



TRIBAL CULTURE AND LIVELIHOOD OF ATTAPPADY

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ABSTRACT

Attappady is a tribal block in the Mannarkkad taluk of Palakkad, Kerala, containing one of the state's largest tribal communities. Attappady is near the Nilgiri Hills and the Western Ghats, on the boundary between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The reserve region is home to Irulas, Mudugas, and Kurumbas, each with their unique lifestyle, culture, and dietary habits. This research adopted a Participatory Action Research Method which includes qualitative methodologies and techniques such as interviews and participant and non-participant observation. Tribals are a component of Indian culture, and they practise a variety of rituals aimed at preserving the environment. The tribal culture is primarily made up of natural elements. The study shed light on the tribes' primary cultural features, such as their culture, tradition, sociocultural values, rituals, the current state of tribal life, and government initiatives.

Keywords: Tribal Culture, Livelihood of Attappady, Tribal Community

INTRODUCTION

Attappady is a tribal block in Palakkad's Mannarkkad taluk, with one of Kerala's largest tribal communities. Attappady is located on the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, near to the Nilgiri Hills and the

Western Ghats. Irulas, Mudugas, and Kurumbas live in the reserve region, each with their own lifestyle, culture, and eating habits. They dwell in Oorus, which are

hamlets. Attappady currently has 192 Oorus.

Attappady is a 731-square-kilometer extension mountain valley in the Western Ghats. It is situated in Kerala's mid-eastern region, to the north-east of Palakkad district, and borders the Tamil Nadu districts of Coimbatore and Nilgiri. Attappady's population is made up of tribespeople and non-tribespeople. Attappady gets its name from the words *atta*, which means "blood leech," and *pad*, which means "habitation." The Attappady tribe is the most backward among Kerala's vulnerable groups. Their economy is based on land and forest, and it is traditional in nature. The situation of tribespeople is mired in a quagmire of ignorance, illiteracy, and poverty.

RELEVENCE OF THE STUDY

Recognizing the community as the unit of study is a fundamental aspect of any research, according to Israel [4]. A study is conducted to have a better understanding of the culture and livelihood of community members. "In the objectives to research about a society, a historical perspective is necessary in an examination of the past and in planning the future," writes Richard. M Dorson [3]. Understanding the present and predicting the future require knowledge of the past. Tribal research is one of the ways to gain a better understanding of the folklife of Tribal Communities. The results

of the research observations and data are being discussed. This research will aid in gaining an understanding of tribal culture, lifestyle, and the current state of tribe society in attappady.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the culture and folklore of Tribal community in Attappady
- To understand the Livelihood of Tribes of Attappady
- To investigate the Current Picture of Tribal Life and Government Initiatives in Attappady

METHOD

A study is being done to determine the cultural perspectives and priorities of tribes folk utilising the Participatory Action Research Method (PARM). Participatory Action Research aspires to change the world in order to better comprehend it. Its core is a collaborative, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants conduct in order to better understand and improve the activities they engage in and the situations they find themselves in. The reflective process is intertwined with action, affected by knowledge of history, culture, and local context, and rooted in social interactions. PAR should be an empowering experience that gives people more control over their life. [5]. The investigators conducted in-depth interviews with tribespeople and watched their

everyday activities. With the support of a tribal instructor and a community social worker, a visit to the Attappady villages was made. In the fieldwork, qualitative methodologies and techniques (such as interviews and participant and non-participant observations) are used. All of the tribal habitats in the Attappady were visited, and their lives and culture were observed. Tribal school teachers, tribal social workers, and tribal officials are interviewed, as are non-tribal persons who live in the surrounding areas. The information gathered through interviews is double-checked utilising observational methods and cross-checking with the previous research findings done by other researchers in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TRIBESFOLK IN ATTAPADY

In Attappady, there are three distinct tribes: Irulars, Mudugars, and Kurumbas.

Kurumbas

Kurumbas, who make up fewer than 5% of the entire population, live in the interior of Attappady's northern region. They were the very first Adivasis to arrive in the area.

Mudugas

Mudugas are believed to have come from the Tamil Nadu district of Coimbatore. They had been living in Attappady's northeastern section under the leadership of Kovai (Coimbatore) Moopen.

Irula

Irula, also known as Eruvalla, Iruliga, Illiga, Kasova, Urali, Kadupujari, and Velliga, is a Dravidian tribe found in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala. The term Irular comes from the word Irul, which means "darkness." Irulas have strict rules and etiquette.

The tribesfolk's dialect is known as Aadivasibasha. It is only available in spoken form and does not have a written script. The transmission of oral literature from one generation to the next is at the heart of cultural activity for the tribesfolk. The native language serves as a means of passing on distinctive cultural knowledge.

Tribal Culture

Environmental values are merged with feminine values. Tribes folk are the keepers of a culture that is based on integrated values and the belief that women and nature are one. The knowledge of tribes folk teaches that the land satisfies not just the needs of humans, but also the wants of the entire creation. They consider the forest and nature to be their mother. A distinct characteristic of tribes, as opposed to non-tribes, is that they have an ethic of enough. Nothing is taken from nature that isn't absolutely necessary. The barefoot folk dance is a celebration of their oneness with nature throughout their lives.

Trees, mountains, streams, animals, and all of creation can be seen as manifestations of the Divine. Earth is God's mother, and God

cannot be bought or sold. They treated the land with reverence. Joining with nature is a celebration for tribes, which they all celebrate as Kootake and Kampla. Before sowing the seed, the Mannakkaran leads the worship of the earth, and sowing, planting, weeding, and harvesting are all done in a joyous spirit.

They are the founders and contributors of a unique natural and indigenous healing system. All food crops, medicinal plants, and animals evolved around the world are hybrids derived from a diverse range of life species conserved by tribespeople since ancient times. Tribes are viewed as uncivilised and uncultured in our modern world, which is ironic. The tribesfolk owned Kadu (forest) and its bountiful soil for centuries. They never privatised them, and in the sake of development, they never destroyed them. Their lives are driven by necessity rather than greed. They haven't developed a financial mindset. They go to work two or three days a week and then spend the rest of their time relaxing. They return to work as soon as the money runs out. [2].

Tribal Values and Practices

Equal rights and participation for men and women are guaranteed in the traditional tribal structure. There is no other human group in the world where women's rights are protected to such an extent, with no workplace discrimination. Women are free

to pick and find their own life partners. Tribal civilization is open to divorce and remarriage. The them do not have a dowry system. Property rights were the same for men and women. In this society, there is no such thing as female infanticide [2].

The entire traditional culture is based on the principle of equality among all living things, including plants, water, and the ground. It is founded on all beings' symbiotic relationship with nature. People are respected and elevated in status based on their contributions to society, but only when they are carrying out the task that has been allocated to them. As a result, when a Mannookkaran, a Guruvar, or a Guruvathy performs rituals in their various duties, they are treated with reverence. They are treated the same as everyone else in the Ooru after the occurrence. The attitude stems from the heart of culture, a sustainable lifestyle, and a positive social environment.

Socio-cultural structure

Tribespeople may not have their own written language, but that hasn't stopped them from passing down their rich culture and rituals from generation to generation. They communicate in their own dialects. On the seventh day after birth, children are given names, which are frequently based on family custom. Tribes bury their dead in specially designated burial grounds. Funerals are accompanied by music and dance. The people have a great faith in the

ghosts of their forefathers and mothers. There is a specific house for worshipping the Kara Deivam (God) in the hamlet. They do Pooja whenever there is a disease outbreak. On Shivaratry day, they abstain from eating and only eat when the light on Malleswaram mount appears. [1]

Tribal songs and dances

Tribesfolk play an important role in passing on history, cultural customs, and ways of life to future generations. The primary means of transmission is through tribal songs and dances. Their rituals and traditions are passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. In this process, the elders play a critical role. They pass on their melodies and stories to the next generation.

Current Tribal Life and Government Initiatives

The situation of the tribal populations in Kerala has been varied. Many tribes had previously resided in remote woodlands, jungles, or hills and were thus reasonably self-sufficient. Encroachers forced other tribes to settle in the same previously uninhabited area. The most widely held belief is that some of these tribes were once rulers and even kings of the land until they were vanquished by invaders and forced to flee or dwell in the woods. Regardless, they are firmly attached to the forest, which served as their primary source of income previously. All of the tribes have a

thorough understanding of the forest, its flora and animals, which has resulted in a formidable system of traditional medicine. They are deeply connected to the forest.

Attappady is a 731 square kilometre extension mountain valley in the Western Ghats. It is situated in Kerala's mid-eastern region, on the outskirts of Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore and Nilgiri districts, on the north-east side of Palakkad district. Tribespeople and non-tribespeople make up the population of Attappady. The name Attappady comes from the words *atta*, which means blood, and *pad*, which means homeland. Irulas, Mudugas, and Kurumbas are the three largest tribal communities in the region. Ooru are tribal settlements in Attappady (hamlet). Each Ooru has an average of 50 dwellings built in rows. The Attappady tribe is the most backward of Kerala's vulnerable groups. Their economy is based primarily on land and forest. The situation of tribal peoples is mired in a quagmire of ignorance, illiteracy, and poverty [2]. The hilly region is known for its worship of the mountain peak "Malleeswaran" at the Malleswaram Temple, which is a major event in the region. This region is dominated by the Bhavani River. The place is one of the most beautiful in the Palakkad district. Attappady is look like a child on a mother's lap. Community kitchens, Anganwadis, Kudumbashree, Attappady millet village,

Attappady cooperative farming society, National rural livelihood mission (NRLM), Kerala state literary mission, and AADI(Attappady Adivasi Development Initiatives) are among the services provided by the district administration [1].

Kerala's government is working hard to protect the tribes. The government is adopting enormous measures in order to empower their lives.

Community Kitchen is an initiative focused at alleviating malnutrition among Attappady's tribal population. It's a return to the community's past practise of sharing meals and discussing social issues over dinner. It began in 2013 and is overseen by the Social Welfare Department. The management changed to the Kudumbashree mission in 2014 [1].

Breakfast items such as avil (rice flakes), broken wheat upma, rice gruel, green gramme, and idli would be distributed to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, children aged 6 months to 6 years, school-aged children, and the elderly. A protocol for preserving hygiene standards is being created. For obtaining and storing water as well as cooking food, vessels have been given. Food is made twice a day in the community kitchen at the moment. In addition, the community kitchen has begun to use vegetables cultivated by the community. Cleaning is supervised by the

same NGH (neighbourhood groups) who prepares the meals.

The NGH Secretary, with the help of the animator, compiles the stock book. Monitoring the project's management will be the responsibility of the Oorusamithi Executive Committee, the animator, and the Kudumbashree Mission's project management team.

The goal of the community kitchen would be to create a nutrition education centre that would bring back traditional foods. Internalizing the nutritional value of traditional foods such as Ragi, Chama, Varag, Chola, Thina, Kambu, and pulses such as Thomara, Amara, black gramme, horse gramme, groundnuts, and around 63 species of leaves, as well as popularising ancient farming methods such as "Panchakrishi."

Under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) initiative, Attappady has 172 Anganwadis that are supposed to give extra nourishment to children, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and adolescent girls.

The Kudumbashree Mission is gaining traction among Kerala's tribal community. Kudumbashree has been working on the Attappady special project since 2013, with the goal of bringing about positive improvements in the lives of tribes. Among the tribal-focused programmes, the projects that place a specific emphasis on locations

like Edamalakkudy are the most important. Kudumbashree intends to strengthen tribal livelihood activities.

As part of the Attappady Comprehensive Tribal Development and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group Development Project, Kudumbashree is establishing 'Bhakshyavanam' in Attappady. This programme is in line with the Kerala government's Subiksha Keralam concept. The 'Bhakshyavanam' project, which aims to ensure food security in Attappady's 192 hamlets while also maintaining organic diversity, was launched on June 5, 2020, as part of the World Environment Day celebrations. Paddy, Ragi, Sama rice, Millet, Sugarcane, Koda millet, and other food crops, as well as vegetables, tubers, and spices, will be grown in the Attappady area. Bhakshyavanam is being adopted to revitalise agriculture, create livelihood and self-sufficiency in agriculture, and preserve tradition, mother earth, and flora.

Recognizing that education is the only path to a bright future for the tribes, the Scheduled Tribes Development Department has been substantially investing in tribal educational institutions in Attappady. In Attappady, the Scheduled Tribes Development Department has built one Model Residential School (MRS) and 16 Pre-Matric dormitories. The mission of the APJ Abdul Kalam Tribal Residential School is to provide a high-quality

education to tribal students, mostly from the Kurumba community of Attappady, in a fully residential setting with superior facilities and resources. The school is located in Attappady, Kerala's largest tribal block, on around 4.59 acres of ethnic land. It contributes to the tribal community's long-term growth while preserving their cultural values and traditions. The objective is to provide tribal children with the tools they need to have a bright and secure future while interacting with mainstream culture.

Post-matric and Pre-matric Scholarships, supply of uniforms, various educational grants, incentive to parents of students, assists for brilliant students and study tour, tutorial scheme and entrance coaching for admission to professional courses, and skill development are some of the schemes offered by the Scheduled Tribes Development Department for the overall development of scheduled tribe children.

Nodal officer and Tribal Health, Attappady, oversee the special operations of the Government Tribal Speciality Hospital, Kottathara. In the Attappady block, 65,000 people dwell in three panchayats: Agali, Puthoor, and Sholayoor. This contains more than 33,000 people from 11,000 tribal households belonging to the Irulas, Mudukas, and Kurumbas tribes. The health department has put in place the most effective health-care procedures. The Kottathara Tribal Speciality Hospital,

which has 100 beds, is Attappady's main treatment facility.

No one can deny that this hospital has the qualities and quality of a private specialty hospital. Agali Community Health Centre, which has 44 beds, is also doing well. At the panchayat level, primary health centres such as Anakkatti, Sholayoor, and Puthoor play an important part in Attappady's health care.

The conversion of these three hospitals into family health centres is currently underway. In addition, 28 sub-centres and five mobile medical units are operational. In Attappady, there are 52 doctors, including specialists. Nurses, Health Inspectors, and ASHA workers visit villages to give pregnant women, underweight children, and other patients the information they need. Using all of these methods, Nodal Officer and Tribal Health, Attappady guarantees that the tribes' health care is progressing in a comprehensive way.

CONCLUSION

In Attappady, the tribal group has been the most vulnerable. Modern education was more accessible to the Irulas and Mudukas. They mixed with the others, and as a result, they received good education and were able to obtain government employment. Because to government assistance, they are in a transitional stage when education and modern facilities are always plentiful. Kurumbas, on the other hand,

continue to live in a primitive manner, with little access to education or contemporary conveniences. The majority of them still reside in Attappdy's deep forest. Kurumba tribes are still isolated from the rest of the world. This research paper discuss the culture and current life of tribal communities in attappady. This research gives an insight that, The history of a tribe is the history of the entire world. There are various aspects of tribal culture that mainstream people must emulate. The noble principles and attitudes can be applied to the modern world in general.

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