

STUDY OF A TRIBAL SOCIETY IN KERALA : IN SEARCH OF A HOLISTIC WORLD-VIEW

by
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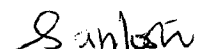
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Study of a Tribal Society in Kerala : In search of a Holistic World-View** being submitted by **Mr. Abey George** to the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a record of bonafide research work carried out by him.

Mr. Abey George worked under our guidance and supervision and has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which to our knowledge has reached the required standard.

The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted in part or in full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.


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ABSTRACT

STUDY OF A TRIBAL SOCIETY IN KERALA: IN SEARCH OF A HOLISTIC WORLD-VIEW

Over the last four decades, the idea and process of development has been undergoing immense change. This has been reflected in the emergence of several new terms - Sustainable development, Eco-development, Integrated development, Human-centered development etc. Currently, the idea of Sustainable Development is in vogue. These are projected as responding to the changing needs and as reinforcing the flexibility and dynamism of the concept of development.

But parallely, there are academic studies which challenge these claims. These studies consider that such changes are only in name, and are at best a survival strategy for an obsolete idea. In fact, based on case studies, it has been argued that these are efforts to sustain a development process which is basically unsustainable. The basic problems of development, despite its different forms and styles, seem to be emerging out of the very paradigm of development. This is therefore not solvable unless the concept of development itself is changed. In fact the resource management' strategies of appropriate, integrated, and holistic versions are only replacing the issues and further complicating them, rather than solving them. Thus, devaluing nature and humans into 'resources' and 'managing' them in terms of 'human resource management', 'planetary management' etc. in integrated, holistic, sustainable, participatory ways or a suitable combination of all of the above have become rituals for a development discourse. These strategies have moreover dehumanized individuals, both physically and culturally, and damaged the entire life process. The widespread extent of this damage has led to a steady erosion of people's self confidence, trust

in society, and ability to participate in the natural world order.

Critiques of various forms of development have also put forward new visions. 'Deep Ecology', 'Gaia Theory', 'Bio-regional vision', etc., are the prominent critiques among them. The world view latent in and emerging out of different ecological movements such as 'Chipko movement', 'Save Narmada Campaign', etc., is also an expression of the need for a different outlook.

Mahatma Gandhi, through his life and works, contributed and exemplified a radical critique of development. The inherent violent nature of 'modern civilisation' and its dehumanising power were clearly brought out by him.

Another vision is of *Saha-Astitwa* as a guiding principle to work and evolve in complementary togetherness, providing perfect harmony within the individual and in all inter-relationships. It relates one with all in a mutually meaningful manner with the entire natural order.

In this thesis an effort is made to explore deeper into this issue of development and its criticisms through the concept of *Saha-Astitwa*.

The values and ways of life of the tribal and traditional societies, especially of the tropics are projected as the models for ecologically sustainable societies. It is believed that these societies consider nature as beyond a mere resource base, and do not separate humans from nature, but rather consider them as a part of it.

Therefore it was necessary to explore the concept of *Saha-Astitwa* in the context of a tribal society, and to study the influence of development processes on this society. In India, which is undergoing rapid changes, Kerala is projected as a 'model of development'. Hence the tribal society in Attapady valley, situated in the Western Ghats of Kerala was taken up for the study. The study was aimed at exploration of traditional tribal ways and its

response to formal development programs.

The study examined the interactions between an existing tribal society and modern development. The results of this study substantiated the view that modern development can "conquer" older cultures. The high value in which vernacular societies are held by ecological visionaries seems to be misplaced. The anthropocentric, technocratic model of development has been able to appropriate the older culture of the tribal society.

This points to a need for an entirely different set of institutional and behavioural frameworks, and the need for individuals to recognize and accept their relationships to each other as the fundamental basis of living.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Understanding development	1
1.2 Scope of the present study	4
1.3 Methodology	6
1.3.1 Site selection	6
1.3.2 Research methods	7
1.4 Limitations of the study	9
CHAPTER TWO ON DEVELOPMENT DEBATES	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Power of the development concept	13
2.3 The concept from biology to social sciences	15
2.4 Development as a global imperative	18
2.5 Modernization and development	20
2.6 Economic growth and social development	22
2.7 Crisis in development	23
2.8 Dissenting voices	28
2.9 Sustainable development	31
2.9.1 Introduction	31
2.9.2 Origin of concept	32
2.10 Marriage of environmental and development	36

2.11	"DRAIDS" the new AIDS	40
2.12	Development is over - What next?	41
	CHAPTER THREE ECOLOGICAL WORLD VIEWS	42
	Section A Philosophy and movement	42
3.1	Introduction	42
3.1.1	Global nature of the predicament.	42
3.2	Eco-philosophies	44
3.2.1	Deep Ecology	44
3.2.1.1	The ethics	44
3.2.1.2	Deep ecology and biocentrism	48
3.2.2	Religious and spiritual approaches	50
3.2.3	The way out: Vernacular wisdom?	52
3.3	Ecology movements	57
3.3.1	Three positions on environment	57
3.3.2	Ecological movements in India	58
3.3.2.1	Chipko Movement	61
3.3.2.2	Save Narmada Movement	62
3.4	Perceptions about humans and nature: The background for development	65
3.4.1	Nature is just a resource	65
3.4.2	Humans are not part of nature	65
3.4.3	Humans are consumers	66
3.4.4	Nature as a sink	66

3.5	In quest of answers	66
3.6	Perspectives on addressing human predicament	67
3.6.1	Technological perspective	67
3.6.2	Economic perspective	68
3.6.2.1	Growth approach	68
3.6.2.2	Scarcity approach	68
3.6.3	Environment perspective	69
3.6.4	Ecological perspective	69
3.7	Need for a new approach	70
Section B	Need for a new vision: Saha-Astitwa	71
3.8	The human dimension	71
3.9	Why Saha-Astitwa?	73
3.10	Saha-Astitwa	74
3.10.1	Evolution in Saha-Astitwa	75
3.10.2	Evolving in harmony	76
3.10.3	Chaitanya as gestalt of Jarh and Jeevan	77
3.10.4	On human evolution	78
3.11	Conclusions	82
CHAPTER FOUR	STUDY OF A VERNACULAR SOCIETY	
	IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON TRIBAL SOCIETY OF	
	ATTAPADY	84
4.1	Introduction	84
4.2	Introduction to Attapady	88

4.2.1	Location	89
4.2.2	Geomorphic evolution and topography	89
4.2.3	Drainage and bioclimate zonation	90
4.2.4	Rainfall pattern	91
4.2.5	Potential and existing vegetation	92
4.3	Cultural setting	93
4.3.1	Area of prominence	93
4.3.2	Tribals	95
4.3.2.1	Tribals of Attapady	95
4.3.3	Tribals and government	98
4.3.4	Tribals and development	100
4.3.5	Non-tribals and migration	101
4.4	Case-study villages	103
4.4.1	Description of clusters	103
4.4.1.1	Cluster I - Thudukki	104
4.4.1.2	Cluster II - Anavai	105
4.4.1.3	Cluster III - Mukkali	107
4.5	Issues	107
4.5.1	Agriculture	107
4.5.2	Land alienation	111
4.5.3	Housing	114
4.5.4	Forestry	116
4.5.4.1	Colonialism, forestry and agriculture	116

4.5.4.2 Hunting and gathering	118
4.5.5 Local knowledge	119
4.5.5.1 Velliyamma	121
4.6 Co-operatives	123
4.6.1 Power politics	125
4.6.2 On forced co-operation	127
4.6.2.1 Tribal as target	127
4.6.2.2 Community and outsider	131
4.7 Violence of development	133
4.8 Summing up the current situation	135
4.9 Conclusions	139

CHAPTER FIVE EVALUATION OF ATTAPADY SOCIETY IN TERMS OF SAHA-ASTITWA	141
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5.1 Introduction	141
5.2 Evaluation of Attapady society	141
5.2.1 The Individual level	142
5.2.2 The family level	143
5.2.3 The village level	144
5.3 Nyaya, Suraksha and Samridhi	145

CHAPTER SIX SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	151
APPENDIX I	157
APPENDIX II	162
APPENDIX III	166
APPENDIX IV	167
APPENDIX V	169
BIBLIOGRAPHY	170