SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF SELECTED TRIBE IN THE NILIGIRIS DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Tribal development implies social and economic development of the tribal people through phased manner and time-bound integrated area development and other programmes suiting the genius and the economic situation of the people, ensuring progressive elimination of all forms of exploitation and ensuring a move towards the goal of equality and social justice. The objective of the study was to analyze the socio-economic condition of the selected Badaga tribal households and to evaluate the quality of life of these tribal households. The data was collected from 50 Badaga tribal households (25 families of Kavaratty village in Ooty and 25 families living in Chinnaubathalai village in Coonoor) during May- June 2013 to study the levels of living among the tribal households by constructing the quality of life index. The study found that there were significant inequalities in the distribution of resources in the selected tribal households and quality of life of the Kavaratty households were significantly lower when compared to Chinnaubathalai households. The study concludes that the quality of life index of the tribal households was poor and the need to ameliorate the living standards by enhancing their income levels.

Key words: *Development, Health Status, Households, Quality of life and Tribal.*

INTRODUCTION

Development as a concept is loaded with value judgments. Until 1970s', development was used in the sense of 'growth' indicating a quantitative increase or progress in production, income, consumption of food etc. and thus emphasized mainly on economic aspect rather than social, political and cultural aspects. The decade of 1970s' heralded a new era in the field of development economics throughout the world by making a departure from the age-old belief that growth is synonymous with development. Development then came to be viewed as an improvement in the 'quality of life' of all sections of people, whereas growth was understood as an index of aggregate performance of economy measured through the GNP apparatus. The famous Tinbergen Report (1971) of the United Nations stated that "development implies not simply an increase in productive capacity but transformation in their social and economic structures". Following this, it was realised that development requires not only economic growth but also, a concurrent and qualitative transformation of the society through social, political and cultural changes. It includes growth, modernisation, increase in social facilities, political awareness, etc. The main aim of development is to increase national and per capita income and to raise the standard of living of the people and to secure justice, freedom, equality and security for them in a society. Development, therefore, relates to transforming the entire society enmeshing together its economic, social, political and administrative aspects, for an all round balanced upward change (Sharma, 1971). It is a process of creating and guaranteeing conditions, in which people can enjoy, exercise and utilise all their human rights- economic, social, cultural, civil and political. Development thus aims at economic, social and cultural progress and this can be achieved through certain programmes.

Tribal Development

Seen in the above perspective, tribal development can be defined as upliftment of the tribal communities, which are at different stages of socio-economic and cultural realms of growth. It implies social and economic development of the tribal people through phased manner and time-bound integrated area development and other programmes suiting the genius and the economic situation of the people, ensuring progressive elimination of all forms of exploitation and ensuring a move towards the goal of equality and social justice. It could be done by bringing about a positive change in the quality of life of the tribal's through programs on health, education, employment, transport and communication, technical manpower etc. with a view to bring them on par with the people in the wider national society.

Giving equal emphasis on social, cultural, economic and other aspects of life, Belshaw(1972) however, observed that "Sociologically speaking, development should be looked upon as an organised activity with the aim of satisfying certain basic needs and to psychologically orient the triba1's to adopt new skills, attitudes and life styles, so that they build up the inner strength and appropriate social and cultural infrastructure to withstand the pressure of the new situation and accrue benefits from the new programmes and maintain higher levels. Belshaw considers development as a positive change, which provides an increase in the capacities of a society to organise for its own objectives and to carry out its programmes more efficiently.

According to Vidyarthi (1981), development means growth and change which includes both material and human, the socio-cultural factors which are an integral part of the dynamics of growth. He argues that "While striving for the development of a group or an area, due emphasis has to be given to their traditional values and historical experiences". Development activities particularly in the context of tribal, says Roy Burman(1986) should be concerned with (a) satisfaction of minimum needs; (b) control and management of productive resources; (c) employment optimisation; (d) broad based participation of the population in the development process; and (e) socio-cultural and political aspect of national integration. He further suggests that development must result in the reduction of regional disparity and help in the creation of self-reliant economy. Besides, it must lead to redistribution of income, equalisation of distribution of development benefits, reduction of social stratification and resource mobilisation without affecting the quality of life and physical environment.

Tribes in India

Tribes constitute a considerable proportion of Indian population. The proportion of tribal's in general population is about 8.1 percent (84.51 million). More than 500 different types of tribal communities are staying in India (Article 342 (33) of the Constitution). The largest number of tribal's are located in Orissa (62 types) and the highest concentration is in Central and North- East regions. More than half of the tribal population lives in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand and Gujarat. Tribal community is characterized by social and economic backwardness. Inaccessibility to various services that are being provided by government is the predominant reason for their backwardness. Every tribal community has its own identity and unique characteristics of culture and traditions. Due to this, the tribal community always remained in isolation. This situation leads to a poor living condition which is the main threat for their survival. The Lokur Committee (1965) appointed by Government of India for the study of tribal has also identified the characteristics such as: presence of primitive traits, distinctive culture, and shyness of contact with the other communities, geographical isolation and backwardness in social and economic condition.

The need for tribal development in India hardly needs any justification. Their primitive way of life, economic and social backwardness, low level of literacy, hackneyed system of production, absence of value system, sparse physical infrastructure in backward tribal areas and demographic quality of tribal areas coupled together make it imperative for a systematic process of development of tribal's and tribal areas. It is in this context, it is essential to look at the quality of life led by the different tribal

communities. A systematic approach is used to illustrate the dynamic state of the social, economic and environmental quality of life. The dimensions of life to be examined include; education employment, energy, health, human rights, income, infrastructure and shelter. With this backdrop the present survey on the Badaga tribe in Niligiris, Tamil Nadu, was carried out during 2013 to observe the Quality of life led by this group of tribal population.

EARLIER STUDIES

There are a large number of studies on tribal communities but only a few have focused on quality of life of tribal population. The term 'Quality of Life'(QOL) is often discussed in broad terms as satisfaction of needs, feelings of well-being, good or bad working conditions, and other indicators. Such a conceptualisation of QOL encompasses all the material aspects of human life, and may extend beyond, to cover the physical and psychological dimensions. Quality of Life covers diverse and innumerable human need. Human needs at the elementary level may include essentials of survival like drinking water, perpetuation needs, shelter and warmth. However, a consideration of basic needs cannot stop at the level of mere survival; it has to transcend survival due to the special attributes and characteristics of human.

Work on the concept of quality of life grew out of the social indicators movement of the 1960s and investigators started using a social indicator approach to define what QOL meant to them. However, subsequently, many researchers adopted both subjective and objective approaches to assess QOL, available on wide literature on the subject (Echevarria-Usher, 1999; Singh, 1989, 1999; Forget and Lebel, 2001; Noronha and Nair, 2005; Sheyki, 2006). Sheyki (2006) made an extensive sociological study of Quality of life by examining the fertility behaviour from a multidimensional perspective. Echevarria-Usher (1999) equated health, in its fullest and multicultural connotation, with well being or quality of life. Understanding of QOL needs exploration of relationship between various components-economic, biophysical, socio-cultural and political- to arrive at the priority determinants of health and wellbeing (Forget and Lebel, 2001). Noronha and Nair (2005) adopted participation process, case histories, biomedical health analysis and spatial and environmental analysis in developing a Quality of Life.

Various studies have been made on poverty, living standard and quality of life of different tribal populations, viz., Elwin (1939), Saxon (1957), Caprihan (1982), Mahapatra (1994), Yadav (2001), Sharma *et al*. (2002, 2004), Mishra *et al*. (2008, 2009) and many others highlights low quality of life of the Tribal's. Various study in India, indicated that unhygienic living conditions of the tribal are the major cause of skin infection and gastric disorder (NIN, 1973; Pingale, 1973; Ali, 1978-79). Amita Shah and Sajitha O.G. (2008) examined the status of poverty and multiple deprivations among tribal communities in the state and explore policy options for strengthening their livelihoods through a combination of forest and non-forest based interventions. The estimates suggest that monthly per capita expenditure on food items among poor-tribal was less than half compared to non-poor tribals in Gujarat. Also, the expenditure on health and education was significantly lower among poor as compared to non-poor within the tribal communities. The study identified that shortage of food in tribal households was severe in 43 tribal dominated districts compared to non-tribes. Also tribal households as casual labourers have 36 percent higher poverty score than those with subsistence cultivation. The study reveals that the presence of forest villages has a significant positive correlation with proportion of vulnerable households in the taluks.

Beck P. and Mishra B.K., (2010) in their study on Socio-Economic Profile and Quality of Life of Selected Oraon Tribal Living in and around Sambalpur Town, Orissa carried out during 2008-09 examined the quality of life led by this group of tribal population. The study revealed that the hygienic conditions of the houses were poor and no toilet facility was available in the houses. There was no water supply from the government, they collect drinking water from the bore well of one household paying for it. They go to nearby river for bathing and washing clothes. All the native Oraons use wood collected and/or

purchased as their fuel except the few who uses kerosene stoves and electric heaters as cooking fuel. All of them have a supply of electricity to their houses. None of the families own vehicles, only one family has an auto rickshaw which carry goods and 45 percent have a bicycle. The daily menu of native Oraons consists of rice with pulses and/or curry. Non-vegetarian items were consumed once in a week or month and the consumptions of fruits like apple, bananas were almost negligible due to which they suffer from many deficiency diseases. There was no reporting on any member suffering from any severe disease like blood pressure, diabetics, heart disease etc.

Many studies have been undertaken during the past years on tribal development in India. These research attempts were directed (Sarkar Prattoy et al., (2011), Samik Shome et al., (2012)) at analysing the impact of employment programmes on tribal's socio-economic status. One common lacuna was that many studies were case studies covering tribal problems in general. However, the present study is somewhat different from others. This study is meant to examine the quality of life of the tribal's and based on the results present some policy implication to improve the quality of life of the tribal households.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To analyse the socio-economic condition of the selected Badaga tribal households.
- To evaluate the quality of life of these tribal households.

HYPOTHESES

- ❖ Tribal households are characterized by large family size, low literacy and extremely low income.
- ❖ The quality of life index is significantly low for tribal households.

METHODOLOGY

Field survey for this study has been carried out during May 2013 to June 2013 in Ooty and Coonoor in The Nilgiris districts. The data for the present study has been collected from 50 Badaga tribal households (25 families of Kavaratty village in Ooty and 25 families living in Chinnaubathalai village in Coonoor). The research design followed for this study is exploratory and descriptive in nature and the samples were selected purposively for collection of relevant data.

The study covers two aspects viz., socio-economic profile of the people and assessment of quality of life, with regard to demographic features, educational status, occupational structure, facilities available in the area and living condition, food intake pattern, asset ownership structure and income distribution. Health status of the people has been assessed pertaining to the incidence of various types of common diseases as well as chronic diseases viz., air borne diseases, water born diseases and parasitic infections.

To study the levels of living among the tribal households quality of life index was constructed. In the construction of the QLI, the study converts the raw data on an eleven major component variables into a scale of 1 to 5, so that data on these variables can be easily compared and subjected to statistical analysis.

The respondents are presented with certain indicators and are measured in terms of their relative position of the composite index. The total number of indicators is 10. The minimum one can score on a particular indicator is one and the maximum is 5. The scores were transformed into index by using the following formula:

$$\text{Thus,} \quad \frac{\text{Actual values} - \text{Minimum Value}}{\text{Maximum value} - \text{Minimum Value}} \times 100$$

Once the indicator indices are formed, the comprehensive Composite Index is then calculated as a simple average of the indicator indices.

$$\text{Composite Index} = \Sigma \frac{\text{Individual Indicator indices}}{N} \times 100$$

Where, *composite index* is the summation of all the individual indices and N is the total number of individual indicator indices.

Besides percentage, chi-square test was used to draw inferences.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In the traditional and structured society, socio-economic factors play a significant role in shaping the personality and characteristics of an individual A clear insight into the socio-economic factors is of paramount significance to establish the influence of these factors on the life and activities of the respondents. The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are presented in the table.1

Table-1, Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

S.No	Variables	Classification	Number of Respondents		
			Kavaratty village	Chinnaubathalai village	All
1	Sex	Male	16 (64)	13 (52)	29 (58)
		Female	9 (36)	12 (48)	21 (42)
2	Religion	Hindu	21 (84)	22 (88)	43 (86)
		Muslims	4 (16)	2 (8)	6 (12)
		Christians	0 (0.0)	1 (4)	1(2.0)
3	Community	BC	22 (88)	22 (88)	44 (88)
		OBC	2 (8)	3 (12)	12 (10
		OC	1 (4)	0 (0.0)	1 (2)
4	Type of Family	Nuclear	16 (64)	3 (12)	19 (38)
		Joint	9 (36)	22 (88)	31 (62)
5	Marital Status	Unmarried	3 (12)	10 (40)	13 (26)
		Married	12 (48)	15 (60)	27 (54)
		Widow/ Divorcee	10 (40)	0 (0.0)	10 (20)
6	Family Size	≤ 4	25 (100)	23 (92)	48 (96)
		5 or more	0 (0.0)	2 (8)	2 (4)
7	Education Status of Head of the family	Illiterate	9 (36)	10(40)	19 (38)
		Primary	1 (40	1 (4)	2 (14)
		Middle	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
		Secondary	8 (32)	5 (20)	13 (26)
		Higher Secondary	5 (20)	4 (16)	9 (18)
		Degree	2 (8)	5 (20)	7 (14)
8	Age of Head of Family(inYears)	20-59	18 (72)	20 (80)	38 (76)
		60 and above	7(28)	5 (20)	12 (24)
9	Occupation of Head of Family	Agriculture	5 (20)	22 (88)	26 (52)
		Labour	10 (40)	1 (4)	11 (22)
		Private	3 (12)	2 (8)	5 (10)
		Government	3 (12)	0 (0.0)	3 (6)
		Services	4 (16)	0 (0.0)	4 (8)
10	Total Family Income(in Rs)	Less thanRs.10,000	21 (84)	5 (20)	26 (52)
		10,000- 20,000	2 (8)	14 (56)	15 (32)
		20,000- 30,000	2 (8)	6 (24)	8 (16)
11	Per capita Income (in Rs.)	1720	4433	3077	

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2013.

Description of the respondents by the socio-economic characteristics reveals that majority of them were males in both the villages (64 percent in Kavaratty village and 52 percent in Chinnaubathalai village). Majority of the households in both the villages were Hindus, belonging to backward community, were married, living in nuclear family and practicing small family norms. The educational status of the head of the household reveals that the incidence of illiteracy was higher in Chinnaubathalai (40 percent) than in Kavaratty (36 percent) village. However, the percentage of respondents with college education was higher in Chinnaubathalai (20 percent) than in Kavaratty (8 percent) village. In both the villages the number of respondents who had formal education was high. Age composition of the respondents reveals that 72 percent in Chinnaubathalai and 80 percent in Kavaratty belonged to the productive age group of 20-59 years.

Regarding the occupational status there was differences among the two villages with majority (88 percent) of the respondents in Chinnaubathalai were farmers, while in Kavaratty, the proportion of labourers was high (40 percent). Further in Kavaratty, 40 percent of the respondents were working in private concerns, government office or in service sector, while in Chinnaubathalai it was only 8 percent. The analysis of total family income shows that while 84 percent of the family in Kavaratty village was earning less than Rs. 10,000 per month, in Chinnaubathalai majority (56 percent) was earning between Rs. 10,000- 20,000 per month. Similarly the proportion of families earning between Rs. 20,000- 30,000 was more in Chinnaubathalai (24 percent) than in Kavaratty village (8 percent). The percapita income arrived by dividing total family income by family size was higher in Chinnaubathalai (Rs.4433) than in Kavaratty village (Rs. 1720). The low percapita income in Kavaratty village implies that most of the households in the village belong to the lower income strata in the society.

Chi-Square Analysis

An attempt was made to examine whether the tribal households in the two villages differed with respect to socio-economic factors by using chi-square test (Table 2). The hypothesis framed was:

$H_{o:}$ There is no association between the place of location and socio-economic variables.

$H_{a:}$ There is significant association between the place of location and socio-economic variables.

Table 2

Association between Place of Location and Socio-Economic Variables

S.No	Variables	χ^2 value	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance	Inference
1	Sex	0.739	1	0.390	Accept H_o
2	Religion	1.690	2	0.430	Accept H_o
3	Community	1.200	2	0.549	Accept H_o
4	Type of Family	16.428	2	0.000	Reject H_o
5	Marital Status	14.103	3	0.003	Reject H_o
6	Family Size	2.167	3	0.539	Accept H_o
7	Education	2.142	4	0.710	Accept H_o
8	Total Family Income	20.846	2	0.000	Reject H_o

Source: Estimation based on Field Survey.

The Chi-square test revealed that the tribal population in the two villages differed with respect to type of family, marital status and total family income. Thus, the tribal population in Kavaratty village was characterized by the presence of nuclear family, widowed/ divorcee and low income, while in Chinnaubathalai village the tribal households were characterized by predominance of joint families, no incidence of widow/divorcee and higher income.

Living Conditions

The quality of a house is assessed in terms of ownership of the house, size of the house, type of house, the availability of electricity and latrine, fuel used for cooking , availability of safe drinking water, availability of bathrooms and type of drainage. Table 3 presents details on the living arrangements of the selected tribal households.

Table 3

Details on Housing Conditions (in percentage)

S.No	Variables	Classification	Percentage of Respondents		
			Kavaratty village	Chinnaubathalai village	All
1	Ownership of House	Own	88	100	94
		Rented	12	0.0	6
2	Type of House	Kutcha	24	40	32
		Semi-Pucca	48	56	52
		Pucca	28	4	16
3	Number of rooms	One	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Two	8	0.0	4
		Three	8	20	14
		Four	84	80	82
4	Source of Water	Bore wells	0.0	8	4
		Own wells	4	8	6
		Private Tap	12	0.0	6
		Common Well	4	8	6
		Public Tap	80	76	78
5	Availability of electricity:	Electrified	96	100	98
		Not electrified	4	0.0	2
6	Type of Sanitation	Public Latrine	8	16	12
		Pit Latrine	44	76	60
		Open place	36	8	22
		Flush Latrine	12	0.0	6
7	Cooking Device	Wood	36	0.0	18
		Coal	4	4.0	4
		Kerosene	8	24	16
		Gas	48	72	60
		Electricity	4	0.0	2.0
8	Availability of Bathroom	Yes	84	92	88
		No	16	8	12
9	Type of Drainage	Open	56	12	34
		Closed	44	88	66

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2013.

The details on the ownership of the dwelling revealed that 88 per cent of the households in Kavaratty village and 100 per cent of the households in Chinnaubathalai village lived in their own houses and only 12 percent of the households in Kavaratty lived in rented houses. About 24 per cent of the households in Kavaratty and 40 per cent of the Chinnaubathalai households were living in Katcha houses and a significant proportion in Kavaratty (48 percent) and Chinnaubathalai (56 percent) villages were living in Semi-Katcha houses. However, the proportion of the households living in pucca houses was higher in

Kavaratty (28 percent) than Chinnaubathalai (4 percent). Thus, poor housing conditions indicate the poor economic status of the households. More than two-fifths households in both the villages were living in houses with four rooms and less than one-fifth households were living in houses with three or less rooms. Thus, the living space was comfortable for tribal households.

About 84 per cent of the families in Chinnaubathalai and Kavaratty village were depending on public tap and common wells for securing safe drinking water and the remaining 16 percent were depended on private taps and bore wells. While all households in Chinnaubathalai have access to electricity, 4 percent of the families in Kavaratty go without electricity. While 88 percent of the tribal households in Kavaratty village had access to either pit latrine or open place or public latrine, this proportion was 100 percent in Chinnaubathalai. While 72 percent of the households were using gas in Chinnaubathalai, it was only 48 percent in Kavaratty. The second most used fuel was wood in Kavaratty (36 percent) and Kerosene in Chinnaubathalai (24 percent). The proportion of the households with separate washing area was higher in Chinnaubathalai (92 percent) than in Kavaratty (84 percent).Similarly, the proportion of the households with open drainage was 12 percent in Chinnaubathalai; it was 56 percent in Kavaratty. To sum up, the living conditions was fair expecting for sanitation, drinking water facilities and drainage facilities.

Asset Possessed

The household assets possessed by each family like fan, television, bicycle, two-wheelers, mobile, etc. are observed and presented in table 4.

Table 4

Details on Assets Possessed

S.No	Variables	Percentage of Respondents		
		Kavaratty Village	Chinnaubathalai Village	All
1	Fan	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	Bicycle	8	20	14
3	Radio/Transistor	20	48	34
4	Television(B/W)	20	88	54
5	Television (colour)	88	100	94
6	Mobile	100	92	96
7	Two-Wheeler	4	8	6
8	House	92	100	96
9	Bullock-Cart	0.0	8	4
10	Gold	24	100	62
11	Silver	28	100	64
12	Land	24	96	60

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2013.

The possession of assets like colour television, gold , silver and house was 100 percent in Chinnaubathalai , while in Kavaratty all households possessed mobile , followed by other assets like Colour television (88 percent) and house (92 percent). In Chinnaubathalai, other assets possessed by households includes, black/white television (88 percent), Land (96 percent) and mobile (92 percent). Only 24 percent of the households in Kavaratty possessed land. Thus households spend more on acquiring consumer durable items which enhances their life-style rather than productive assets like land, excepting in Chinnaubathalai village where 96 percent of the families invested in land. This may be attributed to the fact that majority of the families in Chinnaubathalai were farmers. In general, conspicuous consumption was on the rise among the tribal families with a rise in their levels of income.

Food Intake

The frequency of consumption of selected food items by the selected tribal households are shown in table 5.

Table 5

Frequency of Consumption of Selected Food Items (in Percentages)

Food Items	Kavaratty Village			Chinnaubathalai			All		
	Daily	Once a week	Twice a week	Daily	Once a week	Twice a week	Daily	Once a week	Twice a week
Rice	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0
Pulses	48	48	4	48	48	4	48	48	4
Vegetables	80	20	0.0	80	20	0.0	80	20	0.0
Green leaves	28	64	8	36	52	12	32	58	10
Fruits	28	56	16	80	16	4	54	36	10
Egg	16	68	16	32	44	24	24	56	20
Fish	12	8	80	16	28	56	14	36	56
Meat/Chicken	4	48	48	12	24	64	8	36	56
Milk	100	0.0	0.0	92	0.0	8	96	0.0	4

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2013.

Rice was the staple food among the tribal households. Besides rice, milk and vegetables were consumed daily 100 percent and 80 percent of the families in Kavaratty village, while it was 92 percent and 80 percent in Chinnaubathalai. Pulses were consumed daily by 48 percent of the families in both the villages, while another 48 percent consumed once a week. Majority of the families in Kavaratty (64 percent) and Chinnaubathalai (52 percent) consumed Green leafy vegetables once a week. While majority of the tribal families irrespective of their location consumed egg and meat once a week, fish was consumed twice a week by 80 percent of the families in Kavaratty and 56 percent in Chinnaubathalai village. While 80 percent of the families consumed fruits daily in Chinnaubathalai village, it was only 28 percent in Kavaratty. For the entire tribal households, important items of consumption in the order of priority were rice, milk, vegetables and fruits.

Health Status

Health of all the members of the family is studied by asking question regarding the health problem they have in the last one year. Based on the type of diseases suffered by the respondents, they were categorized into three categories namely no diseases, common ailment (cold, fever, headache, etc.,) and long standing diseases (diabetics, blood pressure, heart attack, etc). The health status of the respondents is presented in table 6.

Table 6

Health Status of the Respondents (in Percentage)

S.No	Variables	Percentage of Respondents		
		Kavaratty village	Chinnaubathalai village	All
1	No Diseases	56	28	42
2	Common Ailment	32	68	50
3	Long Standing Diseases	12	4	8

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2013.

The health status of the tribal's was better in Kavaratty village with 56 percent of the respondents reporting no ailment in the past one year. This proportion was only 26 percent in Chinnaubathalai village. The proportion of sample suffering common ailments was also higher in Chinnaubathalai village (68 percent) than in Kavaratty (32 percent). However, the incidence of long standing diseases was higher in Kavaratty (12 percent), while it was only four percent in Chinnaubathalai village. In general, the health status of the tribal's was quite fair.

Quality of Life Index

In development economics, poverty is usually discussed in terms of consumption expenditure, minimum calorie intake norms and income. However, there is a general perception that one dimensional measurement of poverty is an inadequate basis for identification of the poor. It has been suggested that a more reasonable way of identifying the poor is to use a number of indicators rather than income. Hence in the present study the Quality of Life Index (QLI) of the tribal households were constructed by using 10 indicators. They were (i) housing (type and number of rooms) (ii) source of water used (iii) sanitary facilities available (iv) food and nutrition intake (v) health status (vi) educational status (vii) fuel and energy availability (viii) assets possessed (ix) own transportation means and (x) Family Income. The scoring for different parameters is as per the details in Table 7.

Table 7
Method used for the Assessment of Quality of Life

S.No	Indicators	Classification	Score
1	Housing	Pucca +4 rooms Pucca+3 rooms/Mixed+4 rooms Mixed +3 rooms/ Katcha+4 rooms (Lower and higher values are assigned according to availability of rooms)	5 4 3
2	Source of water	Bore well/own well Private Tap Common Well Public Tap Others	5 4 3 2 1
3	Sanitary Facilities	Flush Latrine Public latrine Pit latrine Open Space	5 3 2 1
4	Health Status	No Diseases Common Ailment Long Standing Diseases	5 3 1
5	Food and Nutrition intake	Rice/Pulses/Vegetables/NV/Milk Rice/Pulses/Vegetables/Milk/GLV Rice/ Pulses/Vegetables/Milk Rice/Vegetables/Milk Rice/Pulses/Milk	5 4 3 2 1
6	Education Status	Higher Secondary and Above Secondary Matriculation Primary Illiterate	5 4 3 2 1
7	Fuel Availability	Electricity	5

		Gas Kerosene Coal Wood	4 3 2 1
8	Assets possessed in value terms	Above Rs.90,000 Rs. 60,000- 90,000 Rs. 30,000-60,000 Rs 10,000-30,000 Below Rs. 10,000	5 4 3 2 1
9	Own transportation	Two Wheeler Bicycles No self transportation	5 3 1
10	Family Income	Rs. 40,000 and above Rs 40,000-30,000 Rs.20,000-30,000 Rs. 10,000-20,000 Less than Rs 10,000	5 4 3 2 1

The classification on the basis of total score used for an analysis is as follows: less than 20- Poor, 20-40 Average, 40-60- Fair/Satisfactory and more than 60 Good. The scoring for different parameters is as per the details in Table 7.

Table 7
Distribution of the Households on the Basis of Composite Index
(in Percentage)

Composite Index	Kavaratty Village	Chinnaubathalai Village	All
Less than 20	24.0	0.0	12.0
20 – 40	44.0	8.0	26.0
40 -60	28.0	76.0	52.0
60 and above	4.0	16	10.0

Source: Estimation based on field survey.

Majority (44 per cent) of the households in Kavaratty village was in the index range of 20 – 40, followed by 28 per cent in the range of 40-60, 24 percent in less than 20 and 4 percent in the range of 60 and above. In contrast, nearly 76 per cent of the households in Chinnaubathalai village had fair quality of life, 16 percent had good quality of life and the remaining 8 percent had average quality of life. Thus, the concentration of the households in Kavaratty was in the lower range of the composite index while the households in Chinnaubathalai village were concentrated in the upper range of the composite index. Thus, there were significant inequalities in the distribution of resources in the selected tribal households and quality of life of the Kavaratty households were significantly lower when compared to Chinnaubathalai households.

CONCLUSION

It is well known that most of the tribal are victims of acute poverty and are living in wretched living conditions. The present study shows that the native tribes in The Nilgiris district like many other tribal populations are victims of poor socioeconomic conditions. The quality of life index prepared revealed that the tribal households had poor socio-economic index and the need to ameliorate the living standards by enhancing their income levels. In this context, the following recommendations are made:

- There is an urgent need to launch income generating, educational and health awareness programmes so as to make them aware and help them to grab the opportunities given by the government and non government organizations.

- Investment should be focused more on activities providing benefits at the community level so that the poor derive maximum benefits.
- The role of NGOs and mass media is crucial particularly in creating environmental awareness among the tribal population. This is imperative as it would facilitate greater community participation in improving social environment and also to ensure responsible behaviour on the part of the people.

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