

## **Status of Education among the Denotified Tribes of Andhra Pradesh**

### **A Case Study of Siddhapuram and Stuartpuram Settlements**

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Some tribes in India, known for their criminal propensities have been declared as criminal tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. After Independence, the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed in 1952 and these groups came to be known as 'denotified communities'. As per the census of 1981, 6.7 crore people were classified as members of the denotified community. A study conducted by the Tribal Welfare Department, Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, indicated 59 sections of denotified tribes in the State—to name a few, Yanadis, Lambadis, Yerukulas, Donga Waddars, etc. mainly residing in Guntur, Kurnool, Nellore, Krishna, Warangal, Mahaboobanagar, Anantapur and Cuddapah Districts of Andhra Pradesh. Their main occupations are agriculture, making ropes, baskets and mats, grinding stones and other petty business.

Education of children of the denotified communities is a very important concern of our government. Although schools were provided in their settlements, attendance was made compulsory for the children of school-going age, expenses on education were met by the government, and children were fed, desirable results have not been achieved to improve their standard of living. The solution to the problem depends on how best educational facilities can be provided to them. The educational problems concerning these denotified tribes should be tackled by the apex educational organizations as a part of their extension programmes. It is with this background that it was decided to study the educational pattern available to these denotified tribe children with a view to improving the literacy rate in the present settlements. This article presents the academic/educational conditions of the children of the denotified tribes and suggests ways and means to improve their quality of education.

#### **Siddhapuram Settlement**

Siddhapuram is situated in Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh. The settlement is in between Atmakur and Srisailam road. Siddhapuram settlement is a voluntary settlement. The site of the settlement was shifted to the present place in January 1927. The strength of the settlement in the beginning was 112 (30 men, 40 women and 42 children).

For the education of the Donga Waddar children, a school was established during the year 1915. Twenty-six boys and 26 girls were receiving instruction during the year 1916. Education was imparted in the three Rs and no attempt had been made to give them industrial training. The attendance was fairly regular. The school was run by two male teachers and one female teacher who were paid Rs 15 and Rs 12, and Rs 10 respectively. The Education Department was inspecting the school now and then.

The average attendance during the year 1924 was 19.5. The boys were made to learn agricultural work in the fields during the season. Carpentry, weaving tapes, masonry and brick-making work were taught. The girls were taught sewing. They had attained proficiency in making their own jackets. Taylor, the then Labor Commissioner, said, "The children look well-cared-for and show satisfactory knowledge of their subjects".

The settlement was excellent in every way. Most of the boys used to read and write Telugu well. They were smart and clean.

The following table shows the class-wise distribution of children during the year 1927.

TABLE 1  
**The Strength of Siddhapuram School, 1927**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
Infant	8	7	15
Class I	2	2	4
Class II	–	3	3
Class III	3	2	5
Class IV	5	–	5
Class V	4	–	4

The Scout troop of boys was started in 1923. The Boy Scouts prepared for the inspection of officers. The officers were pleased with their smart turnout. The educated Waddar settlers were sent for teachers' training at Kurnool and were later appointed as teachers in the school. The school worked for 252 days in a year.

The schoolmistress, the wife of the compounder, took care of the girls in the lower classes. Elementary school boys were given practical lessons in agriculture on the government farm. The school was regularly inspected by the Deputy Inspector of Schools, the District Education Officer and Sub-assistant Inspectors.

Elderly boys were taught some agricultural theories in the class and then they were given manual work on the government farm. Some were sent to learn weaving. Some were trained as scouts. The best boys were presented with eight goats as prizes to promote interest in education.

The headmaster was a secondary grade trained teacher. He possessed good teaching ability and organizing capacity. English was introduced as an additional subject in Classes IV and V during the year 1937, as suggested by the collectors. The headmaster was the only person who was competent to handle that language. We can draw comparisons between Siddhapuram children and students belonging to advanced localities in the district. The Waddar children were brought up under excellent discipline. They were trained to become self-reliant and useful members of society.

The old boys of the school were encouraged to form a dramatic troupe, and enacted four street dramas. It served them as a diversion and as moral instruction. 'Animal Week' was celebrated and the settlers were taught to show sympathy towards their animals. Leaflets were read and explained to them. The supply of mid-day meals to school children commenced in Siddhapuram in 1937.

Sometimes the settlement manager used the innocent settlers in scandals. Since the manager was the incharge of the school, tuition work was assigned to the grown-up girls. Older girls in the school visited delinquents' houses for preparing lessons and learnt Banjara songs. Brutal assaults were made on school girls. It was very sad to know that, "In a school, especially of criminal settlers, a strict standard of discipline was absolutely essential and any chastisement by the headmaster in the exercise and maintenance of such a discipline should not be criticized. Exercise of discipline must be measured with a different standard".

The school was developed into an elementary school during the year 1938. Pupils who completed Class V joined the higher elementary school. The government sanctioned the commencement of Class VI in the settlement school at Siddhapuram during 1947-48, and the conversion of one of the higher elementary grade teacher's posts into a secondary grade post. The students who passed Class VI were sent to Velgode for further studies in the Telugu lower secondary school. The settlers' girls who passed Class VI were sent for training in midwifery.

The students of elementary school and secondary grade school were too slow to understand lessons due lack of proper motivation. The number of children in each class was more than a teacher could coach easily. The parents of the children did not appreciate the value of education. They were constantly goaded to send the children to school.

The strength of the school during the year 1948-49 was as follows.

TABLE 2

**The Strength of Siddhapuram School  
during the Year 1948-49**

**Class Average Attendance Strength 1948-49**

	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
Class I	18	17
Class II	10	6
Class III	9	6
Class IV	10	2
Class V	6	1
Class VI	4	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>43</b>

At present, the location and condition of the school at Siddhapuram is in a deplorable condition. The teacher, an ex-serviceman of the British Period is running the school. It is not planned properly, since there is no syllabus or curriculum prescribed for the school. The environment is not conducive for the children to study. There are only two graduates in the entire settlement and they too are still unemployed.

**Stuartpuram Settlement**

The Salvation Army thought that education was compulsory for the Yerukulas of this settlement and, therefore, started an elementary school in 1916. Elementary education was made compulsory and those not attending the school were strictly punished. Out of 481 children in the settlement, 250 children were school-going during the year 1916. Seventy-four children attended

the school regularly. The children in the school were very bright. The Governor of Madras was delighted with the school and took a photograph of the boys.

The school was run in a leaky Palmyra shed 60 ft × 20 ft. In the elementary school, the children were taught the three Rs and general knowledge, including rural science, gardening, nature study, English, physical training and the Bible. In the higher classes, industrial education and moral training were introduced. Instruction in agriculture was made compulsory in school education. The school was a coeducational one. There were 40 children in each section. Class books, maps, slate and slate pencils, pictures of animals and plants, a globe, Ananda Primer and Ananda Readers for Classes I, II and III, and garden implements for children were purchased by the manager. Night classes were conducted for adults. The teachers employed in the day school taught in the night schools also. The wives of the teachers evinced keen interest in girls' education. For this, the teachers were given extra salary — eight rupees to the headmaster and five rupees to assistant teachers. The subjects taught in the night school were reading, writing and arithmetic.

TABLE 3

**Strength of Elementary School, Stuartpuram, 1917**

Standards	Number on Rolls		Number Present		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Infants A	14	11	14	9	23
Infants B	22	14	13	11	24
Infants C	15	23	10	18	28
Infants D	30	34	25	27	52
Class I	8	3	6	2	8
Class II	11	1	8	1	9
Class III	7	3	7	3	10

The strength and attendance of students in the elementary school on 29 October 1917 are given in Table 3.

The management of the school and the employment of teachers were left entirely to the Salvation Army. The government desired that the rules prevailing in the Education Department should be adopted. An interesting feature of that time was that qualified teachers from the Yerukulas, both men and women, were appointed as teachers in the school. This was done with the intention of creating an atmosphere in the settlement primarily to promote the self-confidence of the whole tribe and, secondly, to prove that those who were committed to do any work were asked to do so seriously. To strengthen this, periodical inspections were arranged by educational officers. The teachers were given better salaries and provided free quarters in the settlement. Ganji (boiled rice water) was supplied at noon to the students who were present both in the morning and in the evening.

The following table describes the teachers in the school during the year 1918.

TABLE 4

**Position of Teachers in Stuartpuram Elementary School**

Name of the Teacher	Qualification	Pay	
		(in Rupees)	

K. Jacob	L.S.P.T.C. of 1915	25/-
Ch. Joseph	S.S.L.C. of 1915	20/-
Santhoshammal	L.S.P.T.C. of 1915	15/-
Soubhagyammal.	S.P.T.C. of 1915	15/-
P. Simon	Not passed	12/-
Lyssammal	Passed Class IV	12/-
B. Solomon	Not passed	12/-

The newly established boarding school helped in reducing the atmosphere of crime among the settlers. The boarding school was established for (i) orphan children, (ii) children whose parents were in jail, (iii) children of parents who were miserably poor, (iv) children of parents just returned from jail, (v) children who were separated from parents because of the bad character of parents or because of the suspected character of the children and, (vi) children of absconding settlers.

The boarding school was very well managed and in a report the manager stated that the school was an asset to the settlement. In order to improve the sleeping conditions of the children of the settlers, the Commissioner of Labor constructed separate dormitories for boys and girls. Two matrons were appointed separately to take care of them. Another classification was that of young children and the older ones. A separate building was arranged for recreation purposes.

Meeting of parents and children either at school or at home added to the children's mental disturbance. It was felt that reformation was impossible in an atmosphere where the crime culture was not forgotten. The Salvation Army dissuaded the parents from meeting their children. But the influence of the parents on their separated children was very severe. The new generation was made up of honest people. The Salvation Army scheduled working hours in such a way that no time was left for the children to visit their parents and hence no perpetuation of crime among the youth. Thus they segregated the children from their parents and arranged a boarding school in the settlement and permitted occasional visits of the parents.

The Salvation Army established peons for the reformation of the children of the ex-settlers. The peons for these schools were selected from among the settlers themselves. Their duty was to go around and collect the children for school. At the age of five years the settlers' children were sent to school. In the elementary school, instruction was given up to Class V.

There was an increase in the number of children attending the school every year. During the year 1924 there were nearly 401 children on the rolls and the average attendance was 261. Furthermore, the outside influences were felt by the children. The Salvation Army authorities considered that the solution to the problem was in sending girls to Nellore and boys to Perambur (near Madras city). It would help them in the reformatory process. Mackenzie, the Salvation Army official, wanted to change the structure of the building to create a new atmosphere in the settlement. The availability of buildings at Nellore was a positive factor and this was congenial to the growth of children. The Salvation Army suddenly closed the boarding school in Stuartpuram and shifted some of the girls to Nellore Girls' School. But the closing down of the Stuartpuram boarding school (1926) was a severe blow to the settlers' children.

A significant feature of this settlement was that, the manager, L.R., Gale, gave a Christian bias to the whole atmosphere of the settlement. When the first batches of Yerukulas were brought into this settlement, men and women were dirty-looking and were involved in petty thefts and road robberies. It was not an easy task to teach "criminal tribes to be on the path of righteousness".

But much had been done towards this end. The younger generation understood and responded well.

The Salvation Army constructed a church in the year 1915 ostensibly to reform the Yerukulas by giving them Bible education and thereby making them disciplined. All the settlers were gathered and brought into the church.

S.H. Slater, the Labor Commissioner, bestowed attention on the school children. Some students got through the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) examination. Those who failed were also given utmost care. They were admitted either in Paddison hostel or in the Industrial School, Perambur, Madras. Some of the boys who passed through the five standards in the settlement school were admitted in Classes IV and V of the high school at Bapatla. The then Deputy Inspector General of Police, Madras, inspected the settlement school in 1931 and wrote, "I knew this settlement in its earliest infancy. My visit today was peculiarly interesting. My first visit was in 1914. Today... it is possible to see that the settlement has completely fulfilled the purpose for which it was instituted".

The Salvation Army opened a new girls' school for the development of women's education. During the year 1921, there were nearly 100 girls in it. During the year 1926 a few girls were transferred to Nellore Industrial School. Owing to the closure of the girls' reformatory school at Nellore, a number of girls were sent back to their parents. There were no classes above Class V. The girls who studied at Nellore in the higher classes were again sent to the higher elementary boarding school at Kavali. Nursing and training in sewing were given to the girls. The manager of Stuartpuram settlement selected some women who were familiar with the three Rs and talented in the art of conversation. They were trained in the proper maintenance of the house or the working place. Incentives were offered by way of encouragement to draw out their talents. For example, on 10 March 1928 a medal was won by a girl for essay writing on 'Home Sanitation' during health week competition.

The settlers had a brigade of Scouts since, 1923. Although the members were constantly changing owing to employment and other circumstances they had a creditable brigade. A small bugle band had been formed and equipment supplied. The Assistant Manager had taken a keen interest in the movement and himself went into camp with the Scouts. The scouting activities in the schools were conducted by the school teachers who were trained as Scout Masters.

All the adult reformed settlers were expected to give importance to morality. Polygamy was prevalent and traces of polyandry were rare among them. The Salvation Army thought that religious and moral instruction were the greatest factors for their improvement. They instructed the womenfolk of the settlement to take stern steps to control their men folk's crimes. But ironically, even the wives were involved in the culture of crime.

The supply of midday meals was started at Stuartpuram for the first time only in December 1947. Other settlements' school children were also supplied with midday meals at government expense. The introduction of midday meals to the school children was to encourage the children to attend school regularly and to make them fit to receive instruction. The school children were taken on excursions.

It is striking to note that among the Yerukula community of Stuartpuram settlement some have secured good employment both in Central and State Governments. At present, more than 150 members even receive University education. This is obviously, to some extent, due to the efforts of the Salvation Army and the awareness among the youth. Separate hostels are also being maintained by the Salvation Army for these children. Consequently, there are nearly 155

students in these hostels today. In the hostels there are 101 boys and 54 girls studying from Class I to Class X. It is providing scholarships, food, hostel facilities and clothes to the students.

The Salvation Army had requested the Secretary, Government of Madras, to sanction a general library for children outside the premises of the school and it was conceded. Even now it is maintained by the Salvation Army.

In the year 1958, the Salvation Army together with the Inspector General of Police, opened a new high school for the children of the settlers. The school comprised mainly Yerukula children and some converted Christians together with the children of upper castes. Later, it was converted into a middle school from the academic year 1958-59. It was run by the Social Welfare Department. The high school followed the syllabus prescribed by the Board of Secondary Education, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. The strength of the high school as per the annual record of the year 1991 is 277. The division of boys and girls from Class VI to X is given in Table 5.

Table 5

**Strength of the High School in Stuartpuram, 1991**

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
VI	34	26	60
VII	29	18	47
VIII	26	17	43
IX	34	28	62
X	41	24	65
Total			277

After Independence, the Indian Government withdrew all the powers of the Salvation Army. The authority of the management was shifted to the Tribal Welfare Department. But the Salvation Army continues doing its work in the settlement. A manager, his wife and some wardens are looking after the schools. In the hostel, there are 101 boys and 54 girls from Class I to Class X. Scholarships and clothes are provided to the students.

After the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952, it was contemplated that all state governments should undertake welfare schemes, especially education. In the Second Five Year Plan, funds were sanctioned by the government for the education of these tribal children. During the Third Five Year Plan, a plan provision of Rs 375 lakh was made for the purpose. An estimated expenditure of Rs 55.36 lakh was incurred during 1962-63. In the Fifth Five Year Plan no separate provision was made under centrally sponsored programmes for undertaking schemes for denotified communities.

Various societies such as the Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh (New Delhi), Andhra Rashtra Adimajati Sevak Sangh, and Andhra Rashtra Yerukula Maha Sangam came forward to reform these people. The main aims and objectives of Andhra Rashtra Adimjati Sevak Sangh were: 1. Education, 2. Literature, 3. Liberation, 4. Sadachar work, etc. Yerukulas, Yanadis and Banjaras were included in the list of Scheduled Tribes by the Parliament in 1956 owing to the efforts of

B.N. Datar, the then Minister of Home Affairs. The first school for Scheduled Tribes was started by the Sangh in 1934. The first Harijan hostel was started in 1929. The first tribal hostel was started in 1939. Female education among the tribals was taken up by the Sangh. Various types of books, magazines and articles were published in Telugu and English. The best examples are Kallumunta, Rama Rajyam and Yekalavya which are ballads. Adivasi, Dalit Marg, Girijan Jyoti, Yekalavya Patrika and Harijanoddharana were other important newspapers published by Andhra Rashtra Adimjati Sevak Sangh.

In addition to the Salvation Army and various social organizations, social workers endeavored hard to reform these people. During the year 1983, the students who secured the highest marks in public examinations in Classes VII and X in the school at Stuartpuram were awarded prizes.

The welfare measures initiated for Yerukulas, Woddars, Yanadis and Sugalis are not bearing fruit. The development of Scheduled Tribes is a real challenge. Policy formulation and its execution, most often, fall apart. Tribal children are required to pay a special fee at the time of admission, though they are exempted from other fees. Poor tribal students are not in a position to pay even this. Added to this, tribal welfare scholarships are generally delayed and released at the end of the year. As a result students are bound to face many problems.

In the sphere of employment too, tribal people are facing serious problems. Though the public advertisements earmark a number of vacancies for these people, they do not get filled properly. It is suggested that the government take appropriate measures to overcome these problems. The elected representatives from the tribal regions should advise the government about these fundamental hardships of the tribal people.

It is evident that in the quagmire of poverty, they prefer immediate gains to long-term benefits that accrue to their children after a continuous schooling of ten to fifteen years. They are under the false impression that schooling eats away their economic fruits. Therefore, need-based or job-oriented education is an effective alternative to the existing monotonous and unproductive education. In the interviews, we found from the settlers that their children could not reach higher echelons of society because of the psychological barrier they suffered from. For this, revamping the present school set-up on the lines of ashrams or gurukuls, would make a considerable difference. Trained teachers and well-equipped schools would be a significant factor in molding the personalities of children in these settlements. There is no proper schooling for the children in Siddhapuram settlement. Hence no advancement is found.

There should be a major drive to eradicate illiteracy among these people. It goes without saying that any positive change in their attitude towards earning their livelihood necessarily drives them towards a positive realization of an important aspect like education. The aim of social education can best be achieved only when feelings of deprivation, discrimination and aloofness are erased from their minds. A dynamic group of young volunteers and social workers will have to shoulder the responsibility of disseminating enlightened ideas among these people.

In view of the above analysis, a few suggestions are made to improve the educational status of the denotified tribes of Andhra Pradesh.

1. The government should conduct sample surveys to know about the present position pertaining to the present state of literacy.
2. They should be provided with jobs which give them immediate remuneration and relief. Some of those who have minimum education may be recruited into the police department as constables, water boys or sweepers.
3. Educational facilities as they exist today are not adequate. A few more schools may be established and all these schools should be provided with necessary infrastructural facilities.

4. Self-employment schemes are very useful for the unemployed youth in their economic development. Dairy-farming, piggery, poultry, small-scale industries such as basket making, weaving, mat-making, brick-making and the like should be encouraged. Mat-weaving, dress making centers, etc. require minimum technical skill and guidance should be provided for these.
5. Free coaching centers should be opened in these colonies for educated unemployed youth. Coaching facilities should be provided for the students of both technical and general courses.
6. A high potential for sports exists among these denotified tribe children. Physical education should be improved and special training facilities provided to make them national and state players.