



MANAGEMENT OF BIORESOURCES AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF PALIYARS TRIBES IN THENI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Paliyars are indigenous tribes, live in the western Ghats falling in the districts of Madurai, Theni, Dindugul, Tiruppur, Virudhunagar and Tirunelveli. Poolavadi and Puliampatti area in Palani hills of western Ghats is considered to be the origin of this tribe. Paliyar is one oldest tribal community in India. With this background, the present study investigates the well documented in the management of Bio-resources and cultural aspects of paliyars tribes in Theni - District of Tamil Nadu.

INTRODUCTION

India has the largest tribal population, constitute nearly 8.2% (84.3 million) of the India's total population of them 91.7% of them living in rural areas and 8.3% in urban areas (Census 2001, India). Madhya Pradesh has the largest concentration of tribal population and Tamil Nadu constitutes 1% of tribal population. Globally, estimated to be over 500 million tribal or indigenous peoples residing in over seventy countries whose social, political, economic and cultural orders predate the modern nation state [1]. These peoples also possess diverse knowledge systems and various types of knowledge and applications to include knowledge in relation to food and agriculture, biological and other materials, medicine and medical treatment, design, literature, music and other artistic manifestations. Indigenous knowledge systems and associated knowledge are diverse, as are the nomenclature. Traditional resource management systems are considered as unbiased system and often ensure equitable sharing of benefits from forests and other natural resources [2-3]. India is bestowed with rich reserve of bioresources and forests are one among them. For generations these forests have been managed by

the indigenous communities for enhancing the productivity and maintaining their integrity. Human practice of setting aside areas for the conservation of bioresources can be seen in several examples of sacred groves, royal hunting forests and sacred gardens [4].

METHODOLOGY

Collection of Data on Traditional Botanical Knowledge

The Culture and Traditional knowledge was collected by informal questions to the elder persons between the age group of 50 and 90. Paliyars are inhabited in the villages of Kathirvelpuram, Melapatti colony, Mokatana parai, Kurinchi nagar, Muthunagar, Aanaikisham or J.J Nagar, Nochi odai, Karattupatti colony, Bodi, Paliyenkudi, Sothuparai and Periyekulam of Theni district. The local name of the plants, uses, useful parts, Cultural activities and indigenous technological knowledge were recorded. The frequent field trips were made to the study area from January 2015 to September 2015.

Data collection

The field research will include a variety of qualitative research tools such as structured and semi-structured interviews with key people from the local Panchayat leaders, local healers, community members and Forest Department officials. The interviews will have two

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sections: one structured and the other semi-structured. The first one will be composed of to obtain data on knowledge and use of the plant resources applying the free list method, and the second one to collect and document data on social cultural religious environment and economic arrangements, and to gauge local knowledge and opinions of each tribal community. In addition, unstructured interviews about social role by gender, perceptions, preferences, and collection and preparation, modes of useful plants, folk taxonomy, ethno classification, methods of transmission of knowledge, will be performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study the life style and sustainable utilization of bioresources of major Paliyer tribals settlements (Plate 5 a-d) were documented. Tribals are primarily a semi-romantic community and one of the primitive people who settled in Aandipatti malai and Varushanadu malai. Paliyer tribals live in religious practices of ancient traditional system and harmony with nature and the eco-system. They live in bamboo huts, mainly derived their food from forest product and still maintain the hunting-gather instincts. They follow animistic religion. Paliyers settlement is typically a cluster of few families living interspersed with the forest, isolated from any public transports facility. Tribals are comprised of largely illiterates, 90% of them cannot read and write. They speak Tamil. The Government of Tamil Nadu has recognized them as Schedule Tribes in Theni district. Nowadays, they also buy food in the “Public Distribution system” for home needs. They sell the cultivated products to the common men with the permission of the Forest Department, for their livelihood. They are extremely hard working and can survive without the help of modern agricultural implements. They cultivate edible food plants like jack fruits, citrus, pepper, banana, coconut and grains (Plate 5b). They are socio-economically very poor and still most them are forest workers. They are also engaged in seasonal collection of honey and some other forests products (Plate 5c).

Socio-cultural Life of the Tribals

Normally the primitive tribes express the cultural identity through their custom, tradition, festivals, dress and ornaments. All these play a key role in maintaining law, youth dormitory, worship and enchanting, economic policy, Indigenous technological knowledge, collection of food, hunting, shifting agriculture, and handicraft and so on for their lively subsistence. Indeed all these things are a case study of cultural history of tribes for the new generation of writer. Affection towards villagers is also taken into consideration for selection as head.

Culture and festivals activities of paliyer tribes

Paliyer tribes are the worshipper temple of Mavootru velappar murugan, kalamman and nature as

they felt the presence of divinity in nature. Indeed, this is important from religious ground. They give more emphasis on some elements of nature. They worship the tamil month of Sithirai, karthigai, margazi such as Padiyel, Poojai, Sacrifice of animals and soil as mother earth, sun as religious god and water as the life giver. But the head decides the observation of different festivals on considering the religious culture. So it is noticed that there is some uniformity and diversity of observing festivals.

Man and women simple prohibit cloth which is often attached to the waste card in front and passes between the needs and handover the card at one slide this type of dress the elderly people wear when they or in agricultural field or at home but most of the going people wear nowadays that but of reason days most of the people we youth how started use in longer the elderly people don't wear any shirt unless and until the go get of the village and attend any function but almost the elderly people is the use urban on the head.

The dress of a female mainly consists of a petticoat. Kapada and the saree the petticoat made of the red coloured kadhi with a number of plates of hands from the waist to the anklets its circumference is large it us many folds and required cloth from eight to ten meters long. The colour either red, blue, or black, the dress often unmarried girl consists of gogari, the petticoat which is made of three to four meters of cloth. the shari-odani is the long piece of the cloth of the length of two to three meters with printed designs.

Ceremonies are two types so far as the observation at family level and community level is concerned. The family level ceremonies mainly include new born babies, marriage and death. These ceremonies have specific custom and convention, for instance the naming ceremony of the new born baby which is taken place on 21st day after birth. There is also provision of prayer and worship to the forefather for blessings. In rare cases, small villagers maintain some terrain forest covers, which are considered as sacred forests due to traditional and ethical beliefs, only where tribal interference is not there. Presence of *Azadirachta indica*, *Tabernaemontana divaricata*, *Calotropis gigantea*, *Acacia mearnsii* and *Morinda tomentosa* in the sacred forests are considered as sanctity bearing sacred forests. Due to deforestation, interference in their habitat and attraction towards modernization influenced tribes to move towards city life. Very few populations of *Paliyar* and *Puliyar* tribes are still following their traditions and believe in forest for their better prosperity. Fifty medicinal plants, predominantly found in sacred groves and used in tribal daily life are enumerated with their botanical name, family, parts used, and uses.

Bio-resources as food and ethnomedicine knowledge of paliyer tribes

They are extremely hard working and can survive

without the help of modern agricultural implements. Other than the traditional food items of modern man, like the rice, wheat, millets, etc they have a treasure house of knowledge about potential food plants from the surrounding forests. These includes leaves, stems, bark, roots, fruits of wild plants and a number of animals and insects gathered as food items. The area is very rich in

various types of edible and non-edible items found abundantly in the nearby jungles. They collect those edible plants for their own consumption and other uses. If there is any excess quantity of collected materials, they sell those in the market or exchange with some other essential items of daily needs. Similar study also reported by John De Britto *et al* [4] and Gadgil *et al* [5].

Fig 1. Festivals and cultural activities of paliyars triables in theni district



Fig 2. Uses and management of biological resources in paliyars triables in theni district



Fig 3. Paliyars triables settlements in Theni district



Fig 4. Indigenous technological knowledge of Paliyars tribes



CONCLUSION

The present population has little knowledge about the medicinal plants of the area because most of the knowledgeable, older persons have passed away and the younger ones are not as informed of traditional methods. The living of man in all societies is largely guided by the availability or otherwise of natural bio-resources. However, the tribal people who are regarded as in the primitive stage and experiencing slow pace of development have a high degree of dependence on the natural resources for their livelihood. However, as in the past, some empirical knowledge of medicinal plants among the tribes continues to be developed and transmitted orally from one

generation to the next. The deterioration of the wild flora of this area is to be blamed on population pressure, forest fires, overgrazing, and browsing. Hence, the paper is significant for the forest dwellers to assess the level of bio-resource utilization, cultural habitats of tribals and framing strategies for sustainable utilization of forest resources in future continuum.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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