

Tradition and Transition: Examining the Socio-Economic conditions of Malayali Tribes in Jawadhu Hills, Tiruvannamalai District, Tamilnadu, India.

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ABSTRACT

The Malayali tribes of the Jawadhu Hills have long relied on traditional livelihoods such as agriculture, forest produce collection, and herbal medicine. However, rapid socio – economic changes and environmental degradation have posed significant challenges to their way of life. This study examines the impact of modernization, land alienation, and limited access to healthcare and education on their traditional practices. The paper emphasizes the need for inclusive development policies that respect tribal identity while addressing their contemporary struggles for survival and sustainability.

KEY WORDS: Tribal, Forest dependence, Malayali Tribes, Jawadhu Hills, Sustainability, Environmental Change, Marginalization, Land alienation, Agriculture, Resources, Ecology, Policy, Tribal empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

The term “tribe” signifies a gathering of individuals who live at a specific spot from days of yore. Regarding human sciences the tribe is an arrangement of social association which incorporates a few neighbourhood bunches towns, areas on lineage and ordinarily incorporates a typical region, a typical language and a typical culture, a typical name, political framework, straightforward economy, religion and belief, primitive law and own instruction framework. A tribe is a social division in a traditional society consisting of families linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect. A tribe possesses certain qualities and characteristics that make it a unique cultural, social, and political entity. Tribes are also known by the name ‘Adivasis’ in India. India is wealthy in ethnic assorted variety and indigenous learning. There are more than 537 diverse native gatherings in India. Numerous quantitative and subjective field overviews have reported on of explicit community groups namely, *Kadars*, *Kanikars*, *Irulars*, *Malasars*, *Malamalasars*, *Malayalis*, *Paliyars*, *Todas* and *Kotas*.

The Constitution of India has recognized tribal communities in India under ‘Schedule 5’ of the constitution. Hence the tribes recognized by the Constitution are known as ‘Scheduled Tribes’. There are around 645 distinct tribes in India. Article 366 (25) defined scheduled tribes as “such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution”. In order to determine the correct population of Scheduled Tribes, it is necessary to define a scheduled tribe. A tribe consists of a group of families who are bound together by kinship, usually descending from a common mythical or legendary ancestor and who live in a common region, speak a common dialect and have a common history. A tribe is invariably endogamous. All tribal groups which can be covered by this general definition of a tribe are not necessarily Scheduled Tribes. For many centuries, the tribal population has come into contact with other different human groups and cultures. This contact has necessarily led to different types of inter-actions, co-operation and conflict, leading to a high degree of acculturation, and sometimes even to total assimilation with groups possessing more dominant cultures.

The Malayali tribes who are living in Kolli hills, Pachamalai, Kalrayan hills, Shervaroyan hills and Jawadhu hills are not the natives of these hills. During the sixteenth century A.D, they emigrated from Kanchipuram and moved westward and settled in these hills. They were living in remote areas and followed their own traditional customs and manners.

However, during the twentieth century the tribals life pattern underwent radical changes as a result of their interaction with the people of the plains. After examining all the views, one can arrive at the logical conclusion that the Malayalis are not natives of these hills and they came from Kanchipuram and became a tribe of cultivators, woodmen and shepherds. Even though they are scattered, they follow similar customs and traditional habits and have common administrative, socio-economic and religious system of life.

The Constitution of India provides for the special provisions relating to Scheduled Tribes. Article 342 lays down that the President may by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities or parts which shall for the purpose of this Constitution deemed to be Scheduled Tribes". According to this provision, President of India has specified these communities through Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) order, 1950 S.R.O.570 Article 164 provides for a Ministry of Tribal Welfare in each of the State of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa which have large concentration of Scheduled Tribes population. These Ministries are required to look after the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in their respective States. Article 244 provides for the inclusion of a Fifth Schedule in the Constitution for incorporating provisions for the administration of Scheduled Areas and Tribes of the States which have sizeable tribal population. Article 275 provides for the grant of special funds by the Union Government to State Government for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with a better administration.

MALAYALI TRIBES AND THE STUDY AREA, JAWATHU HILLS

Home to a large number of tribal people, known as Adivasis, India has the second largest tribal population in the world. The tribal people through the country have rich traditions, cultures and heritage with unique life styles and customs. Despite some regional variation, the tribes share many common traits, including living in relative geographical isolation, and being relatively more homogeneous and more self-contained than the non-tribal social groups. The areas inhabited by the tribal constitute a significant part of the under developed areas of the country. India's population includes nearly one hundred million tribal people. The two main regions of tribal settlement are the country's North-Eastern states bordering China and Burma, and the highlands and plains of its central and southern regions. The latter is home to more than 80 per cent of the tribes, which differ from the northeastern tribes in ethnicity and in having experienced greater "intrusion of the Indian mainstream and of the pan-Indian model of the state, society, economy and culture".

There are also differences in the extent to which the tribes interact with non-tribal communities. While the North-Eastern tribes are usually isolated communities, the tribes in peninsular India may at times coexist with non-tribal people. The word Malayali means ‘the inhabitant of the hills.’ They are spread out in the prominent hills of Tamil Nadu such as Kolli hills, those who live in Kolli hills are called as Kolli Malayali. The Malayali tribes who are living in Kolli hills, Pachamalai, Kalrayan hills, Shervaroyan hills and Jawathu hills are not the natives of these hills. During the sixteenth century A.D, they emigrated from Kanchipuram and moved westward and settled in these hills. They were living in remote areas and followed their own traditional customs and manners. However, during the twentieth century the tribals life pattern underwent radical changes as a result of their interaction with the people of the plains. The tribals were subjected to many changes and they began to adapt themselves to the new environment. After examining all the views one can arrive at the logical conclusion that the Malayalis are not natives of these hills and they came from Kanchipuram and became a tribe of cultivators, woodmen and shepherds. Even though they are scatted, they follow similar customs and traditional habits and have common administrative, socio-economic and religious system of life.

ORIGIN OF THE MALAYALI TRIBES

The origin and migration of the Malayalis to the hills are shrouded in mystery. The legends *Nattukattu* say that some warriors belonging to Karalar community hailing from Kanchipuram came to Kalrayan hills subjugated the native’s and established their settlement.³⁸ According to another legend, *Nattukattu* the Malayalis originally belonged to the Vellala caste of cultivators and emigrated from the sacred city of Kanchipuram to the hills, when Muhammadan rule was dominant in Southern Indian, they left Kanchipuram. They took with them, three brothers. The eldest one came to the Sherveroys hills, the second to the Pachamalai and the youngest to the Kolli hills. According to another version, the exhortation by the Malayali deity *Kariraman*, prompted emigrants from Kanchipuram to shift to the hilly region.

The Javadhu Hills (also Jawadhi, Jawadhu Hills) are an extension of the Eastern Ghats spread across parts of Vellore and Tiruvannamalai districts in the northern part of the state of Tamil Nadu in Southeastern India. This range separates Vellore and Tiruvannamalai districts. Vellore district lies on the north western side and Tiruvannamalai district lies on the south eastern side of this range. About 50 miles (80 km) wide and 20 miles (32 km) long, they are bisected into eastern and western sections by the *Cheyyar* and *Agaram* rivers, tributaries of the Palar. They

consist of bluish gray granites, with peaks averaging 3,600–3,800 feet (1,100–1,150 m). The hills are sparsely populated; the majority of the inhabitants are Malayali tribes' people, though other castes are also present. There are many tourist places near Jawadhu Hills, e.g., the Beemanmadavu waterfalls.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALAYALI TRIBES IN JAWADHU HILLS - INTERPRETATION & DISCUSSIONS

Gender plays a vital role for understanding the living status of Malayali tribes in Jawadhu hills. In Jawadhu hills, most of the tribal people are male and hence the male population is high in Jawadhu hills area when compared to female and children population. In Jawadhu hills, all the tribal people are belonging to Hindu religion. So, the social system, cultural system, morals, sanctified places, prophecies and ethics are not widely changed. It indicates that Jawadhu hills tribal people are having same type of cultural events and there are no vast variation changes in their behaviour. Majority of the Malayali Tribes are not having formal education and also not able to adapt with the society and also they are not having any knowledge and awareness about the schemes announced by the State and Central Government. The quality of education one can get is largely contingent upon economic affordability and the vast differences that exist between the two parallel systems of education; one managed by the government, where reservations and free education is available but quality of education may be less.

When compared to unmarried tribal, married tribal have more committed in their life as well as working segment. But the unmarried tribal people does not have any commitment and lethargic. In Jawadhu hills area, most of the tribal people are married and have committed in their social and economic life. Because of their more commitment level, they can perfectly fabricate their social and economic life. It is found that 40.0 percent of the tribal people are doing agriculture, 17.6 percent of the tribes are private employees, 6.4 percent of the tribes are daily wagers, 16.0 percent of the tribal people involved in animal husbandry, 8.0 percent of the tribes are involved in collection of forest produce and 12.0 percent of the tribes belong to other kinds such as student, house wife, old age, unemployed, etc. It is noted from the analysis that the majority (40.0%) of the tribes are doing agriculture. The reason why most of the people are involved in agriculture is that more availability of agriculture land and they are not highly educated due to lack of awareness about the Government subsidies.

In recent days many youths are aware about the Government schemes and are studying and getting jobs in various locations, but they are deviated from the agriculture field. It is found

that 61.6 percent of the tribal people are working within the village, 17.6 percent of the tribes are working outside village but within the grama panchayat, 14.4 percent of the tribes are working outside grama panchayat but within the block and 6.4 percent of the tribal people working outside the block but within the district. It is examined from the analysis that the majority (62.7%) of the tribes are working within the village. The reason for this is that the majority of the people are above 50 years of age, so they prefer to work within the village limit. It is very easy to travel from their home to the work place and they can come back to home as early as possible.

It is noted that the majority (56.0%) of the tribal people have one earning member in their family. Their economic level is not commendable level because only one member income is not sufficient to survive due to high expensable life. More number of tribal people are engaged with agriculture and so another one family member is engaged in other jobs. It indicates there is no more benefits in agriculture field. It is found that the majority (46.4%) of the respondents are earning below Rs.5000 per month. It abruptly shows that while engaged in agriculture they have not earn more in hilly area also and some tribal family people are strongly diverted to work some other places. It should bring to the notice of the government and they should take necessary steps like providing more subsidies for agriculture work, and encouraged to animal husbandry.

It is found from the study that the majority (78.4%) of the tribes are having moderate (Rice + Pulses) food. Many tribes are not having good income of money, so their food type is said to moderate food. It is found that 12.0 percent of the tribes are having facility of drinking water and 88.0 percent of the tribal people are not having facility of drinking water in their house. It is stated from the analysis that the majority (88.0%) of the tribes are not having facility of drinking water in their house. The house is located in the hill and there is less possibilities for drinking water facility in every house.

The majority (58.4%) of the tribes are not availing any government schemes for economic development. Many respondents stated that they were not having formal education and hence they are not aware of the government schemes provided for them to improve their economic development. Majority are male, in the age group of above 50 years and not having formal education. Further the majority (92.0%) of the tribes are married and having upto 4 members in their family, belong to single family and most of the people involved in agriculture. In Jawadhu hills huge number of tribes are working within the village, having one earning

member in their family and the majority of the people income is below Rs.5000 per month. It is noted that most are tribes in Jawadhu hills are not having the saving habit and they are living in the village since birth.

The analysis revealed that most of the tribal people in the study area is living below the poverty line, not aware of the government law on Right to Work, not availing any government schemes for economic development. Many respondents are growing above 25 goats, sheep is less than 15 numbers, below 20 cows and below 10 poultry birds. Most of the people opined that their culture is not losing its economic value. It is noted from the analysis that the tribes belong to less than 30 years age category are having maximum level of opinion towards availing government schemes for economic development. From the Anova analysis, it is found that there is no significant difference between the age of the respondents and their opinion towards availing any government schemes for economic development in the study area. In the present scenario, educational qualification is must and need for all the people even though they are in tribal. But in this study, most of the Malayali tribes are not well aware about the education. So, the Government should take more initiatives to lift their educational level through arranging teachers at Jawadhu hills that leads to increase their educational level in the future.

FINDINGS & RESULTS

It is observed that the majority of the tribes are doing agriculture. So, the agriculture is to be given a new thrust in the tribal areas as majority of the tribes depend on them. At the same time non-agricultural wage employment through Government programmers like MNREGA be increased which would improve the economic conditions of the tribes thereby, get livelihood. It is observed that the majority of the tribes expressed that there is no sanitary facility. Hence, proper sanitation strategy should be developed with the help of Government and Non-governmental agencies to content with improper sanitation in the village.

There are many reasons for Jawadhu hills tribal people not being able to enter into higher education because of poverty, inadequate schooling facilities, ill health, poor quality of education or traditional mindsets of parents. Most people, besides being poor, face an additional obstacle when they want to become educated. The tribal students were made to sit in the back of the class, forced to eat separately, humiliated and made to feel inferior due to social discrimination. So, every people in the study have to attain higher educational qualification utilizing the Government schemes.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the demographic, social, and economic structure of the Malayali tribes in the Jawadhu Hills. These communities face a range of challenges, including poverty, low income, inadequate education, and poor sanitation facilities. Such issues can be addressed through various government schemes and initiatives. Additionally, support and goodwill from residents of nearby villages can play a vital role in improving the socio-economic conditions of the tribal population in the area. A stable socio-economic environment is essential for leading a dignified and fulfilling human life.

The Government has to provide provisions like loan facility and other development programme to improve their economic level. The demographic profile of the Malayali tribes resulted that they are virtually cut off from the main stream of society. As an ultimate observation, therefore, it can be said that this study provides an exceptional prospect to explore the status and socio-economic condition of Malayali tribes with special reference to Jawadhu hills and the myriad problems and prospects of their development. To sum up, the study finds that there is only a partial development in the socio-economic status of the tribe's people in the Jawadhu hills.

The analysis points out that to reduce the intensity of problems associated with the improvement of living conditions of tribes, the Government should focus special attention to the creation of more extent of basic infrastructure facilities on a priority basis in the interior hill tracts where the tribes generally reside. There is a need to take cognizance of the traditional values and practices of respective tribes while formulating special schemes for the development of Malayali tribes in Jawadhu hills.

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