

Social Development and Biographical Identities of Tribal People in Nilgiri District

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Abstract—The current study is related to the Nilgiris district due to the easy accessibility of the investigators. In Tamil Nadu, among the 37 scheduled tribes, the government of India identifies six communities as Primitive Tribal Groups namely; Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas and Kattunayakans. Among them, three major Dravidian tribes namely the Todas, the Kota and the Kurumbas are the home of Nilgiris District. The Badaga form the largest ethnic group in Nilgiri District and they were originally a migrant group from Karnataka who arrived in the highlands in the 16th century. The Toda are the original inhabitants of the Nilgiris Hills and they are one of the most picturesque tribes in India. The Todas possess some Patrilineal and matrilineal divisions they were undoubtedly polyandrous. The Kotas inhabit the Nilgiri district within a cultural framework and are strict followers of their culture. Kurumbas are the district's least civilized group and mostly live on the hill slopes and feverish places. In Nilgiri district, Irula are found in the lower regions of the hills. The Paniyas usually avoid marrying their cross cousins. Monogamy is the most common form of marriage, among Paniyas whereas, polygamy form of marriage is also found in a few settlements in the district. The social organization of any society involves mutual relation obligations, elements of idea behaviour anticipated behaviour and accrual behaviour of the community members. Their priests are of their tribe. There are two to a village one called Devadi, whose office is hereditary. No animal sacrifices are performed there. They do not know the difference between Siva and Vishnu. However, describe the Irulas as a distinct and no peaceable tribe. There is a repertoire for dancing, a repertoire for funerals and a repertoire for 'god'. Tribal people are endowed with enriched traditional wisdom to use available resources around them.

Keywords: Tribal Population, Badagas, Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas, Tribal Culture, Social Organization, Social life, Birth and Marriage Ceremony, Religious Life, Devotion, Special technology of Agriculture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Tribal population is an integral part of the Indian population and represents a true synthesis of Indian culture. Generally, the term tribe is a collection of individuals sharing a common culture, and clear linguistic, well-defined political and cultural boundaries people. India has the second largest concentration of tribal population after the African continent. The scheduled tribe population in India as per the 2011 census, is 10.42 crore, constituting 8.6% of the total population with consists 500 scheduled tribal groups in different states. Tamil Nadu, one of the major states of the southern zone in India, consist of 37 important groups live in different districts. Nilgiri district is one of the smallest districts in Tamilnadu. Etymologically the word Nilgiri means Blue Mountain. According to the 2011 census, the total scheduled tribe population in Nilgiri district is 32,884 people, representing approximately 4.46% of the district's total population. According to the Ministry of tribal Affairs, Nilgiri district had the highest percentage of tribal population area in Tamil Nadu came under the primitive tribal areas because of the presence of six primitive tribal groups (PTGs) viz., Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Paniyas, Irulas and Kattunayakans. Each of these tribes maintain unique cultural traits. All these tribes coexisted locally in a loose caste like community organisation.

II. OBJECTIVE

1. To identify the social culture of tribal people in the Nilgiri.
2. To study the State and Central government and non-governmental organization offered to tribal peoples in Nilgiri.

3. To examine the Difficulties faced by the tribal people in Nilgiri.

III. PEOPLE OF TRIBAL IN NILGIRI DISTRICT

The primitive tribes in Nilgiri areas are observed to have special skills used for the benefit of the whole society. They are found complementing one another in various ways. The Collier's Encyclopedia describes that: Kotas serve the other tribes as artisans; the Todas specialize in raising buffaloes, the Kurumbas, noted for their power as sorceresses, have a hunting economy and act as priests and musicians for neighbouring tribes; the Badagas are farmers who rely upon neighbouring tribes for their implements and musicians and doctors; and the Irulas, like the Kurumbas are hunters. The Nilgiris is the home of three major Dravidian tribes namely the Todas, the Kota and the Kurumbas. There are other tribes also found in these districts.

III.I. BADAGAS PEOPLE

The Badaga form the largest ethnic group in Nilgiri District, numbering around 200,000. They were originally a migrant group from Karnataka who arrived in the highlands in the 16th century. Traditionally, agriculturalists, have assimilated and adapted to technological change and new forms of cash crop agriculture, making them the most economically secure ethnic group. Many Badaga have succeeded as small-scale tea cultivators, they tend to be better educated and many are now employed in the civil service and urban economic sectors. Badagas although by far the most numerous, not being an aboriginal or jungle race, which will be devoted to an account of the primitive tribes, and to the rude stone monuments, of uncertain origin, which are found in various parts of the plateau. The Badagas are Hindus, chiefly of the Saiva sect, and are supposed to they emigrated to the Nilgiris from Mysore, about 300 years ago, after the breaking up of the kingdom of Vijayanagar. They are an agricultural race and cultivate various cereals of rather a poor sort. They hold their lands under the government at very easy rates, and of late years many of them have acquired considerable wealth, an own large herd of cattle. They pay a sort of tribute, in grain, to the Todas; their language is a corrupt form of Canarese. Their individual socio-economic, socio-cultural mainly characterizes the tribal groups who are exposed to various environmental stresses and socio-biological set up. Hence, the health of these tribal groups is as such a function of the interaction between socio-cultural practices, genetic characteristics and the environment conditions.

III.II. TODAS PEOPLE

The Toda are the original inhabitants of The Nilgiris Hills and they are one of the most picturesque tribes in India. Classically described as Patriarchal, the Todas actually possess some Patrilineal and matrilineal divisions they were undoubtedly polyandrous. The Todas believed that they were the original inhabitants of the hills, and have attracted a high level of anthropological interest since W H Rivers' renowned ethnographic account in 1906. They predominantly occupy the high altitude grassland areas at the top of the plateau, mainly in Udagamandalam taluk. Traditionally Toda life and religion was centred on herds of sacred buffalo whose dairy products provided the main means of survival. These buffalo were kept in the Toda munsor hamlets for the majority of the year, but during February to May the

buffalo were taken to the Kundah area to access fresh pastures before the monsoons. Over the last fifty years this rotational grazing practice has almost ceased with the more static settlement of Toda people, and their growing adoption of agriculture. Since the 1882 Madras Forest Act, the Government has reserved certain forest and grassland areas as for Toda needs; these are known as Toda patta lands. Toda people have rights to live, graze their cattle and to undertake cultivation in these lands on the basis of permits granted by District Authorities. Pulpwood plantations occupy some patta lands. The profits from these, under the Social Forestry scheme, are supposed to be split 60:40 between the pattadar and the forest department.

III.III. KOTAS PEOPLE

The Kotas inhabit the Nilgiri district within a cultural framework and are strict followers of their culture. Both monogamy and polygamy are practiced among them but most Kotas prefer monogamy. Polyandry is not prevalent among the Kota people. Traditionally the Kotas were an artisan group skilled in carpentry, metalwork and pottery and producing other crafts and music that they exchanged for foodstuffs from other tribal groups. Today the Kota live in seven settlements at an elevation of about 1800m MSL in Udagamandalam and Kothagiri taluks, and many are now small-scale agriculturalists on patta lands that have been allocated to them. Compared to other tribal groups, the Kota are comparatively well educated and economically secure, with some holding positions in the civil service and non-government sectors. The hunter-gatherers that mainly live in forested

tracts between an elevation of 1200m and 1500m in Kothagiri taluk. However there has been much recent debate over whether these groups should be considered as entirely separate ethnic clusters. Previously the Kurumba were entirely reliant on forests for their livelihood, exchanging forest products, in particular honey, with other tribes. Today honey still forms a significant part of Kurumba income, though it is now traded on a cash basis rather than exchanged. However, most Kurumba are now engaged in agriculture and those who do not own lands work as casual agricultural labourers. Many Kurumba are amongst the poorest of the population of Nilgiri District.

III.IV. KURUMBAS PEOPLE

Kurumbas are the district's least civilised group and mostly live on the hill slopes and feverish places. Alu Kurumba, Jenu Kurumba, Betta Kurumba, Urali Kurumba and Mullu Kurumba, each group maintain different ethnic social organizations and social designs based on their living habitats. All these five groups follow endogamy to regulate their marriage systems and cross-cousin marriage is practiced except for Mullu Kurumba. They follow the monogamous form of marriage. Polyandry is forbidden, but polygamy is a status symbol.

III.V. IRULAS PEOPLE

Irulas the second largest scheduled Tribe in Tamilnadu. In Nilgiri district, Irula are found in the lower regions of the hills. Irulas strictly follow community-level endogamy i.e., marrying within their community. They also prefer cross-cousin consanguinity. Monogamy is a common form of marriage. Polygamy is sanctioned but polyandry is strictly forbidden. Irula people were also traditionally a hunter-gathering group inhabiting the forest edges at similar altitudes to Kurumba peoples, and they were also engaged in the collection of forest products. Although forest products still provide some income on a seasonal basis, most Irula are casual agricultural labourers, either on the plantations or for livestock owners. Some are engaged in agriculture on patta lands that have been conditionally assigned to them, where tea, coffee, jack trees and fruits are cultivated. But these lands are small and of poor quality and income from these lands have to be supplemented with paid labour.

III.VI. PANIYAS PEOPLE

The word 'Paniyan' means 'servant' in both Malayalam and Tamil. They are the traditional farm labourers for Chetty (landowners) Property Owners. They do not easily mingle with other tribal communities in these areas. The Paniyas usually avoid marrying their cross cousins. Monogamy is the most common form of marriage, among Paniyas whereas, polygamy form of marriage is also found in a few settlements in the district. However, the polyandry form of marriage is completely absent in Paniyan society. Levirate form of marriage is prevalent in both males and females. This somewhat feudal system was recognised as a form of bonded labour, and under the British as well as post-independence some efforts have been made to break these bonds and rehabilitate Paniya in various schemes. After independence many Paniya took up work as casual agricultural labourers or plantation workers, however although most are now not working under bonds Paniya people remain particularly poor and uneducated.

III.VII. TRIBAL CULTURE IN NILGIRI DISTRICT

A culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Culture also includes all the elements in man's old endowment that he has acquired from his group by conscious learning or by a conditioning process – techniques of various kinds, social and other institutions, beliefs and patterned modes of conduct. Marriage is universal form that has been accepted by all. It varies from culture to culture and people to people. The commonly known forms of marriage are monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry.

III.VIII. SOCIAL LIFE OF TRIBAL PEOPLE IN NILGIRI DISTRICT

The social organization of any society involves mutual relation obligations, elements of idea behaviour anticipated behavior and accrual behavior of the community members. Thus, social organization is the network of relations existing among individuals and groups in a society. The Kota society is a patrilineage descent group whose membership is based upon a rule of matrilineal descent is a cultural principle, which automatically affiliates a child at birth through his male ancestors. As with other tribal societies, Kotas do not have separate social divisions based on territorial or occupational levels. However, Kotas

have a unique social feature of the *keri*(street) system that regulates their marriage alliances. *Keri* in Kota dialect means a street. According to Kota informants, since quite a few Kota persons in each settlement bear similar names, it is easy to identify a person when the name of his or her *keri* is prefixed to this name. Thus, the social organization has developed among the Kotas in such a way that, a *keri* corresponds to a clan, and the members of a *Keri* itself have become a social grouping of kinsmen.

III.IX. BIRTH AND MARRIAGE CEREMONY OF TRIBAL POPULATION IN NILGIRI DISTRICT

During a woman's pregnancy, the husband leaves his hair and nails uncut. Three houses were built for women to occupy after the birth of children, or at other times when they considered unclean. Immediately after birth, the mother, and child are removed to the first hut, a temporary erection of bough called *vollogudu*, from *vollu* inside and *gudu* nest, where they remain for thirty days. The second and third months are spent in two permanent huts called *telulu*. A woman with her first child, on leaving the *vollugudu* for the first *telulu*, must make seven steps backwards among seven kinds of thorns strewed on the ground. Some Kothagiri, however have only the *vollugudu* in which the women remains for a month, and he treading on thorns takes place when she leaves the *vollugudu* to return home. This is *Mamul*, no other reason is of course discoverable. On leaving the second *Telulu*, the mother generally goes to a relative's house for three days; if this is not convenient, she returns home.

III.X. THE GOVERNMENT OFFERED A TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN NILGIRIS DISTRICT

By the tribal-sub plan, the government sets aside and allocates 1% of all non-state yearly plan outlays each year for use in both indivisible and divisible programmes. In addition, the grants granted under Article 275(1) of the Indian Constitution are being used to provide houses, roads, drinking water, and electricity to the tribal settlements around India. Our state government's programme to advance tribal development in Tamil Nadu also made use of this plan.

III.XI. NILGIRI HILL AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

HDAP was initiated during the Fifth Five-Year Plan. The National Committee on the Development of Backward Areas in 1981 recommended that all the hill areas in the country having a height above 600 m and not covered under the tribal sub-plan be treated as backward hill areas. The Nilgiri is one of the Hill Stations in Tamil Nadu consist six particularly vulnerable Tribal groups (PVTGs) settlements. So, these Hill Area Development Programmes were used by these tribes for the construction of Houses and basic Amenities. Because most of the Tribal people were settled into their Traditional huts or hamlets. Under the programme various schemes were used for the Todas community to build Modern houses. Other interior tribe settlements Irulas, Paniya and Kattunayakas are benefited by this HDAP. The Scheme called Swatch Bharath Aayan (SBA) have helped to improve sanitation houses for Irulas settlements in Masanagudi Village (Udhagamandalam Taluk) the joint hands of HDAP to constructed 23 Houses with Toilets facility.⁴

III.XII. ROAD FACILITY

As they lived inside the forest they didn't have through much of road facilities to travel from their settlements to other areas. It would take time for them to come and go through the forest, sometimes it is also dangerous for their life. The government will look the initiative to construct necessary road facilities to make their travelling easier and safer. All places Road facilities are very important for the people. National Health Mission

III.XIII. HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT

The Health and Family Welfare Department implemented the Tamil Nadu Health System Project in 2005 with funding from the World Bank established fresh strategies to deal with a range of health challenges, including noncommunicable diseases, providing healthcare to the state's tribal population, and working with NGOs to achieve its objective. The initiative identified the health problems the tribal people have and the barriers to care they encounter. It created a wide range of interventions to deal with the issues at hand based on its understanding of the issues in the field. Many tribal welfare projects and programmes, including the Integrated Tribal Development, the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, and ITDP, have been implemented. The state is running a programme (ITDP, etc.) primarily for the welfare and socio economic development of the primitive tribal groups. Some voluntary organizations established hospitals under the programme of National Health Mission,

IV. CONCLUSION

Tribal people are endowed with enriched traditional wisdom to use available resources around them. They are well-versed in the use of plants for treating various diseases. They have used powder or extract or paste form of the plant parts such as root, shoot whole plant, fruits and leaves etc., the recipe known by the tribal people was passed on only to their family members and community. Hence the knowledge is confined to particular people alone. The Toda tribe can identify plant species that are used for the treatment of fever asthma, cold, cough diabetes, diarrhea, dysentery, eye infections stomach ache, wounds and snake bite. But these skills they do not use for income-earning purposes. The Government of Tamil Nadu has classified the Badagas as an educationally and socially backward community but not as a tribe. Their language is a mixture of Tamil and Kanada. The Village Council of the Badagas is considered to be more advanced than that of the other tribal communities. Many provisions in the Indian Constitution are dedicated to promoting and defending the interests of the Scheduled Tribes. The development schemes and programmes proved to be very helpful in the development of the social condition of these tribes. They were far better now. It is a fact that still some are unaware of these schemes and still are suffering socially without any assistance.

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