

Anthropological Of Perspective Tribes and Inter Ethnic Relationship in the Nilgiris District

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Introduction

The term 'tribe' has been widely used in anthropology, but there is no general consensus as to its precise definition or appropriate application. The Roman word "TRIBUA" meant a political unit, and was used to refer to social groups defined by the territory they occupied. institutions but not political ones. MAINE (1861) defined the tribe as a group which possessed social institutions but not political ones. MAINE (1861) characterized it as a group in which legal relations were based on the principle of status rather than that of contract. It is in this sense of a pre-political or pre-contract society, that the term is used by Charlotte Seymour-Smith (1986:281). The term thus "TRIBE" passed into general usages as a synonym for a PRIMITIVE SOCIAL GROUP.

Among the social sciences, the 'Cultural Anthropology' was identified until fairly recently as the study of 'PRIMITIVE PEOPLE' and was distinguished from other disciplines such as Sociology, Political Science and Economics because of its pre occupation with 'primitive societies'. Gradually due to the broadening of perspectives, terms of condescension like 'primitive societies' was replaced by the term 'simple societies'. The term savage was widely used in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The term 'tribe' does not have any derogatory connotation; in the social science, it simply refers to cultures that are technologically less developed.

While dealing with human relationships between communities the modern anthropologists prefer to empty the notion of ETHNICITY and inter-ethnic relations in order to analyze what are real problems of inter-group relationships. This attracts competition and adaptation between different ethnic groups.

The key features of the term 'ETHNICITY' as a concept are the identification and labeling of any group on any category of people and the explicit or implicit contrasts made between the identified group and another group or category. Charlotte Seymour Smith (1989:96) defined and classified ethnicity thus, "Ethnicity may be objective or subjective, implicit or explicit, manifest or latent, acceptable or unacceptable to a given grouping or category of people.

She further emphasized the term ethnicity such a way that, the study of ethnicity in modern anthropology involves understanding the development and bases of labeling and contrast applied to group and categories of people. The study of ethnicity cannot be separated from "the study of self-identity systems, stereotyping. Class systems system of resource competition and systems of political and economic domination and changes".

The essential characteristics were first laid down by the Lokur committee. For a community to be identified as Scheduled Tribes the required characteristics are:

1. Primitive traits
2. A distinctive culture
3. Shyness of contact with the public at large
4. Geographical isolation and

5. Back wardness – social and economic.

As per the census 2011 the Tribal population in India is 10.43 crores constituting 8.6 percent of the total population and the Tribes had grown at the rate of 29.44 percent during the period 2001-2011. More than half the Scheduled tribe population is concentrated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand and Gujarat.

Limitation

1. The primitive tribal groups being small, the saturation approach towards the economic development of the entire group is not possible. Thus the individual family as the base should be adopted.
2. Special measures are to be taken for improving education, health, nutrition, drinking water supply, transport and communication.
3. Adult education both for men and women to awaken their awareness for the need for economic development has to be paid serious attention.
4. Since there is inadequate supervision of programmers for the primitive tribes, the nearest project administrator should be declared as the direct supervising officer of the development projects.
5. Voluntary Agencies of the right type should be induced to work in primitive tribal areas.
6. Incentives should be granted as special allowance to government staff who are deputed to work in the primitive tribal areas.

In Tamil nadu, among the 36 Scheduled Tribes, Government of India identifies six communities as Primitive Tribes Groups (PTGs). They are:

- a) Todas b) Kotas c) Kurumbas d) Irulas 5) Paniyans and 6) Kattunayakkans.

Objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the tribal groups that are natives of the Nilgiris district has great diversity and pluralism among its population, including tribes. It is therefore imperative to identify and establish native tribal groups from migrants and settler populations.
2. After establishing the tribal groups and their spatial distribution in the hill area of the The Nilgiris District, we have to find out how each tribal group is different ethnically and culturally from others on the hills.
3. After establishing each tribal group's ethnic features, we have to find out how each tribe maintained its separate identity and how the composite society maintained inter-tribal ethnic realations.
4. After assessing the inter-ethnic relationship between tribal communities, we have to find out how they maintained an attitude of coercive co-operation in order to perpetuate their culture; and how they faced new challenges that occurred in The Nilgiris district due to changes on the soils, mountains and also on the economy and culture.
5. Finally, we shall make observations and suggestions for the welfare and advancement of the six PTG's that will not clash with their unique ethnic identities.

Tribal Habitat in the Nilgiri District

The present report is based on the data collected from all the six Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) living in Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu. Before describing the six primitive tribal groups, let us know something about The Nilgiris.

The Nilgiris district, also called as 'The Nilgirs', hills', is one of the smallest district of Tamil Nadu. Etymologically the word 'Nilgiris' means 'blue mountains'. The district is a hill area of 2549.0 sq.kms. located between 11' 10' and 11'30' N latitude and between 76'25' and 77' 00'E longitude at the junction of the Eastern and the Western Ghats, the two prominent mountain ranges that run almost parallel to the coastline of peninsular India. With an average elevation of 6500 ft. the Nilgiris District is bound on the west by Kerala on the north by Karnataka, and on the Southeast by Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. It therefore occupies the highest and western most part of Tamil Nadu.

For administrative purpose the Nilgiris District is divided into six taluks, viz., The Udagamandalam, Gudalur, Pandalur, Coonoor, Kotagiri and Kundah. The Udagamandalam town, also called as Ooty or Ooctacamund or Udhagai, is the head-quarters of the district administration. According to 2001 census, the total population of the nilgiris district is 7.64 lakhs, out of which the schedule Tribes population is 32813 constituting 4.46 percent in Nilgiris district is not evenly distributed in the six taluks. 32.08 percent of them live in Pandalur Taluk; 24.10 percent of them live in Kotagiri Taluk; 14.33 percent of them are in percent of them live in Udagamandalam Taluk and remaining 6.96 percent live in Coonoor Taluk.

In The Nilgiris District the following Scheduled Tribes are found;

- a) Todas b) Kotas c) Kurumbas d) Irulas 5) Paniyans and 6) Kattunayakkans.

Table:1

The Scheduled Tribe Population In The Nilgiris District (TRC Census 2011)

Sl.No	Scheduled Tribe	House holds		Population				Area of Concentration
		No.	%	Male	Female	Total	%	
1	Toda	418	6.39	785	695	1480	4.98	Udhagamandalam Kotagiri
2	Kotas	491	7.50	1009	976	1985	6.68	Udhagamandalam Kotagiri, Kundah, Coonoor
3	Kurumbas	2076	31.71	5196	5157	10353	34.86	Kotagiri, Kundah, Pandalur and Gudalur
4.	Irulas	1913	29.22	4219	4495	8714	29.34	Kundah, Coonoor, Kotagiri
5.	Paniyas	1197	18.28	2795	2746	5541	18.65	Pandalur, Gudalur
6.	Kattudayakan	452	6.90	824	805	1629	5.49	Pandalur, Gudalur
	Total	6547	100	14828	14874	29702	100	

Source:- Nilgiris Adiwasi Welfare Association (NAWA) Census- 2011.

Primitive Tribal Groups Of In the Nilgiris District

The term 'ethnography' is used in two distinct senses; that of ethnography research and that of an ethnographic monograph. As a category of anthropological research, ethnography ethnic group. As Charlotte Seymour-smith (1986: 98-99) descriptive and analytical elements, but the central characteristic of conventional ethnographers is that they focus on one specific culture or society and consider theoretical or comparative generalizations from the standpoint of the ethnographic example". The origin of the modern ethnographic research tradition is generally traced to popular Anthropologist, Prof. Malinowski, who as part off his FUNCTIONALIST theory of society stressed the primacy of field research and participant observation and to another anthropologist, Dr.Boas who like Malinowski reacted against the 'speculative history' of evolutionary theory and advocated the expirical method of careful description of specific cultures.

The following Scheduled Tribes are the inhabitants of the Nilgiris District as per the notification of the list of the scheduled tribes of Tamil Nadu.

1. The Toda

The Toda are known by several names like Todas, Tudavans, Toras and Todar. They are found only in the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu. Now let me state what a few scholars have said about the Todas.

"In Physique the Todas are by far the most pre-possissing as a tribe, and it is this superiority in personal appearance, in conjunction with their, singular costume peculiar mode of wearing their hair, their bold and self-possessed deportment and unique social and domestic institutions that have at all times attracted for them the greatest share attention and interest from Europeans".
– **Dr.Shortt:1869.**

2. The Kota

The Kota are known by several names like Koter, Kotharu, Kothewars and Kohatur. They are found only in the Nilgiris district and distributed only in seven settlements. Now let me state what a few scholars have said about the Kotas.

"Kotas in the olden days were the only one of the all the hill tribes who practiced the industrial arts and they were therefore essential almost to the very existence of the other tribes and castes of the Nilgiris".
–**Rev.Metz:1864.**

3. The Kurumbas

The Kurumbas of Nilgiri hills are entirely different from other ethnic groups like Kurumba, Kuruman or Kurumba gounder. There is a confusion in the synonymous names of the communities, that is the reason, the Government of India, recognized them under the name 'KURUMBAS' and to avoid confusion, it declared that, those Kurumbas who are living only in the Nilgiris district are categorized as Scheduled Tribe and included them in the list of Primitive Tribal Groups.

"It is possible that their name origination from the Tamil word kurumbo (mischief), because in their savage state they were very arrogant and mischievous".
- **Luiz (1962:116)**

4. The Irula

Irulas are one of the major tribes of Tamil Nadu, and are distributed in twelve districts which includes the Nilgiris. The Irula are known by several names

like Irular, Iriligaru, Iruliga, Iruvan, villiar, Kadu Pujari etc., Now let me narrate what a few scholars mentioned earlier about the Irulas of Nilgiris District.

Irula women wore a double fold of wrapper cloth, extending from the waist to the knees; the upper part of their bodies with their bosoms were nude. –
Shortt: 1868.

5. The Paniyans

The Paniyans are found only in Pandalur and Gudalur Taluks. The term 'Paniyan' literally means a 'worker'. It is the modified form of the Malayalam word Panikkar (Labourer). They resemble the African in their curly hair and thick lips. Now let us look at the existing literature on the Paniyans of Nilgiris District.

The Paniyans are a short, dark skinned tribe with broad noses and such curly hair that they are popularly supposed to be of African descent. They speak a corrupt patois of Malayalam, live in little huts made of bamboo and wattle plastered with mud and thatched with grass and follow the Kakkatayam law of inheritance. Each family is attached to some chetti household and works in its fields, and in their past times they were little better than agrestic.

“Local tradition says that the Goundan landlard came across the Paniyans in a wild state and they captured, domesticated and enslaved the Paniyans. There is no doubt that the Paniyans were the most ancient inhabitants of Wyanad. Their language is a dialect of Malayalam with some traces of Tamil terminations or words.
– **A.Aiyappan 1948**

6. The Kattunayakan

In the Nilgiri District, the Kattunayakans are found only in Pandalur and Gudalur Taluks. They are also known as Kadu or Shola Nayakans. Their name correctly connotes that are the Nayakans (chiefs) of the Kadu (forest). They claim to be autochthonous of the Western Ghats Now let me review the findings of a few scholars from the past in relation to the Kattunayakans of Nilgiris District.

The Kattunayakan speak an old Kannada dialect. Their habitation is called as 'Padi' represents five to nine huts in a hamlet. Men wear short dhotis and half sleeved shirts and women tie a long, single piece of cloth round their body just below the neck, leaving the shoulders and arms bare. They are non vegetarians. The Kattunayakans do not have sub groups or divisions and rules. They are patrilineal with patrilocal residence. Child marriages were common but now a days girls marry after attaining puberty. Monogamy is the most common form of marriage. Their life cycle rituals are simple on par with their customary norms. They bury the dead near their habitation and thereafter it was customary to desert that locality and een carefully avoid visiting it. There were reports that the hut in which death occurred is destroyed. Kattunayakans were hunters and food gatherers. Now a day's besides gathering the minor forest produce, they are employed by the Forest Department as mahouts and watchers. Some of them used to cultivate small patches of land on hill slopes. They are experts at collecting wild honey and wax. A few have become wage labourers on tea estates. They have the institution of the 'muthan' who worshiped trees, snakes and animals but now most of them claim to be Hindus and use popular Hindu names. They worship Lord shiva in the name of 'Bhairavan'. They are fond of music, songs and dance.

Inter-Ethnic Dynamics of the Tribal Groups

Among the non-tribal groups, there are Scheduled Castes, Malayales, Wyanad ,chetties and Mauntadan Chetties in the district. The Badagas, who have

migrated into the Nilgiris from Karnataka during the last few centuries, have settled along with the already existing tribal people. Their contributions towards the economic development in the district, especially in the field of agriculture, has been considerable. Through there have been many tribal divisions, with rare exceptions, the people of this district have lived very peacefully. The simple economy of the district and traditional division of functions among the tribes and other castes had enabled them to live together amicably. But different tribes and also between tribes and castes particularly Badagas.

Development of the Nilgiris Hills and Its Impact on Inter-Ethnic Relations

The first description of the Nilgiri Plateau is to be found as early as 1117 A.D in a Kannada inscription, which may be found in B.Lewis Rice 'Epigraphica Carnatica'. Of the internal history of the district, down to the date of the English occupation in 1799 no definite record is available. In the early 19th century, the British administration discovered the Nilgiri hills as a temperate haven. The development of the Nilgiris hills during the 19th century and early 20th centuries by the British administration, initiated major change in the social and physical environment, causing total disturbance to the symbiotic relationship between tribal and indigenous communities.

Inter Ethnic Relationships among Primitive Tribal Groups in the Present Era

The previous section shows how the gradual development of the Nilgiris hills and the over flow of the migrant population to the Nilgiris directly impacted the old symbiotic interdependence of the Nilgiris tribal indigenous population.

In the process of the heavy inflow of people from the plains and the sudden increase of the Badaga population in Nilgiri district now the native tribal people, i.e., Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniayns, and Kattunayakan populations began to stagnate. It remained around 30000, and all these six tribes, now marginalized were reduced to 3.8 percent of the general population of the Nilgiris district.

Tribal Development and Inter Ethnic Relations among the Tribes

Proponents of appropriate or intermediate technology have argued that the most appropriate technology of a community is often that which can be built and maintained locally, at a low cost and which is directed towards resolving basic community problems and needs, rather than imported high technology which is only available to wealthy elites and which will ultimately serve the gap between rich and poor.

Findings

1) The present study is an attempt to understand inter-ethnic relationship between tribal communities inhabiting the Nilgiris district of Tamilnadu. This study was conducted and interpreted within the framework of a cultural anthropological perspective.

2) The term 'tribe' has been widely used in anthropological, but there is no general consensus as to its precise definition or appropriate application. In the sense of a pre-political or pre-contract society, the term 'Tribe' has passed into general usage as a synonym for a primitive social group. Among the social sciences the cultural anthropology is identified as the study of primitive people and is distinguished from other disciplines such as Sociology, Political Science and Economics because its focus is on primitiveness of the peoples societies.

3) In Tamil Nadu, the Government has identified out of 36 Scheduled Tribes, six Scheduled Tribes as Primitive Tribal Groups. They are Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyans and Kattunayakans. Surprisingly, all these six PTCs live in Nilgiris district.

Suggestions

1) Restoration of Toda lands already encroached by the Forest department as well as by tribal landlords.

2) Construction of community halls in all seven kota settlements in Nilgiris district.

3) Alu Kurumbas want a monitoring authority to regulate NGO activity, particularly with reference to sale of honey and forest products collected by the Alu Kurumbas. Further they do not want the Alu Kurumba name to be used as brand name or trade mark for honey selling.

4) The Irula priests need training in priesthood by the government.

5) Dominant communities should not treat Paniyan people as inferior community.

6) Most of the men need jobs in forest department because they do not want to be away from the forest and wild life.

Conclusion

The study found that the symbiotic relationship among the tribes and other community which existed till the first half of the 20th century has undergone severe strain subsequently with the advent of modern education, advancement of the Badagas, formation of towns and markets, tourism and other forces like heavy inflow of migrant. The study also focused on coercive co-operation among the tribal ethnic groups in the context of development on the hills.

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