



Consultation Meeting with the Tribal People

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

India

June 14, 2018





Consultation Meeting with the Tribal People in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve of The Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve, India.

By Arulagam



Report compiled by
Bharathidasan.S.,

14th June, 2018

Rationale

The villages which are situated in the North Eastern Slope Range of The Nilgiris were included in the buffer zone of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve from April 1st 2018. Previously this area was under reserve forest category; Inhabited predominantly by the Irular Tribes are living there.

As an organisation working in the landscape for the past fifteen years, we, the Arulagam want to ascertain the response of tribal people on such inclusion of their habitat into the tiger reserve. Moreover, Arulagam also would like to document their lifestyle on how do they co-exist with the wildlife, apart from transforming their knowledge to non-tribes and the newly emerging conflict areas. With these objectives in mind consultation meetings were planned and organized at the tribal hamlets that are located within the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR).



Roosting and nesting site of OWB Vulture

Hamlets such as *Kallampalayam, Boothanatham, Anaikatty, Siriur and Chokkanalli* which are surrounded by the vulture nesting sites were selected for conducting the consultation meetings. Because, cattle rearing and farming are the main activities in those villages and it could make direct impacts in the vulture population.

“Conservation of nature must go hand in hand with improving the livelihood of the immediate dependent of the tribal people who are the corner stone for a healthy environment”.

The above statement is repeated by many conservationist. So, Arulagam also would like to explore the option of linking livelihood and conservation of wildlife among tribal people. And we also anticipated that the ideas about the livelihood options should come from the tribal people. Then only it will be effective.



Discussion Meeting at *Chokkanalli* hamlet.

By considering the above facts, the meetings were scheduled in the month of May, 2018. Most of the meetings were conducted in the evening hours. Activities such as group discussions, playing of games, conducting of friendly tournament were conducted. Two days were allotted for each tribal village. (Pre-visit was made for finalizing the event while the subsequent meeting was conducted in the next day).

Agenda for the Discussion

1. Tribal People's Perceptions on the establishment of Tiger Reserves
2. Tribal People's Perceptions on the Human and Wildlife co-existence
3. Implementation of Forest Right Act 2006 and Its Status in Tamil Nadu
4. Creation of Alternative Livelihood Opportunity for the Tribal People of this region
5. The Challenges faced by the Tribal People of this area in rearing cattle

Agenda 1. Tribal People's Perceptions on the establishment of Tiger Reserves

Enhancement in the Awareness Level

Until few years back, the tribal people were reluctant on the setting up of tiger reserves in their habitats out of fear that they would be thrown out from the forest and lot of implications would also be imposed upon them. But nowadays the situations get improved and tribes come out from their fear. It shows that their awareness level has increased and enactment of Forest Right Act might have given relief and assurance to them, from the fear of habitat loss.



Discussion Meeting at *Kallampalayam* hamlet



Tiger and Tribes

Tribes are living in harmony with mother Nature and wildlife. Tigers are worshipped by the tribes. There is not much conflict noticed in these tribal villages. The popular myth that the 'Tiger would not survive with the peoples presence' was denied by the tribal people. Contrary to the above cited misbelief the Tigers will survive as long as the tribal people live. Statistics also proves the above fact by revealing the fact that highest tiger populations thrive only around the tribal areas.

Agenda 2. Tribal People's Perceptions on the establishment of Tiger Reserves on the Human and Wildlife Co-existence

The tribes, the 'Adivasis of forest' remain as guardians of forest. And the Adivasis life is connected culturally and spiritually with the forest.



Discussion Meeting at *Kallampalayam* hamlet

The tribes know how to behave properly with the wild animals. The wild animals do enter into the premises of tribes but they voluntarily return back without affecting them.

One Ms. Chandra (45), a tribal women from Siriyur village told that sometimes the crops are damaged by the wild boars. While the wild animals destroy the crops, the non tribes cause harm to the wild animals; Rather, the Adivasis just send them out; And the tribes will not cause



Book on Forest Right Act handed over to Mr. Basavan the village headman by Mr. Sivasanthakumar

harm to the animals; Further, they always do share their extra food with wild animals.

The tribes also will not make much hue and cry, asking for compensation unlike the non-tribes. Resulting of which, the serious concern on wildlife and human conflict does not arise among the tribes.



Resource mapping exercise by the village youth at Kallampalayam

On the contrary, the interference and periodic deforestation by the non Adivasis are the main causes for human and wildlife conflict.

One Mr. Basavan (60), the village headman of Anaikatty, The Nilgiris, told that no tribal people was killed by wildlife except two outsiders

in their village in his life time; And he added that it might have happened in some other area.

Impacts of the Development Activities Eco-Tourism and tribal People

Since this area comes under buffer zone of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, the Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu have initiated the eco-tourism activity in-order to increase the income source of the tribal people in the above mentioned tribal hamlets.

Interestingly, the tribal people of these habitat unanimously opposed eco-tourism activity and passed the resolution against this move. The officials of Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu tried to convince them but the tribes in turn simply told that they do not want any extra income by floating vehicles into their area which will disturb their peaceful life. If the area is included in the eco-tourism zone, tourists will make noise and try to take selfie with wild animals resulting of which the wild animals will be disturbed and cause repercussions in their life and existence as well.

The tribal people also complained that the forest department allowed the tourists to enter into their habitation sites, by collecting entry fee. Wherever the eco-tourism in operation the visiting guest of the tribal people are questioned disturbingly.



Check Dams

Check dams are constructed for conserving water and quenching thirsty wildlife. But, it is effective only for the short period, Mr. Chandramohan, (51) village headman told.

The development activities such as construction of check dams do affect the flow of natural stream and consequently due to the stagnation of water big trees which are close to the water stagnation area wilt.

So, before constructing the check dams, local people should get consulted.



Agenda 3. Implementation of Forest Right Act (FRA) 2006 and Its Status in Tamil Nadu

Adivasis and FRA

The conservation of forest should be left with at the hands of Adivasis (Tribal People). The Adivasis can do the conservation activities without destroying the nature by taking care of trees, medicinal plants, and also wild animals.

In comparison with other Indian states, Tamil Nadu is lagging far behind



Discussion Meeting at Siriur hamlet

in implementing the Forest Right Act (FRA). The Government has to do its level best in implementing the Forest Right Act 2006. Through the implementation of FRA in letter and spirit the *Adivasis* (tribes) will be benefitted and these traditional forest dwellers can claim their rights.

The state and central governments should come forward in giving back the forests to the traditional forest dwelling communities to take up the conservation of Nature for the betterment of future generations.

Tribal people also expressed their views on community rights and dissatisfaction about NGO's.



Agenda 4. Creation of Alternative Livelihood Opportunity to the Tribal People in this Region



Discussion meeting at *Boothanatham* hamlet

Value addition

Various opportunities pertaining to the value addition of forest produce, milk, manure were discussed so as to ensure increase in the income of tribes.

Forest produce such as silk cotton, chebula seed, and phoenix leaves are taken for value addition. Instead of selling the raw materials as such, subjecting them to value addition will fetch higher income.

The phoenix leaves are sold at the rate of Rs. 6,000/ per lorry load. Instead of that if that will be converted as broomstick, the income will be manifold. This suggestion was accepted by the tribal womenfolk.

A tribal women of Siriur demonstrated her crafting ability by bundling phoenix leaves into an ornate and handy broomstick.



Agenda 5. The Challenges faced by the Tribal People in rearing cattle

Cattle Population and Its Implications

Most of the livestock which are rearing here are native breed and free ranging. Each household has at least three to five cattle until a few years back. Nowadays the cattle populations also get dwindled drastically and reduced to one or two cattle only. Last year alone about 3000 domestic cattle have died due to heavy drought in this region. It was a huge loss to the tribal communities and their economy.



S. Bharathidasan and Mr. Manigandan from Arulagam interacting with the cattle owner Mr. Narayan at his farm house

Younger generation does not show much interest in the cattle rearing. The cattle herders also expressed their unhappiness on the intervention of forest department preventing the grazing of cattle in the forest.

One Ms. Saroja (60), raised a pertinent thought- provoking point that the cattle manure is good for forest and if the cattle are allowed that will pave the way for nourishing of the forest.

Domestic cattle do provide a food source to the carnivores and scavenging animals of the forest. But it is a pity that policy of government does not allow the cattle to graze.

Moreover, cattle pen which are situated inside the forest were forcefully removed by the forest department during 1990-91. Most of the cattle were belonging to the non-tribal *Baduga* and or Lingayath communities. And the Irular tribal people served as the daily wage earners in taking care of these cattle on that period. Consequently, drastic reduction is noticed in the cattle populations of this region.

Vaccination program and its Repercussions

People also gave complaints about the vaccination program initiated by the animal husbandry department and forest department. Vaccination is administered during the weaning period that caused a negative role in livestock population. During that time the cattle became unhealthy and obviously could not withstand the side effects caused due to such a wrong timing of vaccination.



Value Addition of Milk

Fifteen years ago, 36000 liters of milk were procured from these villages and supplied to the nearby cities. On the contrary, the current situation is critical and milk procured here is not at all sufficient to meet out even the local needs.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has planned to give milch animals and poultry for the betterment of local tribal people. While it is a good initiative the government might have obtained the people's perspective prior to its implementation.

This area is hot climatic zone and thus the cross-bred cattle would not withstand such an acute climatic conditions. So, the indigenous people demanded for buffalo and native breed cattle. The milk production gets reduced drastically and affected the income of villagers. We should bear in mind that in this region there is no other source of income except rearing of cattle.



Value Addition of Manure

The cattle are reared in this landscape primarily for getting manure rather than for milk; And the manure produced here has been used widely by the farming sectors, especially in raising the plantation crops.

Each household of this area collects the manure and sell it as raw manure. Each truck load (of 4 units) is sold at the rate of Rs 6000/.



Depending upon the cattle population the income level varies from Rs.. 6000 to Rs 30000 per annum per household. Mr.S. Muthusamy, Resource person, added that as and when the same raw manure is converted into vermi-compost the income will be

enhanced at least by two times. Moreover, linking of “Gobar Dhan Scheme” was also explored.

Gobar Dhan Scheme

Gobar Dhan Scheme was introduced by Prime Minister of India in 2018-19 for the betterment of cattle farmers.



Cattle pen at Moyar village

GOBAR is an acronym for Galvanizing Organic Bio Agro Resources. The aim of this scheme is to ensure cleanliness in villages and generate wealth and energy by converting cattle dung and solid agricultural waste into compost and Bio Gas. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural), the Central government strides to use animal dung and other bio-waste to produce energy like some European countries and China. This is hugely helpful for the country as India is home to the highest cattle

population in the world, close to 300 million in number, with a daily output of 3 million tonnes of dung. A target has been set to use cattle dung, agricultural waste, kitchen waste to produce Bio gas-based energy. Meanwhile, the Gobar Dhan Scheme will encourage the farmers to consider dung and other waste not just as a waste but as a source of income. It will be easier to keep the village clean and sanitized, livestock health will improve and farm yields will increase. Biogas generation will increase self-reliance in energy utilized for cooking and lighting. Cattle herders will be helped in augmenting their income.

Arulagam Role

Realizing the fruition of such value addition that villagers also appealed to the Arulagam to help them in this regard; Subsequently the Arulagam, provisionally accepted their plea with a condition that the cattle owners should not use drugs such as ketoprofen, diclofenac, aceclofenac, flunixin, nimesulides which are harmful to the vulture population to their cattle; To this, the villagers agreed and consequently. Arulagam has planned to explore the possibilities



- To improve the livelihood of tribes through the induction of vermi-compost project
- Initiate certification system that ensure only vulture-safe NSAIDs are used and monitoring of veterinary drug sales and drug use at key sites and promoting safe alternatives
- Survey and monitoring of carcass disposal and livestock kills by carnivores to improve availability of safe food and minimize risks from poisoned carcasses.



Acknowledgement

We want to express our sincere thanks to Mr. A. Siva Santhakumar of Humane Trust, Mr. S. Muthusamy of SEEDS Trust, Mr. D. Boominathan & Mr. S. Saravanan of WWF, Arulagam team (Mr.A.Kalyanasundaram, Manager & Mr. S. Manigandan, Biologist) and Volunteers team (Mr.G.Samy Bantan., Mr. S. Prithiviraj, Mr. T. Umopathy, Mr. B. Palraj, Ms.J.Latha) for their immense cooperations and coordinations for organising the meetings. We want to thank Mr. C. Maheswaran and Mr. K. Mohan Raj who helped me in drafting the report. We want to express our sincere gratitude to the Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Rufford Foundation and Worldwide Fund for Nature- India program for their support.



Get Involved

Arulagam is working to establish Vulture Safe Zone in Tamil Nadu with the support of stakeholders to safeguard last remaining endangered vultures and its habitats. We strongly believe wildlife conservation of endangered species can be achieved with collective action of all the stakeholders. We invite you to be a part of this conservation activity in establishing Vulture Safe Zone in Tamil Nadu.

All donations made to Arulagam are exempted under section 80G of the Income Tax Act. We request you to donate generously to conserve wildlife.



Mr. Bharathidasan, Secretary, Arulagam has been awarded as Biodiversity Hotspot Hero by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) based on the exemplary work on vultures in Western Ghats.



Arulagam is a registered society working towards conservation of nature.

ARULAGAM

62, G.V Residency
Sowripalayam
Coimbatore - 641 028

Field Station -1

Vulture Conservation Center
Moyaru, The Nilgiris - 641 222

Field Station -2

No10, Ex-Military Colony
Bhavani Sagar - 638 451

Call us : +91 98432 11772
E-mail: arulagamindia@gmail.com
Website: www.arulagam.org

