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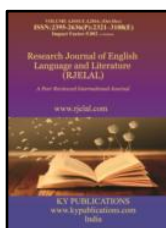
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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY OF TRIBAL SCHOOLS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the environmental study of tribal schools in Coimbatore district. Majority of the tribal population in Tamil Nadu live in hilly ranges viz., Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats and the discontinuous hill tracts adjoining the plains and the hills. These tribal's live in forest. The tribal communities are scattered throughout in the Coimbatore district. The settlement starts from Irulas of Uliyoor in Mettupalayam and ends with the Mudhuva and Pulaiya settlements of Amaravathi Nagar. Tribal settlements is found in Uliyoor, Palamalai, Anaikatti, Maruthamalai, Manar, Singupathi, Mavuthampathi, Karatoor, Thirumoorthy Hills, Amaravathi Dam Region, Valparai in Coimbatore district.

Keywords: Scheduled Tribes, Irulas, kaders, Muthuvars or Mudhugars, Pulayars, GTR

Introduction

Settlement of scheduled tribes

Majority of the tribal population in Tamil Nadu live in hilly ranges viz., Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats and the discontinuous hill tracts adjoining the plains and the hills. These tribal's live in forest. The tribal communities are scattered throughout in the Coimbatore district. The settlement starts from Irulas of Uliyoor in Mettupalayam and ends with the Mudhuva and Pulaiya settlements of Amaravathi Nagar. Tribal settlements is found in Uliyoor, Palamalai, Anaikatti, Maruthamalai, Manar, Singupathi, Mavuthampathi, Karatoor, Thirumoorthy Hills, Amaravathi Dam Region, Valparai in Coimbatore district.

One of the largest tribes in Tamil Nadu is Irulas and the largest tribal population is found in India. They constitute nearly 8% of the Indian total population. They occupy in two south Indian states namely, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Irulas live in the Nilgris, Coimbatore district and Erode district of Tamil Nadu. Irulas are found in Anaikatty,

Maruthamalai, Mavuthampathi, Muttathu Vayal, Manar and Uliyoor of Coimbatore district.

The kaders live in Anaimalai which is called the elephant hills, the great mountain range of Western Ghats. It is extended to southward towards Travancore, which are ranges of Pollachi, Thunakkadavu, Punachi and Udumalpet. Valparai taluk consists of these ranges altogether into seven settlements. They are Netungunru, Manamapalli, Anamudi, Udumpanparai, Kavarkkal, Kadamparai and Kallar. Kaders are the most primitive tribal people among the various groups found in the Anamalai hills of Western Ghats area.

Muthuvars or Mudhugars are cultivators of hill who exist in Anaimalai, Madurai, Malabar and Tiruvancore areas. They occupy a limited area at the heart of the primeval forest of the Western Ghats border area between Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Mudhuva is the name spelt for this tribe in English.

Pulayars are the hill tribes who live in the Thirumoorthy hills of Coimbatore district and in the adjoining Amaravathy Dam area of the Western

Ghats. They have their settlements in the forest and plain areas.

Study Area

This present study includes only five government tribal schools in Western Ghats of Coimbatore district. Namely

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| 1 | Government Tribal Residential school, Valparai |
| 2 | Government Tribal Residential school, Palamalai |
| 3 | Government Tribal Residential school, Anaikatti |
| 4 | Government Tribal Residential school, Muttathuvayul |
| 5 | Government Tribal Residential school, Mavuthampathy |

Valparai region is a hill station come under the Coimbatore district and is located at the border of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. There are two main tribes in this region, they are Kadars and Muthuvars.

Palamalai is positioned in the Gurudi Hills of Perianaickan Palayam area of the Western Ghats area. Palamalai is the second highest place where number of tribal's exists in this place.

Anaikatti is located at the boundary between Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the Western Ghats region. Anaikatti area covers totally fifteen square kilometers. It is a small village in Periyanyakkan Palayam taluk in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu state. It comes under Anaikatti (north) panchayat. It is located 19 kms towards north from district head quarters Coimbatore. It is surrounded by Karamadai taluk towards north, Sarcarsamakulam taluk towards east, Coimbatore taluk towards south and Annur taluk towards east. Irulas are the main tribes inhabited in this area.

Mavuthampathi is a small village and situated in Coimbatore south tehsil. It is one of twenty eight villages in Coimbatore south block. Major tribe lives in this area is Irula.

Particulars of Government Tribal Residential Schools

Coimbatore South Circle: one school

1. Government Tribal Residential School - Mavuthampathi.

Coimbatore North Circle: Three schools

1. Government Tribal Residential School - Anaikatti
2. Government Tribal Residential School - Palamalai
3. Government Tribal Residential School - Muttathuvayul
Pollachi Revenue: One school

1. Government Tribal Residential School- Valparai

A total number of forty four teachers are working in GTR schools in the Western Ghats area of Coimbatore district. In general, the teachers are drawn from Tamil Nadu to work in the GTR schools. Mostly the teachers who are working in GTR schools do not reside in the tribal school area.

Headmaster who also functions as the warden of the hostel has to stay at the school quarters. The teacher do not know the problems of the learners whose mother tongue is different from that of the tribal students. The teachers should possess the knowledge of the language culture and other aspects of their society while teaching a language to non-native speakers.

As far as the tribal situation is concerned the mother tongue of the tribal children is not Tamil. Native Tamil speakers or the mother tongue speakers are appointed as teachers to teach correct pronunciation, word formation, syntactical patterns, meaning and so on, to the tribal students. So it is found to be very useful for the students of tribal community. Therefore the teachers should know the commonness and similarities are found between the mother tongue of the learner and the target language.

Methodology of the Study

The present study follows a micro level examination about tribal school situation in Coimbatore district. For this study, five tribal schools have been selected and students profile sheets, teachers profile sheets are collected for the reference. Mainly photograph and as well as video recording have been captured.

Student Profile: School Records

From the twelve Government Tribal Residential Schools functioning in Coimbatore district, only five schools are taken as sample and studied here. Students admitted during the period 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 are also

studied. The students attendance register, the promotion register and the head admission register are the key of this present study for the collection of information.

Nature of Schools and Teachers

The tribal residential schools are divided into three groups which are based on the selection of students.

1. Tribal residential schools containing the students of specific tribal students.
2. Tribal residential schools which have students of more than one tribal community students.
3. Tribal residential schools which have students of one particular tribal community and non-tribal students.

Insufficient Infrastructure in the Schools

In present a number of teaching aids are being used for the purpose of education. Infrastructure is the basic need towards the educational development. In many tribal schools of Coimbatore district do not have even the very basic infrastructural facilities that are needed. From the five GTR schools mentioned above, Muttathuvayil and Palamalai tribal schools have not provided with good electricity support, water facilities and also things such as table, bench, map, black board, chalk piece required for their use. If the infrastructural facilities are improved, it will go a long way in improving the teaching process.

Inadequate Boarding and Lodging Facilities

The boarding and lodging facilities are not good in GTR schools in Coimbatore district. A lot of schools do not have enough rooms to accommodate all the students.

As a result of this some students have grievance regarding the hostel facilities provided.

More number of tribal students is interested to join as hostel students, but the present condition does not allow them to join. The danger due to wild animals is also one of the causes affecting attendance of the tribal school children at the school. Palamalai of Periyanaicken Palayam region and Valparai area many children who come to attend the school from far-away places. Such children have to provide with hostel

accommodation. This problem is also one of the strong reasons for the drop-outs in the GTR schools.

Lack of Public Transport Facilities

Lack of public transport facilities from their settlements to the town area is another reason for dropouts from the school.

Insufficient Teachers

Palamalai and Valparai government tribal schools have the less strength of students when compared to the admission in the academic year. The reason stated for this is that the school is managed by only one teacher to handle all the classes from sixth to eighth standards and for all the subjects.

In addition to all the above causes some other important observations can also be cited as the background for the reasons for Drop-out. At the primary level of education 40% of the children only continue their education. Drop-out rate is the highest in class 6th and there after it gradually decreases for each class. More than twenty percent of the children in the seventh and eighth standards fail to meet the basic requirements of literacy.

More than 30% of the students dropped out from the school because their parents send them to work to earn wages or ask them to do some household works. Majority of the tribal schools are still in need of various basic infrastructural facilities. And finally, most of the parents are either hunters or agricultural labourers and 85% of the parents are illiterates. So they are not willing to educate their children.

Model of Infrastructure in GTR Schools

The infrastructural facilities are not sufficient for students and teachers in the government tribal residential schools. They need to be upgraded and improved to meet the growing needs of the students and teachers. The following items should be included in the infrastructure of the GR schools,

- 1) Adequate number of class rooms
- 2) Students computer and language lab
- 3) Teachers resource room and computer lab
- 4) Science laboratory
- 5) Library
- 6) Infirmary and sick room
- 7) Auditorium or general purpose hall

- 8) Housing for teachers, securities and supporting staffs
- 9) Well ventilated dormitories
- 10) Assured and reliable water supply
- 11) Rainwater harvesting
- 12) Reliable sewage system
- 13) Dinning and kitchen
- 14) Compound wall
- 15) Electrical control room
- 16) All facilities should be accessible with disabilities

For example the model of classroom and library as Classroom

The classrooms should be designed with safety and has an emergency exits in case of eventuality like an evacuation. Each classroom should be provided with an LCD projector, a white board and space for displays. Most particularly the furniture and equipment should be chosen with utmost care. And also every classroom should be provided with necessary resources for every standard.

Library

There should separate librarian for each school other than subject teachers. There should be separate stock library for each subject so students can attain knowledge easily. The libraries should be supported by qualified teacher librarians to use friendly with browsing areas, reference sections, periodical sections and general sections. All the students are oriented how to use the library.

In general the GTR schools lack the infrastructure facilities. This affects the continuation of study by the students. In some settlements, schools are situated at a distance place and this affects the attendance of the students. The teaching apparatus largely contributes the teaching process, but in the tribal set-up teaching aids are very rarely used. Similarly the teachers who teach Tamil are not aware of the linguistic competence of the students in their mother tongue. So all these factors are responsible for the high drop-out rate in the GTR schools.

To educate the tribal children and empower them is achieved by collective effort of all the stakeholders of the society such as village community, private organizations, teachers, and

government functionaries, elected representatives and the people in general. The inadequate facilities and lack of initiatives towards making tribal community are grave concerns. Government should prepare innovative approaches to involve the entire stakeholders at various levels for streamlining the educational system, so as to achieve higher literacy level among the tribal children in the long run.

The participation of tribal community is in very low levels. Though the developments of the tribes are taking place in India, but the paces of development have been rather slow. If government will not take some severe steps for the development of tribal education, the status of education among tribes will be a story of pain, misery and loss. Hence time has come to think it seriously about tribal education and inclusive growth. So, there is an urgent need for various government interventions, planners and policy makers to address this problem and allocate more funds in the central and state budgets for tribal education. Easy access and more opportunities should be provided to the tribal children in order to bring them to the mainstream of economic development which is badly necessary for the development of the nation.

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