

PREFACE

In a democratic system, which India follows, all individuals and societies are regarded more or less equals, as this is necessary to provide equal opportunity to individuals to enable them to realize their full potentials. As tribal communities in different parts of India are relatively backward, the Constitution of India provides several safeguards for the protection and promotion of tribal communities. Apart from general provisions such as prohibition of discrimination, abolition of untouchability, right to equality, prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour, etc., the Constitution of India contains certain specific measures for the development of tribals.

These measures include promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes (Art 46), special administration of scheduled tribe areas, (Art 244), grants-in-aid from Consolidated Fund of India to states for implementation of tribal development programmes, (Art 275), reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People, (Art 330), and reservation of seats for them in the Legislative Assemblies of the states, (Art 332). Art 335 allows special claims to Scheduled Tribes to services and posts under the Union or of a state. Art 338 provides for appointment of a special officer for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to investigate all matters relating to their safe-guards provided under the Constitution, and (Art 339) gives control to the Union over the administration of scheduled areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes.

These lofty constitutional arrangements as well as certain measures taken for the welfare of the tribals during the last 55 years notwithstanding, tribal communities in several parts of India in general and Kerala in particular still continue to suffer from

socio-economic and political backwardness. Though the Government of Kerala has introduced several schemes and allocated huge sum of money during the Five Year Plans for economic and educational development of tribals, they continue to suffer from inequality and backwardness. They are unable to exercise political power due to their lack of development. Despite the above-mentioned provisions for reservation of seats for tribals in the Lok-Shaba and state Legislative Assemblies, tribals of Kerala are still away from political mainstream. This is despite the fact that Kerala has achieved the highest literacy rate in India as well as relatively better living conditions. The study of political development among Tribals of Kerala is, therefore, a very relevant subject to understand and assess not only their overall backwardness, but also to examine the political aspect of their developmental problems.

A Brief Survey of Literature

Unfortunately, however, a systematic study of political development among tribals of Kerala in general and those belonging to the Palakkad district in particular has hardly been done so far. Several scholars have, of course, studied the problem of tribals of Kerala. They include scholars like Anantha Krishna Iyer (*The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, Madras, 1909), Edgar Thurston (*Castes and Tribes of South India*, New Delhi, 1909), and (*Ethnographic Notes on South India*, New Delhi, 1907), A A D Luiz (*Tribes of Kerala*, New Delhi, 1962), Ehranfels U R (*Kadar of Cochin*, Madras, 1952), P R G Mathur (*The Tribal Situation in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1977), B Ananda Banu (*Cholanaikans of Kerala*, Calcutta, 1989), and T Madhva Menon (*The Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes*, Trivandrum, vol.2, 1996), etc. They have made extensive studies on tribals of Kerala. The focus of these studies are, however, on social customs, economic

anthropology, religious beliefs, material culture, family life, food habits, geographical environment and so on. In the process they have ignored the political aspect of development of tribals in Kerala.

This is especially surprising in view of the fact that scholars in the West since the emergence of new states in Asia, Africa and Latin America are increasingly studying political development in these societies. While one may not totally agree with their ideas of political development, as most of the Western scholars have defined political development from Western perspectives, what, however, cannot be rejected is their recognition of the significance of political aspect of development. Unfortunately, this dimension of development of the tribals in Kerala has so far largely remained an unasked and unanswered question. The present study is a modest attempt to fill this gap.

Objectives

Accordingly, the present study intends to achieve the following objectives:

- to examine whether the social conditions of tribals of the Palakkad District such as access to public utility services and mass media, education, social disparities, customs, etc., have affected their political development,
- to assess the economic profile of tribals of the Palakkad district such as land ownership, employment, collection of forest products, cultivation, animal husbandry and to evaluate linkages between their economic condition and political development,
- to examine the stages of political development among different tribal communities of

Palakkad and to analyze whether geographic isolation is a factor that affect their development,

- to study whether the tribal sub plans and other schemes for the welfare of the tribal communities have been implemented effectively and with a proper understanding of the tribal culture, and whether these measures have enhanced their political development;

- to examine the political knowledge and attitudes of tribals, their participation in *Panchayat Raj* institutions and general political processes and to evaluate the process of political socialization among them

Scope

The tribals of Palakkad district form the universe of the study. The total population of Scheduled Tribes in the district is 35,465. Out of the total ST population, 68.31 per cent are living in Integrated Tribal Development Project area, Attappady. There are seven major tribal communities living in the Palakkad district. Eravalar, Irular, Kadar, Kurumban, Malayan, Mudugar and Paniyan.

The study has been confined to the Palakkad district of Kerala due to several reasons. Firstly, the Palakkad district is the homeland of some of the most primitive tribal communities on the Indian mainland. Among the above mentioned seven major tribal communities living in Palakkad, Kadar and Kurumba tribes are declared as primitive tribes by the government. Secondly, the Integrated Tribal Development Project, Attappady, in Palakkad is the first ITDP in Kerala state. Out of the total ST population of 35,465 in the district, 68.31 per cent are living in the Integrated Tribal Development

Project area, Attappady, which is one of the high tribal concentrations in the state
Thirdly, the Palakkad district stands last in the tribal literacy rate in Kerala

The district is bounded by Malappuram and Nilgiri districts on the north, Coimbatore district on the east, Trichur district on the south and Malappuram and Trichur districts on the west Palakkad has an area of 4480 - square Km and ranks fourth in Kerala state in term of area The total population of the district is 2382,235, and total population of the Scheduled Tribes is 35,465.

Hypotheses

The present study attempts to examine the following hypotheses

- The socio cultural disadvantages such as absence of education, economic security, occupational mobility contact with mass media, and social interaction are determinants of political development among the tribals.
- Level of political development varies between tribals having geographical isolation from non - tribals, shops, bus route, educational institutions, health center, government offices and to the nearest town
- Tribals with better economic conditions are found to be in a better stage of political development
- The lack of effective political socialization is one of the reasons for the low performance of newly infused political cultural system among the tribals

Method and Sources

The present study has been conducted with the help of historical, analytical and comparative methods The historical examination of the past culture and life of tribals of the Palakkad district served as a background information for the subsequent empirical

analysis of the changes that have taken place in their political culture. The empirical investigation has brought out the recent changes in their political culture and factors that promote or inhibit these changes. A comparative study has been made to compare the political culture and development of the seven tribal communities under study. Finally, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods have also been applied for data collection.

Both primary and secondary sources have been critically used. A pre-tested interview schedule has been applied among the tribals for data collection. Personal interviews with knowledgeable persons like officials of Tribal Development Department, Panchayat and Forest Departments, social workers, political leaders, etc., have been carefully conducted. Besides, publications and records of Kerala Institute for Research, Training and Development Studies for SC/ST (KIRTADS), State Planning Board, Department of Tribal Development, Department of Economics and Statistics, Forest Department, Panchayat and Block offices, Census Reports, etc., have been critically used. The secondary sources include news papers and articles in books and journals available at libraries of KIRTARDS, Center for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Theenmurthy Bhavan, New Delhi, Pondicherry University, etc.

An attempt has been made to supplement these sources with critical observations of the field investigators. Two qualified tribal youths were employed for fieldwork to ensure effective communication with tribal respondents. In the first stage, a pilot study was conducted in a sample settlement. The informations regarding the distribution of tribal population, their culture, present conditions, etc., was gathered from knowledgeable persons and published reports. An interview schedule was prepared. This was tested

among few respondents belonging to different tribal communities. On the basis of this the interview schedule was modified and finalized.

In the second stage of the field work, the pre-tested interview schedule was applied for collection of data from various respondents belonging to different tribal communities living in the Palakkad district. Since the problem under study is about political development among tribals of the Palakkad, samples were selected from all the seven major tribal communities. The method followed for the sample selection was stratified random sampling. One tribal community, namely, Ulladans were not selected for the study since their number was insignificant. For getting a fair representation of all tribal communities in the district, in the first stage of selection of the sample, the tribals were divided into two groups [1] tribals living in Integrated Tribal Development Project [ITDP] area and [2] tribals living outside the ITDP area.

Attappady is one among the largest tribal concentrations, which is an ITDP area in Kerala. Tribes in Attappady, constitute 10 per cent of the total tribal population in Kerala State. The tribals of Palakkad, who are outside the ITDP area, are treated as dispersed tribes and could not enjoy the benefits under ITDPs.

Out of the total 500 samples selected for the study, 250 each is from ITDP area and non - ITDP area. The samples selected from each tribal community are in proportion to their numerical strength in the ITDP and non - ITDP areas. For selecting samples from ITDP area in the first stage, the settlements of the three tribal communities living in the area were identified separately. Then by using the random sampling method different settlements were selected according to the requirement of number of samples from each tribal community.

For selecting samples from non - ITDP area in the first stage, Panchayats with tribal concentration of each tribe under study were identified. Then by random sampling method tribal settlements from different Panchayats were selected according to the requirement of number of samples from each tribal community

The Chapter Scheme

This study has been divided into seven chapters. The introductory chapter provides a theoretical frame for the study. The various formulations on the concept of political development are analyzed in this chapter. The second chapter is devoted to an overview of the Palakkad district. The history, geography and socio-economic conditions of the district are discussed in this chapter. In the third chapter, an ethnographic description of seven tribal communities under study and their social and economic profile have been scrutinized. The fourth chapter probes the different dimensions and characteristics of the political culture of seven tribal communities of Palakkad on the basis of the data collected by applying the pre-structured interview schedule. This chapter also throws light on the role of various agencies in the political socialization process of the tribals. The role and effectiveness of input structures like political parties, interest groups and mass media agencies in development of the tribals has been examined in the fifth chapter. The sixth chapter analyses the influence of the present output structures in development of the tribals. In this chapter, the influence of the traditional tribal output structures among the tribals at present are also examined. Finally, the major findings of the study have been summed up and nature and tenor of political development among the tribals of Palakkad are appraised in the conclusion chapter.