

THE ROLE OF TRIBAL WOMEN, THEIR OCCUPATION IN RURAL ECONOMY IN KODAIKANAL

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Abstract

In a society a man gets power, respect, happiness, self-complacency and authority by his occupation. Economy is the basic need of all the people. A county's poverty and its prosperity rest on its production. Adam Smith of the 18th century calls land, investment, labour and organization as the factors of production. If the land and money goes together, the economic status can be heightened. It is a man's low and high economic conditions that he is compelled to be a subordinate to the other. The tribal economy depends on forest produce. The economy of the nomadic tribe was entirely based on the accumulative method of food gathering and hunting. The tribes who were the original inhabitants, enjoyed total freedom. Later they were pushed into the hills and jungles by the advance of the more vigorous people. The rest of the people who learnt to till the soil and sow seeds were not prepared to abandon their land but were enslaved by the new comers. Thus isolated, some of them came to live in a hostile environment by a simple substance like gathering food, forest produce, hunting, and fishing and by axe cultivations.

Keywords: *self-complacency, economic status, tribal economy, Forest Management, Land Acquisition, Unemployment*

The Formal and Tribal Economy

The concept of individual property is the basis of the profit motive as well as of the contradiction between the tribal and formal societies and of their impoverishment. Property is based on a written document of ownership in the name of an individual or a moral person (for example a company) and gives to that individual the right to use it according to his/her will, with no obligation to anyone else unless it goes against the right of another individual. Literacy and access to the formal administrative and legal structures, is essential to it. These factors have implications for the tribals in general and women among them in particular. Studies on the impact of planned development show what has been presented as modernization has forced many of them to change over from an informal to the formal society, without any preparation. These two societies emanate from often contradictory foundations. The formal economic, social, political and legal systems are based on the concept of property, the individual and the written word. On the other hand, the informal, particularly tribal economy is based on the concept of the resource, word of mouth and legitimacy provided by the community (Sharma 1978:8-12).

The informal tribal economy, on the contrary, is based on the concept of a resource i.e. the livelihood that is to be used according to the needs of the community and

preserved the posterity. Community, in this perspective, is viewed not merely as the present but also the past and future. Their resource management systems are an indication of this culture. In most tribal societies, ecosystems symbolizing the ancestors (e.g. the sasan or burial ground in the middle of a forest), the present (e.g. the saran where young men were traditionally trained to become protectors of the community), and the future (e.g. the akhra, the dancing ground where young men and women met and chose their life partners), were accorded total protection. Other species that were crucial to their economy (for example sal trees) were granted special protection. Useful but less important ones were accorded partial protection. The use of species not protected in this manner was regulated through social control mechanisms to ensure equity and sustainability. Traditionally the tribals have depended on the word of mouth and legitimacy by the community. Similarly, in contrast to the formal litigation based system, truth in their culture was unambiguous

As such, their system is in sharp contrast to the individual based culture of the formal society. The first contradiction arises from the fact that the individual and the written word are the bases of its legitimacy. The tribal regions, being administratively neglected, had neither the physical nor social infrastructure was developed adequately. Consequently, literacy is low among the tribals. Against the national literacy average of more than 50%, among tribal men it is below 30% and among women around 15% (Singh 1955: 295). As such, a written ownership document is a rarity. The administrative apparatus is controlled by the traditionally powerful classes and the powerless tribals are denied access to it. Besides, much of their economy had depended on the barter system till a generation or two ago. Monetary economy is a recent phenomenon (Roy Burman 1993: 184-186). Thus there are contradictions between their traditional and the formal systems.

Forest Management and Tribals

Though more than two thirds of the tribals depend on forests for an important part of their livelihood, forest management in India is state centered. Till independence, its basis was conservation and revenue for the state. With planned development, they became sources of raw material for industry. With the formation of forest development corporations, profit became an important motivate. Conservation, while retaining its importance at the policy level, began to be relegated in practice, to the background In this framework, the process of development has come to be equated with the channelizing of an ever more intense volume of resources through the intervention of the state apparatus at the cost of the state exchequer, to sub serve the interest of the urban and rural elite, as a result, state subsidies have become a central element of the development process in independent India these subsidies have served to lower the prices of many goods and services primarily for the privileged segment of Indians society. Thus deprived of their basic

needs, the tribals feel in to the hands of the merchants and money lenders who accompanied the industrial agent. Slowly their land was alienated to the money lender and some of them became bonded labourers. For sheer survival, most others made transition from a constructive to a destructive dispense on forests. They began to cut trees as bonded or daily wage labourers of timer contractors and smugglers or for sale as fuel wood.

Land Acquisition and the Tribals

Also the land laws are based on individual ownership and a written document. Only in the sixth schedule areas of the north - east is the right of the community recognized in a limited form. Moreover the colonial land acquisition act 1894 has been declared an overriding law. As such protective measures such as ban on land alienation to non - tribals can be ignored in its application. Its consequence is development induced displacement particularly in resource - rich regions by projects such as industries and mines. Most decision makers view it as a necessary price paid for national development. On the other hand because of its adverse impact on the powerless classes like the tribals those who view development not only as economic growth but also as improving the standard of living of the whole population have serious reservations about displacement itself. Secondly, the public purpose which is the basis of the land Acquisition Act, 1894, has not been defined till now. The state alone has the right to define it. Based on this right, the Government of India amended the Act in 1984, to make it possible for the public sector to acquire land directly, and for the private sector to acquire it through the Government. Till then, the Government alone could acquire it and only for the public sector. The meaning of public purpose has thus been expanded without defining it officially. Even without this amendment, abuse of the concept was common.

Displacement and Unemployment

The condition of mechanization began to be accepted by displacing agencies already from the 1980s. Till then the T. N. Singh formula stipulated that the displacing mines and industries give one job per displaced family. It certainly had its shortcomings. For example, some families have several adults and not only one got the job. Since the land records are often in the name of a dead ancestor, conflicts arose in many families about who is to get the job (BJA & NBJK 1993:35). Jobs were offered only to men except in the rare cases of the widow or single woman being head of the family. Most jobs were unskilled, quite often on a temporary basis. But it was a step in the right direction, but with mechanization, the number of unskilled jobs was reduced substantially. So in 1986, SCOPE (Standing Committee for Public Enterprises) abandoned the scheme (MRD 1993: 1.2).

Another area of concern is the women's additional workload after deforestation. With industrial intervention the forests near the village from which the women got the most

of the family's food and other needs, are destroyed. She has to walk a longer distance to collect food.

The shortage should also be seen in the context of the change in the culture of the tribals, particularly after displacement or migration to the city slums. The first is change in the consumption pattern of men. They spend more money than in the past on clothes, entertainment and other trivia. After displacement, the women is more often than not, reduced to being a housewife alone since the land and forests where she worked to grow or collect much of the family's food, are taken over the project. Now she has to buy food from outside. But only one job is given, usually to the man. The women who depends on this single salary, has to run the household with it, after much of it is spent on these trivia (Fernandes and Raj 1992: 153-155).

In this context of reduced cash and supplies and price rise should be examined another change viz. internalization of upper caste culture. Some analysts (e.g. Gaventa 1980:27-30) state that an unequal society cannot be maintained without the subalterns internalizing the dominant culture and viewing themselves as inferior. The change in the consumption pattern is a part of this process of internalizing the dominant culture since the tribals consider their own habit inferior. We saw this internalization also in the acceptance of the ideology of women's subordination. Tribal women, without being equal to men, have traditionally enjoyed a higher social status than their high caste counterparts did (Fernandes and Menon 1987: 63-73). This is being diluted.

The food gathering and hunting tribes were sparing in the use of the products, which nature offered them the they seldom collected more than they needed for a day. The only thing they perhaps stored was honey as a treasure. When the availability of food was exhausted in one area they moved on to another place, but within their own territory. Trespassing was strictly forbidden. But after a few decades which the knives and billhooks, pots, cloths, ornaments and occasionally liquor, tobacco and other stimulants.

These tribes were rather lean in number for they were the only relics of larger communities that had been enslaved, while these have escaped or were separated in the forests and hills. In course of time, they had developed into different tribal societies. The jungle tribes retreated still further as the conquests of the forests by the people of the plains increased and collecting could no their liking. There were areas where the infiltration of the advanced population into tribal territory resulted in the tribal communities being gradually absorbed into their caste system into its lowest strata.

Land Ownership

After the forests having depleted the chief source of livelihood of the paliyans is agriculture. A person's relationship to the land can be of two types; either he is a owner or a non-owner. The non-owner can be divided into two groups. Among the non-owners are

found those who have taken land on lease and those who are purely landless. Among the paliyans cultivable land is very little.

Type and Mode of Work and Payment

Type of work	No. of Males	No. of Females
Agricultural worker	90	25
Estate labourer	17	5
Self employment	36	20
Land owner	64	-
others	13	22
Mode of work		
Permanent[full-time]	-	-
Temporary [casual]	163	137
No. of months		
5-6	120	112
7-less than 10	23	25
10-12	15	-
Mode of payment		
Daily basis	20	17
Weekly basis	107	100
Monthly basis	36	20

The land ownership pattern of the sample household is explained in table. From this table we can infer that 21.33 percent of them owned land but all of them under the category of marginal farmers having a holding of 2 acres while 78.67 percent of them remain landless. The economic dynamics among the paliyans in earlier days remained restricted to forest, and agriculture.

Among the tribals 78.67 percent of the population is without land and they work for daily wages. Their main occupation is agriculture. These paliyans work for daily wages in plantation and farmers' invariably, both the husband and wife go to work together. They get a nominal wage from the employer. Their subsidiary occupation is collecting small forest produce. The paliyans whose occupation is cooly work. The main work of the kattunyakans is kudukuppai occupation. Thurston in his book calls the people who came on the streets during night as kudukudukaaram. They go about striking the udukai from door seeking alms.

Occupation

Sl. No	Occupation	No. of Paliyans	No. of Kattunayakans
1	agriculture	192	17
2	hunting	10	33
3	fishing	8	-
4	Honey gathering	20	

5	Oil preparation	20	-
	Total	250	50

Productive Assets

Sl. No.	Land Relations	Number of persons	Total Acres	Percentage
1	Owners	64	128(dry land)	21.33
2	Tenants	-	-	-
3	Landless	236	-	78.67
	Total	300	128	100

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The occupational pattern is shown in shown in table. the occupational pattern of the sample village shows a high degree of predominance of agriculture. Nearly 192 households reveal that they depend on agriculture. Since agriculture is seasonal in nature, they depend on secondary occupation and minor forest products (MFP) also. Only 43 households engage in hunting.

The secondary occupations of the sample tribal households are dairying and casual labour in kodaikanal (on some forest contract work). The important minor forest products in the sample areas are honey collection, gum, making of broomsticks, wood collection, soap nuts etc. The occupational patterns is shown in table. The occupational pattern of the samble village shows a high degree on agriculture. Since agriculture is seasonal in nature they depend on secondary occupation and manor forest products (MFP) also. Only 43 households engage in hunting.

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Source: Filed Survey

Table present several characteristics of employment among the tribal respondent's such as the type of work, the node of work the number of months engaged in work, and the mode of payment. A majority of the tribes from all the three categories are found to be agricultural workers. In contrast, about half of the males are able to get work only for 5 to 6 months, whereas where as half the females get more work. As regards payment, it is on weekly basis for most of the respondents.

Agriculture

The town tradesmen who wished to collect the products that grew in the mountains like honey, kungkiliyam, goose-berry, kilaiakai, kadukkaai, lemon, guvava, jack fruit and medicinal herbs took them on lease for a stipulated time. To get the products that grow in the mountains they have link with the paliyans. Since all the parts of the mountains are familiar to the paliyans this vocation is a deserving one for them. The field study makes known to the paliyans this vocation is a deserving one for them. The field study makes known of the fact that a man mayandi lived in the place known as mayandi kovil paarai and used to collect kungliyam.

If the women of the paliyans of kadamanaavu, kombaikaadu and savarikaadu rather attain puberty or expire the town people who had taken the mountains on lease would get for them dhoties and sarees. The Kattunayakans do not engage themselves in such deals. They go for daily wage. The paliyans of polur, kamarajar colony indulge in

agriculture very well. Moreover they cultivate near their houses things like beans, catot, cabbage, potatoes, beet-root, radish and garlic. The paliyans who dwell in sirumalai and palani taluks collect the products that grow in the mountains like lavanga, chathikai (nut mag). Kalpasam, kungiliyam, goose - berry and nekkatangikai (a kind of herb), kalpasam, kungiliyam, goose-beery and nekkatangikai (a kind of herb) and sell them to the merchants.

Based on the occupation that they do the Dindigul Paliyans are called as Mannaka Paliyans, kaani paliyans and vedua paliyans and live in the dense forest. Their recreation is to play with the bow arrow. The Mannaka Paliyans engage themselves in agriculture. The kaani Paliyans eke their living by selling the tubers and honey since the Mannaka Paliyans of kamarjar colony cultivate the land. The paliyans of palani taluk who hunt with the bow and arrow are known as veduva paliyans. Those who depend on honey and tubers are called as kaani paliyans.

However, among the Kattunayakans no such division are found on the basis of their occupations. The Kattunayakans who live in the mountains of niligris engage themselves in agriculture successfully. The Kattunayakans do not take up agriculture as their occupation. The paliyans who live in palani taluk do the work of climbing the mango trees near their area.

The paliyans are nomadic and their life is closely associated with forests. They get themselves engaged in professions like hunting, cultivating in forests and guarding of regions. Their work changes according to the seasons. During the month of November and December, they get themselves engaged in professions like gathering potatoes, roots and gooseberries. In the month of January, they collect honey and echchanhizhagu (a kind of tubers). During the summer, season (April and May) they work in mango and tamarind gardens. The paliyans cultivate nothing, not even sweet potatoes. They pet no animals except a stray dog one or two. An axe, a knife and are the instruments a paliyan carries. The paliyans are capable of hard manual work and for collecting of the strain.

Hunting

In the days of yore the paliyans engaged themselves in the profession of hunting. In order to meet his food wants he went from place to place in search of the water sources. It was a general characteristic feature of the paliyans and the Kattunayakans to be nomadic in their life. They used to migrate where valli kilangu was available in plenty. Valli kilangu is the staple food of the paliyans. If they had uprooted all the tubers, it would take a long time to grow. Hence they shifted to other places. In the ancient days the way of hunting among the selves was peculiar. The paliyans do not possess bow and arrow. They used to hunt the animals by using the forceps, trapping and arrow. They used to hunt the animals by using the forceps trapping and by digging holes. Hunting in this manner was prevalent in the olden days among the Kattunayakans. But it is not practiced now. The present

generation of people says that they do not know to hunt. In the ancient days the paliyans and the Kattunayakans used to hunt animals like deer varaiadu (goat), hare, squirrel, udumbu (iguana) and red- dog (reddish wild dog). Since the wild life law has been implemented, the tribals area banned from hunting. The Kattunayakans during their leisure time hunt squirrels, hares and mongooses along the fringes of the paliyans hunt the animals in water areas and near the fringes and later burn and eat as food. The kattunayakans have the big as pets. The paliyans on the other hand bring up the sheep and the fowls as domestic animals. The used to accumulate water in the holes found on the mountains. To drink this water animals like hare, deer and mongoose come there. They hide themselves in an ambush and catch the animals which they and burn and eat.

The paliyans hunt for food. On the other hand the Kattunayakans hunt for recreations. The paliyans are experts in rapping the animals by digging a hole. They dig a hole on the way of the animals and on it spread the branches of trees. The animals which come on that way like mila, hare and deer, fall into it. On hearing the groaning of the animals, the paliyans come out of the ambush and begin to attack the animal with stick and scythe. They peel off the skin and through it down. These people are also well versed in aiming at the animals with small stones, and hunt the forest hen, hare squirrel. They also known as to where and when animals like deer, pig and Mila make their movements.

Honey Gathering

The paliyans show great courage in gathering honey. They have their own methods reaching the beehives, whether they are located in a branch of a tall tree or in a deep tree precipitous rock-crevice. They climb trees by using a pole with hook at one end. They fix the hook in a branch and climb up scaling the pole. If the rope to the trunk of a tree on the rock. The rope itself is made by twisting four or five twines of a creeper called karungodi. Which can withstand the weight. One of the parties descends to the beehive with the help of the rope. Another man standing at the top will lower a burning torch by means of a rope. The man lower down pushes with the forked stick so that it comes just below the bee-hive. Then the bee-hive is pierced with another pointed stick. Pieces of the bee-hive is pierced with another pointed stick and they fall with honey on the tray. Pieces of the bee-hive is dismantled. According to tradition, the wife's brother should stand as guard at the top and see to the safety of the rope. Nowadays this is not followed because they have no confidence in the other member of the tribe. The season for honey gathering is from December to April when kurinji flowers blossom.

'Honey is important nutritive food for daily life' even the newborn baby is first given honey to taste. Their survival depends on it. The honey is available in the month of vaigasi (may-june) and Aadi (July-August). Usually three or four men from groups and go for collection during the day. Before the day they avoid having sexual relationship with women

and go for the collection. They pray to their goddess, palichiamman for the honey harvest and to protect them all the dangers they have to face. They collect the stems (runners) of Paal Kodi (black creeper) and strings are hooked at frequent intervals. They spot the honeycombs on the rocks or on tree trunks and branches. They worship on the ground. They take minimum care to see that the fire dose go out spread to the nearby places. The smoke from the fire below makes the bees go out of the comb. While the process is going on, the other men climb down the rocks or climb up the trees in the narrow valley. Every step they take puts their life in danger. Extreme care and concentration is to be observed by each of them. They cut the comb and leave some portion there itself, which will help in the reformation of comb and leave some portion there it, which will help in the reformation of comb later. At present one allowed to enter the forests for honey collection.

The paliyans who go in search of the honeycomb are skilled in many minute things. Furthermore they also know about the different kinds of honey like kadanthi honey, adai honey, kutchi honey, Kombu honey and paarai honey and how to take honey from the comb is known.

The Kattunayakans of N. Puthupatti do not engage themselves in collecting honey. The Kattunayakans of Nilgiris collect honey. They keep a bomboo pole on the tree and keep a leg on the node of it to collect honey. Among the Kattunayakans the art of weaving the baskets is common than the collection of honey.

Fishing

To angle fishes is one of the many occupations of the paliyans. With the help of dhoties they use sieve the fishes, in the water. They also put the Endankai (a kind if herb) and karangakai (a kind of herb) on the portion where the water flows. The fishes that come to drink the water where these vegetables are soaked, drink and the surface of the water swoon because of the consumption of the water. Later the fishes are collected. The kattunayakans do not do the job of fishing.

The Non timber forest produce (NTFP) may be grouped into three major categories like.

- a) Reproductive parts fruits, flowers and seeds.
- b) Vegetative parts like leaves and bark
- c) Plant exudates like gums and resins.

The NTFP are a source of nutrition, medicine and raw materials for various industries. Gathering and processing of NTYFP provides and income to the tribal community. The tribals are not aware of the market potential of the medicinal species.

Commercial Commodities

The benefits procured from the forests other than those that have been numbering Dindugal district by the paliyans are as follows:

- 1) Collection of products from forest for commercial purpose.
- 2) Forest product collected for non-commercial purpose.
- 3) The animals got by hunting
- 4) The medicinal plants used for medicines.

The small products are those that have been got from forests for man's utilization other than the logs of wood. They are medicinal food, taste instigater, oil seeds, the resin from trees, the pulp that oozes out from trees, the milk of tree, barks, colours the minerals used for beautification, forest animals, firewood, bamboo, small logs of wood and fibre. These types of products are got in the heavy moistened temperate forests. These products also satisfy the basic needs of the poor. In the sphere of trade also these products are indispensable. These products not only give revenue but also opportunities to work. In the early stage the paliyans consumed this type of food. It is by consuming these types of food sufficient amount of protein, vitamin and basic minerals are given to the body.

The forest products are auctioned every year by the forest department for trade. The forest are divided into five regions of kodaikanal are divided into five ranges and are given for lease. It is illustrated in the table below:

Sl. No	Ranges	Places
1	Kodaikanal range	The areas around kodaikanal and pannaikaadu.
2	Perumpallam range	The area of kenguvarpatti.
3	Mannavanur range	-
4	Poomparai range	-
5	Periyakulam range	Adukam, pambar east, pambar west, ambaruvi, devathanapatti, and areas of periyakulam.

In the kodaikanal forestry, areas the treded forest products are listed. They are honey pepper, the horn of the deer, tamarind, soap nut, kadukai, aavarampattai, konnaipattai, marapasi, neem seeds, etcham (a species of the dates) leaves, goose-berry, and poathaipul. These products are auctioned every year. These forest products are collected for trade by the paliyans. The paliyans walk a long distance to collect these things. They walk 13 kms to collect kadudai 10.8.kms to collect goose-berry 96 kms to collect mango products lie pasam, kadukai, goose- berry, carrot creeper and date palm are found in abundance in the forest areas of kodaikanal. To collect these products both the men and the women deploy themselves in the task.

Pasam

To collect the pasam the paliyans have to walk a long distance. Hence they employ this purpose. They climb on the trees and scrap the pasam `that spreads its lf on the

brenches of trees with the knife and scythe. A creeper spreads itself on the trees behind the mountains. It is found in plenty on the moistened walls and rocks. This pasam is of three types.

- a) Rock pasam: they are found on either of the stream. It grows on rocks.
- b) Land pasam: found in the moistened areas
- c) Tree pasam: they grow on trees.

When saplings are transported to other places, this pasam acts as a protection for it. They have the capacity to absorb water. In order to prepare the bed for the seeds pasam is used. It is also used as raw materials to prepare products like - 'puliyakadi', acids, liquor, and the rasahath poorath oil. Apart from this it is also used to make polythene and in woven clothes. Pasam is also used in researches concerned with bacteria. In wooden houses it is used to lessen sound.

Kadukai has been got shaking the trees by the men. The women collect it and sell them. Since it contains a kind of acid, it is used as a preservative. In tanning, hides of animals this is very useful. The roots of the tree, bark and wood have a medicinal value about it. Its juice is used in engines and while establishing oil walls. While constructing houses it is added with cement. Its rind is used to clean things. Its fruit is smeared for the outer sores and injuries. It is also smeared on teeth-sores and mouth sores. The kadukai is powdered and is used to heal asthma.

Gooseberry

The paliyans earn good from revenue from gooseberry. In it there is a good amount of vitamin-C. The paliyans think that, since it has sour taste it is good for health. The black color element that is got from the bark of the gooseberry tree and its fruit is used as a preservative. To prepare dye for the hair and the writing ink gooseberry is used. The dried ones are given by the paliyans to make 'shampoo' to other people. The filed study made also revealed that the seeds of the gooseberry are used as a cure for asthma and windpipe related diseases.

Carrot Creeper

Carrot creeper grows well. The paliyans who live in the lower mountainous portions of kodai area earn revenue to a considerable amount. It has a strong acid quality. Hence it is used along with the less acidic fruit juices. It is used as manure. It is also used as fodder. The oil that is needed to make varnish is taken from its seeds.

Etchai

Etchai plant grows to a height of 3 meters in kodaikanal, palani and sirumalai Taluks. Its fruit is very sweet. Hence the paliyans eat well. They also sell them and earn

money. The leaves of etvhai are used to make mat, basket, fashionable handbags, brooms, ropes and thatching the houses.

Endamplant

The paliyans use the nark of end am plant to clean their heads instead of the soap. It is found in kodaikanal and sirumalai.

Setting Herbal Farm

The Tamil Nadu government has set up a herbal farm at the upliftment of the paliyans who collect like medicinal herbs, barks and roots from the mountains are being safeguarded. The paliyans who live in the area of vadakarapaarai get into the mountains and make brooms. This has been sold in the market. Both men and women go into the mountains, collect the broom sticks dry them in front of their houses, trim with the scythes at equal lengths tie them with ropes and sell them in the market or the shops. The paliyans who live in moolaiaru get the coffee fruit from their lands, dry them near their houses, roast, grind them into powder and use them for their use. The remains are sold. Or else they take the coffee fruits sell them to the merchants and get money. It is understood from the field study that the paliyans, who live maayandi kovil paarai area, cut the bark of the kungkiliyam trees found behind their huts and sell them. The paliyans who live in the areas if kuttikaradu and kathaalampaarai of palanitaluk work in the silkworm rearing farm established by the government the paliyans who dwell in pondupuli, gandhinagar, paalaru, and kaththaalampaarai areas work in the mango groves they do jobs like weeding, watering and spraying the pesticides while the women folk go to pluck the mangoes. The paliyans of polur kamarajar colony of kodaikanal taluk cultivate near their houses crops like potato, carrot, beans, orange and chowchow. The forest department people and the contractors use paliyans not only to get honey but also to collect things like the resin used for sealing kunguliyam, kadukai and sekaikkai (organum).

Conclusion

A component of high caste culture that the tribals internationalize as a mode of upward mobility, is the practice of the woman eating last, after feeding the elders, her husband, his brothers, boy children and girl children in that order. In case of food shortages, she may have to starve.

Another symbol of the woman's status loss is changeover from bride price to dowry. Studies (e.g. Luthra 1983) have shown this trend. Bride price symbolizes the woman as an economic assent. The changeover to dowry is a symbol of the woman becoming a liability. One more habit resulting in the woman's oppression is drunkenness and the consequent wife beating. This has intensified particularly after displacement, which is a traumatic

experience. Change of culture is a way of coping with the trauma; Drunkenness is another, among women as well as men. It is much greater among men. In all our studies we saw its consequence not merely in the form of reduced income but also in the form of wife beating (Fernandes and Raj 1992: 156).

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