

Research Paper



SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF EX-CRIMINAL TRIBES IN STUARTPURAM SETTLEMENT – A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The Yerukalas of Stuartpuram are considered as part of the ex-criminal tribes of Andhra Pradesh. These yerukalas are commonly stigmatized as dacoits, burglars, pilferers, thieves and railway-wagon breakers. Majority of respondents were changed for the better since they started their new jobs. Criminal activity has been discarded due to motivation by family members, police officials, caste leaders and self employment schemes provided by the government and Non governmental organizations. Education brought a lot of transformation to the children of the ex-criminals. The welfare measures extended by state government and the non governmental organization have improved the quality of their lives.

KEYWORDS: Stuartpuram, Gora, Lavanam, Hemalatha Lavanam

INTRODUCTION

Notorious criminals hailed from Stuartpuram area of Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh indulged in sensational activities of robbery which attracted the attention of the people of India. They are treated as the real cause of threat to the neighboring places. Stuartpuram settlement area is known for its wide range of criminal activities in robbery. The Salvation Army started reforming the Yerukalas of Stuartpuram since 1914. It was Captain H. Robilliard of the Salvation Army, Manager of the Stuartpuram Criminal tribes Settlement, who did a lot of service to these settlers. In 1915, 1500 acres of valuable sandy land were made into small plots and distributed to the people. In addition to that, 600 acres of swampland were also distributed to these people by giving 2 or 3 acres of land to each household¹. The Salvation Army established schools for the reformation of the children of the ex-settlers². In addition to the Salvation Army, other social workers namely Gora, Lavanam, Hemalatha Lavanam³ and M.V. Thomas endeavored in social reformation in the Stuartpuram ex-settlement. Tribal Welfare Department during the year 1951, taken measures to improve education among these settlers⁴. The youth of Stuartpuram who are working in various private and public employment organized 'Yerukala Ekalavya Samithi', an organization which is the centre for many activities by advising people to discontinue their criminal activities. The Samithi is organising financial help to the youngsters for their education in schools and colleges.

OBJECTIVES

1. To estimate the impact of reformative measures in bringing out social transformation among the Yerukalas
2. To assess the reformative measures undertaken by the Government and Non Governmental Organizations to make Yerukalas to discard the criminal practices.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 300 head of the families of an ex - criminal tribe, the Yerukalas have been selected from Stuartpuram village of Guntur District. The data was collected by using Stratified random sampling method and an interview technique. Besides this, observation and group discussion techniques were also used to collect the data on reformative measures and social transmission. The 'sample constitutes all males and they range in the age group of 20 to 65 years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reformative measures for social transmission:

Distribution of Respondents by Age-wise

Age is an important demographic variable which not only determines an individuals physical and mental maturity but also depicts his/her life experiences. Age of individual also determines his/her relative attitude to the adoption of any programme and welfare scheme or their development. Older persons may be reluctant to adopt new



methods of development and likely to continue with the traditional mode of living. It is evident from the table No. 1 that most of the respondents are in the age group of 51-60 years. The young generation due to social change have chosen

other occupations such as petty business and settled as agricultural labour. Y.C Simhadri (1979 and 1991) in his two books "Ex criminal tribals of India and The denotified tribes" made an attempt to describe their conditions.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Age-Wise

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
21-30 years	15	5.00
31-40 years	54	18.00
41-50 years	80	26.67
51-60 years	89	29.67
61 & above	62	20.67
Total	300	100.00

2. Distribution of Respondents by Motivation for Robbery discard

It is evident from the table 2 that majority of the respondents (47.32%) were motivated by the N.G.Os to discard the robbery activities, 14.67 per cent each of the respondents were motivated by the caste leaders, and family members, 13.67 per cent of the respondents were motivated

by the police officials and 9.67 per cent of the respondents were motivated by government officials. There is a great role played by NGOs and police officials in persuading the criminals to discard the criminal activities and encouraging them to take up new occupations.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by motivation to discard robbery activities

Motivation for criminal discard	No. of Respondents	Percentage
NGOs motivation i.e Salvation Army, Samaskar etc.,	142	47.32
Caste Leaders	44	14.67
Family motivation	44	14.67
Police officials	41	13.67
Government officials	29	9.67
Total	300	100.00

3. Distribution of Respondents by Reasons for Transformation

Majority of the respondents (31.67%) told that the main reason to convert from criminal profession was due to the help received from NGOs, 21.33 per cent of the respondents were due to their children's job and marriage.

17.33 and 15.33 per cent of the respondents were of stigma in the society and due to police harassment respectively. While, 14.33 per cent of the respondents were due to the help and intervention of family members (Table 3).

Table 3 Distribution of respondents by reasons for transformation

Reasons for transformation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Future of children	64	21.33
Bad name in society	52	17.33
Police harassment	46	15.33
Help from NGOs	95	31.67
Family members	43	14.33
Total	300	100.00

4. Distribution of Respondents by Impact of Reformation

The table 4 shows that the majority of the respondents (89%) told that they were influenced by the reformation, 7.33 per cent of the respondents said that they did not accept in the beginning but later agreed. 3.67 per cent

of the respondents said that they immediately responded to reformation. The majority of the respondents expressed slow response towards the reformation and did not wish to change their profession and occupation.

Table 4 Distribution of Respondents by Impact of Reformation

Impact of Reformation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Immediately responded	11	3.67
Slowly responded	267	89.00
First reluctant then later agreed	22	7.33
Total	300	100.00

5. Distribution of Respondents by Life style after transformation

The respondents are traditionally occupied with theft as a profession and have changed due to social transformation. Majority of the respondents (97.33%) are motivated to take up new occupation for their children and also expressed good opinion about their new life style (Table 5). The social transformation provided the respondents with

an improved life style and they have been adapted. Further, they opined that it is not a viable profession in the long run to continue the same. The children are motivated to have education both technical and non-technical for which promises an honourable profession. Very few respondents *i.e* 2.67% have a negative feeling towards their new life style under changed circumstances.

Table 5 Distribution of Respondents by Life Style after Transformation

Life style after transformation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Good	292	97.33
Bad	8	2.67
Total	300	100.00

6. Distribution of Respondents by Education

Table 6 shows that educational profile of the family members of the respondents. It is found, that majority of the respondents were educated upto primary (29.00%) secondary level (7.67%) and very few *i.e* 3.33 and 2.33 per cent of the respondents had completed the Intermediate and graduates respectively. The increase in literacy has changed the lives of the respondents in this area. With a great insight,

the Salvation Army, Samskar organization and A.P. Social Welfare organizations have taken the initiation and provided many opportunities of learning for the respondents. Missionary activities preached the need and importance of education. Through formal schooling, Salvation Army promoted the habit of reading and writing among men and women. As a result, they started putting their signature instead of thumb impression.

Table 6 Distribution of Respondents by Education

Educational status-wise	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Primary	87	29.00
Secondary	23	7.67
Intermediate	10	3.33
Graduates & Above	7	2.33
Illiteracy	173	57.67
Total	300	100.00

7. Distribution of respondents by discord of criminal activities

Majority of the respondents (29.00 %) discarded the criminal activities and chose other livelihood opportunities during the period between 2001 and 2005 (Table 7). 22.00 per cent of the respondents discarded the criminal activities in the year of between 1996 and 2000. 19.67 per cent of the respondents discarded the criminal activities in the year of between 1991 and 1995. 17% of the respondents discarded

the criminal activities between 1986 and 1990. The lowest percentage (12.33%) of the respondents discarded the criminal activities in the year between 1980 and 1985. Most of the respondents discarded the criminal activities due to the preaching's of NGO's and intervention of police. The table also shows that there is increasing trend in discarding criminal activity.

Table 7. Distribution of Respondents by discard of criminal activity

Discord of Criminal activity (Years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1980-1985	37	12.33
1986-1990	51	17.00
1991-1995	59	19.67
1996-2000	68	22.00
2001-2005	85	29.00
Total	300	100

8. Distribution of Respondents by Occupation-wise

Occupation is very important variable which determines familiar social standing. This is due to the fact that only different occupations have different statuses associated with different privileges, economic benefits and needs. Certain occupational needs like those who have agricultural land, need money to buy seeds, other agricultural equipment which compel people to take credit. Majority of

the respondents (55.67%) were working as agricultural labour (Table 8). 39.33 per cent of the respondents were found engaged in agriculture occupation. 3.67 per cent of the respondents were engaged in self-employment (petty business). Most of the respondents possess agricultural land donated by Samskar and Salvation Army. As the land can not be sold to outsiders, all the lands were left with them for agricultural operations. The very lowest percentage of the

respondents (1.33%) were engaged in private jobs. it can interpreted that majority of the families of the respondents earned their daily bread by working as labourer and working in self-employment sector.

Table 8 Distribution of Respondents by Occupation-Wise

Occupational Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agriculture	118	39.33
Agricultural Labour	167	55.67
Petty business	11	3.67
Private Jobs	4	1.33
Total	300	100.00

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study had revealed the plight of ex-criminal tribes of Stuvartpuram had been transformed and leading a decent life with the help of NGOs and Government intervention. Majority of the respondents (47.32%) were motivated to discard the robbery activities by the NGOs. Most of the respondents were transformed for their childrens future, bad name in society and police harassment. 97.67 per cent of respondents were inspired to take up new occupation. 55.67 per cent of respondents are agricultural labourers. 29.00 per cent of respondents are discarded the criminal activities and chose other livelihood opportunities during the period between 2001 and 2005. New avenues and opportunities have been created to trans-avenues these tribal's and made them to lead a social life with a better livelihood. Salvation Army promoted the habit of reading and writing among men and women through formal schooling. Their children are sent to schools and technical institutions with a hope that they may lead an honest life. Today, ex criminal tribes are felling guilty for the robberies done in the past and welcoming Christianity for bringing a change in their lives. Now, they are taking good decision and planning for the future development of their community. Still they need government programmes and policies to the implemented for further development of their children.

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