

Paniya Community: Development Through Education

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ABSTRACT

India is a multicultural country and its multifaced way of life attracted many a man in the world. There is linguistic differences, differences in food habit and difference in work and worship also. Yet, we can see Indianness in the blood of the people. In the country the thread of the Tribal life is seen throughout and tribals contribute a lot to develop the concept of unity and integrity of the country. In this particular diversified nature, a sizable portion of the population belonging to the Scheduled Tribes whose living status is not a colourful one is looked to here. These community has a vast culture of their own and way of working for their livelihood. This study is focusing on how far the education imparted to them is helpful for the progress of Panya Community, the largest Scheduled Tribe Community who has settlements in the district of Malappuram, Kerala State.

KEY WORDS

Multicultural, diversity, livelihood, unsatisfactory, linguistics, aborigines. Settlements.

INTRODUCTION

People belonging to the Paniya Community have their settlements (dwelling places) in Forest areas or remote places such as hilly and adjacent to forest or rivers. For collecting minor forest produce was the only source of their income in earlier years. But change is visible now in their field of activities. Studies say that the people of Paniya settled in Wayanad (a district in Kerala) and engaged in Teak Plantation. Years passed and the lands were sold with the people. Hence, they came to different areas and began their life there. Now, Paniya settlements are there in the districts of Kannur, Kozhikode Wayanad and Malappuram. The Paniya people are with the nature of hard work and the main occupation is in association with the forests. They engage from the very early morning till the evening.

INDIAN TRIBAL POPULATION AT A GLANCE

In the year 1951 there were 19111498 people in the community which is 5.29 percentage of total population. But, in 1962 it was 30130184 and 6.86 percentage. In 1971 the number was 38015162, 6.94 percentage, while in 1981, it was 51628638 that is 7.83 percentage. While in 1991, the number increased to 67658638 which is 8.08 percentage, in 2001 it was 84326240, with 8.20 percentage. In 2011 number rose to 104281034, 8.6 percentage which is a 23.7 growth rate. (Census of India in India 1951 to 2011, Govt. of India (internet).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find the present educational position of the Paniya Community in Malappuram District of Kerala state to see whether it is enough for their development.
2. To find the reasons behind the backwardness of education of the Paniya Community in Malappuram District
3. To suggest remedial measures for uplifting the group from their backwardness.

METHODOLOGY:

In order to get the valuable suggestions and the necessary things required for the Paniya community, in this study, 160 persons were contacted. From their opinion it is learned that this group of community require many things for their development. It included safe drinking water and setting up of educational institutions for their children. In addition, they suggested that health sector should also be strengthened with priority in hospitals and medicines.

DEVELOPMENT OF PANIYA

Development is a term used in a wider sense and it is a continuous process. The main objective of development is to provide opportunities for the betterment of the living conditions. It involves the participation of the masses in the continuous process of decision making not only in economic and social life but also in political and cultural life for their betterment. The previous story of the Tribal people was not an excellent one and they remained poor and marginalised.

Development in Education:

Education, is no doubt, a process of instruction or systematic giving or receiving activity. In the case of the tribal community, especially the Paniyas are not in a position to get proper and timely education since their dwelling areas are far away from the main stream. It is definitely a constant process of teaching and learning. It will be highly essential for the improvement of their quality of life.

The main principle of Development is given in the preamble of the International Development Strategy. It is not the benefits given to the people but, an activity finding out the needy and the desirous. As the Paniyas are the closely associated people with the forests, their occupation is also closely connected with forests and suburban areas.

Economic Development of Paniya:

Economic Development, as said earlier, is the condition of growth with stability. It is a continuous process for reaching a higher level in the living status. It is a process of giving opportunities for development with stability. In other words, to make one the self - reliant and stable in economic activities. Economic stability brings strength and welfare for the community and makes one to open the vistas for development. Stable and growth – oriented programmes are highly essential to have progress. As a group of community, having less privilege in social life, the Paniya community is to be considered which is highly essential, before taking measures for their development as income status of the person or community is also taken for further consideration.

Backwardness in Economic Activities:

Anthropologists have relentlessly made their efforts to see the problems of the down trodden and tried to suggest ways and means for their progress in social life. The Paniya people are one of the groups of the low wage earners so their saving capacity is very small or nil. As a result of the small level of income, the saving position of the Paniya community is also very small. Since the position of saving determines their investment capacity, it is almost small or zero. Being a group working in unorganised or private sector, they are temporarily engaged and their job will not earn much. Low level of income forces them to lead a life low standard of living. As a result, they will remain the backward position in life.

Developmental Activities:

Most of the people belonging to Scheduled Tribes or the vulnerable groups find it difficult to give their children a good modern education, for many reasons. The dwelling places of Paniya community called, ‘Chala’ are very distant from the educational institutions. Previously, the dwelling places were known as ‘Chala’ and in some localities they are termed as colonies. The colonies lack modern amenities. Some colonies are even not having sufficient drinking water facility. Because of lack of education, the people do not get good jobs with handsome remuneration. Education imparted to the children of Paniya are not in accordance with the circumstances and they will have no opportunities for coming to the forefront of the society. Though they utilise the major share of their income for their house hold affairs, it was noticed that a portion of the wage received will be utilised for alcoholic drinks also, which would worsen their health and their capacity to work. The bad situation in family further hinders the educational standards of their children. It was also noticed that the school children were assigned some duties like looking after the younger ones and sometimes engaged in some menial work of the neighbours. Governments’ policies for uplifting the people are thwarted and the overall development of the community will be affected.

CAUSES FOR THE BACKWARD POSITION OF PANIYA:

1. Dwelling Place:

One of the major difficulties to get modern life for the Paniya community is the location of their dwelling areas. These people have their settlements in faraway places or remote areas where modern life did not come. Approach of the areas for developmental projects becomes a difficult task for the authorities often.

2. Transportation facility:

Being the residents of the forest areas or workers of forest related activities, the Paniyas are in distant places. It will become a hazardous task to reach their ‘colonies’. Vehicular traffic is almost nil in these areas and these people are often do not get the appropriate opportunity to get in touch with modern amenities. They are walking a long distance to the work place and after the work, to house.

3. Sticking on traditional approach:

The people of Paniya community are reluctant in accepting some of the new methods adopted in the fields of education and health. They turn their faces against modernism and stick to their ways. In the field of health also they follow their own attitudes.

4. Superstitious Belief:

The people of Paniya community are with their age-old customs and traditions from which they do not move a budge. They have some religious thoughts and follow them. Sometimes their beliefs prevent them from educational development.

5. Illiteracy:

Illiteracy is the major hurdle in the developmental process of the Paniya Community. Illiteracy and ignorance of the community prevents them from their progress. Being a group, not knowing even their position in the social life, work hard, saving nothing will be a tool for exploitation. They do not get recent trends in life or the changes take place as a result of change in technological development.

6. Health Status:

In health status too, the Paniya community is backward. Because of the backwardness in education and illiteracy, they are not aware of the plans implemented even for their own development. They are not ready to accept the modern trends and attitudes implemented. They do not know the care to be taken before and after child birth, pre-natal or ante natal care. Lack of sufficient quantity of nutritional food, deficiency of vitamins and minerals, lack of knowledge about preventive medicines or the availability of treatment in hospitals etc as a result of the low level of education and remoteness of living paces or illiteracy. Mal-nutrition is a common phenomenon among the Paniya. Children suffer a lot due to mal-nutrition. So the governments provide meals to them.

National Family Health Survey 2005- 2006, government of India says that Mortality of the infants in Scheduled Tribes is 62.1, when it is 57 in All India basis and Post natal mortality is 39.9 All India basis it is 39. Children mortality is 35.8 whereas it is 18.4 in All India basis. While mortality below 5 years is 95.7 and All India basis it is 74.3, Ante natal checkup is 70.5 and All India it is 77.1, Delivery in Hospitals is 17.7 where as All India basis kit is 38.7, Vaccine for children 31.3 and All India 43.5 and percentage of coverage of household by health scheme is 2.6 and it 31.9 in All India basis. Anemia affected women is 68.5 and All India basis it is 55.3.

7. Lack of Technical Know-how:

Some of the members in Paniya community are not acquired the skill of modern technology and way of life with technical advancement. In the new trend of educational field the aptitude of the community is estimated very small.

8. Sticking attitude to Forest:

As mentioned earlier, the Paniya people are closely associated with forests and they depend on forests for their livelihood. Being either hunters or gatherers of minor forest produce their living places are near the forests. In addition, they collect herbs from forests used for medicines. Indeed, they cannot be separated from their mother forest and traditional work. But, now the policies of the authorities embarrass them and their entry into the forests restricted.

9. Social Problems:

The Scheduled Tribes in some parts of the country face a number of problems. Some of them are Social, some economic and some are political.

a) Poverty

Though the Paniya have a nature of working from the very early morning to evening their pockets will be empty and nothing will be left for saving. Reckless spending is common among them. So when calamities like drought or flood occur they will be in a condition with joblessness. It means that their financial position will not be good and they will be borrowers. The children also suffer a lot.

b) Unemployment:

Unemployment is a common phenomenon among the tribals. They won't be considered for jobs which require technical knowledge. The reservation policy helps in certain occasions.

c) Exploitation:

The studies say that the tribals are the exploited groups and they are not often paid what they really deserve. Their work in the land of the land lord without time or money will not be counted. Extra time work will not be paid. Women in the Paniya community suffer a lot since they have to manage family matters, education of their children, food preparation, looking after their children etc.

d) Land alienation:

Another main problem with the Paniya is land alienation. They are still the workers in land not become the owners of land in some parts of the country. Cutting of trees, construction of dams, though they are for developmental activities, excavation also paved the ways for displacement of the tribals. The net result is that they would become landless

and homeless. Rate of life expectancy will be increased where the people have more wages, more savings, more investments and where the standard of living of the people is increased and outlook of the people is changed.

e) Indebtedness:

Modern life compels one to spend more. That means the volume of money in circulation is high in the modern world. Expenditure in Educational Field, Health field and in the sphere of allied activities are on a rise. As a solution the people work extra time for additional amount of money. It reduces family attention or education of the children.

Often their ornaments are pledged or pet animals sold at cheaper rates to tide over the situation.

f) Mingling with other groups:

In normal case the Paniya people are reluctant to mingle with the other community easily. They stand aloof and engage in their activities in forests or rivers. The innocent people are therefore, not finding their seats in the front row of progress.

FINDINGS:

Considering the low position of the tribal people, the constitution of India provides a number of safe-guarding measures for them. Proper understating of the peoples' needs is a must. It shall be studied well and remedies be taken. The started projects after evaluation of its progress be augmented.

1. Attitudinal Change:

For the welfare of the people, the situation shall be studied well and the necessary arrangements be made for them. Still there are people who do not get the governments assistance. Though crores and crore of rupees have been pumped for the progress of the Scheduled Tribes, they are not getting the desired level progress. Viable policies should be implemented. The attitude of progress should come to their minds.

2. Approaching the Tribes with a mission:

For the improvement of the life of the Paniya community exclusive projects shall be implemented. The places for their residence, the amenities yet to bring to that place, road and transport facility to their areas, special programmes for eradication of illiteracy, Health and allied activities to be given emphasis.

3. Progress through Education:

Reports say that the governments have spent a huge amount for the welfare of the people belonging Scheduled Tribes. They were not in a position to utilise it for the welfare of the community. An attempt with suitable measures in consultation with the people in that community will be useful for their development.

4. Allocation Funds:

Fund Allocation shall be proper and the authorities should see the entire programmes designed for the welfare of the people enacted. There shall not be any financial crisis in this regard. Regular monitoring is a desired factor in it. The projects for their welfare, whether long term or short term may be under strict vigil. It is also a desired factor that there is no political intervention is involved in it.

5. Literacy programmes:

As per the census of 1991, 29.6 percentage of Scheduled Tribes population in the age group of 7 years and above were literates. The programmes are to be continued until everybody is made literates. The period shall be extended. New areas to be selected for the projects. Under the programme of Rural Functional Literacy Project introduced through the Block Development Offices, so many illiterate members made literates. The classes were conducted in the evening after their work. Being one member took classes on education and health the researcher still remembers the curiosity in their eyes to know new subjects.

The following is the Literacy rate among the schedule tribes in some of the states for the period mentioned.

In Bihar it was 9.16 in 1961, 11.64 in 1971, 16.99 in 1981, 26.78 in 1991 and 28.17 in 2001. Kerala 17.26 in 1961, 25.72 in 1971, 31.79 in 1981, 36.01 in 1991, and 64.35 for the year 2001. In Lakshadweep it was 22.27 in 1961, 41.37 in 1971 53.13 in 1981, 80.59 in 1991 and 86.14 for 2001.

2. Promotion Programmes:

With a view to promote and attain progress for the community exclusive projects are to be implemented. There should be no hands to divide them but develop. Constant efforts for their welfare shall be on a war footing. No external intervention be allowed and exploitation felt. A clear strategy of plans be made within time limits. Any lapse in previous policies found be corrected with the participation of the members. These people should be given opportunities to mingle with other communities without shy or hesitation. They should be allowed, at the same time, to preserve their traditional value without erosion.

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