

## Social Changes and Kattunaicker Tribal Community: A Study

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**Abstract:** Tribe is a group of families living as a community under one or more chiefs united by language and customs. India's tribal population had for ages lived in isolation and had not participated in the main-stream of socio-economic development. According to 2001 and 2011 Census, the population of the Scheduled Tribes in the country is 84.3 and 104.2 million, which is 8.2 and 8.6 per cent of the total population respectively. The population of Scheduled Tribes in India has been found increasing gradually since 1951 to till 2011. The illiterate and economically backward tribes have no resources to assert their linguistic and cultural consciousness and therefore are subdued to change. But, their traditional occupations, such as, hunting and gathering have been reduced by 44 per cent. Terrace and settled cultivations have increased thereby suggesting that they are settling down as peasants. Though, the problems of poverty, low standard of living, hunger-starvation, malnutrition, illiteracy, poor sanitary and housing facilities are serious compared to the non-tribals. Hence, the present study has made an attempt to examining social changes taken place in the Kattunaicker tribal community in Nilakkottai block, Dindigul district over the period of past ten years. The aim of the study is to focus on changing cultural patterns resulting from the advancing tenets of globalization era.

**Keywords:** Tribes, Way of life, Social change, Community, Non-tribes, Welfare

### 1. BACKGROUND

The tribal population is found in almost all parts of the world. India's tribal population had for ages lived in isolation and had not participated in the main-stream of socio-economic development. Prior to the introduction of the caste system, people were divided into various tribes. A tribe was a self-contained unit without any hierarchical discrimination. Even among the tribal communities, inter-communication was restricted. The 'tribals' are outside the Sanskritic system of written codes of Hinduism, and they are not 'Jatis'. But, jati and tribe are, however, not in opposition to one another but are a cultural continuum i.e., either a pure tribal, or a pure jati, under pressure from the Sanskritic tradition takes on jati characteristics.

The UNESCO has, over the years, argued that respect for the culture and identity of people is an important element in any viable approach to people centered development. The experience of rapidly changing world-view caught in the throes of unmatched globalization where individual group identity is emerging as a result of self-awareness and pride in their culture, which is a source to empowerment. The cultural rootedness of people in their respective societies, heritage and living culture will promote economic development. Therefore, a smooth transition from the local to the regional, national, and international carries with it because it ways to conserve and amplify expressions of values and heritage (Dine 1999).

In post-Independence, all the tribal communities were grouped together as 'Scheduled Tribes' under the constitution. The main criteria adopted for specifying as the 'Scheduled Tribes' include (i) traditional occupation of a definite geographical area; (ii) distinctive culture which includes whole spectrum of tribal way of life such as, language, customs, traditions, religious beliefs, arts and crafts; (iii) primitive traits depicting occupational pattern and economy; and (iv) lack of educational and techno-economic development.

### 2. DEMOGRAPHICAL STATUS

Census wise Tribal Population in India			
Census Year	Total Population	Population of ST	% of ST
1951	361.1	19.1	5.3
1961	439.2	30.1	6.9
1971	548.2	38.0	6.9
1981	685.2	51.6	7.6
1991	846.3	67.8	8.1
2001	1028.7	84.3	8.2
2011	1210.8	104.2	8.6

(Source: censusindia.com)

(Population in Millions)

According to 2001 and 2011 Census, the population of the Scheduled Tribes in the country is 84.3 and 104.2 million, which is 8.2 and 8.6 per cent of the total population respectively. The population of Scheduled Tribes in India has been found increasing gradually since 1951 to till 2011. The Constitution of India guarantees socio-economic and political development of Scheduled Tribes for their livelihood protection. There are 533 tribes (with many overlapping types in more than one state) as per notified Scheduled under Article 342 of the Constitution of India in different States and Union Territories of the country with the largest number of 62 being in the state of Orissa. Generally, 93.80 per cent are rural based and 6.20 per cent are urbanized. Of the 623 tribal communities, 123 (19.47%) are monolingual. Tribal bilingualism is rural whereas non-tribal bilingualism is urban. The shift to non-tribal mother tongue has increased from 51 per cent (1971) to 58 per cent (1981).

### **3. LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY**

In multi-lingual and pluri-cultural societies in India, small linguistic groups show inferior complex towards their language and culture. Some are unwilling to reveal the name of their language. Therefore, the proposition that under compulsions of joining the main-stream small cultures submit to pressures of assimilation needs to be re-examined. It is access to the resources that are available that seems to determine the course of assimilation. Some groups have access to unlimited resources and others have access to only limited resources. The illiterate and economically backward tribes have no resources to assert their linguistic and cultural consciousness and therefore are subdued to change. But the problem in the Indian context is that small and isolated ancestral languages and cultures, whose number is less than 10000 gets eliminated in official assessments like the Census Reports. Singh (1996) shows how traditional occupations, such as, hunting and gathering have been reduced by 44 per cent. Terrace and settled cultivations have increased thereby suggesting that they are settling down as peasants.

### **4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

India is a multi-racial country. Different parts have different cultural traits and levels of development. It is not uncommon to find that there are certain tribes which are not yet touched even by the fringe of civilization. Aborigines are examples of it. The word tribe denotes a primary aggregate of people living under primitive or barbarous condition under a headman or chiefs. Tribe is a group of families living as a community under one or more chiefs united by language and customs. The basic problem of tribal people is poverty. The problems of low standard of living, hunger-starvation, malnutrition, illiteracy, disease-poor sanitary and housing facilities etc. are serious compared to the non-tribals. Further, the non-tribals such as money lenders, forest contractors, traders, landlords, officials and politicians have subjected these tribals to exploitation for centuries. This is due to their ignorance of modern institutions, scientific and technological developments and changing environment. Government has initiated special schemes for the development of tribal areas to supplement the benefits acquiring from general programmes of development in different fields. They can be grouped broadly under four headings, a) Communications; b) Education and culture; c) Development of tribal economy; and d) Health, Housing and water supply. Among the above programmes of education and culture can play an important role to bring about changes in the lives of tribals.

### **5. FOCUS OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to focus on aspects of change within the perspective of culture taking place among the tribal communities in the Indian context. Implicit in the presentation is changing cultural patterns resulting from the advancing tenets of globalization. The present study made an attempt to examining social changes taken place in the Kattunaicker tribal community in Nilakkottai block, Dindigul district over the period of past ten years.

### **6. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Review of literature is an exciting task calling for deep insight and clear perspective of overall field. The review of previous studies helps to find out the gap in the concerned area.

**Jabi (1995)** in his book "Problems in India" has narrated the crisis faced by the tribals. He pointed out that the plight of the tribal people and the injustice meted out to them so far was a matter of concern at the national level. It also evoked a sense of quit and non-fulfilment of the obligations. There is non-qualitative change after the adoption of globalization and free market as the guiding principles for the national economy.

**Gunasekaran and Ramasamy (1998)** in their study on “Social Change among Tribals” have analysed that India has the highest tribal population then and single country whose major population is non-tribal. In India, nearly 7 per cent of the tribal population lives in their own life on the remote parts of the country. As urbanization grew rapidly in the country the tribals who did not get into the mainstream of change naturally got isolated within narrow confines preserving to extent their ancient patterns in living, the tribal development programme launched in the country since Independence unusual opportunities to development a new pattern of agriculture production and new economic basis for life and also offers a change to development a new social relationship and new social structure in tribal society.

**Ravindran Nair (2002)** in his study, “Refuges in their Own Land, Social Welfare” concludes that the tribal communities should be helped for better quality of life by providing them a sustainable income generating activities while ensuring conservation of diversity. The grassroots programme would help to revise the traditional health practices by promoting chances of utilizing the medicinal and herbal plant from the forest.

**Jeganathan and Pramodhkumar (2003)** in their study “A Study on Decomposition of Income, Inequality of Tribal household in Nilgiri District of Tamilnadu” explained that there is a need for improvement in skills and formal education of the tribals, so as to increase their access to non-farm income generating activities.

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive research study has been conducted in the selected panchayat in Dindigul District with the following objectives, (i) To know the socio-economic status of the respondents; (ii) To explore the social changes taken place in Kattunaicker tribal community; (iii) To understand the relationship between kattunaickers and non-tribal people in the study area; and (iv) To identify the problems faced by Kattunaickers through the social changes.

Researcher has conducted the study with special reference to N.Pudhupatti village which is located in Nilakottai town panchayat, Nilakottai Block, Dindigul District and Tamilnadu State of India. N.Pudhupatti has a population of 846 male, 843 female and 240 children. There are two caste groups such as Maniyakarar, Piramalaikallar and one tribal community of kattunaicker in the study area. The study village population comprised Christian and Hindu religion. The main crops cultivation are paddy, solam, kambu, and vegetables like brinjal and tomato. The main source of irrigation is well irrigation.

The universe of study area comprised 310 households of kattunaicker community. For the purpose of present study, one third of Kattunaicker households have been selected through simple random sampling method. Accordingly 103 heads of households of Kattunaicker community have been selected as respondents in the present study.

A structured interview schedule has been administered by the researcher to collect the primary data in addition that observation technique has also been used for gathering information among them. The tool has constructed keeping in view of objectives of the study. The interview schedule consists close-ended questions which have been divided into four major parts such as, socio-economic profile, social changes taken place among tribes, relationship between tribes and non-tribes, and problems faced by the respondents through social changes. A two point rating scale has only been used to measure the opinion on their social changes. After the data collection, the data have been classified, tabulated, and interpreted in terms of simple percentage calculations. Only Kattunaickers of N.Pudhupatti village have covered in of present study. So the conclusion may not be generalized to other areas.

## **8. OPERATIONALISATION OF CONCEPT**

The concept of Kattunaicker tribals has been used in the title of the study. The group who have common name, territory and language, strong kinship bonds and endogamy with distinct taboos, one social rank and political organization, distinct customs, moral codes, religious beliefs and rituals, high illiteracy and absence of schooling, common ownership or simple economic profession of subsistence level and low level of technological development.

## **9. MAJOR FINDINGS**

The collected primary data has interpreted by way of systematic procedure to know the social changes taken place among Kattunaicker tribal community in Dindigul District.

**I. Socio-Economic Profile**

**Table 1:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Age and Education

N=103

Variable	Sub Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	69	67.0
	Female	34	33.0
Age	20-30	15	14.6
	30-40	18	17.5
	40-50	70	67.9
Education	Illiterate	91	88.4
	Primary	07	06.8
	Secondary	03	02.9
	Higher Secondary	02	01.9
Marital Status	Married	95	92.2
	Widow	05	04.9
	Widower	03	02.9

From the field investigation, the table-1 is observed that majority (67%) of the respondents are male category. In respect of age group, nearly two-third (67.9%) of the respondents belongs to 40-50 years of category. In terms of educational status, it is heartening to note that the notable strength (88.4%) of the tribes are illiterates and followed by 92.2 per cent of them are married in the study.

**Table 2:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Occupation and Income

N=103

Variable	Sub Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Occupation	Foretelling	58	56.3
	Hunting	45	43.7
Monthly Income (Rs.)	1000-2000	37	35.9
	2000-4000	40	38.8
	4000-6000	26	25.3
Sources of Savings	Self Help Group	84	81.6
	Nationalized Banks	19	18.4
Type of Residence	Thatched	56	54.4
	Hut	41	39.8
	Pucca	06	05.8
Type of Family	Nuclear	83	80.6
	Joint	20	19.4
Size of Family	1-3 members	37	35.9
	3-6 members	40	38.8
	6-9 members	26	25.3

On the basis of survey, the table-2 is inferred that nearly half (56.3%) of the respondents have involved foretelling activities in society as their primary occupation and the remaining 43.7 per cent of them have involved in hunting activities (especially rat, snake, insects, etc.) for occupation. The study is noted that the three-fourth (74.7%) of the tribes have earned between Rs.1000-4000 per month as their income for survival benefits. In terms of savings, the majority (81.6%) of the respondents have formed self-help group for their savings in organized manner. In respect of residence, nearly half (54.4%) of the respondents live in thatched houses and followed by 39.8 per cent of them live in huts only. Regarding the family type, most (80.6%) of the tribes have adopted nuclear form of family and it is continued that the significant strength (74.7%) of them have maximum 1-6 members in their family.

**Table 3:** Distribution of the Respondents by Nature of Transportation and Communication

N=103

Variable	Sub Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Nature of Transportation	Bus	65	63.1
	Share Auto	30	29.1
	Bycycle	08	07.8
Nature of Communication	Cell Phone	70	68.0
	Post Office	33	32.0
Recreational Sources	Cinema Theatre	46	45.0
	Watching Television	37	36.0
	Sports and Games	20	19.0

From the field data, the table-3 is indicated that most (63.1%) of the respondents have used bus only for their nature of transportation. Regarding communication, nearly two-third (68%) of the respondents have used cell phone for their nature of communication nowadays. In respect of recreation, nearly half (45%) of the tribes have often used cinema theatres for their recreational activities and followed by 36 per cent of them always use television for it.

## II. Relationship between Tribal and Non-Tribal

**Table-4:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Relationship with Non-Tribal

N=103

Variable	Sub Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Tribals treated non-tribals	Treated equally	89	86.4
	Not allowed in houses	14	13.6
Non-tribals attend tribal functions	Attend	70	68.0
	Not attend	33	32.0
Relationship between tribals and non-tribals	Intimate	82	79.6
	Secondary	21	20.4
Tribal attend neighbours functions	Attend	82	79.6
	Not attend	21	20.4

Based on the survey, the table-4 is denoted that majority (86.4%) of the respondents opined that tribes have equally treated by non-tribes in society nowadays and followed by nearly two-third (68%) of the respondents opined that non-tribes often have participated in tribes functions in the study area. In terms of relationship, most (79.6%) of the respondents opined that tribes and non-tribes have maintained their relationship in very close, intimate, face to face manner. The data is noted that majority (79.6%) of the tribes in the study area have attended their neighbourhood functions without fail such as funeral related ceremonies (98.7%); marriage (97.6%); house warming (91.5%); and puberty function (78%) respectively.

## III Social Changes in Way of Life

**Table-5:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Changes in Way of Life

N=103

Variable	Sub Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Changes in Way of life	Day to day life	59	57.3
	Recreation	29	28.2
	Festivals	15	14.5
Changes in Education	Primary	15	14.5
	Secondary	40	38.9
	Higher Secondary	36	35.0
	College	12	11.6
After formation	Developed savings habits	48	46.6

of SHG	Aware on banking transaction	30	29.1
	Get loans from Cooperatives and nationalized banks	25	24.3
Aware on Family welfare programme	Yes	70	68.0
	No	33	32.0
Economic improvement	Able to take healthy food	103	100
	Able to give proper education	103	100
	Able to having own house	89	86.4
Attend Others religious ceremonies	Yes	60	58.3
	No	43	41.7
Give equal rights to women	Matter related to family	47	43.7
	Decision making	32	31.0
	Matter related to occupation	14	13.6
	Possession of properties	10	09.7

From the field data, the table-5 is explained that the significant strength of the respondents opined that the notable changes have taken place in their way of life such as day to day life activities (57.3%); recreational activities (28.2%); and festival celebrations (14.5%) respectively. In terms of changes in education, most (38.8%) of the tribes felt that the educational status have significantly changed among their community people up to secondary level education and followed by higher secondary level (35%); primary level (14.6%); and college level (11.6%) respectively. In respect of SHG, nearly half (46.6%) of the respondents have developed their savings habit only after the formation of SHG and its membership, followed by 29.1 per cent of them have aware about banking transaction through SHG and the remaining one-fourth (24.3%) of the respondents have utilized loans from cooperatives and other nationalized banks by their SHG formation. Regarding family welfare programme, the majority (68%) of the respondents have well aware on family welfare programmes and the remaining 32 per cent of them have not any knowledge on it. In terms of economic improvement, all (100%) the respondents in the study area are economically able to take healthy food for their survival and to give proper education to their children respectively. The study also noted that majority (86.4%) of the tribes are able to having own house nowadays. It is continued that nearly half (58.3%) of the tribes have attended the religious ceremonies of other communities now and the remaining 41.7 per cent of them have even now never attended it.

**Table-6:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Overall Social Changes in Life

Sl.No	Social Changes	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Changes in living conditions	103	100
2.	Educational advancement	103	100
3.	Prosperous employment status	85	82.5
4.	Possession of property	72	69.9

Based on the survey analysis in table-6, all (100%) the respondents opined that the living conditions of tribes have drastically changed and they have achieved desired educational advancement day by day respectively. In terms of employment status, the significant strength (82.5%) of the respondents have healthy prosperous employment status for their livelihood purpose in present day situation and followed by the two-third (69.9%) of the respondents have possessed some sort of own properties in the study because previously they were not possessed any properties by own.

#### IV Facing Challenges by the Tribal

**Table 7:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Facing Problems

N=103

Variable	Sub Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facing Problems	Changes of occupation	85	82.5
	Irregular income	85	82.5
	Able to get even two square meals	12	11.7
	Indebtedness	06	05.8

From the field data, the table-7 is highlighted that majority (82.5%) of the respondents have not changed their traditional occupation such as foretelling and hunting. In terms of problems, the notable strength (82.5%) of the respondents felt that they have earned irregular income always at present and followed by 11.7 per cent of them are only unable to fulfil even their two square meals per day. The remaining 5.8 per cent of the respondents have faced indebtedness due to their family and income conditions in the study.

### V Utilization of Welfare Measures

**Table 8:** Distribution of the Respondents by their Utilized Welfare Measures

N=103

Variable	Sub Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Welfare measures by Government	More scholarship for higher studies	103	100
	Takecare through village panchayat	98	95.0
	Providing alternative employment	95	92.2
Welfare measures by NGO	Help and assistance	103	100
	Medical camp	94	91.2
	Develop infrastructure	89	86.4

From the field investigation, the table-8 is denoted that the majority of the tribes have promptly utilized the social welfare measures at enough level offered by Government for tribal community such as scholarship for higher studies (100%); taking care of tribal through village panchayat (95%); and providing alternative employment opportunities (92.2%) respectively. It is continued that the significant strength of the respondents have benefitted through the welfare measures at sufficient level provided by non-governmental organizations (NGO's) for tribal development such as, offering assistance (100%); conducting medical camp (91.2%); and developing infrastructure facilities (86.4%) respectively.

### 10. CONCLUSION

The logical conclusion derived from the study findings that social change taken place among Kattunaicker tribes over the period of ten years as for the past tribal life was nomadic and socially secluded and present day life socially included and settled life and education level has increased from illiterate to secondary level. Majority of them are aware of family welfare programmes and they give equal rights to women for matter related to family, property, and occupation. Tribals have treated equally by non-tribals and have intimate, face to face relationship and attend tribe functions also. They suggest more government scholarship for higher studies, help and assistance from NGOs for empowering the Kattunaicker tribals in all walks of life are reported suggestion for welfare and development of them.

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