TRIBAL SETTLEMENT IN WAYANAD, KERALA

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ABSTRACT

The tribal population in India, though a numerically small minority, represents an enormous diversity of groups. They vary among themselves in respect of language and linguistic traits, ecological settings in which they live, physical features, size of the population, the extent of acculturation, dominant modes of making a livelihood, level of development and social stratification. They are also spread over the length and breadth of the country though their geographical distribution is far from uniform.

Kerala holds a unique position in the tribal map of India. [1] Mainly five tribal communities have their origin in Wayanad. The Paniya tribe is numerically the largest among them. They are the largest scheduled tribes of Kerala also. (fig.1) They are mainly settled in Wayanad. (fig.2) The majority of the Paniya tribal population (71.95%) are found in Wayanad. Taking into account the various socio-economic indicators, Paniya tribe can be considered to be a better representation of the tribal population of Kerala. This study includes the importance of tribals in Wayanad, their sustainable way of life and the relationship between settlement and environment in tribal habitat. So this paper is an attempt to reveals the tribal settlement and development of Wayanad, Kerala.

Key words: Tribe, Paniya, Heritage, Tourism, Economy, Habitat, Wayanand, Kerala.

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1. IDENTIFICATION OF LITERATURE STUDY / CASE STUDY – NEED OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to derive insight tribal settlements in Wayanad, Kerala. The study of sustainable settlement in urban context and the architecture techniques help for Future development of Wayanad. Wayanad is an icon of Kerala for its geographical peculiarities. It is a nerve centre of tribes in Kerala with thirteen tribal groups including particularly vulnerable tribes. Tribes are homogenous ethnic group with a specific sense of identity based on common language and culture. [3] In Kerala largest tribal population is in Wayanad (fig.3) It is the district with the highest share in the adivasi population (about 38%) of Kerala. The tribes here still practices age old customs and rituals and live a nomadic life.

The compilation focuses on the identification of a Important tribal settlement of India on the bases of heritage, religious belief, living style and cultural values integrated all together to sustain the tribal settlement gracefully with the passing time. The study, on the basis of literature study, analyzes the potential of tribal settlement and binds them together to bring a solution. The documentation of tribal settlement of Wayanad, Kerala identifies the significance of tribal settlements based on the secondary sources, literature and case studies, adapted to further analyze and conclude with a understanding contribution of tribes with respect to the heritage, conservation and development in future.

![Figure 1: Paniya tribes in India. (source: Project)](image1)

![Figure 2: Wayanad District, Kerala (source: Wayanad District Map)](image2)

2. INTRODUCTION

A tribe is a group of distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient, and not integrated into the national society. Social formation of India has mainly three components – tribal settlements, villages and towns. It is difficult to draw sharp distinction amongst them because they share some common characteristics. Our race found ways of adapting the environment rather than adapting in accordance with the environment. When you look at a tribal settlement you find people who have found numerous ways of adapting to the environment and becoming a part of it rather than a threat.

According to Ekistics, A human settlement consists not only of its built form but also the area around it which each of its inhabitants travels around for its daily routine.[2] In the case of tribal habitat this space is limited to the fields and forest surrounding it since walking is the main mode of transportation.
3. THE GREEN PARADISE OF KERALA, WAYANAD

The district of Wayanad extends over an area of 2125 sq.km. As the south-western tip of the Deccan Plateau, at an altitude of 700 meters above the sea level. Tamilnadu and Karnataka states and Kannur and Kozhikode districts of Kerala state are the borders around. Wayanad district is famous for its tropical climate and lush green hills, valleys and forests. The district is emerging as the major location for eco-tourism in southern India. It is also the inheritor of ancient religious and cultural heritages. These are reacted in the very old and diverse religious institutions, festivals and tribal ballads. The several old forts and monuments still existing in the district expose the historical importance of the area. The population of Wayanad is 6,71,105 (1991 Census) of which 3,41,187 are men and 3,30,000 women. 20% of the district population is indigenous/tribal peoples who form 36.5% of the total indigenous/tribal population of the whole state. The indigenous/tribal peoples of Wayanad include 14 different communities. Officially recognized by the state as Scheduled Tribes. The Kurichia, Paniya, Adiya, Thenkuruma and Mullukuruma are the major communities. Historically, these indigenous communities had maintained their time-tested patterns of self-governance, social institutions and cultural heritage living in symbiotic relationship with the nature and forest. [4]

3.1. Background

The name Wayanad has been derived from the expression Vayal nadu the village of paddy fields. In the ancient times this land was ruled by the Rajas of the Veda tribe. In later times, Wayanad came under the rule of Pazhassи Rajahs of Kottayam royal dynasty. When Hyder Ali became the ruler of Mysore, he invaded Wayanad and brought it under his way. In the days of Tipu, Wayanad was restored to the Kottayam royal dynasty. But Tipu handled entire Malabar to the British. [50] New turn Thus Wayanad fell into the hands of British, and with it began a new turn in the history of this area. The British opened up the Plateau for cultivation of tea and other cash crops. Roads were laid across the dangerous slopes of Wayanad from Calicut and Telicherry. These roads were extended to the city of Mysore and to Ooty through Gudalur. Road facilities provided opportunities for the people outside Wayanad to flow and settle in these jungle regions.(fig.5) When the state of Kerala was formed in 1956, Wayanad was part of Kannur district. Later South Wayanad was added to Kozhikode district and then on November 1, 1980 North and South Wayanad joined together to form the present Wayanad district. [32]

Figure 5 Road network of Wayanad, (source: Wayanad District Map)
4. EVOLUTION OF TRIBAL SETTLEMENT PATTERN IN WAYANAD

Figure 5 Settlement evolution of tribes in Wayanad Kerala. Source: Author

5. COMMON FEATURES OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

- Tribal origin
- Primitive way of life
- Their own special life style, culture, customs and traditions.
Tribal Settlement in Wayanad, Kerala

- No script for their language.
- Lack of modern technical skills.
- Prefer community living.
- Worships forest gods
- Give respect to others
- Accept the leadership of traditional leaders.
- Have their own traditional art forms, folk dances.
- They are afraid of the outside world.
- Lack of modern education
- Lack of interest in individual ownership of land.
- They are found of nature.
- Sustainable way of life.
- Traditional Ayurveda medicinal practices.

**Figure 6** Wayanadan Paniya tribe.
(Source: Tribe | Joshi Daniel Photography)
6. LOCATION AND LAYOUT
Kuppadi, Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad, Kerala.

Figure 7 Wayanad district map. (Source: Wayanad District Map, Kerala District Map with Important Places of Wayanad @ Newkerala.Com, India)

Figure 7.1 Land use plan of Kuppadi region. Source: Author

Kuppadi is a village located 3 km from the Sulthan Bathery town. Where we can see the relation between the tribals, forest and farming. The settlement is scattered in between forest and paddy land. (fig.7.4)

Figure 7.3 Detailed settlement layout in the colony. Source: Author
The settlement is done based on the climatic orientation and less disturbance to the existing topography. Community is close knit and hence buildings are placed close to one another to have maximum interaction spaces and protection from others. (fig.7.3) The nearest housings are based on farming activities so the Paniya tribe helps them for cultivation of crops. Their technical skills are much utilized by the no tribes.

![Figure 7.4 Site elevation, Kuppadi. Source: Author](image)

**6.1. Paths**
The approach to the settlement is by a mud track which can be used by vehicles. Individual units are approached by footpaths which runs through side of front yards and provides room for increased interaction between the inhabitants.

![Figure 7.5 Mud cart road section. Source: Author](image)

**6.2. Places of worship**
There are mainly three shrines and two are situated deep with the forest. One shrine is dedicated to Lord Siva and is situated near the settlement. The shrine have no structure and is nearly a raised floor of random rubble masonry. Trees in the shrine are very old and add to the sense of sanctity. A front yard is provided for ritualistic dances and acts as a space for public gathering.
6.3. Built forms
There are three types of individual units which includes, 1. Houses 2. Dormitory for boys and 3. Dormitory for girls. All the buildings are oriented towards the east.

Figure 2 Tribal huts beside the forest. (Source: India Tour Packages | Kerala Holiday Packages - Leisure Tours)

Figure 7.8 Section of the unit. Source: Author

6.4. Houses
Small buildings designed with sufficient strength in order to cope up with climate of the region. The house units are basically modular in pragmatic design giving rise to final format. In design they provided lot of space for sit out and sitting space around the house. (fig.7.7) The construction materials collected are seasonal to assure the best quality. Very few openings are provided in order to maintain heat inside the building as two stoves also act as fireplaces in case of a home which is enough to heat the narrow bed room.
6.5. Special units (Socio cultural)

Boys and girls above the age of five are made to sleep in Dormitories. These act as an efficient way of reducing the population and maintaining space in a house. Also people in the same generation develop a special bond with one another due to living together. (fig.7.8) Seclusion of women also occurs within this same dormitory.

6.6. Activities & Spaces

The main activities that occur within the settlement are cooking, drying of crops, agriculture, handicraft sleeping and other daily activities. Cooking is done in an earthen stove slightly above floor level and which is easily accessible by the user by in simple sitting position. Racks are arranged on top and sides and are easily approached by slightly standing up bending the knee. The arrangement is such that it requires very less circulation space for seeds and other agricultural produce. Dining and sleeping occur within the same area that is the extra hall attached to kitchen. During day time this space acts as well as dining space and mats are removed from floor and stored in storage units situated above room level. At night these are taken out, spread and used for sleeping. (fig) whole of activities which takes place in the settlement ends by the sunset since artificial light is not available. Morning the routine begins by sunrise. Water is drawn for washing from streams through bamboo pipes and is brought to the front yard. Front yards also host many activities during summer when the climate is favourable. Community meetings occur in Sathram and also in temple premises.
6.7. Effects of climate, Flora & Fauna

The region is on a high altitude and also the has a high wind velocity, layout as well as building typologies have been developed through centuries cope up with these. The construction itself is made strong by the use of soil and bamboo. The house is made square and the area is reduced to bare minimal requirements so as to make the building stronger. Temperature inside the built form is made cozy and comfortable to the user by the use of fire places (fig.7.9).

Use of straw above the roof structure help to maintain the day and night temperature. Cow dung and clay is used for wall and floor plastering to avoid contagious disease. There are only narrow openings inside the buildings which are done so as to create heat insulation inside the hut and to prevent outflow of heat.

6.9. Building materials and construction techniques

Use of easily available materials like Blackwood, bamboo, soil, valavari grass, wild twigs and cane etc. Construction has two phases that is wall construction(fig.8) and roof construction (fig.8.1)

![Figure 8](image-url) Wall construction stages Source: Author

![Figure 8.1](image-url) Roof structure made with bamboo. Source: Author
7. INFERENCEs

Settlement pattern in Wayanad is such that fields are easily accessible to the inhabitants and houses arranged close together so as to make maximum interaction spaces. The house structure evolved as a response to the climatological and geographical features of the area.

The major tribal arts performed in the district are Vattakali and Koodiyattam using thudi and kuzhal by Paniyas, Gadhika by Adiyas, Kolkali by Kurumas and Nellukuthu pattu.

The meetings are held on the Muppans house (elder person in the colony), rituals and ceremonies occur within the forest and in shrines near the settlement.

Locally available building materials such as wood, stone, soil, straw, grass and bamboo are used for the construction of houses. Technology for construction, evolved out of generations of pragmatic design resulting in final prototype. Agriculture is the primary occupation and spaces are designed to accommodate specific needs put by this activity such as storing of seeds, harvest, utensils etc.

Spaces are designed to suit the activities taking place and climate of the region. Each space is multipurpose in nature and offers flexibility and comfort to the user. A separate dormitory for girls and boys aged over seven are provided which increases the essence of community life since the whole generation grows together. This also reduces the built area required in each house since the number of inhabitants is less.

8. CONCLUSION

In the present scenario, the de-notified nomadic and semi nomadic tribes are the worst victims of neglect and oppression. Some of these communities are far away from receiving the benefit of freedom and social justice even though they are classified as scheduled tribes. Thus even today the tribes are the worst victims of exploitation and their survival is a big question.

- Every tribal habitat has a unique identity which is also reflected in their settlement. This identity develops as an indirect effect of the limited building materials, technology and climate of the region.
- Each space is designed so as to facilitate the activities taking place and is multipurpose in nature. This effectively reduces built up area. Front yards are also used as a house extensions giving space for activities like cooking, gathering, drying etc.
- Climatic influence are clearly visible in settlement design as it decides the shape of the module, size, orientation, openings, nature of building material used etc.
- The knowledge about holistic herbal medicines and sustainable way of life in the present scenario make them more valuable in nature.
- Now a days many tribal blindly follow the modern culture. As a result they are losing their unique culture, land, language, traditional techniques etc. So they have the minority community exploited by others.
- Many Government and non-government policies are there to preserve the tribes but they are not sufficient and insensitive. So we need to develop customized framework as per the need of community.

The acknowledgement of Wayanand tribal settlement will preserve the essence of tribal settlements, deserves upliftment of its heart and soul which can not only sustain the carrying capacity but also live through the times setting an example for the coming generations as an important link of cultural heritage of India forgotten by the people as visitors and dwellers.
The side by side development of tangible and intangible aspects of Wayanand tribal settlement interwoven with surroundings will give a resultant society, the society which is able to flourish embracing its culture while being adoptive to the changing trends for the betterment of society.

REFERENCES


