



CONTRIBUTIONS OF HALAKKI WOMEN TO HOME GARDEN AND ETHNO-MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT :

The tribes in India form an important part of the total population. It represents an element in Indian society which is integrated with the culture mosaic of our civilization. The tribal population of India constitutes nearly 8 percent of the total population. India has the second largest tribal population in the world. In India, Scheduled Tribes are mainly spread across the forests and hilly regions of India. Tribes in India are mainly characterized by their geographical location and distinct culture.

This paper is prepared with the help of the data collected for the Doctoral thesis to be submitted to Karnatak University Dharwad. The paper mainly concentrates on the knowledge of Halakki women on home garden, medicinal plants and their use. The paper is based on the primary data collected in

Uttara Kannada District. Halakki is a tribe scattered in the coastal Taluks of Uttara Kannada district. Halakki women are attracted by the researchers and academicians for their distinct knowledge in the field of home garden, medicinal plants. Halakki women collect and grow medicinal plants at their home gardens, in which they have abundant knowledge of its use. They are specialized in growing varieties of plants, trees, herbs, shrubs, climbers etc for their own use and economic need.

Thus various activities of Halakkis are eco-friendly and there by contributing to ecological sustainability. 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. They collect rampatra, betta (cane), soap-nut, pepper, honey, firewood etc. Collection of honey is also an important occupation of Halakkis. 42 percent of them protect their crops by constructing walls by using mud and stones. This is another way of sustaining the ecology. The forest products are sold in the local market. The money they get by selling forest produce is used for buying consumer goods. It contributes much to their economic mobility.

KEY WORDS: Halakki women, home garden, ethno-medicine, sustainability, organic culture, forest products.



Tribes are the people who are generally living in the forests. They establish harmonious relation with their environment. Tribes' food, beverages, forage, fire edible and non-edibles oils, making house hold implements, construction of huts, religious rituals etc. are heavily consists of plants and plant products. The intimate relation between tribe and nature makes them to observe and understand the rich flora and fauna. The keen observation of the nature made them to develop their own traditional knowledge over the years.

Tribes traditionally constructed knowledge on the use of various plants and plants products as herbal remedies for many of ailments. The forest dwellers are very well aware with these medicinal plants of forest. Till today many of the tribes, depend on herbal medicine for various treatments. Many the plants which are used for herbal medicine are protected in their home gardens. Normally tribal home garden consists of various medicinal plants, vegetables, herbs, shrubs, herbs, creepers. Among these collection of medicinal plants of home garden, many of the plants at the verge of extinction. So, the tribes' home garden is the place of bio-diversity.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is concentrating on the knowledge of Halakki women of Uttara Kannada District in home garden, medicinal plants of home garden and its use.

The paper is based on the primary data collected in Uttara Kannada. Halakki is a tribe scattered in the coastal Taluks of Uttara Kannada district. Halakki women are attracted by the researchers and academicians for their distinct knowledge in the field of home garden, medicinal plants of home garden and its use.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To reveal that Halakkis are maintaining home gardens.
- ❖ Halakki Women play predominant role in the maintenance of the home garden.
- ❖ To say these home gardens along with vegetables and fruit plants it also includes medicinal plants.
- ❖ To reveal they use these medicinal plants for various ailments.
- ❖ The Halakki women have knowledge of these medicinal plants
- ❖ These home gardens contribute for ecological sustenance.

Halakki Community:

Halakkis are the one of the biggest tribal groups of Uttara Kannada. 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. The distinct features of the community attracted the researchers for the study. So, comparatively, a number of studies are made on Halakki Vokkaligas.

Origin of Halakkis:

Halakkis are found coastal taluks of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka state. 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.

With reference to the first view Halakkis are one of the important immigrants of Uttara Kannada district long back. Initially they settled down in valleys of river and forest area like Toda's of Nilagiri. Halakkis prefer these places to feed their cattle and to get medicinal plants, in which they have abundant knowledge of its use.

Their settled area of Halakkis was also good for their traditional occupation like terrace cultivation. Later on they shifted to river banks and coastal areas. Now Halakkis are found in coastal area between Karwar to Honnavar on river bank, hill areas and coastal areas.

The second view about origin of Halakkis is they might have migrated from Andra Pradesh. 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 make to think 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. These 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. 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.

Halakki Women and Home Garden:

Halakkis of Uttara Kannada districts are normally having home gardens at every house. Their home gardens are well maintained by the women member of the family. These home gardens are with greater places of bio-diversity. 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 extinct species of different fruits, herbs and medicinal plants. The Halakki home garden also consists of large trees yielding fruits like Mango, Jack fruit, Bread fruit, banana plants, variety of flower plants etc. The involvement of women in home gardening provides an opportunity for them to earn additional income and to play important role in the family.

The Halakkis home garden 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 handle the marketing aspects and men take care of the home garden.

The home gardens of Halakkis are the symbols of their traditional ethno-medicinal heritage. It also indicates their sovereignty, self-sufficiency, self-determination and sustainability of food and medicinal security. A Halakkis home garden fulfils the following objectives:

1. The home garden provides safe food for their family and community.
2. It shares and protects the valuable medicinal plants.
3. The home garden of Halakkis made the community to develop their expertise knowledge on herbal medicine.
4. Home gardens encourage Halakki women for empowerment.
5. Further, home gardens develop community enterprise & sustainability

The Halakki women are specialized in growing different plants, trees, herbs, shrubs, climbers in their home garden. They also have the knowledge of the medicinal plants and its use. Thus, home gardens of Halakkis are known for collection and use of herbal medical plants through organic cultivation. As per the data 60.67% of the Halakkis have less than three cents of land for home garden, 35% of them have four to five cents of land for home garden and only 4.33% have maintained home garden in more than eight cents.

This is because basically Halakkis are not land lords. They have small plots of land which is used for cultivation of crops for domestic use. Though they have a small plot of land, a small portion of the same is used for home gardens. It is not the question of availability of land for having home garden, but it is the interest and the traditional knowledge of Halakkis makes them to have home garden. The products of home garden are either used for their own purpose or sometimes even for sale. Though it is a miniature of agriculture, it is highly bio-diversified and sustainable place. Apart from the home garden they also collect forest medicinal products like cocum, honey, shrubs, creepers and other medicinal plants for their daily use and even for sale.

Contribution to Sustainability through Herbal Medicines

Herbal medicine is also called botanical medicine, refers to using a plant's seeds, berries, roots, leaves, bark or flowers for medicinal purposes. It is gaining importance today because of improving quality herbal medicine. Advances in medical research show the value of herbal medicine in treating and preventing disease.

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.

The Halakki families of Belambaru, Amadalli of Ankola taluk are well-known for herbal medicine. Along with these Halakki families a few other families of the community are also expertise in ethno- medicine. A good number of people around the state and interstate get treatment especially for bone related problems and expressed satisfactory

The data shows that 59.33% of respondents said that they grow medicinal plants in their home gardens, 40.67 % of them grow fruits plants, another 65% grow vegetables, 23% grow beautification plants and a large majority i.e. 84.33% of them grows all the types of plants in their home garden.

This is in contradiction to the general observation that food plants are the most common species in all home gardens throughout the world (Nair and Kumar 2006). The greater abundance of ornamental and commercial plants in the home gardens has been recognized as an indication of high levels of urbanization and modernization of the home gardening families (Karyona 1990, Drescher 1996). The Halakkis beings dwellers of semi forest area had closely associated with nature, especially women having rich awareness of flora and fauna.

This could acquaint medicinal plants and their medicinal values. It is their traditional knowledge to have these plants in their home garden for food and for ailment.

The Halakki women have indigenous knowledge of different medicinal plants and their use. Many of the diseases are self-treated by Halakki women at houses. Along with home gardens, Halakkis also cultivation different vegetable crops for household use and even market purpose. The soil fertility of home garden 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 their age work for the maintenance of the home garden. Even school going children participate in home garden work during their school holidays and other free time.

In the study area 59.33 Halakki women expressed that they having the knowledge of the use of medicinal plants, and 40.67% does not have the knowledge of medicinal plants. It shows that majority of the Halakki women have the knowledge of use of medicinal plants. It is the traditional knowledge of Halakki community; especially women are used to use various herbal medicines for different ailments. They use herbal medicine widely at pre- natal and post- natal treatments. It is the common feature of the Halakki community that elderly women of the community treat the minor illness of the children and natal problems.

The knowledge of different societies and culture is expressed in their folk medicine. But their knowledge may be similar and referred by different names. Folk medicine often co-exists with formalized, education-based, and institutionalized systems of healing. Some examples of strong informal and to some degree institutionalized folk medicine traditions are vegetables, roots of certain plants, leaves, skins of the trees and small plants. They are all cheaper in cost and easy to collect.

Importance of Conservation of India's Traditional and Herbal Medicine Systems:

The use of traditional and herbal medicine is widely practiced in all social classes of Indian society. It is traditionally transmitted knowledge from the ancestors made millions of households in Indian to possess knowledge of local nutritious food, practice of home remedies etc. The knowledge of local communities on food practices and home remedies made the health care as community based and region specific. Based on these kinds of indigenous knowledge the Ayurveda, Siddha Unani etc. have developed with scientific outlook. But today, a large part of these heritage of medicine is getting erode.

To treat gynecological problems, these elderly Halakki women act as physical as well as moral healers. In curing gynecological diseases, many local plants, fruits, shrubs and herbs are widely used. Halakki women are found with vast ethno medicinal knowledge. The knowledge based on the close observation of human and animal diseases and their symptoms, is passed down from generation to generation.

Among the Halakkis women respondents, 68.33% said that they play significant role in maintenance of home garden, another 20.67% says their husband's role is important. At the same time 7.67% respondents says female members of the family are important and only 3.33% says men's role is important in maintaining the home gardens.

Tribal women are the decision makers for the crops to be grown in their home gardens. It indicates that the importance of women in decision making, management and maintenance of home gardens (Kiran Bargali 2015). Home gardens are examples of women's enterprises where the functions are based on inter-intra household knowledge, labour and exchange of plant materials and marketability of produce (Patterson 2000).

The products of home garden, enables the Halakki women to have some voice in family. The growth of vegetables, fruits plant and medicinal plants empowered them to a greater extent. Growing plants and marketing process made the Halakki women to become economically better. The distinct knowledge of women, especially among Halakkis to interact with nature enables them to have home gardens.

Like many other tribes of Karnataka, the Halakki houses collect the forest products that are used for medicines. Thus the 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 they either sell it or use it for preparing the medicine. 59.33 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. 18 percent of them prepare herbal medicines that heal the bone and nerve related problems.

Halakki women are closely associated with nature, they could know the medicinal value of different plants. For many of their daily requirements they depend heavily on forest, this makes them to know the significance of variety of flora and fauna. The forest normally consists of different plants and creepers with medicinal values. These valuable medicinal plants are protected, prevented from extinction and used according to the needs. This kind of activities certainly provides for the support of herbal medicines.

CONCLUSION

Halakki women have developed specific ethno-medicinal practices based on years of experience. They protected and safeguarded various medicinal plants in their home gardens. The Halakki women are expertise in maintenance of these home gardens. They grow different vegetables, fruits plants and medicinal plants in their home garden. Many of these species of plants, which are found in Halakki home garden, are at the verge of extinction. More over Halakki home gardens are the places of bio-diversity due to variety of species. The Halakki women are also having the traditional knowledge in home remedies. Similarly they conserve and sustain many of the medicinal plants in their home gardens.

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Halakki Women in Local Market Selling Their Home Garden Products



Halakkis Home Garden



Halakki women with their medicinal products in local market

