



Economic aspects of Boya Community in Rayalaseema Districts

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Abstract: Boyas are not a homogenous people. They are divided into several groups which are mainly occupational. However, there are two main divisions; Uru Boyas and Myasa Boyas and each of them are again sub-divided into a number of exogamous groups such as Yenumula Varu, Manadala Varu, Puva Varu, Meena Varu and the like. Such a division among the Boyas does not appear to have been of recent origin but has been coming down from early times. The economic condition of this class depends upon two sets of factors, namely the natural characteristics of the country in which they live and their energy and ability in combating such of those characteristics as are unfavourable.

Keywords: Boyas, homogenous, exogamous groups

Introduction

Boya is the name of a caste in the present Andhra Pradesh which falls under Back Ward Class Community. A Boya is also spelled as Boyar, is the name of the same caste but mean a leader of a group or Head of a Territory. The word 'Nishada' is taken to be the Sanskrit synonym of Boya and interestingly some of the Boya sects trace their descent from the mythical 'Nishada' which appears to be a generic term used to describe all the aboriginal tribes and particularly the synonym of Kirata. The Kirata-Boya-Bedar-bhoi-Nishada is synonymous in many texts. Kirataka Boya and Nishadi Boya can be found in Andhra Pradesh.

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division among the Boyas does not appear to have been of recent origin but has been coming down from early times.

Agriculture

Their welfare is indirectly bound up with that of the cultivator, in as much as they subsist by supplying him with the little luxuries and conveniences with which in bad sections, when money is scarce, he altogether dispenses. The ryots of the districts are few of them great land holders on only three percent of the pattas is the assessment over Rs.50% per annum, and in the case of 69 percent of them it is less than Rs.10. It is therefore only the smaller farmer that need be considered.

The economic condition of this class depends upon two sets of factors, namely the natural characteristics of the country in which they live and their energy and ability in combating such of those characteristics as are unfavourable.

The natural conditions of Rayalaseema could scarcely be more inimical to agricultural prosperity than



they are. The soil is most of it wretchedly infertile, the rainfall is light the uncertain. Fuel and fodder are scarce, irrigation facilities are few, the indigenous cattle are bad, manure is difficult to get and the people are few in number.

The qualifications of the ryot for meeting these adverse characteristics and his resultant condition cannot be better described than by quoting the following passages from a report upon the subject written in 1881 by sir Frederic Nicholson when collector.

In the matter of education and intellectual status, the districts are probably the most backward, in the presidency. Real education is too important a factor in the problem to be ignored, and so long as ignorance holds entire sway, there seems little hope of such a general advance, at all events along the agricultural line, as to push back the famine difficulty. The history of the districts, as of similar ones, shows that the pressure of food failures is absolutely insufficient presto induce decided advances; whether the apathy arise from frequent failure, or from fatalism, or from improvidence, or from ignorance, or from hereditary conservatism, or from want of example and emulation, it is certain that there is at present a total absence of effort and determined struggle except on the old lines; no marriage in this districts has ever yet been delayed for fear of not being able to provide for a family or because the family property would have to be subdivided, or because capital was wanting to stock and work a new farm; no new agricultural departure, save only in the matter of a few ploughs in the richer part of the districts, has been taken; no determined effort has been

made to force an unwilling soil to yield more than it has hitherto yielded; not even patent advantages, such as those of wells in wet land, of fencing and tree planting, of due manorial conservation, or of cattle treatment, have been even moderately adopted; only in the matter of water supply do they follow the ancestral custom of laboriously bringing rills of water to their distant fields. The ryots are only fairly industrious, and that only in the ancestral grooves. It cannot be doubted that real education must be looked to for the mental development of the ryot; self-interest such as acts upon Europeans and impels them to the accumulation of wealth, to the hereditary struggle with nature to new developments whether of agriculture, manufacture, or trade, to the acquisition of knowledge and to prudence in marriage, is wholly insufficient as a motive power in this districts, such education as is given has little or no connection with a lad's after-life; there is nothing in it to help him to farm; it does not teach him to observe, or make him think about, or to think new thoughts about, his processes and products. Probably an adaptation of the educational scheme to the wants of the agriculturist will go far to help us to face the famine problem. As for the wealth of the districts, it is simply non-existent, taking the ryot first, his cultivation is good evidence of his poverty, while there is a terrible absence of tawellery amongst the females; this latter want is very marked to one coming from the south. The ryot has little exchange value in his land; to judge by registration transactions it is except in Tadpatri generally and in some parts of the other taluks, hardly a marketable article; at all events the ryot can borrow but little upon it;⁵ This stands in his way should he wish



to make improvements; though on other hand it tends to prevent reckless indebtedness. Another evidence of poverty is the small number of money-lenders in the districts, and these generally deal with very moderate sums. On the whole the districts is without doubt the poorest and most backward of all districts, whether as regards agriculture or other industries.

The ability of the districts to maintain its population follows as a matter for discussion. Rayalaseema is always in danger at least of distress; soils and climate are adverse, produce but scanty, the ryot ignorant and backward, and industries other than rural almost non-existent. The mere abundance of land and scantiness of population are nothing; distress does not arise from the pressure of population upon the land in the sense of adense population on a restricted area; pressure here is the inability of the bulk of the soil, even of that under present holding which embraces all the best lands, to yield acrop in bad seasons, and no abundance of land will compensate for that inability. The districts had in 1871 a density of population of only 152 to the square mile, as against 226 for the presidency generally, yet the distress in 1877-78 was probably severest in this and Bellary districts, hence the pressure of population on area was not the cause of famine, but the pressure upon the existing means and methods of getting a livelihood and of raising crops. If indeed capital and manure were more abundant; a large area might be cultivated in good years, and the surplus stored; but this is impossible, there being no such capital available, and if there were it would best be devoted to intensive cultivation rather than to a precarious extension capital will

not descend from the stay (though it can arise out of the earth) and there seems therefore no way of making the districts regularly maintain itself other than by acting on the ryot in the matter of education in rural economy, as for instance, by inculcating and inducing the adoption of the home stead system, so that the ryot by living on his own fields may devote himself more closely to the fields, may adopt the natural and sufficient manorial system which physiologically links agriculture and sanitation, may have the power of keeping his own cattle free from danger of infection, and generally may be tempted to combat more vigorously with hostile nature. The ryot himself seems the principal factor in the problem for it is absurd to suppose that a districts could not maintain.

With the object of helping the latest ideas on agricultural matters to reach the ryot, an agricultural society was started at Penukonda at the end of 1901. It is still in existence and has on its rolls 300 members belonging to the districts and 200 from outside it. Its present and Vice-President are respectively the collector and the head assistant it publishes a periodical devoted mainly to agricultural matters, distributes leaflets and organises lectures on these subjects has held on exhibition, has induced some of its members to experiment with groundnut and potatoes and is negotiating the purchase of a price of wet land under the Penukonda tank which is to serve as a trial ground and model farm.⁷

Animal Husbandry

Boyas domesticate animals like sheep, goat, buffaloes etc., the oxen and cows are reared mostly by affluent



people. They usually construct separate conical round shaped huts for sheep and goat. But for the cow and buffaloes, separate pens are constructed with bamboos. They do not normally store fodder for the animal as their dwellings are close to the water sources where enough fodder is naturally available. They usually start with their animals in the morning and come back to their gudems in the evening. In the abnormal situations when the surrounding pastures are depleted due to the failure of rains, the Boyas get out for a temporary migration, along with their livestock to the wooded areas where enough pastures are available. They even stay into the interior of forest for a couple of months and return to their villages when there are favourable conditions.

Casual Labour: Especially physical work manual labour means work using your hands. The price will include the labour and materials, the company wants to keep down labour costs. The means to stop work as a means of protest. He was sentenced to two years in a labour camp labour a type of prison where people have to do hard physical work.

People who work: The people who work or are available for work in a country or a company a shortage of labour repairs in value skilled labour, which can be expensive good labour relations means the relationship between workers and employers.

Conclusion: It may be concluded that the Boyas are not a homogeneous people but they are the indigenous groups who inhabit almost all parts of India. They are divided into various exogamous groups which are based on the

occupations that they took up. In the historical period they are the hunting and warrior class who served the greater rulers such as Vijayanagar rulers and the local chieftains in Andhra Pradesh, they are recognised as backward class the economic condition of this class depends upon two sets of factor namely the available natural resources in their ecological setting and ability in combating the situations which are unfavourable. These people domesticate animals like sheep, goat, buffaloes etc. As Rayalaseema districts is drought prone, the depletion of natural resources such as pasture lands make them to migrate to cities. It may also be concluded that they are in the transitional phase i.e. passing from nomadic way of life to sedentarisation. As these people served as war peasantry under palegar system, in the Vijayanagara Period, the bravery and chivalry of these people is skill found in their day to day life. Hence their cultural differences, profession, food habits, aggressive behaviour distinguish them from other castes and they are the base for factionism, a continuity of palegar system in Rayalaseema region.

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