

A Study of Current Socio-Economic Conditions of the Tribal Communities in Nilgiris District, Tamilnadu

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ABSTRACT---*The Nilgiris is the moderately populated district of Tamil Nadu that has a rich tribal presence. There are about– tribes living in different parts of the district. Nilgiris has – lakh tribal people which are just above – percent of total population of Tamil Nadu. The tribal people differ in their social organisations and marital customs rites and rituals, foods and other customs from the people of the rest of the state. Most of the tribal people speak in their own languages. This paper presents a current socio – economic conditions of the tribal groups on the basis of the data collected through field survey and secondary data. The survey covered a random sample of 100 households. This paper reveals that the tribal people of the Nilgiris lacking behind the main stream population with respect to per capita income, GDP, health issues, social status, expenditure pattern and life style.*

Keywords--- Socio economic condition Tribal community Nilgiris

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nilgiris is the moderately populated district of Tamil Nadu that has a rich tribal presence. There are about– tribes living in different parts of the district. sssThe tribal people differ in their social organisations and marital customs rites and rituals, foods and other customs from the people of the rest of the state. Most of the tribal people speak in their own languages. This paper presents a current socio – economic conditions of the tribal groups on the basis of the data collected through field survey and secondary data. The survey covered a random sample of 100 households. This paper reveals that the tribal people of the Nilgiris lacking behind the main stream population with respect to per capita income, GDP, health issues, social status, expenditure pattern and life style.

2. PROFILE OF THE DISTRICT

The meaning of the word ‘Nilgiri’ is “Blue hills”. It is literally true that the hills in this area are filled with thick blue green trees. This is regarded as a natural charming hill station of South India. It is one of the small districts of Tamil Nadu. It is situated in the western part of Tamil Nadu, the junction of Eastern and Western ghats of the Sahyadri Hills. The steep hills are a common scene in this area, as well as narrow valleys with numerous perennial rivers and river lets, running down and forming several fine waterfalls. With all this, this is a district of great natural beauty in Tamil Nadu.

3. TRIBAL POPULATION IN THE DISTRICT

This district is divided into four regions in accordance with the different habitants. Thus are Peranganad, Merkund, Todanad and Kundahnad. The Todas claim to be the most ancient inhabitants of this area. The original inhabitants of these areas are tribals. The early Britishers who came to the area paid money and brought land from them. Along with the Todas many other tribal groups are also found here. They are Kotas, Kurumbas, Paniyas, Badagas, Irulas etc. Once Badagas were included in the list of Scheduled Tribes, but now they are regarded as one of the advanced tribes of the state.

The main tribal communities found in the District are Todas, Kothas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas, Mullukurumbas and Kattunaikkans. These tribal communities are not evenly distributed in the six taluks of this district. There is as heavy concentration of about 50 percent of the tribes in GudalurTaluk followed by KotagiriTaluk with 25 percent of the Tribal population. Udhagamandalam and Coonoortaluks have with 16 percent and 9 percent of the tribal population. It is interesting to note that "Paniyas" Mullukurumbas and Kattunaicks live on the lower western slope of the district up to an altitude of 1200 m. In GudalurTaluk, whereas Kurumbas and 89 Irulas mainly live in tracts between an elevation of 1200 m and 1500m. On the KotagiriTaluk the Kothas are living in places at an elevation of about 1800m. This geographical distribution has invested the different tribes with district characteristics and mode of living. These

groups together with the peasant community of the Badagas, who migrated to these hills from Karnataka probably in the 16th Century, have lived ritual, economic and social symbiosis. The Badaga which is the major people group in the District worship mainly the Lord Shiva.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify a current socio economic conditions of tribal population in the Nilgiris district.
2. To Suggest possible solutions to improve the percapita income, GDP, social status, expenditure pattern and life style

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study uses secondary data for analysis. The data were collected from the reliable sources like Census of India, Times of India Newspaper, BPL survey 2002 etc. The researcher has used simple statistical tools for the analysis.

6. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gupta (1980) found that irulas energy intake was 1860cal, protein(50.3), minerals(35.5), fat(25). Santhosh et al(2012) in their study on social life of Irula women of Chengal pet, Tamil Nadu found that 13% of irula women completed high school education, 62% of women were illiterate. 61% got married at young age (<20 years), remarriages were common. Among 48% of the respondents age difference between husband and wife is above 10 years. Most of the irula women engage in agricultural work as coolie. 81% reported that they have habit of savings. 71% saved through self-help groups. Polyandry and polygamy prevailed in irulars of chengal pet. 78% of irula women reported they do not practice divorce.

AnkitaArya(2004) conducted a study on nutrition and health status of irula children of Pondicherry from five villages namely rajankulam, amtakulam, koonichampet, cittipet, T.N.Palyam. 48 children age energy intake was 1411.5, protein(35.5), fat(29.0), minerals(47.2). Study concluded that irula ranging from 4-9 years were studied. Study found that 71% of the children having household income of 1000 to 2000, 20% Rs.500 to 1000 and 9% Rs.2000 to 2500. This study revealed that irula children children in Pondicherry reported to have malnutrition in calories and minerals due to low family income.

Bindu (2005) in her study found that Irular were an endogamous tribe in nature. Average family size of Irular is 3.15, the female sex ratio is 1000:966. 8.37% of the irulars were aged above 60 years. 64% of the Irula men 56% of irula women in Kerala were literates. Irular tribe has been reduced to the status of wage labourer under non-tribes. Chewing betel leaves were common among irula men and women. Smoking beedi is very common and regular use of alcohol is bourgeoning among irula men. Government development schemes were not reaching the Irula Tribes. Irulas possess rich knowledge about medicinal plants and its uses. It was observed that irulas' use 74 wild valuable plant species to treat diseases such as psoriasis, asthma, indigestion, diabetes, paralyze, genital disorders, snake & scorpion, dog bites, toothache, abortion, dysentery, swallow neck, cough, cold, headache, fever, high BP, stomach ache, rheumatism, leucorrhea, jaundice, burns, cuts and wounds, dandruff, kidney stones, epilepsy, bone fracture, syphilis, STD, swelling, sprain, mouth ulcer, de-worming, nose bleeding, body heat, stomach ulcer, hair growth, throat infections, dehydration, vomiting, liver disease, ear pain, eye infections(Pradheep 2013; Rasingam 2012; Poongodi 2011). This knowledge usually transferred from generation to generation through word of mouth. Presently, there is gradual decline in the traditional healing practices among irula younger generation. There is an urgent need to document the irulas knowledge on ethnomedicinal practices.

Jahanara (2008) reported that 73% of irula tribes in Pondicherry live in below poverty line, less than one-third were belong lower socio-economic status, 3% were belong to middle socio-economic status. 83% were illiterate, 5% middle and primary school respectively, 2% high school and only 1% completed intermediate. Study revealed that nutrient intake of irulas of Pondicherry is not accordance with the daily recommended requirement. All the women irulas suffer from anaemia and underweight. 80% of them suffer from thiamine deficiency. most of the irula children and adults do not consume milk in any form on regular basis including pregnant women. Their height and weight was below the standard level of the general population.

7. CURRENT SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The socio – economic conditions of the tribes usually covers the areas like as size of population, education, income of the people, expenditure part of the people etc.

8. POPULATION OF THE NILGIRIS DISTRICT

The total population of the Nilgiris district as per the census 2011 is 7, 35,394. Out of the total population of the district the male and female proportion is about 3, 60,143 and 3, 75,251 respectively. When compare to the total

population of the district in the year 2001, there is a sharp fall in the size in the year 2011. The population size has declined to 26,747. In percentage terms, it is 3.51 percent.

The tribal population in India is about 8.43 Million as per 2001 census. It constitutes about 8.2 percent of the total population of the country. In the year 2004 – 05, the proportion of SC and ST population has jumped to 25.4 percent (NSS 61st Round).

The SC and ST population of Tamil Nadu shows an increment over the years. The recent data depicts that the size of SC population in the state has jumped from 144 million to 206 million with the growth rate of 21.8 percent. The size of the ST population in the state is estimated to be 104 lakh with the growth rate of 22 percent over the previous calculation. Out of the total ST population, about 6.6 Lakh people are living in rural areas of the state.

The following table depicts the size of population (SC and ST) in the Nilgiris district as per the census of 2011.

Table 1: Distribution of ST population in the district:

The following schedule depicts the number of ST population in different blocks of the district

S. No.	Block	Percent
1	Pandalur	32.08
2	Kotagiri	24.10
3	Gudalur	14.33
4	Kundah	13.16
5	Ooty	9.27
6	Coonoor	6.96
7	Total	100

Source: Tribal Education Status Documentation (2010-11).

Table 1 reveals that out of the total tribal population in the Nilgiris’ district of Tamil Nadu, about 32 percent of the tribal population residing in Pandalur taluk of the district. The next highest number of tribes living in Kotagiri taluk with 24 percent. The lowest number of tribes found in Coonoor taluk of the district. The reason behind the increase in tribes population in Pandalur and Gudalur taluk of the Nilgiris district is that most of the people are employed in tea estates. As tea estates are found more in those areas, people who got employment in those places got settled there itself.

9. EDUCATION STATUS OF PEOPLE IN THE DISTRICT (2011)

Literacy rate plays a major role in the socio – economic status of the people in the country. There is an improvement in the rate of literacy among the male and female category over the years. Both the state and the study area show an improvement in the literacy rate.

The following schedule details about the literacy rate of the state and the Study area.

Table 2: Literacy rate of the state and the district

S. No.	Area	Literacy Rate	Male	Female
1	Tamil Nadu	80.33	86.81	73.86
2	The Nilgiris district	85.20	91.72	78.98

Source:

1. Census 2011.

2. Indicus Analytics Market Skyline of India (2011)

Table 2 depicts the details about the literacy rate of the states and the district for the year 2011. The literacy rate of the state is 80.33 and the literacy rate of the study area is 85.20. The Nilgiris district surpassed the state in the literacy rate by about 5 percent. Among the literacy rate of male and female in the state is concerned, it is 86.81 and 73.86 respectively. In the study area, the male and female literacy rate is 91.72 and 78.98 respectively. Even in the male and female category, the Nilgiris district is above the state average.

In the study area the literacy rate of people has increased by 5 percent when compared to the literacy rate as per 2001 census.

Table 3: Education status of tribes in the district:

Name of tribes	Non-literates			Literates		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Todas	580	467	1047	316	285	601
Kotas	450	628	1078	512	395	907
Kurumbas	3167	4286	7453	1937	973	2910
Irula	2399	3320	5719	2010	985	2995
Paniyas	1987	1910	3897	210	226	436
Total	8583	10611	19194	4985	2864	7849

Source:

- Tribal Education status Documentation (2010),
- Tribal Research centre (TRC), Hill Area Development Programme (HADP), Udhagamandalam, TamilNadu, and PP.58-66.

Table 3 reveals the education part of the tribes in the district. Out of the total tribes population, about 7849 are literates and 19194 are illiterates. It constitutes about 70.97 and 29.03 percent respectively. Between the male and female category, about 4985 women and 2864 men are literates out of the total literates among the tribal population in the study area. It constitutes about 63.51 and 36.49 percent respectively. Under the illiterates category, the number of women and men are 8583 and 10611 respectively. They constitute about 44.71 and 55.29 percent respectively.

GDP of the districts of Tamil Nadu as per 2011 census is stated above

Tamil Nadu performs well in the Net domestic product at the national level. During the year 2011-12, the Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) of Tamil Nadu is about Rs. 5.69 crores which is 7.72 percent of the national domestic product. The GDP of the district depicts the real growth of the district. The following schedule depicts the GDP details of the districts in Tamil Nadu as per 2011 census.

Table 4: GDP of the districts in Tamil Nadu:

S. No.	Name of the District	GDP (in Rs. Crores)
1	Chennai	91749
2.	Kanchipuram	46376
3.	Thiruvallur	39924
4.	Coimbatore	35411
5.	Tirupur	21820
6.	Erode	14172
7.	The Nilgiris'	5,130
8.	Perambalur	2170

Source: Indicus Analytics Market Skyline of India (2011)

Table 4 depicts that Chennai is the district with highest GDP in the state with Rs.91,749crores followed by other district in the order like Kangipuram with Rs. 46,376 Crs. stands second and Thirivallur with Rs. 39,924 Crs. stands third in the order. The least GDP experienced by the district is Perambalur with Rs. 2,170 crs. As far as the study area is concerned, it is about Rs. 5,130 crs. which is low when compared to other district of the state.

Table 5: Poverty among SC and ST in the district:

Blocks	SC	ST	OBC	Others	Total
Gudalur	34.75	41.78	34.63	34.16	35.39
Udhagamandalam	21.20	23.86	16.36	53.20	33.39
Kotagiri	35.86	38.90	27.78	30.00	32.41
Coonoor	38.31	25.30	30.45	24.77	42.17
The Nilgiris	32.56	40.00	26.65	41.50	34.80

Source: Compiled from Rural BPL Household Census, 2002. Retrieved 23 December 2009 from <http://bpl.nic.in>, Department of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi.

Table 5 reveals that among the various categories of the people, poverty is found more among the ST population in all the study blocks of the district. In the district, the percentage of people under poverty comprising of ST, SC and OBC is 40, 33 and 27 respectively. The reason behind the high rate of poverty with respect to ST population is poor education, poor sources of earning, number of children and unemployment.

10. PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL SERVICES

Government expenditure on the social welfare and social security plays a major role in the upliftment of the people under SC and ST category.

The following schedule depicts the Public Expenditure on social services in Tamil Nadu and in the Nilgiris district.

Table 6: Government Spending on Welfare measures: (in Rs. Lakhs)

S.No.	SC, ST and OBC welfare and Social Security	2008-09	2009-10	% Change
1	Tamil Nadu	390986 (17.71)	405587 (18.59)	3.73
2.	The Nilgiris'	2636.84 (15.45)	2719.58 (12.47)	3.14

Source: 1. Office of the district Treasury Officer, The Nilgiris , Udhagamandalam.
2. Reserve Bank of India, Mumbai.

Table 6 reveals that the government expenditure on the social welfare and security shows an improvement in Tamil Nadu. The amount spent on welfare measures in the year 2008-09 is about Rs. 3,09,986 Lakhs and the same has increased to Rs.4,05,587 Lakhs in the year 2009-10. There is an increase of 3.73 percent. In the case of the Nilgiris district, in the year 2008-09, the amount spent is Rs. 2,636.84 lakhs and the same has increased to Rs. 2,719.58 Lakhs. There is an increase of about 3.14 percent. In the Nilgiris district, the amount spent on welfare activities has increased during 2009 – 10. But the allocation for the welfare measures has declined out of the total allocation.

11. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following are the important findings of the study.

1. It is found that among the ST population in various blocks of the district, Pandalur block has more ST population (32.08%) and Coonoor block has the less ST population (6.96%).
2. In the tribal group, women are more literates (63.51%) than the men (36.49%).
3. As far as the GDP of the district is concerned, it is Rs. 5,130 Crs. as per 2011 census and the highest GDP is found in Chennai with Rs. 91,749 Crs.
4. It is found that the percentage of people under poverty is more among ST population. It is about 40 percent in the case of ST and 32 percent among SC community.

5. The government expenditure on Social Welfare and Social Security has increased between the two time periods (2008-09 and 2009-10).

12. CONCLUSION

Despite all the efforts taken by the government to improve the status of the SC and ST population, still it is not realised in the district. Illiteracy is still prevailing among the SC and ST population, Poverty is found more among the ST population and the government spending on the welfare of the SC and ST population is still needed attention. There is a need for a separate organisation to look into the requirement of the SC and ST population for the equalitarian growth of the society. Unless the progress is found, the progress in Human Development Index (HDI) cannot be progressed.

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