

CHAPTER - 5

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Summaries of Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of major findings and conclusion of the study. In the introductory chapter, the status of the tribal at different levels, viz., global, regional and national are discussed. The livelihood status of tribal women in India, Tamil Nadu and Cuddalore has been presented as well and it is reviewed in detail. The various programmes adopted for the development of tribal people in relation to welfare programmes, schemes, Five Years Plans and various measures taken up by the Government has been discussed in this chapter. The profile of the study has been placed in Chapter Two. The research design and the background of the study are presented in chapter Three.

Chapter Four analyses the livelihood status of the women belonging to Irular Tribe in the study region. The findings and the analysis provide the basis for formulating and suggesting suitable measures to overcome the problems of the tribal women in chapter Five.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study based on the livelihood status of the sample respondents are given below:

5.2.1 Human Status

- ❖ *Age and Marital Status:* It was found that majority of the sample respondents i.e., 37.8 per cent belong to the age group of 31-40 years. When probed about the marital status of the respondents, it was found that majority, i.e., 46.8 per cent, got married at the age of 13-16 years. However, the recent times witnessed a massive change in their custom and now marriages were solemnized after the girl attaining the age of 21.

- ❖ *Literacy:* It was found that these communities used to migrate from place to place to find seasonal jobs. Therefore, they had fewer opportunities to avail of or access to formal education. The study found that majority (86.5 per cent) of the respondents were illiterate. Among the few literates, majority of the respondents studied up to the school primary level only.
- ❖ *Health:* The majority of the respondents were aware of the importance of their health status due to various Government programmes. The health of the respondents has been taken care in recent years that the home deliveries were prevented and women were given awareness on the importance of health by the Non-government and Government organizations. Also, the data showed that Infant Mortality Rate has come down in the recent years in the study area.
- ❖ *Traditional and New skills:* Along with male the women in these communities were also have the knowledge in traditional skills. However due to changes in the life style, it was found that majority (76.5) per cent of the respondents know their traditional skills. While 23.5 per cent of the respondents were not familiar with any of these skills. However, these traditional skills were not practiced by the respondents, in the recent years. This was due to
 - The Government prohibited such activities under Indian Forest Act, 1927 and Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
 - Displacement of the tribal communities to the villages and towns, where there was limited and nil scope for utilizing these skills to earn income. Also it was found that the majority of the sample respondent could not learn any new employability skills as they found comfortable with daily labour work.
- ❖ *Civic Card Holders:* The majority (62 to 83 per cent) of the respondents have the necessary documents e.g., Community Certificate, Family Ration Card, Voter ID Card and House Patta to show that they belong to the citizens of the society where they live. It is found that majority of the

respondents are aware of their rights to have their civic cards. However 19 to 38 Percent of the respondents are not having their ID cards.

- ❖ *The Family size of the respondents:* The family size of the study population showed around 63.8 per cent of the respondents belong to the family size of 2-4 Nuclear families. The reasons for adopting to Nuclear family revealed that due to poor socio-economic background, lack of adequate household facilities and in their search of job opportunities, forced the couples voluntarily or compulsorily to leave their main family and live separately.

Social Status

- ❖ *Socio - Cultural Status of Women belonging to Irular Tribe:* The majority (94.4 per cent) of the Irular women participated in the temple service and had their faith on their community rituals, festivals and respect towards God in their traditional way.
- ❖ It was found that (49.7 per cent) of the respondents know their traditional folk dances and songs. Also, the study showed that tribal population is slowly getting away from their own culture as they mingle with other communities.
- ❖ *Participation in Common Gathering:* The majority (99.1 per cent) of the respondents participated in common gathering; attend ceremonies and weddings of the other communities. Several Tribal studies found that women belonging to tribal communities were isolated and never mingled with other communities. But recent studies have observed that the tribal culture has been influenced by displacement, migration and their life style has been changed and thus they were no more isolated groups.
- ❖ This was a positive impact on the life of women belonging to Irular Tribe found in the study area. In other words it was found that the displacement of the Irular community from their hills to plains brought a tremendous change in their life styles particularly in their social network.

- ❖ *Participation in Self Help Groups:* The majority (66.8 per cent) of the respondents participated in the SHGs. The other one third (33.2 per cent) of the respondents did not participate in the SHGs meetings due to:
 - Ignorance about the functioning of the SHGs in their localities
 - The respondents who were engaged in peripheral jobs found difficulty in spending time for SHG meetings as it consumed their evening hours.
 - The expectations of immediate monetary benefits from SHG activities.
 - Those who had some knowledge and information about SHGs and group leaders were alone active while others were neglected.
- ❖ *Participation in Traditional Panchayat:* It was found that every tribal family had to attend the traditional panchayat (*Urukuttam*) compulsorily. It was also found that these meetings ensured cent per cent participation of the women. If they were not attending the meeting; they were treated as ‘untouchables’ for a given period. This would deprive them not to avail any benefits under various development schemes or participate in other community affairs.
- ❖ *Participation in Gram Sabha under Panchayati Raj System:* Under Panchayati Raj System, Grama Saba meetings were conducted periodically in every Panchayat. However it was found that majority (69.4 per cent) of the respondents did not participate in the Gram Sabha meeting. This was due to migration to other areas in searching of seasonal jobs.
- ❖ *Participation in the Politics:* The majority (84.7 per cent) of the respondents did not participate in politics. It was the fact that those who got little knowledge from the social networks, especially literate, get

involved. Whereas the vast majority was not able to get involved in politics as they are ignorant and illiterate.

- ❖ *Social Problems:* The tribal communities were dominated by the other community people in the study area. Particularly the tribal women had been treated as outcastes and they were cheated because they were illiterate and voiceless. The tribal community was prohibited from fishing in the deep sea and they were forced to fish in the backwater for years together and at times fishes would be taken away from them. The tribal people were bonded labourers of the land lords and the rich in the past but changes were taking place in recent years, as the NGOs and other voluntary organization have helped the tribal community to be liberated from bondage and slavery.
- ❖ *Married Life:* A significant number of the respondents expressed their fear to get married; the culture of tribal community had been much affected slowly in the recent years.
- ❖ *Dowry Problem:* The problem of dowry was not in practice at all in this community but the respondents stated that they are expected to give gold ear rings, silver kolusu and some cooking vessels in recent times. The younger women belonging to Irular community tend to have dowry problems compared to older women, as they try to imitate other communities with whom they have a close association and social network in contacting with wider society.

5.2.3 Physical Status

- ❖ *Housing:* The majority of respondents (92.1 per cent) had their own house and they were staying in it. The tribal community having their own house was a great asset in their life. The credit goes to the housing projects executed by developmental agencies.

- ❖ *Basic Needs:* The majority (98.5 per cent) respondents had electricity facilities, as the Government had given free electricity connection to all houses in rural areas; however other facilities were not satisfactory. The followings were the reasons:
 - Due to lack of water many were not using their toilets at home
 - For many it becomes an unhealthy practice to have their toilets at home.
 - Bore wells remain unrepaired in many houses
 - Drinking Water problems become acute in summer and during the rainy as these houses are located in rain water logging areas
 - The drainage problems were the major issue in the tribal villages, water remains all over the villages in the houses surrounding that lead to sickness during the raining seasons.
- ❖ *Kitchen Waste:* Around (47.1 per cent) of the respondents burn, their kitchen waste and it was found that the planning of waste management was not there in the Irular community and respondents said that each one was responsible, however the municipality workers were not collecting regularly the kitchen waste in the study area.
- ❖ *Environmental Cleanliness:* Majority (74.7 per cent) of the respondents reported that environmental cleanliness was on an average level. It was learnt the tribal community used to live in the forest with clean environment with lots of trees and herbal plants but now the situations has been changed due to their new settlement that they live in the polluted environment that respondents found difficult to live.
- ❖ *Assets Particulars:* It was found that the respondents have their assets which were not there at their earlier lives. It was observed and discussed from the field that tribal communities have their minimum assets like., own houses, domestic animals, T.V. Mobile Phone, Two wheelers, Gold,

etc., but live in a meager amount as they are poor and live below poverty line.

- ❖ *Communication and Mass Media:* It was learnt from Case Studies and Focused Group Discussion that easy access to communication and mass media were available to the respondents in the study area. The Government has given free TV to all the families of the respondents and most of the women had their mobile to keep in touch with their community and for seeking job in the informal sector. The respondents were familiar with current issues as they watch news and information about the world around.
- ❖ *Transport and Road facilities:* It was found that transport and road facilities were available in the study area. The Village Panchayat had taken keen interest to develop these facilities after the 2004 Tsunami. It was found that access to these facilities enabled the sample respondents to find easy access to job market.

5.2.4 Financial Status

- ❖ *Occupation:* It was found that 44.4 per cent of the respondents were engaged in backwater fishing and collecting prawns in the shallow waters, while others were engaged in different activities in on-farm and off-farm activities in the nearby villages and informal sector enterprises in nearby urban centers, like Chidambaram, Cuddalore and Pondicherry.
- ❖ *Income:* Majority (55.6 per cent) of the Irular women's family annual income was Rs. 22,000/- to Rs. 24,000/- and only 4 per cent of the respondents' income was above Rs. 40,000/-. This trend showed that the tribal developmental programmes, welfare schemes and Five Years Plans had not brought any major changes in the income status of tribal people in general and tribal women in particular.
- ❖ *Savings:* It was found that around 34.8 per cent had a meager bank savings in their Savings Bank Account. However the study had revealed

that the habit of savings among the Irular community was never in practice in the past. Even the implementation of various Government programmes under 'Inclusive Approach' had not made any changes in their daily life cycle.

- ❖ *Sources of Borrowing:* It was found that money lenders, land lords, relatives, friends, neighbours, and SHGs were found to be the sources the borrowing. Among these sources, money lenders were the easily accessible source for the respondents. It was also found that the money lenders charged high rate of interest which ranged from 35 per cent to 50 per cent.
- ❖ *Expenditure:* It was very difficult for the respondents to manage their family expenses, as their income was not sufficient and they were not able to get regular job throughout the year. It was found that expenditure related to the marriage of their sons and daughters as well as social ceremonies claimed major stake in their expenditure pattern.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS:

Livelihood aspects wise suggestions are offered hereunder.

5.3.1 Human Status:





To improve the human status of the women belonging to Irular Tribe the following steps needed to be paid attention,

- ✚ The alternative programmes could be provided to the respondents to help their reading and writing ability in a non-formal way through play way method related to their livelihoods. The 'Arivoli Iyakkam' which was held in the remote villages would be strengthening to support the respondents in the study areas. The NGOs working for the welfare of the women belonging to Irular could focus on these aspects to improve their educational status.

- ✚ In general educational status of the Irular community has been very poor in the study area. As well as the parents should encourage the girl children to go to school so that they would be literate and manage their life effectively. NGOs continue to motivate the people through awareness programmes and home visits therefore the younger generation would be educated.
- ✚ Government should encourage the tribal community to practice their traditional skills that are not harming the nature and wild animals. Training programmes and workshops will help the younger generation to keep up their skills. Also the younger Irular population is not aware of their folk dances, songs and other traditional habits; therefore it is the responsibility of the Irular families to keep up their traditions which have good values in life.
- ✚ The vast majority, i.e., 96.8 per cent of the respondents did not learn any new skills, therefore the government and all other institutions working for the welfare of the women belonging to the Irular Tribe, should provide suitable programmes that are easy for them to pick-up so that they will learn the skills according to their interest but with sustainable and continual support.
- ✚ Around 19 to 38 per cent of the respondents are not having their ID/Civic Cards that were very necessary to get benefits from the government, therefore the local government should pay attention to all these issues.
- ✚ The family size of the study population showed that around 63.8 per cent of the respondents belong to the family size of 2-4 nuclear families. This showed that respondents have got the awareness of family planning beside other reasons which was not there some years ago. Therefore government should continue to give more awareness on family and child welfare programmes in the study area.

5.3.2 Social Status:

To strengthen the social status of the respondents in the study area the following areas need to be focused:

-  Government had taken a lot of initiatives to organize Self Help Groups to support the rural women, particularly tribal women but it was found that the self help groups were not functioning well in the study area compared to the beginning because women were not educated at all. Therefore ongoing training and moral support should be given to the SHGs of the respondents so as to enable them to get full benefit of the SHG programmes.
-  The majority of Irular women do not participate in the Village Panchayat meetings due to lack of knowledge and information. Therefore the local leaders have to support the participation of the respondents in the Panchayat meetings. Government as well NGOs should create awareness on the functioning of the Panchayati Raj separately.
-  To prevent the respondents' going back to their old pattern of bondages, the government should provide more job opportunities to these tribal communities.
-  Few respondents (16.5 per cent) expressed the prevalence of dowry practice in this community. Though it is small in number it affects the whole community. Globalization has its own positive and negative effects but people should learn to adopt the good values that would help them to be happy.

5.3.3 Physical Status:

To build up the Physical Status of the women belonging to Irular Tribe in the study area the following aspects needed to be improved:

- ✚ Government should provide the housing facilities to all the Irular families because it is not possible for this community to build their own houses with their meager income.
- ✚ The drainage problem was the major issue in the study villages. The government should provide all the basic amenities to the tribal communities, specially drainage and water. The NGOs and other institution working in the tribal area, should educate the women, children and the entire community to make use of the toilets in their area.
- ✚ The government and the local panchayat should provide sufficient water to al the tribal villages. Few families do not have the water sources available in their houses and some of them buy water which has been expensive for them as their economic conditions are very poor. The respondents' found much difficulty to run the family with these extra expenses.
- ✚ Local panchayat should provide the facilities to collect the kitchen waste or teach the people to make use of the kitchen waste for their kitchen garden. Each family should learn to do waste management technique and not throw the kitchen waste or to burn it as it has polluted the environment and harm the people.
- ✚ The respondents reported that the environmental cleanliness was an average, it mean care need to be taken to keep the environment spick and span. It is the responsibility of the people living in the area to maintain cleanliness.

Financial Status:

To increase the capacity to earn more and support the financial status of the sample respondents the following suggestions has been mooted out.

- ✚ NGOs and Government working for the development of women belonging to Irular Tribe should promote and strengthen their present livelihood activities and provide more opportunities to learn skills related to their occupations to increase their annual income. More job oriented trainings could be arranged periodically.
- ✚ Government should support the tribal communities with job opportunity to increase their family income. The government programmes and schemes should reach to the Irula community particularly to the Irula women who are in the SHGs. More awareness camps could be conducted regarding these programmes.
- ✚ Few Irular women have their bank savings and it was not with big amount. An awareness education on this would give them proper understanding about savings which would be a good habit to meet unforeseen expenses in the family and prevent them from money lenders.
- ✚ The vast majority of the Irular women have not taken any loan from the bank. Tribal community should be encouraged to take loan from the Banks to improve their livelihoods and banks should give loan with more subsidies and less interest to this particular community.
- ✚ Few women taken loan in the SHGs federation find difficult to repay the loan as their income from the livelihood activities are not sufficient. Often natural calamities like flood and cyclone affects their livelihoods. Government should give training on skill development which are suitable to their interest and way of life should benefit more.
- ✚ One third of the Irular community borrowed loan to meet their children's weddings expenses. Tribal community, by nature never used to spend on their wedding so much, however today things have changed and therefore the values of the tribal culture need to given important by other community.

5.4 Conclusion

The livelihood status of women belonging to Irular Tribe in relation to human, social, physical and financial aspects has found improvement in the recent years. The human status of the respondents had not found much improvement. However health status of the Irular Tribe, especially women and children had improved compared to the past. The social status of the respondents had increased relatively in the recent years. NGOs started the SHGs to support the Irular women with income generating activities. However the women SHGs could not be successful due to various reasons. The physical status of the respondents referred to their basic needs had been improved as the NGOs, Government and other organizations had worked for the development of the tribal communities in the study area. However, still awareness is required to utilize these facilities. Financial status of the tribal community has contributed in their lives as the women were exposed to various livelihood activities. Women contributed to the family's income. In spite of certain difficulties and hurdles, tribal women learnt to support their children's education and other expenses and thus they have cultivated the habit of savings in the banks.

From the above analysis, it was found that the livelihood status of women belonging to Irular Tribe in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu have not shown any significant improvement while comparing to their neighbourhood. These were attributed to several factors. The ignorance, poor literacy level, poverty, lack of access to development programmes and above all the beliefs systems in the community played a major role in prohibiting these women to come to limelight. In the context of inclusive approach, existing development programmes need to be revisited and revised so as to enable the women belonging to Irular Tribe to have free access to these programmes to strengthen their livelihood.

5.5 Areas Identified for Further Research

Tribal studies is always an interesting field. The livelihood of these people needs to be developed in the fast changing society. Therefore there are more scope in this area for the further research which are given below:

1. Health status of the Irular community in Cuddalore District in Tamil Nadu
2. Educational status of the younger generation of the Irular community in Cuddalore district.
3. A comparative study on women and men, “Self Help Groups” and their impact on the Irular community.
4. A study on the problems of child labour in Irular community.
5. A study on the Role of Community Based Organizations in strengthening the livelihood status of the women belonging to Irular community.