

A Socio-Economic Review of the Tribes in Kerala

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I. Introduction

A tribe is described as "a group of people, who lives together, having the same language, culture, and history, especially those who do not dwell in towns or cities" by the Cambridge Dictionary. Many families, clans, or other groups that have a common heritage and culture make up a tribe, which is a type of socio-political structure. Leadership is often neither codified nor permanent among these groupings. It is a division in a traditional society made up of families or groups with a shared culture and dialect that are connected by social, economic, religious, or blood ties and usually have a recognised leader.

Depending on where they live, Kerala's tribes differ from one another. Each tribe in Kerala contributes to a rich, distinctive, varied, and important aspect of Indian tradition. Kerala has 35 indigenous communities, which account for 2% of the state's total population. The important tribes in Kerala include the Irular, Uruli, Paniyan, Kapu, Kanikkar, Kadar, and other tribes. The Ulladan tribe is spread throughout Kerala, with members living in the Idukki, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, and Kollam districts, among others.

Kerala's Scheduled Tribe population is 4,84,839, or 1.5% of the total population, according to the 2011 India Census. The Wayanad district in Kerala has the most tribal residents (1,51,443), followed by the districts of Idukki (55,815), Palakkad (48,972), Kasaragod (48,857), and Kannur (41,371). Among Kerala's indigenous people, some of the largest "communities" include Paniyan, Irula, Kattunaikan, and Adiyar. Being a minority community the study towards their socio-economic characteristics is significant to understand the status on their basic indicators.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to the developmental index, even 68 years after Independence, the nation is extremely backward. Tribes in the nation are still marginalised, and the majority of them are still viewed as the most vulnerable groups.

The majority of Kerala's indigenous communities continue to be on the periphery of any form of social, economic, or educational progress, despite the fact that some of them have grown and attained enviable heights. Their issues include debt and poverty, poor health and hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, and land alienation, in addition to other issues.

A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF TRIBES IN KERALA

Family Structure

On the basis of the size of the family, Anthropologists have identified fundamentally two different types of family structure. They point out that nuclear family is the most basic family units, composed of wife, husband and children and extended family is includes in one household relative in addition to a nuclear family (Ferraro and Andreatta 2010). Meanwhile, Karve (1994) explained "a joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred".

From our analysis out of 100 samples, only 86 respondents are living with joint family and the remaining are living with their nuclear families. Due to some factors, people were changed their family type from joint to nuclear family. Education and employment are the main reason for the shifting of family structure from joint to nuclear family.

Table 1
Family Structure

Family Type	Numbers	Percentage
Joint Family	14	14
Nuclear family	86	100
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

Marital Status

The below table discusses the marital status of the community. The data were collected through the fieldwork study among 100 households, and it is categorized into five, i.e. married, unmarried, separated, divorced and widow/widower. The table shows that 51.2% (319) of them are married and 43.4 % (270) of them are unmarried. Similarly, 2.8% of respondents had lost their spouse and has not married again, out of that widows numbers are more. Total 13 widows and 5 widowers are enumerated in the present study. In the earlier period the marriage system and other related discussions are taken by Karanavar. Both men and women seek divorce on various grounds like husbands excessive drinking and physical violence, though it was very rare among them (Aiyappan, 1990). The present study 2.4% of respondents are divorced and none of them are separated or living apart from their spouses.

Table 2
Marital Status

Marital Status	Male	Female	Total	Total Percentage
Married	154	165	319	51.2
Unmarried	137	133	270	43.4
Separated	0	0	0	0
Divorced	5	10	15	2.4
Widow/ widower	5	13	18	2.8
Total	301	321	622	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2022

Housing conditions

According to the primary data, the below table shows that 78 respondents are living in their own residences and 22 respondents are dependent to a rented house. The type of residence among the study population is described that 10% of houses being made of easily available raw materials like mud, straw wood or plastic sheets and these types of houses are categorised into kuchat types. 78% of houses are seen as table and made with advanced materials like burnt bricks, stones, cement concrete, timber, clay tiles, asbestos cement sheet and Reinforced Cement Concrete are used to construct the walls and roofs and these types of houses are categorised as Pucca houses. During the survey, it is observed that certain houses with their walls were made of burnt bricks and plastered with cement but its roofs are partially covered with asbestos cement sheets and Reinforced Cement Concrete. 2% of houses are such types and categorised to Semi pucca houses. 8% of houses are single-storeyed with modern facilities and 2% of houses are double-storeyed with modern facilities.

Table 3
Housing conditions

Residence	Numbers	Percentage
Own	78	78
Rented	22	22
Total	100	100.0

Types of Residence	Numbers	Percentage
Kacha	10	10
Pucca	78	78
Semi Pucca	2	2
Single storeyed	8	8
Double storeyed	2	2
Total	100	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2022

Educational Status

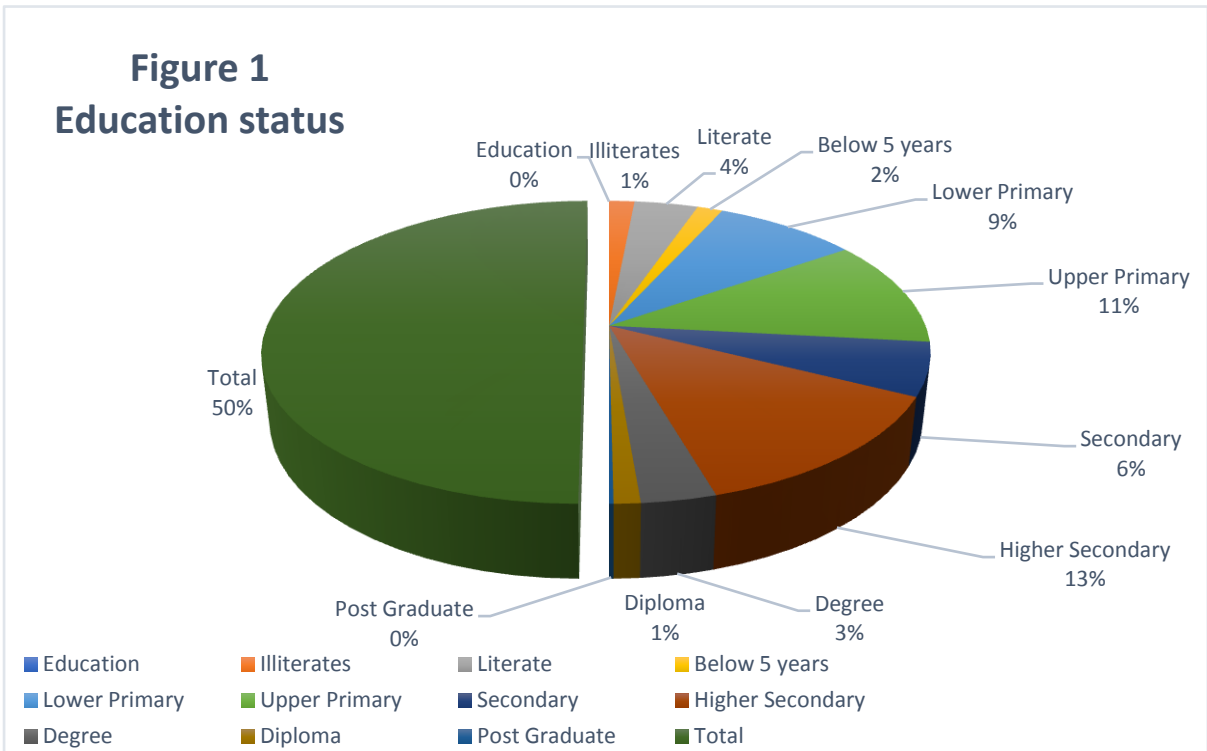
The education level of the population under study is shown in the table below. A total of 100 households' worth of data were collected. Illiterate people are those who are unable to read or write, while literate people are those who can read and write at least their name. According to the table, only 7.82% of people are literate and 10% are illiterate. 16% and 23% of people, respectively, completed lower primary and higher primary education.

Table 4
Educational Status

Education	Male		Female		Total	Total Percentage
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%		
Illiterates	8	3.03%	5	1.6%	58	10%
Literate	20	7.57%	25	8.03%	45	7.82%
Below 5 years	8	3%	12	4%	20	3%
Lower Primary	45	17%	48	15%	93	16%
Upper Primary	60	23%	70	23%	130	23%
Secondary	30	11%	45	14%	75	13%
Higher Secondary	69	26%	78	25%	147	26%
Degree	17	6%	20	6%	37	6%
Diploma	6	2%	5	2%	11	2%
Post Graduate	1	0%	3	1%	4	1%
Total	264	100	311	100	575	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

According to the poll, there are more people with secondary education, with a completion rate of 13%. Corresponding to this, 26% of people hold a higher secondary degree, 6% have a graduate degree, 2% have a diploma, and 1% have post-graduate degrees. The graphical representation of the educational status of tribal people under study has depicted in the following pie chart.



Occupation Status

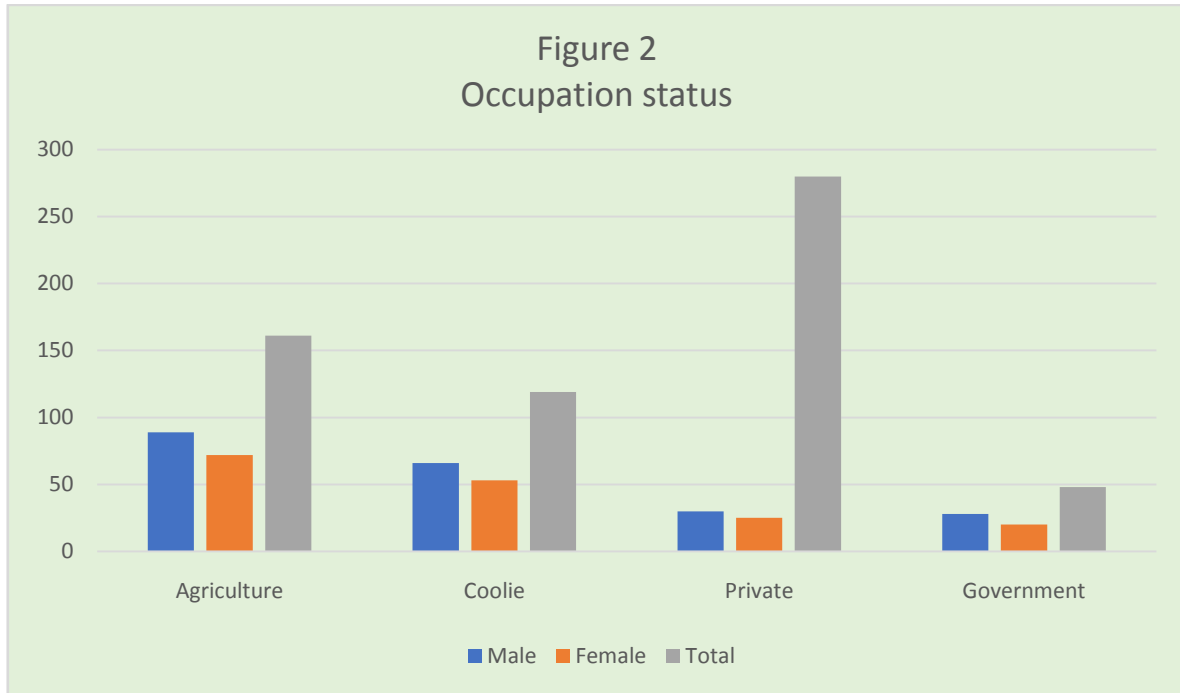
Occupation plays an important role in defining the socio-economic status of a family. These can be analysed by the living standard and individual position in their family.

Table 5
Occupation Status

Occupation	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Agriculture	89	72	161	26%
Coolie	66	53	119	20%
Private	30	25	280	46%
Government	28	20	48	8%
Total	213	170	608	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

From the above table, we can see that out of the total 100 households from the selected study area, 213 samples are working. Among these, 46% of the people depend on the private sector followed by 26% of people working in the agriculture sector and the remaining 20% go for coolie works. Only 8% of the people are working in the government sector either on a contract basis or on a permanent basis. The graphical representation of the occupation status has depicted in the below Bar chart.



Details of Electrification of houses

Electrification is one of the important indicators of social change which prove the standard of living of the people. Every house under study have electrified and the power supply is provided by the Kerala state electricity board (KSEB). Electrification is one of the important indicators of social change which prove the standard of living of the people. In this study, 100% of houses are electrified and the power supply is provided by the Kerala state electricity board (KSEB).

**Table 6
Electrification of houses**

Power Supply	Numbers	Percentage
Yes	100	100
No	0	0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2022

Drinking Water Facilities

Safe and readily available water is important for public health, whether it is used for drinking, domestic use, food production or recreational purposes. Improved water supply and sanitation, and better management of water resources, can boost countries’ economic growth and can contribute greatly to poverty reduction (World Health organisation). Accessibility of safe drinking water is one of the major concerns of the people. Wayanad one of the hill stations in Kerala is the homeland to many indigenous people. The tribals have rich traditional knowledge to collect and conserve water from natural resources. Including their traditional resources, they have also depended on natural resources like rivers and ponds for drinking and other purposes. Panamkeni the traditional source of water is still used in tribal communities in Wayanad. It is an underground stream of water coming out from the holes and pits in a low quantity near the water streams, tanks and dried rivers. In the present study, the sources of drinking water used by the tribal community is generally categorised into five resources.

**Table 7
Drinking Water Facilities**

Source	Numbers	Percentage
Unprotected well	69	69
Pond/reservoirs	5	5
Protected well	20	20
Piped water	6	6
Total	100	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2022

The above table describes that out of the 100 households surveyed 20% of the houses are collected water from a protected well. A protected well is a wider and deeper hole in the ground, lined with bricks and a protection wall at the surface. 69 % of the respondents have accessed water from an unprotected well and 5% of the respondents have depended on ponds and reservoirs for water. The remaining 6% of houses have water supply by the government through the Kerala Water Authority and Jalanidhi project.

Facilities in the Sanitary system

Out of the 100 households surveyed, the disposal of sullage is in the proper way by creating a drainage system. 62 % of houses have a closed type of drainage system and the remaining 13% of houses have the improper condition of drainage facilities, it found open and bad in condition. Sanitation refers not only provide a clean environment but also to adequate treatment and disposal of human excreta and sewage. The present study explored that 97% of houses have toilet facilities and 3 % of houses lack toilet facilities.

**Table 8
Sanitary system**

Drainage Type	Numbers	Percentage
Closed	62	62
Open and bad	13	13
Satisfactory	25	25
Total	100	100.0

Toilet Facility available	Numbers	Percentage
Yes	97	97
No	3	3
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

II. Conclusion

- The majority of the respondents belong to the nuclear family which constitutes 86% of the total samples under study.
- About 51% of respondents were married and around 43% were unmarried persons. Even if they are unmarried, widowed or divorcees majority of them are living in better conditions. Where 78% of the respondents are staying in their own pucca houses.
- For identifying the educational status of the 100 households we categorised the educational and literacy status in to 9 sections including illiterate, literate, Lower Primary, Upper Primary, Secondary, Higher Secondary, Degree, Diploma, and Post Graduate section. Out of the total 100 households, 7.82% are literate and around 9% of the people are having higher education qualifications. This concludes that many of the selected samples are not having enough educational background.
- Out of the 100 households, 608 persons are working in various job activities including Agriculture, Coolie, Private, and Government. Of these 46% of the respondents are working in the private sector followed by agriculture (26%), and coolie services (20%).
- While checking the electricity and water supply of proposed respondents under study, we came to understand that out of the 100 samples everyone is having electricity and water supply. The water supply is also available from the Unprotected well, Pond/reservoirs, Protected well, and Piped water.
- The Sanitation facilities are also facilitated in such a way that around 62% samples are having closed drainage system. But still 13% of the respondents are having open and bad sanitary system.

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