



A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF TRIBES with special reference to the Tribal students of Kannur district, Kerala

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *The Indian tribal society is a unique society with multiplicity of nature and people. In our country, known for the extreme poverty of the grassroots, the tribes constitute the core of the poor. Poverty, poor health and sanitation, illiteracy and other social problems among the tribes are wielding a dragging effect on the Indian economy. The governance and forest policies made these people suffer after independence. In Kerala the situation is not different. The current socio-economic development of Kerala doesn't reflect completely in their life. For centuries, they have been living a simple life based on the natural environment and have developed. In this study the researcher tries to understand the current socio-economic status of the tribe with special reference to Kannur district of Kerala.*

INTRODUCTION

India is a developing country. The development is incomplete until and unless it embraces the aboriginal population. The aboriginal inhabitants of our country are commonly entitled as tribes. As the name implies they are 'Adivasis' or the original inhabitants of the country and distributed almost every states of the country. Over the centuries they have been following a symbiotic life with the forest. References of such tribal groups are found even in ancient literature like Ramayana and Mahabharata. D.N. Majumdar describes the tribe as "a collection of families or common group bearing a common name, the members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos, regarding marriage, professions and have developed a well assured system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations." An expected tribe in these terms is a face-to-face community, relatively assured by kinship relations, mutual exchange, and strong ties to place. Despite all these characteristics there are enormous modifications from the pre-stage tribe to the contemporary tribe. At present these indigenous people are in conversion point. The prevailing needs of the society made them come out of their boundaries; but they are incompetent with the outside community.

THE LIFE OF TRIBE

Even though they are the autochthonous population their living status is incessantly unsatisfactory from the princely period itself. Anthropological studies reveal that the tribal population was socially subjugated by the advent of Aryans. To resist the complete supremacy, tribes evolved a distinct identity through endogamy, hunting, food gathering etc. Dr. D.N. Majumdar points out that the new forest policies and laws hit them very hard and made them struggle. These laws banned their freedom of free roaming and comprehensive use of forest products. Here the government also failed to rehabilitate them. Hence they lost their livelihood as well as livelihoods. The tribes were following a hierarchical administration led by the tribal chief. But it was replaced by the government administration. So they are compelled to reach out of their system and made them follow the same system followed by the so called elegant society. In Kerala the tribal population is concentrated in the valleys of Western ghat. More than 35 tribes were recognized from different part of Kerala. The current

social indicators development is very high in Kerala; but it doesn't reflect in the life of tribe. They are struggling for their lively hood. Even though tribal development is a topic of prime concern it lacks the proper planning in the administration as well as implementation parts. A study conducted by Kerala Institute of Local Administration reveals that There are 4614 landless tribal families in the State. More than 55 per cent stay in rundown houses. Half of the population lack pure water and 1252 tribal colonies are not electrified. Many of the families agonize to get medical care. Among them 4,036 are differently-abled and 2386 are mentally-challenged. The literacy rate among the scheduled tribes is very low while compared to the total literacy rate of the state (72.77). Most of them are school drop-out.

In this research the researcher tries to assess the socio-economic condition of tribes with special reference to the tribal residential school children of Kannur district Kerala.

The socio-economic status may be inborn or achieved. But it gives certain advantage to the individuals and their children.. The social behavior of the child is directly related with the family where they live. It is very necessary to understand the socio-economic status of tribe to analyze their living situation. The correct and genuine information are needed to the effective planning and implementation of their welfare programme.

METHODOLOGY

Thirty samples were collected from the Model residential school Kannur district Kerala which

gives free education with accommodation for the tribal students. Students from different part of the district study over there. A self-prepared tool was used to collect the data from the students. Because the socio-economic status of a family reflects in their children. Genuine data are also capable of being collected from them..

Important findings

The researcher could analyze the data by SPSS. The important findings are given below.

Table No 1

Job	Father	Mother
Coolie	90%	56.7
Private	10%	13.3
Government	Nil	6.7% (Temporary)
Nothing	Nil	23.3% (House wife)
Total	100%	100%

The above table shows that majority of the respondents' parents are doing daily wage works. Only a little percentage of them works in private institutions. The disgraceful thing is that nobody is having permanent government jobs. It reveals that even if the government provides reservation in government jobs the tribal population is incompetent to reach over there. Unawareness may be one of the reasons behind that.

Table No 2

Education	Father	Mother	Siblings
PG	NIL	Nil	6.7%
Plus II	20%	30%	13.3%
HS	3.3%	76.3%	(80%)Still studying
Primary	53.3%	43.6%	
Illiterate	13.3%	100%	100%

The literacy rate of Kerala is the most literate state of India. But while compared to the general population the tribal literacy rate is very low that is 72.77% only. It echoes in this study also. None of their parents are post graduate or under graduate. But the gorgeous thing is that majority are literate among those women are more educated than man. It can be assumed that the mass literacy programme went over there before two decades would have influenced the tribal people also. The results of 80% of respondent's siblings are still studying exposes that the tribal families give importance to the education of present generation.

The respondents were asked about their home location. Majority of the students (53%) responded that they are living in the place where the coolie workers are being stayed. 23.3 % of respondents are staying in the place of low class people being stayed. But 6% of people are living in so called high class society. Hence we can comprehend that now tribes started to leave the hills and valleys of forest and being migrated out of their aboriginal habitat. The social participation of respondents' family was also assessed. Fathers of 13.3% of the respondents shoulder the position of president of some social institutions or organizations. The same percentage also possesses the position of vice-president. Their mothers are also involved socially and bear some responsibilities. 6.7% of mothers are president of certain association at present and 16.6 % of the members are the members of self-help groups. The result also states that 40% of the respondents are having two to five domestic animals at home and 13-3% have five to ten animals. A little percentage 6.7% has more than 10 animals which is an additional income supply to the peo-

ple. They also started to be the owners of vehicles. Two of the respondents' parents keep car. They use it as bothtaxi as well as private use and 50% of them spends Rs.500 to Rs.1000 for fuel charge and the rest spend more than 1000 for fuel charge.

Table no 3

Monthly expenses	Tele- phone	News paper	Education	Elec- tricity	Pocket money
Above Rs.500	83.4%	10%	23.3%	3.3%	10%
Rs.300- Rs.500	—	10%	16.7%	13.3%	16.7%
Rs.100- Rs.300	—	16.7%	23.3%	20%	13.3%
Below Rs.100		40%	36.7%	60%	60%
Nil	16.6%	32.3	—	—	—
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The researcher made an attempt to find out the monthly expenditure of some items about the tribe. Majority of them spends more than Rs.500 for telephone bills. Only a limited population doesn't own any telephone connection. It shows even the tribal people are not exempted from emerging trends of technology. The general population is used to practice different applications like 'whatsapp' , face book etc. for communication. Being ignorant of these applications they depend on telephone/mobile phone as main source of communication. Except a minority they also spend money for newspapers, magazines which are useful for their children. Another gorgeous thing is that all their houses are electrified.

The researcher also analyzed the social participation of the respondents' families. The parents of 63.3% of the respondents are invited to social events and gatherings, and 13.3% participate as chief guest. Because they would have shouldered some positions in their community. The respondents were also asked the position of sitting of their parents in social gatherings. 63.3% reveals that they have never felt such discrimination in the place of sitting. They also keep good relationship with relatives. During festival time they used to visit their relatives home. 83.3% vows that sometimes their parents are called for the problem solving among their groups. It displays that they are adequately accepted by their community.

The researcher also made an attempt to understand the level of satisfaction of the respondents in their families' economic status. 53.3% of the respondents state that at the time of festivals they meet the expenses from their own savings. But 20% reveals that it is very difficult to meet the expenses at the time of festivals. 60% of the students understand that their family is in big distress to meet the daily expenses. The rest tells that they meet the expenses very easily. Regarding the overall economic condition 13.3% discloses that they are not at all satisfied in their families' economic status. 36.7% tells that some times they are satisfied in their economic status and 43.3% reveals that they could satisfy very rarely in their economic status. It points out that these aboriginal people are striving to meet their needs.

CONCLUSION

Here the study show that even though the tribes are indigenous people; now they started to breaktheir shell

of unique characteristics and lead a life of so called civilized society. But it is to be renowned that they are only in transition state. They lost their original habitat but they couldn't conquer the outside society. There these aboriginal people are striving for existence. This study shows that their economic status is not at all satisfactory. Anyhow they try to meet the educational and social needs of their children. But the pleasing stuff is that a vast majority states that they are completely free from social discrimination that is they are socially accepted unlike other states of the country as revealed in literatures. This is to be concluded that the educational and social development went on Kerala has made an impact on the life of tribal people too.

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