

ATTITUDE OF TRIBALS TOWARDS SETTLED AGRICULTURE IN KERALA

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Tribes in India, constituting about seven per cent of the total population are an important group among the economically weaker sections. In Kerala, tribes constitute 1.03 per cent of the total population. Social and physical isolation from the mainstream of the population, exploitation and dispossession of their lands, lack of technical skills and managerial abilities, impoverished lands and subsistence agriculture are some of the problems faced by the tribes in Kerala as elsewhere.

Since most of the tribal communities in Kerala are directly or indirectly associated with agriculture and allied avocations, the approach for their development should be oriented to these aspects. Earlier, most of them were shifting cultivators, but the increase in population and the stringent forest land legislations forced them to go for settled agriculture. Therefore, a study was undertaken to find out the attitude of tribals towards settled agriculture and the various factors associated with it.

Materials and Methods

The investigation was carried out in the South and North Wynad taluks of the Wynad district in Kerala which account for 65 per cent of the total tribal population of the State. The tribal settlements in these taluks were grouped into more developed and less developed based on the quantum of funds utilized for various development activities. Ten settlements each were selected from the more developed and less developed areas by simple random sampling procedure. One hundred and fifty tribal families from the more developed area and fifty tribal families from the less developed area, randomly selected from the four major tribes viz., Kurumans, Kurichians, Adiyans and Paniyans, constituted the respondents of the study (Table 1). In order to project the more developed areas, which are limited when compared to less developed areas 150 families were selected from the more developed area for the study in contrast to 50 families from the less developed area.

Développement of scale to measure the attitude of tribals towards settled agriculture

Equal appearing interval scale developed by Thurstone and Chave (1929) was used to measure the attitude of respondents towards settled agriculture. Thirty statements which were the items that made up the attitude scale regarding the different aspects of settled agriculture and shifting cultivation were prepared and then edited to eliminate items failing to meet the prescribed standards by comparing against the criteria for selection of attitude statements given by Edwards (1957).

Twenty statements left after editing were presented to a group of judges who were instructed to sort this into various categories to represent a scale ranging from extremely favourable to extremely unfavourable opinion about the issue. The judges were asked to rate each statement on a nine point continuum in which one represented the most favourable expression. Cumulative proportion was computed from the data. A statistical criterion of ambiguity, according to Edwards and Kenny (1949), in this technique is the distance between the points on the scale marking of the 25th and 75th percentiles. 'Q' values were worked out for 20 statements and finally 10 statements with low 'Q' values were retained to form the final scale for measuring attitude towards settled agriculture. The selected ten statements were equally distributed between favourable and unfavourable statements.

Reliability of the scale was tested by using the split half method and found the scale reliable. Content validity was ensured during the preparation of the scale itself. Construct validity of the scale was also worked out and found the scale valid. The attitude statements with the scale value are given in Table 2.

Administration of the scale

The scale constructed was administered to the respondents individually during the interview. They were asked to indicate those statements with which they had agreed. Attitude score was obtained from the scale values of these statements and was regarded as an indication of the location subject on the psychological continuum. The attitude score was arrived at from the arithmetic mean or median of the scale values of the statements agreed with.

The median of the attitude score was obtained using the formula:

$$S = l + \frac{(0.50 - \sum pb)}{pw} i \quad \text{where}$$

S = median

l = lower limit of the interval in which median falls

$\sum pb$ = the sum of proportions below the interval in which the median falls

pw = the proportion within the interval in which the median falls; and

i = width of the interval.

Attitude scores above the median values were considered to reflect favourable attitude and those which were below the median values were considered to reflect unfavourable attitude.

Results and Discussion

A. Attitude of tribes towards settled agriculture

The data in Table 3 revealed that most of the Adiyans in more developed areas and less developed areas were found to have unfavourable attitude towards settled agriculture. Similarly most of the Paniyans in both the areas were found to

have favourable attitude towards settled agriculture. In the case of Kurmans, majority (64.57%) had unfavourable attitude towards settled agriculture in the more developed area. In the less developed area 52.94 per cent have favourable and 47.06 per cent had unfavourable attitude towards settled agriculture. Majority of Kurichians, both in the more developed and less developed areas had unfavourable attitude towards settled agriculture.

Table 1
Categories of tribals included in the study

Name of tribe	More developed (no.)	Less developed (no.)	Total
Kurmans	46	17	63
Kurichians	31	9	40
Adiyans	34	9	43
Paniyans	39	15	54
Total	150	50	200

Table 2
Attitude statements and their scale values

Sl. No.	Attitude statements	Scale value
1	In settled agriculture proper care and attention can be given to the members of the family	6.16
2	Settled agriculture is not a lazy process of earning livelihood	6.25
3	In settled agriculture, permanent soil conservation measures can be adopted	8.00
4	Possibilities for hunting and food gathering are less in settled agriculture	5.25
5	Distribution of forests is minimum in settled agriculture and hence erosion of soil can be avoided	5.50
6	Good farming experience cannot be obtained in settled agriculture	1.12
7	The scope for land alienation is less in settled agriculture	2.50
8	The farm produce can be effectively marketed in settled agriculture	7.50
9	Settled agriculture is less economical than shifting cultivation	4.50
10	In settled agriculture, other occupations like dairying, poultry farming etc. can be done	8.78

Table 3

Distribution of tribes in the more developed and less developed areas according to their extent of attitude towards settled agriculture

		More developed n=150		Less developed n=50	
		Fre- quency	Per- centage	Fre- quency	Per- centage
Kurumans	Favourable	34	30.43	9	52.94
	Unfavourable	12	69.57	8	47.06
		46	100.00	17	100.00
Kurichians	Favourable	14	45.16	3	33.33
	Unfavourable	17	54.84	6	66.67
		31	100.00	9	100.00
Adiyans	Favourable	6	17.65	1	11.11
	Unfavourable	28	82.35	8	88.89
		34	100.00	9	100.00
Paniyans	Favourable	29	74.36	10	66.67
	Unfavourable	10	25.64	5	33.33
		39	100.00	15	100.00

Median score=5.89

Table 4

Mean scores of attitude towards settled agriculture

	C ₁	C ₂	C ₃	C ₄	Mean
More developed area	6.05	5.81	6.25	5.81	5.98
Less developed area	5.85	5.70	6.11	5.62	5.80
Mean	6.00	5.79	6.22	5.76	

C₁ = Kurumans C₂ = Kurichiyans C₃ = Adiyans C₄ = Paniyans

As it could be seen from the Table 4, there was no significant difference in the mean scores of attitude of the tribes in more developed and less developed areas. With reference to individual tribes, Adiyans were having the highest mean attitude score, whereas Paniyans were having the least mean attitude score.

Table 5

Coefficients of correlation between attitude towards settled agriculture and the independent variables

Independent	More developed area (n=150)	Less developed area (n=50)
Age	-0.1009	-0.1113
Farm size	-0.0019	-0.2567**
Socio-economic status	0.0184	-0.1965
Attitude towards agrl. development programmes	0.2516*	0.2544**
Land alienation	0.0479	0.1938
Indebtedness	-0.0494	0.0025
Use of information sources	0.1115	-0.0682

*Significant at 5 per cent

**Significant at 1 per cent

One cannot expect pronounced differences in the attitude of tribes belonging to the more developed and less developed areas since the tribes irrespective of their area of domicile are in a very underdeveloped condition and mostly distributed in the distant and isolated forest areas. The findings of the study that majority of the tribes had not yet been oriented in their attitude towards settled agriculture has a trivial implication that even the efforts of Tribal Development Departments to integrate tribes into national mainstream did not meet with a great degree of success.

B. Correlation between attitude towards settled agriculture and selected variables

Relationship of selected independent variables with attitude towards settled agriculture was worked out by computing the coefficient of simple linear correlation.

The computed 'r' values indicated that the attitude towards agricultural development programme was having a positive, significant relationship with their attitude towards settled agriculture in the more developed area. All other variables showed a positive but not significant relationship with settled agriculture except for age, farm size and indebtedness.

In the less developed area the attitude towards agricultural development programmes had a positive and highly significant relationship with their attitude towards settled agriculture. All the variables except attitude towards agricultural development programme, land alienation and indebtedness had negative relationship with attitude towards settled agriculture.

For the tribals, who are practising settled agriculture, adoption of improved agricultural practices will be more easy than those who practise shifting cultivation. So it is quite natural that the tribes who are having favourable attitude towards settled agriculture would also have favourable attitude towards agricultural development programmes. Moreover, such consonance in the two perceptual entities namely attitude towards settled agriculture and attitude towards agricultural development programmes of the tribes also reflect on their growing psychological balance.

Summary

An investigation to study the attitude of the tribals of Kerala towards settled agriculture was carried out in the South and North Wynad taluks of the Wynad district. One hundred and fifty tribal families from the more developed area and 50 families from the less developed area from among the Kurumans, Kurichians, Adiyans and Paniyans formed the respondents of the study. The results of the study revealed that Adiyans in the more developed and less developed areas were found to have unfavourable attitude towards settled agriculture, while Paniyans were found to have favourable attitude towards settled agriculture in more and less developed areas. Results of correlation analysis with selected independent variables revealed a positive and significant relationship between attitude towards agricultural development programmes with their attitude towards settled agriculture.

References

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