

## **Ethnographic Profile of Gonds of Adilabad District**

<sup>1</sup>N.Srinivasu, <sup>2</sup>Pavani

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Educational Management, State Institute of educational management and Training

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D Scholar, Dept of Anthropology, Andhra University, Vishakaptnam

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**ABSTRACT:** Gonds are widely scattered throughout India. Gonds living in different geographical locations do not possess the same cultural features. The language of the different groups speaks to is not exactly the same. The majority of the Gonds are found today in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Their main strongholds are the Satpur plateau including the districts of Betul, Chhindwar and Seoni. Until 1947 Gond Raja's ruled over the states of Kawardar, Sakti, Raigarhand Sarangh, and then known as the Chattisgarh States. The district of Adilabad of the former Hyderabad State was later incorporated in Andhra Pradesh, and is the home of a substantial group of Gonds closely akin to the Gonds of Yeotmal and Chanda. But, Gonds of Adilabad have their own customs and traditions, which are distinct and unique in its own way.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Gonds of Adilabad live in the midst of deciduous forests. The climate of the region of their habitat conforms closely with that prevalent in most parts of the central Deccan. Three seasons are felt during a year: hot season lasting from the middle of February to the beginning of June, the rainy season that follows summer and lasts till the end of September, and a winter extending from October to February. The day temperature during the hot season will be up to 46°C in the plains and about 40°C in the high hills. The average rainfall is about 100cm. Flora in the region basically includes trees of tamarind, ppa, mango, teak, neem, bamboos etc. The most common fauna includes wild pigs. The population of tigers is almost nil. Deer's and antelopes are also diminishing in number. Among the birds peacock, duck are common, but a variety of other birds are also present.

#### **Study village:**

Mankapur, the present study village falls under the jurisdiction of Narnoor mandal of Adilabad district. The village is around 2kms from Narnoor mandal. It is surrounded by hills.

**Language:** Invariably, all Gonds speak their own language, that is, Gond. This language is classified as a Dravidian language. Most of them are also familiar with Telugu and Marathi.

**Physical features:** Gonds are basically medium stature with well-built body and dark brown to lighter color skin complexion. A broad face, high cheekbones, a small, short nose, wide nostrils and a small pointed chin characterize them.

**Dress and ornaments:** The men wear white cotton dhoti. A turban of white or colored cloth is also worn. Women wear the cotton sari in a unique style. One end of the saree is drawn between the legs and tucked in at the back. The other end is thrown over the right shoulder. Women wear ornaments like armlets and anklets made of silver and glass bangles of different colors. Their hands, arms and legs are extensively tattooed.

**Houses:** Most of the houses are rectangular and kutcha. However, about 12% of the houses are pucca with cemented walls and tiled roofs. In some houses walls are also made up of mud. Most of the houses are single or double roomed with wooden doors and windows. For each and every house there is fencing and inside the compound of the house they maintain a kitchen garden where vegetables and flowers are raised.

**Food habits:** The traditional staple food of Gonds is jowari and rice. Consumption of different varieties of curry with available vegetables in the kitchen garden is also high. They usually eat twice a day. Special food items are cooked at the time of festivals.

**Social Organization:** Social organization relates to the functioning of different social institutions in the Gond Society. The institutions are established norms or conditions of procedure linked with group action. The social units of clans and family and the institutions of kinship and marriage are discussed below for the description of social organization of Gonds. Consequently, religion, economic and political organization are also discussed.

**Clans** Social groupings based on blood are perhaps the most important social units

among the Gonds. The persons belonging to these units generally regard themselves as descendants of common ancestor and claim that same blood runs in their veins. In Mankapur, four exogamous patrilineal descent groups known in Gondias "saga" were reported. All the four "sagas" not only share a common mythical history, traced back to their very origin, but their members stand to each other in the relationship of traditional marriage partners. Each phratry is divided into a number of named clans called "pari". The clan name is always placed before the given name, thus a man of Atram clan called Lachu, is known as Atram Lachu. Some other clans in this village are: Mesram, Kotnaka, Atram, Kumra and soon.

**Family:** The family type is predominantly nuclear-type with extension. But there are also few broken and joint families. The family is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal. That is among Gonds the father or the eldest male is recognized as the head of the family. The family is the important basis of day-to-day economic and social life. The member of family produce food by joint action with well defined division of labour. The numerical composition of the households of the Gonds living in the study village is as follows:

Number of household members						
Single	2 - 3	4 - 5	6 - 8	7 - 9	9 Plus	Total
2 3.0%	13 19.7%	20 30.3%	28 42.4%	2 3.0%	1 1.5%	66

**Types of families:**

a. **Sub-Nuclear family:** A sub-nuclear family consists of a married couple with or without children. There are three such families out of total 66 families in the village.

b. **Sub-Nuclear family with dependent:** This is the family consists of married couples without children and divorced or widowed parents dependent on them. There is only 2 such families in the village.

[1] **Broken family:** Once a nuclear family breaks down due to the death or divorce of one of the spouse's, it becomes broken family. It consists of a widow or a widower, divorcee or divorcee with unmarried children of either sex. There are 4 families in the village

[2] **Broken family with dependents:** This family consists of broken family with some dependents. The dependents are widow, widowed daughter, daughter's husband or married granddaughter. There are 5 families among the villagers.

[3] **Nuclear family:** A nuclear family consists of a husband, wife along with their unmarried children. There are 30 families among 66 families in the village.

[4] **Nuclear Family with dependents:** The nuclear family which includes one dependent who do not constitute the family by themselves and become dependent on a nuclear family. Ten families are observed to be of this type in the study village.

[5] **Horizontal extended family:** when two or more males siblings live together along with their mates and children, this is called horizontally extended family. There are 8 families found among Gond.

[6] **Vertically extended family:** when a couple live along with their remarried son and his children, they form a vertically extended family. There are 2 families.

[7] **Polygamous family:** A Polygamous family consists of a man and two or more of his wives along with their children. T

wofamilieswerefoundtobeofthistypeamongGonds.

**Marriage:**

MarriageisasingificantphaseofthelifeofbothmenandwomenamongtheGonds.Membersareconsideredasadultsonlyaftersheirmarriage..Themostcommontypeofmarriageamonggondsismarriagebynegotiationcalledaskhajakhopramarming.Marriagebyservice(lamsarearming)andmarriagebycapture(pisiwatwalmarming)arealsoreported.Marriagebynegotiationisconsideredasprestigiousofalltypes,whilemarriagebyserviceisnotfavoured bymany.In caseofmarriagebynegotiation,a formal proposal is first made bytheboy's side relatives.Oncethe

proposalisagreed,betrothalceremony(khaja)isarranged.Thisisfollowedbyanelaboratewedding(marming)inthebridegroom'svillage.Thekinsfolkofbothbrideandbride

groomparticipateintheweddingceremony.Marriageceremonyisheldatgroomhouseonly,andexpensesareexclusivelymetbythefamilyofthebridegroom.Monogamyisacceptednorm.

RarecasesofPloygynymayalsobefound.Gondwomendon'tobjectonprincipletoliveinpolygamiousunionsandwecanfindmanyinstancesofco-

wiveslivingamicablyinonehouse.TheabolitionofpolygamyimposedbytheGovernmentofIndiainthe1950'shashadnoeffectonthegondsssofarandmostofthemaleunawareofanylegallimitonthenumberofwivesamanmaymarry.LevirateandSORORATEarealsopracticed.Marriagesysteminvolvespaymentofbridepriceintheformofgoats,orevensometimescashatthetimeofmarriage.

ThefollowingrulesareobservedformarriageamongtheGonds.TheimportantrulethatinfluencestheselectionofmatesamongGondsisendogamyatthetribelevel.Ruleofexogamyisalsoobserved.Itisprohibitingmarriagewithinaspecifiedgroup.AmongGonds,thesocialgroupisusuallytheclan.ThemostpreferredcategoriesformarriagesareMBDandFZD.

**Economicorganization:**

The most predominant occupation for the members of Mankapur village is settled agriculture. Some households are also engaged in tailoring, wage labor, service etc. In the following table, distribution of the households according to the occupation of the head of the household is presented.

Occupation of the head of the household						Total
Agriculture	Tailor	Labour	Service	Petty business	Others	
42	2	12	7	1	2	66
63.6%	3.0%	18.2%	10.6%	1.5%	3.0%	100.0%

In case of settled agriculture ploughing usually starts in the month of Durar that corresponds to February-March and continues till the month of Bhawe. First sowing takes place in Bur-Bhawe and the crops are harvested in Sat that corresponds to November-

December. Major crops that are cultivated are: jowar, soya, kapus, wanj, nung, pesa etc. Soya and cotton are basically cultivated for marketing and not for their consumption.

The total agricultural land in Mankapur village is 543 acres. The land owned by the Gonds is dry land and they entirely depend on rainfall for irrigation. Most of the Gonds who own the land have 1-

5 acres. The distribution of households by the extent of land owned is presented in the following table.

Extent of land							
Landless	1-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-15 acres	16-20 acres	21-25 acres	26-40 acres	Total
31.8%	31.8%	22.7%	6.1%	6.1%	1.5%	Nil	100

Different kinds of implements are used for agriculture. Main agricultural implement is nangal (plough) which is a simple wooden structure used for ploughing. Sickles like setada, kusa are used for harvesting crops.

#### **Political organization:**

Among the Gonds we see an intermingling of both traditional and modern political organization working together. Traditional political organization is the organization in which village headman - an elderly person - generally solves the disputes that may occur in the village. Modern political organization refers to the participation in political institutions at Panchayat, Mandal, and District level as per the constitution of India. Participation in modern political institutions is through affiliations with political parties in the State.

Generally, the traditional political institution of Gonds functions for resolving the disputes in the village. The village headman (Patel) summons meeting of elderly people for this purpose. The guilty person is punished by asking him to give feast or by imposing fine. In some cases the person is ostracized. Patel acts as administrative head and keeps an eye on the law and order situation.

Office of the Patel is hereditary and transferred to

the eldest son of the family. If the dispute is not solved then the local leaders go to the Sarpanch to solve the same.

#### **Religion:**

Religion is the vital part of any society and it plays a significant role in tribal societies in particular. The most prominent tribal god among Gonds are Bheemdev and Poochamma worshipped in the month of chait that corresponds to March-

April. Apart from these two, they have their own clan gods like Persa Pen and village deities like Aki Pen and Auwal Pen. There are religious specialists among the Gonds: the village priest (devari), the clan priest (katora), and the seer or diviner (bhaktal). They also have ancestral worship. They perform life cycle rituals like tonsuring, puberty, marriage, and death in a traditional manner. Most common festivals among Gonds are akhadipuja, polapanduga, nagobarite, holi, kamdevj atra etc.

#### **Communication**

In Mankapur village communication and transport facilities are quite significant. The village is connected to the main road and within 2 Km there is a small town with telephone booths, grocery shops, hospital, medical shop etc. Villagers' commute to this town by autorickshaws.

#### **Medical facilities:**

In Mankapur village there are local medicine men, providing herbal medicines to the villagers. These medicine men use various herbs for treatment of various diseases like Typhoid, Jaundice, fever, cold, cough etc. In case of serious illness they go to the Nar noor government hospital, which is 2 km far from their settlements.

**Inter and intratribal relations:**

Gonds of the study village maintain very close and intimate relationship with members of other tribes and castes in the village and also outside the village. The sorrows, happiness and all feelings are seen to be shared with each other in the village. There is exchange of labor and other agricultural implements. Any conflicts and tension that may crop up in between are peacefully resolved by the head of the village.

**Literacy and education:**

Majority of the members in the village are illiterates. However, some of the youth had their education up to college level. The following table shows the educational attainments of the heads of the households in the study village.

Education of the head of the household					
Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Inter	Degree	Total
63.6%	9.2%	21.2%	4.5%	1.5%	100

**II. CONCLUSION**

The Gonds of Adilabad live in the midst of deciduous forests. The climate of the region of their habitat conforms closely with that prevalent in most parts of the central Deccan. Invariably, all Gonds speak their own language, that is, Kond. The men wear white cotton dhoti. A turban of white or colored cloth is also a must. Women wear the cotton sari in a unique style. One end of the saree is drawn between the legs and tucked in at the back. The family type is predominantly nuclear-type with extension. But there are also few broken and joint families. The family is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal. Majority of the members in the village are illiterates. However, some of the youth had their education up to college level.

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