

Forest Based Economy among Yarava Tribe In Coorg District of Karnataka

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Abstract:

Central, state governments and non-governmental organizations have been implemented several welfare programmes for the wellbeing of tribes, still poverty has been prevailing in the country. Hungry, poverty and deprivation of civic amenities are being experienced by the Yarava tribe and general population of Western Ghats. Obviously, education, health, sanitation, habitation and communication with the mainstream of society have been stood upon economic prosperity. Unfortunately, there is no sustainable means of livelihood for Yaravas, existing forest based economy is hardly serving piecemeal for them. Hence, all the stakeholders of society need to extend their support to overcome by the challenges facing by Yaravas and other tribes. The present study attempts to address the livelihood status of Yarava tribes of Coorg District.

Key Words: Deprivation, Livelihood, Minor Forest Produce, Sustainable, Western Ghats.

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I. Introduction

Minor Forest Produce of tropical forest has become a matter of greater concern following depletion of medicinal species and ecological point of view. At the outset, continued deforestation has threatened people living amidst of forest and elimination of hundreds and thousands of species. Secondly, effective conservation and management of MFPs are viewed as a means of improving the tribal livelihood and their economy. Thirdly, tribal and rural communities need to participate in preservation and promotion of forests. The forests in India have been suffered over the years due to excessive exploitation and facing many threats which affect bio-diversity, composition of species and tribal communities. Conservation of forest is a need of an hour due to having oxygen, rainfall, soil erosion and pollination. Hence, all the stakeholders of the society join hands in the journey of saving forests.

The tribal economy has been grounded upon minor forest produces since time immemorial. Fundamentally, tribal used to gather minor forest products to meet their basic requirements in the past. In the passage of time, minor forest produces gained commercial value, as a result of which MFPs became a major source of cash income for the tribal. Apparently, MFPs found in the western Ghats are bamboo, honey, soap nuts, herbs, fodder –grasses, commercial leaves, starches oil, gums, fiber and flosses and lac etc. Hence, MFPs playing crucial role in the welfare of tribal and rural communities.

Brief Note on Yarava Tribe and Western Ghats

The Yaravas tribals are inhabited in the thickly forested slopes and foothills of Western Ghats and Nilgiri hills. However, the study which was conducted way back in year 1983 reveals that Pani Yarava and Panjiri Yarava were actually two different tribes and each forms a part and parcel of a larger tribal community scattered across the border areas of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Virajpet taluk of Kodagu district is one of the few taluks in the district which have a high number of Yarava tribes. All the chroniclers of Kodagu and the earlier ethnographers have noticed the presence of Yeravas in the district and have made few observations on their physical structure, customs, rituals, traditions, language and their way of life. Apparently, the Yeravas consisting of four endogenous groups namely, Badaga, Kage, panjiri and Pani. A dialect called yarava is being practiced by them.

The Western Ghats range of mountains is situated in the South-West of the country and they run through the states of Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Goa. The Western Ghats in Karnataka cover an area of over 20,000 sq km. out of a total forest area of 38,284.30 sq.km. All the major rivers of South India namely The Godavari, Cauvery, Krishna, Nethravathi and Tungabhadra origin in Western Ghats and provide water for domestic, agriculture, industrial usage and facilitate to generate hydroelectric power as well. Western Ghat is a rich source of timber and MFPs. However, available forest resources are being exploited by the contractors and making Yaravas life miserable.

II. Objective of the Study And Methodology

❖ Present study has emphasized to analyze the economic condition including collection of Minor Forest Produces (MFPs) by the Yarava tribes.

The study pertained to Kodagu district of Karnataka state. Kodagu (known as hilly region in southern India), known in English as Coorg. Kodagu is known for huge coffee plantations which cover most of the highland, most of them under multiple cropping of orange, coffee, cardamom and black pepper. Coorg honey and coffee have been popular in the world. The region was also called “The Scotland of India” by the British and the Kashmir of the south for its scenic beauty. About 200 samples were selected from Virajpet taluk. Because the study is descriptive in nature, the structured interview schedules have been used to collect the primary data by using the purposive sampling technique. Similarly, relevant literature is collected from secondary sources such as journals, books, encyclopedias, gazetteers, reports, and different websites as well.

III. Result Analysis

The Yerava tribe is depending upon collection of minor forest produce and agriculture for their livelihood. However, very few of them are landholders, rest of the people are working as landless labourers in coffee plantations, occasionally work as laborers in unorganized sector as well. Below-mentioned table depicts details on different minor forest produces available, the season of harvesting, and usage of the produces. Naturally, minor forest produces available in the Western Ghats are honey, beeswax lichens, shikakai, soap nuts, turmeric and gooseberry.

MFPs are gathered all over the year, most of them are seasonal in nature. The late winter and summer season (February to May) are considered as the peak season for MFPs collection. Out of the ten species, four species were collected in this season. The other important season was the monsoon season (June –September) dominated by collection of lichens.

Nurseries which are maintaining by the department of forestry also provided ample opportunities to Yarava tribes, where they are work as daily wage earners. Similarly, Yaravas working as laborers for contractors who have taken the license from the forest department to collect minor forest produce in the forest. Normally both the men and women do take part in MFPs collection and their children extend possible support.

Particulars of MFPs Harvesting By Yarava Tribe

Sl. No	NTFPs	Usage	Harvesting Season
1	Lichens (Indian stone moss)	Traditional Medicine and Perfumes, Dyes	June-September
2	Honey with Beeswax	Medicine, Consumption	April-May
3	Shikakai	Medicine and hair oil	February- May
4	Antavala (Soap nuts)	Medicine and Soap and Detergents	March-April
5	Nellikai (Indian gooseberry)	Medicine, Pickle, Juice	December-February
6	Arishina (Turmeric)	Medicine, Cosmetics, Cooking	March-April
7	Dalchini (cinnamon)	Ayurveda Medicine	May and November
8	Murugal (cocum, garcinia indica)	Medicine	March-April
9	Uppage (garcinia gummi-gutta)	Medicine	March And July
10	Alalekai (terminalia chebula)	Health Benefits	May-June

Obviously, the followings factors have been deterrents in the way of Yaravas` livelihood in the Coorg district of Karnataka.

- ❖ Wildlife Amendment Act 2002 bans the extraction of Minor Forest Produces in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
- ❖ The risk of attacks by elephants and wild animals are common.
- ❖ The legal restrictions are imposed on entering protected forest.
- ❖ Crops grown in little patches of the forest land are damaged by elephants and other wild animals.
- ❖ Yaravas have no title deeds for the land that has been cultivating by them for a long time.

IV. Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study and fieldwork experiences, some important recommendations for the implementation by the government, voluntary service organizations, activist and all those who are interested in the progress and development of Yaravas.

- ❖ There is a need to improve agricultural activities among Yaravas by way of providing basic infrastructural facilities like irrigation, financial support from banks, fertilizers, improved seeds.
- ❖ For the development of tribal cottage industries and improving their conditions, there is a need to establish cold storage, at village level, for the storage of perishable forest produce.
- ❖ Handicrafts and basketry need to be promoted to from the level of livelihood to industry with the help of advanced technology and also to be provided wider marketing facility.
- ❖ Both the union and state governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make sure the active participation of tribal in animal husbandry, apiculture, rearing of bees and other forest based income generating activities.

V. Conclusion

Minor Forest Produces are played a crucial role in sustainable livelihood of the tribal and other forest dwelling communities living in forest fringes. MFPs are the source of food, employment, medicine, nutrition and income. However, due to lack of the level playing field, poor marketing infrastructure and storage facility, Yarava tribe has lagged behind in getting remunerative prices for their MFPs. Therefore, there is a need to take necessary steps to provide appropriate technology to preserve the produce and additional institutions need to be established which can take care of tribes. On the other hand, all the stakeholders of society need to work for the betterment of Yaravas and other tribes of the nation.

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