

An Anthropological study on Livelihood dependency of Paliyan Tribes in Lower Palani Hills of Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Paliyan community, a primarily forest dependant tribal community, resides in the lower Palani (Kodaikanal and surrounding area) hills in Tamil Nadu. They are largely dependent on forest resources for their livelihoods. Their system of living is nomadic and they gather food by hunting and gathering. In addition, they collect a set of Non-Timber Forest Products like lichens, honey, amla (Indian gooseberry), grasses etc. and sell these in the market. These economic activities are a major part of their livelihoods.

However in the recent past there have been changes in their economic activity, due to changes in the forest resource availability as well as access to forest resources. This study focuses on the changes in the livelihoods of men and women and the associated challenges they face. There is specific focus to their rights over forest resources and their culture. The study adopts a qualitative approach in understanding the issues and challenges and their impact on traditional ecological knowledge and associated cultural practices.

Key words: Tribal Livelihood, Marketing, Indigenous knowledge, Forest Act, and Women's Challenges.

Tribals

This term has been coined by W.R.S. Rivers to refer to those who are live in hills and caves as well as persons isolated and living in forests far away from the mainstream people. These tribals are called Adivasis in India.

NTFP—Non Timber Forest Products

The forest has been traditionally and primarily used for timber and fuel by the mainstream population. The tribals living in the forest harvest certain items like fruits, nuts, honey and tubers, and use them as a substitute of conventional food. These products are called NTFP (Non Timber Forest Products). This is a world-wide phenomenon among marginalized people like the tribals.

Area Dynamism

This term refers to the geographical location of the particular area where NTFP are available, depending upon the vagaries of nature. Multiple seasonal changes, such as monsoon rains, dryness, moisture and drought etc, determine the quality and quantity of edible items available for consumption. As the climatic conditions changes, NTFP form a large part of their sustenance and livelihood along with produce from forest streams such as fish and crab. Tribals exchange these products for ragi, maize, rice and sometimes money. This is a kind of barter system. The Government has taken several initiatives for the development of tribals, including allotting forestland for cultivation and creating a marketing system for the NTFP products. NTFPs are becoming well known to the outside world and the increased demand for them has created a clamor among tribals for more lands and rights for their livelihood.

History of the Paliyan Tribe

The Paliyan tribal community has been early forest dwellers in Tamil Nadu. They were hunter-gatherers who used to live in caves and they relied on stream caught fish and crab, and edibles available in the forests for sustenance. Gradually they started agriculture on encroached lands. They claim that they learnt agriculture by observing the nature. They claim that they observed that when they threw away seeds after eating fruits, these grew into plants. They are engaged in the cultivation of millets (finger millet and foxtail millet), along with tapioca and some bean varieties.

The produce was sold to the outside traders in exchange for food such as rice, clothes, warm beddings etc. Many of these traders are those who also extend small amount of loans to the tribals. This loan amount has grown over a period of time and tribals were unable to repay it. Some of the traders have confiscated tribal lands as a compensation for non-repayment for loans. The traders, using their influence and money, get the title deed for the land they confiscated from the Paliyan tribals.

These outside traders started growing oranges, coffee, banana, vegetables, pepper etc. The timber tree *nelramaram* was also introduced by the traders. The traders have also engaged the Paliyan tribals as bonded labourers in their estates. During their forefathers' time, they were engaged as bonded labourers in private estates. They were paid wages in kind, they had a very subsistence existence surviving on rice, and ragi gruel for 3 days and on tapioca and honey collected from forests for the remaining days. During their fathers' period they started getting wage in terms of money. Also, the wage was 25 paise and 50 paise.

When the bonded labour system was abolished during 1976, the government resettled them on lands taken from public lands under the Land Reforms Act of 1961. Many of the settlers felt that they had been given a raw deal in this resettlement. They claim that they had been settled in rocky areas, many of them have still not been given title deeds for these lands, and the government has not followed up in bringing basic amenities to these settlements. The communities, who lived in the forest areas, were settled in 33 different villages spread out in the area.

Livelihood options

One of the livelihood options for the early Paliyan community was NTFP collection. Lichen collection was not their traditional livelihood option. It was introduced to them by private traders, who came to collect other NTFP products like honey, gooseberry etc. People in the age group of 10-50 years engage in lichen collection, during peak season. This is done for 4 days in a week. After lichens collection was introduced, it has become the major NTFP product. During 1988, the price paid for 1 Kg lichen was Rs.25/-

The second option for livelihood is as daily labour on private estates. The main crops in these estates are coffee, oranges, and pepper. The tribals engage in weeding, and harvesting of these produce. In coffee estates, they are also engaged in cleaning and post harvest operations.

The third option for livelihood is cultivation on land, allotted to them by Forest Department. The forest department had given land at the rate of 3 acres per household to all those who had a community certificate. These tribals got the land after a long struggle with the Forest Department. They were inspired to struggle by hearing about tribals in other states, like Maharashtra etc being given land by Forest Department to reduce their dependency on forests. This encouraged the Paliyars to negotiate and demand more land for themselves too. They got this land in 2006.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the extent of dependency on NTFP lichen species for livelihood by the men and women of Paliyan tribals.

- To identify the NTFP items, use and sale of NTFPs, from a Tribal Community of Western Ghats, Tamil Nadu.
- To evaluate the contribution of NTFPs to the Tribal Livelihood and calculate the profit from the collection and sale of important marketable NTFP products.

Methodology

For the purpose of a quantitative study, structured pre-tested interview schedules have been employed and the samples have been chosen through a process of stratified random sampling method.

The qualitative study is based on PRA methods and different PRA tools used in the study are transect, time line and trend analysis, seasonal calendar, resource mapping, gendered roles, responsibilities and institutional linkages. The report is the outcome of compilation of the outputs from both the quantitative and qualitative approaches of study. Thus, outputs from the qualitative studies have been used to strengthen and add value to the resulting inferences drawn from the quantitative study.

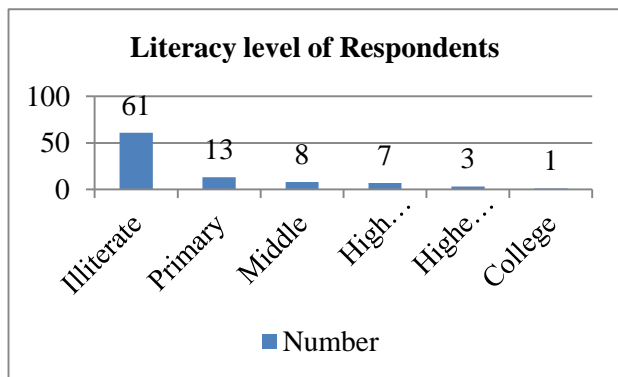
Area of Study

The baseline household survey was carried out in Thandikkudi, Pannaikkadu, Poolathur and K.C.Patti Panchayats. Details of villages surveyed in the panchayaths and the hamlets therein are given. The focus group discussions were conducted in Korankombu, AmmaNagar, Kadugudhadi, Moolaiyaru, and Vazhagiri hamlets.

Surveyed Area Details		
Panchayath	Villages	Hamlets
Thandikudi	Thandikudi	Ammanagar Kadugudhadi Murugan Kovil
Kaamanoor	Kaamanoor	Malayakkadu
Pannaikkadu Town	Vazhagiri Moolaiyaru Vadagaraiparai	Vazhagiri Moolaiyaru Vadagaraparai
K.C.Patti	K.C.Patti Kuppammalpatti	Koravanachi Odai Korankombu
Poolathur	Manathevu	Manathevu

Socio-Economic Details of Respondents

A total of 93 respondents were surveyed out of which 53 were women and 40 were men. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 70 with mode being 45. Of the 93 respondents, 91 belonged to the Scheduled Tribes and one to Scheduled Caste and one to the Mannadiyar caste. The Scheduled Tribes of Thanthikudi are *Paliyars*. The major sub-groups are *Deiva paliyar* and *Vana Paliyar*.



More than 63 percent of the respondents were illiterate. Among those who were literate, they had a school level of education. Among the 53 women respondents, 30, (comprising 57%) were illiterate while in the case of men it was 63 percent. The majority of the literates (14 out of 34) have attended primary schooling, 10 out of 34 had been to middle school, 6 out of 34 had High school level education and 3 out of 34 had higher secondary level education. The lone college graduate was a woman.

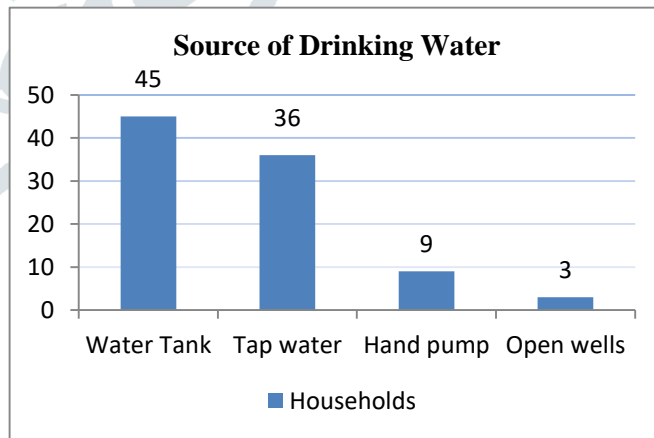
Marital Status

Of the 93 respondents, 71 were married, 5 unmarried (3 women & 2 men), 12 widows, and 5 were single (4 women & 1 man). Family systems among the tribes in the region are predominantly nuclear with 77 of 93 respondents living in nuclear family while the remaining 16 of 93 live in joint family systems. Except for 3 respondents, 90 out of 93 said they lived in own house, which included 47 out of 53 women and 29 out of 40 men. 33 out of 90 respondents who lived in own house had the house title deed in the woman's name, most of the time the wife. 15 out of 90 had title deed in husband's name and 19 out of 90 had title deed in the name of either their parents or their in-laws. 23 out of 90 houses did not have a title deed for their house, which included 10 women respondents. 12 of the 93 households did not have any response to questions on household assets ownership.

39 out of 93 houses were concrete houses, 29 out of 93 had tiled houses, 23 out of 93 had tin sheets for roofing, and 2 out of 93 had polythene sheets. 54 of the 93 households had electricity in their house. Mixie, grinder and televisions were among the most reported household assets, with 67 out of 81 households who responded reporting owning all three of these assets. This could be because these household assets were distributed by the Government of Tamil Nadu for households with ration cards and 69 out of 93 households possessed a ration card. Over and above, these assets that they got as entitlement, few households, around 6 out of 81 reported ownership of motorbike and one of the households reported presence of fridge too.

Source of Drinking Water

The major source of drinking water was the water tank and tap water, with 45 and 36 out of 93 respondents, respectively reporting as major source of drinking water and 9 out of 93 respondents reported depending on hand pumps for drinking water. Some of the households 9 out of 93, depended on stream water for domestic purposes like bathing, washing, and cleaning.



Private land ownership by households was not found among the *paliyar* households in Thanthikudi, with none of the respondents reporting any ownership of land. 65 out of 93 respondents reported having user rights over homestead land given to them by the Department of Forestry. Of this, 35 were women. This land holding was in the range of 1 to 3 acres and is given to those households, which have proper community certificate. Majority of the households reported raising coffee, horticultural crops like orange, hill banana, passion fruit, jackfruit and other horticultural crops on the land they got from the Department. These products they sold in commission shops at Oddanchathram, Palani, Madurai and Pannaikadu; or gave it on contract. Focus group discussions with people across the villages revealed a trend of some families buying land in their name from caste people. It was said that people who do not have community certificates and are excluded

from accessing forestlands and lack the resources to buy private land, often encroach forestland illegally and cultivate them.

Farming was reported as a primary occupation by 29 of 93 respondents of which 6 were women and 46 of 93 reported agriculture wage labours on private estates as their primary occupation, and 32 among them were women. NTFP collection was reported as primary occupation by 5 households, of which 1 was a household with a woman respondent. Of the remaining, 1 was a driver, 5 were housewives and 7 did not have a response.

Agriculture Wage Labour

Agriculture wage labour is reported as an important secondary occupation with 29 of 93 respondents citing this to be their secondary occupation. Farming their own land was a secondary occupation for 6 respondents, while NTFP collections were reported by 3 as a secondary occupation. Though 25 of 93 respondents reported owning livestock, only 3 of 93 reported animal husbandry, goat rising and poultry as a secondary occupation. 2 of 93 respondents worked in the non-agriculture sector, with one as a teacher and the other in a NGO. The teacher was a female respondent and the NGO worker was a male respondent. Majority of the women, 36 out of 53 did not report any secondary occupation.

Availability of NTFP Products

Since the project was focused on commercialization and conservation of NTFP especially lichens, both the quantitative and qualitative study focused on this aspect of the Paliyar livelihood. The major NTFP products were lichen, honey, gallnut, broomstick, gooseberry, poorvalipattai, indhampattai, kadukkai, seevakai, thadpootkodi, senbagapoo etc.

A total of about 26-27 items were listed by the community but they said many of these items were not available now due to overexploitation or change in species composition in forests. Moreover, many of the items were collected in small quantities and meant for household consumption only.

Details of some of the major NTFPs that are collected and marketed as of now are given below:

Non Timber Forest Produce			
S.No	Local Name	S.No	Local Name
1	Paasam, Kal paasi	13	Pei pudalai
2	Thenu	14	Indampatti
3	Periya nellikkaai	15	Lemongrass
4	Kadukkaai	16	Poorvalipatti
5	Eechamaaru	17	Marakkungliyam
6	Kaapikottai	18	Kurumbaver
7	Vazakkai	19	Vallikkizangu
8	Palminikkam Poo	20	Seeyakkai
9	Senbagapoo	21	Manjai
10	Kaanum Milagai	22	Thehlukkai
11	Idaivalai	23	Palivukkeerai
12	Thatpootkodi	24	Vallikkizangu

Seasonality of NTFP			
NTFP	Available Months	Peak Season	Lean Season
Lichen	6 to 8	June to December	March-May
Honey	6	April-May to August-September	February to April
Gallnut	4-5	December-March	April
Broomstick	12		

Lichens

Major sources of lichens are, primarily, from forestlands and, secondarily from private lands. The community has access and use rights over forestlands. In private lands, they need to obtain the permission of the landowner. This permission is often very limited. One, because the private land owners fear that in the event of any mishap during NTFP collection, they will be expected to compensate. Second, after the fruiting stage of coffee and orange, private land owners do not allow anyone inside the plantation/orchard for fear of theft. The community collects many varieties of lichens (pasam). The different varieties are *pachai* (green), *karuppu* (black), *vellai* (white) and *poo pasam* (flower). Pachai and poopasam are said to have no economic value. The light coloured vellai pasam is said to fetch the highest price.

Majority of the respondents 34 out of 93 (of whom 10 were women) reported availability of lichens for 6 months in a year, 20 out of 93 (7 women) cited 9 months, 14 out of 93 cited less than 6 months and 7 of the 93 (3 women) cited throughout the year. On an average, lichens are available for a period of 6-8 months in a year. The peak months for lichen availability are during rainy season, which is during the months of June to December. The lean period for lichens is the summer months of March to May. Lichens though available in summer will be of poor quality, they will be dry and powdery. During peak months, a minimum of 3 kg to a maximum of 10 kg can be harvested. During peak availability months, a man can harvest on an average 6 kg of lichens while the woman will harvest an average of 3 kg of lichens per day. During the lean months, the average harvest of a man can be about 3 kg and that of a woman could be 1 kg.

Lichens are harvested when there is a little moisture in them. Care is taken not to chip off the bark along with the lichens. Some portion of the lichen is left on the tree as a conservation measure to help in regeneration. The collected lichens are cleaned to remove impurities like dust and other materials, and sun dried. The full lichens and the powder are separated. The sundried lichens have to be stored in jute sacks. None of the respondents except one reported receiving any training for quality control in lichen harvesting, handling or storage. One of the respondents reported having been trained on Lichen handling by one trader from Madurai.

Lichen's marketing

The majority of the respondents reported selling lichens to the village trader. The price of lichens is Rs.100-150/kg. The respondents said it is much below the price that they would receive from traders and markets in Madurai. However, they also said that they do not have any option of selling lichens in the outside market, as collection and sale of lichens from trees is prohibited by the Forest Department. They are allowed only to collect lichens found on rocks and sell it. They reported that there was a nexus between the local traders and the Forest Department which allowed the local traders are able to get away with this illegal harvesting for commercial purposes.

In addition to this, the local traders also bring in their own people and harvest lichens. These people are not natives of the region and do not understand the role of lichens in forest regeneration and forest health. Thus they overexploit the lichens. They also damage the bark of the tree in the process of harvesting lichens. Their carelessness in throwing half-burnt cigars also leads to forests fires in the area.

Honey

Honey is available for a period of 6 months. The respondents cited April-May, June-July, July-Aug and Aug-Sept as the peak availability periods for honey. The lean periods were February-March and March-April. A maximum of 10-12 litres of honey can be collected during peak months and a maximum of 3 litres can be collected during lean months. Honey is collected along with the honey comb and the wax coating on it. The wax scrapings of the honeycomb are removed with a knife and honey is strained through a white cloth. Honey sticking on to the wax is removed by boiling it in water. The honey is stored in plastic bottles and sold.

There were no fixed channels for marketing of honey. Many said that they sell it in loose to anyone who would buy it, traders, households, tourists etc. Some said they sell it in the Government Department store Amudam at Batalakundu, a nearby town. Some said they sell it in the local market. A litre of honey they said would go for a minimum of Rs.100 and maximum of Rs.300 or even sometimes shoot up to Rs.600/. Kombuthen is used for medicinal purpose. *Pettithen* (Honey collected from bees reared in boxes) is not common here, but they would like to start it. *Pettithen* is said to fetch more remuneration.

Gallnut

Gallnut is available for a maximum of 4-5 months ranging from December to April. The peak months are December to March, while the lean month is April. Harvest during peak months ranges from 50-100Kgs while that during lean month harvest merely yields 35 Kgs. Gallnut has to be harvested in raw form, sundried for 4 days and stored in sacks. Gallnut is sold to agents or local traders. A kilogram of gallnut tannin would go for Rs.25-40/- and sometimes even Rs.100.

Broomstick

Broomsticks are available almost throughout the year. Broomstick grasses are collected in ranges from 15-50 mudich (*a mudich is a bundle the size of one handful*) while on an average they manage to collect 25 mudich per month. Few respondents also reported '*vallikizhangu*' and '*palminikkampoo*' as products they collect from the forest. These are available for a period of 3-5 months in some parts of the forests. While harvesting broomstick, alternate 2 layers are left to help in regeneration. It is said that everyone in the community follows this conservation measure. Broom sticks are sold in the local market, to agents of big private traders and also to households locally. A green bunch/bundle would go for Rs.25/bundle and a dry bunch would go for Rs.50/ per bunch/bundle.

Roles and Responsibilities of Men and Women in NTFP

Role of Men & Women in Collection, Marketing , Use and Decision Making related to NTFP – Thandikkudi												
NTFP	Collection			Use Rights			Marketing			Decision Making		
	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B
Lichen			√			√			√	√		
Gallnut		√				√	√			√		
Broomstick		√			√		√			√		
Honey	√					√	√			√		
Gooseberry			√			√	√			√		
Milaguthakkali	√	√				√					√	
Vethilavalkizhangu	√			√	√	√					√	

Both men and women are engaged in lichen collection. Women collect it from rocks and lower branches, while men collect it from trees. Women, on an average, collect 1 kg/day while men collect around 4-5 kg/day. They engage in lichen collection 4-5 days per week during peak seasons. The lichens collected by

them are marketed independently by them. The men sell it sometimes on a daily basis to the trader. The women collect and keep it for a week and then sell it to local trader who comes and collects it at their door step.

Decision making about sales, the use of money realised etc. is done by men. In the case of gallnut, they stated that they are not able to collect enough quantity to be marketed. Moreover there are no local markets for gallnut tannins. The gallnut they collect is powdered, strained and then used as tooth powder. Gooseberry collected is kept for home consumption and is usually made into pickles.

Though women are actively involved in collecting all the NTFP other than honey, they do not have any active role when it comes to marketing. In the case of tubers, the smaller and shallower tubers are harvested by women, while the bigger and the deeper placed tubers are harvested by men. All NTFP products taken out for marketing has to pass through the Forest check post, and take a receipt from the Forest check post authorising sale, before its sold outside. These procedures are done by the men in the community.

Roles and Responsibilities of Men and Women in Crop Management

Weeding, coffee harvesting, coffee cleaning and vegetable harvesting are done by women. Orange harvesting, orange tree pruning, and pepper harvesting are done by men. Coffee pruning is done by both men and women. The wage rate for women is Rs.100/day for all operations. The wage rate for men for orange tree pruning is Rs.300/day and for pepper harvesting per day is Rs.200/day.

Operations	Who Does			Who Decides		
	M	W	B	M	W	B
Weeding		√			√	
Coffee Harvesting		√			√	
Coffee Cleaning		√				
Orange harvesting	√					
Orange tree Pruning	√					
Coffee pruning	√	√			√	
Pepper harvesting	√					
Vegetable harvesting		√				√

Membership in Institutions

48 out of 93 respondents said they did not have membership to any institution, which included 24 women respondents. 19 of 93 (of which 12 are women) were members of Village Forest Councils (VFCs) (*vanakuzhu*). The remaining were members in SHG groups. The majority of them reported individual membership. Only 3 reported membership for the whole household. Most of them were just members in these institutions except for 2 (1 women and 1 man) who were presidents and another woman respondent who was treasurer. The major role of the forest council was in monitoring and protecting the forests. They are called into action during forest fire outbreaks, and in generally guarding the forests against encroachments and reporting to the forest and police department in case of any anti social activities being noticed within the forest areas. The forest councils are also authorised to facilitate sale of NTFP, but they seldom take on this role. In many places, the community felt that forest councils were in the absolute control of the forest. The respondents said that the effectiveness of the forest council depends on how the Ranger of the forest operates. If the Ranger is a corrupt individual he doesn't give any recognition to the forest council and does not consult them on matters in which their consensus is needed as per the rules governing village forest councils.

During the PRA, the different villages classified the organisations into big, medium and small organisations based on their perception of the importance of these institutions in their lives and livelihoods. Except for institutions like the coffee board, election office, NGOs, and MP MLA offices, all the rest of the institutions listed were either ranked Big or Medium. The institutions were classified into strong, medium, and poor according to their degree of association. Most of the individuals claimed strong association with the various institutions. The only exception was the health services, which some in the men's groups did not articulate as having a strong association with because they did not trust the medicines prescribed by the health department.

The women group classified the institutions listed by them as Big in terms of importance and Strong in terms of association (outputs from PRA given as Annexure).

Access to Different Institutions					
Institution	Yes (Y)	Female (Y)	No (N)	No Response (NR)	Total
Collector Office	55	30	3	35	93
Adi-Dravidar Office	6	4	14	73	93
SBI	8	6	11	74	93
RDO	12	9	2	81	93
Thasildhar	44	24	12	37	93
VAO	31	16	7	55	93
Panchayat office	19	8	5	69	93
NGOs	30	19	14	49	93
Forest Department	8	4	10	75	93
Forest Councils	6	2	11	76	93
Health Centres	38	21	8	47	93

Access to different Institutions

Access to the collector's office, Tahsildar office, village administrative office, NGOs and health centres have been reported by several respondents. The Collector's office and Thasildar's office seem to be the most accessed offices with more than 50% of the respondents reporting visiting these two offices. The Collector's office is approached for submitting memorandums and applications for basic needs such as housing, water, electricity, getting community certificate and getting general entitlements. The Thehsildhar is also visited for getting community certificates, house title deed, ration card, income certificate etc.

The Forest Department and forest councils provide small loans, grants for constructing toilets, sheds and also allot 1-2 acres of forest land with user rights for the community. The community can cultivate this land and use the produce for household consumption and marketing.

Facilitation Needs Articulated by Community

Most of the facilitation demanded was for marketing of NTFP products, especially lichens. The community wanted help in doing away with the middle men. NGOs and civil society organisations could help in direct marketing of NTFP. The desire for help in the direct marketing of products was articulated very clearly by both men and women. The individuals also felt that the Forest Department should permit NTFP collection and facilitate direct marketing of these products by the local community. Some of the respondents also articulated the need for a space for placing honey bee boxes for rearing honey bees. This was said mostly by men.

They also articulated the need for facilitation in

- Obtaining title deed for the land given to them by the Forest Department.
- Accessing government entitlements
- Finding alternate livelihood training for women (stitching, tailoring etc)
- Finding alternate market options (outside Kodaikanal region – In Madurai, Coimbatore etc where the nexus between local traders and the traders in these places will be less).

Role of NGOs

An NGO, ACT India Foundation has trained young women in the community in tailoring and mushroom cultivation. The women in the community also are skilled in basket weaving. Many expressed a desire for skill development in women and help in starting of tailoring units, mushroom production units and other skill based micro-enterprises.

In general, there was a negative view about NGOs and the tribals had an unwelcome attitude which was reflected across the villages. The tribals felt that NGOs generally come and use tribal poverty to get funding and run short term projects, and give tall promises, which are never kept or followed up later on. They also felt, NGOs divide the community by supporting those who are favorable to them.

Table 1

Lichen Gatherers

Name of the Settlement	Status	Male	Female	Total
Ammanagar	Yes	7	1	8
	No	0	1	1
Kadugudhadi	Yes	30	28	58
	No	19	28	47
Korangkombu	Yes	32	2	34
	No	19	52	71
Vazagiri	Yes	12	8	20
	No	3	4	7

Table 2

Broomstick Gatherers

Name of the settlement	Status	Male	Female	Total
Ammanagar	Yes	7	1	8
	No	0	1	1
Kadugudhadi	Yes	4	6	10
	No	45	48	93
Korangkombu	Yes	13	2	15
	No	38	52	90
Vazagiri	Yes	10	8	18
	No	5	4	9

Collection and Use of NTFPs

Though NTFPs have been used for household purposes for a long time, commercial extraction of NTFPs started with the harvesting of lichen. Since then, many NTFPs were rapidly identified and commercialized. In 2014 a total of 122 men and 124 women across the four settlements were involved in NTFP related activities as part time or full time work. The Paliyar tribal community collects around 23 products from the forest. Among them, 13 products were used for their subsistence and commercial purposes, whereas 10 products were used only for commercial purpose. Keeping the sample survey results, Table 2 shows that the most of people were dependant with two products like Lichen and Broomstick for their commercial purpose. Table 1 represents the lichen gatherers from the four communities.

Conclusion

The dependence of Tribal populations on the natural and forest resources around them cannot be overstated. In spite of the economic growth that is helping large parts of urban India, certain pockets of extreme poverty still exist, where survival depends on the harvesting and sale of NTFPs. In spite of numerous schemes by the government, tribal populations continue to live in poverty and are often victims of unscrupulous traders and middle men. In addition, excessive dependence on forest products has led to environmental degradation. The ideal would be to have alternative sources of employment so that tribal populations can gradually wean themselves away from such employment to engage in ones where there is greater income potential.

