**CHAPTER - V**

**SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP**

Society has its roots in the union of the man and the woman. (ã‹Ôë„¬ôO‹¬†³¶QË^ÎÄ"ŒO) 1 Their union is the foundation for the growth of societies.

It is a convention in literature that a parrot and a cuckoo make an ideal couple. The pairing of a mynah and a parrot is an altogether odd one. Literature, in a sweep of imagination, anticipates the pairing of a cuckoo and a parrot to be the ideal.

Society has the zeal to weave flowers of different colours together into a single garland.

Culture tries to invent different varieties of crops to generate new kinds of grains that are tasty and healthy.

Ingenuity to experiment with a fine fusion of both reality and imagination in art and science is age-old in the culture.

All social life is need-based, system-bound. So societies obey the particular patterns that tradition dictates.

When a Chenchu lowers himself down to collect honeycombs, it is his brother-in –law who holds the rope tied to his waist! A share in the honey goes to the brother-in-law along with the share allotted to the deity, Mallamma. (=°Á=°àQ®\_ÈÛ)

Among the Kondareddis, it is the priest who builds his habitat first on a new ground. The family which settles next is called the “lenka”. (…ÿOH›) This ‘lenka’ becomes the assistant to the priest. There develops kinship between the lenka and the priest.

In the *Nandi* festival song, the *talledunagu* (snake) gives a snake to Ambatula Raju to relieve Asiveyula papa of morning sickness. In return the Raju is made to promise that in case he had a daughter she should be made daughter-in-law of the cobra.

The meat got from hunting is usually shared by the members of the party, regardless of who actually shot the animals or who surely had a name-sake partnership in the hunting. The priest gets his share “goravala kotti” or the meat on the thigh bone. The *munsab* has a share and it is called *dayam*, a share in which kinsmen have right. Besides, some special shares are marked for guests. If the escaping animal crosses the border, the neighbour is entitled for a share. If any indiscretion or injustice creeps in this distribution of shares, it leads to serious repercussions. In this context the saying of the tribes goes as follows: “Mukka muruguddi – Mata peruguddi” (=òH›ø=ò~¡°Q®°kí =¶@ Ì„~¡°Q®°kí) which means, “Meat decomposes, tempers rise”.

Village leaders often warn men to allocate shares with care. Even where hunting is due by individual, farsightedness demands that they should give shares. It is said, “If you hide and eat, each tree stinks”. (^¥z^¥z uO>è =¶#°=¶#°ä›½ "Œ‹¬#) As the meat is hidden in the hollow of a tree trunk, it stinks, if it is hidden for a longer period. A man who conceals meat is ridiculed as a meat - miser. (=òH›ø „²‹²<Œi)

Sri Krishna Devaraya in his book “Amukthamalyada” (P=òH›ë=¶¼^Î) picturised how jealousies are roused.

“A tribe (a Bhil) visits another. After a prolonged chat, the host comes out to see the other off. Throughout the chat, the guest is aware that something is being cooked in the kitchen. The thought that the host does not want to share with him the cooked dish prompts him to understand that the host is eager to see him off quickly. Envy begins to burn within him. With this envy boiling within and the reminiscences of the past bickerings between them haunting him, he has slowed the pace of his departure. While departing, he tries to find a way as to how he should kill the other one. The host abruptly turns back with the words, “Fibre is boiling in the kitchen and I am afraid it may burn off, if I go too far with you.” So saying, he returns. It is now the guest’s turn to say “Oh you are boiling fibre, is it?”. He becomes like a blown out balloon.

Not only in respect of the meat of a hunted animal, but just as much in form- related work, they pay back the helper with respect and care.

Those who directly help, get a full meal. (|O@O) The share set apart for women and those who stay at home is called “Kalimi Muddalu”. Those who set out, but get delayed would get (mutakoodu =ü@ä›€\_È°); and the share in the field is “Pollavulu.” (‡ÚÁ=ô°) For the helpers who level the ground “saatu bojanam” (ª@° ƒÕ[#O) (Saatu - varandah) and “poga rekulu” (‡ÚQ®ö~ä›½°) (tobacco leaves) are reserved.

It is interesting to note the discipline and sense of gratitude observed in maintaining social relationships. They never limited the meaning of the marriage as just a life-long bond. It is a relationship which should bring two families and two villages together. In the modern times numbers are treated as liability. But among the tribes of those days cordial relations among the near and dear were a must because they were living otherwise solitary lives in the deep woods. Giving away a bride into another family is called kanyadanam. It was considered the best of all charities. Blood relationships strengthen friendships. In the case of kanyadanam, the receiving family grows in strength.

Marriage relationships get proliferated and jumbled up as generations pass and at a certain stage; they end in matrimonies among close relatives. Therefore, these interrelationships are to be properly regulated. There should be some order for the maintenance of this discipline. Therefore totems or surnames serve the purpose of maintaining distinctness among tribes-groups. The tribal elders are sharp enough to understand the problems of members and give due advice taking into liberal consideration the mistakes of omissions and commissions. They serve the purpose of a hereditary religious constitution which lays a strong foundation for good social life. These hereditary religious laws constitute the foundation of social life.

Then comes the question of the place of the bride in the in-law’s family and in the new social environs, as she holds an onerous position there as a bridge between two families. How do the newly-formed relationships or reservations affect the marriage?

A girl is not like any other commodity in exchange. She has her own likes and dislikes. Many minor or major misunderstandings may creep in the adjustments between the bride and bridegroom or between the bride’s people and those of the groom. It is the parents till their wedding and the groom after that, who should assume the responsibility of the woman’s welfare.

As the girl is never independent, it is her protectors who are liable for punishment in the event of any lapse on her side. Under no circumstance, the tribal justice would penalize a woman2.

As the proverb goes “Adapilla addaginja” (P\_È„²Á - J\_ÈÛyO[). It means “The adda seed falls at a distance from the mother tree where it sprouts up and starts life as yet another creeper”. So a girl belongs to the groom’s home, not of the home of her birth. These words are usually repeated in all societies, but their meaning is most put in application in tribal communities. When a girl goes to live with her in-law’s family, her total responsibility rests with the husband’s family.

When the husband meets some untimely death, his younger brother takes her for wife. This system is an in-built mechanism to protect the progeny and property. Also the system sanctions this levity to avoid other biological relationships. They call it to keep a papa or sister-in-law (‡„¬#° LOKÇ°HË=\_ÈO).

This system is extinct amongst us. Yet it has assumed another form where the younger sister may take the place of the elder, in the event of the death of the latter.

Where the tribes follow seed-oriented shift cultivation and field-oriented property rights, the above two practices are permissible. As the ballad goes, Panduraju is the son of Ambatula Raju and Asivayula papa.

For fear that the younger brother, out of fondness for his brother’s wife, may let go the rope holding his elder brother in honeycomb hunting, the job is usually entrusted to the wife’s brother.

Was anybody to bring up the children whose parents are no more, the surnames of the children staying with them, hence the slogan “no property, so no adoption”? Funeral rites too are in accordance with the customs of the surname holders.

When a girl visits her parents, she must be suitably provided for in the in-laws house with necessary provisions. This custom is prevalent among konda reddies. The son-in-law is different. He is after all a relation. He need not take any provisions.

An uncle has a “birth right” over her niece. If a girl is brought from his family, it is his relations’ responsibility to pay the bride-price. If for any reason the girl could not be given to her uncle, he has then to be compensated. This custom has come to stay as the bride price. The mother has to be given an eight yard saree. Since it is not possible to give such a long saree, they are to pay a fine of one “Ana” for each half yard that falls short.

The nephew has a “birth-right” over his uncle’s daughter. If the uncle is reluctant to give his daughter to him in marriage, he does not hesitate to kidnap her. His friends in this kidnap assist him. After the groom steps on the bride’s foot, his friends would carry her away, by force if need be. (f„¬° …ìQ®\_ÈO)

Always the women’s desires are attended to. This may be an exception to the general rule. Parents may not care, if their daughter does not agree for the marriage. They fix for her. But a wife with distaste for her husband can return to her parents’ home. “A broken knife goes to the smithy and a broken marriage to the parents” (qiy# H›uë H›=°àiO\÷H÷ - =°#°=ôK³\_`Í „¬ô\÷“xO\÷H÷) as the saying goes. However it is a different matter, if the expected warmth is missing at home.

If the housewife (=°Q®<Œe) elopes with some other man, the man has to pay “the bride-price,” paid by the former husband as also the wedding expenses as per “the settlement”. “Sixty for wife and thirty for penal bride-price”. (Pe J~¡"³á, Fe =òÌ„¦áæ) A woman’s frailty is doubly expensive.

No husband could really prevent his wife from running away. If some one enquires such a man whether he is married, he would say “My wife is dead”. (|`ÇH›…è^Î°) He is true to say so, because, for him, she is as good as dead. A wife who runs away must leave the children with her husband. If the child is an infant, she can take the infant with her with prior permission from the husband and with a condition of returning it by a dead line.

In the social life, where the institution of marriage plays a pivotal role, perversions of the above type disturb domestic peace and social harmony. In addition to it, if palm wine starts pouring in such circumstances, there is inevitably the disorder.

Among the tribes where women’s role is secondary, men do not share wine with them for fear they would “grow horns”. Among the non-telugu Khonds and Koyas, however, the woman is in charge of the toddy. Man may draw the wine from the palm; it is the woman who sells it. They brew mahuva licquor also. Being in the market, they are bold enough to face any one.

Young women of Bagatha and Reddy tribes are extremely shy, even to the point of being timid, since theirs is the ruling class.

Among tribes, both man and wife are toilers. Children are kept in the care of elders and they grow responsible even at the age of five, becoming capable to mend for themselves, without any trauma from such a tender age.

If a man gets some other woman, the wife cannot deny. At the same time, the tribal elders do not approve a man abandoning his wife under any circumstances. Even when the husband is able to prove that his wife is becoming a liability, being lazy, the elders will at best admonish her, that is all.

The wife getting rid of her husband is easier than the other way round. However, husband may ill-treat his wife.

The elder brother has to maintain distance with younger brother’s wife and should not crack jokes against her. As the adage goes “The section of the house where the younger sister-in-law lives, and the section of the village where the *malas* live are untouchables. (=°~¡^Î° ~ò°Á =¶~ò°Á - =°#ß# W°Á) This unwritten rule in joint families is there, to nip all suspicions3.

In spite of some rare aberrations, men and women are generally devoted to one another. Man and wife toil equally well during *podu* farming. Collecting roots, vegetables, fruits and mango stones is the job of women. The income got from this collection is more stable and more useful for sustenance than the income of the men who go for hunting or collecting honey.

“Dig a measure of soil (Q®iÌ‹\_È°=°#°ß `Ë\_È"Œ…ÿ)

till the nails become blunt: (KÍu QËˆ×Ã¤ J~¡Q®"Œ…ÿ)

Gather a measure *chidumu*” (Qê"³°\_È° z^Î°=ò f†Ç°"Œ…ÿ)

Along with the other odd jobs

Thus both men and women work hard and keep the family going.

By the introduction of the plough in farming, the women’s role is limited to sowing and harvesting operations. Then her work is almost confined to the home. She has defined her work to be the pounding of rice, the keeping of cattle and other domestic chores like drabbing patterns with flour on the floor. As assets grow, her responsibilities at home increase and as she protects the family interests, she is looked upon as the goddess of wealth on the home front.

At such times, family bonds become stronger, social standing requires to meet newer demands and still further new desires and tastes take root. Even as the man becomes a slave to these, his mind adjusts to the system that provides them.

At times, they relax the rigid rules of the society. Especially on festive occasions, they do so, lest the rules become counter productive4.

Thus during the mango festival in the Godavari districts, the Gangalamma festival in Maredumilli and the itim festival in Visakha, maidens & youngsters have a lot of fun, frolic and with their friends, in-laws or other relatives, both male and female. As all are interrelated, no one seriously objects.

One is grand father, the other daughter if one is daughter, the other may be uncle- some times grand mother and son thus relatives are some how linked up and games get going. Freedom is given, which is taken as license, still no one minds.

As families mix up with inter-marriages, members become cousins and all play together freely, in a relaxed mood.

They perform the wedding of maiden and youngster mango trees. Govulu are youngsters and gobbatlu are maidens. (QË=ô=¶q°\_, Q®°|Ä@Á=¶q°\_) They tease the visitors of the village and collect money. They feast on the money thus got and tease men. While feasting, men, who are thus driven out by ragging, can be seen during the *itim* festival spending the whole day in the hot sun in the hunting yard.

When women leave home in a huff they are usually found in places like *moganalimetta*\_or *rankulametta*\_because these are generally decided to be the shelters for the like of them. There they let their steam out. These places are at the raised grounds at the village out skirts. Meanwhile her husband or her in laws come there to persuade her to return. She may elope with her lover already in waiting.

At the outskirts of the village Santari; in Hukumpet Mandal a hillock is called Kamarajumetta. This name is given to it, as the result of an incident that took place there. The Jarrai family gave their daughter in marriage to one called Kamaraju- While the village tank is being filled, it desired some human sacrifice. When Kamaraju was away the Jurrai girl was given as a sacrifice. The he-buffalo, which was brought as one of the bridal gifts of the deceased woman, digged at the banks of the tank, exposing her corpse. Kamaraju then could know the sad end of his wife and he was grief-stricken and was turned into a statue. To this day, there has been no more alliance between the two villages.

On the way to Pedabayalu there are two tall mango trees, the place being known as “tappula mamidi”; may be, the place is called so, because the mischiefs are committed there. Fact or fiction, the people of the place talk of an incident said to have happened there. A couple while going that way felt like eating one mango or two. The husband climbed the tall tree with the help of a tall bamboo pole (`Œ„¬). While he was shaking the branches for fruit, some mischievous youths, passing that way, removed the bamboo from its place so that the man on the tree could not come down. Then they took away his wife. Finding no way to get down, the man was shouting in anguish. After a while, his wife had returned, put the bamboo pole against the tree and lowered him down, all the while crying. God only knows whether her cries are real or a mere pretence.

In another instance a girl of the Bijji family, ends her life up by drowning in the river Godavari on account of her husband suspecting her fidelity. People hold her in reverence to this day and the passengers, who go by launch, break coconuts over there.

The girl, who has attained the age of puberty and is in her first menses, has to go to the forest and lodge in a hut (J\_ÈqH÷‡é=\_ÈO). She is kept under strict diet. If the priest’s wife too is in menses (KÇ¶~¡°=ò@°“), the festival is postponed. Apart from considering that the menses is evil and defilement, they consider a virgin girl is a force of productivity. They sing songs of various tunes and meanings calling the girl as Seethamma and the like.

Gontemma is virgin – Seethamma is wife.

With the growth of agriculture, the status of women is raised in the social scheme of things. During Rajula festival, women have no role to play though they just sing or dance. In places like Kanivada where agriculture is partly developed, the woman goddess *gupamma* is worshiped. The woman occupies the main role in revels.

During the Nandi\_festival, a girl who has not attained puberty is made to sit on the pot which is a symbol for Gonthemma.

While going to a girl’s place to ask her in marriage, women (À„~¡\ìOã\_È°) go in auspicious groups although talks are confined to its male elders. Anyway, the woman’s role is always an indirect one.

It is customary to celebrate the mother’s festival with fun and fanfare, whereas the male-dominated *pothu* festival is more ritualistic.

It is a noble ideal to share with others what one has. It is necessary too among tribes who live hand to mouth. However, the haves try to keep the have nots at bay. This is human nature.

Developed countries do not land to the poorer nations just like that. They impose many conditions. Thus they do share though reluctantly fearing the ‘evil eye’ and to be away from possible harm.

Among the tribes, which do not indulge in street brawls he, who shares, gets of precaution from one and all by holding feasts at weddings.

Elders keep on urging the village servants who collect funds not to harass the rich and the poor alike for common causes. They say, take where the rich give and help the others. (L#ß"Œi ªÚ=òà° u#O\_ - Ti"Œi „¬#°° KÍ†Ç°O\_)

The tribes like *nagas-* who are more overt in displaying their passions when they get hurt, slaughter an animal right in front of the enemy’s house as a challenge. His enemy goes one up and repeats the former’s act in revenge. This goes on till their steam is out.

Applauding both for their valour, the onlookers take home the meat. This war mania in is called *potlach*5.

These are some of the ways as to how wealth is decentralized in societies with limited wants. Gone are the days when men feared living as “some one in particular” because materialism is ruling the roost with its too much of importance to the rupee (money).

“Reddys don’t wear their wealth” (ï~\_Û"Œ~¡° H›ey<Œ H›@“~¡°) taunt the valmikis. If one tries to avoid being the cynosure of all eyes the other jeers at him. This is again human nature.

It is said “To put up with the reddy’s revenge is as tough as the bundling up of tamarind leaves.” The tamarind leaves fall off, even while being bundled.

(ï~\_Û"Œi„¬Q® zO`Œä›½=ü@) The reddys resort to mutual destruction with sorcery and the like.

The Reddys in their turn ridicule the malas saying that they live off through idle talk and flattery. “A mala-talk is a long talk” they say. (=¶"Œ\_ =¶@°‡Ú\_È°Q®°)

The institution of *totem* is an innovative creation, which aims to systemize the growth restrictions imposed by of society. It acts as a safety volve for the renewal of civilizations. This institution puts a person on an altogether different plane from bird or beast.

The different totems among the Visakha Bagathas and Konda Doras are *puli, maga, surabhi, jambava, Anumantha, Recheluka, Meka, Matsya, Surya, Kasapala, Saduga, Myna, Thummeda, Chandra, Dega, Sanku, Erra Balija, and Nalla Balija* and so on. Each totem covers some four or five surnames.

There could be a history behind a family adopting an even totem. The totem of the Kilamkota Rajas is Matsya (fish), but they are commonly called Recheluka Rajus. The recheluka root is a symbol for the demon king of the forest in the Nandi festival.

*The\_Satthe\_vitthanalu* (true seeds) drop to the ground from Hanumantha pagada (plantain flower). Was it that the *surabhi* subtribe entered manyam with this seed and their cattle-wealth?. It was possible that there was a conflict of interest between such immigrants and the local hill tribes. The *Elugus* entered from the direction of Parlaki mundi to settle in Kimudupalle.

The *Balijas* came as bangle vendors. They hang bangles to the marriage post.

The Ondrugedda people say that they belong to Matham, where as the Matham people attempt to escape by saying that they are Koyyuru *jangalu*(wandering saivites).

The people of the sub-tribe of tiger totem are friendly to tigers. It is said that they give ‘adugu’ potions to these animals to make them obey. This faith has gone to such an extent that the people belonging to the other totems used to bluff and say that they belong to tiger totem to escape from tigers. Tigers were all the same devouring them disregarding their lies.

In a must-kill situation, the tiger totem people do kill the tigers, but after killing them they give a decent bath to the carcass, to avoid the anger of the tiger’s spirit.

With time, all these sub-tribes and sub-castes got absorbed into the local castes, some times trade-wise and at other times depending upon whether they are beef-eaters or non-eaters.

Kondareddis lack totems, but they have surnames. The *‘Kavi’* people have the surnames like *Andela, Kelala, Marigela, Karukodi, Saadala, and Valala*. The *Kannamma reddis* of Gurthedu are the *Kadabala* ruling class. There is native family with Kadabala surname. The Pallala family is muttadars of Maredumilli region.

The *Kaavi* people segregate themselves from others. The *Mutadars* of Duccherthi, the Chekka families are the ruling castes; however, they made marriage alliances with all the reddis in the long run.

The *Daasaris* used to perform funeral rites to the Kaavi families. The Daasaris are *Vaishanavite* wandering tribes. In the present times, the *Chemagadda* and Geddada jangams (saivite wandering tribes) perform these rites for all.

The Kadabandla people of Kadanoothula and those of Cheruvuru once had bitter enemity between themselves. The Kadanoothula Kadabandlas wanted to bring Cheruvuru into their control and as such they incited Kannamreddi to fight. The people of Kannamreddi brought the blacksmiths under their control and forced them to make arrows with short iron tips, thus preparing for the fight. They then induced the wife of Cheruvuri Pandureddy to their side and prepared her mind for treason. She in turn poured water in the guns of her people at the same time blunting the edge of their swords with stones. Injured in battle Pandu was on death bed. Lingareddi of Pendalavada, his elder brother, moved him out and after cremating the dead body, he got the arrows from his body to be pulled out by a valmiki.

So much about the old disputes between the native reddis and the migrant reddis. The Gurthedu Kannam Reddi is a migrant and became Muttadar. The native Kaspas of Revadikota and Polamonugondi joined them. Still, the native Kaavi Dora family is the village munsibs.

The arrogant among the immigrants are despised and they are called “the goats that came for a bare living”. (Hù#"Í°„¬ôHùzó#"Œ~¡°)

They say that the Sadandlu and Merigendlu tribes inhabiting, Revadikota, Siribala Kota and Karanikota are of elephant size, residing in the darker and denser regions of the forest. They are Bhimas in strength, Arjunas in archery and Dharmarajas in ripe wisdom. They are as hospitable as the mountain Vindhya and in good nature, they are Viduras. May they form the very foundation of a glorious Telugu culture?

The surnames like *sadala* (torchbearers) *Chedala* (termites), *Karukodi* (a foul) Valala (nets) and vindela (a bow) clearly indicate that they belong to a hunting society. The people of Katthula are adept in sword fight. The Pallalas are cultivators. They add the suffix “Bhupathi” to their names. The Chekka family came under the control of the British rule after the abolition of Golugonda estate. In the Nizam territory of Papi hills, there was no mutadari hierarchy. The village patel, other elders and the priest were the village leaders. The clan-chief remained the leader for the entire clan. Dhucherthi Nukalamma, Gurthedi Gundalamma and Pallala Gangalamma are the Goddesses who entered *manyam* with those families*.*

Out of self-esteem, some people feed others. But it is optional. However, the social system has been time and again drawing broad links for ideals of good conduct. Regardless of status, all eat together at Rajula and Jakari festivals. The task of organizing such events is divided among members.

Caste system prescribes certain code of conduct. The village elders act on it in meetings. When the village grows richer with the collective efforts of the people of all castes, human relations do not get bound by these caste codes. Yet the system has its check in not allowing free play.

The tribal society allows friendship with the have-nots. Friendships are oftentimes converted into strange relationships. There are thus name-friends (À„~¡Á<Í‹¬ëO), place-friends (‹¬Ö<Í‹¬ëO), marriage-friends (Ì„O\_Á<Í‹¬ëO) (as in visakha) and respect-each-other-friends (=°#ß# KÇ°@“iHê°) (as in Godavari regions). There are friendships outside one’s caste which gradually lead to relationships.

Thus, if the relationship is of one’s own village, it becomes place-affinity (À„~¡Á<Í‹¬ëO). Those who swear to friendship at a wedding became marriage friends and so on (Ì„O\_Á<Í‹¬ëO).

It is everyone’s duty to respect the vows and be bound by them. When marriage- friends (Ì„O\_Á<Í‹¬ëO) meet, they put flowers in each other’s ears as a mark of respect. („¬ô=ôÞ° =ò\_È°KÇ°HË=\_ÈO) If the friend is of a different caste; they help him to cook his own food. They extend a helping hand to one another in all domestic events. These friendships may sometimes lead to kinship. However caste penalties can not be avoided.

In villages like Kundada, such relationships brought the Reddis and Valmikis together and they together become priests and assistants to a single deity. Though they do not have relationship between them, they are bound together by duty. (=°#ß# KÇ°@“iHê°) The untouchability did not prevent their mutual visits to their homes.

Gangalamma is the deity of the red-path (Zã~¡=¶~¡¾O) and she is excommunicated. She is the daughter of Gorle family. The Pallalas introduced *ghatam* (a pot covered with flowers) as her symbol. The Gangalamma festival brings all the three groups of the tribes together.

A ballad of Visakha region, enlogises the marriage of a Prince of M*annem,* Sanjeevarayudu and “Gangu” (Q®OQ®°) a *Mala* by caste. This marriage is approved by all. The ballad makes it visible to all that the malas are litterateurs. They have business acumen and they maintain neatness. The Reddis and Bagathas are used to hard life.

The village munsib is the head of the village. He, being the owner of much land all over, helps one and all, young or old, in all times of need. Valmiki is both a peon and attender. The priest too has a very important role to play in the proceedings of the village council. Other castes are also represented in this assembly.

The villagers in their turn reciprocate by sharing vegetables and meat with the elders (ä›€~¡ =°#ß#°) and voluntarily assist them in their agricultural work and in roofing their houses. This they do in gratitude for the selfless service rendered by the elders in settling their disputes6.

A separate field called leader’s field (<Œ†Ç°H›=°\_) is set apart for the munsib in Visakha. Caste members always take collective action. The clay that makes up a dais for a village- wedding is dug up by all at the center of the village. A dead body is bathed by the water brought by every one. Tobacco is bought from the money of the common pool which is equally distributed among all. The decisions relating to marriages, women- related problems and other common issues are generally made unanimous by the entire village. It is considered an offence, if any one enters such meetings without prior permission. Such offences were punished by a penalty of one anna.

The accused should feed all who attended the meeting because they came there postponing their own urgent work. He, who cannot do so, should at least distribute tobacco leaves for a smoke together.

If a married woman elopes with a man of a different caste she had to atone both for her parents and in-laws. When these procedures got multiplied, it is required that the people of a whole village should attend to these duties across the entire *manyam*. Thus the inhabitants of Gowripatnam emerged as royal priests and their men acted as presiding officers on the Day of Atonement. Then the tongue of the culprit is touched by sacred grass, *darbha*. All elders are given food and a present or some fee. (KË\ìä›½°)

When the Kondareddis began to have complex dealings with one another in food grains, minor forest produce and goats or poultry, their visits to the weekly fairs became a must, resulting in added expenditure at the fair. Thus expenditure at the fair began to rise steeply in the context of the new consumer demands. The Kondareddis used to feel the pinch of the extra costs involved in the wedding feasts in the back drop of several feasts to be offered in the wedding. Celebrations of a girl’s marriage have thus become harder. To meet these rising demands, they were selling food grains and worse still, their fields, tamarind topes. Credit goes to the noble and generous soul Saadala Ramannadora who counseled thrift and advised his people to avoid pomp and ostentatiousness and get satisfied with a single wedding feast without accessories.

The munsib of Kaanivada village engaged the people of his village as bonded labour, for roofing his house and offering a free feast for all. It was again the noble and bold Saadala Ramanna who could say “neither do we need your bonded labour, nor your few morsels thrown at us”.

Another incident need be related to show the generous and outstanding leadership of this Saadala Ramanna. It so happened that a certain youth stole a jack fruit, being unable to bear the pangs of hunger and ashamed to beg. The owner of the tree Pallala Lakshmi Bhupathireddy found him out and demanded the elders to settle the dispute by giving due punishment to the culprit. Ramanna Dora interfered and requested Reddy not to be too harsh with the man, who had after all stolen it out of acute hunger and he did not have the intention to sell it and make profit. He also appealed to Reddy to the effect that they would admonish him privately instead of insulting and humiliating him in public. But the Reddi insisted on punishing the culprit.

Ramanna Dora, in his last days, was passing through a lean phase of economic crisis. So much so, he could not influence the decision, though he was one among the elders. Still, his gesture to save a poor fellow’s honour is to be appreciated.

“Had he asked me, I would have given the money” said Bhupathi shedding crocodile tears.

Atlast the thief was left unpunished. The elders dispersed advising Bhoopati and the like to protect their orchards with a good fencing.

Economic disparity between the haves and have-nots is increasing and the old affections and relationships are gradually becoming obsolete7.

One has to be a thief or a beggar to avoid starvation. The profession, shylock money lending, has come into vogue in the tribes areas.

Man’s excessive use of natural resources is making them deplete. Unable to fall back on the forest even for bare livelihood, as it is not the good old forest, they are becoming labourers. In women-related disputes, they are making payments of fine. When they do not have the money to pay the fine, they take loan on promissory notes. A fraction of the amount collected goes for documentation and hospitality expense. The rest is credited to the common good fund of the village and God only knows how the accounts are maintained. Who dares to question the elders about the accounts! Who have the time to call for the panchayat to follow up the matter! This is the present state of affairs of the tribes!

Women have a special place in the tribal culture. There are some elaborate rites at the birth of a female child. When she grows into maturity, there are rites again on her wedding day. When a girl is seen off to her in-laws’ place, her parents throw a milk party to the villagers. In the party, they say, “she belongs to that place –not this place. (‡é~òxO\÷ ƒìQêx, „¬ô\÷“xO\÷ ƒìHê^Î°)” They also say “we gave birth to her but later; the fruit of the tree should be brought to our place. (H›ey#k H›#ß"ŒiïHá<Œ - Ì„Oz# Ì„^Î`ÇOã\_È°° g°ï~ - =°# K³@°“#° "³òz# Hê†Ç° =°#"Í° `³KÇ°óHË"Œe Ì„^Îí…ì~¡)” It means that the daughter’s off-spring must need be in our village.

The tribes feel that the society should impart its culture to the girl. It is no matter whether the girl is brought up in prosperity or adversity. This culture equips her well to conduct herself in her new home. Our tribal societies and their village councils are homes to such democratic ideals and traditions.

Although the rules in respect of marriages are strict, there are some aberrations too. The people who indulge in such aberrations by marrying within their own blood relations are called “mullikas” which is a derogative phrase. The remarriage of a woman, who runs away, is valid. If ready for ex-communication, even an inter-caste marriage is possible.

Marriages among blood relations do not encourage exchanges among different clans. Exchange promotes an ordered society because it makes marriages of the bride and bridegroom from different clans. That is why; societies all over the world obey these basic principles of marriage. When passions compel members of the same family to marry among themselves, God alone should save their offspring, born out of such immoral wedlock. When brother and sister marry, why should their children suffer? The brother and sister may be excommunicated. As a result their children would suffer. If that excommunication is not withdrawn, the family suffers for generations, continuing the same incest.

“So we take them in and their offspring could be accepted for marriage among local’s relatives “, the elders say. Such marriages are generally atoned through a ritual by the Jangam of Chamagadda. The large hearted Sadala Ramanna Dora, set such atonements that set right the aberrations in the society.

Of late, the relationship between the village elders and the people at large is becoming loose. Even the elders are paying wages to the workers for the work done by them. Elders are now paid an advance amount of Rs.25/- among Chenchus for resolving disputes. One can hardly see the people of the villages going to the village councils these days, with men and women leaving the villages for daily wages. In the absence of an overriding control of the public at large, the influence of the elders wanes, justice becomes a casualty and it succumbs to corruption. Women-related disputes are on the rise in the predominantly agricultural Visakha villages. But the caste elders are able to check the caste from going out of control. However, the contractor in the Godavari districts who pays wages hardly bothers about caste. As a result, the fear of being made an outcaste on account of inter-caste marriages has gone. The iron frame of the caste structure has gone slack.

The manyam is crowded with timber and bamboo transport personnel and Government servants. These Government servants are regularly transferred once in two or three years. So, they would be coming and going. The tribal beauties in their prime of youth are becoming prey to their luscious advances.

Like the gales that blow off the huts on the seashore before the tidal wave hits, evil influences are encouraging eccentric behaviour among the tribal communities. Like in the rural societies, there prevails commercial trend in tribe villages near the fairs and a life of ignorance with its resultant anguish in the remote ones. As long as mankind had fought with nature, men remained united, regardless of their individual likes and dislikes. When the fight with nature had subsided, man became man’s enemy, in a machine driven economy. Unable to adapt to the pressures of the new system, the old economy he had represented became like the strands of sand that get washed away with the mere touch of water. What were once exceptions are becoming a general rule in the present system! The thinkers have been time and again warning about such sudden upheavals in the social system.

We extract stones for house construction. But the stones first extracted would happen to be soft because they were taken from the top layers of the earth. These stones go into the foundation. The .stones we extract later from the deeper delves of the earth are harder which are used to make the wall on top. Doesn’t the softer stone at the bottom succumb to the weight of the heavier stones on top? This phenomenon is just similar to the social system after the industrial revolution. Humanity has been building its edifice of the future basing on the technological innovations. The hesitation about what should come first and what next leaves no time to priorities. The building briskly rises, no matter what its future would be. Controversies in priorities do not allow the speed to slacken in the rat race of progress. Experiences are the assets whether for an individual or for a community. They are like the stones that build the wall. Out of durable experiences, plans for sturdy structures can be formulated.

Man-made machines may be more useful and comprehensive for skilled work. But if they become defective, it is difficult and some times impossible to repair them. However, living beings have an inbuilt mechanism of marvelous power to heal their wounds. They have also had the talent to make good some deformities as well. Information about past abilities and their cure is stored carefully in the brain. The skills so acquired by the human race after lakhs of years are also stored carefully for the future; they say. They also hold the opinion that the man belonging to any age is not an exclusive entity that has his own unique talents which had logical, pre-logical and psychological distinctions. He is a part of the general humanity which belongs to all ages. Time was when he lived upon earth on natural resources. Then he enhanced production, invented machines and promoted industries. Now he grows trees again. He loves wild life. The cycle rotates on.

This foregoing introduction is a typical preface to the tribal songs of the age-old and timeless tribal society. These songs hold us a mirror to our own life time which has seen and which has yet to see many a phase of progress in our life styles.

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1. POã^Î=°‚¬ðƒì~¡`Ç=ò ##ß†Ç° 1Ð1

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‹²Öu =¶q‚¬ìO`Ç¼ q^Î`ŒO

¢‹Ôë „¬ôO‹¬†³¶QË^ÎÄ"ŒOÑÑ

2. The Reddis of Bison Hills

Page 133. Responsibility falls always on the man; on the husband while she lives under the roof, on her father, if she returns to the parents house. If she is caught in adultery, a women is hardly ever punished by tribal justice.

3. Hill of Flutes. Page 83. To knock against younger brother's wife is punishable. These rules are important for they protect a junior member of a family from exploitation by his elders, and if they are broken, the offender is liable exemplary punishment.

4. Custom conflict in Africa. Gluckman Max. Basil Blakkwel Oxford 1955.

Page 115. Lifting the normal taboos and restraints obviously serves to emphasise them.

Page 22. Rituals are statement of rebellion and never revolution.

Page 134. Once there is a questioning of the social order, the ritual of protest is inappropriate since the purpose of the ritual is to unite the people who do not or cannot query the social order.

Page 131. A union fought with conflict.

Page 112. How customary exaggeration of conflict achieves a social blessing and beyond that the problem of how conflicts are built into a system of social order.

Page 86. Jealousy comes first - witchcraft follows after.

5. Morals and Merits : A study of values and social controls in South Asian Societies. Christopher Van Furer - Heimondorf., Weiden field and Nicholson. 1967. Page 76.

If a disputes drags on the buliang representing the community as a whole, will try to negotiate a settlement or one of the opponents will attempt to vindicate himself and humiliate his enemy by resorting to procedures known as Lisudu. This procedure involves the ritual destruction of wealth in a manner reminiscent of the potlatch of Northwest Africa. A man who challenge a co-villager to Lisudu opens the contest by killing one or several mithons in front of his opponent's house leaving the meat for the villages to eat. If the opponent accepts the challenge he must slaughter cattle and destroy valuables of atleast equal value in front of the challenger's house.

6. The Reddis of Bison Hills, 1945.

Page 151. Leadership of the hereditary head of the village usually, a descendant of the village founder, lies mainly in religious field. He presides over Panchayat. He is Peddakapu or Patel. The younger brother or nearest male relative of Peddakapu acts as his assistant is Pinakapu. In Chodavaram and Yellavaram taluka the village head is Munsif.

7. Tribal Ethnography. Customary Law and Change. N.V.Kameshwara Rao., ed. K.S. Singh. Director General Anthropological Survey of India. 1993, Concept Publishing Company. P.269. Customary Law and Politics - A Case Study of the Bagata and related tribes of Andhra Pradesh.

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POã^Î°‹¬OH÷Æ„¬ë KÇiã`Ç. „¬@°ä›€i |~Œ=°=üië, q‰§…ìOã^Î ã„¬KÇ¶~¡} 1998. „¬ô@.8