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**ENDANGERMENT OF LANGUAGE AMONG
THE YERUKULA: A NOMADIC / DENOTIFIED
TRIBE OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

The scheduled tribes, nomadic and denotified tribes constitute a major segment of population in Andhra Pradesh. They live in remote areas of the state and need special focus to solve their problems. Jatapu, Konda Dora, Muka Dora, Manne Dora, Savara, Gadaba, Chenchu, Koya, Gondi are some of the major primitive tribal groups of Andhra Pradesh. In addition there are Dasari, Yerukula, Yanadi, Sugali, Korawa, Koracha, Kaidai and Nakkala as some of the denotified tribes in Andhra Pradesh. Further, Woddera, Pamula, Nirshikari, Budabukkala, Mandula, Pusala, Gangi, Reddula, Boya, Dommara, Jogi are some of the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

Andhra Pradesh has 52 lakhs scheduled tribe population (2001 census). The largest tribal population is found in Khammam district (26.47% that is 682617 – 6.8 lakhs), followed by Visakapatnam district (5.58 lakhs). The tribal population of Andhra Pradesh increased from 7.67 to 52 lakhs in 50 years between 1951 and 2001. The substantial population increase between 1971 and 2001 was because of the recognition of the Sugali, Yerukula, Yanadi, Nakkala and other denotified, nomadic tribes as scheduled tribes in the entire state. The tribal communities in the state of Andhra Pradesh mostly exhibited Proto-Austroloid features. Chenchus and Yanadis exhibit some Negrito strain whereas the Khond and Savara have Mongoloid features. The tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh mainly belong to three linguistic families such as: Dravidian language family (Gondi, Koya, Kolami, Yerukula, and so on); Mundari language family (Savra, Godaba, and so on); Indo-Aryan language family (Banjara, and others).

The majority of the communities speak Telugu. The Bagata, Chenchu, Goudu, Konda Kammara, Konda Kapu, Nayakapodu, Reddi Dora, Valmiki and the Yanadi speak Telugu language. Some of the Yanadi who are living in Sriharikota, Chittoor and border areas of Tamil Nadu speak a mixture of both Telugu and Tamil. Tribal communities such as Kotiya, Mulia, Porja, Rona and Savara living in the border areas of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa speak in

both Telugu and Oriya. Similarly, the communities like Pardhan, Gond and Andh speak in Telugu and Marathi. The Pardhan also speak in Gondi. There are some tribes who use their tribal language along with Telugu. They are Gadaba (Gadaba language), Gond (Gondi language), Koya (Yoya Tur), Lambada (Lamani or Lambani language), Porja (Parji), Yerukala (Yerukula or Koravanji), Jatapu, Samanta and Konda (Kuvi). The Dandasi speak, read and write in Oriya. They also speak in a corrupt form of Telugu. They are classified as scheduled castes. The Dasari or Poosala speak in their own dialect (Poosala Bhasha) and Telugu. Some of them are conversant in English, Hindi, Urdu, Kannada and Tamil. The Jogi form a community which covers a large variety of people belonging to diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The Konda Dora and Konda Kapu speak in *Kubi* or *Konda*. Many of them have forgotten their mother tongue *Kubi* and speak in Telugu. The Koracha and Korava were derived from *Kuru* or *Kurru* indicating their profession. In Andhra Pradesh, they are called Yerukulas. The Korava, Kuruvan, Koracha, Korama, Kaikadi and Yerukula are one and the same group. They speak in their own language *Koracha Bhasha* among themselves and with their kin groups. The linguistic speculations as well as celebration of Holi festival by the Banjara support the explanation which points out that the Banjara are of North Indian origin. Their dialect shows connections with North Indian languages like Hindi, Rajasthani and Punjabi.

The Banjara dialect in South India is mixed with the surrounding Dravidian languages. The Mandula are a sub-division of the Gosayi. They are a wandering class. They speak in *Paduru* language which has no script. The Mang Garodi/Mang Garudi speak in Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and Telugu. They write in Devanagari script. The Nirshikari are a hunting community. They are also called by the name Pardhi. They were notified as 'criminal tribe' in the Madras Province. They speak in a language of their own called *Shikari language*, which is an admixture of Parsi, Urdu, Gujarati and Marathi. The *Pardhi* speak a dialect which is believed to be a corrupt form of Oriya. They also speak in Telugu and Savara dialect. The Pariki Muggala speak in the native language. They speak in a dialect known as *Pariki Muggula Basha* which has some similarities with the language of the Yerukula. In all these tribal languages, script has not been developed (except Savara language).

Studies on tribal languages were carried out by few scholars like Sitapati (1943) on Savara, Emeneau (1955) on Kolami, Krishna Murthy (1969) on Kubi (Konda Dora), Trivedi (1978) on Chenchu, Srinivasa Varma (1978) on Yerukula, Pratap (1980) on Naikapod. There are no in-depth and well documented research works on the languages of nomadic, denotified tribal communities.

In the tribal areas their languages are not being developed up to the expected level. The parents among these tribal communities are not speaking in their own language due to various reasons. As a result their children have

been gradually forgetting their own mother tongue. There is a communication gap existing among the older generation among the tribal groups and the present generation. Due to this gap there is the problem of endangerment of the rich tribal languages. In order to preserve these languages there is a need to take active measures to document their languages for their future generations.

Indigenous languages are confronting serious threat in India. Proper research has not yet been conducted on the languages of NT/DNT communities. In many countries there are many models available for the protection of the languages belonging to these sections of people. India is known for its linguistic and cultural diversity. However, there are no official statistical figures pertaining to the language speakers of the NT/SNT/DNT communities so far. According to some estimates there are 198 communities belonging to NT/SNT/DNT communities spread over scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. In the state of Andhra Pradesh alone there are 59 sections of NT/SNT/DNT communities with their own dialects. Each community has abundant of knowledge, about their medicinal practice, ecological wisdom, climatic patterns, spiritual attitudes, artistic and mythological stories.

The government has not taken serious measures to protect the languages of NT/DNT communities. Unless drastic measures are taken to preserve and promote the smaller languages, a day is no longer far that these languages sooner will be abandoned being accommodated in favour of the state official, dominant languages very soon. Among these communities the speakers of their languages are becoming fewer every year. This is due to socio-cultural, educational development and a negative attitude among the younger generation towards use of their language. In this connection Michill Cahill states that 'a language among indigenous communities is endangered when the children in the community are not speaking the language of their parents and there are only a small number of people left in the ethno-linguistic community'.

The NT/DNT communities used their language for many generations. Their language served their needs. They had met their societal needs by using their indigenous languages. They got their strength with the power of their language. For instance, the community members among the various sects of the Yerukula carried their language for many generations. However, the younger generations are not using their language in their villages. They should en-shoulder the responsibility of protecting their language for future generations.

Language of 'Criminal Tribes': A Historical Background

During the colonial period some efforts were made to record the vocabulary of the nomadic, criminal and gypsy tribes in India. Muhammad Abdul Ghafur had compiled a complete dictionary of the terms used by the criminal tribes in Punjab during the year 1879 together with a short history

of each tribe, and the names and places of residence of individual members. The dictionary was compiled for the purpose of the jail and police officers serving in the Punjab Provinces. The dictionary was printed at the central jail press. The dictionary contains slang terms of the Gamblers, Pilferers, Uthaigiras, Khallait, Uchakka, Tagus, Sansis, Doornas, Gandhilas, sweepers of Delhi district, sweepers of Punjab, Harnis, Baurias, Minas, Meos, Ahirs, Goojars, Thugs and Pachhaddas. G. W. Gayer wrote *Selection from the Records of the Punjab Government. Section I of Linguistic Fragments Relating to the Dialect of the Magaddas and Other Wandering Tribes*. The account was printed at the Punjab Government Civil Secretariat Press during the year 1880.

During the year 1882 G. W. Leitner prepared an *Appendix to Linguistic Fragments in the Punjab and Kashmir Regions*. Later R. C. Temple developed an examination of trade dialect of the Naqqash or Painters on papier-mâché in the Punjab and Kashmir. The article was published in 1884 in *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal in Vol. 3, Part I*. He also published another article 1885 on 'The Delhi Dalals and their Slang'. *Indian Antiquary* in Vol. 14.

There are other works which talked about the Gypsy, wandering tribes and their languages. Edward Balfour wrote 'On the Migratory Tribes of Natives of Central India'. It was communicated by the author to Jameson's Edinburgh Journal. This was published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. 13, Part I* in 1844. B. H. Hodgson wrote on 'Aborigines of the Eastern Ghats' in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. 25* (1856). It was reprinted in the *Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects, Vol. 2*, Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1880. The paper is a valuable one which deals with the vocabulary of Yerukulas.

A. C. John Boswell wrote *Manual of the Nellore District in the Presidency of Madras* in 1873. It deals with the account of the Yerukula tribe and the dialect spoken by them. Colonel R. M. MacDonald wrote a brief sketch of the Yerukula language as spoken in Rajahmundry in *Journal of Literature and Science* in 1879. Reverend J. Cain wrote on 'The Yerukula Language' in *Indian Antiquity, Vol. IX*, in 1880.

Various nomadic, gypsy and criminal tribes were not distinguished in the language returns in the published reports. During the year 1911 there were 28,294 gypsy languages. The number of speakers of various gypsy languages in the country was big. In the *Manuals of the Administration of the Madras Presidency* published in 1885 there is a brief account of the vocabulary of the Yerukula living in the Madras Province. M. Paupa Rao Naidu in his *History of Railway Thieves* also gives a short account of the language spoken by the Yerukula. This account was published in 1900. M. Kennedy wrote on *Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency with Appendices* regarding some foreign criminals who occasionally visited the presidency on the detection

of counterfeit coin. The account was published in 1908 in Bombay which is a valuable account to understand the language pattern of the Yerukula.

Status of Language of NT/DNT Communities in Census Reports

The language information with regard to wandering, nomadic communities was collected from 1881 census onwards. The compilation of Dravidian nomadic communities was introduced from 1891 Census Report. The census report made the following observations with regard to nomadic and gypsy languages. (A) 'the language of certain wandering tribes, such as the Waddar and Kaikadi, though no doubt of *Telinga* origin, suffers such change in the course of the peregrinations of those earth workers and mat weavers, that in provinces beyond Madras, it has been grouped with the Gypsy tongues instead of with Telugu, wherever it has been returned under a tribal designation'. (B) 'The earth workers called Od or Waddar, carry a language of their own from Peshawar to the sea using a vocabulary less and less Dravidian as the tribe frequents tracts farther away from the East Deccan, from where it probably originated'.

In various census reports of 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 the Government of India reported that the Yerukula language is derived from Dravidian language family particularly from the Tamil origin. Therefore, the Yerukula language originated from the largest Korava community of Tamil region. Herbert Hope Risely identified that there were 44,768 people speaking the Yerukula language in the Madras province. He treated the Yerukula language as 'petty dialect' of Tamil. Yerukulas were also reported as Korachas or Koravas in these reports. They were included under the category of gypsy languages but not under Tamil language. The language of the Yanadi and Chetzu had been referred as the corrupt standard of the Telugu language. The dialects of Kaikadi and Waddar had been recognized as 'the deformed kind of Telugu'. Information with regard to the language speakers of Yanadis, Kaikadis, and Chenchetus was not available. In Nizam territories the Sugali or Lambadi languages were mentioned. In all, the 1901 census mentioned the languages of the Yerukula, Yanadi, Chentzu, Naiki, Sugali, Lambadi, Kaikadi and Waddar.

The majority of tribes found all over India are of different kinds. Some tribes are migratory whereas some are nomadic tribes. Some tribes due to their occupation wander all over the country to pursue their trading activities. Some tribes are like the Gypsies of Europe. They were called tumblers, jugglers, acrobats, thieves and robbers. They were classified as 'criminal tribes' under Criminal Tribes Acts of 1871, 1911 and 1924. These tribes were called Gypsies as a custom. But there is no connection between the Gypsies of Europe and wandering tribes in India. The word Gypsy was applied to all the migratory tribes. The Gypsy languages are the dialects spoken by the vagrant, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes in India. The information with regard to the forms of speech of these tribes is very limited. They speak in the language of their

neighbouring communities. Others are bilingual. They are also multilingual. They adopt themselves in the speech of the native districts where they live in and make their dealings with outsiders. However, they retain a peculiar dialect of their own when they speak among themselves or with their kith and kin. Many tribes have developed their secret language or argot or code language. They feel shy to tell about their language to others. Their languages are based on some dialect. Their dialect may be designated as the home tongue of the tribe. These tribes did not develop any artificial code language or argot. They have developed their own dialects. Such forms of speech did not possess and present the same consistency just like other Indian vernacular languages. Due to their migratory habits their languages were also mixed with other native languages. Where the base is comparatively uniform and practically identical with one definite tongue, there such dialects developed as a form of speech. Therefore, the dialects used by the vagrant tribes change from place to place. For example one can mention about the Korava, Yerukula, Koracha and the Kaikadi.

The various nomadic, gypsy and 'criminal tribes' were not distinguished in the language returns of the census reports. During the year 1911 there were 28,294 gypsy language speakers. The number of speakers of various gypsy languages in the entire country was big. The Korava or Yerukula were a wandering tribe of basket-making, mat-making, pig-breeding, etc., and were found all over the Madras Presidency. They were also found in several districts of Bombay and Nizam dominions. They called themselves *Kora*, *Kurru*, *Korava*, *Koracha* and *Kuluvaru* in Mysore and Madras. The Telugu people gave them the name Yerukala. It was written that they spoke the *Korchari* and *Korvi* dialects in Belgaum. They are called Korvaru in Bijapur and Korvi in Kolhapur and in southern Maratha *Jagirs*. The history of origin of these names is obscure. Similar denominations were also used by the tribes like the Kodaga of Coorg and the Kurukh of Bengal provinces.

During the year 1921, information with regard to the number of speakers of various nomadic, wandering gypsy languages was taken from the *Linguistic Survey of India Reports*. The Linguistic Survey of India had mentioned the wandering communities and their languages belonging to Telugu and Tamil origin such as Korava, Yerukula, Kaikadi, Irula, Vaddar and Dasari. The Korava language was considered as a separate language for some time and it did not derive from the present day colloquial Tamil. There were several ways in which the Korava dialect differs from Tamil. The Korava language agrees and mixes with other Dravidian languages. However, the whole structure of the Korava language was derived from the Tamil language. The earliest specimens of the Korava language was forwarded from Belgaum, the Jamkhandi state and Bijapur. They all represented the same form of speech. However, there are some slight local variations. The language closely agrees with the dialect described by Macdonald and Cain. They did not

maintain consistency with their dialect. They were a wandering tribe throughout the state. They associated with other people talking so many other, different languages in the wide areas. They wandered throughout the country for their trading activities.

The Census Report 1951 was the first that was conducted after India got independence. Mother tongue according to the 1951 Census Report was 'the language spoken from the cradle'. The details of the wandering, nomadic communities such as Waddars, Yerukulas and Koravas were mentioned from this census year. The percentage of switching over to the local dominant languages by the majority of the NT/DNT communities can be seen from the Census Report of 1961 onwards. There were two major changes introduced in the 1971 Census Report. Language presentation was done first according to the regional variation and secondly, according to the criteria of 10,000 or more speakers of a particular language. Among this category, the Yerukula, Kaikadi language of Tamil origin, and *Vadari* language of Telugu origin, were identified. The order of the languages was given according to the number of speakers in descending order. The 1981 Census Report provides details of the NT/DNT communities of the Tamil region. Arava, Kaikadi, Yerukula/Yerukala, Vadari (Telugu) and the names of the regional variants were provided (in the brackets). The 1991 Census Report is the latest survey report on the details of the NT/DNT communities. Some information is available with regard to Kaikadi, Yerukula, Vaddera and other communities. According to 2001 Census Report there are nearly 69,533 people who were identified as the speakers of Yerukula language. It was identified that Yerukula language is closely connected to *Ravula* – the language of the Korava tribe. An unofficial written script for the Yerukula language has also been designed by some of the community members recently. It is also mentioned that these communities are steadily switching over to Indo-Aryan and local dominant languages.

Brief Ethnographic Profiles of the Korava, Koracha and Kaikadi

Korava

Koravas are also known as Korar, Kormar, Korama and Korachar. They are found principally in Belgaum, Bijapur and Dharwar districts of Karnataka state. They are a wandering tribe of hunters, fortune tellers, cattle breeders, carriers, musicians, basket makers and petty business men and women. They are immigrants from Mysore and Tamil speaking districts of Salem, South Arcot, and Coimbatore in the Madras Province. They are generally known by the name Koravan. They appear to be an aboriginal tribe in the process of being Hinduised. The Brahman do not take part in their ceremonies. Their women are not considered unclean during their periods. They bury their dead bodies. Only a few of them have been following the Hindu customs and holidays. On the other hand, these people have many 'primitive'

practices including the *covvade* (tribal ordeals) in Mysore region. Their home tongue is an admixture of Telugu, Tamil and Canarese indicating the country of their origin. They have nine endogamous divisions *viz.*, Sanadi, Kunchi, Adivi or Kal Karkadi, Patrad, Modi, Suli, Ghantichor, Bid, or Vir and Dabbe or Uru. Of these Sanadi, who are settled, are considered to be the social superiors of the rest of the people with whom they neither eat nor inter-marry. The Bid and Dabbe eat together, and the Bid will give their daughters to the Dabbe though they do not marry as a rule Dabbe girls. The tribe has four family stocks which are exogamous. Girls are married either before or after they attain marriageable age. Widow marriages are permitted under certain restrictions. Divorce is not allowed. Koravas eat the flesh of goat, sheep, fowl, hare, pig and other animals, and drink liquor. Although they hold a very low position their stigma is not considered defiling. Their favorite gods are Maruti, Yallamma, Mariyyamma and Huligeva. They have no priests. The dead are either buried or cremated. Burial practices are more common among them. In each village and each quarter of a town the Korava have a *panchayat* consisting of a hereditary headman who is called the *sarpanch* and four members selected by the caste men of the locality concerned. Social disputes are settled at meetings of the *panchayat*. When a *panchayat* can not come to a common decision, the matter is referred to another *panchayat*. Offenders are punished by fines which are kept by the headman and spent on caste feasts. Many of the Korava wandering gangs have originally emigrated from the Telugu territories and still use Telugu as their home language though they speak in local vernacular as well.

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Koracha

Korachas are found all over the state in Kolar and Shimoga districts of Karnataka. The Koracha are a wandering tribe. They are known as Erukulas in the Telugu country, Koravas in the Tamil Nadu and Koramas or Korachas in Karnataka. They are called Koravis or Kaikaris in the Maratta (Maratha/Maharashtra) country. There are four endogamous divisions such as Uru or

Dabbe, Uppu or Ghattada or Ettina, Kunchiga and Sonai. The Uru are also called Uru Korachas because they have settled down within the towns and villages. They are agriculturists but also practice basketry and their women practice tattooing and fortune telling. Uppu Korachas practice trade in salt. Kunchiga Korachas are those who manufacture *kunchige* or the brush used by weavers for starching their yarn. Sonai Korachas get their name from a wind instrument on which they played. Generally they are snake charmers. They have four endogamous groups or divisions namely, Satpadi, Kavadi, Menpadi and Medragutti. The Koracha seem to have traces of the custom called *cauvade* according to which when a wife delivers a child, the husband is confined to bed and treats himself as delicate patient. The practice seems to be dying out and exists only in remote parts in Shimoga district and elsewhere in Karnataka. One can correlate this practice with the *cowade* system present among some African tribes. Marriage is generally celebrated after puberty. Polygamy is allowed. Traditionally the bride price is Rs 72/-. Widow marriage is freely allowed. Divorce is allowed on account of the wife's adultery. They do not perform *sraddhas* (final mortuary rite). The Uru and Sonai Koracha are more or less a settled people. It is stated that they have no objection to take into their fold the persons of other castes who were higher in the social scale except a Brahmin. Korachas belong to the 18 *phannas* section. Korachas worship God Venkata Ramana of Thirupathi. The chief male deities worshipped by them are Durgamma, Hulegemma, Mathangamma, Gangamma, Madduramma and Yellamma.

Kaikadi

Kaikadis are principally found in the Deccan region. They state that they originally originated from Telangana, which seems probable from their language, a mixture of Canarese and Telugu. They are a wandering tribe and were once notorious robbers, but they have been recruited at times from other 'criminal tribes' such as Bhamta, Lamani and others. There are nine endogamous divisions of the tribe namely, Borivale; Dhuntale; Kamathi, Kusubatanvale or Lalbajavale; Kaiji; Laman; Makadvale, Kunchevale, or Khlkhlevale; UrKaikadi (*Uru* = a village); Vaibase; and half caste Kaikadi known as Bhamta or Tulia. The Borivale and Vaibase are having settled habits and have taken to other deviations as their social inferiors. The Kamathi are basket-makers, and their women used to make livelihood as prostitutes; the Makadvale wandered from place to place exhibiting the monkey performances. The Kaiji were flute players and magic performers. The Laman used to make bullock packsaddles. The Ur Kaikadi are musicians and basket makers and the Bhamta are pocket picketers. There are five exogamous divisions among the tribe. A Kaikadi may marry his father's sister's daughter (FSD) or mother's brother's daughter (MBD). Marriage with a wife's sister is not allowed. Infant as well as adult marriages are in vogue. Sexual immorality is generally connived at, one of the divisions following the prostitution as a calling as stated

above. The marriage of the widows is permitted. Divorce is allowed. Kaikadis eat fish, goats, sheep, deer, hares, all varieties of fowls and pigs. They drink liquor frequently. Members of higher castes are said to be admitted into the tribe on paying a certain amount of money to the tribe's man that is spent on a feast. Kaikadis follow the Hindu law of inheritance. They subscribe to Hindu religion. Their priests are the *Deshasth* Brahmans, but the use of Brahmans was not universal in the tribe. The dead are either buried or cremated. An image or *tak* of the deceased is made and installed amongst the household gods and it is worshipped on the *Dussera* and *Diwali* festivals.

Importance of Language among the Yerukula

In South India, among many nomadic, denotified tribes, Yerukulas occupy an important position. They are found in almost all districts. The Yerukula have their own language but no script. The words of Yerukulas and Koravas appear to be taken mainly from other South Indian languages such as Tamil, Telugu and Canarese. The wandering tribes speak more than one language to make friendship with others. The settled people speak in the language of the locality. The Yerukula spread all over the Andhra region speak only in Telugu. They use slang expressions which are unintelligible to outsiders. The Yerukula living in the ex-criminal settlements have their own language. Old people generally speak in Yerukula language. Some of the children learn their language from their parents. Language is the factor which contributes to their unity and they recognize easily the non-Yerukula through the conversation of their language.

The Yerukula spread all over India with different languages and dialects are known by different names in different localities. From the extreme South to the North Arcot district in Madras Presidency, they are called Koravas. From North Arcot district they are called Korchas or Koracha up to the ceded districts. From ceded districts they are called Yerukulas. The Yerukula, Korava, Koracha and Kaikadi are in fact branches of the large Korava community operating in different regions of Madras Presidency. In Andhra Pradesh the Yerukula are called 'Yerukulavandlu' or 'Korachavandlu' but they always speak of themselves as 'Kurru'. In Nellore they speak of one another as Kurru and Kula. In Telugu, Yerukulavandlu means fortune tellers and Gustav Oppert suggests that this is the origin of the name Yerukula. He attests that 'it is highly probable that the name and occupation of the fortune-telling Kurruvandlu or Kulavandlu indicated the Telugu people to call these people Yerukula Vandlu. He further connects the word *Kurru* with the root *Ku*, a mountain. Thurston informs that in a Tamil work of the 9th century (Tirumurukairupadi) *Kurru* or *Kuru* is given as the name of a hill tribe. Brown and Wilson in their glossaries used the word *Erukala Vandlu* or '*Erukulawaru*', a plural in Telugu for Yerukavadu. It was stated that amongst themselves they call each other '*Kulawaru*', but the Telugu people call them

'*Erakavaru*' or *Erakalavaru*, and this name has been derived from the Telugu word *eruka* which means knowledge or acquaintance, as they are great 'fortune-tellers'.

The mother tongue of the Yerukula is known as Yerukali, Kurru Vata or *Yerukala Basha*. The language of the Yerukula is an admixture of various Dravidian languages such as Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and other local dialects. In Andhra Pradesh the Yerukulas living in the ex-settlements such as Sitanagaram, Stuartpuram, Lingala, Lakkavaram, Bitragunta, and in some places of Rayalaseema, Telangana regions converse in their mother tongue when they are at home. The Yerukula who are engaged in basket making, pig breeding, petty business, labor contract work speak in their language. Nowadays a vast majority of the Yerukula who are engaged in government and private jobs are forgetting their language. Their children are educated in English medium schools and are not interested in speaking their language. The Yerukula children who help their parents in basket making, rope making, labour contract works, tending sheep, herding cattle and agricultural activities speak in their language. Free education, free accommodation in *ashram*, residential hostels, free supply of text books and scholarship provisions have attracted the Yerukula parents to send their children to schools, colleges and universities. This has a tremendous exclusive impact on their language.

Even though the Yerukula language is a product of a combination of several languages, it does not vary from region to region. Wherever the Yerukula live they speak in their *Yerukala Basha* as their counterparts speak in different states in India. This uniformity can be seen in their language. The Yerukula language provides the linguistic homogeneity regardless of the geographical distribution and sub-tribe differentiation of the Yerukula. The language of the Yerukula contains more or less the same number of Telugu, Tamil, Sindhi and Kannada terms besides the terms peculiar to themselves. The total number of Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Sindhi terms excludes the terms which are special to the Yerukula. There is numerical preponderance of Telugu terms over those of Tamil, Kannada and Sindhi in the language of the Yerukula.

The pronunciations of the Yerukula are with short final vowels. Their pronunciation and vowels are not distinctly sounded. Their vowels are often interchanged. For example:

Father: *tōpanke*
 tōpanki
 tōpanka
 tōpank

They usually drop the final letter **l**.

They: *āga*

Them: *āgai-uḷḷi*

They also drop the initial letter **h**.

Having gone: *hógi*. The h in this word has Go corresponds to **P** in Tamil. Kanarese has **h**.

In the settlements and villages they observe their *gotras* or kinship relations very strictly while performing their marriages. They identify certain person by his name and usage of their language. Thus they follow their language very closely and speak each other in a dialect of their own called as *Kurru Basha* or *Kurru Vata*. The following are some examples of words spoken by the Yerukula in Andhra Pradesh:

<i>English Word</i>	<i>Yerukula Word</i>
Numerals	
One	<i>ondu</i>
Two	<i>rendu</i>
Three	<i>munu</i>
Four	<i>nalu</i>
Five	<i>anju</i>
Six	<i>aaru</i>
Seven	<i>egu</i>
Eight	<i>ettu</i>
Nine	<i>ombadu</i>
Ten	<i>pattu</i>
Hundred	<i>nooru</i>
One Thousand	<i>pattu nuru</i>
Relations	
Father	<i>ava</i>
Father's Father	<i>Jejava</i>
Father's Mother	<i>Jeji</i>
Mother	<i>amme</i>
Mother's Mother	<i>ammamma</i>
Mother's Father	<i>Tata</i>
Elder brother	<i>annu</i>
Younger brother	<i>tambi</i>
What is your name?	<i>nimberu andadi?</i>
My name is Ravi	<i>nanu ravi</i>
Son	<i>momu</i>
Rice	<i>soru</i>
Water	<i>tanni</i>
Wife	<i>mondu</i>

Stone	<i>kellu</i>
Hand	<i>kiyi</i>
Right hand	<i>sorakiyyi</i>
Left hand	<i>purukiyi</i>
Husband	<i>managoam</i>
Daughter	<i>magale</i>
Son	<i>magane</i>
Younger sister	<i>tangsi</i>
Elder brother	<i>brrannu</i>
Younger Brother	<i>thenbi</i>
Elder Sister	<i>berakka</i>
Younger Sister	<i>thengsi</i>
Grand Daughter	<i>pethi</i>
Grand Son	<i>patho</i>
Elder Sister-in- law	<i>nanga</i>
Younger sister- in- law	<i>merchinsi</i>
Uncle	<i>mama</i>
Pronouns	
I	<i>nanu</i>
You	<i>ninu</i>
We	<i>ninga</i>
What	<i>enda</i>
Phrases	
I drink water	<i>nanu tanni kudikiren</i>
I ate food	<i>nanu soru tingaren</i>
My Wife	<i>na mondu</i>
I am here	<i>Nanu ity ikkiren</i>
You all	<i>ninga addeeru</i>
A good man	<i>nalla monoso</i>
I have beaten him	<i>nanu atta mottikkren</i>
Dog	<i>nayi</i>
Water	<i>tanni</i>
Wine	<i>merdu</i>
Run	<i>odu</i>
Have a sip	<i>kudikeri</i>
Arrested	<i>Pudusukondu kottukoru ettudsu</i>
Cot	<i>katlu</i>
Paddy	<i>nellu</i>
Don't beat	<i>motuddu</i>
Ears	<i>soyyilu</i>
Fire	<i>nerupu</i>
Stop there	<i>nilabugu</i>
I got hurt	<i>debba tegulsu</i>
Community members	<i>kurru</i>
woman	<i>pengerike</i>
Children	<i>sinneya</i>
Girl	<i>pengrukutti</i>

Police	<i>kolugaru</i>
Stranger	<i>pudaya</i>
Gold	<i>bangaru</i>
Abuse	<i>eyakkudu</i>

Kinship terminology

<i>English</i>	<i>Era kala</i>	<i>Tamil</i>	<i>Telugu</i>
Father	<i>Tâpan</i>	<i>Tagappan</i>	<i>Nana / Tandri</i>
Mother	<i>Tâè</i>	<i>Tâi</i>	<i>Tallè</i>
Father (familiar term)	<i>Âva</i>	<i>Appan</i>	<i>Ayya</i>
Mother (familiar term)	<i>Amma</i>	<i>Ammâi</i>	<i>Amma</i>
Elder brother	<i>Anna</i>	<i>Annan</i>	<i>Anna</i>
Younger brother	<i>Tembi</i>	<i>Tambi</i>	<i>Tammadu</i>
Elder sister	<i>Akka</i>	<i>Akkâi</i>	<i>Akka</i>
Younger sister	<i>Tevisè</i>	<i>Tengachchi / Tangai</i>	<i>Chelli</i>
Wife	<i>Pondu</i>	<i>Pendati / Pendu</i>	<i>Pendlamu</i>
Husband	<i>Managam</i>	-	<i>Mogadu</i>
Grandfather	<i>Tatam</i>	<i>Tatan</i>	<i>Tata / Tatayya</i>
Son	<i>Moganu</i>	<i>Magan</i>	<i>Kumarudu / Koduku</i>
Daughter	<i>Mogulu</i>	<i>Magal</i>	<i>Kuturu / Kumarthe</i>
Brother-in-law	<i>Mechchunu</i>	<i>Machchinan</i>	<i>Bavamardi</i>
Father-in-law	<i>Mama</i>	<i>Maman</i>	<i>Mama</i>
Son-in-law	<i>Merumoganu</i>	<i>Marumagan</i>	<i>Alludu</i>
Daughter-in-law	<i>Merumogulu</i>	<i>Marumagal</i>	<i>Kodalu</i>
Grandson	<i>Pêtam</i>	<i>Pêran</i>	<i>Manamadu</i>
Grand daughter	<i>Pêti</i>	<i>Pêttè</i>	<i>Manamaralu</i>
Uncle	<i>Sopbam</i>	-	<i>Babai</i>
Sister-in-law	<i>Nanga</i>	<i>Nangai</i>	<i>Vadina</i>
Person	<i>Keruvu</i>	<i>Pêr</i>	<i>Vyakti</i>

In the interviews conducted in Stuartpuram, Sitanagaram, Lingala, Bitragunta some ex-convicts among the Yerukula narrated several words used by them during their operations of committing crimes. They narrated that they have their code language which they use while performing the crime. Some of the secret code language/words are listed below.

Secret code language used by the Yerukula

<i>Code Language</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>Oluku</i>	Torch Light
<i>Sonapam</i>	Gold

<i>Kanchakam</i>	Money
<i>Bokollu</i>	Police
<i>Berikeda</i>	Sub-Inspector
<i>Kolugaru</i>	Police
<i>Pulla Kollu</i>	Leader of the gang
<i>Ellavi</i>	Assistant Leader
<i>Nemati</i>	Man
<i>Tella Belupu</i>	Silver
<i>Ulli Mukka</i>	Knife or Screw Driver

Various types of books, newspapers have also been written and published by the Yerukula. The best example for such a kind of literature is *Kallu Munta*, *Yekalya*, and *Erukala Patrika*. *Kallu Munta* is a ballad. The authors of the work are Ponna Koteswara Rao and Ponna Satyanarayana. It was published by Andhra Rashtra Yerukula Mahasangham, Vijayawada in 1950. Ponna Koteswara Rao along with Palaparathi Verraiiah, Chadala Janakiram and others visited many places in the Madras Province and played the *Burrakathalu* in the language. This work provides a detailed account of their culture and how they perform their marriages. The entire focus of the narration is how an innocent family got addicted to alcohol and ruined the life of his entire family. The ballad was performed in the Yerukula language by its community members as a cultural performance in order to sensitize the community members the evil of illicit liquor. *Kallu Munta* served as cultural and media tool to spread the values of morality, good habits, strong community life, to protect the honour of the community members, how to lead an honorable and dignified life. Similarly, the *Adivasi Partka*, *Yerukula Patrika*, *Girijana Jyothi*, and *Adivasi* are other important literary sources to understand about the life of the Yerukula in the erstwhile Madras Province. These two sources acted as powerful news agency to connect the community members to know about the problems of the Yerukula and emphasized the community achievements, the day to day activities of the prominent Yerukula community meetings held at different places during the period from 1930-1960s. These two are the only Yerukula community literary sources which are treated as journals. These papers were published by Rameswaram Nagaiah from Guntur despite of poverty stricken conditions. Each issue was priced at 1 *anna* and the annual subscription was Rupees 1/-. The *Yerukula Patrika* was published by Kampa Punnaih during the year 1920-1940. *Dalit Marg* was another monthly magazine authored and published by Ponna Koteswara Rao. Some other papers of the same kind were *Penal Reformer*, *Girijana Jyothi* and other newspapers which emphasized the problems faced by the Yerukula in the colonial and post colonial era in the country. The community leaders faced acute financial crisis to run these news papers. However, from 1960s onwards these papers were stopped.

Displacement of Languages among NT/DNT Communities

The displacement of NT/DNT tribal languages are caused by the important vernaculars of the state. Koracha, Korama, Yerukula and Kaikadi dialects of the Dravidian groups were affiliated in the Linguistic Survey of India to Tamil. They are the mother tongues of the communities of the same names. These communities were previously nomadic but have in recent times settled down in villages and assimilated with the general population using the mother tongues only within their communities. A large number of the community members, of late, stated speaking in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, English, Hindu and other languages in their households. For instance, the number of Korachas in Karnataka returned both under Hindu and tribal religions was 12,085 as against this number of people who have returned the Koracha language as mother tongue was 3,704 in Bangalore. The population of Koramas returned both under Hindu and tribal religion was 17,124 in Kolar district. The people who are speaking their language are only 2,319 according to a survey conducted very recently.

The above figures indicate that a large proportion of these sections of people are discontinuing speaking their language even in their houses. Another example is the Banjara language. Banjara dialect is a dialect of Rajasthan spoken by the Sugali, a nomadic community in Andhra Pradesh. These people have given up their language as that of Korama, Koracha, Kaikadi and Yerukula. The population returned as Banjara, both Hindu and tribal, was 64,368 and the number of people speaking the dialect is 57,415. The children among them are receiving instruction in Telugu, English and Hindi. Their dialects are losing ground continually. The smaller numbers of Korava, Koracha, Kaikadi, Yerukula and Sugali are slowly adopting other languages. These changes are placing these sub-sections of the people in a disadvantageous position. Some of these communities are placed in various categories such as SC/ST/BC categories in different states. Majority of these communities are speaking in the language of their neighboring places. Adoption of the neighboring languages is sometimes voluntary and sometimes due to circumstances. However, it can be observed that their languages are disappearing very fast.

Language Endangerment among Nomadic, Denotified communities

It is always argued and debated on the matter that what are the reasons for endangerment of NT/DNT language in general and Yerukula language in particular? What are the socio-linguistic factors for the endangerment of the Yerukula language? How far the factors like language policy, multi-lingualism, and linguistic diversity contribute to the endangerment of languages of smaller communities/sections of people such as Dommaras, Sugalis, Yanadis, Yerukulas, Koramas, Korachas, and Kaikadis? What is the status of the language among the Nomadic, Semi-Nomadic, Wandering communities? What is their place in the globalised society? Will

the dialects of these communities will be able to survive in future? Are they able to protect and stick on to their languages? In what conditions these communities are surviving?

The reasons for the endangerment of these languages are mainly because of the fact that speakers and their younger generations are shifting over to the regional language or medium. The impact of the regional medium is more on these communities. Their languages are lacking domination and prestige. There is also lack of economic progress among the NT/DNT communities, and with lesser identity, criminality tag, etc. Their vocal literature is also mixed up with local languages. There is also displacement of the Yerukula, Yanadi, Sugali, Dommara, Nakkala, and Shikari due to the so called development projects by the government. The progress of the print media, technology, and communication technology is also showing the negative impact for the protection and promotion of their language and culture. Their languages are endangered due to unequal socio-economic, political and technological status among these poorer sections of people. Many minority languages are facing pressures due to vernacularization and standardization. There is no such demand for use of their languages at home front and societal front. The majority of their languages do not have a script of their own. These are all spoken languages. Therefore, structurally and functionally, the NT/DNT languages are losing their identity.

The languages of the NT/DNT communities are not institutionally supported for the communicative functions. They have no written tradition. They have no accessibility to science and technological innovations. Equal access to languages is not extended to them. It is quite true that constitutional support and linguistic rights are not extended to them. They can not maintain their languages. In the social sphere their languages are not standardized. Often their languages are discriminated and ridiculed. Their knowledge system and intellectual capabilities are undermined.

Many such languages are falling into non-utilization, disuse for economic, political, social and educational and other benefits. These communities are accelerating themselves into the local languages. They are demanding English medium education for their children. On the other hand it is realized that their languages are treasure trove of human knowledge. Most of their languages are not written languages. Their languages are only the memories, folktales, their rare cultural practices, stories, ballads, ritual practices and socio-cultural milieu. The importance of the smaller languages such as the Yerukula, Dommara, Waddar, Nakkala, Yanadi, Korava, Koracha, and Kaikadi are widely debated by various linguists and anthropologists. Fishman elaborated that 'protecting these communities' languages is a worldwide social asset. The histories of these communities are closely linked with their language. The boundary between their languages and dialects are arbitrary. It is depended upon sociological considerations. Dialect death is

considered as language death. Language helps to keep one's identity. The state of language disappearance among the NT/DNT communities has accelerated dramatically in the 21st century.

Throughout human civilization, many languages disappeared. The loss of a language is not taken seriously. Language endangerment is not taken seriously with reference to smaller languages such as Nomadic and Primitive Tribal Communities. We often read and hear in the mass media that many languages of the gypsy, nomadic communities are seriously endangered in India and across the world.

Language endangerment among the NT/DNT communities has been a topic of serious discussion among socio-linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, linguistic experts, educationists and many others. The dominant languages like Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam are predominantly used in South India. These languages have the constitutional and state support. But the languages of NT/DNT communities in India do not have such a support even after 65 years of independence of the country. These sections of people and their languages have become marginalized due to their socio-cultural and intellectual subordination. Their languages are becoming extinct one after the other.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Government has to implement a proper plan to achieve the constitutional goal. The Article 29 of the Indian Constitution emphasizes a commitment for the maintenance of India's linguistic diversity saying that 'Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same'. The Article 30 guarantees minorities, NT/DNT communities to have the right and protect and propagate their languages through education or by other means saying that 'All the minorities, whether belonged to religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice'. The Article 350 (A) provides instruction in their own mother tongue at the primary stage of education to the children belonging to NT/DNT communities and linguistic minorities saying that 'It shall be the endeavor of every state, and of every local authority within the state, to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to NT/DNT communities'. These constitutional guarantees are very relevant for the empowerment of NT/DNT communities.

The languages of the NT/DNT communities can be protected through recognizing their linguistic rights by encouraging and protecting their home language, promoting the same in the schools, colleges, universities, through language policy, planning, and maintaining a balanced approach to protect

their socio-linguistic plurality of the country by developing multilingualism and maintaining the core values of Indian Constitution, their cultural identities, ethnic identities, linguistic diversities and guaranteeing educational and economic benefits. In light of the above, the following few suggestions can be made for the protection of the language among the Yerukula.

1. Conducting basic and original field work to know the status and position of the languages among the Yerukula and other NT/DNT communities.
2. Finding the unique structures of the languages of the Yerukula, Waddar, Yanadi, Dommara, Nakkala and other communities.
3. Preparation of multilingual and bi-lingual dictionaries.
4. Collection and preservation of folk tales, folk songs, narratives, proverbs, news papers, ballads prepared by the NT/DNT communities.
5. Material production, preparation of primers, other text books in their languages.
6. Involving the NT/DNT communities in the preparation of teaching learning materials.
7. Giving state and central government support and aid for the promotion of their languages.
8. Giving the responsibility for the protection and promotion of their languages to language research institutes such as CIIL, Mysore; Linguistic Survey of India; Anthropological Survey of India; Survey departments and Census departments under Office of the Registrar General of India.
9. Introduction of mother tongue (Yerukula, Banjara languages, etc) in primary education in ex-settlement/*thanda* (villages) schools under *Sarvashiksha Abiyan* for the children of NT/DNT communities under Article 20 (1) and 350 (A) of the Indian Constitution and inclusion of NT/DNT communities languages/dialects in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
10. Development of text books, reference materials, source books, hand books, supplementary reading materials and glossaries in the languages of NT/DNT communities.
11. Recording of the languages of NT/DNT communities languages in audio-video CDs and dissemination of the same to schools, colleges and linguistic departments of various universities.
12. Training for teachers to learn their languages by providing incentives for learning and transacting the languages of NT/DNT communities.

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