Research Paper

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Status of Common Property Resources (Cprs) and Rural Poor Livelihoods: a Case Study in Theni District of Tamilnadu

Economic

KEYWORDS : CPRs, Livelihood sustenance, encroachment, institutions

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ABSTRACT

The Common Property Resources (CPRs) are still playing a crucial role in providing livelihood sustenance to the local masses in general and rural poor in particular for long. But in the recent periods, the quantity and quality of such vital resources have been degrading conditions due to a number of social, economic and political reasons. But this study is primarily aimed to identify the category of such CPRs, pattern of utilization and the reason to go down of such vital CPR in the rural pocket of Tamil Nadu in general and Theni district that is study district in particular. This paper is wholly based on the secondary sources of information in Theni district of Tamilnadu during the year 2006-07 to 2011-12.

Introduction:

Common property resources like land, water, forest, fisheries, wildlife and agriculture consist of an important component of community assets in India and considerably contribute towards the people's livelihood sustenance in spite of the decline in their area and physical productivity (Marothia, 2002, p. 4). Broadly speaking common property resources are those that are accessible to the entire community in a village and to which no individual has exclusive property rights (Jodha, 1986, NSSO, 2000) Susan and Buck (1989) defined that now it is well known fact that common property resources (CPRs) are an important component of natural resource endowment of village communities in developing countries. Common Property resources can be broadly defined as those resources in which a group of people has co-equal rights that exclude the use of those resources by other people. This research paper mainly concentrates on the problem of Common Property Resources (CPRs) in the rural areas and secondarily it aims to discern the present status of CPRs and to trace out the causes of degradation in the study district based on secondary source information. The objective of the paper is to identify the category and present status of CPRs in the study district and to discern the extent of degradation of such CPRs and to probe the factors causing degradation.

Material and methods:

The present study falls on Theni district of Tamilnadu is being a wet district in which possessing potential irrigation facilities for cropping and good agro-climate conditions in several other aspects. The total geographical area of this district is 257654.09 hectares. According to the 2011 census. Theni district has a population of 1,243,684 and has a population density of 433 inhabitants per square kilometre. Its population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 13.69 percent. Theni has a sex ratio of 990 females for every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 77.62 per cent. The district comprises of eight blocks and five revenue taluks covering a geographical area of 3242.30 sq.km. Its economy is mostly agricultural. Utilisation of land area for cultivation in Theni district is 40.33 per cent. The principal crop production in 2005-2006 is sugarcane was about 1,201,221 tonnes, cotton 95,360 (561 bales of 170. kg lint each), rice 66,093 tonnes, millets and other cereals are accounted about 57,081tonnes, pulses 6,677 tonnes, groundnut 4,021tonnes and gingelly 325 tonnes. Silk, Banana, Coconut, Tea, Coffee, Cardamom, Grapes and Mangoes are the other main produce of the district.

Discussion

There are ample evidences are also available in India to furnish an idea about that resource managed under common property regimes have degraded into open access due to weak property rights regimes, institutional arrangements and breakdown of the local authority systems. For instance (Jodha, 2002, p. 37) find that the area of CPRs had declined by 31 to 50 per cent in the studied villages of different states during the early 1950s as compared to the early 1980s, when different states introduced land reforms, which influenced the status and treatment of CPRs. Further investigations by Jodha into that of the decline of the CPR area showed, the bulk of the area decline was due to the governments' undeclared policies of privatization of CPRs including the legalization of encroachments in spite of the protest of villagers against it in some cases and often pre-election period distribution of land in the name of giving land to the landless.

Table 1: Proportion of CPR and PPR in the study district

Year	CPR Land (Including forests)	Private Land	Total geographical area
2006-07	195903.05 (58.09)	141331.36 (41.90)	337234.41
2007-08	182872.41 (56.40)	141357.80 (43.59)	324230.20
2008-09	179961.82 (55.50)	144268.38 (44.49)	324230.20
2009-10	179177.08 (55.26)	145053.12 (44.73)	324230.20
2010-11	177617.51 (54.77)	146651.69 (45.22)	324269.20
2011-12	175597.97 (54.15)	148632.24 (45.84)	324230.20

Source: Department of Economics & Statistics, Theni District – 'G' Returns

In table (1) is explained that the proportion of CPR and PPR (Private Property Resource) to the total geographical area of study district. In the case of common property resources there has been a wide fluctuation during the period of 2006-07 to 2011-12. It was 58.09 percent in 2006-07 and thereafter it has continually declined to 56.40 percent in 2007-08, 55.50 percent in 2008-09, 55.26 percent in 2009-10, 54.77 percent in 2010-11 and then 54.15 percent in 2011-12. In this period, the availability of such vital CPRs was declined from 58 percent to 54 percent in the study district.

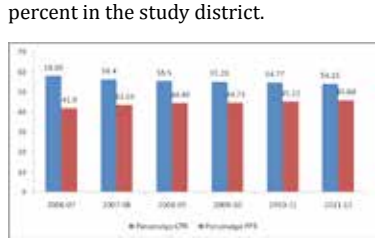


Figure : 1 Proportion of CPR and PPR

Most of the studies contributed a lot of evidences related to the reasons for the degradation of CPRs by micro and macro level surveys in India and at the global level. For instance, Kannan et.al (2006) found that the poor people were systematically excluded from customary access to CPRs at an alarming rate mainly due to agricultural intensification, commoditization of CPRs, environmental degradation and population growth. Desarda (2000) study emphasized that the process of industrialization and urbanization has had an adverse impact on the overexploitation of common property resources. The intrusion of open market system and privatization policy of the state has corrupted the community which subsequently leads to rapid decline of CPRs.

Another study by Kadekodi (2004) shows that about 20 to 30 million people depend on the CPR land to meet 80 to 90 per cent of their fuel and fodder needs. Over time, traditional local community control and management systems have been weakened. These lands have been subject to maximum degradation, and are especially susceptible to encroachment, subsequent allotment, regularization and appropriation by the forest or revenue departments. The area under the CPRs has decreased from 74 million hectares in 1980 to 69 million hectares in 1990.

Conclusion:

The Common Property Resources are the important sources of natural resources and it is play the supplementary sources of employment and income of the rural peoples. It was observed that the study area under CPRs in the state as declined over time. With the increased population growth and density of human population the CPRs degraded in its nature and extent due to the number of social, political and economic reasons This study has identified the primary reason for decline of common property resources is encroachment by the people for the purpose of cultivation which indirectly supported by the state institutions through regularization of such encroachment and distribution of land by state government. This has been resulted in the shrinkage of area CPR and reduction of per capita availability of common property resources.

There are very many recommendations made by several social scientist and policy makers in various times regarding the allocation and distribution of these resources to the individuals. For instance, according to P. V. Rajagopal, member, National Land Reforms Council, pointed out that the National Land Reforms Council, in its recommendations, has suggested that the state government takes time-bound action to survey 'Panchami' land and distribute it to landless Dalits. Further emphasized that the government should take appropriate action to prevent the conversion of Bhoodan (gift) land for industrial purposes. "Land rights are a critical social issue and the government's inaction had resulted in a condition where castes at the bottom fight against each other leading to land struggles becoming caste wars. In addition that secondary sources provided by the government records have also been lakcing to estimate the accurate picture about the status and extent of changes with regard to CPRs.

Note:

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