

Original Research Article

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN KOLLI HILLS OF TAMIL NADU

ABSTRACT

Social and economic justice, equal status and opportunities and the assurance of the dignity of the individual are guaranteed by the Indian Constitution for all citizens among other things. Economic and social marginalization, primitive life, geographical isolation, and educational backwardness define the Scheduled Tribes communities in India. India's constitution is filled with several provisions for scheduling castes and scheduling tribes to protect and promote their cultural, social, educational, and economic interests to bring them into the nation's mainstream. The majority of the sample households in the study area are illiterate. Cultivation is the primary occupation participated by the most heads of the sample households. Income from cultivation supports the majority of the sample population. There is a need to put more attention on educational aspects of scheduled tribes, where this only can motivate them for future life. In this study the researcher tries to understand the current socio-economic status of the Scheduled tribes in Kolli Hills Namakkal district Tamil Nadu.

Key words: Tribes, socio- economic status, resources and financial position.

1. Introduction

The tribal societies in India are considered as the weakest sections of the population in terms of common socio-economic and demographic factors such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of developmental facilities and adequate primary health facilities (Thakur et al., 1991; Basu, 1994). Tribal economy is closely linked to forests. The tribal has lived in or on the edges of forests for centuries and relied entirely on forests for their livelihood. Even today, Forest products are still the main source of income and livelihood for many tribal communities.

1.1. Scheduled Tribes in India

There are 427 big tribal groups living in India. India ranks second only to Africa in having the world's tribal concentration. The predominant tribal areas are estimated to constitute about 15 percent of the country's total geographic area. The country's population of Scheduled Tribes (STs) is 10.45 crore as per the 2011 census. STs make up 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country and 11.3 per cent of the total rural population. ST males are 5.25 crore in population and ST females are 5.20 crore in population.

1.2. Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu

The scheduled tribes make up 1.1 percent (0.79 million) of Tamil Nadu's total population of 72.14 million as per 2011 census, which represents 0.76 percent of India's total population and makes up 36 castes. Among the 36 STs, five STs are sharing majority of 80.32 per cent in the state ST population namely Malayali, Irular, Kattunayakan, Kurumans and Uraly.

Earlier ages before men lived in a society that endured a fierce hunting society and relied purely within the limits of survival on the established natural sources. The incredibly increasing human and animal population, the pressured environment, the consumer markets and economics, the industrial development and other several related factors has resulted in the exploitation of natural resources. This has resulted to the degradation of forests, several environmental problems and has consequently led to the fall off of homeland of native tribal. The primitive methods of farming, agriculture, shifting cultivation and exploitation of the forest produces by the millions of people living within and out of the forest has led to major forest loss.

1.3. Selection of the Study Area

The selected study area, Kolli Hill has an area of 371.30 sq. km. It stretches 29 km from North to South and 19 km from East to West. Among the total population in Kolli Hills (40479), schedules tribes occupies more than 95 per cent of the total population consists of 39716 tribes.

Table 1. Population Spread of Tribes in Kolli Hills

S. No	Panchayat Villages	Tribes	Population	Percentage Share
1.	Peraikkarainadu	Kolasamy	1496	3.77
2.	Bainadu	Perandai	4572	11.51
3.	Chiturnadu	Vellaiadai	1631	4.11
4.	Edapulinadu	Sakkaravarthi	2309	5.81
5.	Thirupulinadu	Thoondiyan, Silambai	2399	6.04
6.	Alathurnadu	Kolapandi	828	2.08
7.	Gundaninadu	Kolapandi	1169	2.94
8.	Gundurnadu	Pettiyan, Sakkaravarthi	3810	9.59
9.	Valappurnadu	Sakkaravarthi	4608	11.60
10.	Ariyurnadu	Karuvada, Kolapandi	4683	11.79
11.	Valavanthinadu	Valanjan, Sakkaravarthi	4347	10.95
12.	Thinnanurnadu	Sakkaravarthi	2537	6.39

13.	Devanurnadu	Kanthan, Sakkaravarthi	2310	5.82
14.	Selurnadu	Kalithalaiya	3017	7.60
	Total		39,716	100

1.4. Objectives

- To study the socio economic condition of tribal people at Kolli Hills.
- To study the facility available for tribal people at Kolli Hills.
- To identify the resources available in Kolli Hills.

2. Methodology

Taking into the remuneration of the objectives and the time available for the conduct of the study, two-stage sampling method was adopted at 1st stage six villages are purposively selected and 2nd stage 40 tribes are randomly selected from each revenue village that constitutes a total sample size of 240 tribes in Kolli hills. The total of 240 sample respondents is tribal tribes only. The selected villages are Valavanthinadu, Thirupulinadu, Gundurnadu, Ariyurnadu, Devanurnadu and Selurnadu.

Table 2. Distribution of Sample Respondents in Kolli Hills

S. No	Name of the Village	Number of Respondents
1.	Valavanthinadu	40
2.	Thirupulinadu	40
3.	Gundurnadu	40
4.	Ariyurnadu	40
5.	Devanurnadu	40
6.	Selurnadu	40
Total Sample Size		240

2.1. Source and Nature of Data

The data were collected from the tribes which include the socio-economic conditions of the sample respondents such as age, education, experience, size of the family, primary occupation, sources of income, number of dependents and asset position. The secondary data was collected through Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Directorate of Agriculture, Government of India, District Statistical Office of the Namakkal district, Census of India 2011,

Ministry of Statistics Government of India, Kolli Hills Municipality and also from the Government publications, reports and other published sources.

2.2. Tools of Analysis

Simple, average and percentage analysis were employed to study the socio-economic variables such as age, education, primary occupation, size of family, number of dependents, level of income, asset position, etc., with regard to different outcomes of scheduled tribes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Tribes

The study was based largely on the primary data collected from the sample farms. All the sample respondents are depending directly or indirectly on the forest for their livelihood. Hence, the general characteristics of the sample respondents would help to know more about the socio-economic factors that influence the decision of tribes.

3.2. Age Wise Distribution of Tribes

The details of age wise distribution of tribes in Kolli hills in the Namakkal district are presented. It could be observed from the Table 3 that, the respondents in the age group of 25 to 50 were found to be high (37.08 per cent) followed by the tribes belonging to the age group of 50 to 65 years which accounts for 31.67 per cent. It is clearly observed that majority of the tribes are middle-aged. Nearly 17 per cent of the tribes are young aged, belongs to less than 25 years followed by the tribes belonging to the age group of more than 65 years accounting for 14.17 per cent. Most of the large tribes are falling under the group of old aged which lies more than 65 years.

Table 3. Age Wise Distribution of Tribes in Kolli Hills

S. No	Age (Years)	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share to the Total
1.	Less than 25	41	17.08
2.	25 to 50	89	37.08
3.	50 to 65	76	31.67
4.	More than 65	34	14.17
	Total	240	100.00

3.3. Gender Wise Classification of Head of the Sample Households

Gender is an important factor that determines the level of exposure and access to information. The results indicated that 88.75 per cent of the head of the households in the forestry tree growers were male tribes and 11.25 per cent were female tribes. Hence it could be

concluded that male tribes were dominated in the sample respondents comparing the female tribes.

Table 4. Gender Status of the Head of the Household

S. No	Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share to the Total
1.	Male	213	88.75
2.	Female	27	11.25
	Total	240	100.00

3.4. Family Type of Sample Respondents

The family details would be very useful to assess the contribution of family labor to farming.

Table 5. Family Type of Sample Respondents

S. No	Family Type	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share to the Total
1.	Joint	154	64.17
2.	Nuclear	86	35.83
	Total	240	100.00

From the above table, the traditional joint family system still exists in most of the families of sample households. Mostly tribes prefer joint family system because of various advantages viz., labor contribution, livestock maintenance and so on.

3.5. Literacy Level of Tribes

The literacy level of the tribes is also a principal factor in the decision-making behavior to a great magnitude.

Table 6. Literacy Level of Sample Tribes

S. No	Educational Status	Respondents (Nos)	Percentage Share to the Total
1.	Illiterate	108	45.00
2.	Primary school (1 st to 5 th)	59	24.58
3.	Secondary school (6 th to 10 th)	23	09.58
4.	Higher secondary (11 th to 12 th)	28	11.67
5.	Collegiate	22	09.17
	Total	240	100.00

The literacy level of scheduled tribes was 55.00 per cent. Among the literates, tribes with education up to primary school were highest with 24.58 per cent followed by higher secondary with 11.67 per cent and 9.58 per cent of scheduled tribes belong to secondary school level category. Collegiate level of education was the lowest with 9.17 per cent. Hence, the result

revealed that scheduled tribes were above average with a primary, secondary and higher secondary level of education.

3.6. Operational Land Holding

Farming size is positively related to the adaptation of forest crops and new technologies. The land holding pattern of sample tribes is presented.

Table 7. Size of Land Holding of Sample Tribes

S. No	Area (ha)	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share to the total
1.	Small(less than1)	63	26.25
2.	Medium (2 to 4)	156	65.00
3.	Large (more than 4)	21	08.75
	Total	240	100.00

Majority of tribes were medium tribes with a 65 per cent share followed by 26.25 per cent of small tribes. The proportion of large tribes was lowest with 8.75 per cent share respectively.

3.7. Livestock Position of the Sample Tribes

Livestock plays an important role in farming. The details regarding livestock rearing and maintenance among the sample farms would help in understanding the extent of supplementary income generated by the sample tribes.

Table 8. Livestock Position of the Sample Tribes

S. No	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share to the Total	Present value (Rs)/ Animal
1.	Cattle	206	85.83	32000
2.	Buffalo	22	09.17	44000
3.	Goat	143	59.58	4500
4.	Pig	64	26.67	6000
5.	Fowl	191	27.58	1500
6.	Duck	04	01.67	230

Among all the categories, cattle is the important livestock possessed by the majority (206 tribes out of 240) of the tribes and the present value of per cattle is Rs.32,000. Followed by fowl (191 tribes out of 240) and the present value is Rs.1500. Goat possessed third most majority (143 out of 240) and the present value is Rs.4500 followed by a pig (64 out of 240) of the tribes and the present value is Rs.6000. Buffalo and duck possessed by least number (22 and 4 out of 240) of the tribes and the present value are Rs.44000 and Rs.230 respectively. The income from selling the milk is used to meet the daily expenses.

3.8. Annual Income of Tribes

Most of the tribes (35.83 per cent) belong to the income category of 15,000 to 25,000 followed by the income category of 25,000 to 50,000 which constitutes 29.59 per cent. Income category of less than 10,000 categories constitutes 19.58 percent and more than 50,000 category tribes are the least shares constitutes with 15 per cent.

Table 9. Annual Income of Tribes

S. No	Income level (Rs)	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share to the Total
1.	Less than 15,000	47	19.58
2.	15,000 to 25,000	86	35.83
3.	25,000 to 50,000	71	29.59
4.	More than 50,000	36	15.00
	Total	240	100.00

3.9. Primary Occupation of Tribes

It could be seen from the Table 5.11 that out of 240 respondents of tribal, 53.75 per cent of respondents were involved in forest activities. Out of this, 40 per cent respondents were engaged with collecting Non-Timer Forest Products (NTFP) as their primary occupation, 4.58 per cent of respondents involved in hunting honey and 9.17 per cent were engaged in other forest related activities. Regarding 14.17 per cent of respondents were involved in cultivating agricultural crops, 10.83 per cent of respondents involved in livestock rearing, 17.50 per cent of respondents are working as agricultural labor and 3.75 per cent of respondents fall under other forest and agriculture related activities.

Table 10. Primary Occupation of Tribe in Kolli Hills

S.No	Primary occupation	Respondents (Nos)	Percentage Share to the Total
1.	Collection of NTFP	96	40.00
2.	Honey hunting	11	04.58
3.	Other forest related activity	22	09.17
	Forest related activity	129	53.75
4.	Agriculture	34	14.17
5.	Livestock	26	10.83
6.	Agricultural labour	42	17.50
7.	Other than forest and Agricultural activity	09	03.75
	Total	240	100.00

3.10. Asset Possession

Investments on farm assets play an important role in assessing the infrastructure available in forums. The total value of farm assets per farm was on an average of Rs.32,88,365. The land was found to be the most significant asset and it forms 98.09 per cent of the total value of farm assets. Farm machinery constituted about 0.87 per cent followed by farm buildings with 0.40 per cent, cattle shed with 0.35 per cent and 0.29 per cent constitutes tools and implements.

Table 11. Asset Position of Sample Tribes

S.No	Type of asset	Average value per farm (Rs)	Percentage Share to the total
1.	Land	32,25,500	98.09
2.	Farm buildings	13,075	0.40
3.	Cattle shed	11,525	0.35
4.	Farm machineries	28,500	0.87
5.	Tools and Implements	9,765	0.29
	Total	32,88,365	100.00

4. CONCLUSIONS

Here the study shows that while the tribes are indigenous people, they have now begun to break their shell of unique characteristics and lead a life of so-called civilized society. But it's to be renowned that they are in a state of transition. They lost their original habitat, but the outside world could not be overcome. They lost their original habitat but they couldn't conquer the outside society. Such indigenous people are fighting for life there. At present, the Tamil Nadu Tribal groups are engaged in economic activities ranging from hunting to settled agriculture and residential and industrial appeals. Forest land is the tribal's main asset is very small compared to the total literacy level of Tamil Nadu.

A low level of infrastructural and social services and the presence of greater inequality among the tribes intensify their miseries. This study shows that they are not at all satisfactory with their economic status. That way, they try to meet their children's educational and social needs. But the pleasing thing is that a vast majority claim they are completely free of social discrimination that is they are socially accepted unlike other country states as revealed in literature. This is to say that Kerala's educational and social growth has also had an impact on tribal people's lives.

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