

HISTORICAL EVIDENCES AND THE INTENSITY OF THE TRIBAL PROBLEMS IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ATTAPPADY

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Abstract

Kerala is one of the developed states in India accounts tribal population in different 36 sects. The tribal communities in Kerala lived in close proximity with biodiversity rich landscapes; they have evolved local specific and novel livelihood strategies based on their indigenous knowledge. The life pattern they had been passed through generations and it played an important role in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. To a great extent they were depending on nature for their survival. In their traditional societies they always had an organic unity between humans and their surrounding environments. Automatically there rised an intricate relationship between their culture and nature. At this juncture, Social and cultural diversity, coupled with the environmental complexity, created diverse approaches and technologies in the management and use of different natural resources.

Historical evidence from Attappady

The tribal communities in Attappady were lived in a tight culturally packed up cohesive unit. Their intimate relation with the forest made them a close linkage group in the forest. Their particular pattern of agriculture made them healthy rich population from centuries. Their hamlets system is known as “ooru”. Each ooru consist of 1-20 families. communities for each *ooru* include the ‘*Moopan*’ who is the chief of the *ooru*, and his wife is the ‘*Moopati*’; the ‘*Kurutala*’ who takes care of the assistance in the administration in the *oorus*, and they will take initiatives to solve inter-*ooru* conflicts, if any; the ‘*Bhandari*’ is the person to make sure the availability of ensuring food security in the hamlet, and their main duty to make sure that nobody in the hamlet goes hungry, and the ‘*Mannukaran*’ is the person in charge of agricultural operations in the *ooru*, and they will split the agricultural land in the hamlet. They are happy in their agriculture. Nobody was lazy in the hamlet. Everyone will engage in the agriculture in their land. They eat their own agricultural products. They practiced Community agriculture as a model for the traditional agricultural practices of the tribals and this explicit a view that they are focusing on labour and produces were shared as they have abundant land for themselves.

Table-1 Population in Attappady-A Profile

Sl. No.	Gram Panchayath	Irula Oorus	Muduga Oorus	Kurumba Oorus	Total
1	Agali	53	18	0	71
2	Pudur	45	5	24	86
3	Sholayur	46	4	0	50
4	Total	144	27	19	192

Source (Census Report 2011)

The real existence of the tribal families is closely related with their nature. The dependency of the tribals with the nature curtailed very critically. These leads to a severe threat in their livelihood issues. There is an urgent need to find a solution for the survival and livelihood problem faced by the tribals. Eventhough there are measures implemented for the tribals their healthy, secure and independent life, has got deteriorated. Nobody can talk about the tribals without focusing on nature. They are the product of the nature and forest, the streams and of nature and have for long been seen as the protectors of the tribals. There exists a living mechanism in between the nature and mainstream culture. From this pleasant situation now they are thrown out to the mainstream culture without anything to prove for their land. They can just figure out their fingers and can say that this is

our land. It is the duty of the Decision making process to find out a permanent solution for this poor people. Tribal's opinion and their views are most important in this background. Because their view can provide a good background to find out the solution. Most of the tribals in this region have been subjected to worst type of land alienation in all the hamlets it is reported that each households lost sizable acreage of fertile land. There are many reasons for the tribals to give up their land. Indebtedness in general is a serious problem. Large amount of money the tribals had borrowed from the non tribals in various occasions that become a huge amount of debt later. In the name of very less amount the non tribals took their land. During 1970s to 1990s. Indebtedness was the major cause of land alienation. The tribals are not ready to believe the non-tribals due to this attitude and they are very aggressive towards the non tribals Irular, Mudugas and Kurumbas have lost their hope in restoration of their land and to indulge in their agriculture. They have the view that the root cause of their poverty started from land alienation.

Changed food pattern

The traditional food pattern of the tribals were highly nutritious and protein rich. At present everything has changed. Traditionally, ragi, chama, cholam formed their staple diet and it was their major crop. Similarly, in their food pattern they need to purchase rice and vegetables. Now rice had become staple diet and they depend on fair price shops for buying it. "Community kitchen" completely stopped their love towards agriculture to a great extent. Ignorance of the tribals were exploited by the settlers. One of the main reasons for all the exploitation by the non tribals on tribals is their ignorance. Still they faced acute problems in education. Behavior of non tribes particularly in economic terms gives the tribals always bitter experiences. It is reported that in terms of economic transactions they are always exploited. To a great extent many of the privileges which the tribal's actually deserved to get were denied by the settlers, they are exploiting the ignorance of the tribals.

Loss of control on the traditional system and culture

There occurred a big conflict between settlers and the tribals as the tribal population become minority and the settlers become the majority and their dominance in their life. Immediate impact of the dominance of the non tribals on tribal life is the destruction of the traditional life structure and the tribal social functionaries could not undertake trial and impose punishment over non- tribal social offenders who indulge in rude activities on the tribals. They made a severe threat on the land possession of the tribals; they gave a serious negative impact to the tribal likelihood pattern.

Loss of traditional livelihood of tribals and increase in the livelihood of non tribals

Tribal livelihood pattern is fully packed with nutritious and vitamin foods. They collected more than 150 keera items, vegetables and fresh fruits from the forest. Besides meat and fish also was one of the important part of their life. Non tribals destroyed traditional land use practice and usages have and they converted the land in Attappady as according to their whims and fancies. They have introduced cash crop cultivation and irrigated agricultural practices. They followed Coconut, areca nut, plantain cultivation cover a sizeable area in Attappady. Cash crops become the economic activities in the area. Tribals were completely alienated form their traditional food structure.

Alienation of the tribal language

Tribals keep their tradition on the basis of their rich belief in their language. After the encroachment of the non tribals in to this area there happened a great change and makeover in the tribal language and customs. Due to the generalization and the dominance of non- tribals they speak their language only within the hamlet for family interaction. Now the situation in Attappady has changed in favour of a Malayalam speaking area and their language has been sidelined. Malayalam and Tamil; the mother tongue of the settlers are the medium of instruction in schools but we should not forget the fact that we are killing one sect of people with power and autonomy. They are dying day by day in the name of developmental activities. Ultimate result of this situation is the misunderstandings and ads to the helplessness of tribals.

Control under the settlers and they rule the tribals

Most of the tribals and are took over by the non tribals. Even the lands of the temple are occupied by them. Instance of boundary disputes associated to land grabbing by settlers are also not rare in this area. Poor tribals will not complain anything about this to anyone as they know that they will not get any result from any kind of complaints. Sometimes incidences of physical violence were reported among non tribes. Whatever will happen, ultimately tribals will receive the punishment.

Deforestation and complete loss of traditional livelihood

One of the main causes of all the problems of the tribals is the deforestation. The heavy influx of the settler made a heavy damage to the forest eco system of Attappady Valley. Due to the large scale immigration of the non tribals in to this area the pressure on forests increased. Non tribals engaged in illicit timber extraction which was resulted in denudation of forest cover of Attappady in the settler areas. This area was not favoured by the outsiders as the living of wild animals and heavy climate. But after the large scale immigration in to this are by the settlers from different parts of Kerala and Tamilnadu, two-third of the forest cover disappeared all of a sudden. All the issues of the tribals stated from this deforestation and occupation of their land by the non tribals. The tribal lost their all life systems and rights in the forest only because of this heavy deforestation.

Introduction of modern technology by the non tribals

The non tribals and settler population adopted new technologies in agriculture and other walks of life. But the tribals who were working under the settlers become the victims of this situation and they got an opportunity for getting exposed to the new technology and tools. But the tribals don't know anything about the new technology and they employed traditional tools and techniques which are out dated and less productive. In addition to this Government introduced many developmental measures for the tribals. Whatever programmes are implemented for tribal upliftment, they are always creates negative impact to the life of the tribals.

Deterioration of the social and cultural life of the tribals

There is a complete destruction in the social hierarchy of the tribals in Attappady. They themselves are not interested to discuss their social problems and no one in the society is bothered about their customs and tradition. Most of the development thoughts believe that, for the complete development of the tribals we need the tribal people away from their age old cultural practices and traditions. They had many types of practices in the tribal community related with feasts and festivities accompanied with music and dances. In addition to this burial rites and marriage rites in variably group dance of hamlet people were arranged. There were no age bar and sex bar for the tribals to participate in it. There had a culture of uniformity in their life and finally they were so happy and enjoyed. But everything from their tradition has disappeared from their life.

There is a controversy between the education to the tribals and their taste

There are enormous measures have implemented with the purpose of imparting education to the tribals. But it did not reached to the goals in providing the expected outcome. It resulted in dropouts in education even at the early stage of their education. There is complete negligence of their language and media of communication, so their educational interests are also curtailed by the development machinery.

Depth of Malnutrition in Attappady

Malnutrition or nutritional deficiency is one of the critical problems in Attappady. Till recent years nobody were noticed about this issue. Some of the studies in Attappady shows that most of the infants had birth weight (as well as current body weight) that was far below the national average. Before the delivery, the weight, circumference of the head of the infants were recorded and measured and other physical examinations will conduct. Traditionally they used to breastfeed their children up to two years but now due to the change in situation they give ragi to their infants from 4-6 months

onwards some said that they feed the children amrutham powder (a nutrition powder supplemented from anganwadis). Breast milk production is not in good amount. That may be the reason to stop the breastfeeding at very early stage. The mothers took care of their children irrespective of their harsh economic and social realities.

Low Hemoglobin and Poverty

Hemoglobin count in many mothers are very low. Most of the mothers will go through blood transfusion at the hospitals. There is a common situation in Attappady that either their blood pressure will be low or it will be extreme. The consequence of this situation is that in many cases 70% of children lived a few days after birth and 30% were still-born. The main issues for all this problems for all this worse situation was the destruction of the forest land the related problems raised from these issues. In the name of development projects, government takeover acres of the forest lands from the tribals. A poor tribal doesn't know the realities. In the name of tea or alcohol they are ready to give their land to the settlers. The input and out of this handover resulted in wild life protection initiatives, heavy settler inflow, mere establishment of Governmental bureaucracy, much importance to the settler practice of commercial agriculture, increased deforestation, heavy soil erosion, exploitation of women, chronic hunger in the tribal families, heavy alcoholism in the tribal Hamlet, displacement demanded by the 'development' and so on, the traditional practices have gradually fallen down etc.

Conclusion.

Tribal women in traditional Tribal society enjoyed great freedom and gender equality in the traditional setup. The three original Tribal communities in Attappady are Irulas, Mudugas and Kurumbas had their own religious, cultural, political, social and economic life. The most important in their culture was the inspiring and scheming factor which leads them to a complete development of their overall growth and development at any stage of life. There are many factors led them to their present deprivation in their life. It includes land loss, deforestation, lack of income, absence of proper employment opportunities, deterioration in health, deprivation of their culture, addiction to alcoholism by men and women, deprived health and associated diseases, extreme dropout and lack of interest in studies, heavy influence of social media, lack of income to lead a life of mainstream, depression and mental illness, increasing domestic violence at Tribal hamlets, critical exploitation of Tribal women etc.

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