

# FOREST POLICY AND EXPLOITATION OF NATIONAL RESOURCES UNDER NIZAM REGIME

Reflections on the Flight of Tribals in Adilabad District, Andhra Pradesh, India

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## ABSTRACT

The intention of this paper is to deal with two broad issues highlighting tribal culture and forest policies. The area of study intends to cover Adilabad district under Nizam's dominion in the early quarters of 20th century.

**Keywords:** Forest policy of India, Adilabad, Nizam Regime, national resources of India, tribals of Adilabad

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By 1905, Adilabad district was created as a separate district under Nizam's dominions, which was in Warangal Suba as an administrative unit (Sirpur-Tandur sub-district).<sup>1</sup> From 1905 onwards the results of administrative changes were clearly seen. Giving of *Pattas* (title deeds) to non-locals made them to claim lands owned by tribals. Non tribals supported by State made deep inroads into culture, and economy into wood lands or forestlands that made unprecedented and adverse effects on culture aboriginal inhabitants and even on the ecology of the concerned region. From 1905, the same physical demarcations of Adilabad district continued till Hyderabad state was merged into Indian Union through police action (17<sup>th</sup> September, 1948). Between 1905 and 1948 the unchanged modus operandi of administration was carried on in the district. It was the period when forest department brought large tracts of forest cover in the district under its management. The intention was simply commercial exploitation for generating revenue. Establishment of forest department and its mode of working in Adilabad is largely part of British legacy in princely state of Hyderabad. But such acts lead to the unwelcome intervention in the personal and isolated life of aboriginal tribes who developed their way of living in tune with ecology. The acts of destruction of such ecology have registered change in the lives of forest dwellers or aboriginal tribes. The administration carried in Adilabad district made visible impact on culture, economic life style of indigenous people along with the ecology. This brought irreconcilable and irrecoverable loss and imbalance in nature and also in the life of the aboriginal inhabitants that never existed till then. Generally, resistance will be seen for bringing sudden and unexpected change in life either in form of violation of rules or violent revolts. Revolts normally are seen as anti-government or anti-administration but occasionally they have cultural and ecological angles.

Adilabad is a fascinating district, though having historical, ecological and wider ethnological background, it has received less attention of scholars. Very little is known about the history of Adilabad district prior to its becoming part of Hyderabad state under Asafjahis. Geographically, this district is located between river like Godavari on South and its tributary Penganga on North. Pranahita, another tributary of River Godavari forms eastern boundary of this district.

The Geographical distribution of tribal population in India is uneven. Making study about them assumes significance from many angles. The habits and customs, beliefs and dogmas of the various tribes that we come to know through wide variety of sources are not strictly observed today. There are many causes for this and here is an attempt to put forward

atleast something about it if not everything. But the present area of study confines itself between first and fifth decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The demographic profile of Tribal Adilabad shows that it is the home to some of the important tribes of this vast country since pre-historic times. According to 1941 census, Out of a total ground tribal population of 1,14, 228 residing in the Hyderabad state, 71,874 were found in Adilabad district alone. According to 1901 Census, Adilabad had more than 76% of the population were Hindus, Muslims were at 5% and the rest of the population consists of tribes (animists in census reports prior to 1941 census). Total tribal population of Adilabad district by 1931 was 104,809, including all tribes. Nine out of 33 major tribes of Andhra Pradesh, such as Gonds, Koyas, Kollams, Pardans, Naikpods, Lambadas, Andh, Bhils and Thotis, inhabit this district.

At present the tribal population of Adilabad district is of about 4,16,511 and total tribal population of the state is 50,24,104. These tribes constitute nearly 8% of the total population in Andhra Pradesh. In Adilabad tribes represent a large chunk of human habitat i.e., 18% of its total population and has second largest tribal population after Khammam district. Gonds, Naikpods, Kollams, Pradhans and Lambadas form group of major tribes in the district and there are also some tribes who are scanty numerically, they are Naikpods, Thottis, Khattis and Wanjaris who too made forests of Adilabad as their home land.

However, in human beings culture helps in adaptations to the environment more efficiently. Every community has its own cultural identity, one can identify them through their practices, tradition, customs and spiritual applications. Similarly, tribes too have their own culture, which stands out from the rest, mostly shaped by their surroundings (ecology in present context). The present area of discussion is obviously round the tribes of Adilabad who too have developed their own culture in correlation with their environment and it has brought them an identity. This cultural diversity is a kind of natural heritage given to man by nature in this district. This diversity has come under siege owing to the domination or influence of a number of aspects. Intention behind arguing around this is an attempt to present that the tribes and their eco-friendly culture is one of the valuable knowledge acquired by man from the lessons taught by nature. Stress of external factors is making such ecofriendly culture vulnerable that caused it to stand on the verge of extinction.

Wooded hills and ranges of this district not only became the home to many tribal communities but also provided a suitable habitat for undertaking occupations like shifting cultivation, hunting and food gathering though most of the traditional occupations have been abandoned today. Relative isolation for many years gave them free hand to lead their own

<sup>1</sup> Imperial Gazetteers, provincial series, Hyd state, 1908 and Adilabad District Gazetteers.



way life without any disturbance. Rugged terrains of central part of Adilabad helped tribes to retain many features of their archaic way of living till the interference of state and its agencies has happened. The foreign interference brought change in tribal economy and social life.

It is said that by 19<sup>th</sup> century there were more than ten lakhs of people who depended on shifting cultivation and this dependency has dwindled to about few thousands today. The tribes who depended on shifting cultivation to some extent defended themselves and resisted against economic and cultural invaders by responding in form of revolts. But those tribes who depended completely on hunting and gathering failed to defend themselves. People who are naïve regarding shifting cultivation defend their notion of anti-shifting cultivation. According to this notion shifting cultivation will not only clear green cover but also leads to erosion of fertile soil and this eroded soil will collect in rivers as silt and result in manifold increase of floods during rainy days. The above notion was developed during colonial period. Why this entire problems not to be seen prior to the arrival of outside elements into forestlands is the argument made by present environmentalists. In contrast to the above said notion some anthropologists argue that for effective and successful utilization of resources under shifting cultivation the growth rate of population should be either low or stable in growth. Haimendorf made extensive research on tribes of central and peninsular India. In his study on Hill Maria of central India he came to amazing conclusion that the thick forest today can be seen in the areas where shifting cultivation is practiced and in areas where plough/permanent cultivation is present there we find no forest. That is vigorous depletion of forest cover or deforestation was recorded in the areas where shifting cultivation is absent.<sup>2</sup> To Varier Elvin, an anthropologist on scientificity of shifting opined that it is not only an economic method with few environmental effects but it is also a way of life. From psychological and physical culture point of view shifting cultivation to him is central to tribal life. People who criticize shifting cultivation forget that state after bringing most of the forest areas under their administration has immediately asked tribes to stop this method of cultivation by stating that it is not environmentally viable but on the other side fast depletion of forests has been recorded in the state administered areas only that too purely for commercial/market purpose. Growth of population is shown as other important cause for not supporting of slash and burn method of cultivation. The question is why there were no problems before the intervention of forest department in the tribal way of life. Therefore, looking shifting cultivation from environmental and cultural point of view is necessary rather purely from economical angle.

2 Haimendorf, Christoph von Furer, Tribes of India, The struggle for survival, O.U.P., Delhi, 1985, 90-91.

There was no recorded environmental problem created by tribes prior to the penetration of outsiders (state/forest department/contractors) into deep forest areas.

In the absence of scientific mode of cultivation, animal husbandry and organic manures, shifting cultivation proved good and sustainable with low inputs for cultivation on the infertile soils. This method of cultivation involves the rotation of fields rather than crops. This type of cultivation is good for rain fed and millet cultivation. In this method of agriculture the period of cultivation is not more than two years, since the production of crops falls drastically up to 50% in the second year. There are two main reasons for diminishing yields and hence abandoning the plot to a specific fallow period. Firstly, the fertility of soil reduced because the nutrients from the ashes are utilized by crops, and secondly there is a revival of weeds which have been partially killed by the initial firing. These weeds now tend to overpower the crops in coming year. Therefore, the plot is abandoned to fallow for the period between ten to twenty years, the period of fallow vary according to the type of soil, terrain and climatic factors. Most shifting cultivators can assess the fertility of land by noticing the productivity. One can reuse the same field when its fertility is regained but for this it takes some time for nature to restore. Therefore as long as adequate fallow periods are maintained in this type of cultivation and it remained the most efficient and proven method of agriculture in many parts of the tropical world. In the absence of modern methods this type of cultivation practiced proved well and good. Shifting cultivation is generally practiced on weak, leached or sandy soils on hill slopes. This slash and burn cultivation did not continued for long in modern days and situation underwent change from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century as the state of Hyderabad embarked upon the policy of forest reservation and allowed land hungry Hindu and Muslim peasants and entrepreneurs to infiltrate into the tribal areas.

Under coppice, selected species of trees will be eliminated resulting in many social and ecological problems like decline in availability of humidity, reduction of rejuvenation of soils because of decrease in leaf fall, decrease in time for regrowth of forest after abandoning by tribes, bringing other type of imbalance in ecology. Some more points on forest policies can be seen on States forest policies.<sup>3</sup>

The areas where shifting cultivation is practiced there we can find the dense forests in India. In rest of the places we find no green cover due to intensive and commercialization of agriculture. Shifting cultivation can be successful support in case of less population. Because

3 Report on the forest administration, H. E. H. the Nizam's dominions, for the year 1347 Fasli, Hyderabad Deccan, Government Central Press, 1937-38. (Hereafter RFA).

of shortening or reducing of cycle of shifting cultivations time period, revival of lost forest cover is not taking place. For this there are two causes, one is increasing pressure on land because of percolation of non-tribals with title deeds (*patta*) or ownership rights in their hands and occupying the land abandoned by tribes and doing intensive cultivation that gave no time for revival of forest cover. The other is because of the above percolation into tribal or forest areas making it difficult for tribes from moving around in large forest tracts that were at their disposal and now they are confined to limited area. The new arrivals led to increase in demand of wood. As a result of this new pressure the traditional values developed by man (tribes in particular) to preserve his natural environment began to loose ground. The general cause is arrival of new and powerful owner of forest i.e., state and its agencies. Their sole aim was/is nothing but to make money by devastating forest cover and never thought that such activities will adversely affect life of those natural inhabitants who since times memorial relied on it without disturbing.

It is said that the very existence of green cover in this tribal areas reveals that shifting cultivation is eco-friendly if practiced in proper manner by allowing the growth of forest in abandoned land for considerable period of time. From various findings it has been noted that there is close relationship between intensity of agriculture and density of population that rely or depends on it.

Leading a simple life is different from leading a meaningful life because the latter one is an art. It refers to those forms of creative expression which are guided by principle of necessities and which involve imagination, skill and style in executing things. Tribal culture of Adilabad is good example to this as they have their own characteristic forms of creativity. Tribes through their acquired experience, consciousness, knowledge, perceptions of reality express their values. These expressed values speak about their identity and their culture. Collection of a wide variety of items used by the community like food, fodder and ethno-medicine is one of the most important activities in the life of a tribe. They gained knowledge of plants that exist in their surrounding for curing different ailments. They kept their knowledge alive through oral tradition and passed to next generations as it is.

The knowledge about use of different parts of plants, their medicinal values, how and where to collect and store, the proportion of medicinal values and the processes of manufacturing medicines from the plant, the general therapeutic value of the different parts and the effects of medicine on different part of the human body can only be acquired through sheer experience, consciousness and awareness.

The next important issue that is highlighted in this paper is regarding states forest policies and their impact in the district of Adilabad. After the establishment of Forest Department in 1867, no other individual or institution or organization has brought such vast area of land under control. It emerged as the biggest landlord. Whatever the reason is, for right or wrong it is influencing life of each and everyone in the country even today. Till the introduction of forest policies in India, tribes and forests were flourishing. Because of forest policies in the name of conservation and protection, commercialization and exploitation of forests were carried on. This is not only reduced forest cover but also adversely affected tribal way of living.

The policies of Forest management in the state of Hyderabad were nothing but simply an imitation of British forest policies. Physically, The Hyderabad state, otherwise known as H.E.H the Nizam's dominions, contained an area of 82,698 sq.miles. It was larger than that of England and Scotland put together and traversed by several forest claded hill ranges. The dominion was divided into two main geologically and ethnologically divisions. One was Marathwada and other Telangana. In Telangana, there were/are fine forests where valuable timber is found. Prior to Hyderabad state we find British in Berar framed early set of rules and regulations in respect to forest conservancy. Berar was confiscated by British in 1853 in lieu of arrears that have to be paid by Hyderabad state.

The forest Act of 1399.F (1989-90), which empowered the conservator to exercise full control over 'reserved' and protected forests and on reserved species of trees in open forests, guided various agencies of state like Revenue department, forest department, contractors and middle men in exploiting forests. Timber, main income generating resource of forest was supplied to purchasers at prescribed rates. Minor produce, such as grass, branches and leaves and other likewise were also not spared for locals and their cattle. Free grazing was permitted, under many restrictions that too occasionally. After meeting the local demand, timber of various kinds should be exported but this has not happened. Local railways and the military workshop received importance. Introduction of railways and military installations on modern lines is the legacy of British that has been copied by Nizam's of Hyderabad. The commercial and military importance of botanical investigations came to be realized by British soon after the company secured a firm grip over Bengal and Madras.

The information provided by Administrative, forest, revenue and other related records of Nizam's period help us to know about the establishment, extension and working of the department of forest in Adilabad district. Coming to the point, until the establishment of forest department, the forests in Adilabad district as in the entire state were under the control

of the Revenue Department. Till then there was only a nominal supervision over forest. With the establishment of forests department, increasing efforts were made to get more profits and it was manned entirely by untrained staff. Even by 1294 F. or 1884 AD there was no forest division in Adilabad though forest department was established by 1867. By 1877-78 AD proposal for nearly thirteen new tracts were kept in front of Government to get permission for bringing them under reserve. The total area of this tract accounted up to 2,629 sq.kms and of this thirteen tracts Nirmal forest tract had 700 sq. kms and it was the biggest of all proposed tracts. Along with Nirmal, state administration was drawing plans to bring wide forest tracts of Sirpur and Tandur that are located on the eastern side of this district. This Sirpur- Tandur accounted nearly 1500 sq.km of vast area. By the year 1900 most of the valuable forest tracts were still in the open forest and from it most of the revenue in form timber was derived. With the Forest Act of 1900, for first time forests around Chinnur (596 sq.m), lakshetipet (498 sq.m), Sirpur-Tandur (800 sq.m) and Edlabad (1413 sq.m) were brought under jurisdiction of Forest department in this district.<sup>4</sup> The constitution of reserve forests was sanctioned in the state of Hyderabad way back in A.D. 1894. But Claudius, official from Survey of India, Dehra Dun undertook an accurate survey of forests.<sup>5</sup> By 1313F (1902-03 AD) expenditure in form of salaries on entire forest staff of Hyderabad state for a single month was Rs. 9,544 and on Nirmal itself, salaries of around Rs.1707 were paid in that particular year. By 1314.F, nearly 100 sq.miles of forest tracts were brought under protection of forest department by spending Rs. 8/- on every mile towards maintenance. In the same year Nirmal division as a part of Adilabad district can be seen for first time on the pages of Forest records. Since the conception of Forest department, there were disputes between revenue and forest departments. On many occasions overlaps of administration caused problems in revenue collection and demarcation of forest tracts. Until the formation of Adilabad district, Nirmal division was under Nizamabad district (then it was known as Indur). Whatever it may be, the people who lived in and near by forests had to pay unequally.

On an average this district has contributed nearly 25% to 30% of total income derived on forests of Nizam's dominion. Between 1867 and 1948 because of availability of excessive surplus, forest department never experienced loss financially and expenditure over its maintenance was far less than the revenue spent in neighboring British provinces and princely states, like Madras province, central province, Mysore and Travancore state. In 1938 AD

expenditure on Asafabad division, Eastern circle and on entire State was 38.61, 40.48 and 73.69 percent respectively and perhaps it was the highest spending of state. Whereas the same on entire state in 1929 was 25% only.<sup>6</sup> Like Asafabad division, Nirmal division too was not lagging behind in generating huge revenue from forests and forest products. In 1909 and 1911 income derived from Nirmal was more than Warangal division of eastern circle. Warangal district at this time was leading in entire state as far as forest area and income is concerned.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly in case of Nirmal division, in 1921 expenditure was made upto 98% and this was highest as per records on maintenance of staff and infrastructure. The data provided on revenue and expenditure of district and dominion replicate some more details in this regard. As far as income of divisions or district on forest is concerned Adilabad mostly stood second after Warangal district in eastern circle and occasionally first (in 1910 and 1921 AD) in entire dominion. Nearly no division or no district in western circle of Hyderabad state has dominated (Nirmal and Asafabad) divisions of Adilabad district in collection of revenue on forests.

With the increase in population several islands of cultivable patches were formed and title deeds were granted resulting in expansion of settlements at the cost of declining forests. Either to scare away the wild animals or to counteract the naturally invading jungle or to increase the production of *beedi* leaf from *Tumki* or *Abnus* trees or to collect honey and other minor forest produce, the villagers living in the vicinity of forests started setting fire to the forest. Thus devastating efforts of man towards nature went on and it was intensified by agencies of government like forest department. The process of consolidation was carried by adopting several steps like demarcation of forest lands through working plans, appointing officers to settle the disputes over boundaries of reserves and by preparing of forest maps.

In simple words government laid roads and on this path behind them non forest dwellers followed and penetrated into deep forests. The men started hacking trees indiscriminately for their various needs. The beasts without number started grazing and browsing. With such frequent biotic interference the equilibrium of vegetation started getting upset. This process got momentum with growing pressure of population and taking over of forests by state in overnight has added to the severity. Year after year government brought thousands and lakhs of acres under its jurisdiction.

Of total forest area in Hyderabad state, Asafabad and Warangal had maximum percentage

<sup>6</sup> Kesava Iyengar. *Economic Investigations in the Hyderabad (1929-30)*, Vol. III, Special officer for economic investigations, H. E. H Nizam's Government, Hyderabad (Dn).

<sup>7</sup> RFA, 1921 (1331 Fasli), 30.

<sup>4</sup> RFA, 1905 (1315 Fasli).

<sup>5</sup> Claude, A. Campbell. *Glimpses of the Nizam's Dominions* (London: C. B. Burrows, 1908), 61.

of forest with 44.87 and 27.06 respectively. For conservation of state forests, government has strengthened the hands of forest department since the days of establishment of this department. As said early series of Acts were passed in this respect like Forest Act of 1900, 1910 and 1916. The forest Act of 1916 clearly speaks about the constitution, rules and conditions to demarcate and declare forests as reserve, protected, open and village forests. The area notified under section 18 of Forest Act of 1916 was considered as reserve forest and if notified under section 7 then it will be protected forests. The same act explains every thing about institutional structure of forest department and it even empowers with a kind of authoritative and ownership rights over vast green tracts. The rules regarding forest villages were absent even in third decade of twentieth century where as strong debate went among the British officials on this issue way back in third quarter of nineteenth century.

So right from 1908-09 Forest department in coordination with Public works department made efforts to lay all weathered road between Nirmal and Itchora in the Adilabad District, which was continuation of old Nagpur road. In the same year Assistant conservator of forests of Lakshattipet division too prepared a sketch map of road that was laid between hills of Jangaon (Asafabad) and Lakshattipet. In his words:

I feel that though it is premature to attempt at road making at present but it is necessary for future requirements. Above this it is a requirement to traverse the dense forest tracts and also to bring backward forest settlements into contact with rest of the world.<sup>8</sup>

In 1321.F (1911-12) the quarters of sub assistant conservator of forests at Chinnur along with Rangers office at Lakshattipet and Assistant conservator's office at Nirmal were constructed by public works department. But forest authorities failed to get a contractor for construction of such buildings in Utnoor because of its extreme interior in nature. Where as in Asafabad division construction of two range offices buildings were undertaken by public works department in 1929-30 likewise construction of rest houses by forest and other departments in forest tracts of Asafabad was more after 1935.

The department of forest also utilized the service of Public works department. With the help of such departments the administrative apparatus by making deep inroads by percolating deep into forest areas. Unlike the past many roads crisscrossed the district passing

and covering many remote, isolated and dense forest tracts. Laying of road from Jannaram connecting Utnoor with Adilabad is one of the good examples.

Because of increasing communication facilities the seepage of state administration and other non-tribal inhabitants into nook and corner of district became possible. It resulted in depletion or vanishing of forest cover at much speedier rate and it showed adverse impact on the life of tribes of Adilabad, who depended on forests since time immemorial. Tribes who lived isolated and relatively free life in forests absorbed the tremendous and unbearable pressure created by new immigrants for many years. The result was obviously clear and grievance was expressed by raising the banner of revolt under the leadership of Kumaram Bhimu in 1940.

Big centers of consumptions started surrounding the large forest blocks and converted them into small patches like groves scattered here and there. Then forest department emerged as an exploiting agency stated to satisfy the needs and demands of urban centers. Today's patches of reserves forests once upon a time were connected to each other, percolation of human settlements into wooded lands led to the creation of green islands. In the district itself unabated flow of outsiders from every direction and increasing new settlements also increased the pressure on forests of Adilabad. Now forest and its products came to be more useful to non forest dwellers. With the passing of time pressure created through increasing demands and consumption of forest products, especially timber. So state through its agency of forest department started reaping good profits and thus an unabated earning has turned green pastures as good source of income. The Government Timber Depots and saw Mills at Mancherial (estd. 1934) and Jannaram fetched Rs. 12,718 by the year 1937-38.<sup>9</sup> However, a business of Rs. 10,4593 in 1938 was transacted in both Mancherial and Jannaram depots as against Rs. 66,002 in 1937 in the local and foreign markets of Delhi and Vijayawada along with Gulbarga, Raichur, Bidar and Kurnool etc.

As far as major produce is concerned auctioning and felling were carried out by the contractors. The coupe system along with departmental working seems to have affected the depot sales, as the contractors, who got timber of standing coupes at rather cheap prices in the auction sales, tried to undersell to the Hyderabad and Secundrabad wholesale timber contractors. When ever demand for wood increased either for/in Britain or in other parts of world for various reasons then production and income of forest department increased. For instance, the sale of timber increased considerably during Second World War.

<sup>9</sup> Report on the forest administration, H. E. H. the Nizam's dominions, for the year 1347 Fasli, Hyderabad Deccan, Government Central Press, 1937-38. (Hereafter *RFA*).

<sup>8</sup> *RFA*, 1318 Fasli, (1918-19), 9.

Teak (*tectona grandis*), Tirman (*Anogeissus latifolia*), Satin or *anduga* (*Cholroxylon swietenia*), Somi (*soymida febrifuga*), Chinnangi (*Lagerstroemia parviflora*), Nallamaddy (*Terminellia tomentosa*), Kordsha (*cleistanthuscollinus*) and Bijasal were profit earning commercial species. Teak is universally adopted and is of commercial importance. Shisham and satin may be regarded as fancy cabinet and furniture timbers, whilst Bombax is used for match industry, Palakordsha (*Wrightia tinctoria*) and *poonika* for toys and slate frames. The modern style of living has stimulated the demand for expensive as well as heap furniture. On major forest produce between 1894 AD and 1902 AD forest department on average received annual revenue of 1,82,299 Rs/- and in between 1903-07 AD it has received Rs. 4,25,230. The exploitation of timber and fuel was usually regulated in accordance with the prescriptions of working plans and working schemes.<sup>10</sup>

On the advent of Mr. Lodge, the erstwhile Inspector General of forests, indiscriminate and pernicious system of felling of trees in the forest was stopped and systematic felling was gradually introduced since 1915. Between 1929-30, the coupe selling was at its peak that resulted in heavy flow of revenue to state treasury. The outturn collection of timber and fuel by 1924 AD was 6,46,755 Rs. in entire dominion. Out of this collected revenue Adilabad contributes lion's shares to states treasury. The total revenue collected from timber and fuel in Adilabad in 1924 was Rs.1,29,990 (Lakshattipet division contributed 70,379 and Nirmal division with 59,611 Rs.). The same in Adilabad district in 1904-05 was just 18,480. This is because of absence of Lakshattipet division in this district. By 1938-39 the total revenue collected by forest department through sale of timber was 7,50,177 Rs. and out of this Adilabad (then Asafabad district) contributed Rs. 1,63,467 towards exchequer.<sup>11</sup>

Effectively the process of colonization was carried on by state deliberately and opening of Adilabad district from all sides through rail and road ways enabled the state to move effectively in this direction. The introduction of state timber in the foreign markets and the local markets became possible with the opening out of the Kazipet-Balharsha railway line on account of proximity to Delhi, the forest department tried to establish timber business transaction with other big centers of consumption such as Delhi. Teak wood the strongest of all woods that was available in the jungles of Adilabad was precious for the department that brought plenty of profits because of its durability. Its extensive use in construction, furniture making, agriculture

implements, Railway sleepers, Rifle butts etc. created market for this kind of timber. Satin or *Anduga* is a light wood and therefore it used in paper making, match sticks, packing material. Bijasal is a heavy wood but strong and durable. Bijasal is also used as alternative for railway sleepers. It has medicinal properties too and helps in healing blood pressure. Sheesham is black colored timber mostly used in making attractive and beautiful furniture. Nallamaddy also called *vagumaddy* in Adilabad, is known as second teak for its durability. This wood is used for construction activity, ship building and for railway sleepers also.

The important source of revenue under minor produce came from bamboo, grass, Ebony leaves, Myrobolans, Gulmohwa, fruits, barks and grazing tax. . From 1910 nearly 1685.74 sq. miles of forests were closed form browsing in order to protect premature forest growth from animals.

On the whole forest department in Adilabad has earned Rs. 3,93,385 (1938-39), Rs. 6,51,385 (1937-38), Rs.1,18,842 (1935-36),Rs. 8,68,412 (1924-25), Rs. 2,02,067 (1912-13 AD), Rs. 3,85,480 (1913-14) , Rs. 2,34,434 (1911-12), Rs .2,04,561 (1910-11), Rs. 65,030 (1907-08 AD), Rs.38,061 (1908-09), Rs. 2,57,650 (1905-06) respectively on minor forest products. The two divisions of Adilabad district (Lakshettipet and Nirmal divisions) has contributed Rs. 73,000 on average in the year of 1905-06 AD and Rs. 38,636, Rs. 59,621, Rs. 1,29,131, Rs. 72,369, Rs.95,477 for the years of 1910, 1911, 1914 1924, 1938 respectively as outturn revenue towards minor forest produce of Nizam's dominion.<sup>12</sup> Total revenue collected by forest department was Rs. 36,56,902 in 1352 F. and on each sq. mile forests fetched about 426 Rs. The surplus derived from forests of the other princely states and British provinces up to 1941 show that the revenue of the Hyderabad state from forests was the third highest in entire British India.

The aboriginal inhabitants who lived in isolation became dumb victims of process of colonization set on by the Hyderabad state through its various agencies of exploitations like forest department, middlemen and contractors. Non Tribals and new migrants too contributed their share in exploiting tribals and forests of Adilabad district. Geographical, Adilabad district located between two rivers (River Godavari and its tributary Penganga) was completely covered with forest till the middle of eighteenth century. This cover depleted only due to commercializing of natural resources like forests and minerals.

When such kind of balance gets disturbed, the conflicts begin. The increase in area of reserve forest went hand in hand with depletion of availability of resources for tribes and their future generations that was unfortunately failed to get noticed. It means the addition of every

<sup>10</sup> Report on the Administration of Hyderabad Assigned Districts, By the Resident of Hyderabad, (1871-72), 94 (Hereafter RA).

<sup>11</sup> RFA, 1348. Fasli, (1938-39), 28.

<sup>12</sup> RFA, 1905-38, 19.

new forest tract was at the cost of declining tribal habitat. In pursuance of the policy of forest conservancy, large scale evacuations occurred in the 1920s and continued even after 1940s. While promulgating new legislations, administration under Nizams had never thought like officials under British India who never restricted (comparatively) people from having minor forest products. Officials' prophesied that by not allowing people to have provisions that are used in day-to-day life will make them to undermine the legitimacy of colonial state and show resentment that leads to revolts. Containing of such resentments will be difficult was the opinion expressed by few British officials especially in madras province. The people who were at receiving end had to live in the atmosphere of unending insecurity.

Ownership over forests was clearly their natural right. Preservation of the resources on which they relied for fulfilling their needs was in their own interest. This responsibility was successfully carried on by the every coming generation of aborigines. With the arrival of forest and revenue departments, they were forbidden to take even enough wood to build huts and for making ploughs. But the contractors from the non-tribal areas carried loads of trees on their carts with the help of labour brought from outside. On the other side, tribals were allowed for access to some of the forest produce such as grass or dead wood for fuel and this was considered as concession liable to be withdrawn at any time. The traditional de facto ownership of tribal communities was now replaced by the de jure ownership of the state, which ultimately led to the exploitation of forest resources with total disregard for the needs of the tribal economy.<sup>13</sup>

The revenue of this division increased more than three hundred times between 1905 and 1941.<sup>14</sup> The effects of the reservation of large expanses of forest disrupted tribal life by restricting their agricultural practice or shifting mode of cultivation. The introduction of forest conservancy forced the tribes to adopt new mode of living or to modify the traditional economy. Under this changed circumstance many tribes adopted settled mode of agriculture. Many tribes as early as 1941 felt that the yield of the crops grown during the rains on every re-fertilized soil equaled or exceeded the combined harvests (both rainy and winter crops) of settled agricultural lands. Thus, tribes were more prosperous in pre-settled agriculture days or prior to the introduction of forest conservation policies. Gond prosperity and Gond culture thus began to decline. Under such conditions, tribes hardly recognized their new position. As long as they lived in habitat, protected from the outside world by hills and forests they

were economical and culturally safe. The forest officials while demarcating lines for reserving forests included all those abandoned land that were lying fallow and thus deprived tribes from its future use and such lands used to be lost for ever for communities practicing shifting cultivation. Thus, demarcation of forests resulted in confining the movement of tribes to limited area and restricted them to undertake their traditional endeavours. At that time demarcation of forest reserves in many tribal villages, especially, of Kolams and Naikpods were disbanded and the inhabitants were compelled to leave their home.

Tribes, who used to move continuously, then had to adopt settled agriculture due to decrease in the availability of free land. Reservation of forest areas and virtual prohibition of shifting cultivation have in many ways revolutionized the economy of the aborigines, their exploitation of the natural resources of their habitat was further limited by the auctioning of forest produce such as grass, mahua, chironji (*Buchanania latifolia* berries) and bamboo. The contractor who takes the chironji contract for a group of villages usually does not collect the fruits, but some time, after the fruit season he or his servants tour the villages and charge the aborigines either per house or per tree for the fruit which it is assumed they or their children have eaten. Another method of exploiting a contract is for the contractor to compel the villagers to collect the chironji without paying any wages, taking the services of the villagers as a right of his contract. Similarly Mahua flowers, were auctioned to one who collects from the tribes like Gonds and Kolams. Gonds complained that prior to the percolation of states administration they used the mahua flowers both for making liquor and also food. These flowers were collected during the season in large quantities and stored them for using them in the days of scarcity. Like on failure of crops, dry summer seasons when no tuber and fruits are available. They used to mix the dry flowers with millet flour and also ate them after boiling. Now excise officials supported by forest officials gathered the flowers and if found in the house, then residents of such house have to pay fine. The next forest produce was grass. Grass was also auctioned and the contractors act on the same principle. While demarcating forest lines, lower forest officials used to take bribes from villagers and peasants for not including their lands in reserved areas.

Money culture among tribes was not rampant as in plain or non-tribal areas. Taking advantage of helplessness of tribes, money lenders percolated into forest belts. Now, tribes were prohibited from going towards shifting cultivation as pressure on land was created by both forest department and new immigrants, who came to settle there permanently. Self-sufficiency came to an end and tribal communities were sucked into a cash economy that

13 C. von Furer-Haimendorf. *The Raj Gonds of Adilabad*, Book-1, "Myths and Ritual" (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1948).

14 *A Review of Hyderabad Finance* (Hyderabad (Dn): The Economic Adviser, Finance department, Hyderabad Government, 1951), 134.



had its roots in materially advanced and socially complex spheres outside the tribal regions. Prevailing ignorance among tribes on money transaction made them more vulnerable to money lenders. On whole the forest dwelling communities were either evicted or denied access to the forest produce on which they had depended for many necessities. Then the conflict for the forest resource between the traditional tribal ownership and the states claim has begun. Numerous revolts in India and few in Adilabad were direct result of the denial of the local tribal right over forests, which they had always considered their communal property.<sup>15</sup>

Nizam's Government through its laws encouraged immigration into this district in order to bring virgin forest tracts under cultivation to increase state's revenue. Conferring of title deeds and jagirs gave legitimacy over ownership of land. This lead to the influx of outsiders, who questioned the sustenance of Tribe and their way of living. The insincerity of subordinate officials is one of the causes for it.<sup>16</sup>

As said earlier, tribal revolt was not simply for forest rights, but was more than that. It was something regarding identity, against cultural domination and nationalism. It reflects the uncordial relationship between the forest dwellers and the forest authorities. The Jodenghat movement of 1940s in the Adilabad district of Nizams dominion was rooted in the self-assertion of Gond adivasis. The leader of the Gonds at Babijheri was Kumram Bhimu, who was born in a village, Sankenapally, in the neighbourhood of Asifabad. The oral stories say that he, like his fellow Gonds felt deep resentment over their pathetic condition that was caused by the arrival of outsiders like Brahmin, Muslim, moneylenders and so on. Every outsider was getting enough land with legal right or patta land but Gonds and other tribes could not get the same though they are residing there itself since times immemorial.

Many years of neglect and exploitation has left them wary and weary of outsiders. If we think the protective rules and enactment of laws could solve aboriginal problems then it will be a misconception. The 1981 Gond uprising at Indervelli in Adilabad district is good example that breaks such misconceptions. Therefore, the intention of problem should not be perceived simply from economical angle but it should also be asserted from psychological, social and ecological angle.

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15 Sahu and Allam Rajaiah. *Komuram Bhimu* (Jodenghat: Adivasi Prachurana, 2004), 85-88.

16 *Census of India*, 1921, 1931, Vol.XXIII, Hyderabad (Dn), 42; also *Census of India*, Vol.XXI, Part II (Hyderabad Dn.: The Nizams of Hyderabad, 1941), 59.