

Widening Disparities Among Powerful And Powerless: A Comparative Study Between Tribals And General Community

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Abstract The tribals in Kerala have a long history embedded in the socio-economic setting of the state. Owing to long years of marginalization, the majority of the tribals are landless today and their socio-economic status is very much below the state average. The question as to why such a state of affairs continues in Kerala is being addressed from various angles. This paper tries to examine the life of tribals as a comparison with non tribals in the mainstream on various dimensions. This study is conceptual in nature and the interpretations are made based on the literature available. The post globalised developmental projects and developmental dreams of the state have again made deprivation of the tribals of Kerala and the developmental divide has increased between tribal and non-tribal in the state. There is considerable evidence to suggest that tribals continue to encounter more deeply embedded economic deprivation than other social groups.

Key Words ---Tribal community, Development, Land alienation, environment protection, financial backwardness, Urban-rural tribes disparity

I. INTRODUCTION

India is often characterized as an emerging economic superpower. The huge demographic dividend, the high quality engineering and management talent, the powerful Indian diasporas and the emerging Indian transnational-kneeling the optimism. In contrast, there is another profile of India which is rather gloomy. This is the country with the largest number of the poor, illiterate and unemployed in the world. High infant mortality, morbidity and widespread anemia among women and children continue. India suffers from acute economic and social disparities. This article addresses various dimensions which include disparities in Occupation, Work environment, electricity, Weather and season, Skills ,Type of family, Size of community, poverty, Caste and Tribe Inequality, inequality of opportunity, Infrastructure & Modern amenities.

There is empirical evidence to indicate that during the last two decades all these disparities have been increasing. As a result of economic reforms, the majority of the communities experienced accelerated economic and social development as compared to rural and tribal community. This has led to the widening gap in income, poverty and other indicators of development between the two communities. Rural-urban divide also widened in the wake of reforms. While large and medium cities experience unprecedented economic prosperity, the rural areas experience economic stagnation. As a result, there is

widespread agrarian distress which results in farmers' suicide and rural unrest. Socially backward sections, especially scheduled castes and tribes (SCs and STs) have gained little from the new prosperity which rewards disproportionately those with assets, skills and higher education. STs have often been victims of development as a result of displacement. Also the gender gap in social and economic status, traditionally more in India as compared to other societies; has further widened by the economic reforms and globalization.

The transformation of an economy from agricultural and mainly rural to industrial and predominantly urban is indicator of economic development. The urbanization in India is taking place much faster rate than in the rest of the world. Contemporary urbanization in India is marked by what one may call rural-urban divide. It started some two centuries back. By the end of the nineteenth century, urban centers practically became centers of exploitation of rural resources both natural and human. The pattern not only continued during the 20th century but also intensified, so that the positive interdependence that existed among rural and urban settlements in the past took a negative form. While the urban areas became superheated, the rural areas were left as cold and dry. The topic is often therefore discussed as how the country's two economies-the rural and the urban are increasingly growing apart. The topic

aims to discuss some issues regarding the rural- urban disparities and related issues.

The objective of the study was to compare the disparities among powerful urban community and powerless rural tribal community through the analysis of various dimensions such as financial status, social and economic disparities, infrastructure and disparities in opportunities.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are various studies have been embarked up on the different dimensions of tribal communities all over India. Most of these studies have pointed on such matters associated with the development of tribal life as well as their culture, socio-economic conditions, beliefs, administrative system, land alienations and the impact of modern education system (Skaria, 1999) [1]. Even if the relevance of the financial backwardness of tribal community is a topic that interests the modern development administrators and environmentalists (Sahlins, 1995), there has been very little inquiry in this direction, especially in the context of tribal's in Kerala [2].

The tribal communities, since decades, have been victims of socioeconomic and cultural exploitation and have been debased to low income generating occupations, degraded trades, unhygienic working and living environment and unskilled occupations, because of their unwillingness towards modern technologies. All these reasons lead to the improper implementation and utilization of Government policies and programs which are entitled for their development as well as recovering financial backwardness. The protective legislations, forces of urbanization, positive discrimination and other policies taken by the Government, have led to gradual development in occupational motility and living standards over the years, but the living conditions of the majority of Tribal communities continue to express their socio-economic and financial backwardness. Tribespeople in India, especially in Kerala form a separate cultural group, staying away from the mainstream; have a particular place in the socio-economic and cultural background of our country. Majority of Tribespeople are in below poverty, less educated and live in geographical isolation. As a result, there is a marked disparity in the Tribespeople standard of living and financial status as compared to the people in the surrounding areas.

Nair (2008) has examined the health position and ethno medicine of tribal communities of Kerala in association to their ecological and socio-cultural factors and identified the impact of tribal development programmes which forced the advancement of modern agriculture in tribal lands in Attappady area of Palakkad District in Kerala constituted to be highly detrimental to the concern of the tribes [3].

Narayan (2011) in the book, "Malayile Arachanum Arayanum", informs the tribes problem in idukki district

and alter problem in Malayaraya tribes and concentrate on the socio-economic issues of the Malayara tribes [4].

Suranarayana and Gangadharan (1982) analyzed the effect of two development programmes on the tribal community-Chenchu, like (i) colonization scheme and (ii) agricultural programme. It shows that the programmes could not flourish because the development programs did not take into attention the cultural pattern for bringing about the longing technological changes. The data on tribal occupation indicates that most of them are doing wage labour as the primary occupation. Another community Mullukurumbas, whose economic dependency is now largely on wage labour which has come as a result of various development programmes (Mishra and Mishra, 1982). It was identified that the Piniyan's plight is much worse than the Mullukurumbas, who are the most exploited in India who serve as agricultural labourer to their masters Chettiar/ Nayar in the Wynad Taluka of Calicut district, Kerala [5].

Subash chandran (2011) who wrote the book, is the first book to know about the Kerala first tribal panchayat Edamalkudi, in his book Edamalkudi we can understand all the parts of the settlement and about the history of the place. He describes the story of the first election in the first tribal panchayat in Kerala [6].

Kalathil (2004) in his study warned that if modern agriculture was being promoted in tribal lands, it would have caused the destruction of tribal Agriculture which was more suited to the needs of the tribal community. As a consequence of the deviation of tribal people from their traditional organic farming, they have faced many problems like malnutrition and anemia related deaths in their colonies [7].

The displacement of the tribes from their homelands in Idukki occurred repeatedly on account of the construction of dams and hydroelectric projects. (Machenzie 1963) in his study points out that the tribes were displaced from the Periyar forests due to the construction of Mullaperiyar dam across Periyar and Mullayar River in 1895 [8]. The declaration of the Periyar forests as a tiger reserve in 1934 also brought about large scale displacement of tribal people in this area (Morris, 1982) [9].

Mini (2015) in the book contain description of all parts tribal life, shifting cultivation, Tribal performing art forms, food habit, Honey collection, Traps, Handicrafts, Ethono medicines and the endangered languages etc [10].

(Anuradha, 1995) states that the case study reported on the arrangements for sharing the economic benefits from commercial products manufactured using the fruits of the plant *Trichopus zeylanicustravancoricus* explains the principle of benefit sharing with tribal communities. The Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Thiruvananthapuram entered into an agreement with the

Kani tribespeople in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala to share 50 percent of the commercial benefits that would be derived from the sale of drugs manufactured using the fruits of the above plant. This agreement has been in tune with the mandate of Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). On the basis of the traditional knowledge of the Kanis about the practical use of the fruits for medical treatment and for healthy living, the scientists of the TBGRI discovered the pharmacological properties and then to the development of drugs out of it. This particular case is considered as a model for sharing the benefits of traditional tribal knowledge [11].

Thurston in his *Ethnographic Works on South India* (1906) and in the *Tribes and Castes of South India* (1909) brought out the first information about the south Indian tribes. He had given a brief account of all the tribes and castes in south India based on his observations. On the basis of conducting an ethnographic survey of the hill tribes and low caste people of Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1908) published a book "Cochin Tribes and Castes" in four volumes. A book titled 'The Travancore Tribes and Castes' was published in three volumes by Krishna Iyer (1937, 1939) who was engaged in similar ethnographic work in Travancore and Cochin area. Iyer focussed his study on the hill tribes which were fast dying out or were getting detribalized. In the first volume (1937) he had described seven hill tribes in Kerala. The second and third volumes (1939) dealt with the accounts of the tribes of Travancore. He explained the hill tribes of Kerala as Pre-Dravidian in a later study in 1961.

Ehrenfels (1952) analysed evolutionary tribal of Kadar and published a book on 'Kadars of Cochin'. This study deals with the various dimensions of culture and changes that have taken place among the native Kadar community [12]. Luiz (1962) has made an elaborative study of all the tribes of Kerala. The study discussed the mode of living, occupation, diet, religion, taboos, marriage and rituals [13]. Mathur (1977) has published a book on *The Tribal Situation in Kerala* [14]. A study on social structure and change among the tribespeople was undertaken by John Kattakayam (1981) among the Uralies of Idukki district in Kerala. The main aim of the study is to examine the social structure and social processes among the tribal communities and to discover how these contribute to increase or decrease change in the tribal communities. The various welfare measures put forward by the government to promote the tribal population and the general outcome of these programmes were not fully effective in achieving their objectives. But considerably they changed their lifestyle, level of education, rights to the land, housing facilities etc. As changes occur like other tribes, the Uralies undergo change of the Western Ghats, but the magnitude of change has been very low and certainly not of the size seen among other tribes due to their value system, the harmonic

nature of Urali society, the important linkages between the Urali social system and other systems etc [15]. Viswanathan Nair (1985) has done a research work among the five tribal communities about the tribal health and medicine in Kerala. This study focused on the ethnomedicine of tribespeople. It is one of the pioneer studies in the branch of medical anthropology in Kerala [16].

Mohandas (1987) studied culture change and physical characteristics of Paliyans of Kerala. This study focused on the extent of influence of acculturative trends on tribal culture and the direction of changes that have happened in their life pattern since India's independence. The study was conducted among the two major Paliyan settlements viz., Chakkupallam and Puliyanmala in the Udumbanchola taluk of Idukki district in Kerala. As a tool for data collection, Participant observation method was used. Among Paliyans major aspects of changes were found to be in association to the nature of habitat which includes the geographical conditions and the influence of other ecological factors. The study found that acculturative trends developed among the tribe and the programmes of planned developments in the area by the government or the influence of voluntary agencies have helped the tribes to have increased contact with other cultures [17]. Aiyappan (1987) has made several systematic and scientific studies of the various tribes of Kerala. The Nayadis of Malabar and the Iravas of Kerala are his important studies. The Iravas was later restudied by him and the results were published as a book on *Social Revolution in a Kerala Village*. A diagnostic survey of the socioeconomic conditions of the aboriginal tribes of the Nilgiri Hills by Aiyappan has reported the issues pertaining to that of permanent cultivation, collection of minor forest products, forced labour, the impact of the land transfer Act of 1927, co-operative credit marketing, money -lending, drinking habits, education, medical aids etc [18].

III. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Urban-rural tribes disparity in India

Indian society has been broadly divided into urban, rural and tribal societies on the basis of their geographical surroundings and socio-cultural characteristics. The urban area is spatial concentration of people who are working in non-agricultural activities i.e. urban society is based on non- agricultural occupations like the industries and service sector. Urban areas are equipped with all modern amenities. The modern day facilities are widely available in the urban areas .A majority of the households of urban areas are blessed with this technological advancement. People in urban areas lead an economically more stable and luxurious life due to the availability of different and advanced career opportunities.

A society or community can be classified as rural based on the criteria of lower population density, less social

differentiation, less social and spatial mobility, slow rate of social change etc. Rural is an area where the people are engaged in primary industry or sector namely agriculture. Rural areas can have an agricultural character, though many rural areas are characterized by an economy based on mining, oil and gas exploration, tourism etc. These are sparsely settled places away from the influence of large cities and towns. Lifestyle in urban areas is different mainly because limited resources are available like public transport, electricity or higher educational institutions etc.

It is those areas wherein Scheduled Tribes reside. A tribe can be defined as a community living in hilly forest or well demarcated areas having its own culture, religion, language and strong ethnic identity. Tribal communities live in about 15% of the country's areas, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forest hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. The total number of tribal population in India as per the 2011 census is 84,326,240 i.e. 8.2% of the total population. Census of India 2011 is used as the criteria for the definition of Indian society in to urban, rural and tribal areas.

Disparities in occupation

The occupation of rural and tribal society mainly depends on agriculture while the urban society depends on Non-agricultural, industrialism and technology. Majority of the individuals are wage earners, hired laborers in urban areas. The urban and rural occupation distributions have the obvious feature that urban areas have a much smaller fraction of the workforce in agrarian occupations while rural areas have a miniscule share of people working in white collar jobs. The crucial aspect though is the share of the workforce in blue collar jobs that pertain to both services and manufacturing. The urban sector clearly has a dominance of these occupations. Importantly though, the share of blue collar jobs has been rising not just in urban areas but also in rural areas. In fact, the share of both white collar and blue collar jobs in rural areas are rising faster than their corresponding shares in urban areas, it is not proportionately increasing in the case of tribal community. This suggests that the overall structural transformation at the level of output is translating into convergent trends in the occupation structure across rural and urban sectors.

Education services:

Education plays a pivotal role in laying the proper foundation for the overall development of people in a given society. The following table will help us to understand the literacy and educational status of both urban and rural India.

Table Number 1. **Literacy rate in India (in %)**

India	Total	Male	Female
Total	74.0	82.1	65.5
Rural	68.9	78.6	58.8
Urban	85.0	89.7	79.9

(Source: Census India 2011)

Literacy and education contribute in increasing productivity and standard of living of the people. In India only 68% of people are literate in rural areas, whereas this percentage is higher in urban areas which account for 85%. Literacy among women in rural areas is very low. This also contributed to the low development of socio-economic indicators in rural areas. Nearly 27% of village schools in India have electricity compared to 76% of schools in towns and cities. Irregular teachers, lack of books and other stationary for children, lack of toilet and drinking water are some of the problems which rural schools are common features of rural schooling in India.

Health

Status of health shows the development of society. This health status is influenced by different indicators like employment, income, educational attainment, level awareness, accessibility to health care facilities etc. The overall health infrastructure in India faces serious challenges with significant shortage of doctors, nurses, equipment and facilities. Only 13% of the population has access to primary health centres and less than 10% has access to a hospital.

Around 80% of all hospitals (government and private) are located in urban areas even though it contains 31% of the population. The availability of qualified physicians is 11.3 per 10,000 population in urban areas, while in rural it is 1.9 per 10,000 population. Only 35% have access to essential medicines. There are significant disparities in health care spending, infrastructure and outcome between rural-urban and interstate populations and by income status. 35% of the population living below the poverty line and cannot afford any expenditure on medicine. Due to the gender discrimination women in rural areas are deprived of their health rights and suffer due to many curable diseases.

Electricity

Rural areas in India are electrified non-uniformly, with richer states being able to provide a majority of the villages with power while poorer states still struggling to do so. The picture of electricity access in India is one of the disparities. A clear disparity in access can be seen between rural and

urban population, while in the urban areas 92.7% of the population has access to electricity in rural areas only 55.3% of population has access to electricity.

Work environment

The work environment of tribal people is Open-air, close to nature, mostly related with soil, water, plant and animal life. But in the case of urban society it is enclosed, highly complex, man made environment, which is mostly related with trade industry and office work.

Weather and seasons.

The tribal community mainly depends on agricultural activities like honey extraction, seasonal cropping etc. So it is very important for them to depend on weather and seasons. In the case of urban society their day to day work is not dependent on weather and season, so they are least bothered about the seasonal changes.

Skills

Tribal community requires a wide range of skills such as strong communication skills, problem solving as well as the ability to persuade others while comparing with general community. Though general community already achieved these basic skills, they are lacking specialized skills such as Technical skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills etc.

Social characteristics

Type of family

Joint and extended family with large size is the peculiarity of tribal communities while urban society follows Small and nuclear family.

Size of community

When we are analyzing the size of community structure among rural tribal areas and urban society, in rural tribal areas people are living like different colonies (named as *kudi*) and they have their own administrative systems named as *urukoottam* headed by *moopan* and king (usually he is the oldest person in the community). they are mainly focus on living in the banks of rivers as small groups. Currently, Kovilmala is the headquarters of Mannan community who preserves certain customs, traditions and form of governance, making them a unique tribal unit. The system of governance here is a democratic - monarchy in which a king is elected by the people to rule.

The urban society mainly living with the help of advanced technologies and now a days they have found out new innovations to simply their day to day activities. they are mainly focus to live in cities and least bothered about the environment. these kind of attitude leads to form medium and congested pattern of communities.

Caste and Tribe Inequality

The castes and tribes that were economically weakest and historically subjected to discrimination and deprivation were identified in a government schedule as a target group for reservation policies. Despite such policies and rural

development programs to raise the levels of living of scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST), many studies have reported that the disparities of living standards with the non-SC/ST still remain (Bhengra, Bijoy, and Lutthui 1999; Deshpande 2000; Dreze and Sen 2002; Mosse et al. 2002; Rogaly et al. 2002; Thorat 2002) [19]-[24].

Poverty

The fact is that although tribals are compared with other excluded groups, the basic processes leading to their deprivation ostensibly vary from those affecting other communities. There is considerable evidence to suggest that tribals continue to encounter more deeply embedded economic deprivation than other social groups. While highlighting the persistent inter-group differences with regard to poverty, various studies point specifically to the higher incidence of poverty among tribals as compared to other groups (Sengupta, Kannan & Raveendran, 2008) [25]. The unrelenting impoverished conditions of tribals are attributed to different factors such as deprivation in terms of lack of access to productive income-earning assets (Thorat and Mahamallik, 2007) [26]; non-utilisation of available resources such as land and common property resources (Gang, Sen, & Yun, 2008)[27]; and lack of education, and equal opportunities (Borooah, 2005) [28]. It is argued that “tribals have been victims of social exclusion not simply because of the historical exclusion and marginalisation and geographical isolation; but recent dispossession of their traditional habitation and rights to resources, and erosion of their autonomy because of other development interventions” (Gill, Bhattacharya & Bhattacharya, 2015) [29]; and consequently, their livelihood is adversely affected by the loss of access to resources (Das, Kapoor & Nikitin, 2010) [30]. Although the development concept is often used to solve the poverty problem in the tribal areas, displacement due to development destroys the traditional livelihoods of the tribal people, resulting in a denial of their access to resources and making them more vulnerable to poverty. (PahruPou 2013) remarks, “Although the dominant development paradigm is considered as an essential part of enhancing economic growth, its experience of today is of anti-poor” [31].

Infrastructure

The first extensive survey of schools conducted in tribal dominated villages of India has revealed a grim picture of dilapidated buildings, no power connections, and lack of separate toilet for girls and poor attendance across all states when compared with highly developed urban areas. The survey, conducted for human resources development ministry, shows that they are plagued by basic problems of infrastructure that deter the tribal children from regularly attending school.

The survey has been conducted by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) across 750 villages in India. The survey assessed the availability and utilization of facilities for elementary education in the tribal-dominated districts of these states. It has revealed that on an average every village has as many as two schools indicating an increased access to elementary education. However, the survey found big gaps in the infrastructure facilities. All the schools were assessed on 10 parameters, which are considered as mandatory norms under RTE. The survey found only 1.7% of the schools complied with all 10 parameters and only 19% complied with five parameters. These parameters included basic facilities like boys' toilets, girls toilets, ramps, drinking water provision, playgrounds, libraries, school class ratio less than 30, presence of boundary walls. The report observes that though there is no explicit discrimination against girls' education, many social factors hinder their participation in school.

IV. DISCUSSION

Disparities: real life examples

A. Effects of Land Alienation

Land alienation started in the 1950s. In April 1975, the Kerala Assembly, with C. Achutha Menon as Chief Minister and E.M.S. Namboodiripad as Leader of the Opposition, unanimously passed the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Bill, 1975.

In July 1975, Ms. Gandhi announced a 20-point programme which included the restoration of alienated tribal land. On November 11, 1975, the Kerala Tribal Land Act got the President's assent and included it was included in the 9th Schedule of the Constitution..

In 1988, activist Nalla Thampi Thera of Mananthavady, Wayanad, moved the first writ petition before the Kerala High Court pleading to instruct the State government to implement the Tribal Land Act of 1975. The Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) of Ottappalam received 2,422 applications for restoration of land in 1996. In 13 cases, 44.77 acres were restored and in many cases proceedings were completed. But, tribespeople could not secure the possession of land; in addition to that the 1982 survey report of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) presented a shocking picture.

"Between 1960-77, in Attappady, 10160.19 acres got alienated. Between 1977 and 1982, only 536 acres got alienated. But after 1982, 100 acres got alienated," quoting from the ITDP report.

While listing some cases, Rootan, son of Karuppan, lost 1.5 acres for an amount of Rs.25 he had taken from a Cooperative Society in 1983. Muddan, son of Aandi of Kozhikkodam hamlet, lost his 5.3 acres for Rs.30 in 1970. Velammal 'sold three acres for Rs.900 to one Ramaswamy

Gaundar, Kulakkur, in 1974, and Pitta, son of Chinnan, sold 4 acres for Rs.400 in 1973.

An agricultural economy relies largely on the predominance of land. The socio economic status of the population is often determined by the amount of land possessed. In the light of the above scenario, the Scheduled Tribes are the most deprived community in terms of possession of land. The majority Scheduled Tribes of Kerala depends on agriculture (71.98%). Out of these, the majority suffers from land alienation and as a result they are forced to work as casual labourers. The Dhebar Committee also opined that the main cause of poverty among ST families all over India is landlessness (or land alienation). Land alienation resulted in loss of agricultural labour and created a new class of wage labourers. It also resulted in a process of transformation from a self reliant to a highly dependent tribal economy.

B. Kasturirangan report on Western Ghats

The original residents in the Western Ghats area were tribals. In the second half of the 19th century, the British planters occupied a very large area for cultivating cash crops like tea, coffee, and spices. The British government also tried to protect the forest by implementing reserve forest policy. Later, people migrated to high-range areas in the Western Ghats, especially Wayanad, Idukki and eastern parts of northern districts from other parts of the state during the popular Malabar Migrations. These people cleared a wide area of forest land for agriculture and plantations. The big players also started occupying the lands in the area for big plantations and the boom in tourism led to the popping up of resorts and other related industries. A study by biodiversity board reveals that there are over 1,500 per cent increase in the population in these areas in the last 80 years.

The Dr K Kasturirangan-led 'High-Level Working Group on Western Ghats' (HWGWG) as well as the previous report of 'Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel' (WGEEP) led by Prof Madhav Gadgil, recommended reducing the mass-scale constructions, banning mining and quarrying and promotion of eco-friendly agricultural activities in these zones. While the Gadgil committee considered the entire Western Ghats as Ecologically Sensitive Area and categorised into three zones with specific recommendations to pursue the activities in each zone, the Kasturirangan omitted almost 60 per cent areas from the ESZs. In any cases, it restricts the life of tribals who are living there. Though these reports were recommended to protect the environment, it is widely used as a mask to reduce the exploitation of environment in other areas. It imposed restrictions on the life of tribals by banning several activities.

V. CONCLUSION

Historically, the Scheduled Tribes (STs) or tribals in India have been the victims of exclusion and marginalization.

Recognizing their special needs and interests, the Constitution of India provides various legislative safeguards to protect their social and economic rights. The fact is that although tribals are compared with other excluded groups, the basic processes leading to their deprivation ostensibly vary from those affecting other communities. There is considerable evidence to suggest that tribals continue to encounter more deeply embedded economic deprivation than other social groups. While highlighting the persistent inter-group differences with regard to poverty, education, health, skills, infrastructure among tribals, there exist disparities as compared to other groups. The analysis of land alienation act as well as Kasturirangan report remarks the miserable life of tribals in Kerala.

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