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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Promoting Sustainable Livelihood among Tribal Community through Traditional Handicrafts in Wayanad District, Kerala, India

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Abstract

Tribes constitute approximately 10% of the total Indian population. They are found in most parts of the country and are generally economically deprived. Traditional handicrafts of the tribes of India are generally prepared out of resources available in their immediate ecology, where they inhabit. Traditional knowledge applied in the entire process of preparation of most of the handicrafts, as per the needs of these people, is inherited from their forefathers (Jayanta Sarkar 2007). This paper explores to look up the handicrafts culture among the tribal artisans. The study explains the tribal culture and the role handicrafts in promoting sustainable livelihood among the tribal artisans. The main objectives of the study is (1) To assess the livelihood options for the tribal handicrafts at Wayanad (2) To study the existing status of handicrafts in markets (3) To study the source of raw materials and the extent of sustainability of handicrafts based on these resources (4) To assess the support provided by the local NGO's/Govt program/Financial institutions to the artisans. The investigator clearly exhibited objective wise findings in the paper with facts. Nevertheless to say that, there are some factors which affect the decrease of the handicrafts such as scarcity of raw materials; some products did not get market demand, less wages. The study helps to understand that the difficulty to the individual artisans because they did not get support from other. The paper concludes with the strong support both in terms of Govt and NGOS's in policy level and programme level is needed to address the right concerns of the tribal population and promote sustainable livelihood for their development.

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INTRODUCTION

India has a wealthy source of traditional industries. The natural products of traditional industries not only have great potential for growth both in production and export, but can also direct to make bigger generation of employment opportunities in the rural areas of the country. Article 46 of the Constitution of India lays down that the state shall help with special care the educational and economic welfare of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the scheduled tribes and shall keep them from social injustice and all forms of misuse. In pursuance to the above section, the rapid socio-economic development of scheduled tribes (STs) has been a subject of concern of the government since Independence.

India has the largest concentration of tribal population in the world. The tribal are the children of nature and their lifestyle is conditioned by the eco-system (SEEDS, 2006). Tribal people constitute 8.14% of the total population of the country (2001 Census). There are 697 tribes notified by the Central Government under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution with certain tribes being notified in more than one State. They lived in the hilly areas, forests,

mountainous place and deep valleys. They are known by various names such as ancient tribals, animists, jungle people, adivasi and so on. The tribal handicrafts are focused skills which are accepted on from one age group to another and these handicrafts are income of livelihood of the artisans.

The tribes of Kerala are usually short in height. They are also serious with smooth beak. The tribes in the state of Kerala raise very long hair and they tie it by forming hair locks. According to the Government sources, there are 35 tribal communities in Kerala. The tribes of Kerala vary from each other depending upon the area they reside. All the tribes of Kerala build a rich, single, mixed and critical element of Indian tradition. The major tribes of Kerala are namely Urali tribe, Paniyan tribe etc. For many years, bamboo connected actions have been one of the traditional occupation/crafts in Kerala. The artisans of this crafts are mainly located in forest area, particularly in Wayanad district. The Wayanad district is having the largest adivasi population, consisting mainly of paniyas, adiyas, kattunayakan and kurichiyans. Wayanad district stands first in the case of adivasi population (about 36%) among other districts in the state.

The tribal handicrafts are specialized skills which are passed on from one generation to another and these handicrafts are means of livelihood of the artisans. However, in absence of any organized activity in this sector and the products not being adequately remunerative, there is a possible likelihood of the artisans taking up alternate livelihood options (which may involve migration as well). In such a case this age-old activity will die its own death. At this stage it is very imperative to understand the problems faced by this sector and suggest the strategies for development of tribal handicraft based on which certain policy level interventions need to be taken by the government to sustain the traditional tribal handicrafts, (SEEDS, 2006).

The Indian handicrafts are known the world over for their rich variety, grace, elegance and Skilled. Excavations conducted in different parts of India show that India in various periods had unremarkable handicrafts. Like art craft resources also reflect the taste of human society through the individual and give collective mind of the community. Crafts not only satisfy economic wants but also the aesthetic yearning of man.

Handicrafts are mostly defined as "Items made by hand, often with the use of simple tools, and are generally artistic and/or traditional in nature. They are also objects of utility and objects of decoration." Handicrafts can be broadly classified in three categories

- **Consumer goods.** Artisan prepare such utilitarian goods for self consumption or for exchange such baskets for keeping domestic articles, smoking pipes, footwear, hunting arrows, combs, storing, wooden and stone plates for use ,textile items like shawls, coats, jackets,
- **Processing industries** such as minor forest products for self consumption and for exchange at weekly hatt on barter age system or sell them for money to purchase other items for self consumption
- **Decorative items** include jewellery, and ornaments, earrings, anklebells, necklaces, head gears, head dresses, In addition other decorative items such as wall paintings, deities either wood or stone, artifacts. These handicrafts for decoration are for self use or sell /exchange them in the weekly market for money

The tribal economy is equally distinctive since it is closed and undifferentiated characterized by adoption of primitive technology in economic pursuits. The tribal people earn in their livelihood by undertaking many occupations such as forestry and food gathering, shifting cultivation, settled agriculture, and industrial labour, animal husbandry, fishing, traditional commerce of which household industry including handicrafts is of prime importance Tribal have been producing different handicrafts both utilitarian and decorative over centuries. Tribal economy in the earlier days was a barter system through mutual help. Lending, if any, between different members of the community is also governed by customs and interest has not been applied. Thus self-sufficient economy of the tribal does not have substantial surpluses to warrant establishment of regular markets nor knew their potentialities for their handicrafts. Slowly market economies began to appear around religious festivals and demands for new items started increasing. This leads to weekly markets. Traders or middle men came on the scene and slowly these tribal artisans who display their skill, acquired through tradition, used to sell their products to these traders or middleman, unfortunately these artisans are being exploited and are paid paltry amounts. Even this system is getting eroded due to poor marketing facilities and is unable to with stand competition from manufacturing industries.

Some NGOs are helping the tribal people for developing the handicrafts. They are. Uravu, Swami Vivekananda Medical Mission, Amrid are working among the tribal community in Wayanad district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the livelihood options for the tribal handicrafts at Wayanad.
- To study the existing status of handicrafts in markets.
- To study the source of raw materials and the extent of sustainability of handicrafts based on these resources.
- To assess the support provided by the local NGO's/Govt program/Financial institutions to the artisans.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The tribal earn their livelihood by under taking many occupations such as forestry and food gathering, shifting cultivation, settled agriculture, industrial sector, animal husbandry, fishing traditional commerce of which house hold industry including handicrafts is of prime importance. Their main activities are handicrafts and handlooms.

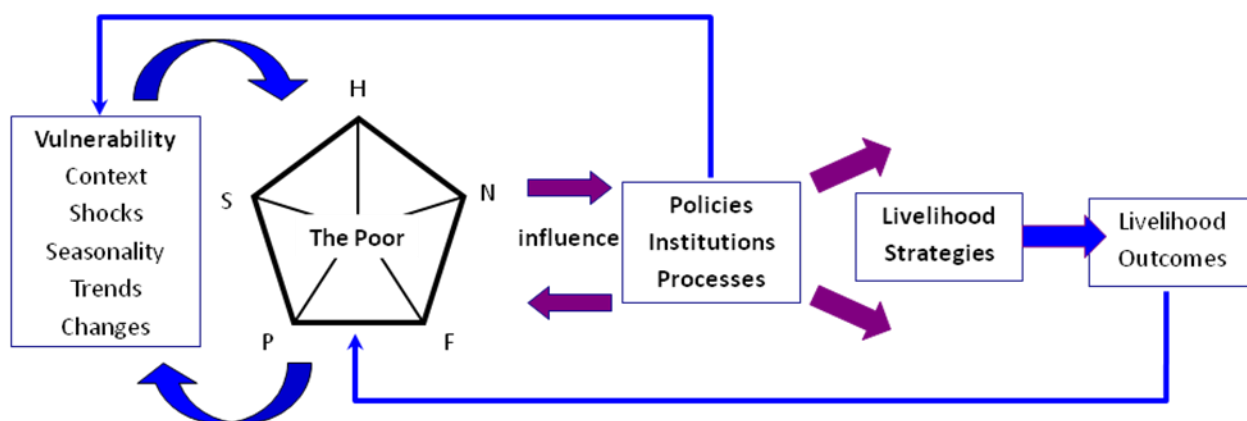
Their main occupation is getting in the fore fathers. Most of the tribal's are irrespective of their occupation. So they are in the below poverty line. Their standard of living is low because of the low level of income. The artisans are exploited by the traders or middle man.

In terms of labour constraints, the major problem is that there has been a decline in the number of skilled craftsmen currently involved in handicrafts production. The main reason is economic. This includes the need of better wages in other professions, the slowly declining demand for the products that they produce, inadequate job security in handicraft production, and an unstable income.

Tribes depend upon non-farm sector activities because of availability of raw material, skilled family manpower, market access, communication availability, lack of government support programs. Tribal women contribution to non-farm sector is very significant. Problems in promoting nonfarm activities are Lack of knowledge, Lack of proper marketing facility, Lack of finance, Raw material problem, Lack of demand, Lack of proper communication, Competition from organized sector, Lack of time, Lack of technology, Lack of common facility and Lack of training.

THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK

The sustainability frame work is ONE WAY of "organising" the complex issues surrounding POVERTY. To provide a method that views people & communities on the basis of their daily needs, insted of implementing ready-made, general interventions & solutions without acknowledging the various capabilities that people offer. In this study the poor means the tribal artisans. So the theory is related to the sustainability of the tribal artisans crafts.



In the above figure shows that **poor** is related to the Human, Financial, Social & Physical capital. The human capital includes Health, Nutrition, Education, Knowledge and skills, Capacity to work, Capacity to adapt. The financial capital includes Savings, Credit/debt - formal, informal, NGOs, Remittances, Pensions, Wages. The social capital includes Networks and connections, patronage, neighbourhoods, kinship, Relations of trust and mutual support, Formal and informal groups, Common rules and sanctions, Collective representation, Mechanisms for participation

in decision-making, Leadership and the Physical capital includes Infrastructure like transport - roads, vehicles, secure shelter & buildings, water supply & sanitation, energy, communications etc. Tools and technology like tools and equipment for production, seed, fertiliser, pesticides, traditional technology. The Asset Mix is different households with different access to livelihood “assets” and Livelihoods affected diversity of assets, amount of assets, and balance between assets. A landless female agricultural labourer, their Human capital is labour capacity, no education, limited skills, their Natural capital is landless, access to common property resources, their Financial capital is low wages, no access to credit, their Physical capital is poor water supply, poor housing, poor communications and their Social capital is low social status, discrimination against women, strong links with family & friends, traditions of reciprocal exchange. This affects an extremely reduced “livelihood pentagon”. The **vulnerability** is affected vice versa to the poor. After the **Policies, Institutions & Processes** influence vice versa to the poor. On that the Policies is from different LEVELS of government, NGOs, international bodies and the institutions which are support from the political, legislative & representative bodies, executive agencies, judicial bodies, civil society & membership organisations, NGOs, law, money, political parties, commercial enterprises & corporations and the processes which are given to the poor are the “rules of the game”, decision-making processes, social norms & customs, gender, caste, class, language. And the **Livelihood Strategies** is Combining the assets they can access, Taking account of the vulnerability context and Supported or obstructed by policies, institutions and processes. At last the **Livelihood Outcomes** come in to the Poverty - a “poor” livelihood outcome based on a fragile or unbalanced set of livelihood assets and unable to sustain to shocks, changes or trends, not supported, or actively obstructed by policies, institutions and processes that do not allow assets to be used as they might and livelihood options combined in a “bad” or unsustainable strategy. The outcome will return to the poor.

The Wayanad district is situated in the north-east of Kerala and it is formed on November 1, 1980. So the Wayanad district is the 12 district in Kerala. The Wayanad is known as ‘land of paddy fields’ and also there are so many indigenous tribal artisans area of Wayanad district is 2132 km². The density of population is 369 people/km². Wayanad district stands on the southern top of the Deccan plateau and its chief wonder is the magnificent Western Ghats with superior ridges interspersed with dense forest, tangled jungles and deep valleys, the landscape is strong. In ancient times the land was ruled by the Vedar Rajas. Later Wayanad came under the rule of Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam Royal Dynasty. The modern history of the district is associated with the events that took place during the Mysorean attack and the long enchantment of the British rule stretching over a period of about two centuries. There was violent come across between the British and Pazhassi Rajah. One important characteristic feature of this district is the large adivasi population, consisting mainly of Paniyas, Kurumas, Adiyars, Kurichyas, Ooralis, Kadans; Kattunaikkans are the different aboriginal tribes of Wayanad.

The important limitation of the study is it is difficult to identify the tribal artisans who have traditional knowledge. While collecting data it is clear that some artisans have no idea regarding the marketing situation because they are working under NGOs/government sector. Another limitation is in the day time some artisans were work in other jobs like farming field and they are busy with their work. So sometimes not able to meet and properly communicate with them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

The researcher use thin ethnography as the design. Ethnography is a systematic study of a particular cultural group or phenomenon based upon extensive fieldwork in one or more selected locales. Here the study trying to explore to improve the handicrafts culture among the tribal artisans. The study explains the tribal culture and the role handicrafts in promoting sustainable livelihood among the tribal artisans.

Respondents

Individual tribal artisans are the respondents of the study. The researcher selects the tribal artisans who are making the handicrafts.

Sampling procedure

The researcher uses purposive sampling as the technique of sampling. In purposive sampling, we sample with a *purpose* in mind. We usually would have one or more specific predefined groups we are seeking. Here the researcher already determined that the tribal artisans’ community is specific.

Method of data collection

The researcher uses both in-depth interview and observation is the method of data collection. In depth interview is to collect the data directly from the farmers and the observation helps to observe the activities of farmers in their farmland especially their cultural pattern.

Tool of data collection

The researcher uses interview guide and observation check list are the tool of data collection. Interview guide used to collect information at the time of interview and the observation check list helps to observe the things in an appropriate manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some findings are emerged based on the analysis both vertical and horizontal and the findings demonstrate in objective wise for more accuracy and detailed information presentation.

Specific Objectives

Objective 1: To assess the livelihood options for the tribal handicrafts at Wayanad.

- Most of the tribal people are going to industrial related work because of the fewer wages in this area. The livelihood options are less in the existing tribal artisans. Some of the individual artisans are making the handicrafts as part time.
- The livelihood has direct relation with sustainability among the tribal artisan community. They depend only on handicrafts sector for their livelihood. Because of this dependency in such an inconsistent sector their livelihoods are always in challenge.
- The tribal people strictly follow their beliefs, rituals and are also dedicated to their cultural activities in framing a livelihood through handicrafts. The attack of modernization spoiled the rich cultural wisdom that was once the foundation on which the handicrafts sector bloomed.
- Most of the tribal artisans do not have a durable economic activity they in fact perish in the perspective of a regular livelihood. Marketing support is of crucial importance in livelihood. It determines the condition of the livelihood system in the community.
- Marketing could not be of any value if there is no demand for their products in market. But the using of modern marketing techniques such as advertisements could increase the demand for their products.
- The exploitation of modern machineries that could assist the artisans in speeding up their production and at the same time to improve the quality of the products are lacking in the sector.
- The tribal artisan's creative abilities with the support of marketing techniques can be used to create a model of sustainable livelihood. But still the NGOs working in this area are not giving much attention in this area of development.
- There is no adequate communication channel that enables the artisans in getting information about the policies and programs of the government that may affect their livelihood.
- The sustainability of tribal handicrafts is less because the young people are going to other jobs. And the scarcity of raw materials also affects the handicrafts sector. Most of the individual artisans do not have the proper storage facilities for the handicrafts products they make and it affected their livelihood.
- Most of the artisans are getting fewer wages, because the work is not proper due to the raw materials, so the sustainable livelihood of the tribal artisans is low in the handicraft sector.
- The marketing support of the tribal artisans is less because of improper communication with common society, so the artisans are not sustainable in the handicrafts sector.
- Sustainability in marketing can only be made for the products which get more demand in the marketing; the sustainability is stable among the tribal artisans. During the rainy season the marketing demand is less and the lack of raw materials is affected the demand of the handicrafts
- Some of the tribal artisans are used less technology in the field of handicrafts, so it will also reduce the sustainability. The individual artisans are did not know about the modern technology, because they are not educated people.
- Sometimes the product is destroyed due to the affection of insects or rain, so there is no sustainability among the tribal artisans.
- Sustainability in the marketing techniques is mostly improved through the creativity among the tribal artisans. The marketing techniques are decreased due to the handicrafts making in proper time and the repairing of handicrafts products, in that there is no sustainability in the handicraft sector.
- The Scarcity of raw materials affected the sustainable livelihood among the tribal artisans in the handicraft sector.

- The tribal artisans get only one or two training from the beginning stage of new products, so they are not sustainable in the making of handicrafts. The individual artisans did not get skill development. On that they are competing with the other artisans in the market. Thus tribal artisans are not secure in the livelihood and their sustainability also decreased.
- The individual artisans are not known programs and policies on the making of handicrafts from the governmental sectors, on that the livelihood is not sustainable among the tribal artisans in the handicraft sector.
- Today cultural activities in tribal communities are less due to the lack of proper communication between them. The scarcity of raw materials has its impact in the cultural activities of the community.
- Some of the tribal community both males and female artisans work together, and in some other tribal community men and women works alone. For example, in the kurichiyar community the men are the craft makers' women does only the household works. The amount of man power required in the handicrafts production has been considerably reduced in recent year because even the women members in the community prefer to work in other sectors.
- Most of them do not have a regular wage pattern. The availability of energy resources is very feeble in these areas. These factors affect their livelihood in a negative manner.
- The artisans are not much benefit in the making of handicrafts, because the equipment for making the handicrafts is high prize. But the wages of artisans is less; it will affect the economic activity of the tribal artisans.
- Some of the tribal artisans are not guaranteed about their work. They have a piece wage system, that if they can make 10 products at one day they will get more wages than the day when he can make 7 products.
- Sometimes, working hours of tribal artisans is less due to the scarcity of raw materials and equipment, so the marketing support is less among the tribal artisans in the making of handicrafts.
- The scarcity of raw materials had some delay in the making of handicrafts, so it will affected the working hours of the tribal artisans.

Objective 2: To study the existing status of handicrafts in markets.

- The tribal people are not educated, so they did not know the marketing conditions. Their lack of awareness about marketing of the products is a major problem that the handicrafts artisans face.
- Sometimes, the scarcity of raw materials and rain is affected both marketing support and market demand of the handicrafts products.
- Sometimes, due to the lack of machines and lack of electricity will affected the marketing support of the handicrafts products.
- Most of the tribal craftsman said that the demand is got from outside the district. The individual artisans are not to know about the demand of the handicrafts. The artisans who are working NGOs and Governmental sectors did not know much about the demand of the handicrafts products, so their livelihood is not sustainable in the handicrafts sector.
- The tribal artisans still do not explore the possibilities of technologies that they could use for marketing the products. Their livelihood opportunities could have been increased by the proper using of technologies. The attractive products are sold. Most of the artisans did not know about the modern machines, so it will affect the marketing techniques.
- Some people are making products on the basis of orders they get, so they get the money on the basis of no of products. Seasons and the health conditions often adversely affect the number of products they make. This also adds to the fact that livelihood of the artisans are not sustainable.
- Most of the tribal artisans are still use the traditional marketing techniques in selling their products. They couldn't penetrate even rural markets because of this reason.
- Some of the tribal artisans said that introduction of plastic has affected the market of kutta and other bamboo products. The craftsmen are forced to also sell their crafts by themselves. Some of the women who are working with the group or units said that earlier it was difficult in cutting wood but now the machines help doing the job and each member in the group are alternatively asked to go for marketing.
- The forest department restricts the cutting of the bamboo for making handicrafts. In that situation, the hereditary artisans are less in the tribal community.

Objective 3: To study the source of raw materials and the extent of sustainability of handicrafts based on these resources.

- Most of the people buy bamboo from the private parties. And the people those who work individually buy the bamboo and also collects bamboo from the forest. Now a day's cutting bamboo from the forest is not allowed by the forest department so the craftsmen are forced to cut those which are broken or tampered by animals or any other cause.
- Most of the people have gone for trainings, seminar on marketing and have got knowledge about the benefits from the exhibitions and have got skill training for the making of pen and other items. But as some of these artisans got the opportunity to attend the training programs offered by the NGO in which they are also members, their skills got slight development.

Objective 4: To assess the support provided by the local NGO's/Govt program/Financial institutions to the artisans.

- Only very few NGOs are working to improve their livelihood conditions and not many of the artisans are members in such NGOs.
- Government could have helped the artisans by providing services that can link their products in the rural and urban markets.
- The NGO have helped community in improving their health. For example, a sickle cell anemia affected group is working in the handicraft production. Most of the people who are working in this group said that the NGOs have given skill development and training. For example, in the case of pen some groups got training on the making of pen and a training and development were given for standardizing the product.

On every year three or more exhibitions are been conducted by the government. The other exhibitions conducted by organizations do not give food and other services. The people who are working with government institutions know about the opportunities relating to the development of handicrafts. Some are tourism program, DCH (Development Commissioner Handicraft) program. Some peoples who are working in a group or unit got sander machine from the Rastriya Sama Vikas Yogana. But the people who are working individually do not know about the opportunities and programs related to the development of the handicrafts.

Annexure: Field Photos:



The above pictures shows that the handmade products made by the tribal artisans of Wayanad district.



The above picture shows that the Wayanad tribal artisans who are making handicrafts in their tribal hamlets.



The above pictures shows that the tribal artisans who are making crafts under the NGOs in Wayanad districts.



The above picture shows the data collection by investigator.

CONCLUSION

The study helps to understand the tribal artisans and its relation with the culture. It helps to understand the living conditions of the tribal artisans. The study also explores tribal handicrafts and marketing situation of the crafts. There are some factors which affect the decrease of the handicrafts such as scarcity of raw materials; some products did not get market demand, less wages. The study helps to understand that the difficulty to the individual artisans because they did not get support from other. One thing is that the hereditary artisans are decreased day by day

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