

The Gollakuruma: A Perspective on Their Semi-Nomadic Life and Cultural Heritage

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ABSTRACT

This perspective article addresses the significant gap in scholarly research concerning the Gollakuruma community, a traditionally semi-nomadic pastoral group primarily located in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, India. Despite their crucial role in the regional rural economy and cultural landscape, the Gollakuruma remain under-explored in academic discourse. This study aims to provide a comprehensive examination of their cultural practices, social structures, and socio-economic challenges, drawing upon historical accounts, ethnographic studies, and socio-economic analyses. By synthesizing information from diverse sources, including the Mahabharata, colonial-era ethnographic records, and contemporary sociological studies, this article offers a nuanced understanding of the Gollakuruma's unique way of life. It highlights the threats posed by modernization, urbanization, and changing land-use policies to their traditional pastoral lifestyle. Furthermore, this perspective underscores the importance of documenting and preserving the Gollakuruma's cultural heritage, including their indigenous knowledge systems, religious practices, and oral traditions, which are at risk of being lost. This research contributes to a more inclusive understanding of pastoral communities in India and provides valuable insights for policymakers, welfare workers, and NGOs seeking to support marginalized groups. The scope of this perspective extends to fostering a deeper appreciation for the Gollakuruma's socio-cultural contributions and advocating for targeted interventions that address their specific needs.

Key words: *Gollakuruma; Pastoralism; Semi-nomadic communities; Cultural preservation; Socio-economic marginalization*

INTRODUCTION

The Gollakuruma community, primarily located in the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh regions of India, represents a distinct socio-cultural group with a traditional semi-nomadic lifestyle centered on pastoralism and cattle rearing. Despite their crucial role in the rural economy and cultural fabric of these regions, the Gollakuruma remain significantly under-researched, particularly when compared to other communities in Telangana. This lack of scholarly attention has resulted in a critical gap in our understanding of their unique social structures, cultural practices, and socio-economic challenges. Studies that focus on marginalized groups, including lower classes, women, and children, have revealed the importance of including these voices in historical and literary narratives to provide a more nuanced and complex understanding of society. In the case of the Gollakuruma, this is particularly relevant due to their historical marginalization and the threats they face from modernization. While broader studies on semi-nomadic communities in India have offered valuable insights into the socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by such groups (Singh, 2011; Hassan, 2014), the specific experiences of the Gollakuruma have been largely overlooked. This study aims to address this gap, providing a comprehensive examination of the Gollakuruma community's cultural practices, social structures, and socio-economic challenges, thereby enriching the academic discourse on pastoral communities in India. The mythological origins of the Yadavas, to whom the Gollakuruma trace their lineage, are deeply rooted in ancient Indian texts, most notably the Mahabharata by Vyasa. This epic provides a foundational narrative for understanding their descent from King Yadu and their integration into the broader historical and divine context of ancient India. The Mahabharata portrays the Yadavas primarily through the character of Lord Krishna, offering vital insights into their mythological significance and their role in shaping regional and cultural identities. By analyzing pertinent sections from the Mahabharata, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the Yadavas' mythical origins and their influence on the development of regional identities, laying the groundwork for understanding the Gollakuruma's historical and cultural context (Vyasa, Mahabharata).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to bridge the significant gap in scholarly works on the Gollakuruma community. While there have been scattered mentions of the Gollakurumas within the broader context of pastoral communities (Srinivas, 1996), a detailed sociological or anthropological exploration of their specific social structures, family organization, and kinship patterns is notably absent. Other semi-nomadic groups in India have attracted a more robust body of academic inquiry, making the Gollakurumas' study even more pressing. Traditional historical studies often focus broadly on semi-nomadic cultures but lack depth regarding the Gollakuruma community's distinctive characteristics and local variations, particularly in Telangana. By focusing on the history and society of the Gollakurumas, this study will highlight their contributions and experiences, filling a critical void in the literature through an in-depth, community-specific analysis (Jones & Manohar, 2017). Furthermore, this research aims to illuminate the specific challenges faced by the Gollakuruma's, such as limited access to education, healthcare, and land rights, which hinder their socio-economic mobility and overall well-being. By documenting these issues, the research will provide crucial data for policymakers and social welfare organizations to design more inclusive interventions tailored to the needs of marginalized communities. This study also aims to contribute to the preservation of the Gollakuruma community's cultural heritage. As their traditional lifestyle faces increasing threats from modernity, it is critical to document and understand the indigenous knowledge systems, religious practices, and oral traditions that form the core of the Gollakuruma's identity.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Gollakuruma presents a distinctive set of sociological and developmental challenges. Historically, the Gollakuruma have been pastoralists who depend on seasonal migration to find grazing lands for their livestock. This practice has shaped their social organization, economic activities, and cultural norms. However, in recent years, the traditional way of life of the Gollakuruma has been under significant threat due to increasing pressures from urbanization, industrialization, real estate development, conversion of wasteland to cultivation, opencast mining, privatization, and government policies promoting sedentary agriculture (Singh, 2013). The socio-economic marginalization of such semi-nomadic communities has often been overlooked in the development discourse despite their vital role in rural economies (Guhan, 2002). This study aims to illuminate the specific challenges faced by the Gollakuruma, such as limited access to education, healthcare, and land rights, which hinder their socio-economic mobility and overall well-being. By documenting these issues, the research will provide crucial data for policymakers and social welfare organizations to design more inclusive interventions tailored to the needs of marginalized communities. Historical accounts, such as Arthur F. Cox's *Manual of North Arcot District Vol. I* (1895), provide valuable insights into the social structures and historical significance of communities related to the Gollakuruma, including the Gollas, Idaiyans (Yadavs), and Kurumas. Cox's work highlights the pastoral traditions and social hierarchies within these communities, noting the Gollas' association with cattle herding and their internal subdivisions, as well as the Idaiyans' role as the principal pastoral class in Tamil regions.

The Kurumas, with their historical significance as a pastoral community, are also examined, revealing their fragmentation and adaptation to hilly regions due to historical conflicts. Cox's detailed ethnographic account offers a foundational understanding of the historical transformations and socio-cultural dynamics of these communities. R.V. Russell and Hiralal (1916) further contribute to this understanding by analyzing the Golla community's customs, ceremonies, and material culture in their work, "The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India." Their study explores the Gollas' social structure, including their exogamous marriage system and religious practices, providing a comprehensive view of their traditional pastoral lifestyle and the complex relationships among various caste and tribal groups. D.D. Kosambi's "The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline" (1965) offers a Marxist interpretation of Indian history, focusing on the socioeconomic structures that shaped ancient Indian civilization. Kosambi critically examines the role of the Gavali (Golla), tracing their transition from tribal formations to caste-based hierarchies. His analysis highlights the historical processes that influenced economic production, agrarian developments, and class struggles, providing a broader context for understanding the socio-economic challenges faced by pastoral communities. Thurston, E., & Rangachari, K. (1909) in "Castes and Tribes of Southern India" provide a comprehensive ethnographic account of the Golla and Kuruma communities, detailing their pastoral lifestyles, social customs, and religious practices. Their work emphasizes the nomadic and semi-nomadic nature of these communities, highlighting their transhumant practices and religious traditions. Yadav, J. N. S. (1992), in his book "Yadavas Through the Ages from Ancient Period to Date (Vol. 1)," presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the Yadava community, tracing its origins, evolution, and socio-political influence over time. He emphasizes the fragmented nature of

Yadava identity, shaped by regional variations in nomenclature, customs, and traditions across India, and highlights their significant contributions to culture, religion, and philosophy. Gadgil and Malhotra (1982), in their study "Ecology of a Pastoral Caste: Gavli Dhangars of Peninsular India," investigate the ecological and socio-economic transformation of the Gavli Dhangar community, highlighting the impacts of modernization and urbanization on pastoral groups. Their research underscores the broader patterns of change observed among semi-nomadic communities in India, as they confront the challenges posed by development and environmental pressures. The study also highlights the importance of preserving the Gollakuruma community's cultural heritage. As their traditional lifestyle faces increasing threats from modernity, it is critical to document and understand their indigenous knowledge systems, religious practices, and oral traditions. Like many other indigenous groups, the Gollakurumas are at risk of cultural erasure as they become integrated into mainstream socio-economic structures. This research aims to document and preserve their unique traditions, ensuring that future generations have access to a record of their cultural practices and social structures.

CONCLUSION

The research holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a notable gap in the existing literature concerning the Gollakuruma community, a traditionally semi-nomadic group with a rich pastoral heritage in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. By delving into their cultural practices, social structures, and socio-economic challenges, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of their unique way of life. Secondly, this research enhances our understanding of the Gollakuruma's distinctive semi-nomadic culture, shedding light on the complexities of their pastoral lifestyle and the threats they face from modernization. Historical accounts, ethnographic studies, and socio-economic analyses, as presented in the works of Cox, Russell and Hiralal, Kosambi, Thurston, Yadav, and Gadgil and Malhotra, provide a foundational understanding of the broader socio-cultural context of pastoral communities in India, emphasizing the need for community-specific research. Additionally, this study offers practical knowledge for policymakers, welfare workers, and NGOs, thereby supporting initiatives to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Gollakuruma. By exploring their socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions, this research contributes to the development of more inclusive interventions tailored to the needs of marginalized communities. Furthermore, this research aims to preserve the Gollakuruma community's cultural heritage, documenting indigenous knowledge systems, religious practices, and oral traditions that are at risk of being lost. Through this comprehensive and well-rounded perspective, this study benefits scholars, policymakers, and the community, ensuring that the Gollakuruma's unique contributions to India's cultural landscape are recognized and preserved.

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