

Gollakurumas: Nomadic Lifestyle and Linguistic Variation

(A Case of Telangana State)

Dr. Bharathi

Assistant Professor

Department of Telugu,

**Telangana Social Welfare Residential Degree College for Women's
(Palamuru University)**

Email: bharathi@gmail.com

IUC Associate – November 2022

Introduction:

India is a conglomeration of ethnicities, languages, occupations, castes and so on, *Gollakuruma* is one of the castes engages in sheep and goat rearing and is to be considered numerically dominated sub-castes among the Telugu speaking *Yadavs*. Their population constitutes around 15 percentage in Telangana State. The population around 3500000. Though the community is numerically dominated, still it is backward socio-economically and politically as well, and confined to their traditional way of living and life world. The sheep and goat rearing is the occupation widely practiced by this particular community. As a result, they are a little bit soaway from the 'so called' culture of mainstream society. The prevailing socio- economic conditions along with certain existing conditions compel them not to enroll in schools. Their nomadic life style, usage of indigenous ways of medicine, ancient forms of language and dialect prevalent signs of the community. However, Gollakurumas has been a leading traditional and vernacular community life.

The family of Gollakurumas are patriarchal but female used to give more priority and status to run the family as male or head of household always with flock of sheep which mostly roam in forest or around grazing lands, thereby, men have less time to interact with family and neighbour. Consequently, women tackle all the domestic and political activities, thus, women of this community is different comparing with other communities. Sometimes, women also gage the flock and mostly involve in weaving *Gongadi*(woolen blanket) at home. They also know how to treat the lambs when they separate from the flock of adult sheep.

Prime Deities

Mallanna and Beerappa are considered as the prime deities and huge folklore surrounded them in the forms of ballads, especially Oggu Katha – a unique and traditional form of art performance belongs to Gollakurumas. Wherein the grazing modes sheep, struggles of shepherds, the ways of migration in the quest of fodder, the glories of Chieftains, important personalities and places, moreover, the culture of Gollakurumas will commonly be depicted by a team of artists constitutes 5-6 members. Oggu(Damar), Flute, Dolu(Drum) and Talas are prime musical instruments in the performance. In fact, no other Sudra community has rich folklore and history as Gollakuruma has. Similarly, their cattle rearing occupation also forced them to expose and learn the indigenous way of treatment to heal their sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes etc, thus, they are well-known as veterinary doctors in villages. In fact, they observe all kinds of leaves and herbs in the forest when they go into forest and conduct trial and error base experiments with the help of goats and eventually identification of useful herbs and leaves takes place, then, involve in further preparations to intake or apply the herbal medicines. However, their indigenous wisdom of herbs is imperative and effective in curing so that most of the village folk still approach them to cure their livestock. Nomadic life style exposed them to different geographical and climate settings, in the course of migration, they meet different people, cultures and languages so that Gollakurumas have being been recognized uniquely and ascribed themselves a peculiar identity in the society. In this context, the present paper is intended to focus on the language used by the Gollakuruma community in order to know the origin and antiquity of words, pronunciation and vernacular dialect of their everyday life.

Definations by Different Authors

Kuruma- the shepherd, goat herd and blanket-weaver caste of Telangana, corresponding to the kuruba of the karnatic and the kurumba of Tamil country. These tribes probably belonged to the same original stock, for they closely resemble one another in their features and complexion and in some of their customs and usages. The names Kurumba' and Kuruba' seem to be variats of the Tamil Kurumba, the first being formed by the dropping of the letter 'b' and the second by the dropping of the 'm' All the names are said to be derived from the word kuri" meaning a sheep". (Thurston, Edger. Castes and tribes og Southern India 1903.P.362).

The kurubas one of the most important elements in the early population of south india. They appear as kurubas in kanarise and correspond to the dhangars of the marathas and of the northern india”

Kurumas are called by different names in different regions of India

Telangana : kruma, kuruva, kuruba

Andhrapradesh : kuruva, kuruba, kurumba,

Assam : kumaro, kumara, sacharano rudrapalo gamda

Arunachal pradesh : kurmi

Bihar : pal, beriyar gaderi

Gujarath : gadaliya, gadaluhariya, dhangar, kumbar(biyaar, bharavada

Hariyana : gadariya, kummi kumar(prajapati)

Himachal pradesh : gadariya, gaddi, kurmi, kumar(prajapati)

Jammu kashmir : gaddi, kumars(prajapati)

Karnataka : kuramban, kuruba, kurava, halumata, dhangar, bharavada, gurava, gunda, gonda, madhyagonda, rajagonda, godari, kurmi, kurab, kurambar,

Kerala : rajagomda, godari, hegde, gonda, madhyagonda.

Madhyapradesh : dhangar, bagla, gadri, gadariya, ghath gar, hatkar, kurumar, path, gondikumar,

Maharastra: dhangar-dhangad, kuruba, kurubar, gadariya

Meghalaya : kurumar,

Orissa : kuruvan, kuruman, kurumba, gondi, kumira, madhyagonda, rajanda

Panjab: gadderiya, gadariya, kurmi, kumar-ghavar,

Rajasthan : gadariya, chandaliya, gavala, shoshi(goshi), kabiriya, gonda, kumaro

Tamilanadu : kurumba(kekkeada), gonda, hegde, kurumbavaras, kuruvan.

Tripura : gonda, kurmi, kurariyar,

Uttarapradesh : gaddi, gadariya, pal, kurmi.

Pacchima bengal : gaddi, gonda, gudiri

Chandigadh : gadariya, gaddi, kurmi

Gova : dhangar, kurumba, kuruba, kurubar, kuruva.

Dynasties of kuruma

1. Shatavahanulu
2. Vijayanagara palakulu

Breeds in sheep:

There are about 40 breeds of sheep in our country, 20 breeds of goats, Telugu states also have many types of breeds of sheep and goats.

1. Nelluri
2. Dakkani
3. Ballari
4. Barbari
5. Jamunapuri
6. Beital
7. Surti
8. Usmanbadhi
9. Black bengal
10. Jakrana
11. Malbari

Diseases of sheep:

Chitukurogam:

Ammatalli:

Purrurogam:

Galikutuvyadhi:

Neeli nalukavyadhi:

Mutivapurogam:

Sorupu rogam:

Kalipundlavyadhi,

Dommarogam:

Gotuvapu:

Idusakapoyerogam

Sarrarogam:

Daggu:

Gajji:

Making Gongadi and Derivation of Words:

Gongadi is dark coloured blanket is handwoven out of the yarn obtained from the rare Deccani breed of sheep, the only pure black wool breed of sheep. An all-seasonal fabric, this woolen blanket is an integral part of the cultural heritage of shepherds from the Telengana State. With increasing scarcity of Deccani sheep wool, and the advent of inexpensive, mass-produced synthetic blankets, the craft of Gongadi weaving is fast declining. However, the survival of this craft making of Gongadi needs rare materials, high skill and long time. While producing Gongadi, Gollakurumas use the following words;

1. *Doonuga* – an instrument used in weaving Gongadi
2. *Doonuga Nootle Bargu*– an instrument used in weaving Gongadi
3. *Palka* – a smoothen wood rubber
4. *Pandla Katte* – a stick having teeth to clear wool from dust, thrones etc
5. *Logola* – a stick used to soften the wool
6. *Nulugola* – a stick also used soften the wool
7. *Kadimyaku* – a stick works as supporting at the end of weaving machine
8. *Dothikatte* – a stick folds the completed or weaved gongadi on weaving machine
9. *Pyakatte* – a thin stick used for collection of wool threads
10. *Gottam* – a pipe shaped instrument used for sending wool treads
11. *Shilakarlu* - Jute threads used for fitting weaving machine

12. *Maggam Tadu* – Rob used to tie or fit the weaving machine
13. *Dhane* – An instrument used for separation of wool threads
14. *Kuncha* – A sharp wood instrument used for tightening wool threads
15. *Acchukola* – an wooden tool used to imprint the Gongadi
16. *Panna Gottam* – A cylindrical shaped instrument
17. *Gutam*– an instrument used to press the wool
18. *Peeta* – wooden stool
19. *Maggam* - Weaving Machine
20. *Nulu pidusalu* – Wool threads shaped like a ball
21. *Acchu posudu* - making duplicate by the image of original
22. *Pogu lerudu* – making wool rolls
23. *Ekuta* – Spinning of wool
24. *Teddu* – a wooden instrument used like a bigger spun while preparing paste
25. *Odakadam* – wool weaving
26. *Saldadupulu* – A process wherein water is applied
27. *Palkathadi* – A process wherein oil is applied

More surprisingly, the dictionary of Telugu language does not include the above terms, thus, it is inferred that the language which is included in so called dictionaries is merely Brahmanical and it is purely unproductive language. In case of downtrodden terminology and language, they use productive language and treated as inferior to the elite language.

The wool for the preparation of Gongadi usually collected from the sheep and this happens twice in a year. This is called *Gorre tupuda*, the wool on sheep's body. If collection or cutting of wool takes place in summer (generally after Ugadi festival) is called 'Ayeti Kattirimpu', the term *ayeti* is generally used for starting of rainy season. The wool collection happens in winter is called as 'Maagi Kattiripu', here *maagi* denotes as winter. The best wool can be obtained from youthful sheep is known as '*koduma*'. The scissor is also unique both in terms of structure and holding and it is denoted by 'unni kattera', one can see it only in the houses of Gollakurumas.

Once collection of wool from sheep is finished, they clean the wool from thrones, dust and other substances. For which, they use *ekili* – the cleaning tool or machine which is made by themselves only. Later, the wool shifted into *ekili* means keep in separate bundles. When wool shifted into *ekili* rolls, it is ready for spinning, this process is known as '*vadakadam*'.

For which, they use *kuduru* – supporting tool for spinning machine. The structure of this machine is different for male and female. The spined wool transformed into *unni pogu* - wool thread, this process is named as *padugu*, it is nothing but rolling of wool treats to a separate cylindrical shape roll. Mostly, 9 or 11 rolls are prepared to make a single piece of Gongadi.

Subsequently, these *padugu* rolls shifted into *maggam*, the instrument to weave the Gongadi where they apply *sarambali*, the paste prepared with seeds of tamarind fruits to avoid mixing of *padugu* rolls and a weaver also uses *donalu*, a separated instrument which also avoids mixing of wool threads while weaving. *Kunche* is another instrument which softens the wool during weaving. Weavers dig a small pit for comfortable setting to run the weaving machine. To finish one product, a weaver can take week days' time and moreover, weaving is done by only men and women are to assist them only but their role is important in spinning the wool.

Preparation of *Sarambali*:

As we know that *sarambali* is a paste prepared from the seeds of tamarind trees. After collection of tamarind seeds, they broke into pieces and then, keep in the water. This is done during morning hours only. In the evening, they wash the broken seeds and make as paste by rubbing. While rubbing, *chittepu rallu*, one sort of stones mixed with broken tamarind seeds. This paste is poured into boiled water for about one hour so that the paste transforms into gum. This gum is applied to newly weaved Gongadi for shining and softening. The proportion of *chittepu rallu* in making the paste leads more bright and vibrant Gongadi.

Types of Gongadi:

1. Surakama Gongadi – the blanket which provides sense of pleasure
2. Pattela Gongadi – the blanket consists of square pattern white wool marks
3. Tella Gongadi - the blanket made of white wool
4. Kasra/ Pulla Gongadi – the blanket with lime flavor smell
5. Nalla Gongadi – the blanket made of full of black wool
6. Panches Kandela Gongadi – the blanket made of 15 *padugulu*(15 rolls)
7. Uduta Sarala Gongadi – the blanket consists of patterns like squirrel

Similarly, they also give different names for sheep based on their shape, colour, moles on wool and sharpness.

1. Bolli gorre – sheep with white moles to legs
2. Sukka gorre - Sheep with a mole on forehead
3. Ragi gorre – sheep in thick brown colour wool
4. Gandrakayla Gorre / Padala Gorre – Sheep with two cylindrical shapes at throat
5. Barigi / pargi Gorre – Sheep with mix of red and black colours
6. Bingi Gorre – Sheep with small ears
7. Batta Gorre / Jala Gorre – Sheep with full of white patches
8. Chevula Gorre – Sheep with big ears
9. Erra Gorre – Sheep in red colour
10. Kasra Gorre – Sheep in thick red colour

In everyday life, Gollakurumas use unique words which are not find in Telugu or in any other Deccan languages and those are evolved historically onslaught of production of sheep and goat.

1. Chitpa Goddali – A small and sharp axe used to cut the branches of trees
2. Vala – Net used for the Vala Koyyalu – the supporting stand like sticks used for net construction
 1. Oggili – finishing tie-up thread of vala
 2. Jalla Gampa/katte podhi – A basket made of *vavili* or *vudugu* sticks to keep lambs
 3. Kula Kaikam – Shepherding as caste occupation
 4. Batthem – Remuneration in form of food is offered by landlords to shepherds
 5. Sickkem – food carrying net
 6. Gorla Doddi – place where flock of sheep kept for night
 7. Gorre Nucchu – Sheep Shit
 8. Gorre Gothike – Wet sheep shit
 9. Konupulu – Iron rods used to make fire scars on sheep's body in medication
 10. Doddu Karra – Long stick used by shepherds while grazing sheep
 11. Dupaku Dutta – A earthen bowl used for carry foods
 12. Komma Katthi/kaigatthi– A long stick consists of sickle at end to cut long distanced leaves
 13. Keelu Katti – A sophisticated knife used to cut hoof in order to remove thorns
 14. Simmeta – A player like instrument used to pick the thorns from sheep legs
 15. Koka – A cloth-piece used to prevent lambs from sucking milks from mother sheep

16. Jakamuka Rayee – fire ignited stone
17. Chanda Kavali – Guarding sheep flock during night protection of flock of sheep
18. Vala koyyalu:
19. Bandaaru:
20. Kurapogulu”
21. Doolu
22. Doolukatte/doolu pirra
23. Kattarlu
24. Iragola:
25. Andhe:

GONGADI AT WEDDINGS

Selection of mate or life partner among Golla-Kurumas is not of own choice of the bride or bridegroom. Therefore, among Golla-Kurumas also the marriage activity begins with the groom’s parents looking for a suitable bride for their son. They expect that the girl should be young in age, good in manners, coming from good parental and family background. Further, they want to choose a bride from a family which is equal or superior in terms of economic status. On the wedding day when the bridegroom is taken to the bride’s residence where the marriage ceremony takes place, after the completion of marriage, the newly married couple has to make a round around the *polu* – a design made of rice grains on the floor. The husband keeps the gongadi on his shoulder while moving around the *polu*.

The warp of the Gongadi is also used in the wedding ceremony. The knotted warp is given to the bride and the groom to sit on. There is a story associated with this ritual: Mallanna kidnaps a girl with the intent to marry and did not find anything for her to sit on. He wraps the wrap that he was going to weave and places it on the ground for her to sit upon, which has now become a custom. Animal sacrifices form a part of the rituals. Two days after the wedding, a sheep is sacrificed. The gongadi is folded and kept on the floor near a wall. The shearing scissors are kept on it the wall. 5 lines of rice flour and 5 lines of turmeric are drawn alternately on the folded gongadi. The sheep are sacrificed in front of this and the meat is offered to their Gods.

PUTTUGONGADI CEREMONY

When a Gollakuruma boy turns 10 years, a unique ceremony called the *puttugongadi* is to be performed. This ceremony is held so that the young Golla-Kuruma realizes that the Gongadi is going to be an important part of his life. The maternal uncle or grandparents present a newly weaved Gongadi to the boy who is going to be entered into a teenager. The *puttugongadi* which means Gongadi which gives real birth to individuals and inculcates the value of production into the minds of upcoming young children. It has identical dimensions to other *gongadis* but is never doubled, stitched, or given a finishing *kada* or *kuncha*. The *puttugongadi* always has 2 white lines or *sulupu*. This *puttugongadi* is used in all other rituals, festivals, and fairs.



Gollakuruma boys with PuttuGongadi

DEATH AND GONGADI

In case of a death in the family, touching Gongadi is strictly prohibited for about ten days. If someone in the family comes in contact with the Gongadi, it is purified by sprinkling turmeric water. This is done because the Gongadi is considered to be a deity. However, most of the Golla-kurumas believe that a Gongadi can never become impure, hence, the practice cannot be seen in many villages.

Present Scenario of Reservation Movements in Telangana:

The Telangana State Assembly passed a Bill on 16 April 2017, giving a 12% reservation quota for socially and economically backward classes among the Muslims in educational institutions and government jobs. The Bill hiked the quota for Muslims from 4% to 12%, and the Scheduled Tribes quota from 6% to 10%, thereby taking the quantum of reservations in the state to 62%ⁱ. Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has emphasized in many public meetings and TV interviews that the 50% cap on reservation is merely trash and no legal or constitutional measure confine to exceed 50% reservations. Further, he also asserted that state governments have to be given utmost freedom to formulate their own legislations to implement appropriate quotas with regard to their local contextⁱⁱ.

So far most of the communities or community leaders do not aware of Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic and Denotified Tribe reservations. With the spur of Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) reservation, Socially and Educational Backward Community (SEBC) reservations for Maratha community and relax over 50% cap over caste-based reservations, certain caste based organizations have started their agitation for the demand of these unknown reservations. It is so visible with Dommara, Sagara, Uppari, Gandireddula, Gollakuruma, Vaddera, Boya and so on. However, in coming future, these demands will be articulated by the political parties to create their own caste-reservation vote banks. One can assume that the EWS quota should face serious threat by these NT/SNT/DNT reservations as these were in enforcement once and many commissions have recommended them and more of, those communities are historically deprived and are in dire need of affirmative action.

Sheep Distribution scheme:

It is a subsidized sheep distribution scheme started by the Government of Telangana on 20th June, 2017 to distribute 1 crore 28 lakh sheep to the traditional shepherds of Gollakuruma in the state of Telangana.

The budget allocated for this scheme is Rs. 12,000 crores.

Of the ₹ 1.25 lakhs cost per unit, the government provides 75% of the cost and 25% is borne by the beneficiary.

Factors for the Decline Traditional Wool Weaving:

- (1) Shortage of labour
- (2) Restrictions on access to customary grazing
- (3) Lands inside the forests
- (4) Availability of alternative livelihoods
- (5) Enhancement of agricultural labour wages

(6) Shrinking commons

(7) Change in lifestyle and aspirations of the Golla-Kuruma community

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To understand the socio-economic political status and indigenous knowledge of golla kuruma community.
2. To document the tools and materials used in making process of *Gongadi* in order to produce a variety of woolen products and also to depict the technologies, talents and skills required in making the woolen craft/products.

Suggestions:

- Allocation of grazing lands to graze the flocks of sheep. Supply of wool yarns and other materials with subsidized rate sustains the economical viability of the Gongadi and other woollen products.
- Government or Banks should extend the credit facility to the wool cooperative societies.
- Organization of training programmes for the wool weavers enhances their skill and talent, and exposes the artisans for modern technology and its usages in weaving.
- State Wool Board should be restructured with autonomous status, and through which the wool weavers who crossed 60 years should be given pensions and their children who are studying upto intermediate (10+2) should be given scholarships like Beedi workers so that wool weavers feel more confidence.

Conclusion:

Gollakuruma community is nomadic and pastoral in nature and still, most of them migrate from one place to another in the quest of fodder for their sheep and goat. Rearing of sheep and goat, weaving of Gongadi, preparing indigenous medicines and production of milk are their traditional occupations. They have a rich oral history that has been persisting in the form of 'Oggu Katha'. It alludes the origin and development of sheep-herding, producing milk, weaving wool, preparation of indigenous medicine and its related items. Therefore, Gollakurumas has a unique and peculiar terms and vocabulary which one cannot see either in Telugu or in any other Deccan languages. Oggu Katha also describes their history of ruling but those kingdoms never match with so-called historical academic writings. This is where folklore and modern history differs with each other. Whereas, rural folk believe in oral history as it has been passed on from generations together. And thus, mainstream modern historical interpretation and explanation doesn't give any importance to them. However, due to lack of cultural assimilation, Gollakurumas still have their own socio-cultural ethos and traditions. In this way, their vocabulary is different from other communities. Due to the

advent of liberalization, privatization and globalization the traditional occupations have been next to extinct. But still, the existence of these occupations can be seen in nook areas of the country.

References:

1. Ilaiyah, Kancha: Post-Hindu India, Sage Publications, New Delhi 2012
 2. Simhadri S, Ravinder et al. Samajamlo Yadavulu, Shepherd Research Center, Hyderabad. 2004
 3. Syed Siraj Ul Hassan, 'The Castes and Tribes' Bombay The Times Press 1920.
 4. Ram Bheenaveni Gollalu Kurumalu veru kadu, Gongdai Magazine, January, 2012.
 5. [Thurston, Edgar. Caste and Tribes of South India.1903.](#)
-