

Land Alienation and Ecology in the Perunchani Hill with Special Reference to Kani Tribe

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ABSTRACT This study highlights the Kani tribe's awareness of ecology and their land alienation in the Perunchani hill. The land alienation creates the landlords and traders who occupy the commanding position in the whole system of agricultural production and distribution. Ecology includes number of issues pertaining to culture, attitude, belief of the people towards forest and health, awareness of environment, breeding of animals and the advantage of staying in the forest and communion with outsiders. This paper makes an attempt to understand the ecological problems and conditions of the Perunchani hill and the land alienation among the tribal people by understanding the tribal institutions of the hill. The tribal people of the hill are depending upon the forest mainly for their economy and for their basic needs. They cut down trees to build their huts and also in order to extend their cultivable lands they set fire to the thick forest and make them fertile. In this study it is found that the people of the hill are not maintaining the ecological conditions of the hill and are unaware of the ecological problems, at the same time they have been exploited by the outsiders in all the ways and in certain cases the Kanis's lands are also encroached by the outsiders. This paper analyses the way of life of the Kani tribe of Perunchani hill and suggests probable remedial measures for the ecological problems prevailing there.

INTRODUCTION

The tribal population of the India may be divided into three principal zones, namely the North-eastern zone, the central zone and the southern zone. The north-eastern zone consists of the sub-Himalayan region and the hill and mountain region of North-eastern Indian, east of the Tista valley and Jamuna Padma of the river Brahmaputra. This zone is inhabited by tribes like the Gurung, Limbu, Cepcha, Aka, Dofla, Abjojmiri, Mishmi, Singpho, Mikir, Rabha, Garo, Khasi, Naga, Kuki-lushai Chakma and others.

The central zone which is separated from the North-North-eastern zone by the gap between the Garo hills and Rajmahal hills consists of the plateaus and mountainous belts between the Indo-Gangetic Basin to the north and roughly

the Krishna river to the south. The main tribes inhabiting this zone are Santal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhamj, Kharia, Birhor, Bhuriyan, Juany Kandh, Savara Ghod, Bariga, Bhil, Koli, etc.

The southern zone may be said to consist of that part of peninsular India which falls south of the river Krishna. This zone is inhabited by the tribes like the Chenchu, Kota, Kurumbar, Baduga, Toda, Kadar, Malayan, Muthuvar, Urli, Kanikkar, etc.

In addition to the above zones, mention may be made of a small isolated fourth zone consisting of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. The main tribes inhabiting this zone are the Jaraman, Onge, North Sentilese and Nicobarse. Numerically they are small tribes, though important anthropologically.

LAND ALIENATION

Land alienation creates alienation of the labour from society (Damle C.B., 1993). The land alienation creates, the landlords and traders who occupy the commanding position in the whole system of agricultural production and distribution. To control this land alienation (1973) through high debt of small owners and forces them to sell their lands, Madras Debts Conciliation Act was created.

Early Impact

Excess labourers in one village leads to migration nearby village to work, especially male members of family. This leads the young male workers less attached with their family.

Late Impact

Because of modernization and technological development labourers migrate to urban areas. An urban migrated labour receives high social status (even though he earns less than the

villagers). Land alienation produces the negative relationship between man and nature. The agricultural labour force move to work in industrial area.

Land Alienation in Rural Settings

The colonial interest in increasing the burden of land revenue to be paid in cash, commercialization of production, mechanization in production and modernization of economy in the countryside had practically crushed a large section of Indian peasantry who had to part with their lands to clear debt burden. Alienated land got concentrated gradually in the hands of landlords, moneylenders and traders. These three social categories are often indistinguishable.

The interests of landless labourers were invariably ignored by the Pre-independence Tenurial Legislation enacted between 1860 to about 1947. The social and political systems based on dominant caste ideology and values only nurtured and legitimised the oppression of lower classes. Increased population and demographic as well as ecological imbalances created by it was another factor that accelerates the parent's oppression.

The word Oecology was coined by Ernst Haeckle (1870) in the course of an effort to formulate a logical scheme of zoological sciences. His primary division was into the sciences concerned with structure (morphology) and those concerned with function (physiology). He wrote that just as morphology falls in to the main division of anatomy and development. So physiology may be divided in to a study of inner and outer phenomena, of relations-Physiologie and conservation-physiologic. The first is concerned with the functions of organism of itself the second with its relationships with the outer world.

Ecological studies of cultural behaviours take into account much more than technology which is one of the most obvious classes of central behaviour. Ecology, however, has gradually become established as a word and as a science, though there is no universal agreement about its usage or its meaning. This particularly true in the case of human ecology.

Human ecology stemming from sociology. The American Sociologists have attempted to give ecology as specific as the study of commu-

nity structure.

Human ecology stemming from Anthropology, the word in original sense of Haeckle, only with *Man* instead of *Animal* as the central focus of interest.

It might be useful to regard ecology as a pervasive point of view rather than as a special subject matter. The ecological point of view by the organisms is regarded as a whole unit functioning in its environmental context-would carry over from the biological to the social sciences and might then be especially helpful in relating the concepts of one field of those of the other.

TRIBE

A group of people who have a common language, background and way of life. Tribe members usually have a feeling of being related to each other (where they are related or not) and a feeling of being separate and distinct from other tribes. A tribe is generally composed of smaller groups such as families, clans, bands, of villages. Tribal organisation exists mainly among primitive people (people without writing or technical advance). The terms tribe and tribal are also broadly applied to more advanced groups of people who follow custom rather than established law.

Jawaharlal Nehru says, we should have a receptive attitude to the tribal people. They are extremely disciplined people, often agree to deal more democratic than most others in India. Eventhough they have no constitution they are able to function democratically and carry out the decisions made by elder representatives.

The tribe is the largest social and political group among primitive people, except for a confederation of two or more tribes. Primitive tribes live mainly in remote areas of South America, Africa, Asia, Australia and islands of the Central and Pacific Ocean. Primitive tribes differ in political organisation. Some have a chief or council. Most tribes have a loose political organisation and no designed leader. The local groups within the tribe live independently and control their own affairs.

In prehistorical times, people lived in small groups such as families and bands. Tribes probably developed groups in the same territory joint

together, usually to fight enemies or to hunt for food. As civilization developed tribes were gradually organised into large formed political units such as the city, state, empire and nation.

Awareness of Ecology of Kani Tribe

As mentioned above the Kani tribes are predominant in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and the border places of Kerala. There are more than 48 Kani settlements in the hilly regions around Kanyakumari district. Some important places are namely Pathukani, Aoorukani, Kuratimalai, Mothiramalai, Vatarparai, Thachamalai, Pooruvarkuzhi, Vekkalumoodu, Valiamalai, Ettukanai, etc.

The Perunchani hill is located in the north east part of the hilly regions of Kanyakumari district. This hill-forest comes under Ponmanai forest range. The tribal population of the Ponmanai forest range Vekkalumoodu, Valiamalai, Piravilai, Paduparai, are selected to this study containing nearly 150 people, they are all belonging to the same religious group - Hindu.

Ponmanai forest range - Vekkalumoodu, Valiamalai, and Piravilai of the Kani settlements are taken for this study. There are more than 150 people in these three villages or bands. Out of these 150 population, 50 respondents (both male-30 and female 20) have been chosen on the basis of Simple Random Method from Vekkalumoodu and Valiamalai for this study. But in Piravilai, there it is found only one family, though it is far away from the other places so in this study the particular household is not chosen.

It is found in this study that there is only one primary school at Manalodai, which is far away from these two villages. The people actually wanted to educate their children, but due to two reasons, i.e., long distance and no proper road facilities, they hesitate to send their children to school. There is no hospital facility to them but they very much in need of hospital facilities. Traditionally the Kani tribes are very much aware of practicing herbal medicines, but now-a-days they are not so, now they depend on allopathic medicines. Traditional habit of medicines include chanting mantras- which is especially for curing snake biting and exorcisings.

The Kanis have only one God which is called

Kaduvamoorthy. The tribal people believe that their god Kaduvamoorthy takes care of them in the forest. Once in a year they are granting festivals to the God, then they offer goat, hens, and also home made arrack. During the festival a old man in the village performs poojas in front of the Mootukani (Chieftain). While performing poojas they don't use any peculiar mantras. The Kanis are practicing purely patriarchal system of family. They practice dowry system, they offer buffaloes, spades and even lands to the bridegrooms as dowry, normally marriage age for a male is around 20-22, and for a female is 18-20. They do not have the practice of widow remarriage system, because they think that it is against to the god's will, they believe that god makes betrothels and he allows a man to marry a woman but only once in his or her life time.

They sometimes hunt the forest animals like fox, iguana, hog, yak, etc. They often set fire to the forest and make them fertile. They cultivate mainly tapioca, plantain and fruits like jack, pine apple, mango, gouvea, etc.

Their principal occupation is cultivating tapioca. The tapioca they cut into small pieces and make them dry and sell them for just 30 or 40 paise per kilo. But the actual price per kg is 3 to 4 rupees (now a days) in the plains. They set fire to the forest for cultivation and also to protect themselves from the forest animals. They cut down trees like bamboos and beed trees. The bamboos they often use to build their huts and also for making fences around their agricultural lands in the forest. They breed animals like hen, goat, dog (for hunting) cats, etc.

They believe that forest is their native land and they should not go out from the forest and must offer something to the God timely. Except marketings they do not have any kind of communications with the outsiders.

The Kani tribes in the Perunchani hill are not aware of the ecological conditions of the hill. Most of the people are illiterates. The people of the hill are very much dependent on the forest for their economy.

In this study among the chosen respondents majority of them (57%) are illiterates. Those who are literates they feel that there is encroachment in the forest by the outsiders. The people from the plains are now dominating the tribal folk;

the outsiders sometimes get the Kani's land in lease and they never return it and sometimes they are threatening the Kanis, when they ask them to return their lands. The foresters are rudely behaving with the Kanis when they are coming down to the plains to sell their agricultural products. People from the plains are forcefully trespassing into the Kani's lands.

CONCLUSION

The tribal of the Perunchani hill depend upon the forest mainly for their economy. They cut down trees to build their hovels and to extend their agricultural lands, they often set fire to the forest and make them fertile and cultivate tapioca, plantain, jackfruits etc. They have no housing, water and schooling facilities. A small number of people send their children to school, which is far away from their home, but any how they wanted to educate their children. Totally the tribal people of the hill are not aware of the ecological problems of the hill. They must be given proper counselling about the uses of maintaining ecological systems. And they must be provided with proper schooling, water and housing facilities. And also they must be provided with transportation facilities like mini busses, that will help the people to have more contact with the

outsiders and to send their children for higher education at colleges etc. These efforts in turn will enlighten them about the importance of sustainable development. It may help them to understand the importance of land and it will put an end to the alienation from their land.

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