

# Exploring Welfare State and Gender Justice in Kerala: A Case Study of Human Development Status of Tribal Women in Attappady

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**Abstract :** Kerala is a state which is known for its social development of the economy. The Kerala Model has received much attention in the development discourse. But few sections of the population were not able to benefit the fruits of development that has taken place in the economy of Kerala. The tribes, fisherfolk and the dalits are the marginalized sections which were left out of the development experience of the state. The tribes have low literacy and low health achievements compared to the state's average. This study looks at the tribal women in Attappady block of Palakkad district by focusing on the women's health and what the state has done to protect their life through a rights based approach. Gender justice in terms of rights, resources and access has been emphasized in the study by regarding women as agencies of change in the society and economy. The role of women in a tribal society has been defined by integrating the agency role of women and the society. In the light of Kerala's decentralized planning and local governance, the study considers how the state led welfare and social security schemes have helped the tribal women in Attappady. The human development and capability approach have been used to provide a theoretical and conceptual support to the study.

**Key Words:** Tribal Women, Decentralized Planning, Welfare, Kerala Model, Human Development, Capability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Welfare state is a concept of government in which the state plays an important role in protecting and promoting the social and economic wellbeing of its citizens. A welfare state embodies values of equity and universality. It is necessary that the sufficient social conditions for the creation of a welfare state are articulated through the interaction of the state with the other existing institutions. A welfare state focuses on the governmental responsibility of equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of goods and services to those who are unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions of a good life. According to Esping Andersen's classification of welfare regimes, the social democratic regime is committed to the universal coverage of citizens in order to promote welfare on generous benefit levels and egalitarianism. In such a regime, the universal covering institutions have created a strategic solidarity among different societal groups and also the minimized problems of collective action (Andersen 1993). By embracing the pro-welfare state system, expanded provisioning of public services through health, education and wellbeing has been made available. Owing to welfare state the focus on human development and expanding their capabilities is also an ongoing agenda of the welfare system. People centered development and their expansion through improved participation and agency have been a focus of the human development approach. This is possible only by investing in the social requirements of a society. In this backdrop, it becomes relevant to look at the idea of welfare state and human development and interrogating how both these can act simultaneously in an economy to bring about a synergy of progress and development.

The role of state in a welfare system is inevitable. The state intervention in matters concerning the public plays a key role in socio-economic development of the society. Public provisioning and social security will ensure the occurrence of the desired outcome. The relation between state and its role in a society is strengthened based on the actors in a society. The pattern of distribution in a democratic setting is altered by the potential role of state. This will lead to a shift in the focus of analysis on the nature of state itself and also on the political conditions which are necessary for a successful redistributive reforms. State plays a significant role in the matters concerning the socio-economic and socio-political condition of the economy, according to Francine Frankel's view, political failure in turn reflects the narrow social base of state power<sup>1</sup>. In a democratic economy, the state power and its impact on the socio-economic development of the people are very well connected. The redistributive measures adopted by the state will help in further reallocation. The solution to problems of poverty is likely to take place by widening the social base of the state power (Frankel 2005).

Using the agency role of women, actions and movements in identifying and strengthening their participation by course of action is an important societal aspiration. The existence and persistence of gender injustices have to be dealt by empowering the agency role of women in the society. It has to be pointed out that, economic growth does not guarantee gender equality. Development should be holistic in such a way that, it will have an impact not only in her life but also in the lives of men and children. The status of women can positively influence the lives of other members in the family. Factors like female education, female labour force participation will have a positive impact on the social-economic-political living of the members in their family. Factors relating to women's wellbeing are directly related to her knowledge based on education, economic independence and political participation. Women play specified roles in different spheres of life. It is important to invest in the girl children in a family because of the several roles they occupy and acquire over the span of a lifetime. In India, it is quite common that the women tend to be homebound and inactive in any economic or political activities; active participation of women in social, economic and political arenas would bring a massive impact in the overall setting. The social opportunities act as a great deal on the effective freedom of a woman in order to exercise her liberty.

The welfare of men and women together constitute human welfare. In order to understand the gender dimensions of development and welfare it is important to look at gender specific attributes. Women in many parts of the world lack support for performing their fundamental functions. They are less well nourished, less healthy, more vulnerable to physical violence and

<sup>1</sup> Francine Frankel's study on *India's Political Economy* reflects on the idea of state power, which reveals that the power of the political base depends upon the prevailing rural poverty in India and traces the failure of the state power in eradicating poverty.

sexual abuse (Nussbaum 2000). The role of women in society has been identified and has been spoken about in many literatures by development theorists (Sen 2002; Agarwal 2006; Robeyns 2005). Enhancing and empowering women in society will have a positive impact on the society. Women are generally viewed as instruments for serving the needs of other people's ends rather than as ends by themselves. Providing capabilities for women will have a bearing on the household and in the overall human development of the people. Providing education, access to health services, decision making and participation empowers a woman and also her freedom would stimulate further development of the children and other members in the family. Having a paid work for women would do a lot to her freedom, but if the work is within the household and is invisible, the income and her freedom is appropriated by the men in the family (Koggel 2006). Likewise, women's agency helps to analyze that they have reason to value their freedom and lives. Especially the economic roles that are attached to women are tied with different values. Naila Kabeer has argued about the multiple facets of female agency that comes under the purview of female empowerment (Kabeer 1999).

Sen has argued about attributes like higher female literacy and female labour force participation which have an affirmative influence in the society (1985). Economic independence, decision making power and authority will widen the freedom of the woman. The agency role of women in achieving higher development is taken from the notion of higher responsibility and transforming nature of the behavior of women in society. It is vital to point out and bring to notice the agency role of women in bringing social change. Development through higher gender inclusion would guarantee a healthy and equitable progress and welfare.

## II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to look at the tribal women in Attappady through a gender lens by considering the capability framework and human development approach. The area chosen is a tribal settlement in the district of Palakkad, in Kerala. It is the third largest settlement of tribes in the state; the first being Wayanad, and the second being Idukki<sup>2</sup>. Looking at tribal women in the Attappady block, gives a picture of the kind of relation the women in that area pursue in accordance with the nature, family, their livelihood, society, local democracy and the state in general. As far as Kerala is concerned, the state has witnessed high human development index (HDI) and gender development index (GDI). This makes it all the more important to study the condition of the women from a marginalized and backward community in a state like Kerala that has achieved development in its social spheres to a great extent. The agency aspect attached to women, as explained in Amartya Sen's thesis highlights the responsibility and accountability nature of women. The theoretical basis that is used in the human development approach also tries to emphasize the importance of widening of people's choices by investing in the central human capabilities. In that case, widening of the choices of women by giving them education, access to health, political representation, property rights and decision making power would enhance the capabilities of women from any community.

This study aims to look at the aspect of development in relation to the health quality among the tribes and the awareness regarding the welfare services. The role of women in the society has been glorified by the agency function of women. Thus it becomes all the more important to look at the performance of women in tribal society in relation to their livelihood choices and participation in their community and society. Tribal people are one of the marginalized sections of the society. When it comes to tribal women it appears that the women who are an integral part in a community need to be given priority and they are to be seen as change makers in the society. Policies and programs intended to enhance women and their voice in the family are a successful attempt to deal with the problems concerning their insecurity and dependence. The present study has taken Attappady as the area of analysis because of the diminishing health quality of tribes in that locality especially with regard to infant deaths, premature birth and low birth weight of infants which are increasing in number<sup>3</sup>. The intervention of the state in this crucial situation is very important in providing the rights and liberties of the people. The health related issues in a developing economy is primary, particularly when it comes to marginalized sections of the people. The issue of maternal health and children's health in Attappady has drawn sufficient attention and the main issues to which all this could be problematized is relating to the nutrition and food security issues of that area (Manikandan 2014). This study also tries to analyze the policies in the Attappady tribal block by looking into the information regarding the major central government policies like Public Distribution System (PDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). By investigating the welfare safety nets offered by the state and its performance within the tribal community will give a picture of how successful the state was in giving them the wellbeing that they ought to be getting. Among the tribal people, the relevance of the state and how much they want to be part of the state is also a concern. As the tribes are concerned they do not want to lose their native identity. Tribes were not seen as part of the civilization and were viewed as lying outside the larger Indian society (Xaxa 2005). According to Bose (1941) tribes were absorbed to larger Indian society. Therefore they are not left with distinct identity and space because of the social transformation among them.

## III OBJECTIVES

The present study looks at the different aspects of tribal women concerning their livelihood, health aspirations and health seeking nature. The role of the state in catering to the needs of the tribal community by giving them the provisions for food, nutrition and employment are looked from a rights-based perspective. The living conditions of the women are captured by conceptualizing the different role she holds in the community. The objectives of the study skim through the historical narration of the social democratic regime of welfare state in Kerala and then moves specifically to gender and tribal women in Kerala. It also gives an account of the wellbeing of the tribal women and how the state interacts with their requirement for nutrition, food, good health etc. The study tries to locate tribal women in Kerala amidst the development the state has witnessed in the recent years and raises the question of how far has this section of the society been represented in the state's success stories.

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the dynamics of welfare state and gender among tribal women in the state of Kerala

<sup>2</sup> As per census 2011: Scheduled tribes constitute 1.45 percent of total population in Kerala; Sex ratio of ST population is 1035. Wayanad has a tribal population of 37.56 percent, Idukki 14 percent and Palakkad 10.89 percent as per Human Development Report 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Iqbal B, *Attapadiyil Sambhavikunnathu* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publications, 2013), 76.

- To analyze the causes for poor wellbeing status especially maternal ill health, food security, and hygiene among tribal women
- To explore the role of welfare policies (like MGNREGA,PDS,) and their impact on the tribal women

#### IV THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Capability approach is essentially a ‘people-centered’ approach that puts human agency at its centre instead of any organizations such as governments or markets. It is concerned with opportunities that are influenced by public policy and social circumstances. Its main aim is to expand human freedom and the realm of human agency, both as an ‘end’ by itself and as a ‘means’ for further expansion (Sen 1979). Its focus is on the multi dimensional aspects of wellbeing. The approach draws attention to the difference between means and ends, and between the capabilities (substantive freedoms) and achieved functionings (outcomes).

Capability approach begins with a simple question of “what people are able to do or to be” (Sen 1989). Though it looks very simple, this question revolves around several potential capacities of individual human beings. It represents a part of the state of that person. “The capability approach to a person’s advantage is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functionings as a part of living. The corresponding approach to social advantage –for aggregative appraisal as well as for the choice of institutions and policy – takes the set of individual capabilities as constituting an indispensable and central part of the relevant informational base of such evaluation” (Sen 1993). Assessing the quality of life takes the form of assessing these functionings and capability to function. Through capability approach he focuses on what people are able to do and to be, their quality of life and the freedom to live the kind of life they want to live and value.

Capability approach addresses the means and ends of wellbeing and development. When it is said as ‘ends’, it could also be ‘means’ to other ‘ends’ (Eg: the capability of being in good health is an ‘end’ by itself, but it could also be means to capability to work which is another ‘end’). As per this approach, the ends of wellbeing and development are to be conceptualized based on the people’s capabilities to function. Each person’s actions and activities depicts what they want to be, these beings and doings are called ‘functionings’ which together constitutes what makes life valuable (Sen 1989). What is important for a person is the freedom to choose from valuable opportunities (capabilities) in order to lead the kind of life they want to lead, to be what they want to be and to do what they want to do. Capability approach falls within the liberal school of thought by giving precedence to individual freedom.

The capability approach developed by Amartya Sen, is concerned with the different opportunities the people have in order to improve their quality of life. This approach keeps human beings at its centre, and thus the role of human agency is stressed by considering human capabilities as instruments for economic and social performance. Amartya Sen also brings his focus on women’s agency for social progress. He stresses the fact that women’s agency is different from women’s wellbeing. Sharp gender inequalities in several forms are important features of Indian society, and it results in disparities in decision making, power relations and wellbeing (Sen 2006). Thus, the persistence of gender based inequalities justifies the need to bring about a change in women’s actions and her position in the society. Gender inequality does not decline automatically with the process of economic growth (Dreze and Sen 2002). There is a need for women’s own agency in securing gender justice and this happens mainly through female labour force participation, female literacy etc. it is important to bring the attention on the agency role of women because, women’s empowerment can positively influence the lives not only of women themselves but also of men and of course those of children in their families. As studies point out, the positive link between female education and child survival is likely to relate to the agency of women within the family, and also to their role in public life and politics (Nussbaum 2000). Women are viewed as the potential agencies that are capable of human functions, provided with good education, sufficient nutrition and other support (ibid). The unequal share in the capabilities of women is the result of existing problem of justice and equality to women.

Positive changes in gender relations and the role of women in the society are carried out in a direct and transparent way by emphasizing the agency role of women. It does not mean that the agency role of women is not concerned with the wellbeing of the women. There is a definite intersection between the wellbeing aspect and agency aspect of women’s movements. When one says women as agencies of change, it means that women being considered as the responsible persons for doing things. Focusing on women’s movements establishes relative deprivations in the wellbeing of women which are certainly present in the society and these are clearly the matters of social justice for women. The “excess mortality” of women in Asia and northern Africa, which Amartya Sen has termed as “missing women<sup>4</sup>” point at the unequal access to health care and other necessities; this portrays the inferior status given to women which are indications of the neglected needs of the women across the world (Sen 1992). By focusing on the agent oriented approach of women, it aims to enhance the lives of the women, men, children and the elderly in the family. Expanding the capabilities of women by providing education and good health through women oriented policies can focus on women’s freedom and agency and also contribute for improving the bargaining position of women. Sen also spoke about the different aspects like women’s earning power, literacy and education, economic role outside family and property rights etc which would add a positive freedom to women’s agency and voice through empowerment and independence (Sen 1993). Education and property rights make women more powerful in family decisions. These entitlements guarantee women a social acceptance and emancipation which can have a far reaching impact on forces governing family and society as a whole. The lives that women save through her empowerment and independence will certainly be of her own, as well as those of men’s and children’s. There has been considerable evidence that women’s empowerment within their family can reduce child mortality significantly (Sen 1999). The agency role of women and their acceptance which are influenced by education and employment can consecutively influence the public discussions on social issues like fertility rates. The intra household divisions of the several arrangements of sharing in a family are influenced to a great extent by the economic role and empowerment of the women in the community. Female education, female employment, property rights etc that determine the economic prosperity of the women also influences the

<sup>4</sup> “Missing women” is told in the sense of being dead as a result of gender bias in the distribution of healthcare facilities and other basic necessities (Sen 1992).

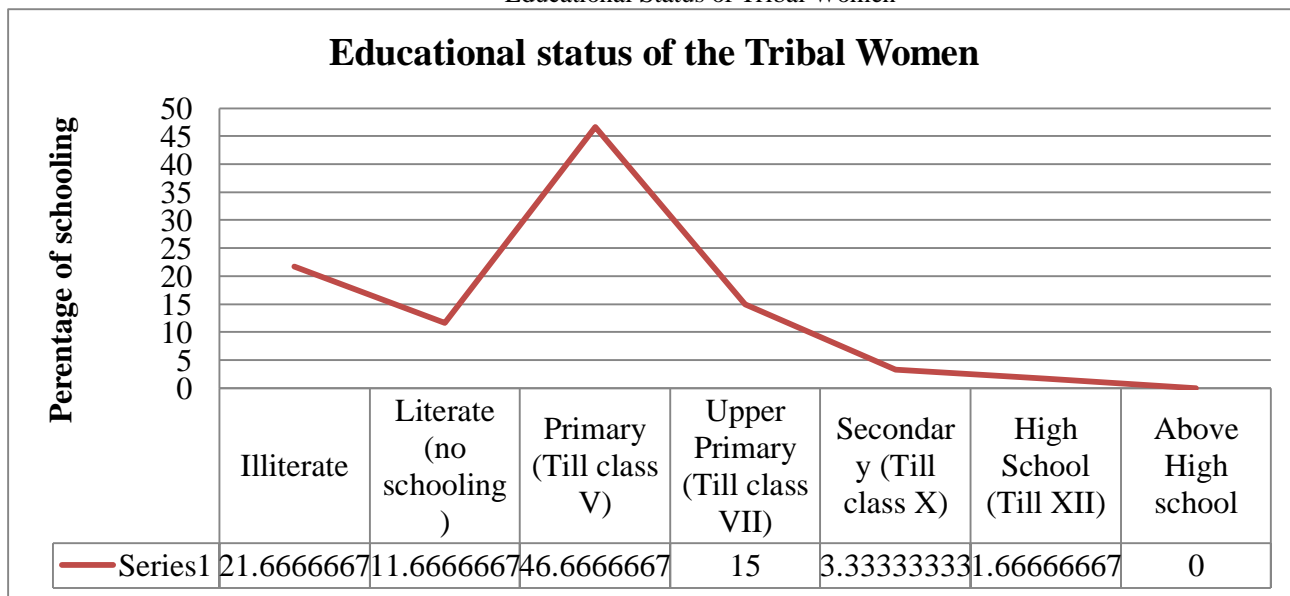
wellbeing and freedom of the other members in a family. These factors can altogether enhance the social standing of the woman in the household and society (Sen 2006).

The importance in identifying the women’s agency lies in realizing the ability to widen the scope of social mobilization by increasing the participation of women in economic, political and social spheres and thereby widening the choices and freedoms of the women in each family and society. The greater reach of this approach lies in focusing on the capabilities of women’s agency which has multi dimensional connotations. The gender development aspect of investing in the education and health of the women has a long run impact on the overall wellbeing of the household and as well as the society in which they belong. This helps in diminishing the gender bias within the household in decision making, resource allocation, fertility and birth rate and mortality rates.

**V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Education is an important aspect of gender inclusiveness. Among the tribal women, the educational attainments are not so high. Not a majority has finished high school. Even among the younger mothers, a majority of 30 percent have stopped going to school after primary education. The drop outs are high among tribal children.

Educational Status of Tribal Women



Source: Primary Data from the field (Sholayur Panchayat, Attappady Block)

From the figure it is clear that, 22 per cent of the women were illiterate and most of them were in the age group of 45 and above. There were few women who knew how to read and write without any formal schooling. They learnt it with the help of other people in the community. Not a majority of the sample have studied above primary class. Early motherhood was also an important factor that was seen among the tribes. Many girls who had finished primary school did not go for further schooling and by the time they reached the age group of 20-25 they were mothers of two or three children. Only 10 per cent of the sample had gone for upper primary education, and only 3 per cent had finished their secondary. The attainment among the tribal women on educational grounds was very much backward. Only one had finished her class Xth and went for higher secondary schooling.

Kerala is the only state which remains at the top, both in terms of the smallest percentage of poor and vulnerable and education up to primary level (Kannan 2014). But the condition of the SC/ST population remains at the bottom level with respect to all developing states. The development of women’s education is integrally linked with the perception of roles within the Indian society (Desai and Krishnaraj 1990). There are social factors that affect the participation in education among girls. Child marriages and early motherhood is not very uncommon within the community. The issue of early motherhood has been addressed by several health practitioners as an important factor in determining the deteriorating health status of mothers and children among the tribes (Rajendraprasad 2013). The average age of marriage among the tribal women stood at 18 and the education of girls among tribes is taking a new perspective amongst the non educated tribal people. The anganwadis and primary schools which has a majority of tribal children in the area of Attappady; the enrolment rates have increased at a lesser rate but the dropout rates have risen more than proportionately (ibid). The education of the mother in the family is found to have a positive impact on the household. All families wanted to give a basic education to their children. But only those households which had educated mother wanted their children to be educated. But lack of sufficient environment to study from home is also a factor and there were families who had sent their children to stay in tribal hostels due to lack of a clean environment at home. But generally the families wanted their children to get education but lacked necessary environment to provide good quality learning. It can be said that women’s education is reflected in decision regarding sending their children to schools, and further participation in household and in community also influences her participation to some extent.

From the Kerala experience, increasing female literacy has led to an overall increase in the performance of the state. The importance given to girl’s education in the socio development planning of the state has to be incorporated in all the regions of expansion

**Interrogating Health Seeking Behaviour of the Irular Women**

Kerala has made remarkable achievements in its higher life expectancy, reduced infant mortality and maternal mortality (Census 2011). The improvement in health indicators is also supported by lack of any kind of bias against the women or girl child (Kannan 2007). The concern of social equity is highlighted in the achievements of the state. But the neoliberal policies have affected the health sector by reducing the budget allocation for health and education over the years. It has become a growing concern in the state; marginalization of the poor has increased and their access to health services has reduced tremendously. 30 per cent of the population is denied of a good health care and the expenditure on health is increasing (Iqbal 2006). During the time

of privatization; adivasis, dalits and the fishing community are those who are denied of their right for education, good health and wellbeing.

The health needs and requirements of each community are different. Physical and mental wellbeing or absence of disease or illness is perceived as being in good health by a few people. This entire notion about health will vary in each community and in the way people access health services in their community.

Health seeking is associated with the income the family is earning. Income acts as an important determinant for any kind of expenditure in a household. The Table.6.3 shows the association of wealth and health seeking nature of the tribal women in Irula community. The total households are divided into three categories: poorest, middle and richest based on the wealth. The health seeking nature is divided into low, medium and high based on the number of visits to any healthcare service in a period of 6 months. The table shows that 36 per cent of the poorest household has a high health seeking nature, where as 47 per cent of the poorest household has medium health seeking nature and the 23.8 per cent of the poorest household has a low health seeking nature. It shows that among the poorest household, majority has a medium health seeking nature. Similarly, among the middle level household 35.3 per cent have medium health seeking nature and 27.3 per cent have high health seeking nature. Within the richest household 42.9 per cent have had a low health seeking in the past 6 months and 36.4 per cent had a high health seeking behavior.

Wealth and Health Seeking nature

		healthseek_recode			Total	
		Low	Medium	High		
Wealth	Poorest	Count	5	8	8	21
		% within healthseek_recode	23.8%	47.1%	36.4%	35.0%
	Middle	Count	7	6	6	19
		% within healthseek_recode	33.3%	35.3%	27.3%	31.7%
	Richest	Count	9	3	8	20
		% within healthseek_recode	42.9%	17.6%	36.4%	33.3%
Total	Count	21	17	22	60	
	% within healthseek_recode	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Source: Primary Data from the field (Sholayur Panchayat, Attappady Block)

This table shows that, the poorest and middle level households have medium access to a healthcare service centre whereas a richest level households need to have only a low access to a healthcare centre. Income which is a proxy for standard of living shows the relationship between the healthcare needs of a household with respect to its standard of living. The correlation matrix shows that for those households which have savings are having pucca houses, and they have availability of toilet at their home. Such households have comparatively lesser need to approach a health service centre. Richest households have pucca houses along with drinking water facility and separate toilet facility which acts as supporting factors to show how the health requirements. Whereas other households (semi pucca or kutchra) do not have proper toilet or drinking water, and this is reflected in the higher health seeking nature of the people. There is a correlation between the access to health services and the environmental factors (like toilet and drinking water) which influences a person's decision for health services.

#### Public Distribution System (PDS)

In the case of several indicators of development, the state of Kerala presents an interesting situation in matters of socio economic variables. With regard to food security, the state is in forefront position. As per the NSS data, Kerala's position with respect to the national average in terms of food availability is quite low. The state is known as the "food deficit" state in India, as the gap between the food requirement and availability has widened over the past few decades (Kannan 2000). The state still imports its cereals, pulses and vegetables for its consumption. The state stands least in its incidence of poverty but even then the problem of hunger still persists among the people.

Attappady, which shows a picture of low health quality in terms of rising malnutrition and infant deaths, demonstrates a picture of food deficit in terms of nutrition. But PDS ensures the physical access to food grains through ration shops and this has reduced the impact of poverty in Kerala since its institution. The same result has occurred in Attappady as well, the PDS was able to secure the access to food and have helped the inhabitants in securing the need for food. The functioning of PDS in Attappady is considered to be crucial from several points of view:

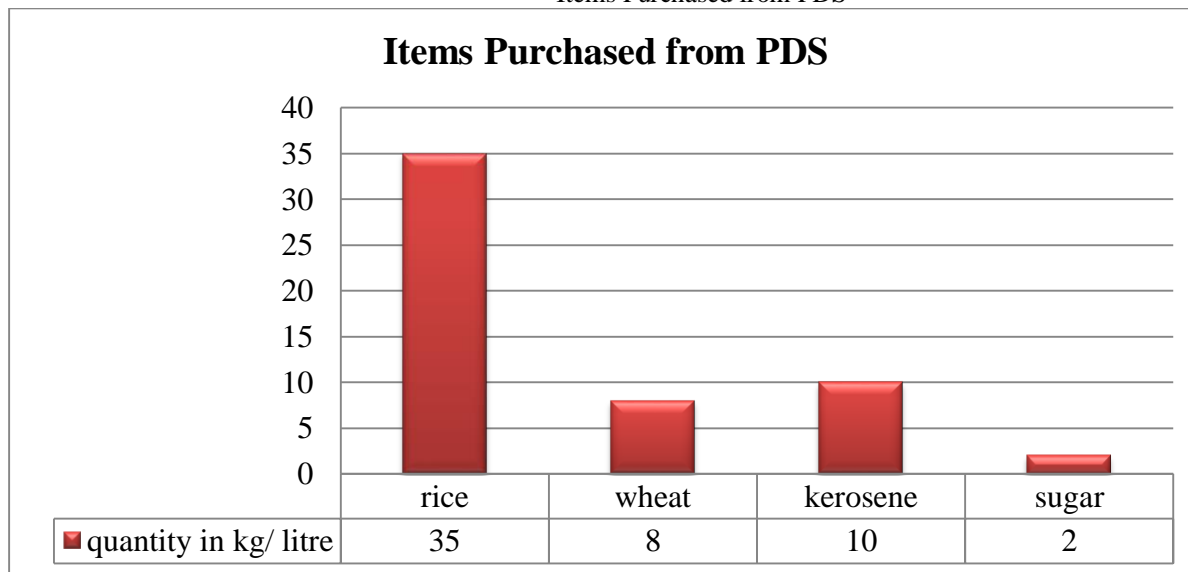
##### (a) Availability in Attappady of Kerala

All families hold a ration card and they are given Antyodaya card (Antyodaya Anna Yojana)<sup>5</sup>. The following figure (Figure 7.1) shows the amount of different items the families consume on an average in a month. Rice is a staple food in their community. But the tribes eat ragi rice and not the matta rice (red rice) which sometimes the PDS provide. For a household which has more than five members, they will have to buy their ration from outside shops in times of need. Apart from rice and sugar, the vegetables which are necessary for cooking other dishes need to be bought from outside shops. The families have to buy vegetables everyday from outside shop to cook for everyone. They do not have a provision to cultivate as they own no land, so they depend on the market to buy vegetables, egg and meat. So they sometimes choose not to buy from outside shop and finally they consume only rice.

<sup>5</sup> Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) has been introduced in the year 2000 by the NDA government. It is aimed to provide food security to individuals under a particular social group and also to destitute households. Each household has a provision for 35 kilograms of rice or wheat at Rs 3 and Rs 2 respectively. Primitive tribes, old persons with no support, disabled, pregnant and lactating mothers, widows or single women with no support etc fall under the beneficiaries of Antyodaya card. It is issued to those families which have their income less than 250 Rs.

Wheat is not consumed by tribals that much. So the total consumption of wheat is very less among the families. The households used firewood to cook, and the kerosene is also used to light lamps and sometimes to cook by the women. Sugar is consumed by almost everyone in the family, and they sometimes used *jaggery* instead to make tea or coffee. For the families, the ration from PDS is very important to make sure that everyone in the family eats at least three times a day. Not many families have many items during lunch, dinner or tea; they consume milk and egg only ones or twice a week on an average and meat only ones in a week or ones in two weeks. Milk, egg and meat are not part of their usual food.

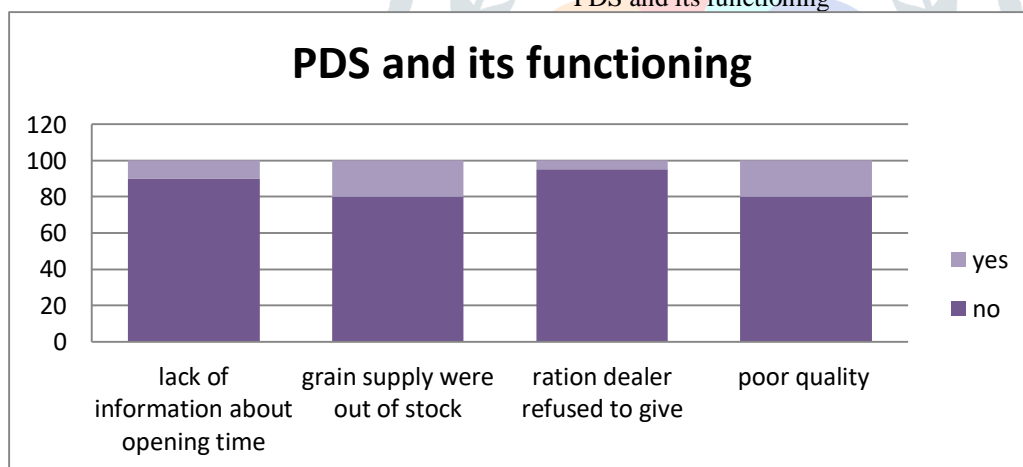
Items Purchased from PDS



Source: Primary Data from the field (Sholayur Panchayat, Attappady Block)

When asked about whether they have been getting their full quota for a month or week, 90 percent of the samples replied positively, with a 'yes'. The respondents did not have any problems with the ration shop dealings. All the households in the locality were informed about the timing when the shops will be closed. The figure (Figure 7.2) below shows the functioning of PDS in Attappady from the point of view of the availability of information and the quality of the services.

PDS and its functioning



Source: Primary Data from Attappady Block

The shop dealer provided them with weekly ration which made it comfortable for them. When they had no money to pay for the ration, they had to lend it from somebody in case of emergency and such incidences are common in their lives. Families are updated with information in terms of availability of opening and closing time of the ration shop. There was no issue with lack of enough stock. There is no general dissatisfaction about the dealer's way in dealing with the cardholders. Regarding the quality of the ration received from PDS, the families are of the general opinion that, there is no much problem. The general quality is the same, sometimes they receive rice which is from old stock, but a majority said there is no issue with the quality of the ration items.

**(b) Accessibility in Attappady**

In terms of accessibility, the ration shops were less than 5 kilo meter close to their hamlets. All families had equal access to the ration shops in Attappady. The days when the shops are open or close are informed in prior to the households. In many of the ration shops, a board was hung outside showing the timing of the shops which made it convenient for the families to go and collect their weekly ration. The ration which was not collected in that particular week was not given to them in the later week when they went and asked. Each shop had to keep a stock of itself in every week which made it difficult for them to give it in the later periods. But few of the local people had complaints that the ration shop is selling the ration in the market.

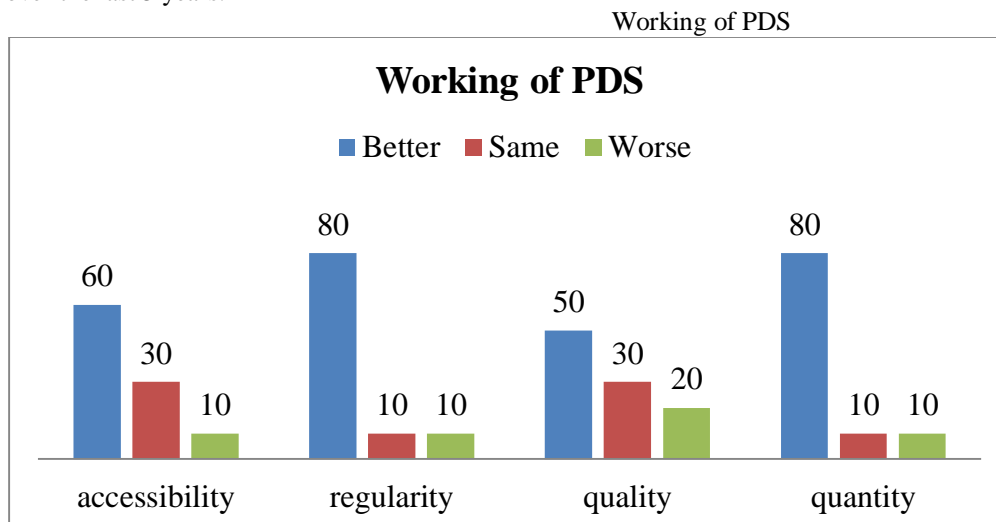
**(c) Affordability in Attappady**

The Antyodaya card holders get a monthly provision of 35 kilos of rice or wheat, then sugar, oil, pulses etc. The items in the ration shop are affordable to them by means of its prices. But in few cases, where the household hasn't received their income

for that month, it becomes difficult for the families to buy from ration shops. The subsidized rates in the public distribution system helped all families to procure rice and other items on a continuous basis. The functioning of PDS has led way to continuous supply of food in the families. The households have identified that the role of PDS in securing the family welfare is very important. Since there is no land with the tribes for cultivating their own requirements it is a great deal to have access to this food security scheme on a regular basis.

#### (d) Accountability in Attappady

The families in Attappady are using the ration for a period of more than 20 years. When asked about the quality of the food grains, sugar, oil and other items that they receive from the ration shops, the households were finding that the quality of the rice hasn't changed much. But sometimes they receive rice which is of less quality from the shop, but generally it doesn't happen so. In terms of regularity, the households are satisfied with the working of PDS; the shops are open on a regular basis, and there has not been any delay in giving them the ration for the particular week. The following figure compares the functioning of PDS over the last 5 years.



Source: Primary Data from the field (Sholayur Panchayat, Attappady Block)

For the AAY families, the quality of the grain that they got from PDS did not matter much because it was their primary source of ration and their expectations about the quality of the ration are so low. With respect to the quality aspect, the storage facility also matters. The fair price shops had no proper ventilation and it was just one room where everything was piled up.

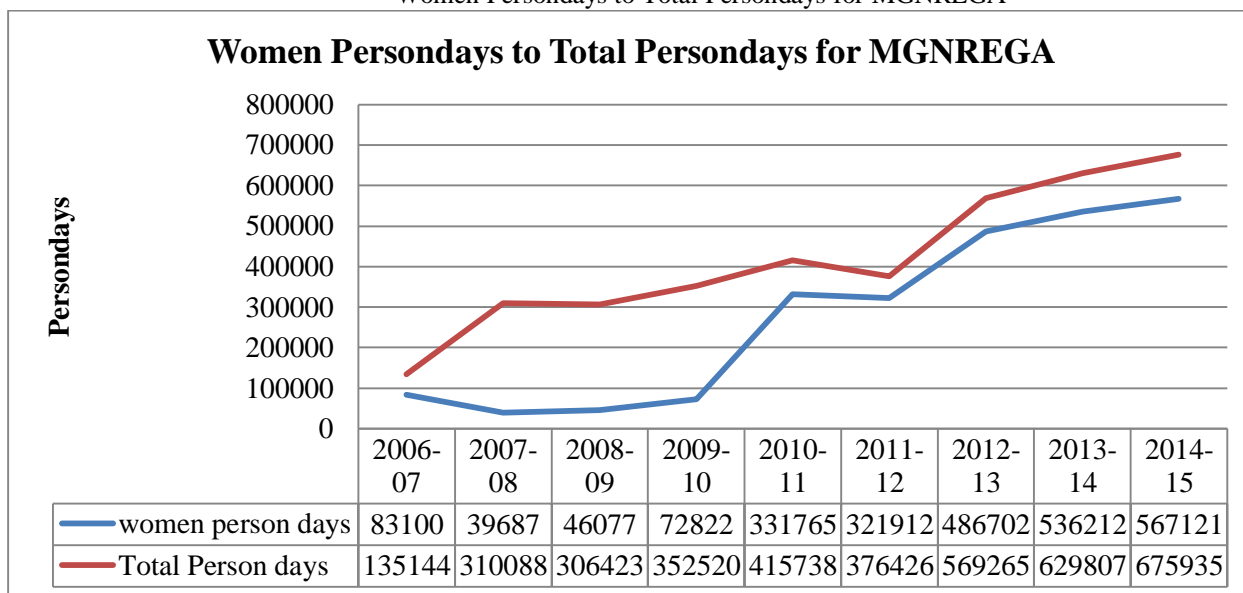
The families did not complain much about the scheme as it played an important role in their daily life and in securing their food requirements. In terms of the quantity supplied, for a household with an average family size of 4, quantity is enough but for a family with larger size, it is difficult to provide for all. But providing food security and making the families free from hunger and poverty is an important achievement from the state sponsored schemes. Providing the entitlements through PDS has made the people better in terms of availability of food. The state has become accountable to the people in guaranteeing them the right to food. The scheme has helped in bettering their poverty status in rural areas.

#### MGNREGA – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

MGNREGA is a program aimed at providing guaranteed employment to the rural households who are willing to perform unskilled work. The program guarantees a wage employment of 100 days in a year. The Kerala state government under section 3(iv) of MGNREGA, 2005 has declared an additional wage employment of 100 more days to every tribal household that is registered under this scheme in the Attappady block<sup>6</sup>. Households which do not have access to any other regular employment would prefer to go for wage employment

<sup>6</sup> Under the Attappady Tribal 100 Plus Scheme (ATP) the state government of Kerala under the section 3 (iv) of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA 2005), had assured an additional 100 days of employment (unskilled manual work) beyond the guaranteed period of 100 days to every tribal household in the Attapad block of Palakkad district registered under the MGNREG scheme. So this makes the ST households eligible for 200 days of wage employment in a financial year. The area of operation of this scheme is restricted only to the three Gram Panchayats of Agali, Pudur and Sholayur that constitute the Attappady Development block. The funding of these additional 100days is borne by the State Government with the same wage rates as under the scheme.

Women Persondays to Total Persondays for MGNREGA



Source: Attappady Block Panchayat Report From 2006-07 to 2014-15, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India

The women persondays compared to total persondays for the year 2014-15 shows that 83.9 per cent of women persondays occupy the total working days. Over the years, the percentage of women taking up wage employment under MGNREGA has increased since 2010-11. Till then there was a wide gap between the total persondays and women persondays. The above figure shows an increase in women persondays over the years. The number of women for employment has increased tremendously from 2006-07 starting from 83100 to 567121 in 2014-15. The participation from women has multiplied and this shows how women have entered into the public space and how they could make a representation of themselves in the community. The MGNREGA guarantees equal wage for men and women, therefore the scheme has helped women to come into a foremost arena and has helped to demonstrate their independence in the household and income earning capacity. Economic independence and female labour force participation will help in bringing up the freedom and liberty that women enjoy. This will help in the overall upliftment of the social status of women. Collective groups of such women will help in larger representation in social and political settings. But an important issue is that, Attappady is having more of non-tribals now compared to earlier times, therefore, the total increase of women persondays may not be benefitting the tribal women as a whole. But the household data gives a more clear picture. The households that have finished their 100 days of work are given in the table below.

ST Household with 100 days of employment

Year	HH provided with 100 days of employment	Percentage of ST Households on Total families provided with 100 days of employment
2012-13	878	42
2013-14	1055	47
2014-15	1360	63

Source: Attappady Block Panchayat Report From 2006-07 to 2014-15<sup>7</sup>, Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India

There has been an increase in the number of ST households that have been provided with 100 days of employment from 2012-13 to 2014-15. This shows larger participation from ST families in employment. The families that have reached 100 days of employment have increased from 42 percent to 63 percent. Over the years, there has been an increase in the job card holders. Providing employment and income will give a financial security to the families. 90 percent of the households did not have any other sources of livelihood other than going for wage employment. Thus it becomes important to look at the role MGNREGA scheme has done in raising their standard of living by looking into the income aspect the person had been earning before and after going for wage employment scheme.

The alternative hypothesis is that;

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant improvement in income after taking up MGNREGA employment.

The paired t test shows that the mean of the income before taking up the MGNREGA employment is (M=720.83) which is less than the mean after taking up the employment which is (M=3668.33). The standard deviation value (1072.911) shows the difference in income before and after taking up the employment for each worker that have been calculated. This value shows the standard deviation of all those differences. T statistic is (-21.28) and the significance value or the p value is (.000). The p value is less than the level of significance; (.000 < .05); which means that we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis is that; there is a significant difference between the incomes earned after taking up the MGNREGA employment.

The paired t test shows that the households' income has increased significantly after taking up the employment. The MGNREGA scheme has added positive changes to the households. Income which is a proxy for measuring the standard of living indicates that it has had a productive impact on the family and the society in terms of the activities that the program undertakes. The increase in income has reflected in the economic independence of the women in the family and this guarantees a greater power to her in the family decision.

<sup>7</sup> Till the year 2012 no separate information is available on ST households that have reached 100 days of employment.



## VI CONCLUSION

Tribal women, who takes an equal status as men in their community is also affected by development in a way that has affected her livelihood means and representation. But the idea of women as agencies of change has an important impact on the tribal women. It is believed that the tribal community is more egalitarian and the women have more freedom than the caste women. It is identified to be vital to integrate and channelize women into social, economic and political activities. Participation and equality in the process of development as the traditional and modern agencies will help in identifying women as change makers. Kerala has a successful history of political decentralization through local governance and democracy, and gender representation has played an important role in bringing the women into social and political front. In tribal areas of Attappady, the activities of Kudumbashree which aims to bring the women from tribal households have also helped in their participation. But a larger percentage of women remain as unskilled labourers who work on a daily wages basis. The welfare motive of bringing the tribal women into the larger framework of gender inclusion in the development discourse still remains to be achieved. The high rate of literacy and health condition of women has not taken place among the tribal women. This has resulted in lower performance of the tribal families in the education and health indicators. High drop outs and low birth weight and under nutrition still persist in the tribal block. Lower achievement in the human development of tribes has resulted in a lacuna in the development narrative of the state as welfare oriented state. More specific intervention by looking at the specific nature of the community is what is lacking in the approach of the state in reaching to the root cause of the issues. The land alienation and destruction of the forest and ecology have made the lives of the tribes miserable.

Migration and deforestation have reduced the natural resources which is an important source of livelihood of the tribes. This forces the tribal women to take up alternative sources of income in order to supplement their household income. The health of women and children are important indicators of development of a community but these are largely neglected among the tribals. Women share equal responsibility as that of men in the matters of the household among the tribes. The work participation rate among the women is very high compared to the non tribals. The alterations in the livelihood pattern have changed their work patterns too. It shows the interdependence between their health culture and response to the various institutions for dealing with their health status. Integrating their system with the modern or mainstream system of health is challenging and complex. The problems of tribal people are incomplete with their rights over land and forest. In the case of Kerala, it is very crucial as the state was not able to give back their land which was taken from them by the settlers and traders in the past. Depletion of the forestland and natural resources has affected their traditional livelihood opportunities which have direct impact on the living standards of the people. Their deprivation and low standard of living started reflecting in their social achievements. Other attributes like poverty, hunger and hygiene also added to the low status of health of the tribal women. Practice of early marriage is common among them and the existence of large number of unwed mothers is also a rising issue among the tribal community. The increase in female headed household either due to death of the spouse or due to divorce has also contributed to the depressing status of the tribal women. 'Maternal depletion' due to early motherhood and continuous pregnancy has increased the risk of women's health in terms of its quality. The change in their life pattern due to transformation in the surrounding factors has had significant modification in their tradition and culture.

The role of state in terms of initiating welfare policies to protect and safeguard the condition of people from falling to the trap of poverty is regarded as essential from the state's point of view. The policies that are considered under the present study have shown a positive impact on the life of the tribal women and families as a whole. The employment guarantee scheme has helped in providing an alternative employment by giving an alternative source of income for the families. The larger number of women enrolled under the scheme shows that the program is able to target women and thereby help in gender inclusiveness and women empowerment. The program has helped in upbringing the living standards of the people and has also helped in preventing migration to other places in search of jobs. The food security programs have helped to ensure the supply of necessary commodities to make sure that the people who are in need are provided with basic need and the right to food. The PDS and MDM aim at providing subsidized food. The MDM program has been able to satisfy the alternative food consumption need of the children but from hygiene point of view the food cooked and served did not satisfy the nutritional requirements of a child even though they were providing milk and egg. From the last year there was a fall in the children enrolled for the scheme and there has been no significant decline in the drop outs also. In the case of the functioning of anganwadis, they were able to provide the nutritional food to the children, but children were hesitant to come to the anganwadis often and they came only to collect the food or during that time. The policies aimed at the welfare of the tribal people are taking place in the block without much supervision. The panchayat that has to look into the needs of the people are not paying much attention to the needs of the people as a long term solution.

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