

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBALS IN NILGRIS: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TODAS

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The Nilgiris popularly known as the 'Nilagiri' is one of the prettiest hill station in Tamilnadu. Nilagiri the name in sanskrit, means Blue mountains or Blue Hills, in Tamil Neelamalai.¹ The nilgris form a small district of Tamilnadu altogether covering 2549 sq.km. The Nilgris bounded on North by karnataka state on the west by Coimbatore District, Erode District, South by Coimbatore District and Kerala state and as the East by Kerala state. Land is the soul of the farmers, but for the tribes, hills are more than the soul. The life, habit and thinking of tribes are much affected by the hill and its situation. The tribes are looked at with an inferior eye by the common people. The tribes can be identified by their language, their habits and customs. They are adopting their appearance and the way of earnings.

According to the 2011 census, tribal people constitute 8.6 percent of the India's population, about 104 million.² This is the largest population of the tribal people in the world .Among them, 10 percent tribal population habituated in central India, compare to other part of India. There are some 573 communities recognised by the Government of India. In the south, about one percent of the populations of Kerala and Tamil Nadu are tribal, whereas about 6 percent in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are members of tribes. Tamil Nadu has 36 types primitive tribal community, interestingly all the six tribes are natives to the Nilgiris.

The Nilgiris region has consisted a district locale for tribal people, the main tribal communities found in the district as *Todas, kota, kurumbas, Irulas, paniyas* and *Mullukurumbas*. Just as the various altitudes, the habitat of the tribes and average size of the settlements also vary from tribe to tribe.

¹ W. Francis, **The Nilgiris**, Asian Educational services, Delhi, 1984, p.28

² **Census of India**, District Census Report, The Nilgiris,2011

The Todas

Tode or Toda, the original inhabitants of the Nilgiris hills and they are one of the most picturesque tribes in India³. Though there are six primitive tribes in the district, the Todas attracted for greater attention both here and abroad than any other tribal communities. The Todas are pastoral in nature and to a certain extent nomadic. They believe even fondly that their ancestors inhabited the Nilgiri hills from the beginning of mainland.

Most of the Todas possess large herds of buffaloes, mint products are their main source of living. In the past, agriculture was completely unknown to the Todas, they were frequently migrating from one mountain area to that of another within the Nilgiri hills, as pastures in their vicinity began to fail. So they never had a large established residence.

Area of the study

In Nilgiri district, the Todas have their own dialect called as Todas dialect, they lived in uniwue half-barrel shaped houses and their village or settlement which from 5 to 8 maximum 15 houses was called as “mund”, the Todas are living in sixty one munds. For the present study, ten Toda munds were selected. These munds are inhabited only by the Todas. The settlement pattern shows that some of munds are having less than five households. The present study explains the Mullimund, Muthanad Mund, Garden Mund, Tamilaha Mund, Bedukal Mund, Nerkod Mund, Narum Mund, Thalapathari Mund, Kokodi Mund and Pakalkod Mund. Among these munds only Narum Mund is having one household. The Toda population is very small compared to that of other tribal population of Nilgiris. The Todas main occupations are buffalo rearing, agriculture and embroidery. The literacy rate among the Todas is very low. But some awareness improves their literacy rate 16.67 percent to 65.67 percent between 1951 and 2001⁴.

Agencies for Sustainable Tribal Development

In general the tribes are a community who have been neglected for quite some time and even now living only in a primitive way of life. Most of the tribal families are much below the poverty line and they are struggling for their basic needs such as food, shelter, education and medical facilities. Government is working for the upliftment of the tribal population under various development measures. Apart from threes, there are few non-Governmental and international agencies working in the district for overall development of the tribes in Nilgiris.

Governmental agencies

The main objectives of the schemes implemented under Tribal welfare Department are to provide (i) Education, (ii) Economic development and (iii) Housing and provision of infrastructural facilities.

³ P. K. Mohanty, **Encyclopedia of primitive Tribes in India**, vol. 2, kalpana publications, Delhi, 2004, p.619

⁴ Jakka parthasarathy, **Education and development among the tribes**, Coonoor printing, Coonoor, pp.1-20

Education

In the field of education, the government has taken measures to develop school, college for the tribal student and provided scholarships. One High school, five middle schools, seventeen primary schools for the tribal students (Government tribal Residential school) and two government Hostels for the tribal student are provided in Nilgris. The students are provided with free text book, note-books and slates in Government schools. The students pursuing pre and post matric courses in school, colleges and other professional courses are provided with scholarships under Government of India and State Government Schemes. Also having two residential schools in Nilgiris for the improvement of education amongst the tribal children and such school are, Sri Sarguru Sarva Sassrase Sangas Tribal Residential High school for Boys and Sri Sarguru Sarva Sassrase Sangas tribals Residential High School for Girls held in Coonoor.⁵

Economic Development

The Government provides loans for agriculture purposes, loans for purchase of buffaloes, housing loans etc. For agriculture purpose, the Government provide *patta* land to Todas and also loans for tea plantation and potato cultivation. House site *pattas* are provided free of cost by way of acquisition by this department to all Scheduled Tribes especially to the Todas. The Government assist the Todas to improve their agriculture through free charge of electricity. The Government is providing basic amenities to Scheduled tribes i.e., provision of link roads, provision of drinking water, street light, medical facilities, etc.,

Employment

The tribes, especially Todas are encouraged by the Government to avail reservation facilities in the Government services. Besides age concession, qualification concession and promotion opportunities are also taken care by the Government⁶

Hill Area Development Programme (HADP)

Under HADP⁷, various schemes were started for the Todas. Around sixty modern houses were constructed for them. Subsidy provision is also extended to the Todas for the purpose of purchasing buffaloes.

Nilgiris wild life and Environment Association

With the help of the above association of a Toda man was appointed as Care-taker of the Mukkurthi Fishing hut and solar-powered lanterns were distributed with full subsidy to twenty five needy houses in remote areas.

⁵ **The Hindu**, 25th May 2015

⁶ Richard McGee, **A Guide to Tribal Employment**, Xilbris publications, Delhi, 2008. P. 366

⁷ Government of TamilNadu, **Planning and development Department**, HDAP, Annual proposal, 1997

Revised scheme of Development of Particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs)

PVTGs⁸ constitute the most vulnerable section among tribals and inhabit isolated remote and difficult areas in small and scattered hamlets. The scheme aims at planning their socio-economic development in comprehensive manner while retaining the culture and heritage of the community by adopting habitat development approach and intervening in all spheres of their social and economic life, so that a visible impact is made in improvement of the quality of life of PVTGs

The Non-Governmental Agencies

There are some notes worthy non-Governmental agencies in Nilgiris working for overall development of these tribes. Their activities include medical and health care through hospitals, dispensaries and a mobile medical unit. Nutritional, educational and socio-economical development programmes are being taken by these agencies. Among the non-Governmental agencies, Nilgiris Adivasi welfare association (NAWA), Todas Nalavazhu Sangam(TNS), and UPASI krishi Vignayan Kendra are to be mentioned.

Nilgiri Adivasi Welfare Association (NAWA)

Since 1958, NAWA is actively engaged in welfare work among tribals in Nilgiris. The main objective of NAWA is to work as a secular and voluntary service agency for the all round welfare of the Nilgiri tribes in the fields of health education and socio- economic development. Daily clinics and dispensaries, the kotagiri Tribal clinic is working for the development of health among the tribals. Averages of 30 to 40 patients are treated daily. Mobile medical services are also provided to the Toda settlements at scattered and interior places. Child sponsorship programme is also taken up on the basis of family assistance. The sponsored children and their siblings are helped according to their abilities to attend regular school and University, Courses. The major emphasis of the child sponsorship programme is to help the enrolled families to improve their incomes, thus leading to tribal self-sufficiency.⁹

Toda Nalavazhu Sangam

The fifth years of the TNS¹⁰ in this year (1997) are the most significant one. In this year it has reached out to various Toda settlements and helped them to develop both materially and culturally. There are at present over one hundred members in the Sangam. The committee met four times during the year. Several todas were helped procure subsidised loans to purchase buffaloes. Unfortunately some of the banks refused to issue loans even after release of the subsidy amount by the DRDA. A few Todas were also helped to obtain embroidery loans to encourage traditional embroidery. TNS promoting carving skill development walking sticks by the Todas which is an unique feature.

⁸ G.o, F.No.2240/37/2012-NGO

⁹ Annual Reports of Nilgiris Adivasi Welfare Association, The Nilgiris, 1970 -1989,p.11

¹⁰ Mahendra Mohan Verma, Tribal Development in India, Mittal publications, Delhi, 1996.p.32

Solar powered lanterns were distributed at full subsidy to twenty five needy houses in remote area. The community bio-gas plant that was set up at Tarnad Mund started malfunctioning during the warranty period itself. Some Todas are being helped to grow marigold plants so as to obtain fair revenue. Some others are being helped to plant tea. The Todas cultural uniqueness was exhibited at various public functions. In the year 1995, the temple at Marli Mund and Konorsh Conical temple were totally rebuild in the traditional way. TNS with the help of HADP about sixty modern houses were constructed and also ten tradional huts were built at different munds. TNS encourage the Toda women in the field of embroidery. Development of women children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) scheme has also implemented among the Todas. Buffaloes loan under IRDP were sanctioned to over forty Toda families. An eclectic pump connection was also given. With the help of HADP and District Forest Office (DFO) north check dam and water facilities developed. In the field of education, for the very first time a young Toda student was admitted to an Engineering College. TNS is working on schemes to have on bright Toda child admitted to a premier residential school scholarship.

United Planter Association of South India- Krish Vigyan Kendra (UPASI-KVK)

This is a transfer of technology project sanctioned by the Indian council of Agricultural Research under the ministry of Agriculture, involved in imparting vocational training to the farmers an tribals for field level extension functionaries.

KVK implements the lab-to-land programme for the Nilgris tribes in Collaboration with NAWA. The main objective of the programme is to improve the overall socio-economic conditions of the tribes by not only increasing the productivity on their farms but also by generation of additional employment through diversification of agricultural enterprises liked sericulture, apiculture, live-stock farming , tea cultivation etc.

Toda Multipurpose Co-operative Credit Society

The encouragement given to traditional Toda embroidery work by the servants of India society in conjunction with the All Indian Handicrafts Board has been more successful through which most of the Toda women market their embroidery clothes¹¹. The unemployment problem among the Todas to a certain extent is solved by the intake of Todas in the Hindustan Photo Films Company.

Soroptoda French Child and Student Sponsorship programme

The members of this organisation are concerned about the survival of the todas and their unique culture. They are aware that this depends largely on the education of the todas children. The members of the group are helping sixty Toda students by encouraging their education. Through this scheme the sponsored Toda children and their siblings get their school needs like text and note books, uniform and warm clothes, etc., Soroptoda is helping two Toda girls for their University education. The building of the Toda Tribal community hall taken up

¹¹ The Hindu, 31 january,2016

by his organisation is nearing completion. The members of this organisation have contributed generously towards this building. The hall will be used as a meeting place for members of the Toda tribe.

Canadian sponsorship programme is helping one Toda boy in Higher Secondary education and two girls in primary education. British Sponsorship Programme is helping one Toda boy in the primary school level. Christian Children Fund (CCF) has extended their generous help to the tribal families in Nilgris.

Conclusion

India has an age old culture with hidden encrustation or crudeness. This study has attempted to focus light on the welfare measures of tribes with particular reference to the Todas. The governmental and Non-governmental agencies working for the welfare measure of the Todas are noteworthy. In spite of the measures taken by these agencies, now these tribes are making strives to come away from their old form of life and to keep pace with the modern society, the environment, the social status, the education standard remain the same.

Education for all and equal opportunities in education are the policies of the government. But the importance of education is being neglected. So it is necessary to establish an "Education Committee" which must be provided with all rights to decide about educational activities provided to the tribes.