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# Impact of Welfare Schemes on *Kanikkars*: An Empirical Study<sup>†</sup>

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Both State and Central Governments have been making every effort towards the upliftment of the tribal people. This includes measures both executive and legislative. However, if annual reports of the concerned departments are any guide, it is found that these efforts could not make much impact. An empirical inquiry into the reasons for this state of affairs was conducted among the *Kanikkars* of South Kerala. The following pages embody the results of this study.

## THE BACKGROUND

Tribals in India are traditionally known as *Adivasis*, the aborigines of the country. They remained completely isolated from the national life due to their long stay in the thick forests. They were traditionally nomadic and were in the habit of doing shifting cultivation. The self-governing system of administration, their distinguishing traditional habits and customs and their indigenous laws, and separate dialect keep them aloof from the main currents of national life. It is estimated that about seven

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per cent of India's total population consists of Scheduled Tribes. There are about two hundred and fifty Scheduled Tribes communities. They speak about one hundred and fifty languages and two hundred and twenty five subsidiary languages and are scattered along the length and breadth of India from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean and from the Arabian Sea to the Eastern Frontiers.<sup>1</sup>

The tribes in India are now classified into four.<sup>2</sup> They are:

- (a) those living in the remotest corners and almost in primitive stage;
- (b) those in the *jhuming* (shifting) cultivation stage;
- (c) those who have taken to regular agriculture; and
- (d) those already assimilated.

Even from the olden days these people were kept undisturbed by the Rulers. The British Administrators also excluded them from their general administrative reforms introduced in other areas of Indian territory.<sup>3</sup>

The acceptance of the idea for the formation of an egalitarian society by the independent India made the Government to give special attention for the upliftment of these groups. This is evident from the incorporation of special provisions for the administration and protection of these people in the Indian Constitution.

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1. See *Report of the Working Group on Tribal Development During Sixth Plan 1980-1985* (1981), p. 1.
  2. U. N. Dhebar, *Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission 1960-61*, Vol. 1, p. 5.
  3. See for details, P. S. K. Menon, "Administration of Tribal Areas—A Historical Perspective," *Occasional Papers on Tribal Development-27*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi (1981), pp. 38-60

Two approaches were put forward even days back for the development of the tribals in our country. They are:<sup>4</sup>

- (a) Development in isolation; and
- (b) Forcible absorption into the mainstream of national life, completely ignoring the fact that the tribal societies have distinct cultural patterns and customs requiring special treatment and the consequent need for a special approach of development.

The first one was criticised by many sociologists as a proposition intended to "treat tribals as museum specimens by shutting them off from all outside contact."<sup>5</sup>

During the First Five Year Plan period a new approach striking a balance between the above two was adopted, thus eliminating the elements of 'isolation' and 'force' from them. This approach was based on respect and appreciation of tribal culture and tradition as an understanding of the social, psychological and economic problems with which they are faced. This strategy was expressly stated in the *Pancha Sheel* Policy of tribal transformation enunciated by the first Prime Minister of India, Sri Jawahar Lal Nehru. According to the first principle contained in it, the tribal development "should be along the lines of the genius of the tribal community and nothing should be imposed on them".<sup>6</sup>

This approach was reaffirmed later. The Debar Commission observed:

4. See Elwin Verrier, *The Baiga*, London, (1939), quoted in D. R. Pratap, "Planning for Tribal Development", *Occasional Papers on Tribal Development-28*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi (1982), p. 44.
5. See D. R. Pratap, "Planning for Tribal Development", *Occasional Papers on Tribal Development-28*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi (1982), p. 44.
6. *Supra*, n. 2. p. 6.

“The problem of problems is not to disturb the harmony of tribal life and simultaneously work for its advance; not to impose anything upon the tribal life and simultaneously work for their integration as members and part of the Indian family”.<sup>7</sup>

With this in mind, the Government implemented many programmes for their development and continued upto the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan. But the study team appointed by the Planning Commission to review the working of tribal development programme on the eve of the Fifth Five Year Plan suggested that the aim of tribal development policy must be of one of integrating the tribal population with the rest of the people by a gradual and well planned process.<sup>8</sup> Thus the whole object of the tribal development is to inject into the existing traditional value system of tribes, the values and norms of the formal system.

The executive measures were geared towards the upliftment of the educational and economic conditions of the tribes. They were linked with the welfare activities of the Community Development Programmes to develop the areas of tribal concentration during the First Plan period. For achieving this, Special Multi-Purpose Tribal Development Blocks and later Tribal Development Blocks were started. Although various schemes for improving education, agriculture, industry and health condition were implemented in these blocks, these programmes were found to be inadequate for tackling the complex

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7. *Ibid.*

8. The Commission observed: “The aim of tribal development policy should be defined as the progressive advancement, social and economic, of the tribals with a view to their integration with the rest of the community on a footing of equality within a reasonable distance of time. The period has necessarily to vary from tribe to tribe and while it may be five or ten years in the case of certain tribes, more particularly the tribes who have already come into contact with the general population by living in the plains it may be two decades or more in the case of tribals who are still in the primitive food-gathering stage.” See *supra*, n. 1 at p. 8.

problems of tribal development. Hence a new approach was called for. Area development with focus on the development of tribal communities in areas of tribal concentration, and family-oriented programmes for dispersed tribes were the two significant aspects of this new approach which started from the Fifth Plan period.

The term 'development' in the tribal context means integration of the tribal people with the mainstream of the society. *Kanikkars* present different stages of development and are selected for studying the implications of tribal development in the present time. *Kanikkars* may be classified into three - the first group already integrated to the mainstream, the second in the process of integration and the third group just starting to assimilate the new values. The problems with which these groups are confronted differ substantially.

#### PROBLEMS OF THOSE INTEGRATED

A group of *Kanikkars* residing in a place called Naraka-thinkuzhi situated nearly twenty-five kilometres away from the nearest town Neyyattinkara are a sort of tribesmen who have substantially gone up from their old tribal life. The place was once thick forest cleared by the *Kanikkars*. Originally there was eleven families. The Maharaja of Travancore assigned about forty-four acres of land for these families. Although seven persons totally alienated their lands and left into the interior forest, by the passage of time the number of families has now increased to nineteen. The areas surrounding this tribal settlement are completely inhabited by plainsmen who have either encroached into, or purchased, *Kanikkar* lands. Thus the area which was once dense forest and inhabited by tribal people only does now look like a village in the plains.

The rate of literacy in this area seems to be appreciably high.<sup>9</sup> There are one *balawadi*, a centre where children are

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9. More than twentyfive persons completed secondary education even though the majority failed. There is one person who completed his

looked after, an adult education centre, a feeding centre and a craft centre. These are not institutions exclusively meant for the tribal people. Persons belonging to other communities also are helped in these institutions. The nearest tribal school is nearly five kilo-metres away from this place. All the students in this area are studying in the private school which is nearer. Aware of the benefits of education and interested in educating their children, the parents have a general complaint that the payment of educational grants is usually delayed. Some of the students who failed in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate examination are having private tuition without any benefits from the Government. Such benefits are now restricted to students who have got a fixed minimum marks in their examination. *Balawadies* are well attended. The majority of the children below five in the locality go there. Since the feeding centre is working they get food.<sup>10</sup> Only women used to attend the adult education programme.

Majority of the *Kanikkars* are farmers. They get income from coconut and arecanut trees.<sup>11</sup> They seem to have no problem in marketing their products, nor are they exploited. Some of them are casual labourers and are getting proper wages.<sup>12</sup> Every *Kanikkar* possesses land assigned to him by the Government. But many alienated a portion of their lands to persons outside their community.<sup>13</sup> Almost all are found in debts varying from two hundred to three thousand five hundred rupees. They

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graduation and is employed in the Accounts Office. Some others are having their college and other post secondary technical courses.

10. Food usually supplied is milk and porridge or *uppuma* prepared from wheat.
11. The rate of their income varies from fifty to five hundred rupees per month.
12. The daily wage was fifteen rupees when the author visited there.
13. Out of the fourteen family members interviewed, nine have alienated their lands. Eight of them given it to non-tribals. Some of the *Kanikkars* who transferred their lands are ready to purchase it back for more consideration than what they received. But the settlers are too willing to part with them.

say that these debts are incurred by unavoidable items of expenditure such as treatment and marriage ceremonies. Housing scheme of Government is seen to have considerably helped them as most of the houses owned by them had been constructed with the assistance of Harijan Welfare Department. Recently the Tribal Welfare Department issued maintenance grants to them. All beneficiaries except one has utilized it for maintenance of their houses in good condition. Some of them spent additional amounts from their pockets for this purpose.

*Kanikkars* here are also supplied with coconut seedlings, rooted pepper cuttings, cocoa plants, etc. from the Agricultural Department. More than fifty per cent of these items have been lost as they were of inferior quality. They were also issued with fertilizers, spade, pick-axe and other agricultural implements. Girijan Co-operative Society is still to be started. There is a proposal to start one. Besides this, some *Kanikkars* have already taken agricultural loans from the nearby Co-operative Society and are repaying them.<sup>14</sup>

The craft centre is imparting training in rattan work, such as making baskets, weaving mats and making cane chairs. As there is no forest and no raw materials from the forest available, surprisingly, these articles are now made out of plastic and wood. Although many *Kanikkars* are trained, none is employed in this art.<sup>15</sup> Some of the persons who had this training work as peons in Banks and Governmental Departments. Two persons are professional drivers though not employed. It seems that nobody has been benefited by any governmental schemes to start small scale industries or other business. Some of them

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14. One person utilized the money for marriage purposes and another for clearing debts. For repayment of the loan one has mortgaged his lands and another sold a part of his land.

15. Out of the fourteen members interviewed, eight members studied rattan work and one weaving conducted by the weaving centre at Pongummudu, Neyyantinkara.

expressed their willingness to do business if they are given financial assistance. It seems all the educated persons are looking forward to get white-collar jobs.

An examination of the social set-up of the *Kanikkars* in this area indicates that there was conversion of their traditional values. Their unity is broken. Perhaps their marriage rules remain intact. However, greater tolerance of their violations can be perceived. There are many inter-caste families residing in the area without any disturbance - a phenomenon that a traditional *Kanikkar* group could never have permitted. The *Muttukani*<sup>16</sup> system - their own system to resolve disputes - has already disappeared from the area spelling the total break of bondage with the old institutions. They now approach the police and other formal state organs for resolving their disputes. The *Kanikkars* in this area seem to be free from ignorance and exploitation when compared to their counterparts in other areas. They can be identified with a group in the formal society in many respects.

#### THOSE *Kanikkars* IN THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION

The group of *Kanikkars* who are now in the process of integration reside in Vlavetty three kilometers away from Neyyar dam which is about twentyfive kilometers away from Neyyattinkara, the nearest municipal town. On one side is the forest area and on other sides are private and Government plantations. The *Kanikkars* now living here are not original residents but settlers in the banks of the dam site after alienating their lands in the

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16. *Kani* village is under the control of a head man called *Muttukani* who has influence and authority over the community. He is the head of the 'Village Council' or 'Panchayat' which control the administration of the village. It is in this body that all the disputes among them are settled. See for details, L. A. Krishna Iyer. *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, Vol. 1 (1937), pp. 31-33 and V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. II (1906), p. 409.

plains. When the dam was completed their settlement was covered by water which made them to settle in this area. The way in which they were ousted from their own lands presents the typical mode of exploitation resorted to by the plainmen. The *Kanikkars* used to take loans from plainmen who charged exorbitant rates of interest. Extreme poverty did not allow the *Kanikkars* to repay the loan or the interest. Then the money lender would ask the debtor to alienate a portion of the land for cultivation in return for the money. The *Kanikkars* were forced to comply with this demand. This would continue year after year till all of them lost their lands and migrated to the area near the dam.

At the time of this study there are fifty three families in this area. The Forest Department has earmarked near about one hundred and eighty acres of land. But those lands are yet to be assigned to them. The literacy rate among the *Kanikkars* here is very low. Only very few reach upto Higher Secondary School. There are a nursery, one feeding centre and a Lower Primary School. The students of the nursery were supplied with clothes. Parents are aware of the benefits of education. The children get lump-sum grants though according to them they are paid very late. Majority are interested in educating the children but the students seem more interested in cattle rearing and other jobs even though the High School is only three kilo-metres away. They used to attend one or two years in this School but stop attending the classes. The poor financial condition of the parents coupled with the delay in getting the educational dole is perhaps the reason for the heavy drop-outs. Some students do feel that they are being discriminated by the teachers. The teachers, on the other hand, feel that these tribal students come to the school only for getting grants. Thus there seems to be a communication gap between the teacher and the taught. It is true one adult education centre is functioning in the area. But few *Kanikkars* attend this centre. Evidently they are not interested in studies.

There are ten government employees among the tribal people here. All others are farmers and casual labourers. Agriculture is indeed not a lucrative occupation for them. They are living in the forest land without any legal right. But more than sixty per cent of the cultivable land is now in the hands of outsiders. The mode of assigning the land to these outsiders is on *varam* (a type of tenancy) arrangement under which they allow others to cultivate. In return the *Kanikkars* get money. They usually do this because they are not interested in agriculture. The *varam* in due course get converted into mortgage or lease depending upon the debt.<sup>17</sup> The ignorance of the legal consequences and the social circumstances makes them to resort to such transfers. The result is that they are dispossessed of gradually.

The tribal people here used to sell their lands to other *Kanikkars* who migrated to this area after parting with their lands in the countryside. Such migrants are on the increase now. The grant of more benefits to the hill-tribes in contrast to their counterparts in the plains by the Government according to the new policy seems to be the reason for this phenomenon.

The average income of the *Kanikkars* here varies from fifty to five hundred rupees per month. Their indebtedness ranges from three hundred to five thousand rupees. Debts are incurred for meeting expenses of marriages, treatment of diseases of children and drinking of alcohol.

The government housing schemes benefited these groups also. The Harijan Welfare Department rendered house grants in

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17. This happens as follows. The *Kanikkars* are asked to enter into a written agreement stipulating that the land must be returned when the money is paid. Since they are not aware of the implications of the measures of land, for small amounts of money they used to give large extent of lands. This shows that the giving of land for *varam* and then converting it into a lease or mortgage may force these tribal people to part with their lands in future.

1972. But no one has completed the house. Since the rules for issues of grants prescribed the allotment at three stages of work, the first part of the grant was released after the completion of the basement by the *Kanikkars*. On receipt of this amount they constructed small huts on the basement already constructed and collected the next allotment. Since nobody has completed the roof according to government specification, the last instalment was not given at all. According to some persons, the officials had misappropriated the fund. Recently, five good houses have been constructed under the Integrated Rural Development Programme.

They were also supplied with coconut seedlings, rooted pepper cuttings, cocoa and cashew plants and agricultural implements. Most of the seedlings are lost due to their being of poor quality. The recent draught also is a major factor for the destruction of their seedlings. This affected their sources of income adversely.

To improve their living conditions, loans for purchase of cattle were given by the Tribal Co-operative Society. Many bought these animals, but some sold them. Some of the animals of course died due to some epidemics. They used to supply the milk to a Milk Co-operative Society close by which provide them with reasonable price. It is found that none has so far repaid the loans given for purchase of cattle. Instead some *Kanikkars* have pledged their cattle to outsiders for getting more money.

The Tribal Welfare Department issued a grant of three hundred rupees to six families for wiring their houses. But the irony is that electricity has not yet reached this place and none has made use of this money for wiring.

The most significant development that takes place in this area is the industrial training given to the tribal women. This training is being imparted by the *Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi* on

making of threads from cotton. It also envisages training in weaving. The machinery (*Charka*) and raw materials are loaned to these women who get training. The threads made by them will be collected by the institute and part of its value adjusted to the loan advanced. The starting of this training has a beneficial impact. Previously these women were engaged in collecting firewood unauthorisedly and selling it at the market. This illegal transactions are not there now, since the women are not available now to take the firewood to market. In other words this has helped in preventing the unauthorised felling of trees to a substantial extent.

One person received financial assistance for starting a consumer store and another a tea-shop. The tea-shop is running at a loss since two non-tribals also started similar business in the area. The *Kanikkars* are generally not purchasing goods from the consumer store since the prices are too high. They depend on this store only for purchasing sundry articles and in emergency.

A Co-operative Society has been functioning here for a long time. The Society launched loans for the benefit of the *Kanikkars*. But their reluctance for repayment is a barrier for its future working. The scheme of the Society of purchasing the Minor Forest Produces does not seem to be successful. The Minor Forest Produces thus collected are given to the Government Pharmaceutical more than three hundred miles away from this place. The *Kanikkars* get the price of the produce only after this Pharmaceutical certify the genuiness of the Minor Forest Produces. This creates hurdles and inordinate delay. The *Kanikkars*, who are urgently in need of money, will have to wait for a long time to get the price for their produces. No wonder, they are forced to sell the produce to the local traders who promptly give the price although the price may be less than those fixed by the Government. The cumbersome procedure adopted by the Government in the purchase of Minor Forest Produces defeats the objective of the Society.

Their traditional settings have been considerably affected by their longterm interaction with the members of the formal system. By and by they are parting with their traditional systems.<sup>18</sup> Their unity was the hallmark of their tradition. This is now broken. Just as the group of *Kanikkars* already assimilated, about whom mention was made previously in this paper, the *Kanikkars* of this area resort to police and formal judicial methods for solving their disputes, thus bidding farewell to their old traditional and customary dispute resolving mechanism. The inter-caste marriage now existing among them is another illustration of this transformation. But in contradistinction to those *Kanikkars* already assimilated to the mainstream, this group did not utilize in full the assistance rendered by different agencies, nor did their children take keen interest in getting educated. However, in contrast to the third group of *Kanikkars* with whom the rest of the paper deals, this group shows signs of integration.

#### THOSE *Kanikkars* JUST STARTING TO INTEGRATE

The third group of *Kanikkars* who are just starting to have contacts with the plainsmen are living more than thirtyfive kilometers away from the nearest urban population. The eight small settlements<sup>19</sup> where they live are scattered over the reserve forest and surrounded by water, the only access to this place being by country boats. Except the place of their settlements all other areas are covered by thick forest. Some areas are still not free from wild elephants. A few *Kanikkars* are original settlers of this place; others joined forty to fifty years back after parting with their lands near the plains due to public encroachments.

The rate of literacy is very much low when compared to other areas, the major reason being the lack of educational

18. See *supra*, n. 16.

19. They are at Puravimala, Thenmala, Shankumkonam, Karikuzhi, Kunnathumala, Ayyavilakam, Thodumala and Chakkapara.

facilities. One Lower Primary School has been functioning (at Puravimala) since 1979. *Kanikkars* are not satisfied with its working. Owing to the lack of transportation, teachers are not in a position to reach the school regularly in time. The parents are not fully aware of the educational concessions. Still they know that they are entitled to get some money. They are getting incentive grants for sending their children to the school in addition to other assistance. Two *balawadies* where small children are given training and opportunity to play and study, are working in this area. Here the children get food, books and clothes.<sup>20</sup> Since some of the settlements are far away from these institutions separated by thick forest, children find it difficult to come and attend classes regularly.

It is found that the students passing out of the Lower Primary School cannot even write their names much less read books. One can imagine the standard of education imparted in this school. Naturally tribal students will not get admission in the well-conducted private schools close by. Those who get admission find it difficult to adjust themselves with others. Drop outs are many. Lack of transportation facilities, poverty of the parents and insufficient and delayed government assistance are the adverse factors that stand in the way. Still it is heartening to note that one boy and three girls from this area are studying for B.A. and Pre-degree respectively in a far away college.

The settlers here possess forest land of considerable extent<sup>21</sup> without legal title. They consider that the land is their property. Most of the cultivable land is given to outsiders for *varam*, a system under which the money lenders advances money to them or gives one third of the produce during harvest. The

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20. Previously a lungi and towel were supplied to them. Now they are supplied with shirts and skirts which are not fit for them. Slates and books are also supplied to the students of the Lower Primary School.

21. Majority do not know even the approximate area of land they possess.

*Kanikkars* themselves work as casual labourers<sup>22</sup> in the land which they gave on *varam* and they claim as their own. The funnier story is that they are asked to guard the crops from the animals. For this also they are entitled to get a pittance of the produce. Lack of funds with the *Kanikkars* to cultivate and their traditional laziness are the real reasons for this *varam* arrangement. The laziness is created, it is felt, not only due to their traditional ways of life but also due to the way in which the Government helps them, i.e., by giving doles without extracting any work from them. By giving the property to *varam* they are not only getting money in advance but also regular work given by the outside cultivator. The portion of the produce during harvest given by the outside cultivator to the *Kanikkars* for protecting the crops from the animals in fact pleases the latter. Thus they find it more economical to give lands on *varam* rather than cultivating them by themselves. But the painful result of this practice is that slowly the money-lenders by indebting<sup>23</sup> them convert this *varam* into lease or mortgage. This happens in the following way. Since *Kanikkars* are poor they are not in a position to help each other during financial difficulties.<sup>24</sup> This leads them to look for the money-lenders who advance money and levy high rates of interest.<sup>25</sup> Evidently *Kanikkars* fail to pay interest or the capital. Thus the debt mounting to a huge amount leads the money-lender to convert the *varam* lands into mortgage or lease without the knowledge of the poor and ignorant *Kanikkars*. The peculiar feature here is that none is dispossessed from his land. Everything works as an informal arrangement between the *Kanikkars* and the money-lender away from the eye of law and official scrutiny and to the advantage of money-lenders in several ways. In law the property gets not only trans-

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22. Daily wages prevalent in this area is twelve rupees.

23. The rate of indebtedness among them varies from three hundred to five thousand rupees.

24. Their rate of income varies from fifty to one hundred and fifty rupees per month.

25. Generally the interest varies from fifty to hundred per cent.

ferred to him but also gets cultivated with the cheap *Kanikkar* labour. Protection of the crops from wild animals is also assured. The money-lenders thus will be getting the ownership of the land, the produce from them, etc., at very cheap rate. This surreptitious practice has been going on without any check.

The Government after the starting of sub-plan strategy implemented many schemes in this area. The major items of coconut seedlings, rooted pepper cuttings, cocoa plants and agricultural implements supplied by the Government are sold by the *Kanikkars*. The reasons seem to be the duplication of the supply of items and lack of knowledge about their proper use. Many allege that the seedlings supplied did not grow in the forest. So when they were again supplied with the seedlings they sold them. In an interview with some of the *Kanikkars*, they said that they had to pay money to the officials for loading and unloading charges of these materials. Since they would not be in a position to give money, the officials themselves take one or two items, already supplied, for meeting the transportation charges. Similarly, the items are supplied at a place three to eight kilometers away from their settlements. The difficulty of carrying them to the settlements and the pressure of demand for these items from the public make them sell the seedlings and other goods. They are selling them at cheap rate since they are ignorant of its actual prices.<sup>26</sup> It is said that the public are advancing money to the *Kanikkars* as soon as they receive the news of the supply. It is here where the lapse in administration at the lower levels works havoc. If the officials take care of paying periodical visits to the settlements and check the progress of their programmes these unfortunate events will never happen.

Supply of goats, cows, poultry-birds, work-bulls and extending agricultural loans are other welfare activities imple-

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26. For example, they sell the coconut seedlings worth four rupees fifty paise for fifty paise or one rupee and spade, pick-axe, iron bar worth nearly one hundred and fifty rupees for thirty to forty rupees.

mented by the Government to improve the economic conditions of the *Kanikkars* in this locality. Each and every family was a beneficiary of at least one of the above schemes. But it seems that they have not utilized them properly. The reasons can be illustrated by the examination of the following two schemes.

Under the Special Central Assistance Scheme<sup>27</sup> three families in one settlement were supplied with a pair of he-buffaloes for the purpose of ploughing the paddy field. All disposed of them. One family sold a buffalo when the other pair died of a disease. The second family disposed of both when one buffalo started showing symptoms of disease. The third man sold one buffalo when the other was shot dead by a hunter who had mistaken the buffalo to be a bison.<sup>28</sup> The fact is that there is no such area of paddy field in this place to use three pairs of buffaloes for cultivation. The *Kanikkars* had no past experience in using buffaloes for ploughing their paddy field. They also did not know how to treat the disease of the buffaloes which are imported to their habitat. Nor was there any veterinary hospital or trained staff any where nearby. All these contributed to the failure of the objectives of the scheme.

Another example is the recent supply of milch-cows to the *Kanikkars*. Under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (I.R.D.P.) eighteen hybrid variety of milch-cows have been supplied to eighteen families through the Girijan Co-operative Society on the condition that they have to pay back half the value of the cows by selling milk to the nearest Milk Society which is three kilometres away from the nearest settlement. The

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27. The Scheme envisaged the supply of work-bulls. For details see, *Tribal Sub-plan of Kerala 1980-85 and 1982-83*, Tribal Welfare Department, Govt. of Kerala (1982), p. 22.

28. The *Kanikkaran* filed a complaint to the police and a case was initiated. The horns of the buffalo were placed as a piece of evidence. According to him since the offenders managed to replace the horn of buffalo with that of another animal the case was dismissed and he was deprived of compensation.

Milk Society accounts the milk supplied and gives money at the week end. Out of the total amount received fifty per cent goes to the Girijan Co-operative Society for the repayment of the loan and the rest to *Kanikkars*. They say that they do not get any profit at all. The total money received in a week is not sufficient for repayment of loan and cattle food. Since they are not trained in milking or looking after the cows, the quantum of milk is very low. Many fail to supply milk. Some have complaints about the measurements also. Owing to the lack of proper care, two cows died. Even though the cows are insured, if they cannot get a certificate from the veterinary doctor, they would not get the money.<sup>29</sup> This scheme has also failed due to the lack of knowledge of the *Kanikkars* to rear cattle.

The tribal people experience a lot of difficulties in getting the benefits from the Tribal Welfare Department. They have to produce certain certificates proving their community and income for getting the benefits. The offices are fifteen to twenty kilometres away from the area. Even though the Tribal Extension Officer is empowered to issue certificate in certain cases, since he is not visiting the area regularly, the tribals have to go to his office two or three times to get the certificate and apply for the benefits. Since most of the *Kanikkars* do not know the places, they have to take the assistance of somebody who knows the place. In most cases, they have to borrow money for the expenses of travel. Sometimes they may have to go four or five times to get the things done. In all these cases he loses his labour which in turn may lead to starvation of his family on these days. In some cases they have to bribe the officials.

Duplication of schemes and lack of uniformity in implementing these schemes seem to be the major reasons for the misutilization. According to the sub-plan approach, the

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29. They have to go nearly fifteen kilometres to get a veterinary doctor. They have to take a car and sometimes give money to the doctor for coming to the field to certify the death. Due to these difficulties they fail to get the certificate and lose the benefit.

Tribal Welfare Department is implementing its schemes and the schemes of the Central Government. The rest of the schemes in the sub-plan are being implemented by the respective departments who formulate their sectoral programmes.<sup>30</sup> Some of these schemes are quite similar. For example, the Tribal Welfare Department and the Agricultural Department have similar schemes for supply of agricultural implements. So also Tribal Welfare Department, under the Central assistance scheme, and Dairy Department have similar schemes for supply of cows. Similarly the Animal Husbandry Department and the Tribal Welfare Department have similar schemes for supply of cows, goats, poultry birds, etc.<sup>31</sup> Since the schemes are implemented separately by each department there seems to be overlapping. No wonder that this resulted in the sale of some agricultural implements by the beneficiaries.

The housing schemes did not help them much. Only in one settlement some houses were constructed and they are not good for staying during rainy seasons. Some others were given grants but none completed the construction. The Government also permitted them to fell jack fruit trees for this purpose. But many *Kanikkars* sold the wood at cheap rates. Now majority are staying in small huts constructed with bamboo.

One Girijan Co-operative Society has been functioning here from 1973 onwards. The Society had tried to implement four loan schemes. But nobody repaid it properly. The first loan was released in 1980 for agricultural purpose. This was given to sixtyfive members. No one has repaid the loans. In the next year another loan was issued after deducting the amount of previous loan. Thirdly, it launched a loan for the purchase of goats to all the members adjusting the previous one. The goats purchased were sold by the beneficiaries and the loans are still outstanding. This prevents the secretary to launch new schemes.

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30. For details see *Tribal Sub-plan of Kerala 1980-85 and 1982-83* Tribal Welfare Department, Govt. of Kerala, (1982).

31. *Id.*, pp. 12-14, 23-24.

Recently eighteen milch-cows are issued on fifty per cent subsidy under the I.R.D.P.<sup>32</sup> Some beneficiaries are repaying it while others hesitate to pay. The feeling among the *Kanikkars* is that the loans given to them by the Government are free and need not be paid back. The most important reason for the failure of repayment seems to be the distribution of other benefits by other departments free of cost which gave an impression to them that what is given by the Government is free.

The Society is having some working problems. It is functioning under the Kerala Co-operative Societies Act 1969 (Act 21 of 1969). It is controlled by the Director Board nominated by the Government for the first five years and then by the elected members. The period of the nominated board can be extended to five more years if it feels necessary. The Board now consists of four government servants and three *Kanikkars*. The present government servants are the Forest Range Officer (President), Unit Inspector (Co-operative) Neyyattinkara, Harijan Welfare Inspector and Handloom Inspector. Out of this the Harijan Welfare Inspector and Handloom Inspector according to many do not generally come for meetings. Two *Kanikkars* who are nominated members are also not participating since they shifted their houses from this area. This places the secretary in great difficulty to carry on the working of the Society. The Government has not made any alternative arrangements to overcome this difficulty even after repeated reminders. Now, since the period of the nominated Board is over, they are going to constitute an elected Board of Directors. This perhaps may lead to the total failure of the Society's working since the *Kanikkars* here are not in a position to take proper decisions.

The *Kanikkars* here face difficulty in marketing their products. Their major produces are arecanut, tamarind, pepper and cashew nuts. They used to sell these items in the market. They allege about the use of faulty balances by the traders to weigh

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22. Details of the Schemes already discussed, see *supra*, pp. 253-254.

their products. In case of pepper and tamarind the traders used to come to each house for buying. They generally approach them during the beginning of the season itself offering advances. Due to financial difficulties *Kanikkars* generally are forced to accept them. If they agree to sell, the traders will fix the price and pay a portion on condition that the *Kanikkars* have to look after the produce till the product get ripened. During harvesting they give the balance. In most cases they reduce some money on some excuses which include allegations such as the reduction in quantity of the produce from the quantity they expected or that the *Kanikkars* have stolen some portion. In spite of these tactics of tradesmen the *Kanikkars* believe that they are getting reasonable prices. In fact they are being exploited by the traders. They do not seem to be aware of this, and this practice is going on without any check from the part of officials.

There is no government hospital anywhere near where the *Kanikkars* live. An *Ayurvedic* Dispensary has been started in one settlement. But the doctor and other staff are not regularly attending the hospital. The doctor, according to *Kanikkars*, used to visit only once in a month, and the other staff once or twice in a week. So in practice it is of no use to *Kanikkars*.

## CONCLUSION

The above study among the different groups of *Kanikkars* gives an overview of the problems involved. It is clear that the problems of that group already assimilated are considerably less while the propensity of the problems increases from those who are in the process of assimilation to those who are still in the old traditional ways of life in the forest.

The most complicated problem is how to save the hill-tribes from the exploitation by the money-lenders and traders. Alienation of their lands without the proper knowledge of the tribal people constitutes another difficulty which needs quick remedy. The law seems to have not done much to solve this.

It is brought out in the study that most of the tribal people are ignorant of the legal implications of the transfer of lands. As seen already their financial difficulty, the non-availability of an agency whom they trust in the field to give money and the lack of their interest in cultivation are the reasons leading to the alienation. A clear solution to these problems at the grass-root level, is to be found before embarking on enactments or implementation of laws or executive programmes.

The supply of work-bulls and milch-cows to the tribal people without considering the necessity of ensuring certain conditions to achieve the object and rendering grants to electrify the tribal huts and houses where electricity has not yet reached are the concrete examples of the failure of well planned executive measures. The duplication of the schemes, the reluctance of the officials to visit the fields and the present dole system without nurturing in them the dignity of labour are matters that require serious thinking. The development of the tribes must be through their labour and active participation. Before introducing any scheme, its viability and the ability and aptitude of the tribal community to utilize it has to be evaluated and the schemes modulated to suit the genius of the tribal people.