

# A SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES OF SOLAGAR TRIBE OF KATHIRIMALAI, TAMILNADU

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## ABSTRACT

Scheduled tribes are the segment who always subjected to marginalization of various kinds from long back. Among the tribes those who occupy the deep seat of interior forest are facing certain social, economic issues in their day to day life. Accessibility of those forest dwellers is hardly possible due to myriad of reasons. The lack of motorable road hinders the easy movement of these tribal people which results in economic backwardness among the tribal concerned. Solagar is the tribal community who resides at kathirmalai the hamlet in Bargur Panchayat Union in Anthiyur taluk is located at an elevation of 1,200 metres inside the reserve forest of Chennampatti forest range in Erode Forest Division. The present paper the issues of concerned tribes theoretically with sociological perspectives.

**Keywords:** Tribes, solagar, Kathirimalai, Livelihood, Road

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tribal population is found in almost all parts of the world. India has the second largest tribal population in the world, the first being Africa. India is the house of different tribal populations who have unique and complex cultural backdrops. The tribal population lives in relative isolation in hilly forests or well demarcated areas marked with distinct culture, language, religion and strong ethnic identity (Kumar). The Oxford dictionary defines tribe as, "a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestry". Imperial Gazetteer of India states, a tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous though originally it might have been so' (C.Dhandapani, 2010). The constitution of India does not define scheduled tribes as such. Article 366(25) refers to scheduled tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with article 342 of the constitution which reads the scheduled tribes are the tribes of tribal communities or part of or groups within these tribes and tribal communities which have been declared as such by the president through a public notification (R.N.Aggrawal, 2019). India is a home to a large variety of Indigenous people. The scheduled tribe population are always economically weaker and considered as one of the marginalized section in India. They constitute 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country, according to 2011 census. Scheduled Tribes in India are commonly referred as 'Adivasis,' meaning indigenous people or original inhabitants of the country. The tribes have been confined to low status and are often physically and socially isolated instead of being absorbed in the mainstream (Haseena, 2015).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

Tribal populations are constantly a source of research since they are one or other way in the process of marginalization. Purshottam and Vanita Dhingra (2017) in their study understanding the Indian tribal life and their issues highlighted the major issues of tribal population India. The study found that an educational institution lacks proper facilities. The abnormal situation like pandemic has threatened the livelihood of the tribals and forest dwellers (Behera & Dassani, 2021). The livelihood securities of the tribal need to be improved for the eradication of poverty and also alternative sustainable source of livelihood could be found (Basavarajaiah DM, 2020). Most of the tribals are compelled to migrate out to urban areas due to low agriculture productivity, and lack of other remunerative employment opportunities at their native places. They are employed at the bottom rung in the labour market mainly in low earnings self-employment activities and low paid casual labour work (Mehta & BharatSingh, 2021)

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The tribal communities, solagar of kathirimalai, in Bargur Panchayat Union in Anthiyur taluk are constituted as target population for the present research analysis. These communities are being given least attention so far by the academicians and independent researchers. They are located near the border of Karnataka. The details regarding their issues were collected by having an unstructured interview with the key informants of tribal group by following ethical practices.

### 4. DISCUSSIONS

**IV.1.Issue of Connectivity:** The road, that too, motorable or Jeepable road, is very inevitable to traverse carry men and materials to the various destination. In common parlance, the infra-structure facilities are much emphasized for the overall development. Even the governments are very much particular about the infrastructural development in order to give a new fillip to nation development. On other hand, there are some places still hardly connected with the mainstream area. The easy connectivity via road not only helps to transport goods and services but sometimes knowledge and ideas as well. It was found that in the study area, only mud roads are available. Often, the inhabitants trekking on foot to reach kathiripatti for their essentials. There are about 80 tribal families, comprising 294 members, living there for generations who cultivate crops for their own consumption and rear livestock. As per official sources, the hamlet in Bargur Panchayat Union in Anthiyur taluk is located at an elevation of 1,200 metres inside the reserve forest of Chennampatti forest range in Erode Forest Division. The hamlet can be reached only on foot from Kathiripatti at Kolathur in Salem district. Donkeys continue to ferry poll materials during elections (SARAVANAN, 2022). The absence of proper road adds more drudgery during the medical emergencies. The pregnant women and patients are taken by cloth cradles to plain territory. The lack of road connectivity reflects in education of the students too. The hamlet has a school which offers education up to eight standards. After that they have to travel four hours to plain area to pursue education. A daily commutation in the mud road is not at all possible and during rainy season it is a nightmare. So the educations dream this village is bleak in nature. The interaction with tribal people revealed that they engage a private pick up van at the cost of three thousand rupee per trip to get their rations from plain area. It looks like a community cab. It is a costly affair, they added. Actually the road connects people and facilitates to exchange the ideas and knowledge. The new insights and thoughts are acting as a change agents. As long as they remain unconnected, the possibility of desirable social change has a remote chance. In this context, the significance of motorable road gets great momentum.

**IV.2.Issue of Electrification:** The nation celebrated the elevation of Draupadi Murmu as the first Indian President from a tribal community recently but there was no way tribes people who live in many villages in the Nilgiris could have witnessed the news, a moment of pride for them, since they still do not have power connectivity ( Nithyapandian, 2022). The long pending craving for most of tribes of India who reside in the hilly and remote forest areas is electricity. Electricity is one of the signs of modernity. Lack of electricity forced the people to shut down all their activities after dusk of the day. Power driven machineries save the cost and their valuable time. This problem is not specific to solagar community alone. Even the tribes of Tribal people at Thalakadai on Sirumalai hill live in dark, waiting for power since Independence, owing to inordinate delay in providing electricity to these villages and the 'lethargic' attitude of Forest Department ( RAJU, 2018). Today our entire life is dominated by the electric and electronic gadgets. We can't imagine a place without electricity. We are celebrating 75<sup>th</sup> of our independence. But there are some remote and hilly villages not yet see or use electricity. This is the sorry state of affairs the tribal hamlet deprives from electricity but they use solar panels to tight up their households and charge their mobiles. There is a practical difficulty to erect and provide electricity since the terrain is very rough. It was also learnt that efforts are being taken to provide electricity with consent of forest department. There is a great hope and confidence that the issues will be resolved at the earliest because we are we are having most sophisticated technologies these days.

**IV.3.Issue of Livelihood:** Tribals depend for their livelihood on their surrounding natural resources, the main source of livelihood of Tribals is Agriculture, Minor Forest Produce (Sal, *Mahua*, Amla, Harra, Behera, Char, Imli Tendu leaves, Mehul leave, Honey, forest roots, fruits, leaves and vegetables etc) (www.caritasindia.org). Forest is the main source of livelihood for the tribes who reside in side the forest area. They collect and sell forest produces at the throw away prices. The mainstay occupation of solagar community is agriculture. Most of them have rain-fed land in the hilly terrain and cultivate ragi/ *kelvaragu* (finger millet), *kambu* (pearl millet) and *thinai* (foxtail millet) and they grind the millets at Kolathur and consume it. An average family needs over 75 kg of millet flour annually and they grind it manually using a grain stone grinder (*Thirugai*). Thus, all the families grind five ton millets for their consumption annually (SARAVANAN, 2022). Besides cultivation, the interaction with tribal people revealed that brick kilns are other source of livelihood. But these bricks are used to consume by community people themselves for construction purpose and not sell it to other people since

transportation is risk. Illiteracy is a general social problem prevailing in our country. The problem is doubled when it occur among the marginalized group like tribes. The widespread illiteracy makes them as ignorant of knowing the avenues of other source of livelihood and adopts the same. Physical labour is their only asset to lend to others for making money. This issue may be mitigated by the government sponsored programmes and also Corporate Social Responsibility of corporates. The issue of livelihood

### 5. CONCLUSION

Being a tribe is not a privilege; it is hardship and has its own disadvantages. Solagar tribes of kathirimalai are not given much spotlight as other tribes of TamilNadu. They are forest dwellers. Accessing the plain terrain is not an easy task for them since the place lacks motorable road. It hinders free movement of people, education especially women education. It was found that lack of continuous electricity hampers education and day to day activities. It was learnt that efforts are being taken to lay a road and electricity with consent of forest department. There is a great opportunity for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for the interventions.

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