis*)

Among the fruits and roots the yanadis ate, yalla gaddalu (stamen tuber) and palmyra (borassus flabellofer) figured prominently. The former plant produces a bundle of tubers. The yanadi dig the ground with a thunga (a kind of axe having a rectangular blade fixed to a 20 to 30 cms long wooden shaft) to extract the roots. The small branches and roots of the plant were cut with a vamkathi (a curved thick iron metallic bade fixed to a 20 to 30 cms handle). These tubers were winter and early summer, males, females and older children used to go to the forest in the morning with a basket, knife, digging stick, vamkathi and return to their huts in the evening with basketful of tubers. The forest produce collected by these people included kunkudukayalu, shikakay (shop nuts), karakkayalu (gall nuts), pariga kayalu (ziziplus maritiana), bicki, regu (zizipus zuzupa) nerudu (elaeodendrum glaucum). Alli(memecylon umbellatam), Eetha (phoenix sylvestrus), beera (hygonia mytax), donda (cocinia indica). Generally women and children collected these fruits on their way home work or when they went to collect firewood.

HONEY COLLECTION

Honey collection is one of the main sources for Yanadi economy. They were experts in honey collection. They collected four types of honey, thorra thene (furrow honey) musari thene (flocking honey), pera thene and putta thene. Thora thene is said to be sweetest of all the varieties. To collect the honey, smoke was produced with green leaves and was brought to the honey comb. The bees flew away due to the smoke, leaving the comb. The honey was taken out of the combs which were deposited in tree holes or hollow cavities on the gonji terr (gly casmis manritiana) were chewed and blown into the furrow of the tree where honey bees flocked. Due to the smell of the leaves, the bees flew away. When bees left the comb that was collected. Honey was also obtained from the bee hives in the anthills (puttathene). The honey combs deposited in the rock, crevices and gorges (perathene) were collected with the help of a long ladder (chitti) and a long strong rope and a basket (butta) and an earthen pot (kunda). The skill of the Yanadi in collecting the honey was described in the following terms. The Yanadi gathers honey from the bee-hives on hill tops and cliffs, 100 to 200 feet high precipitous and all most inaccessible and perilous to reach. The man climbs down with the help of a plaited rope of plant bamboo fastened above to a peg driven firmly into a tree or other hard substance and takes with him a basket and stick. He drives away the bees at the first swing by burning grass or brushwood beneath the hives. The next swing takes him closer to the hive which he pokes with the stick. He receives the honey comb in the basket and the honey flows out of it into a vessel are full he shakes the rope and is drawn up by the person in charge of it, who is almost always his wife's brother, so that there may be no foul play. He thus collects a considerable quantity of honey and wax, for which he receives only a subsistence wage from the contractor who makes a big profit for himself (Thurston, 1909).

FISHING

Fishing is the major economic activity of yanadis. The catch of fish varies depending on the climatic conditions. They had extensive knowledge of different types of fish of which the important were Valuga cheap, Murrel or Korremenu (doke), Malugu(eel), Bommaday (aural) and some other varieties of fish, compared to honey collection and hunting, fishing required more tools and a high degree of skill. Traditionally, the yanadis fished at night by torch light. About the fishing activity of the yanadis, Short, (1864) observes: The fish at night by torch light. It is difficult to ascertain correctly whether that habit originated with the yanadis or other natives of fishermen, boatmen and other lower castes resort to the same means. The yanadis take dry palmyra leaves and roll them tightly together with twigs of other trees; this is lightly bound with green fibres from various fibre-yielding plants in the jungles. This is lighted soon after dark and the torch bearer starts for the back water with three companions, each of whom was a conical basket about three feet in height, the base having a diameter of from twenty four to thirty inches, at the apex there is a small opening to admit of the introduction of hand. These baskets are made of bamboo slips tied together and having interstices like a bird cage which will scarcely admit the introduction of the little finger; each man has a fish bag of plaited palmyra leaves tied to the string around the waist. The torch bearer wades in water upto his knees or to his waist, one of the other walks on either sides, and the third behind, keeping close to the torch holders heels. The fish are attracted by the glare of the light, and

when they approach to torch holder, the man at his side, or the one behind covers them up with his basket which the presses through the water on to the bottom with one end, while he places in the bag at his side. They frequently meet with much success. They consume the fish themselves for the most part, but sometimes barter it for other articles in the surrounding villages (Short, 1864).

FISHING IMPLEMENTS

The implements used for fishing are Ootha, Mandam and Galem (angler), Kodam (basket trap), Juvva (tube trap), Visuruvala (cast net) and Chepala butta (fish basket).

OOTHA

It is prepared by the 90 centimeter length bundle of dried sticks of nerudu and gongi (glycosmis manritiana) trees. These are tied parallel to each other into a tumble shape with the help of a creeper (nulla theega). To give shape and strength. One big cane frame circularly bent is fixed inside the thin sticks at the middle and a small circular cane frame through which a hand can be inserted at the narrow and tied with a cane reed to the thin sticks. Mandam is like javeline with a "U" shaped iron piece fixed to the thicker end of a long pole. The metal has two bar inside the "U" shape.

GALEM

It is prepared by a stick of the two meters in length thick at one end and very thin at its tip to which a strong thin nylon thread is tied the other end of it is entangled with hook. To this hook they cling earthworms to attract the fish. Galem is used for deep water fishing. The kodams are nothing but traps made of coconut leaf midvains. The fish moving along with water enter into this trap and remain there. This is applied usually at the flowing water. Castnet (visuru vala) is used when there is much water. The net is having small holes and this is laid at the corners of the water at some depth. The net submerge in the water ranging from 3 feet to 7 feet. In the direction opposite to the net laid they made instigations in the water. So that the fish move towards the net and caught in the holes of it. This method of fishing comes under the major means of fishing. In Knee deep water Yanadi carefully watch the movements of the fish and when the fish comes close. Ootha is immediately put over the fish and it is pressed against the ground. When the fish is trapped in the ootha, it is removed from the ootha from the top.

Mandam is used for catching big fish. Yanadi quietly watch the fish lying in the mud, and the mandam is pierced with a strong stroke into the fish and they slowly remove the fish with the other hand from Mandam. Hunting was another food producing activity of yanadis. The yanadis organized both communal and individual hunting. Hunting began with the summer and ended with the rainy season. The hunting equipment consisted of sikkam vala (rabit net), bow, arrow, vuchchu (rat trap) and bird traps. The yanadis were good shikaris (huntsmen) and devoid of fear in the jungle. They held licences under the Arms Act, and being good shots were great at logging tigers, leopards, porcupines and other big and small game (Thurston, 1909). Both elders and youngsters went to the forest. They hunted sambar deer, rabbits, wild goat, Duppulu, Adavikollu, bear, squirrels, pigs, and porcupines with the help of dogs. They traced the hideout of the animal after identifying its footprints and disturbed the animal. When the animal ran to escape, the dogs chased it. As soon as the dog caught the animal, the Yanadi relieved the animal from the dog. Rabbit was the most commonly hunted animal. Generally rabbit hunting was carried out collectively. Six or seven people followed the rabbits in a circular line and managed to drive them into nets. They also trapped rats and bandicoots and ate them.

The Yanadi Hut (Gudise)

The technology used in constructing the dwelling of the yanadis coordinated with the natural conditions. The raw materials for house construction were obtained locally. The hut (gudise), oval in shape and circular at the base, without ventilation, was an all purpose enclosure. The typical hut of the Yanadi and a stooping roof that could arrest the entry of winds and mosquitoes.



Photo no 3: The researcher with yanadi old age man.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The family was an independent economic unit, it provided food, shelter and clothing for its members. Each family had its own shelter namely the conical hut (gudise) which was crudely built with twigs and fibre, seven feet high at the greatest, with a small entrance through which men would almost creep. The hut afforded protection from the sun and the rain, but the family members cooked, ate and slept outside the hut (Ranga Rao, 1901; Subba Rao, 1931).

The family size was large. Each family had a large number of children, because the tribe was prolific. The child bearing age of the woman ranged from sixteen to forty five years and the highest number of children produced by an individual was nine (Ranga Rao, 1901). Father was the head of the family. All authority was vested in him. Ancestry was traced through him only. All the members according to age and sex participated in the procurement and preparation of food materials. The interpersonal relations within the family were kept harmonious. A wife lived most of her time in her husband's house because, to a yanadi the company of his wife was indispensable. Generally the siblings were affectionate and kind to one another. The relations between them and their maternal uncle were cordial. The yanadi organized themselves into isolated migratory families to solve the problems of subsistence and interpersonal and interfamilial relations. The ability of yanadis to experience the pleasure of social interaction was demonstrated by their coordination in hunting, occasional cooperation in fishing, generalized reciprocity, recreational pattern when the families were in proximity, life cycle rituals and assistance from relatives and shamans. Traditionally, they had no valuable family property. They had meager material possessions.

A mat, a pot, and an iron axe formed their entire property (Subba Rao, 1931). The yanadi has nothing to call his own. His ever shifting residence for want of a permanent habitation was dictated by his love for hearth and home. His little hut is seldom provided with any door. Except half-a-dozen broken or half broken pots which are his utensils, a palm-leaf mat, a palmyrah-leaf, fish basket, a middle sized stick with a sharpened edge, a thin bamboo fishing rod, there will be nothing else in our yanadis hut which can be called property (Raghavaiah, 1944). Wife and husband had exclusive rights over their properties. Father's property was equally shared by all his children. Any disputes with regard to the inheritance of property were settled by the maternal uncle. Maturity generally precedes marriage. Seduction and elopement were common occurrences, and divorce easily obtained. Adultery was no serious offence; widows may live in concubinage; and pregnancy before marriage was not a crime, (Thurston,). Few rites were performed at the time of naming a child. Puberty rites for girls were absent.

POLITICAL LIFE OF THE YANADI

Earlier writings reveal that they had no central authority or organization. Every yanadi settlement had a yanadi headman (pedda yanadi). The head man was elected on the advice of the elders of the settlement. He exercised general social control over the group. He gave his verdict when there was a case of adultery, quarrel, crime or some other dispute. Short (1864) describes the yanadi headman in the following words: The present headman appeared the most intelligent of all the yanadis, not from any inherent qualifications but from constant intercourse with the native officials of the surrounding villages, his wits and become sharpened and he was an intelligent and active as the other natives. He lived in well built thatched house with four wives. The tribal jurisprudence was based on primitive ethics. There were complex rules and regulations governing the intra-tribal and intercommunity relations. With regard to intra-tribal relations, the law prescribed that a Manchi Yanadi should not eat any cooked food prepared or touched by Chall Yanadi because they were considered as inferior to them.

YANADI'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

Traditionally the yanadis were described as "animists" (Bosewell, 1873). At the beginning of the present century they were called 'animists', "Zootheists" and "Hindu in Religion" (Ranga Rao, 1901). Chenchudevudu seems to be the traditional God of the yanadis. Chenchu was the household god as well as the tribal God. They worshipped along with Chenchu, the snake God and certain trees among which the Aruka and the Margosa stands prominent. The places of worship were not temple, but homes called Devara Indlu (houses of the Gods). The deities were represented by "idols at Sreeharikota island (a wooden idol); bricks and stones; pots of water with Margosa leaves, images of Gods drawn on the walls of their houses; or more handfuls of clay squeezed into shape, and placed on a small platform erected under an aruka tree", and in this context the main point was "the simplicity of the faith, not the grandeur of the representative" (Ranga Rao 1901). The yanadi believed in Omens. When they set out for crime, the sight of a snake or a cat was deemed as evil omen (Subba Rao, 1931). The influence of Christianity on the yanadi was insignificant. During the last century, the Christian Church tried its best to convert the yanadi but with the least success (Ranga Rao, 1901).

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