Wool Weavers of Deccan: History, Social Life and Demand for Reservation

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Abstract:

The article gives the historical account of the wool weavers and their social life. They are known as Kuruba/va/ma in Karnataka; Kuruma Gollas in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh; Dhangars in Maharashtra; Ahirs in Central India; Pals, Bhagel and Gaderias in Western India, and Yadavs in North India. It also examines how the regional language labelled them with various parochial names, discusses the socio-cultural importance of Gongadi (traditional woollen blanket) in the everyday life of Golla-kurumas living in Telangana State. Eventually highlights their socio-political movement voicing for the status of reservation as Semi-Nomadic Tribe (SNT).

Keywords: *Wool Weavers; Semi-Nomadic Tribe; Golla-Kuruma; Puttu Gongadi; Shepherds; Deccan Plateau, Woolen Blanket*;

Introduction

India is a conglomeration of divergent factor, namely, ethnicities, languages, occupations, castes, produces and so on. *Golla-kuruma* is one of the castes that is predominately engaged in sheep and goat rearing. They are also known for weaving woolen blanket, locally known as *Gongadi* (Dandeboina, 2022a; Ghotge & Ramdas, 2010). They are considered one of the five numerically dominant castes among the Telugu people. The *Golla-kuruma* population constitutes around 12 percent of the Telangana State's population (Menon, 2017; The New Indian Express, 2017b). Though the community is numerically dominant, still are backward socio-economically and politically.They are confined to their own traditional way of living and world of life. Sheep and goat rearing, milk selling, and *gongadi* making are the major occupation of the caste and are being widely practiced by them. They are a little bit away from the mainstream society and culture (Ilaiah, 2009). School drop-out, nomadic lifestyle, usage of indigenous ways of medicine, and ancient form of language and dialect are prevalent signs of backwardness of the community. However, *Golla-kurumas* are leading traditional and vernacular life (S. S. Reddy et al., 2022).

The writers and historians from leisure classes usually portray and popularize the history of rulers and leisure classes. They deliberately ignore and are reluctant to record the history

of productive masses. As a result, wrong may be known as right and right may not be noted as right at any time. This is true in the case of *Golla-kurumas*. This is why, we need to understand the genesis, evolution, and original history of *Golla-kurumas* in a more rationalistic way by considering all shreds of evidence that we come across. However, a new perspective of understanding is highly prerequisite for knowing the original history of *Gollakurumas*.

Gensis and History of Golla-Kurumas

'Golla-kuruma' is a combined nomenclature derived from the Telugu word 'Golla' and the Kannada word 'Kuruma/Kuruva/Kuruba'. In fact, they are linguistically different but share similar socio-cultural life and spiritual pantheism across the country. The term 'Golla' is derived from 'Gorrelollu' which means shepherds in Telugu (Dalwai, 2019; Thurston, 1906). 'Gorrelollu' became 'Gollollu' which is refined and polished as 'Gollavaru' or 'Golla'. The term 'Kuruma/Kuruva/Kuruba' is derived from 'Kuri' which means 'sheep' in the Kannada language and 'Kuruma' is nothing but a shepherd in Kannada (Nanjundayya, 1906; Saxena & Saxena, 2012). The shepherds in and around the Godavari River basin are called 'Kurumas', in and around of Krishna River basin are denoted as 'Kuruva', and 'Kuruba' is in and around of Thunga and Bhadra rivers. This variation of pronunciation exists due to the climatic conditions of regions. The fact Telugu and Kannada languages were born around the 3rd century BC and by that time, the terms 'Golla' and 'Kuruma' were not present, but the shepherds widely existed and were used to call - 'Hatkars' in the Maratha language. Hatkar isa sub-group of Dhangars (Shashi, 1977).

According to Ramayana, Abhiras are non-aryan dayaus, who were organized in the form of ganas (republic) engaged in cattle-rearing and also were brave fighters who fought against the Aryas (Suryavanshi, 1959) but lost their homeland in battles and were forced to move towards Krishna and Godavari planes with their herds. Later, they were called Dhanghars in Sanskrit. Dhangharis originated from 'Denu' means cow and 'Khar' means worker/herder. However, Dhanghar means the people who rear animals like cows, sheep, goats, and buffalos. Over some time and in the course of migration, Dhanghars were divided into four sub-groups namely Ahirs (Cowherds), Hatkars (Shepherds), Gujjars (Buffalo-herders), and Kutekars (wool weavers) (Singh et al., 2004).

Hatkars became 'Gollas' in Telugu-speaking regions and 'Kuru-ma/va/ba' in Kannada-speaking areas since they are engaged in sheep and goat rearing. Thus, it is inferred that language has is differentiating these two communities but their ancestral origin is the same. This is the reason why, people used to say that '*kulampotthuvunnadikani, viyyampottuledu*' (caste alliance is permitted but marriage alliance is not). However, not just caste itself follows endogamy but, here the sub-castes are also restricted in terms of marriage tie-ups to their specific categories. Even today this practice is largely noticed among cattle-herders found among the Abhira tribe, namely, Dhanghars, Gollas, Kurumas, Kurubas, Pals, Gaderiyas,

Gujjars, Yadavs (N. S. Ghotge, 2004). Consequently, each sub-caste evolved as an independent caste and tried to trace its identity and roots in the epics written by so-called dominant class writers who had not intended to record the accounts of productive masses.

Among Ahirs (Cowherd Dhanghars), Yadu becomes a leader of prominence with his brave efforts and generosity (Michelutti, 2020). Since the name of Yadu is found in Vedas, all Ahirs were suffixed with the title of 'Yadav' to gain a substantial social status in caste-hierarchical society. This is merely an imitation of the dominant culture mentioned in Sanskrit texts, and it is widely known as 'Sanskritization'. In fact, Yadav is not a caste but a lineage succeeded by Yadu, and Yadavs of north India are historically known as 'Ahirs' who are primarily cattle-herders (Prasad, 2015) and a major sub-group of the Dhanghar community (Dhere and Feldhaus, 2011).

With the deprivation of education for generations together and for the lack of proper research on the genealogy of caste, the history of shepherds and cowherds became much more confusing, complicated and misleading too. The researchers and intellectuals should explore the realities by studying deeper into the core of the problem for its validations.

In the year 1975 in Karnataka Kuruba Sangha submitted a memorandum to the Chairman of Backward Classes Havanur Commission, Bangalore. It says that "the Kuruba community is called by different names in the state such as Halumatha Kuruba, Vokkaliga Kuruba, Kurikayuva Kuruba, Gondaru, Gonda Kurubaru,Unne Kankanadavaru, Hattikankanadavaru, Kadu Kurubaru, Voggaru, Kadusiddayyaru, Kilari, Dhangar, Bhaawar, Kurumbaru, Hande Kuruba, Kavadi and Makadivales, Jagayyagalu, Kurigararu, Hanabaru, Hankara, Peddaru, Sudugadusiddaru, Gavaligalu, Sandaru, Odeyaru, Kambi Kurubaru, Kankayyan Jatiyavaru, Prathamasudraru, Indrasudraru, Varada Kurubaru, Dasayyagalu, Golla, Gorava, Jenukunbaru, Urukurubaru, Hosakurubaru, Hale Kurubaru, Sada Kurubaru, Kanchi Kurubaru, Mullu Kurubaru, Betta Kurubaru (Heggadae, 2005)".

However, the name 'Kuruma or Kuruba or Kuruva' is derived from 'Kuri' or 'kuru' which means sheep-thus referring to 'sheep' in the Kannada language. There are many sub-groups of Kurumas; - the Unnikankan Kurumas (who weave woollen blankets); Hattikankan Kurumas (Who rear sheep), here 'Hatti' means 'flock or heard' in Marathi language; Halamuntha Kurumas who are milk sellers, - 'Hala' means milk in Kannada (Murty & Sontheimer, 1980); Madasi Kuruvas who are servants or dependent on shepherds; Maldari Kuruvas who are also shepherds migrated from Gujarat and Rajasthan (Rao, 1995). The last two communities were/are classified as Scheduled Castes (SCs) in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (The Hans India, 2018b). In Medak region, only Hatti Kankan and Unni Kankan are present. Unnikankan Kurumas are called Unni Gollas in the villages and are identified as part of the Yadava community at pan-Indian level.

There is a misconception that is widely prevalent among the Golla-kurumas that *Hattikankan or Pattikankan* Kurumas wear cotton bracelets. In fact, Golla-kurumas are nowhere connected with the 'Patti' (cotton). The Marathi term 'Hatti' was wrongly assumed as 'Patti' in Telugu, later in the course of Sanskritization, and in inferring it, brahmin priests named them as 'Patti Kankan'. There is a myth that was constructed around the deity Mallanna, who is considered as 'Kuladevudu'; meaning Community Deity (P. C. Reddy, 2016). According to folklore Mallanna has five wives namely; 1) Pavidikandla Padmakshi, who belongs to Kapu Community; 2) Golla Kethamma, who is from the Golla-Kuruma community; 3) Balija Medalamma, of Lingayat community; 4) Brahmana Ratnagi, hailing from Brahmin community and 5) Bramarambika is also from Brahmin community. If one deconstructs the folk tales, one can realize that Golla Kethamma was the only wife to Mallanna as the genre and content of Oggu Kathas surrounded by Mallanna and Kethammanarrates (P. C. Reddy, 2016). The other persons might have dedicated themselves as wives of Deity Mallanna like the dedication of Vakulamba or Bibi Nancharito to Lord Venkateswara.

In fact, it is only constructed from the folk tales that cotton is the symbol of the Unnikankan Kurumas who are supposed to have been born from the first wife of lord Mallanna. Wool is the symbol of those who were born to his second wife. There are various versions of the legend about the origin of Kurumas and the division between the *Hattikanan* and *Unnikankan* Kurumas. One of the legends says that Mallanna is thought to be an incarnation of Shiva, who had two wives; one was Padmaashki, a Kapu girl, who was married by having cotton bracelets tied to the wrists of the bridal couple. The second wife was Ratnangi, the daughter of a Brahmin woman who had been devoured by a female demon. The demoness had raised the new-born child. One day as Mallanna was grazing his sheep in the jungle, he came close to the girl. He was so overwhelmed by the girl's beauty that he fell in love with her. He killed the demoness and married the girl and the wedding bracelets were made of wool instead of cotton, as cotton was not available in the forest. That is why wearing a woollen bracelet distinguishes the descendants of Ratnangi from those of Padmaakshi, the latters wear cotton bracelets. The fact remains that wool and woollen Gongadi had existed much before this story.

Beerappa is considered another prime deity as a plethora of folklore exists about him in the forms of ballads, especially in Oggukatha, which is a traditional folklore of singing, praising, and narrating the stories of community deities (Boivin, 2004; Murty & Murthy, 1991). Golla-kuruma community celebrates Beeraiah Patnalu, which is generally called 'Pedda Pandaga'. It is a celebration of God Beeraiah Marriage every 5 or 7 or 9 years. Beerlollu/ Beerlavaru, who are the community priests of Golla Kuruba or Kurumas, perform the marriage of Beerappa with Kamaraathi.

The essence of Beerappa's story reveals that, since Beerappa's parents did not have children

for long, they undertook severe penance addressed to Shiva and pleased him with their devotion. They got a son called Beerappa. But, owing to the mischief of Beerappa's maternal uncle (mother's brother), the child is abandoned in a forest. There, one Maayavva (Mankali), the daughter of the king of Devagiri, finds the child and nourishes it (Prasād et al., 2001). Under her care, Beerappa grows into a very powerful youth and successfully performs many adventures. When he reaches adulthood, he vows to marry his maternal uncle's daughter; goes through many tests and ordeals, and finally succeeds in marrying her. After marriage, he undertakes long journeys accompanied by his mother; and through his adventures and miracles he establishes his divinity (Ramachandran, 2004).

The Oggu folklore also tells about the modes of grazing of sheep, struggles of shepherds, the ways of migration in the quest for fodder, the glories of Chieftains, important personalities, and places. Moreover, the culture of Golla-kurumas will commonly be depicted by a team of artists constitute 5 – 6 members. Oggu (Damar), Flute, Napire (trumpet), Dolu (Drum), and Talas are prime musical instruments used in the performance (Prasād et al., 2001). Only a few Sudra communities have rich folklore and history as Golla-kurumas have. Similarly, their cattle rearing occupation also forced them to expose and learn the indigenous way of treatment to heal their sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes etc. Thus, they are well-known as veterinary doctors in villages. They observe all kinds of leaves and herbs in the forest and conduct trial and error based experiments on the goats. Eventually identification of useful herbs and leaves are made. Their indigenous wisdom of herbs is imperative and effective in curing, so that most of the village folk still approaches them to cure their sick livestock. Nomadic lifestyle exposes them to different geographical and climate settings in the course of migration.They meet different people, cultures, and languages so that Golla-kurumas are recognized as unique. They gained a unique identity in the society for themselves. As a result, their everyday life is somewhat unique and different from others too.

In folklore, it also is believed that the deity Mallanna had used the bones of the demoness to make all the tools required to weave wool into Gongadi (Murty and Sontheimer, 1980). This is the reason why Golla-kurumas believe that Mallanna was the first person to weave a Gongadi and is considered as the inventor of wool weaving technology.

Caste Political System

Golla-Kuruma communities in a village collectively choose an elderly male or female to be the community headman/headwoman, known as *"Pedda Golla or Pedda Kuruma".* Usually, a male by tradition becomes headman but there are several incidents wherein a woman also takes up those responsibilities. *Pedda Golla* plays a key role in finding the grazing lands, exploring routes for migration, planning and organizing festivals, conducting rituals, finalizing marriages, presiding over wedding ceremonies, and resolving community disputes too. Generally, the community collectively celebrates many festivals and fairs.

The family of Golla-kurumas is patriarchal but females are also given priority and status to run the family as males or head of household. Men mostly roam in the forest or around grazing lands with a flock of sheep, thereby have less time to interact with family and neighborhood. Consequently, women tackle all the domestic and political activities; thus, women of this community are different compared to other communities. Sometimes, women also graze the flock but are mostly involved in weaving *Gongadi* (woolen blanket) at home. They also know how to treat the lambs when they are separated from the flock of adult sheep.

Language of Wool Weavers

The Golla community speaks Telugu, while the Kuruma community also speaks Telugu. However, once they used to speak Kannda as their native tongue. 'Kuruma Basha' is another name for it. The shepherds who migrated from Kannadiga region were/are known as 'Kuruma/ba/va' in Telugu land. However, the ancestral root of Golla, Kuruma, Dhangar, Ahir, Pal, Ganderia, and Bhagel is one, yet some have sanskritized themselves and were identified with 'Yadav' titles. In the state of Telangana, the bulk of Golla-Kurumas speak Telugu, which is laced with Urdu. They also speak Kannada in the settlements that are nearer to the border with Karnataka.

Purudu Ceremony

Special rituals are performed to welcome a new-born baby into the community. The *purudu* (naming ceremony) is done when a child is three days old. For a male child, wool is put into a basket and covered with a white fabric. The baby boy is placed in the basket over the white fabric. The tools that are used for shearing and a small basket of wool are placed next to the baby.

For a baby girl, the same ritual is followed, but instead of the shearing tools and wool basket, carding and spinning implements like *ekubadda/ekunara* (carding bow) and *kadaru* (spindle) are placed, signifying that she will grow up and learn to spin wool into fine yarn.

It is interesting to see how the colours black and white have their meanings and use. White wool is used as a *kankana* or wristband during all festivals, weddings, and other such occasions. Black wool is used for example when the child is 21 days old, when the naming ceremony is performed and the *kurumadaram,* a piece of black wool yarn is tied to the wrists and ankles of the baby to ward off any kind of evil. For male babies additionally, the black wool yarn is tied around the waist. It is believed that black wool will protect the child.

The birth ceremony is followed by a naming ceremony. The Father of the child with his friends and relatives goes to consult a priest for a name to be given to the child. Normally the children have been named after the Kuruma community deities and goddesses. The cradle is washed and decorated with flowers. The mother and the child are draped in new garments.

The paternal aunt (father's sister) of the child or its grandparents plays a notable role in the ritual. They will whisper the name to be given to the child into its ear. The guests will present new garments or money to the child and the mother. The guests are fed a delicious feast.

Puttugongadi Ceremony

When a Golla-kuruma boy turns 10 years, a unique ceremony called the *puttugongadi* is to be performed. This ceremony is held so that the young Golla-Kuruma realizes that the Gongadi is going to be an important part of his life. The maternal uncle or grandparents present a newly woven Gongadi to the boy, who is going to be entered into teen age. The Gongadi presented for the *puttugongadi,* has a special meaning. It is believed that it gives real birth to the individual and inculcates the value of production into the minds of growing young children. It has identical dimensions to other *gongadis* but is never doubled, stitched, or given a finishing *kada* or *kuncha.* The *puttugongadi* always has 2 white lines or *sulupu*. This *puttugongadi* is used in all other rituals, festivals, and fairs.

Puttuventrukalu (First Haircut)

The ceremony of 'cutting the first hair' of a child has got a ritual place among Golla-Kurumas like others. This is a rite that must be observed and conducted at the shrine of the family deity. The Golla-kuruma families perform it customarily by going to the temple of the family deity. This rite must be observed without fail in case of all male children among them. All family members, relatives, and family friends visit the temple of the family deity to observe this ceremony. First, the baby whose hair is to be offered to the deity getsa bath, mostly in *koneru*, and is made to sit on the lap of the mother or grandmother. Then, his/her maternal uncle (mother's brother) will symbolically cut a bunch of hairs above the forehead and offers it to the deity. Finally, all the members visit the shrine of the deity.

Gongadi at Weddings

Selection of mate or life partner among Golla-Kurumas is not of own choice ofthe bride or bridegroom. Therefore, among Golla-Kurumas also the marriage activity begins with the groom's parents looking for a suitable bride for their son. They expect that the girl should be young in age, good in manners, coming from good parental and family background. Further, they want to choose a bride from a family which is equal or superior in terms of economic status.

On the wedding day when the bridegroom is taken to the bride's residence where the marriage ceremony takes place. After completion of marriage, the newly married couple has to make a walk around the *polu*, a design made with rice grains on the floor. The husband keeps the gongadi on his shoulder while moving around the *polu*.

The wrap of the Gongadi is also used in the wedding ceremony. The knitted wrap is given to the bride and the groom to sit on. There is a story associated with this ritual: Mallanna kidnaps a girl with the intent to marry and did not find anything for her to sit on. He wraps the wrap that he was going to weave and places it on the ground for her to sit upon, which has now become a custom. Animal sacrifices form a part of the rituals. Two days after the wedding, a sheep is sacrificed. The gongadi is folded and kept on the floor near a wall. The shearing scissors are kept on it. On the folded gongadi five lines with rice flour and 5 lines of turmeric powder are drawn alternately. The sheep are sacrificed in front of this and the meat is offered to their Gods.

Death and Gongadi

In case of a death in the family, touching Gongadi is strictly prohibited for about ten days. If someone in the family comes in contact with the Gongadi, it is purified by sprinkling turmeric water. This is done because the Gongadi is considered to be a deity. However, most of the Golla-kurumas believe that a Gongadi can never become impure. Hence, the practice cannot be seen in many villages.

Pilgrim centers of Wool Weavers :

Oggukatha is a popular play that deals with oral histories of Akka Mankali, Mallanna, Beerappa, Katamaraj, Yellamma, Soudalamma, and other *kuladevas* (family Gods). The specific dependent group; namely Ogguvarau, Berlavaru, Manda Gollavaru, Tagari Jogulavaru, and Bykanivaru particularly; transfer the oral traditions through generations together and preserve wonderful cultural history. Patnalu is a unique festival usually observed by both Golla and Kuruma across the Telangana state.

Mallanna temples are located at Srisailam, Komuravelli, Odela, Inoholu, Katta, Katterashala, Peddapuram, and Kolanupaka. The famous Beerappa temple is located in Jatrapolu of Nagar Kurnool District. A temple in the name of Lingamanthula is situated in Durajpally near Suryapet town. Besides, many temples can be seen in the villages wherein Golla-kurumas predominately live.

Gollakurumas and Issue of Reservation:

During post-Independence, Indian Government has started reservations as part of affirmative action for historically underprivileged and underrepresented communities to participate in government programs, scholarships, and politics (Das, 2000). Based on Indian Constitutional provisions, it permits the Union Government and the States and Territories of India to impose reserved quotas or seats, at a specific proportion in educational admissions, employments, political bodies, promotions, etc. for "socially and educationally disadvantaged persons'' (Shah, 1991).

Kaka Kalekar reported a list of 2,399 backward castes or communities for the entire country and of which 837 (* starred communities) had been classified as the 'most backward' (Agrawal et al., 1991; Ramaiah, 1992; Suri, 1995). The shepherding castes of Golla, Kuru-ma/ba/va, and Hatkar, who live in the erstwhile Nizam-Hyderabad state, were also identified as extremely backward castes, with the star (*) symbol. Following that, the Government of Hyderabad State designated the Golla-Kuruma community as a Semi-Nomadic Tribe (SNT) and granted reservation in 1955, which was extended from 1955 to 1970. The Government of Andhra Pradesh constituted the Anantaraman Commission in 1965 (Dandeboina, 2022b), and in 1970, it placed Kuru-ma/bas under the BC-B category by considering them as a wool weaving occupational caste and Gollas under the BC-D category by considering them an agricultural group. This was a manipulative strategy to weaken the community by dividing it. Golla-kurumas who were illiterate and innocent did not object to this drastic change and were classified as Backward Classes. More specifically, it split the caste into two factions, causing Golla-kurumas to unintentionally distinguish themselves as belonging to BC-B and BC-D. In reality, BC-B and BC-D are social statuses assigned by government orders rather than castes, and they may change in accordance with rules and legislation (Bheenaveni, 2019). However, due to widespread illiteracy and ignorance, they were not yet aware of the reservation problem.

It is important to note that Dhangars, Marathi Shepherds, are availing the status of Nomadic Tribe (NT) Reservation in the state of Maharashtra for decades, yet they are included under the category of "Other Backward Class (OBC)" on the central list of reservation since 1990. The community, however, is seeking for a reservation under the Schedule Tribe (ST) category (Bose, 2019). Members of the community feel that they have been denied reservation in Union government services since the Nomadic Tribe (NT) category is not recognized at the central level (Dadas, 2021). Being the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnav has also assured the Dhangar community that his government would guarantee that they get the reservations promised by the BJP before to the Maharashtra assembly elections (The Economic Times, 2015). Even at present, Maharastra continues to experience social and political unrest as a result of the unmet demand for a Schedule Tribe (ST) reservation for Dhangar shepherds (Bose, 2019). This socio-politico movement for tribal reservation has inspired the other cattle rearing communities viz, Gujjars in Rajasthan (Jha, 2014), Kurubas in Karnataka (Natraj, 2007) and Golla-kurumas in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (Bheenaveni, 2019). Political aspirations and social backwardness eventually came together to create new identity-based community movements with fresh voices and tag lines across India.

On the other hand, Vajpayee lead BJP Government has appointed Balakrishna Renke Commission to study the socio-economic status of De-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities in 2003 (Baxi, 2022) and the commission identified 496 De-Notified Tribes

(DNTs), 914 Nomadic Tribes (NTs) and 139 Semi-Nomadic Tribes (SNTs) across Indiawith state-wise classification (Shah & Bara, 2020). Golla and Kurumas of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states were also placed as nomadic tribes in the draft list prepared by National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes (NCDNSNT, 2016).

In the lines of leftist and subaltern viewpoints, Dolu Debba (Drumbeat), a socio-political movement founded by Golla-kurumas in the 1990s, advocated for substantial political representation and budgetary funding for their welfare (Chalamalla, 2011) but it was stymied by the repressive state apparatus for various of reason s (G. K. Reddy, 2002). Consequently,the community leadership took paradigm shift from left-inclined subaltern ideology to constitutional affirmative standpoint by demanding Schedule Tribe (ST) status for these shepherding communities (The Hindu, 2015).

Since including the semi-nomadic shepherding Golla-kuruma community on the ST list is literarily impossible and unjustifiable, the community intelligentsia, especially professors at Osmania University, drew and propagated an alternative strategy to fight for semi-nomadic tribe (SNT) reservation by outlining three compelling arguments as follows: (1). The semi-nomadic tribe reservation was put into place in Hyderabad and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh states from 1955 to 1970. (2). For a longer period of time, the Maratha shepherds have been granted with a reservation of nomadic tribe (NT) category in their neighboring state of Maharashtra and (3). In the draft list of the National Commission of Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, the Golla kuruma community was identified as a nomadic tribe and recommended for reservation.

With this conceptual framework and credibility of professors, educated youth of Golla-kuruma community stepped up and started a new association called 'Gollakuruma Navanirmana Samithi (GKNS)' with tag of 'self-respect, power and development'. It has brought together regardless of ideology and affiliation people of other professions, such as, teachers, doctors, bureaucrats, engineers, advocates, and students. The movement quickly spread to every corner of the state and geared up to put pressure on the state government to classify them as semi-nomadic in order to receive all the advantages for which they are constitutionally qualified (The New Indian Express, 2017a). However, it was suppressed by the state government (The Hans India, 2018a).

The state government explicitly designed and implemented a subsidized sheep distribution scheme for Golla-kurumas (Dileep, 2018) as part of the appeasing of the shepherds and inversion as a political maneuver in disguise. But, GKNS are persistent in its efforts to connect with the public and various political platforms. As a result, in their respective election manifestos for 2019, the state-level bodies of the Indian National Congress (INC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) both made the commitment to introduce and implement reservations of semi-nomadic tribe for the Golla-kurumas. In order to get nation-wide attention and solidarity,

GKNS is also trying to create a pan-Indian identity and platform with all cattle rearing communities deserved for nomadic and semi-nomadic reservation. Nonetheless, in the contemporary epoch of reservations for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), the GKNS's experimentation may spark a new discussion over reservations by vouching the voice of historical socio-economic marginalization, educational backwardness and the recommendations of Renke Commission for denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities.

Summing up

The present article depicted the social life of wool weavers who are part and parcel of the Golla-kuruma community which has historical connectivity with communities like Dhangars of Maharashtra, Ahirs of Central India, Pals, Gaderias of Western India, and Yadavs of North India. They are labelled with various regional names based on regional languages. Gongadi, the traditional woollen blanket is their major cultural symbol and occupies an important place in their everyday life. Martyr shepherds Mallanna and Beerappa are revered as the community deities of shepherds across South and West India. They frequently migrate from one place to another in the quest of fodder for their sheep, goat and other livestocks. Despite their nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle, they are classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in several states. However, they started demanding for nomadic and semi-nomadic reservationas tribes. They were identified as a semi-nomadic community in Hyderabad and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh but lost their reservation for unknown reasons. In recent times, Golla-kurumas in Telugu-speaking states launched a neo-socio-political movement in the spirit of Maharashtra's nomadic tribal category and the Renke commission's recommendations.

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