CHAPTER – VIII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

8.1 General

The tribals of Tamil Nadu, even though they form a very small proportion of the total population, deserve special attention not only as the early inhabitatants of the land but as a group which remains separated from the mainstream of economic and social development. Various studies have been conducted to understand the general conditions of the tribals. Here, an attempt has been made to understand the socio-economic livelihood of tribals in Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu. For the above purpose, primary data were collected from a sample of 454 tribal households belonging to the Kani, Paliyar, Kattumaikkan and Kondareddy tribes which is considered to be a better representation of the tribals in Tamil Nadu as they are the numerically primitive tribal community in Tirunelveli. The head of each household was interviewed with the help of a structured questionnaire. The results drawn from the data collected are presented in the chapters of this study.
8.2 Findings

Majority of the tribal people engaged in various activities belong to the age group of above 45. Average age of the respondents is 44.31 years. The age of the respondent deviate from the mean age by 8.602 as seen from the calculated standard deviation. The minimum age of the respondent is 23 and the maximum is 58.

Majority of the families were male headed families.

Majority of the respondents are Hindus (82.82%), 15.64 per cent of the respondents are Christians and only 1.54 per cent of the respondents are Muslims. But there is no communal difference between the followers of these two main religions. There exists marital relationship among these religious groups of tribal also.

Majority of the respondents are married.

The study discloses that 143 households (31.50%) fall in the family size of 4 to 5 members, and 171 households (37.67%) have a family size between 6 to 7 members each. On the whole, more than 50.89 per cent of the total sample households have larger families. This accounts for overpopulation in the tribal villages and the consequent socio-economic backwardness of the population.

The average size of the family in the study area is 4.8. The family size of the respondents deviates from the mean age by 2.15 as seen from the calculated
standard deviation. The minimum family size of the respondent is three and the maximum is eight.

The study revealed that 62 per cent of the respondents are literates. However, 33.92 per cent of the respondents have studied only up to the primary level of education. About 37.89 per cent of the respondents are illiterates, but they also try to educate their children to the maximum extent possible.

Out of 454 respondents 292 constituting 64.32 per cent have declared that agriculture is their main occupation and 45 respondents (9.91 per cent) belong to the category of owner cultivators. They are owners of wet land holdings and are cultivating them.

Majority of the tribals are living in their own houses.

The landline telephone connection is found only in a very few houses in each of the sampled tribal villages. About 6.20 per cent of the total sample respondents have telephones in their houses. But recently, many tribals have started using the mobile phones.

Majority of the tribals live in terraced houses because their standard of living is low.

Among the houses of 454 respondents, 113 houses are not electrified, which provides evidence to the economic backwardness of these tribal. Of the 341 houses having electricity, 258 enjoy free supply of electricity provided by the government, while 83 pay the electricity charges. But still 113 thatched, tent and
rock houses are remaining unelectrified.

Majority of 63.66 per cent of the respondents have got only one room in their house. All the inmates of the households are living in the same room. Most of the houses are devoid of sanitary facilities.

The study concluded that only 56 houses are having own pump in their premise, and 148 respondents draw water from the village wells. But still 250 houses have to get their life-giving water from the street pumps. From this data the researcher has concluded that the standard of living of these tribals is very poor, because most of the tribal families are using only the street pumps and village well as the source of water.

The study reveals that 27.13 percent of the respondents are casual labourers. Out of the total, 17.41 per cent of the respondents collect roots and 19.43 per cent of the tribals, especially women, collect minor forest produce. Most of the agricultural related works are seasonable one. Therefore, one man collects more than one item of the forest product.

The study discloses that 68.89 per cent of the respondents are owner cultivators; they produce flowers, roots, pulses, paddy etc. Normally these owners are living in normal lands and the remaining 31.11 per cent of the respondents cultivate the land but they are tenants.

The study further expressed that 30.63 per cent of the respondents do leather work like making bags, purses, belts etc. 28.83 per cent of the respondents
do carpentry work such as making chairs, tables, small stools etc., some of the tribals make musical instruments and it constitutes 6.22 per cent, 12.61 per cent of the respondents are sweeper cum cleaners in private industries and houses and the remaining 11.71 per cent of the respondents are involved in cow grazing work in the farms of the landlords. Majority of the respondents do leather work.

The study also reveals that 27.45 per cent of the respondents are night crawlers (ताजली). 17.65 per cent of the respondents especially women are witches (तालाबसिङ्गा). 11.76 per cent of the respondents do cloth washing work and 15.69 per cent of the respondents are domestic servants. Begging and government employees are each 9.80 per cent and the remaining 7.84 per cent of the respondents own petty shops in their area. Majority of the respondents are night crawlers (ताजली) and witches (तालाबसिङ्गा).

Of the 454 samples, 335 families (73.79 %) have only one earning member each. 87 families (19.16%) have two earning members each and 32 families (7.05%) have three earning members per family.

The study discloses that on an average, tribals get employment for 355.51 days in a year. Of which agricultural activities alone provided 60.61 mandays of work, 90.50 mandays by owner cultivators, 86.86 mandays by industrial workers and professional workers provided 90.40 mandays of work to tribal people. It is clear that tribal workers are employed during most of the year. The industrial and professional activities are properly developed to absorb the tribal people during
the off-season.

The study also discloses that the average income per respondents households is high of 17,371.76 for industrial workers, which constitutes 30.95 per cent followed by 16,273.37 for professional workers and it constitutes 29 per cent, 12,779.62 for owner cultivators and the remaining 9,697.11 for agricultural labourers. The industrial work provides a maximum income of 17,371.76. It is clear that tribals income was comparatively low during the study period. The industrial and professional activities such as sweeper cum cleaner, musical instruments making, leather works, carpentry work and other works.

Of the 454 sample households, 17 tribal households (3.74 %) earn less than ₹15,000 per year. The number of tribal households earning from ₹15,000 to ₹30,000 is 215 (47.36 %), and 26.43 per cent of the respondents earn ₹30,000 to ₹45,000 per year. The number of tribal households earning more than ₹45,000 per year is about 22.47 per cent.

Average annual income of the respondents is ₹28,314.75. The income of the respondents deviates from the mean income by ₹12,370.63 as seen from the calculated standard deviation. The minimum income of the respondents is ₹10,200 and the maximum is ₹52,300 per year.

The decile group analysis concluded that the bottom per capita income groups, 30 per cent (decile group I to III) of the respondents receive 60.47 per cent. Of the total sample households, 60 per cent of them (decile group I to
VI) share 84.67 per cent. The remaining 15.33 per cent is enjoyed by 40 per cent (decile VII to X).

The Lorenz curve and Gini concentration ratio was calculated. The estimated value of Gini ratio was 0.2839. It clearly indicates that the inequality in the distribution of income was low in the sample households. Hence the level of inequality in the professional income can largely be attributed to the relatively high income earning groups.

The disparity ratio was measured and the ratio between the per capita income of the bottom 10 per cent and the top 10 per cent was 1:1.32. The disparity ratio indicated that there is a low disparity among the sample households.

The analysis such as nature of inequality, Lorenz curve, Gini ratio and disparity ratio indicates that there are no income inequalities among the different categories of tribal people. Therefore, the first hypothesis namely ‘There is no income variation among different classification of tribal people of Tirunelveli district’ is proved.

To study the factors which determine the per capita income of the households, the multiple regression analysis is made. The multiple regression analysis revealed that the per capita income of the tribal households could be improved by increasing the number of earners in the family, level of employment and value of productive assets. The measures to reduce the family size among the tribal households would also enhance the per capita household income.
significantly in the study area.

Expenditure on food items, clothing, fuel and light, education, entertainment, social and religious and others are the major constituents of the tribals expenditure. The average annual expenditure of the tribal household is about ₹24,580.66. The total amount of annual expenditure incurred by the tribal people households is minimum for the income groups such as less than ₹15,000, and ₹15,000 to 30,000.

On an average, every tribal family spends about ₹24,580.66 on household expenses. The average amount spent on food is more which is about ₹15,547.95 (63.25%). They also spend a reasonable sum on clothing and entertainment, which comes to about 14.40 per cent and 6.05 per cent of their income respectively, and followed by expenditure on fuel and electricity which comes to about 5.65 per cent.

The study inferred that with every increase in the annual per capita income from the existing mean level by one rupee, the annual per capita consumption would increase marginally by 0.90 rupees in the tribal households. Therefore the second hypothesis that, ‘the Marginal Propensity to Consume (MPC) is comparatively high for the tribals in the study area’ is proved.

The study further discloses that the annual average per household savings of sample tribal households in Tirunelveli district is ₹3,234.72. Regarding the nature and forms of savings, the higher per household savings are held in
house property. It is followed by jewels. The sample households in Tirunelveli district apparently invest more on jewels than other forms. But, it is not a significant one like investment in land.

To identify the factors which determine the value of savings of the sample tribal people households in Tirunelveli district the multiple regression model has been estimated. It is inferred from the analysis that the variable annual family income has a greater influence on the volume of savings. The F value shows that the model fitted is statistically significant at one per cent level. Hence, the third hypothesis that, the volume of savings is independent of annual family income, occupation of the head, family size, education status and assets value is proved.

The study viewed that nearly 43.80 per cent of the tribal people have borrowed from Self Help Groups, 17.22 per cent from the banks, 27.34 per cent from money lenders and 11.65 per cent from friends and relatives. The fund borrowing from SHG is easier as they provide credit by membership fee and pawning the ration card. The $\chi^2$ test was also employed and the result shows that there is no significant association between the income of the tribal people and source of borrowing. Hence, the fourth hypothesis namely, 'there exists a positive relationship between the income of the tribals and source of borrowing' is invalid.

On an average every household has a debt of ₹3,193.64. The borrowed amount may be used for consumption or for other purposes. Tribal people in general borrow heavy amount of money, irrespective of their income. The
amount borrowed varies depending upon the income groups. This has been verified with ANOVA. ‘F’ value which, being high indicates that the amount borrowed varies significantly between the income groups.

The study shows that about 46 (11.65%) tribal people have borrowed mainly for the family expenditure, another 46 (11.65%) for repairing their houses, 130 (32.91%) persons have borrowed for religious functions and majority of 43.80 (173 tribal people) per cent have borrowed for marriage function.

The study concludes that the government measures to uplift the standard of living of tribal people have been used. About 56.83 per cent enjoy the supply of free electricity and 25.55 per cent of the respondents have obtained the free house. Majority of the respondent tribal people are benefited through public benefit system. About 52.86 per cent of the respondents have obtained the free medicine and 17.18 per cent of the respondents have obtained other benefits such as insurance scheme and ‘Ulavar Thittam’ benefits. Other schemes are yet to reach them.

Tribal people face some problem at the time of work. Garrett ranking technique was used to rank the problems and the analysis concluded that low wages was the main problem faced by the tribal people. Then brokerage paid to the middlemen was the second most important problem. Long working hours was the least important problem faced by the tribal people.

Of the 454 respondents, 22 respondents (4.85%) are highly satisfied about
the state affairs. Totally 87 respondents (19.16%) reveal their views that the state affairs are satisfactory.

The study suggests that about 157 (34.58%) tribal people are of the opinion that during off season, alternative employment opportunities may be created which will improve their living conditions and 37.67 per cent of the tribal people opine that higher wages will improve their living conditions. Others feel that better work facilities, tribal union and government schemes will lead to a better living spectrum.

The tribals have very limited wants such as food, shelter and clothing higher education and modern medicines and conveyance are still a far cry which could hardly catch the imagination of the tribal people.

Want of organized marketing is a big bottleneck of the tribal economy. Retail traders and hawkers visit these markets and purchase agricultural produce and forest produce. In return they sell manufactured items of daily requirements like oil, tobacco salt etc.

Majority of the tribals are below the poverty line. Government employee and private firm employees are the only two groups which are above the poverty line. Unemployment and seasonal employment are prevalent among the tribals and their wage and seasonal employment pave the way for poverty and deprivation.

Majority of the tribals live in very remote areas, where transport and communication facilities are inadequate. As a result, the social awareness of the
tribals is very low. But it is true that they are comparatively much better than earlier times in this respect. Housing conditions of the tribals are poor and their houses do not have spacious rooms or separate arrangement for kitchen. Majority of the tribals live in houses along with their domestic animals.

Water and sanitation facilities are very poor as far as the tribals are concerned. It is the unhygienic surroundings and poor drinking water facilities that are mainly responsible for the diseases found among the tribals.

Consumption and expenditure pattern of the tribals give a dismal picture regarding the standard of living of the tribals. Diet pattern of the tribals has changed a lot in recent times. But it is found that they are not in apposition to consume nutritious and different varieties of food. The cropping pattern of the tribals has also changed in accordance with their changing consumption pattern. Today they have started cultivating paddy, vegetables etc. Cultivation of paddy considered as a good sign regarding their diet pattern. With regard to entrepreneurship among tribals, their achievement level is very low.

Since very few among the tribals make use of any kind of media, their general awareness is rather limited and most of them are ignorant about the day-to-day socio-economic and political development around them.
8.3 Suggestions

In order to improve the standard of living of tribals in Tirunelveli district especially in the study area, the researcher suggests the following policy measures:

- Since land alienation is the main cause of the backwardness of the tribals, legislation should be enacted for the restriction on transfer of land belonging to the tribals and restoration of alienated lands.
- Education attainment index is low among tribals. The government should give priority to the importance of educational facilities of the tribals.
- The migration of the tribal areas should be restricted. It is high time that protective measures are taken to avoid further migration to the tribal land.
- Tribal culture and traditions should be protected. Priority should be given to the field of education, both formal and job oriented for the empowerment of the tribals.
- In order to provide and enhance their income, employment, opportunities should be created.

To sum up, the tribal people of the select fifteen tribal villages of Tirunelveli district are not better off in all aspects of social and economic life. Majority of the tribal people belong to the Hindu and Kondareddy community, having a big family size. Most of them have studied only upto middle school level, and they are leading a nuclear type of family. Most of the respondents have own houses with thatched roof. The tribal villages have poor water facilities.
Agriculture is the primary occupation of these tribal people, and they show income inequality depending on the type of work. The average amount of money spent on food is more, but the expenditure on education and establishment is very much less, indicating the poor standard of living of the tribal people. Own house, property and a few sovereigns of gold ornaments are the only savings of these people, but most of the tribal people borrow money from different sources in order to meet other family expenditures.

Generally, tribals are addicted to drinking, pan chewing and smoking. They are highly superstitious. They are subjected to oppression, discrimination and gender problems. Even though both governmental and non-governmental agencies are working for the upliftment of tribals, even today, a large number of tribal families in Tamil Nadu have not yet been benefited by these agencies. Using the human development indices, one can compare the life of tribals in Tamil Nadu with that of the people living in poverty stricken area.