

Vol 6 Issue 4 Jan 2017

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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ROLE OF HALAKKI WOMEN IN ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

Prof. Raghava Naik

Assistant Professor ,

P G Department of Sociology ,

Govt. First Grade College and

Center for P G Studies Thenkanidiyur, Udupi.

ABSTRACT:

The present world is facing a greater challenge to sustain nature, since it is important for all living beings. The various human activities are eroding the natural resources, which are consequential for different natural calamities. The industrial societies in the name of modernization swallowed the traditionally constructed knowledge by our ancestors and primitive people. As a result there is a challenge to the present generation to protect and conserve the environment with eco-friendly activities.

The concept of ecological sustenance is not new to our ancestors and primitive people. Basically the tribal people, who used to live in amidst of nature, were well aware of its protection and use. Their livelihood activities like agriculture, cattle breeding, forestry, fisheries etc. carried with traditional wisdom and were contributing to ecological sustenance. The women since the beginning



have unique wisdom to associate with nature, may be due to their intimate interaction with it. Especially the tribal women, living in the middle of nature have significant knowledge of its use and protection. Further the mutual interaction and influence between man and environment is responsible for evolve human society, economy, culture and ecology. In this research paper an attempt is made to focus on the eco-friendly economic activities of Halakki women of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka state and which are contributing for ecological sustainability.

KEYWORDS: *various human activities, industrial societies, constructed knowledge.*

INTRODUCTION:

India is a land of diversity, which is expressed in its cultural and ecological landscapes. This is being embedded in rich traditional wisdom. But due the processes of modernization, the traditional, rural-based empirical knowledge developed since long time, is being washing out rapidly. But the traditional societies and

tribal people, who are living in the forested uplands, have been able to conserve their traditional knowledge in the processes of onslaught of the modernization.

In traditional societies people used the land for various activities like agricultural crops, fisheries, collection of forest products, cattle breeding etc. in traditional method, which were sustainable in nature. They used to carry out these activities in a sustainable way through their traditional knowledge, which has been built on the basis of their ecological, economic, social and cultural practices. The knowledge of our ancestors was constructed on the basis of their vast experiences with their surrounding and their ta-today activities.

But the present world is exposed to the process of modernization to a greater extent. The process of modernization has threatened our traditional based knowledge on one hand, and on the other is also failed to provide alternative suitable technology to replace what is being disappearing. There are multiple factors for this development and they are more complex. However sustainable management practices of land resource use is the need of the hour. It is essential to protect and document our tradition land use practices to our future generation. It is in this context the present work examines the linkage between ecology and culture, and its importance for the sustainable development of traditional societies in general and for the sustainable livelihood of tribal people in particular.

ECOLOGY:

The socio-cultural anthropologists of modern age hold the ecological approach is more useful to understand human beings, their society and culture. Cultural ecology points out that there is an intimate relationship between culture and surrounding environment. "Interaction between living organisms and their environment are the subject matter of ecological studies (Vayda, 1968). The total environment has two types - controlled and uncontrolled environment. The controlled environment is the environment on which man has control over a part of environment, while the uncontrolled environment is one on which men have no control.

There is a mutual influence between man and environment. "The constantly increasing scientific inventions are gradually giving man every new triumphs over nature and at present he is in a position to control much of the geographic environment, while the cultural environment is man`s own creation. On the one hand, it is believed that the environment determines a culture, on the other hand, it is expected that the environment limits a culture (Semple, 1911)." Hence we cannot ignore the influence of environment on the life of man and his culture. So the interrelation and interdependence between man and his environment is unavoidable. Ecology provides the base for technology. It is the interaction of culture and ecology that depends on the technological capability of all human groups. The technology again determines the level of exploration of nature, which is in turn manifest in the perception of ecology.

The ecological factors water resources, climatic conditions, mountains and hills, forests and vegetation etc. are considerably influence human economic activities and livelihood. In this respect the study of human and environment interconnection is one of the main focuses in social science particularly in the intervention of society, economy and ecology. In this regard it is crucial to understand the holistic eco-system and ecological relationship. As Huntington and Cushing (1934), mention "the scope of human geography is to explain human economic life and the state of civilization reached by different communities, under various physical factors, including location, soil, and climate".

Ecological approach is one of the parameters in understanding human-environment relationship; the basic principle of ecology is examining the mutual interaction between organism and physical environment. In this interaction, human beings are considered as an integral part the eco-system. Hawley (1950), described ecology as "the study of the form of development of the human community". Community, in this meaning, is constructed as a territorial, localized system of relationship among functionally differentiated parts. He further elaborates the ecosystem as the adaptive mechanism emerging out of the interaction of factors like population, organization and environment.

The ecological conditions where the tribal people are live, normally characterized by hilly and forest environment. Their mode of livelihood has led them to develop a symbiotic relationship with their environment and also evolve culture, customs, practice and social control mechanism meant to ensure their sustainable use

(Water, 2003). Hence the occupations of tribal people and their way of life are always have the inter relation with environment and ecological situation of that area. But, the ecological setting and traditional economic patters have undergone for considerable changes due to the interventions and influence of outsiders.

CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY

The World Commission on Environment and Development 1987 defines: "Sustainable development should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Thus, sustainable development involves three integrating pillars: economic, social and environmental. So, sustainable development includes economic, social and environmental development of people, which ensures all human well-being and dignity, ecological integrity, gender equality and social justice, now and in the future.

The present challenges of the societies like natural resources degradation, climate variation, and population explosion etc. require immediate improvements in agriculture and production system. There must be innovation in plant breeding pattern to deliver its benefits to address these issues. The organic farming and organic seed production systems are more importantly needed at this juncture. These challenges have to be addressed in a scientifically integrated, socially, ethically and environmentally responsible manner. The agricultural bio-technology propagandas campaigns to promote herbicidal practices as sustainable development. . The civilized society, the organic community has an opportunity to go beyond rhetoric and marketing to provide future generations with improved food, health, and environmental security and nutrition.

HALAKKI COMMUNITY:

Halakkis are the one of the biggest primitive groups of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka state. Actually they have all features of tribes and would have included in list of scheduled tribes. Though they are not included in the list, they maintained their own uniqueness in all spheres of life as a tribe. Comparatively, a number of studies are made on Halakki Vokkaligas. Bombay Presidency Gazetteer of 14th edition has given detailed information about Halakkis. Dinakar Desai had published "Aboriginals of North Canara District", which gives some information of Halakkis. Similarly Shanthi Nayaka, R. N. Nayaka, Vishnu Nayaka, Shalini Raghunath, K.G. Shastri have published good many articles on Halakkis.

ORIGIN OF HALAKKIS:

The origin of Halakki is concern there are two views. The first is Halakkis are as the aboriginals of Uttara Kannada district. The other view is that they are the immigrants of Uttara Kannada. They Mumbai Gazetteer states that Halakkis are mostly migrated from Mysore region and settled down in the coastal area. But there is not any resemblance between the Halakki Vokkaliga of Uttara Kannada district and the Vokkaliga's of Mysore with respect to dress pattern, culture, tradition and dialect.

The folk literature, customs and dialects of Halakkis makes some of the scholars to think that they are migrated from Andra Pradesh. The Halakkis are stringent devotees of Thirupathi Thimmappa. Halakkis finds the ultimate aim of their life is visiting Thirupathi and getting the blessings of God Ventakaramana. In all religious ceremonies of Halakkis Tulasi Pooja is an important event. All these things indicate that Halakkis might have migrated from Thirupathi. Similarly a good number of folk songs of Halakkis states that they are having connection with Thirupathi. Thus, on these ground some of scholars opine that they have migrated from Andra Pradesh.

Normally tribes are those people who are the inhabitants of hilly, forest areas, away from civilized life and maintain their own unique, distinct cultural traits. The tribes have their own unique beliefs, traditions, folkways, art, and dialect. Similarly among the tribes of Uttara Kannada Halakkis is one of the important tribe, who are so innocent, illiterate and away from civilized life. The Halakkis are having intimate relation with nature with simplicity and without the touch of modernization. They are the people who collect forest products like herbs, firewood, cocum, cane, honey and other forest products. Though, Halakkis cultivate the land, it was shifting cultivation, more like nomadic people till few decades. These people had not much interaction with other groups, have suspicious nature and kept the outsiders at distance. Halakkis does not bother much about

marital relations but maintain their own rules for the good and health of the society (N R Nayaka; 2012). Though the other tribes of Uttara Kannada adopted many features of Hinduism, Halakkis still maintained their own cultural distinctness and uniqueness. They are not like other Hindu castes, who have already submitted to Hindu customs. The tribes, still does not allow the Brahmins in their religious practices and are having their own castes leaders in various rituals and ceremonies like birth, death, marriage etc., but today slowly adopting to the education and interaction with Hindus, they also giving up their own uniqueness.

The tribes of Uttara Kannada follow totemism like other tribes, where totems are worshiped respectfully like mother. In the beginning these tribes used to follow matrilineal family pattern and later on changed to patriarchal family structure. Even today the tribes follow the both patterns of the family in the district. The communities of Uttara Kannada like Gondas, Halakkis, Nadavas, Namadharies, Kunubeis, Konkana Maratas are the followers of balis or clan. It indicates non-Brahmin practices. All these communities engaged in agricultural activities and considered their God is Balindra. So Deepavali is an important festival for these people. It is a festival of worshipping the agricultural land. Basically Halakki Vakkalu were engaged themselves in hunting and terrace cultivation till recent days. The recent Forest Acts restricted them from hunting and terrace cultivation. Further the Land Reform Act made them to have own small pieces of land and to settle down permanently.

HALAKKI WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE:

Tribal women play a significant role in tribal agriculture, they performing many household and agriculture jobs. So exclusion of tribal women from tribal welfare in agriculture is meaningless. Tribal women heavily engage in all agricultural operations. Similarly 80 percent of the agricultural operations in the Halakkis are efficiently performed by the Halakki women. Halakki women do manure application, sowing, weeding, thinning, irrigation and harvesting up till storage. Woman's participation in agriculture is highest among the Halakki tribe. With the increasing pressure like globalization, water scarcity, increasing poverty, less income from agriculture, etc. male heads and male members are increasingly leaving agricultural operations to other family members to seek non-farm employment on a seasonal or semi permanent basis. In this situation women become de-facto house hold heads with the increasing responsibilities as farm managers and workers. Every individual reacts differently to different technologies indifferent situation. Some people adopt the new technology while other resists it. Adoption depends on the fact that what is once perception regarding technology and attitude or opinion towards it. .

WATER HARVESTING:

Water harvesting and water conservation is a technique used to preserve and conserve the water, where there is poor rainfall and shortfall of water to human use. Water is essential in crop growing processes. Otherwise crops cannot be grow reliably and to make profitable. In the absence of suitable water harvesting measures the precious rainwater will be waste because unavailability to human use. Much of the rain water get waste due to lack of adoption of rainwater harvesting measures. In traditional society people used their own traditional knowledge to store and protect rain water. They had wider wisdom of collection of rain water as well as its infiltration to the ground. As a result water table used to get high, and thereby made water availability throughout the year.

Water harvesting is important for storage of seasonal rain water to bring up agricultural crops during dry seasons as well as the use of domestic purpose. Normally in India monsoon pours during the months of June to October and rest of the months have to be managed with the same water. Further, Indian farmers are gambling with monsoon due to its uncertainty. So every summer becomes hard since there will be acute shortage of water. The water harvesting may be done by blocking the rain water runoff thorough ponds, lakes, pits and like. Forestation is the best method of water harvesting since the roots of the trees makes the water to infiltration to the ground. This method serves in many ways: one is roots infiltrate the rain water into the ground; the other one is it prevents soil erosion. Thus, it can reduce both water runoff and soil erosion. Water harvesting is need of the hour due to acute short fall of water to human use due to unscientific and excess water use. This is because many of us think water is unlimited and is used excessive to the purposes of agriculture, cattle breeding, industrial use and domestic purposes.

Halakkis have unique idea of water conservation. Constructing mud dams across the streams is one of the major methods of water conservation in olden days. Halakki tribe uses this method even today. In the study area 54.67 percent of people constructed mud dams across the streams for the conservation of water which is used for their crops according to the need. Though it is the age old method of water conservation, it has multiple effects. The constant storage of water putting dams across the streams increases ground water table. It also supports the plants nearby to conserve the water. 45.33 percent of them make use of ponds and wells to conserve water. Water conserved is utilized for domestic purposes, home gardens, and agricultural purposes.

USE OF ORGANIC MANURE:

The data depicts that 62 percent of Halakkis are using forest waste (green leaf, dry leaf, grass) to prepare manure for their agriculture crops. A small number of respondents are also use the vermin-compost manure. They recently started to do vermin-compost manure artificially with scientific method.

Halakkis are also using poultry litter in their crop growing processes as organic manure. Benefits of using poultry litter are multiple. On one hand it is very good organic manure, so that the farmers are saved their money from using it for chemical fertilizer, on the other, the poultry litter contributes to greater extent for soil fertility naturally without harming the soil.

USE OF PESTICIDES BY HALAKKIS FOR AGRICULTURE:

The survey shows that 70.67 percent of the Halakkis are still not using pesticide. In modern agricultural method, chemical fertilizer and pesticides are widely used. This practice has greater native impact on human health. Many of the modern diseases haunting human being are because of excess use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides in crop growing processes. But, the Halakkis still grow the crops in the organic method, which is rarely practiced in the modern time. This is a major contribution of Halakkis to the sustainability.

SEEDS USED BY HALAKKIS FOR PADDY CROP:

The 51.33 percent of the Halakki people use the traditional seeds for their agriculture. 15.33 percent of people in the study area have used high yielding variety seeds, where as 32.66 percent of the respondents said they use both the types of seeds traditional/ local type and High Yielding Variety seeds. But majority of the respondents depend on the traditional seeds. It means they are either knowingly or unknowingly support the use of traditional seeds and traditional agriculture.

The Halakkis once used to show the traditional paddy seeds like Gandhshali, Joragshali, Halaga, Kempri, Kattapadya, Jadepadya, Sannapadya, Ajjaga, Malbari etc. Today the Multi National Companies provide hybrid variety of seeds to the farmer, since then the farmers totally losing their hold on the traditional seeds which are out of use. Today farmers are also threaten by Multi National Companies since they have patent right on many of seeds. The examples like BT cotton and many other seeds impoverished our farmers.

HOME GARDENS:

The diversity of useful plants in the home gardens of Halakki community is relatively rich due to management practices that are adopted for planting and protection of annual and perennial herbs, shrubs and woody perennials. 59.33 percent of Halakkis have home garden, which is a place for sustaining many of rare and endangering species of different fruits plants and medicinal plants. The Halakki women have indigenous knowledge of different medicinal plants and its use. Many of the disease are self treated by Halakki women at houses. Along with home gardens of Halakkis are also includes of different vegetable crops, for household use and even market purpose. The soil fertility is increased due to the regular usage of cow dung, litter manure, excreta of sheep, goat and chicken. All members of the family irrespective of age work for the maintaining the home garden. Even school going children are also participate in home garden work during their school holidays and other free time.

The Halakki home garden also consists of large trees yielding fruits like Mango, Jack fruit, Bread fruit, banana plants, variety of flower plants and like. The involvement of women in home gardening provides an opportunity for them to earn additional income. The National Highway-66 from Honnavara to Karwar and

coastal Taluk centers encourages Halakki women to grow some semi commercial home gardens crops by providing market and demand. In such home gardens, plant species composition is influenced by market demands. For example- seasonal commercial vegetables like, bread fruit, tuber and leaf petioles of Colocasia, drum stick, radish, jack-fruit, papaya, cucumber, ridge guard, lady's finger etc. Income from home gardens can thus improve the welfare and nutritional status of the family as well as the empowerment of women. In most of the families women handles marketing aspects and man handles his home garden.

HALAKKIS AND HERBAL MEDICINE:

As the other tribes many of the Halakki houses collect the forest products that are used for medicines. Contribution of Halakkis to sustainability through herbal medicines is considerable. They grow, collect and sell the herbal medicine to the people. As per data 46 percent of the respondents involve in the collection of forest produce and either sell it or use it for preparing the medicine. 28 percent of the Halakkis grow herbal plants in their agricultural land or at home gardens. 14 percent of them prepare oils for joint pain, skin related problems, muscle pain and for minor wounds. In fact, Belambaru, a village of Ankola Taluk, and a Halakki family of Amadalli and many others are well-known for herbal medicine. A good number of people around the state and inter-state get treatment especially for bone related problems and expressed satisfactory. Halakki women are well known for pre-natal and post-natal treatment. They have traditionally inherited unique knowledge of treating minor illness.

TYPE OF FENCING TO THE CROP:

Halakkis have their own method of fencing their agricultural land. They use traditional methods and eco-friendly materials to safeguard their crops from domestic and wild animals. The data shows 56 percent of the respondents are fencing their agricultural land by using live plants and creepers. The live plant fencing is one of the major methods of fencing that contribute to ecological sustainability. This is not only protecting the crops but also protecting the biodiversity. It consists of variety of plants and creepers at the verge of disappearance. The fence used by the Halakkis also covers the different flower and fruit plants providing fodder for different birds and other creatures. 42 percent of them protect their crops by constructing walls by using mud and stones. This is another way of sustaining the ecology. This type of fencing does not create any such hazards to the nature, unlike the urban fencing pattern. Even this method of fencing also contributes to the water harvesting. Only 2 percent of the Halakkis use stone poles and wires for fencing the land area.

CONCLUSION

The Halakki women of Uttara Kannada district are being the primitive social groups, engaged in various eco-friendly activities and there by contributing to ecological sustainability. Halakki women are the important breadwinner of the family by engaging themselves in various economic activities, which contribute to ecological sustainability. However, the Halakki women, like the women of other communities are also not enjoying much freedom due to the recent influence of other communities on them. They are also on at social change and slowly adopting considerable features of other dominated communities.

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