ABSTRACT

Socio – Economic Conditions of the Tribals of Dindigul District – A Study
forms the title of the thesis. The study is based on field survey by collecting and analysing information from 43 hamlets in Dindigul district.

There are 36 Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu. Among them the Paliyans and the Kattunayakans are the original inhabitants of Dindigul and Nilgiris districts respectively. The Paliyan tribal group is found in Kodaikanal, Palani and Dindigul (Sirumalai) taluks and the Kattunayakans in Nilakkottai taluk of Dindigul district.

The Paliyans adopted the mountains as their abode from time immemorial. They live with nature. The Kattunayakans are nomads who carry on their living by wandering from place to place.

The objective of the present study is to examine the social and economic condition of the tribals of Dindigul district. It aims to identify the demographic profile of the tribal communities in this district and also examines the geographical condition, tribal distribution in Dindigul district, sex ratio of Scheduled Tribes population, types of dwelling, housing particular, age structure of the tribal respondent, tribal population according to their education, health status, type of treatment, family planning, and immunization of the tribal areas.

It elucidates the social conditions of the tribes: the role of customs and traditions. It explains the types of families, marriage, dress, ornaments, food, beliefs, worship, art, architecture and sculpture, fairs and festivals, entertainment, status of women, literacy, social taboos, rituals of life from birth to death and medicinal herbs for healthy living.

The study portrays the economic situation of the tribals. Agriculture, hunting, fishing and honey gathering, collecting minor forest produces and commercial commodities and preparing lemon grass oil are the occupation of the tribes. The economy of the Paliyans and the Kattunayakans are very simple. Majority of the tribals work as agricultural labourers. They are able to maintain their basic needs with the things that are available to them. Because of their poverty they became bonded labourers. Migration takes place due to their economic backwardness. They suffer a
lot at the lands of the money lenders. It examines the source of income, expenditure and possession of livestock.

The study assesses the reports of the various tribal commissions, constitutional provisions and safeguards for the Scheduled Tribes. The Governmental and non-governmental organizations take efforts for the tribal welfare. Many welfare schemes were introduced by the government through five year plans. Society for the Integrated Development of the Tribals (SIDT), Trichirapalli Rural and Urban Welfare Development Educational Society (TRUWDES), Annai Educational Trust (AET), Rural Education Action and Development (READ), Rural Organising for Social Improvement (Rosi Foundation), PASAM, Association of Welfare in Anthropology and Rural Development (AWARD), Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) and Auction for Community Transformation India (ACTIF) are the important non-governmental organizations working for the upliftment of the tribals.

Even though the government implements various developmental measures for the Paliyan tribes of Dindigul district, they face many problems such as inadequate housing and infrastructure facilities, non-availability of irrigated land for cultivation, low price for their forest products through contractors, restrictions to collect the forest products, delay in issuing the family identify-cards and community certificates, poor quality of essential commodities supplied through ration shops situated far away from the tribal areas and delaying to get the old age pension. This holds good to the Kattunayakans as well.

Based on the field survey it is concluded that the inclusion of Dindigul tribes as Primitive Tribal Group (PTG), introduction of Hill Area Development Programme (HADP), housing facilities to the tribals, construction of roads to the tribal settlements, effective enactment for controlling money lenders activities, land alination, distributing lands to landless, preservation and conservation of medicinal plants and herbs, provision for government loans with simple interest, strengthening Self Help Groups, establishing Rehabilitation Centers, issuing ration card, taking steps to get old age pension at their residence, giving of community certificate Camp, establishing co-operative stores for the sales of Minor Forests Products, promotion of social education, co-operation of all the departments are the suggestions given by the tribal respondents for the upliftment.