

Abstract:-

An economic system is the means by which goods are produced, distributed or marketed and consumed. Each society can and does resolve the problem of living within the limits of its own resources: land, capital and technology. It can also distribute goods according to its own priorities. Economic organization tribal communities can be classified differently, according to their environmental setting like the rural, settled and cattle herding and hunting/gathering types.



THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE MALAIYALI TRIBAL IN KALVARAYAN HILLS

K. Govindaraj

Assistant Professor, Department of History wing DDE,
Annamalai University Annamalai Nagar ,
Tamil Nadu.

Keywords:

Economic Conditions ,
Kalvarayan Hills , Malaiyali
Tribal , economic system .



INTRODUCTION

Numerous scholars from anthropology as well as other 'disciplines have studied economic organization of simple societies ranging from most simple hunter-gatherer societies to communities which have evolved into the market economy. One can also point out numerous studies related to Indian context as well. The present study focuses mainly. On the changing economic scenario of the Malaiyali people of the Kalvarayan area. It also examines as to how far planned effort has ' succeeded in their objectives of raising the economy to the level of development achieved.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The objectives will be to reduce the percentage of Scheduled Tribal families living below poverty line to less than 10 per cent and to raise the economic status of this segment of the population. The strategies will be towards mobilising and organising the poor Scheduled Tribal families in Self-help Groups (SHGs), crating awareness on literacy and health care, improving the capacity and ability of poor people to manage risks, promoting self reliance and thrift, supporting in infrastructure, forward and backward linkages and other assistance for improvement in the income generating capacity of Scheduled Tribal families living below poverty line, improving the skills of Scheduled Tribal by providing training and identification of appropriate institutions and activities, imparting wide range captive job oriented vocational training to the educated unemployed through Economic Development Programme promoting income generating capacities in industry secondary sector and service sector thereby providing mobility from low income areas of primary sector to high income areas of secondary and services sector, imparting entrepreneurial skills and giving financial and non-financial support to the SCs/STs to start small and medium scale enterprises in industrial and service sectors: The following are the new schemes under Economic Development¹.

- Special Economic Development Programme
- Skill Development/Building Training to Below Poverty Line Families for the Promotion of Micro Enterprises
- Venture Capital Funding
- Vocational Training
- Talent Search Training Programme for Job Placements in Private Sector.

TRIBAL SUB PLAN

The Tribal Sub Plan was introduced to ensure that all general development sectors at the State level earmark funds in proportion to Scheduled Tribal population so that adequate benefits from all the concerned sectors flow to the tribal groups.- The objective of the Tribal Sub Plan is to assist the Tribal families in improving their socio-economic and educational status. Economic Development Programmes in the fields of horticulture, animal husbandry, soil-conservation, minor irrigation, sericulture, small industries, bee-keeping etc. and area, oriented development programmes like provision-of drinking water, formation of roads, electrification, providing education and health facilities, improving forestry, communication, co-operation, social services².

HOUSEHOLD ARTICLES

Household articles appliances like the ural (mortar), ulakkai (pestle), almirahs, wooden stools and agricultural implements like the ploughing tools were made from the available timber, that is, woods from forests, like the jackwood and timber are widely used for making the said articles. Ammi (grinding stone) and kulavi (grinder of sorts, if is rolled over and over to make chutney, masala - a chilly-hot, spicy stuff which is a mix for curry) are used to grind spices and chilies. 'Attukkal' (manual grinder) is also used in quite a few houses. Apart from the other common items of furniture, and utensils there are two important vessels which are used especially for feeding pigs³.

CATTLE SHEDS

Cattle is an important asset to the tribal house holds. The farmers keep draught animals, cow, sheep and goats and it is their subsidiary-occupation. Cattle also provide on the one hand food and on the other animal power and manure needed for the fields. There are hybrid varieties of the livestock, especially cows, buffaloes and goats which yield high as well. They are kept normally in separate units of dwelling and they are thus protected from the inclemencies of weather⁴.

TRIBAL AGRICULTURE

The Malaiyali system of agriculture is terraced and rain dependent. Tapioca and paddy are the principal crops raised on a large scale, while vegetable and the cereals are cultivated in lesser areas and small scale. Paddy is cultivated both in wet (irrigated, 'vayalkadu') and dry lands ('metu nilanv'). There are two principal cultivating seasons, each depending mainly on one of the two monsoons, The first, the southwest monsoon, sets in early in June but previous to this there are showers towards the end of March and in April followed by downpour in May. The early showers are utilised for ploughing the moisture-rich

or damp soil, and in May, if enough rain is received,,or in June (Adi), the dry crops are planted after a heavy rain⁵.

The commonest of these are ragi, cholam (sorghum vulgar), thinai (setaria Italica) a'varai (yia-faba), makka cholam (zea-mays), horsegram (dalichos-bifloras) and gingelly (sesamum-indicum). These crops are either cultivated in separate fields or if mixed, it is sown in the same field. Another crops, locally called 'mettu nel' (paddy of the elevated land or simply dry pady), is a native variety growing in dry lands and has been brought from the Periyamalai Hills (Kollihills). It is sown in 'Adi' season and this crop does not require much water. It is thus grown with the occasional rainfall. As soon as wet lands are fuily irrigated, they are ploughed and manured and ploughing is continued at regular intervals. The dry crops take three to six months to mature⁶.

TECHNOLOGY

Slash and Burn Slash and burn cultivation is widely practiced the entire Kalvarayan Hills. A patch of land is selected which is either a patta land or porarhboke on the slopes and they set fire in summer for the bushes. After that, the tribe clan up the land for cultivation. After the rains in Adi, which is an auspicious Tamil month (May-June), ragi, cholam (joyvar) and thinai (millets) seeds are broadcast, in the plot now ready after slash and burn. The soil is however upturned with the help of hoe or by ploughing (hoes are used in the hills while the plough is used in the plains)⁷.

Ploughing and Sowing seeds The main activity of ploughing, however, does not begin before Adi. In fact, the sowing begins (in Adi pattm or Adi season). The very first sowing is observed on either of the following auspices dates as'per the Tamil calender as a eremony but not as a routine work⁸.

TAPIOCA CULTIVATION

Tapioca (Malavalli kilangu in the local language) is a dryland crop widely cultivated in the .terraces of the hills. This crop has been introduced in the hills a decade ago. It is a commercial crop cultivated on a large scale. The crop has a duration-of 10 to 12 months. Initially, the seed cuttings have been brought down from the Kollihills. The cultivation begins in the month of Adi and harvested in the same month by next year⁹.

Before cultiation of this crop, the land is deeply ploughed three or four times either by oxen or by tractors, compost is uniformly applied into, soil then ploughing is done for the last time before cultivation. After the first shower in the month of Adi, the stumps are uniformly cut by the cutter¹⁰. The size of each piece is not more than 15 cm. (6 inches). The cutting are then pushed into the soil of the prepared field, with intervals of 75 fcm. between the successive cuttings. In a week, the cuttings sprout the leaves. The plant begins to grow steadily after about two or three leaves. Dead stumps are replaced by new ones after a month too. The crop generally grows fast with little rains. Weeding is undertaken about twice in the entire life cycle. Manure is applied to each plant before the rainy season starts (Purattasi and Iypasi months). The roots grow and become more widespread during the monsoon days. Generally,no disease affects this crop in any season. When the leaves begin to fall, there is enough indication that the crop is ripe enough for harvest. Approximately 1.5 to 3 kg. of roots are-harvested from each plant. ¹¹

MARKETING OF TAPIOCA

Tapioca is marketed through businessmen who come from neighbouring towns like Attur and Rasipuram. The following provides 'an account of the expenditures incurred in the cultivation' of tapioca in an nit area of an acre (or 0.42 ha).¹²

Cost accounting for the cultivation of Tapioca

No.	Description	Cost in Rs.
1.	Seed cuttings purchased	400
2.	Ploughing3 or4 times	600
3.	Planting the cuttings	600
4.	Weeding"(2 or 3 times)	
	30 or 40 labour or an contract basis	2600
5.	Manure/DAP/Potsli/Urea. (twice a year)	1800
6.	Lorry charges for transportation	2400
7.	Harvesting labour charges	600
8.	Forest check post charges	1000
9.	Weighing machine charges	100
	Total	9560

No diseases attack the crop but it is reported the wild fats are destroying the roots during the-night times. ¹³

The Traditional Economy

The traditional economy of Malaiyalis has been centered around agriculture, cattle herding, occasional hunting and collection of minor forest products. As such the Malaiyalis of the Kalvaryan are

identified as agriculturist -cum- pastorals. The income from the cultivation of tapioca is reasonable and it is thymus preferable crops for the Malaiyalis. The introduction of tapioca has affected the traditional crops that have long been grown by the Malaiyalis.

Changes have been observed in the dress pattern, hairstyles, and personal hygiene of the Malaiyalis. The flourmill has reduced the burden of the husking of grains by women. Both the modem and traditional means of treatment to cure the diseases is prevalent among them. Electrical bulbs have replaced kerosene lights. Tailoring and embroidering provide self-employment the tribals. To provide training, there is a Training Centre for tailoring, at the study area. A few. changes have also been' observed in the traditional political structure of the Malaiyalis. Now the elected the tribal villages. Apartfrom that, the traditional Ur Gounden' and the rest of the traditional pattern of leadership have also been found in the villages.

The forest ecology of the Kalvryan hills has-been changing due to various human activities. Earlier the tribal people depended more on the forest and other minor forest products. Now, the government has plated several hectares of exotia plants both in tribal patta lands and wastelands for improving the forest cover. This type of man-made forest and orchards are not only helpful in sustaining the environment but also more helpful in generating income for the tribals.

Tapioca (average yield) in one acre	100 bags
Approximate weight of each bag	100 kg.
Value of market price of 100 kg. bag	Rs. 400
Value of products produced in one acre	Rs. 50,000
Total revenue (value of production)	Rs. 40,000
Total cost of production	Rs. 15,000
Net profit	Rs. 25,000

Traditionally, the Malaiyalis prefer to cultivate the maranel or thunga nel or periyamalai nel (a native variety) in their dry lands. This native variety is found suitable for this hill climate. This crop does not require much water. No pesticide or manures are used for this cultivation. It is cultivated in the first season of the year (Adi)]. The land was well ploughed 3 to 4 times before sowing of the seeds. The compost is applied in the last plough (sal). Before or after the rains, die seeds are sown in the soil. After the crop reaching 30 days, the field is ploughed agai, as if to make the growth scanty. Hence, the farmers use a special wooden plough, for destroying the thick growth of crops.

Cultivation of paddy is highly labour intensive. From planting to harvest, it requires several laborers for undertaking all related. activities. In case of a favourable rainfall, and other conditions, the yield of paddy may be a little higher than the average expected. It is generally observed that the yield under this cultivation is very low. Due to the climatic conditions, stillthis type of cultivation is widely practiced in the entire Kalvarayan hills. Occasionally, one or two farmers sell this variety of paddy in the market. It is also found that the native variety is very tasteful and delicious food items among the Malaiyalis. It is also a good pest resistant variety compared to other varieties which is introduced by outsiders in this area. The data on the cost of growing wet paddy (vayal kadu/Sethu;/hel cultivation in wet lands. The new constructed check dams under the Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) are not only preventing soil drosion, but is also helpful in the intensive wet land farming and sustaining the ground water level.

Today the Malayali tribal society is well connected by metalloid roads and bus services, postal services, radio and television facilities have also expanded the communication facilities to the community. The veterinary hospital with artificial inseminaiion facility is helpful for keeping fowls and sheep in a healthy condition. Sericulture has been playing a vital role in the economy of the Malaiyalis. As far as the educational development of the tribals is concerned, there has been a considerable improvement in die social status. Savings have never been large in the post office savings account. Most of the Malaiyalis have not been in favour of savings with a bank. Moneylenders, LAMPs, NGOs, friends and relatives have largely been the source of credits for the Malaiyalis. There has been a-considerable change in the tribal dwellings. Tiled and moulded houses have replaced traditional houses of the tribes. As a result of economic development among the Malayalis, a remarkable change has come about in their lives. Changes have also been occurred in the health and sanitation condition of the tribes¹⁴.

CONCLUSION

The traditional self-sufficient agriculture-cum- pastoral economy of the Malaiyalis of the Kalvarayan hills is linked with the collection of minor forest products and the occasional small hunting. It has been found that the traditional economy of the Malaiyalis is changing into a relative market economy through the improved transport and communication systems and the available tribal development programs. The Malaiyalis of the Kalvarayan hills are not in isolation ' now. Their economy is related to the economy of the state - Tamil Nadu at micro-level. This pattern of change and development among the Malaiyalis of Kalvryan hills has been .identified as the neo-traditional tribal economy in transition.

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