

Socio-Economic and Human Development Profile of Scheduled Tribes in Kodagu

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 03 Oct 2018

Keywords

Socio-Economic Status, Human Development, Tribal People, Tribal Development.

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ABSTRACT

The tribals live commonly in inaccessible villages or hamlets. A minor percentage of their population has now established in enduring villages as well as in towns and cities. On the whole, as per rough estimates, the noticeable tribal areas consist about 15 percent of the total geographical area of the country. Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and denotified tribes represent the weakest section of India's deficiency. Habitually, tribal people of India have been outside the purview of the Hindu background. Tribal communities intermingled with the non - tribal, caste Hindu communities but principally endured isolated from the social construction. The majority of the household livelihoods are Agriculture. Farming is the primary occupation contributed by the most heads of the sample households. Income from cultivation support majority of the sample population. More than 83 percent of the cultivation has from revenue about below Rs 5000-10000 level. Even daily wage laborers are present in the sample population. There is an essential to place more consideration on educational characteristics of scheduled tribes, where this only can inspire them for forthcoming life. The central and state governments and planners have formulated and implemented various policies aiming at raising the social and economic conditions of the communities such as the Scheduled Tribes (STs) who had remained traditionally backward for historical reasons. This paper examines the socio-economic and human development of the tribes in Kodagu district.

1. Introduction

India has several socially disadvantaged communities and Scheduled Tribes are the most deprived ones. The tribes of India constitute 8.2% of the total population of the country with varying proportions in different states. Tribal communities are isolated from the general population and are socially and economically vulnerable. They are 'at risk' due to geographical isolation, primitive agricultural practices, socio-cultural taboos, lack of formal education, poor infrastructure facilities, improper health-seeking behavior, malnutrition, lack of safe drinking water and hygienic conditions, poverty and the like. In India, each state is practically equivalent to a country with its own specific socio-economic level, different ethnic groups, food habits, health infrastructures, and communication facilities. Tribal communities are acknowledged to have a very close association with the ecosystem and the environment because of their fulfillment of daily nutritional requirements with food foraged from nature.

As discussed in in this Study, Kodagu is home to many tribal communities with diverse ethnic origins, such as Yerava, Kudiya, JenuKuruba, KaduKuruba, and Soliga. Just like other areas, the tribal communities in the district, especially, the forest-based tribes are vulnerable and significantly lag behind other social categories in the issues of education, health and livelihood opportunities. Further, with a large area covered with forests, three wildlife sanctuaries; the Brahmagiri, Talakaveri, and Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuaries and one national park: the Rajiv Gandhi National Park, tribal rights and resettlement of tribes are other major issues that affect the development of these tribes.

Further, there is a lack of segregated tribe-wise data on the status of development, utilization of various government schemes and the impact of such interventions on the lives of the specific tribes. Thus, this small area study tries to gather qualitatively the current status of development of 3 different tribes and compare and contrast between them the factors that determine their current development status. The study was conducted through primary data collection, consisting of individual interviews and group discussions. The interviews documented socio-cultural practices, the status of education, health and livelihoods and awareness and utilization of government schemes. The field sites were: YavakapadiCheenihadlu (Yerava Hamlet, Virajpet Taluk), Ayarasuli and KatteHaadi (JenuKuruba Hamlets, Somwarpet taluk) and Haadi (Kudiya Hamlet, Madikeri Taluk).

The Yerava also live in adjacent Kerala, where they are known as the Adiya and are primarily fishermen and farm-laborers. They speak their own Yerava dialect. The Kurbas were forest hunter-gatherers who are now farm-laborers. They speak their own dialect and belong to two subcastes – Jenu, who are honey-gatherers, and Betta, who are hill-dwellers and good elephant captors, trainers and mahouts. The Kudiya are of Malabarese tribe origin, they were toddy-makers. All these groups speak the Kodava language and conform generally to Kodava customs and dress.

1.1 The three tribes

• Yerava Tribe

The Yerava are divided into four subgroups, viz., PaniYerava, PanjariYerava, BadagaYerava, and KageYerava. They are distributed in the border area of the three southern

states, viz., Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The numerically dominant sub-groups of the Yerava viz., Pani and Panjari are considered to be two distinctive communities spread over the adjoining area of the three southern states. Yeravas speak their own dialect known as Pani and Panjari. These dialects are a mixture of Malayalam and Kannada, while the Badaga speak Kannada. They use the Kannada script. The Yerava women wear the Sari in a distinctive fashion, which is very specific to the Yerava and similar to the Coorg women wearing the Sari along with blouse. The Yeravas have an oral tradition of folk-songs and folk-tales. Percussion musical instruments accompany during their singing and dancing. Both men and women participate in dances. Most of the upper castes such as the Brahman and Kodava do not accept food or water from the Yeravas.

• JenuKuruba Tribe

JenuKuruba tribes of Karnataka are the original residents of the forests regions of the western ghats of south India. In the Kannada language, the term "Jenu" signifies honey and "Kuruba" stands for caste. Therefore their name suggests that these JenuKuruba Tribes have adopted the profession of honey gathering. According to anthropologists after the downfall of the Pallava dynasty, several JenuKuruba tribes have taken refuge in different places of the southern state of the Indian subcontinent. JenuKuruba tribes also have settled down in several forests hideouts, quite naturally these tribal people embraced the natural habitat of the forest region. Due to elongated alienation, the JenuKuruba tribes have developed their own culture and ethnicity. The JenuKuruba tribes lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle adapting to various occupations like conventional food collectors and shifting cultivators. The JenuKurubatribals inhabit the forest area that forms a conclave of the 3 states: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. JenuKuruba tribe is distinct in its appearance and cultural practices. They have negroid features. They are of short stature, have curly hair and are dark complexioned. They are shy and timid by nature.

• Kudiya Tribe

Kudiya tribes are of Malabarees origin. They are inhabited in the high hilly regions of Western Ghats of Karnataka and Kerala. They live on the peak of the hills. They are originally toddy makers and grow Cardamom with their own traditional way of planting. They speak the Kodava language and have adapted to Kodava customs and dress. Kudiya tribe has settled down in several hilly forests areas and encompass the natural environment of the forest region. They have voiced custom of folksongs and folk-tales, thumping musical instruments complement during their singing and dancing. Profile of the three tribes

1.2 Demography

Demographic background of the selected tribes indicates that all tribes follow patrilineal society¹³ and follow patrilineal¹⁴ descent. Monogamy is the norm. Both consanguineous (within close relatives) and non-consanguineous marriages are practiced. In the consanguineous type of marriage, one's father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter are performed. Endogamy is also present, wherein the marriage

rule is at the group level. Early marriage prevails among Yeravas and Jenukurubas like boys and girls are married off around 16 to 20 years and 12 to 16 years, respectively. Kudiya do not prefer early marriage; they usually get their girls married at or after 25 years and men around 28 years of age.

The age at menarche (first menstrual cycle) among girls is found to be between 12-14 years. Majority of the families are nuclear and only a few extended families were found among all the tribes. Family size extends from 4 – 10 members. All tribes were aware of family planning. Tubectomy as a family planning method was adopted by some households. The study revealed that there were recent infant and child deaths reported among the tribes recently (within one year), although maternal mortality was not reported recently.

2. Objective of the Study

- To Analyse the Socio-Economic Condition Tribal community in Kodagu District.
- To Study the Human Development of Tribal Community in Kodagu District.

3. Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data which has been collected from several governments report, Newspapers, Books, Journals And various websites.

4. Socio-Economic Conditions

There have been changes in all walks of life like social, cultural, economic, education and health. Especially, in the social and economic life of the tribes, many of these tribes have undergone a serious transition in their lifestyle. Earlier their economy was based on fishing for Yeravas, honey collection, hunting, and gathering of minor forest produces for Jenukurubas and toddy making and agriculture for Kudiya. However, these traditional occupations have changed drastically, at least in the case of Yeravas and JenuKurubas.

All Yeravas and Jenukurubas interviewed in the study were working as daily wage laborers in states, forests, and horticulture departments. However, Kudiya were both daily wage laborers as well as landholders who cultivate their own agricultural lands. It is well understood that the main source of income for Yeravas and Jenukurubas is daily wage and Kudiya earn through daily wage and cultivation. Further, it was unclear whether Kudiya actually had documented land rights to the full extent of land they are using for agriculture. Kudiya have the concept of savings, they are aware of banking and have saved their income in banks but Yeravas and Jenukurubas do not save any money as they are completely depended on a daily wage which is a hand and mouth condition.

4.1 Living conditions

The living conditions of Yerava and JenuKuruba tribes were not satisfactory since most of them lived-in Kuccha houses, made of temporary materials. Yeravas lived in huts constructed with hay; Jenukurubas had huts, as well as

tarpaulin roofs. However, the Kudiyas we visited have tiled houses. Kudiyas live in sparse hamlets, where each house is generally far away from each other. Their houses have separate kitchens and are well lit. All of them depend on firewood for cooking only a few countable numbers of families use LPG. For drinking water, they depend on wells and rivers/streams.

There was no toilet and drainage facility for Yeravas and Jenukurubas in their habitations and they practice open defecation. A few families of Kudiyas have toilet facilities but since they live in widely dispersed surroundings, there were no drainage facilities available for them. They do not have electricity connections and use oil lamps, whereas a few families use solar lamps. Yerava and JenuKuruba households did not possess any household assets or furniture except for some Kudiya families who possessed televisions and furniture. Kudiyas possessed agricultural lands and grew Coffee and Cardamom. Some of the Yerava households visited had paddy fields. However, the Jenukurubas had arable agricultural lands but did not cultivate them. Household poultry rearing was visible in the households of all the tribes. The tribal households were aware of Widow Pension and Anthyodaya cards and many possessed them.

4.2 Health condition

All the three tribes were aware of different health schemes. They did not perceive the need for regular health check-ups. They use neem twigs or other roots to clean the teeth and some of them use a toothbrush and paste. Yeravas and Kudiyas kept the surroundings of their households clean whereas Jenukurubas did not perceive this as necessary. All most all Jenukurubas and Yeravas interviewed consumed alcohol and the majority had the habit of smoking. Kudiyas expressed that they too consume alcohol but are stated that they are not addicted as the other two tribes and smoking is uncommon among them.

Further, Kudiyas stated that these days they depend on allopathic medicine and very rarely follow their traditional medicine, except for Jaundice, for which, they prefer Ayurvedic medicine. Kudiyas use auto/Jeep for transportation to health centers and clinics while the other two tribes have walk all the way to reach the health centre. Breastfeeding is given normally for 12 to 18 months among all the tribes; they start preventing after 6 months and are aware of primary immunization. As reported earlier, there were cases of infant and child mortality reported recently in all the tribes. However, maternal deaths weren't reported recently.

4.3 Food and diet pattern

The food patterns of the three tribes included Rice, various roots and tubers, fruits like mangoes, Licchi, Berries, and Jackfruit that are available in the forests. The non-vegetarian foods they consume included wild-boar, forest cat and birds and is consumed based on availability. The three tribes expressed that they never consume beef. Consumption of cereals (Rice and Ragi) and pulses is common and Turdal is used more frequently than other pulses.

The meal pattern includes Rice and Ragi balls with Sambhar along with commonly available vegetables and green leaves. The common pulses that are used are Tur dal, cowpea, horse gram, green gram and occasionally Bengal gram. Chapathi, roti, idli, and dosa are consumed but rarely. Coconut is not used frequently in the preparation.

Eggs are distributed by the government along with rice, ragi, and dhal. Hence they consume eggs once a week. Non-vegetarian food is consumed once in a week or fortnight and depends largely on the wages and money saved by the households. Chicken is preferred as it is cheaper than mutton. Fish is also consumed based on availability. Milk and milk products are occasionally used since they are not available near-by and are also expensive. They usually drink black coffee and black tea twice a day with Jaggery instead of Sugar. The commonly used oils are palm oil and groundnut oil for cooking.

They eat two meals a day and have irregular meal timings. The calorie requirement is high since most work as agricultural laborers in the estates. They do not consume any supplementary foods or tablets. It was found that both male and female members consume alcohol and in the case of Jenukuruba households, addiction was also noticed. The usage of addictive substances like liquor, local toddy and Beedi and several types of Gutka was high.

4.4 Cultural practices

All the tribes perform the major lifecycle ceremonies, like birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Post delivery pollution is observed for four days. At the onset of menstruation, the girl is scheduled for 11 days. She is not allowed to enter the house or touch any household articles but is provided with nutritious food. Ganga Puja marks the end of 'pollution'. They follow funeral rites, practice burial and perform elaborate ceremonies from the seventh to the twelfth day.

They celebrate all the festivals of Kodagu like Huttari, Kailpoudh etc. The one common practice among all the three tribes is worshiping a God called Pashanamurthy (considered as a form of Shiva among other social categories), whose temple is near Ponnampet. The deity is usually worshipped by placing a stone under a tree in the forest.

In the current days, inter-caste marriage is allowed among all the tribal group. Marriage ceremony takes place either at bride or grooms place among Kudiyas and Jenukurubas and at brides place among Yeravas. All the tribes believe in black magic and practice several of them.

4.5 Status of Women

Tribal women enjoy good status as they are involved in all the activities on par with men and contribute towards the family income by doing agriculture wage labor. Both men and women have the right to divorce on grounds of adultery, barrenness or disputes. Widows, widowers, male and female divorcees are all allowed to remarry.

5. Conclusion

The above discussion confirms that tribes have now been settled for a mainstream lifestyle. While tribes like Kudiya have been able to absorb some of the aspects of such a lifestyle easily, it can be seen that tribes like JenuKuruba and Yeravas have a long way to go if these communities have to sustain themselves independent of government support. While all the three tribes seemed to be aware of the various government schemes and benefits, the behavioral and attitudinal change required to survive in the mainstream society (absorbing education, modern agricultural practices, healthy lifestyles, utilizing government benefits to move up the social ladder etc) seemed to be largely missing among the JenuKuruba and Yerava tribes. The ownership and successful cultivation of lands, the production of commercial crops and the assimilation into the local culture seems to be the defining differences between the Kudiya and the other two tribes that could probably explain the difference in the mainstreaming processes between these tribes.

The JenuKuruba and Yerava tribes are still vulnerable and their developments, specifically with respect to health, basic infrastructure and education have to be prioritized. Further, the addiction to alcohol among tribal communities in general and among the JenuKurubas, in particular, is a primary issue that needs to be prioritized if these tribes have to lead a healthy and productive life. The dislocation from the forest-based lifestyle and the continued marginalization of these tribes from fruitful involvement in the local economy are the major hurdles that prevent an immediate and accelerated mainstreaming strategy of these tribal communities. Thus, while the efforts towards tribal development in Kodagu district needs to be amplified, the

government intervention strategy in their mainstreaming requires to be focussed, long-term and participatory. Concluding remarks (Status of marginalized groups)

This Study analyzed the situation of vulnerable groups; SC and ST communities in the context of education, health and livelihood opportunities in Kodagu. The analysis of educational status shows that retention rates and completion of primary education as the major hurdles for ST communities. Special attention needs to be paid to Virajpet taluk, which has a higher concentration of STs and wherein multiple education indicators seem to be lagging.

The health profiles of SC and ST communities provide a grim picture of the issues related to maternal and child health, specifically, that of the ST communities. Improving health-seeking behavior, provision of accessible health infrastructure including referral transport and emergency care and emphasis on coverage of vulnerable communities through preventive and public health programmes are crucial in guaranteeing better health status of the vulnerable groups in the district. The analysis of livelihood options reveals that these communities do not have a significant resource base and are predominantly dependent on agricultural labor and although agricultural labor is in demand in the district, the benefits may not directly reach these vulnerable communities, due to various issues related to the agriculture sector of the district. In this regime, poverty alleviation interventions, skill development, expansion of the secondary and tertiary sector are crucial for economically empowering these communities. Further, the standard of living of the SC and ST communities in the district is considerably lower than that of the other social classes and hence, prioritization is needed in issues like housing and sanitation.

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