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Tribal Economy of India with Special Reference to Tiruchirappalli District of Tamilnadu in India

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Abstract

The tribal communities live in about 15% of the country's areas in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. The tribal groups are at different stages of socio-economic and educational development. While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life, at the other end of the spectrum, there are 75 groups still not adopted mainstream life, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), who were identified earlier for having the following characteristics:

- (a) pre-agriculture level of technology;*
- (b) stagnant or declining population;*
- (c) extremely low literacy and*
- (d) subsistence level of economy*

Keywords: occupation, Eco-cultural, Economic-status and Tribal

Introduction

The tribal communities live in about 15% of the country's areas in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. The tribal groups are at different stages of socio-economic and educational development. While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life, at the other end of the spectrum, there are 75 groups still not adopted mainstream life, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs), who were identified earlier for having the following characteristics:

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- (c) extremely low literacy and
- (d) subsistence level of economy

The word 'tribe' has different connotations for different branches of social sciences. For the present-day western anthropologists and sociologists, the term in general usage is taken to denote a 'primary' aggregate of people living in a primitive or barbarous condition under a headman or chief.

It is necessary to point out that one single criterion has been followed to distinguish 'tribals' from 'non-tribals.' In his endeavor to specify the elements common to tribals, Parmar expresses the divergent views associated with the thesis propounded by Max Weber, Robbert Redfield, Bailey, Ghurye, and Surjit Sinha. But as synthesis, the tribals who are still resisting acculturation or absorption, possess certain features, once possessed by all the tribal groups. These features, considered as common to all such groups are:

1. They live away from the civilized world in the inaccessible parts lying in forests and hills.

2. They belong either to one of the three stocks, namely Negosritos, Austroloids, or Mongoloids.
3. They speak the same tribal dialects and
4. They profess primitive religion known as Animism in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element.

The above synthesis seems more or less in line with what Majumdar advocates. To him, “A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking the same language and observing certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and has developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations.”

Statement of the Problem

The level of economic activity is very low, and there is a vast untapped potential of their resource endowment.

The problem of indebtedness of the rural poor of the country has been the cause of much concern for decades. The nature of the problem assumes serious dimensions when reviewed in the context of a tribal economy where agriculture, as the only source of livelihood, along with the collection of minor forest produce, is characterized by the traditional techniques and practices. The credit procured even for economic activities like agriculture becomes debt because of the low yield of agriculture, which further compels the tribal people to procure and spend borrowings on unproductive activities. The continuous failure of repayment of loans makes the tribal society to fall in the trap of vicious circle of low earnings, poverty and indebtedness and the existence of greater inequality among the tribals. Although due to the intervention of LAMPS, the professional money-lenders and landlords who were the major sources of rural credit in the past, have lost their grip in the tribal economy, why the position has not improved appreciably. To answer this question is the aim of this study.

Objectives

The study is undertaken with the general objective of assessing the contribution of tribals on operational efficiency, income, and employment potentials of the farmers in the region of Tiruchirappalli district.

1. To study the Socio-economic characteristics of tribals relating to the inequalities in income, expenditure, and landholding consumption patterns.
2. To study the levels of inequality in the sizes of land holdings and the household incomes of the tribals in the study villages.
3. To study the extent of poverty, employment potentiality, and capability of male and female tribals in the study area to suggest measures to enhance their standard of living.
4. To analyze the economic aspects (cost, profit, or loss) of the paddy and tapioca cultivation in the study hill villages.
5. To study the level of indebtedness of the tribal households, their repaying capacity, and the problem of large scale default in the repayment of the loan.

Hypotheses

From the above objectives, the following hypotheses are framed and empirically tested.

1. The LAMPS does not make any significant contribution to the socio-economic life of the tribals in the study area.
2. The differences in the size of landholding and the household income do not make greater inequality and significant variation in the extent of poverty of the tribal households.
3. The Tapioca cultivation is more profitable than the paddy cultivation.
4. The presence of LAMPS does not reduce the indebtedness of the Tribals.

Methods and Materials

Database and Period of Study

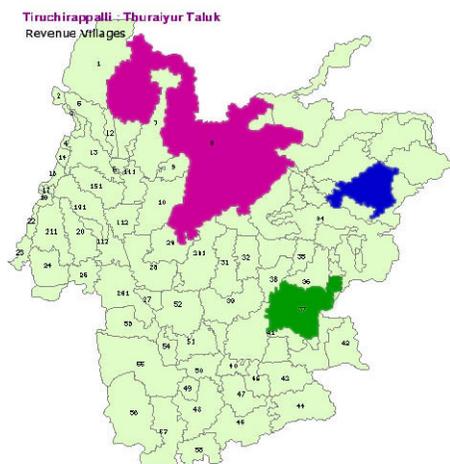
The study has employed / Both primary and secondary data. The primary data collected for the financial year 2018 – 2019. The data were collected from the respondents by using the Interview Schedule method from February 2019 to February 2020.

Selection of the Study Area

Tiruchirappalli district is the Universe, which consists of three hill blocks, namely, Thenparanadu, Vanuatu, and Kombai.

Thuraiyur Taluk - Revenue Villages		
Number of Revenue Villages		64
A.batharpettai	Aalathudaiyanpatti	Aathanoor
Ammappatti	Azhagapuri	Balakrishnampatti(e)
Balakrishnampatti (w)	Chokkanathapuram (49)	Eragudi - North
Eragudi - South	Kalingamudaiyanpatti (51)	Kallathu Kombai
Kamatchipuram (27)	Kannanoor	Karappudaiyanpatti
Keerambur (37)	Kollappatti	Kombai (Hills)
Koppamaapuri	Koppampatti (5)	Kottaiyoor
Kottappalayam East	Kottappalayam West	Maruvathoor
Murugoor	Muthaiyampalayam	Naduvalur (44)
Nagalapuram (42)	Nallamathi Kombai	Okkarai (29)
Osarappalli (9)	Pagalavadi (45)	Pasalikkombai
Patchaperumalpatti-n	Patchaperumalpatti-s	Pokkalaaya Kombai
Ponnusangampatti (56)	Puliyancholai	Ruthiratsha Kombai
Sangampattikombai-i	Sangampattikombai-ii	Senappanallur (54)
Sengattuppatti	Sikkathambur - North	Sikkathambur - South
Singalanthapuram	Sirunatham (31)	Sirunavalur (25)
Sobanapuram (7)	Sookkalampatti	Thalugai (1)
Thenbaranadu	Thu.renganathapuram	Thuraiyur
Uppiliyapuram North	Uppiliyapuram South	Vadakkuveli
Vairichettippalayam	Vannaadu (Hills)	Veeramachanpatti
Vengadajalapuram	Vengadathanoor	Vengadesapuram
Vis.ammal Samuthiram		

Tiruchirappalli District – Thuraiyur Taluk

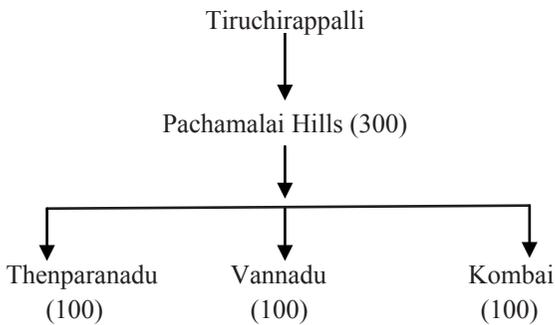


the hill block (2) Selection of three revenue villages from hill block, and (3) Selection of 100 sample households from the total tribal households of the three villages in hill block.



Thenparanadu, Vanuatu, and Kombai were the revenue villages chosen from the Pachamalai hills in Tiruchirappalli District.

The research design of this study is based on Pachamalai Hills in Tiruchirappalli District. The three different stages of sampling are (1) Selection of



Thus a total of 300 sample tribal households were chosen on a simple random basis. Data were collected through a survey method by administering an interview schedule to the head of each household.

Primary Data

A pilot study was taken on to test the schedules and verify the concepts and definitions adopted for this study. The data collected included the occupation, (Primary, secondary, territory), the size of holdings, source of irrigation, household composition, details about assets and liabilities, cropping pattern, cost of cultivation, family employment, sale of minor forest produce, agriculture income, other sources of income, household expenditure, investment if any, the amount borrowed, repayment position, etc.

The primary data were collected through a survey method by administering a household interview schedule to the head of the household. The respondents have generally provided information by recollecting from their memory. Maintenance of accounts by the households in rural areas (especially in tribal households) is conspicuous by its absence in the study area. Despite all the efforts made to elicit correct information by careful probing during the interview, it would be wrong to assume that lapse of memory on the part of the respondents was fully overcome regarding the minute details about the quantum of inputs used, the output produced, the pattern of expenditure incurred in various ways and so on by cross-checking. Therefore, the outcome of the analysis of primary data is within the limitations of the responses for various ways and so on by cross-checking. Therefore, the outcome of the analysis of primary data is within the limitations of the responses for various questions in the schedule. Some of the respondents were initially reluctant

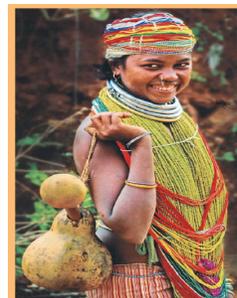
to give out correct information regarding their income from the collection of minor forest produce with the apprehension that they may be penalized for the violation of Forest Laws. A few others were not willing to give out correct information about the quantum of loans borrowed from private moneylenders as the moneylenders had previously threatened them not to disclose the matter. However, by arranging meetings with the help of local leaders in the villages for creating proper understanding and confidence of the respondents, efforts were made to elicit correct information.

Secondary Data

As regards the information from secondary sources related to the District Statistical Office, Panchayat Union Office, and Block Statistical Office. Block Development Office, Cooperative societies, and non-government organizations. These Secondary sources of information have been supplemented concerning several books, official reports from the center and state governments, journals, newspapers, and other relevant materials, both published and unpublished.

Collection of Data

The 300 samples tribal households are selected by a multi-stage random sampling technique. Primary data are collected by personal interview method from the information by providing a pre-tested questionnaire. Data are collected for one calendar year. The requisite secondary data are collected from the published materials and various related centers.



Measures of Analysis and Tools of Analysis

Lorenz curve analysis, cost-benefit analysis, and suitable diagrams are used then and there to make the study more analytic.

Findings

1. The quantum of jewel loan received by the tribals in all the three hill villages is meager when compared to crop loan and medium-term loan because the tribals do not keep adequate quantities of jewels.
2. The LAMPS extends a loan to the tribals, not with a profit motive but only as a service. The loans repaid within the period do not incur any interest. However, the tribal member's default and the overdue positions of the LAMPS have increased considerably during the study period.
3. The non-repayment of loans by the tribals and the overdue mounting positions have been the major difficulties encountered by the LAMPS in the study area. But the financial crunch experienced by the LAMPS has been reduced to some extent by the deposit mobilization.
4. The LAMPS in the study area perform yeomen service by way of the public distribution system and the implementation of government sponsored programs. The values of sales of household commodities and fertilizers by LAMPS have been found at Rs.3562872 and Rs.239726 in Thenparanadu Hills, Rs.2241088, and Rs.168493 in Vannadu and Rs.5793140 and Rs.217772 in Kombai respectively.
5. Agriculture is the main occupation of tribals, and nearly 81% of respondents are cultivators and agricultural workers. They also involve in subsidiary occupations like hunting, fire wood collection, honey collection livestock maintenance, etc.
6. Paddy and tapioca are the two major crops cultivated by the sample households. Based on the data available on the value of land, distribution of the yield of paddy or tapioca, and distribution of the expenditure incurred in paddy or tapioca production, it was found that the profit of tapioca cultivation is more compared to the profit in paddy. However, this analysis has been done without calculating the managerial cost of the farmer.
7. The sample households earn sizeable income by cultivating food grains like samai, cumbia, ragi etc., pulses, and herbal plants. They get income from minor forest produce and livestock also.
8. The inequality in income is much less than the inequality in land holdings in the three hill villages.
9. The sample households spend only 24 consumption items in which the major expenditures are on clothing (29%) and food items (48%), which include cereals, pulses, edible oils, sugar, milk, Milk products, meat, fish, egg, vegetables, fruits, etc.
10. The sample household raise loans for cultivation, business, or to meet daily requirements from LAMPS, moneylenders, relatives, etc. Almost 77% of sample households borrow for one or more purposes.
11. The results of the analysis indicate that there is ample scope for increasing the numbers of both male and female field laborers in the study area to boost further the production of paddy and tapioca. As there is no scope to increase the area of cultivation, more male and female tribal laborers may be absorbed in agricultural occupation to boost the tribal economy in the study area.
12. The loans extended by LAMPS (X3) to tribal households in all the three hill villages show a declining trend as the contribution of LAMPS is insignificant. The authorities must come forward to extent adequate credit for paddy and tapioca cultivation in the selected hill blocks ignoring the overdue position.
13. Tapioca is a commercial crop that is less labor – intensive than paddy. Tapioca cultivation brings more returns than that of paddy in the study blocks because the prevailing weather conditions are more suitable to tapioca cultivation than that of paddy. Also, tapioca is the least affected by pests and diseases when compared to paddy leading to a higher yield of tapioca. Given these facts, it is found that more acres of land are brought under tapioca cultivation in all the three hill villages studied.

Conclusion

This study on the socio-economic life of the tribals in Pachamalai Hills in Tiruchirappalli District is useful to understand the standard of living, the customs and heritage, and the unique problems and

issues faced by the tribals in this area. Some of the findings and the suggestions made in this study may be helpful to the policy framers and the authorities towards improving the tribal life and tribal economy at the national level.

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