



Cover Page



## NIZAMS' FOREST POLICIES IMPLEMENTATION AND THEIR IMPACT ON KOYA AND KONDA REDDIS

<sup>1</sup>Pulkaram Shankar and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Louis Mushary

<sup>1</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of History, Central University of Tamil Nadu

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of History, Central University of Tamil Nadu

### Abstract:

This study analyses the implementation of forest policies in Hyderabad State by the Nizams and their impact on the Koya and Konda Reddi tribes. Due to a lack of comprehensive studies on the impact of forest policies, the adverse effects of their implementation on the Koya and Konda Reddi tribes remain poorly understood. Therefore, the present study attempts to shed light on the repercussions of forest policy implementation on the Koya and Konda Reddis. The study found that forest policies significantly impacted the Koya and Konda Reddis, altering their social, economic, and cultural lives to the extent that they were excluded from their own lands and became daily wage labourers for merchants, Patels, and Patwaris. The evidence from this study suggests that the government restore the forest rights of the Koya and Konda Reddis to protect their social, economic, and cultural practices.

**Keywords:** Forest Policy; Koya; Konda Reddis; Hyderabad; Nizam

### Introduction

The Nizam of Hyderabad State, under British influence, drafted forest policies and implemented them through the Forest Department. The implementation of forest policies denied the Koya and Konda Reddis tribes' access to forest resources. While Koya and Konda Reddis lost access to the forest, the forest policies served the needs and interests of the British and the Nizam's own commercial timber interests. The genesis of forest policies and their implementation in Hyderabad State dates back to 1890, when the Nizam first sought to control forests to conserve and improve existing forests by regulating customary rights (Thaha, 2009). Although the Nizam of Hyderabad State initially implemented forest policies with noble objectives, they gradually came under the influence of the commercial interests of the colonial and Nizam governments, supplying timber for railway track-laying and generating charcoal for use (Guha & Gadgil, 1989).

The expansion of railway tracks and the increase in charcoal use necessitated a steady, increased supply of timber. Driven by these needs, Nizam's government, under the guidance of the British government, enacted forest laws, revising and adding new provisions over time (Guha, 1983). The Forest Acts, which legalised state control of forest resources, curtailed Koya and Konda Reddis' free access to forests for collecting forest products. Henceforth, the Koya and Konda Reddis had to obtain prior permission from the forest department to cut trees. They always obtained consent by paying taxes. However, the mandated duties for timber and other forest products took a heavy toll on the social, economic, and cultural life of the Koya and Konda Reddis (Thaha, 2009). The devastating effects gradually caused the Koya and Konda Reddis to abandon their traditional way of life. Thus, it is reasonable to state that the Koya and Konda Reddis had to give up their way of life to provide timber for the British and the Nizam.

The impact of implementing forest policies on Koya and Konda Reddis in particular and tribals in general has generated significant scholarly interest in recent years. A. Navatha (2017) observed that the Koya faced acute economic distress and displacement threats due to the indirect result of the forest policy. In a subsequent study, P. Venkat Rao (2019) identified a change in the social life of tribals, characterised by the adoption of a caste-like hierarchical structure. In another work, Venkanna Kalthi (2024) highlighted the positive aspects of the Nizam's forest policies while also noting their adverse impact on the socio-economic conditions of the tribal population. In a recent study, Vekanna Kalthi (2025) found that forest policies, taxation, and forest regulations marginalised the Koya and other tribes and disrupted their traditional ways of life. Although these studies shed considerable light on the impact of implementing forest policies on tribals in general, the impact



Cover Page



on the social, economic, and cultural aspects of the Koya and Konda Reddis remains to be further studied to better understand it.

Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the repercussions of forest policy implementation on the social, economic, and cultural practices of the Koya and Konda Reddis. This study argues that the implementation of forest policies harmed the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the Koya and Konda Reddis by restricting their access to forest resources. To prove this argument, the current study is organised into three sections. The first section argues that the forest policies restricting tribals' access to vital forest resources enabled the Nizam government to control the forests. The second section explains how the Forest Act helped the Nizam legalise his control over the forest and make the tribals' practices illegal. The third section argues that the implementation of forest policies eroded the social, economic, and cultural practices of the Koya and Konda Reddis. The evidence from this study suggests that the government restore the forest rights of the Koya and Konda Reddis to protect their social, economic, and cultural life.

### The Forest Policies of Hyderabad State

The Nizam of Hyderabad introduced forest policies in Hyderabad State after the establishment of the forest department in 1867 (Thaha, 2009). The Hyderabad Forest Department was modelled on the Forest Department of British India, established in 1864 (Guha, 1983). Previously, there was no forest policy in place to preserve forests. People living near forests were allowed to exercise their traditional and customary rights. Only a few trees were considered important, such as teak. Therefore, the previous rulers of the Hyderabad state saw the forests rather as an obstacle to agricultural expansion (Thaha, 2009). It was during this time that the British government started exercising full powers after consolidating its rule in India. To ensure efficient administration, they introduced railways in India and steadily expanded the network, which required vast forests for sleepers and fuel (Guha, 1983). Close on the heels of introducing the railway in India, the railway was also introduced in the Hyderabad state for military purposes (Pande, 2018). Although the railway was introduced for military purposes, its massive demand for timber enabled the British colonial power to gain control over Hyderabad State's Forest resources.

The British colonial power, through its imperial Forest Department, indirectly controlled the Native States' forests because the native rulers lacked the knowledge to conserve the forests systematically (Thaha, 2009). However, the Nizam of Hyderabad, too, eventually came to understand the value of forests for the region's development. This understanding led the Nizam to restrict the traditional rights of tribes (Guha, 1983). The need to effectively curtail traditional rights and manage forests caused the Nizam to establish the forest department mentioned in the first lines of the first paragraph. In the initial period, the Forest Department of Hyderabad State was under the control of seven British conservators, who were assisted by German expertise (Department of Statistics and Census, 1949).

The Forest Department's primary task was to monitor deforestation, identify teak and Nallamadhhi (*Terminalia tomentosa*), durable timbers for their use, and protect them. The protection of forests began with efforts to preserve large teak trees in the Telangana districts for railway sleepers and fuel. Later, trade in forest products was prohibited (Thaha, 2009). This prohibition aimed to conserve and control trees to ensure a regular supply of timber for the railways. The Forest Department could achieve these objectives through arrangements that comply with the law of the land. Thus, in 1881, the Nizam government transferred the forest department from the Home Secretary to the Revenue Department. This department was responsible for collecting taxes and managing land ownership. The forest management was again transferred from the Revenue Department to the Forest Department, headed by M.R.J. Ballantine, a forest conservator. He made numerous changes to demarcate and improve the forests between 1886 and 1893 (Kishan, 2023). However, in the name of improving the forest, the government restricted the use of forest products for the state's benefit. The government also curtailed the customary rights of Koya and Konda Reddis to forest resources to which they have been entitled. This legislation led to the development of the first forest policy, drafted and implemented in 1890, which aimed to preserve and improve existing forests by regulating forest management. The policy was also characterised by the requirement to maintain climatic



Cover Page



conditions by preserving forests, to exploit the high-quality timber for commercial purposes, and to review the allocation of forest lands for agricultural development (Thaha, 2009). To achieve these objectives, the Nizam government enacted and implemented forest laws, as outlined in the following section.

## The Forest Acts

Forest acts are closely related to forest policies. Forest policies provide objective direction for forest management, and forest acts establish a legal framework for managing forests. Thus, as mentioned in the introduction, this section examines how the forest acts helped the Nizam government legalise forest control and make the practices of the Koya and Konda Reddis illegal. The acts are analysed as follows:

### The Forest Act No. II of 1309 Fasil (1900)

The Forest Act No. II of 1900 was enacted in Hyderabad state by the Nizam to legalise the state's control over forest resources. This forest act was based on the Berar Forest Law, which in turn was based on the Indian Forest Act of 1878. It took all the major provisions of that act except for minor exceptions. According to this act, forests were classified into three categories: Reserved, Protected, and Open (unclassified). From this classification of forests, the government legally protected sixteen species of trees as important sources of timber and authorised the forest department to reserve and fell them. Though these conservation efforts started earlier, this act formalised the process. Besides this right, this act also enabled the "government to declare any land covered with trees, brushwood, or jungle as a government forest" (Thaha, 2009).

However, this contradicts the administrative revenue report. It reports that under this act, the forest department had not constituted a reserve forest for 15 years since the enactment of the Forest Conservation Act. Land surveying only began in 1914, initiated by Claudius of the Survey of India, Dehradun, for forest reservation. Based on this survey, maps and boundary descriptions of reserved forests were prepared to be reserved until 1914 (Thaha, 2009). However, the Nizam government found this act inadequate for the betterment of the forest department of Hyderabad state. Therefore, the Forest Act of 1900 was replaced by the Forest Act No. I of 1326 Fasil (Kishan, 2023). Through these revisions in the act, the Nizam government established strict control over the Koya and Konda Reddis, who relied on forest resources for their survival. Thus, the Forest Act of 1900 denied Koya and Konda Reddis access to forest resources and legitimised the Nizam's control over them.

### The Forest Act No. I of 1326 Fasil (1917)

The Forest Act No. I of 1326 Fasil was a significant forest act in the Hyderabad State. The act contained all the major provisions of the earlier act, as well as new provisions to improve forest health. This act also helped the Nizam's government to manage forests by continuing to classify them as Reserved, Protected, and Open forests. Similarly, the act empowered the government to enquire into whether the land belongs to the government or a private person, with the assistance of local officials (Thaha, 2009).

According to Chapter II of this act, the government might declare any considered land as a protected forest within that area, no private rights shall accrue, no patta shall be issued, no felling or burning of trees allowed, and the conservator of forests may also prohibit the grazing of sheep or cattle (Kishan, 2023). The government might declare any land a reserved forest by specifying its location and boundaries. In the reserved forest, no one was allowed to claim their right (Thaha, 2009). Thus, the Nizam government had permanently secured the reserved forest through this act.

While the Nizam secured the reserved forests, the Nizam government regulated and controlled land under the provisions of Chapter IV of the 1326 Act. According to this Chapter, the government had the power to make rules for any portion of land



Cover Page



to regulate or prohibit any action, such as breaking land, kindling fires, cutting trees, burning lime or charcoal, pasturing cattle or sheep, or the sale of timber. The government might prescribe penalties for breaches of such laws. Thus, the Nizam government severely restricted the Koya and Konda Reddis' access to resources in protected forests. Besides regulating protected forests, the Nizam government also sought to establish village forests under Chapter III of this act. The Village forests had to be constituted by including areas that did not fall within the state's reserved forests, to supply village necessities with the help of local officers. The government also had the power to make rules for village forests (Kishan, 2023).

In addition to the above provisions, the Forest Act of 1326 also contained terms that denied the local communities their freedom of access to reserved and protected forests. Nevertheless, they had access to the open forests. However, the government imposed penalties for trespassing and for pasturing cattle or sheep in the reserved forests, and provided for the punishment of anyone who broke the forest laws. The act gave a forest officer the power to arrest any person reasonably suspected of a forest offence without a warrant. Later, in 1923, 1924, and 1929, the forest department issued stamps and permits as a concession to peasants and Koya, Konda Reddis, and other tribals, allowing them to use firewood and fodder in limited quantities, for domestic and agricultural subsistence, and not for any selling (Thaha, 2009).

### The Forest Act No. II of 1355 Fasil (1946)

The draft Forest Act, submitted to the government in 1938, became law as Forest Act No. II of 1355 Fasil based on the Indian Forest Act of 1927, except for some minor exceptions. According to the provisions of this act, the forest department strengthened its position over time to regulate people's rights to forests. Forests were classified into three categories: Reserved, Protected, and Village forests. Clearing the forests and granting of pattas were strictly prohibited in the reserved forests. According to Section 3 of this act, the government might declare any land of forests and their produce as reserved forests. No person could claim property rights in the reserved forests, though their forefathers had lived there for centuries (Thaha, 2009).

Provisions for the protection of protected forests on government-owned land were made in sections 29-34. The government might declare any forest land or wasteland not included in the reserved forest as a protected forest. The government had the power to make rules and regulations for the cutting and collection of forest produce, and to grant licenses to persons for taking or removing trees from the forest, both for personal use and trade. Similarly, the government had the power to regulate the 'cutting of grass and pasturing of cattle'. According to sections 35-38, the government might have control over lands that were not government property, where the government protected the forests for special purposes, such as disasters, and assumes the power to manage forests. Under land acquisition, the government can also acquire land for public purposes accordingly. Related to the village forest, the government might 'assign to any village community the right' to govern any land in the reserved forest. It can also cancel the assignment under section 28 of this act. In addition to this regulation, the act also contained provisions for penalties for violations (Kishan, 2023).

This act, along with the two acts mentioned above, was implemented in the Hyderabad state under the influence of the British colonial administration. On the advice of British conservators, the Forest Department of Hyderabad state followed every colonial act with minor changes. Empowered by the provisions of the Forest Acts, the Forest Department brought all forests under the control of the Nizam Government. The Nizam Government initially made minor changes to the forest administration. However, later, they strictly implemented the rules by revising and adding new provisions from time to time to maintain strict control over forest areas, thereby legalising the Nizam government's ownership of forest resources and making the forest practices of the Koya and Konda Reddis illegal (Thaha, 2009).



Cover Page



## Impact of Forest Acts on Koya and Konda Reddis

The Koya and Konda Reddis of Hyderabad state have been living in forest areas for centuries, relying on forest produce for their daily survival. Their socio-economic and cultural practices were closely linked to the forests. They were mainly agriculturists who practised Podu cultivation, a form of shifting cultivation in the forest. They collected forest produce, such as roots, leaves, fruits, and forest fuels, for daily use. Sometimes they hunted animals to meet their food requirements. When the Nizam government implemented forest policies in Hyderabad State, residents lacked land deeds to claim ownership of their land, even though they had lived there for centuries. The lack of legal documents affected the tribes in the government's implementation of forest policies.

### Social Effects

The Koya community resided within the administrative jurisdiction of the Kula Panchayath, headed by Pinna Pedda, who was subordinate to Kula Pedda or Patel, a position recognised by the government. Similarly, the villagers, numbering ten to fifteen and representing different villages, constituted the Samuthu. The Samuthu was presided over by Kula Dora, also known as Pedda Kapu (Department of Social Welfare, 1966). In the same way, Konda Reddi was a community controlled by the Kula Panchayath, presided over by Pedda Kapu, who was also a pujari of their village deities—in the absence of Pedda Kapu, his brother, Pinna Pedda, acted as his assistant (Satyanarayana, 2014). However, these village institutions lost their power when the Nizam government granted watan to watandar, who appointed Patwaris and Patels for village administration (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1982).

The Patwaris and Patels, who collected taxes from the forest lands, were immune from transfer and dismissible. Non-transferability and non-dismissability helped the Patwaris and Patels control the village administration (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1945). However, they did not value the social structure of tribal villages. They helped the forest department officials implement forest policies to exclude tribes from the forests and settle them in the plains. After their settlement, many social changes occurred due to interactions with colonial officials, Nizam State employees, and people from the plains who had settled in the area and gradually dominated the Koya and Konda Reddis in the forest areas (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1982). Compared to the Konda Reddis, the Koyas had undergone significant changes due to their greater interaction with others. Due to these changes, the social norms and customs that they had followed for centuries started to decline.

### Economic Effects

Both Koyas and Konda Reddis were agriculturists who practised Podu cultivation (shifting cultivation), which involves leaving the land to revert to its natural state after cultivation. They produced the same foodstuffs and exchanged foodstuffs through the barter system (Satyanarayana, 2014). Nevertheless, the Koyas were more progressive than the Konda Reddis in economic activities because agriculture has been difficult for the latter due to their settlement in the hilly areas. Regardless of their economic status, Koya and Konda Reddis faced numerous hurdles to survival due to the corruption of forest officials and clerks. With the help of officials, the fertile lands of the Koya and Konda Reddis were gradually occupied by outsiders who came and settled there (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1945).

The Koya and Konda Reddis were exploited by merchants for the extraction of forest timber, receiving lower wages or only foodstuffs and garments in return. Despite receiving only meagre wages, the Koya and Konda Reddis had to pay a gratuity of 2 to 10 rupees to the forest guard for permission to collect forest products for the construction of a house. Indeed, the excise department had issued an order allowing Koya and Konda Reddis to use two Palmyra palms free of charge. Nevertheless, the excise department did not fully enforce the order. Non-enforcement of the order helped the Patwaris to exploit Koya and Konda Reddis. Due to exploitation and restrictions on shifting cultivation, the Konda Reddis emigrated to the East Godavari district of the British region (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1945).



Cover Page



Just as the Konda Reddis did, the Koyas worked as labourers, occasionally at the Singareni Collieries in the Yellandu area due to the prohibition on podu cultivation. Later, outsiders came to the area for work and settled around the collieries, and Koya's land was gradually transferred to them (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1982).

## Cultural Effects

In the cultural sphere, too, the Koyas were more progressive than the Konda Reddis. Koya worshipped the goddesses Mamili, Kommamma, Katurudu, Adamaraju, Korrajaju, Muthyalamma, and Kudidevara (Department of Social Welfare, 1966). They, too, sacrificed human beings to the goddess Mamili to ensure good crops (Hassan, 1920). However, this practice was gradually replaced by animal sacrifice. Similarly, the Koyas also celebrated Sammakka and Saralamma Jathara on Maghamas at Medaram, a significant tribal festival held every two years in the Warangal district (Rao, 1993). Unlike the Koya, the Konda Reddis worshipped Muthyalamma, Bhumidevi, and Gangamma Devi, and celebrated festivals such as Mamidi Kotha, Bhudevi Panduga, Gangamma Paduga and Vana Devudu Panduga (von Fürer-Haimendorf & von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1945). Besides this religious practice, the Konda Reddis had beautiful folk dances. Men and Women performed folk dances at festivals and marriage occasions. One man wore a bison horn, and others played drums rhythmically (Satyanarayana, 2014).

Apart from cultural practices, the Konda Reddis hunted animals with bows and arrows for survival. Regardless of dependence on hunted animals, the Konda Reddis sacrificed pigs, goats, and chickens as part of their rituals. Unlike the Konda Reddis, the Koya sacrificed bull and buffalo at various ceremonies. These traditional and cultural practices of the Koya and Konda Reddis were linked to the forests (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1945). However, the forests became inaccessible to the Koya and Konda Reddis with the strict implementation of the Forest Acts. This inaccessibility led to the destruction of the Koya and Konda Reddis' traditional practices. For example, a customary booth constructed at the threshold of their houses during marriages was largely abandoned by the Koya and Konda Reddis (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1945).

## Conclusion

The presented study explored the repercussions of forest policy implementation on the social, economic, and cultural lives of the Koya and Konda Reddis. The study revealed that the Nizam government's implementation of forest policies enabled the Nizam to obtain timber for commercial use, while denying access to forest resources to the Koya and the Konda Reddis. The study also showed that the implementation of forest acts deprived the Koya and Konda Reddis of their land, reducing them to mere wage labourers. They were also forced to emigrate to other regions in search of greener pastures. Their economic practices, social norms, and customs, which they had followed for centuries, began to decline with the strict implementation of the forest acts. Thus, the forest policies and the implementation of forest acts, which affected the Koya and Konda Reddis, helped the Nizam government achieve its objective of regularly supplying timber to the British colonial government.

## References

- Department of Social Welfare. (1966). *The Koyas of Andhra Pradesh*. Hyderabad: The Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute.
- Department of Statistics and Census. (1949). *Statistical Year Book*. Secunderabad: Cheekoti Veeriah and Sons.
- Dyavanapalli, S. (2014). *Tribes of Telangana: Society, Religion and Culture* (Negadu Series No. 14). Telangana Resource Centre, Hyderabad, Telangana.
- von Fürer-Haimendorf, C. V. (1945). *Tribal Hyderabad: Four reports*. Revenue Department, the Government of H.E.H. the Nizam.
- von Fürer-Haimendorf, C. V. (1982). *Tribes of India: The Struggle for Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



Cover Page



- 
- Guha, R. (1983). Forestry in British and post-British India: A historical analysis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18(44), 1882–1896.
- Guha, R., & Gadgil, M. (1989). State forestry and social conflict in British India. *Past & Present*, 123, 141–177. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650993>
- Hassan, S. S. U. (1920). *The castes and tribes of H.E.H. the Nizam's dominions* (Vol. 1). Bombay: The Times Press.
- Kalthi, V. (2024). Forest policies in the Nizam's state of Hyderabad. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)*, 10(7), 432–437.
- Kalthi, V. (2025). Tribes under the Nizam's state of Hyderabad: A historical and socio and cultural examination. *EPRA International Journal of Research & Development (IJRD)*, 10(1), 100–102. <https://doi.org/10.36713>
- Kishan, A. (2023). *Telangana Forest Laws* (9th ed.). Hyderabad: Asia Law House.
- von Fürer Haimendorf, C. & von Fürer Haimendorf, E. (1945). *The Reddis of the Bison Hills: A Study in Acculturation*. London: Macmillan.
- Pande, Manoj. (July 2018). Nizam's Hyderabad State and the Railways. In *Indian Railway Magazine*. Railway Board.
- Rao, K. M. (1993). *Socio-Cultural Profile of Tribals of Andhra Pradesh*. Hyderabad: Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute.
- Rao, P. V. (2019). Socio-cultural impact of non-tribal contact on tribes of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India. *Romanian Journal of Sociological Studies*, New Series (2), 139–151.
- Suresh, D. D. (2017). Status of Scheduled Tribes in Telangana State: Problems and Perspectives. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3771705>
- Thaha, S. A. (2009). *Forest policy and ecological change: Hyderabad state in colonial India* (1st ed.). Hyderabad: Foundation Books