

## MINOR FOREST PRODUCE GATHERING BY JENU KURUBA TRIBES IN COORG DISTRICT IN KARNATAKA

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### ABSTRACT

Along with economic subsistence forest has been providing unique social and cultural life and people meet their day today needs. Predominantly tribals in India are relying upon minor forest produce (MFP) for their substance. Nowadays deforestation and depletion of forest resources are mounting, on the other hand instances of malnutrition and acute poverty are increasing. Hence, all stake holders of society co-operate to rejuvenate the forest resource and promote the welfare of tribes. The National Forest Policy (1998) of Indian Government considered participation of people in forest protection, promotion and management. The policy has made provision to reap the benefit of forest produce by the people living in and adjacent of the forests. Present Paper has made an attempt to examine the way of gathering Minor Forest Produce by Jenu Kuruba tribe of the Coorg district in the Karnataka State.

**Keywords:** Coorg, Forest, Honey, Jenu Kuruba, Livelihood, Minor, Produce.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe more than two billion tribal people are residing in the forest, relying upon minor forest produce (MFP) for existence, generating income and livelihood security. MFP are playing very crucial role in sustainable livelihood, lessening poverty, conservation of biodiversity and promoting rural economic growth. Around 80 percent population of the developing world utilizes MFP for their health and nutritional needs. Over 50 million people in India are relying upon MFP for their sustenance and income. Evidently, 20 to 30 percent tribal's household income is deriving from the collection of MFPs. Out of 3000 species of forest products hardly 126 are being marketed and generate income.

Socio-economic and cultural life of tribes in India is associated with the forests. Tribal communities across the country are inhabited in different ecological and geo-climatic conditions. Based on ecological, historical and cultural factors the system of subsistence among tribes is different from other ethnic groups. Tribal communities are dwelling in forest regions since prehistoric period in isolation from the mainstream and preserving the legacy of harmony and harmonious relation with the nature. Fundamentally, the collection of MFP by tribals was taking place to fulfill their basic needs. However, MFP gained commercial value over the passage time, since then enormous trade transaction taking place and level of income has increased followed by the rising demand for MFP.

The National Commission on Agriculture (1976) mentioned about eleven minor forest produces namely (1)grasses, bamboos,and canes, (2)Fibers and Flosses, (3)Oil Seeds, (4) Tans and Dyes, (5)Edible products, (6) Lac and its other products, (7)Essential Oils, (8)Leaves, (9)Drugs, Spices and Insecticides, (10) Gumes, Resins and Oleoresins, and (11) Miscellaneous Products.

Studies on Jenu Kuruba Tribes Jenu Kurubas are mainly scattered in Madikeri, Virajpet, and Somavarapete taluks of the Kodagu district. The word 'Kuruba" is derived from the word "Kuru, which is a distorted form of the Tamil ko (Ku) or Ku meaning hill. The collection of honey has been a source of livelihood for Jenu Kuruba. In Kerala state also, there are Jenu Kurubas in the high hills. They are identified as Kattunanyakan, Shola Nayakan, Teen Kuruman and Jenu Koyya Shola.

As of now, no systematic empirical research carried on Jenu Kudubis. Since social anthropological or sociological study or research of an applied nature on Jenu Kurubas has not yet been attempted, literature on the life and problems of this community is not yet available. However, a few research articles and write-ups written in Kannada and English have been published. In the Mysore Census Report of 1911: Jenu Kuruba community was enumerated and discussed separately and no reference was made to Kadu Kurubas and Jenu kurubas either as sections of kuruba or any way related to it. A separate enumeration of Jenu kurubas

was made in the 1921 Census when they numbered 1,672. In 1931, they numbered 4,603. At the subsequent enumeration's, it appears that the population of Jenu Kurubas had not been separately recorded.

Thurston made some anthropometric observations among the Jungle Kurubas of Nilagiris and found that their average stature was 157.5 cm. and classified them as dark skinned, short and with platyrrhine type of nose. The Jenu kurubas have been described as diminutive but hardly race of dark complexion with broad face, low forehead, long head and wooly hair. Anantha Krishna Iyer describes that the Kadu kurubas (i.e. Betta kurubas and Jenu Kurubas) are either dark or dark brown in colour and of short stature and wooly hair. Lewis Rice wrote on the Jenu Kurubas as follows in 1877. They have no fixed abode but go in search of the place where bee hive is found, hence their name, from Jenu honey. The Jenu Kurubas are found scattered in all the jungles. They are excellent climbers of trees and skilled in using of sling, arrow and bow.

B.L. Rice mentions, not long ago they were nomadic food gatherers who never thought of a settled life and home. Often they live under wind-breaks resting on trees, in the hollows of trees and over banging rocks. Many were noticed in open all the day and sleeping around a lighted fire at night. When stationary they have the most disappointing type of long and low huts with the floor in level with the ground. The sides are of flattened bamboo and the roofs are covered with grass or leaves. Almost similar information is recorded in Mysore Census Report. "They (Jenu Kurubas) belong to this locality and do not come from anywhere else. They move around in the same forest" In the course of present study it was noticed that they were commonly in the habit of sleeping in the open around a fire. All the above accounts indicate that the Jenu Kurubas lived practically a nomadic life till recently. Even now many aspects of nomadic way of life continue among them. Due to the restrictions imposed by the Forest Department free movement have become difficult for them nowadays going away from their places to settling down in the villages and bordering the forest.

### Objective of the Study

To examine the way of gathering Minor Forest Produce by The Jenu Kuruba in the Coorg region of Karnataka state.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study pertained to Kodagu district of Karnataka state. Kodagu (known as hilly region in southern India), known in English as Coorg. Kodagu is famed for extensive coffee plantations that cover most of the hillsides, most of them under multiple cropping of coffee, orange, black pepper, and cardamom. Coorg honey and coffee have been popular in the world. The region was also called "The Scotland of India" by the British and the Kashmir of the south for its scenic beauty. About 200 samples were selected from Madikeri, Virajpet, and Somavarapete taluks. Because the study is descriptive in nature, the structured interview schedules have been used to collect the primary data by using the purposive sampling technique. Similarly, relevant literature is collected from secondary sources such as journals, books, encyclopedias, gazetteers, reports, and different websites as well.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Jenu consume and they then market the remains which supplement their income. The Jenu Kurubas livelihood is depending up on the collection of minor forest produce. Apparently, available minor forest produce in Western Ghats are nellikai (*Phyllanthus emblica*), Uppage (*Garacinia gummi-gutta*), Dalchinni (Cinnamon), Alalekai (*Terminalia chebula*), Antvalakai (*Sapindus Laurifoliosus*), Honey, Shikakai (*Soanpnut*) Norekai (*Acacia Consinna*) and many herbs and plants. By gathering aforesaid produce Jenu Kurubas are generating little income to meet their needs by selling in weekly markets. The rights of collecting the MFPs in the interior forests are obtained through periodic remittance of lease fees to the Forest Department. The Jenu Kuruba tribals are in a position to devote most of their time for collection of various MFPs. On average 4-6 hours were spent in a day for the purpose. In this context, the collection of MFP (minor forest produce) could assure the Jenu Kurubas a source of subsistence during the summer months.

**Particulars of MFP Harvesting By Jenu Kuruba Tribe**

Sl. No	NTFPs	Usage	Harvesting Season
1	Lichens (Indian stone moss)	Traditional Medicine and Perfumes, Dyes	June-September
2	Honey with Beeswax	Medicine, Consumption	April-May
3	Shikakai	Medicine and hair oil	February- May
4	Antavala (Soap nuts)	Medicine and Soap and Detergents	March-April
5	Nellikai (Indian gooseberry)	Medicine, Pickle, Juice	December-February
6	Arishina (Turmeric)	Medicine, Cosmetics, Cooking	March-April
7	Dalchini (cinnamon)	Ayurveda Medicine	May and November
8	Murugal (cocum, garcinia indica)	Medicine	March-April
9	Uppage (garcinia gummi-gutta)	Medicine	March And July
10	Alalekai (terminalia chebula)	Health Benefits	May-June

**Composition of NTFP Employment Pattern**

The collection of soap nuts, gooseberry and turmeric generated less than 10 days of employment for the Jenu Kuruba tribal households, as their collection procedures were much simpler than collection of shikakai and lichens. But, the case is different in harvesting honey. Even though honey collection is a laborious job, the quantity extracted and days going out for harvesting were less compared to other MFPs. Thus, based on the employment generating capacity, shikakai and lichens could be considered as the major source of employment. Altogether, the collection of all the available MFPs generated 66 days of employment per household.

**Constraints**

Based on the data collected several constraints were observed in the collection of MFPs. Most of the MFPs occur in widely scattered areas making economic utilization difficult. Some of the products like amla are perishable and seasonal in supply, and their non-collection and non-utilization mean a resource wasted. Their timely collection and storage of MFPs assume huge importance. Unscientific methods of collection and overutilization may lead to scarcity of certain valuable MFPs.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

The study reveals that the tribals belonging to the Junu Kuruba community take an active participation in MFP collection and processing. Replenishing the dwindling stock by proper methods of cultivation, and improving the harvesting, grading and processing to ensure better returns are critical to improve the living standard of Jenu Kurubas. Since the MFPs are available in the inaccessible interior forests, possible infrastructural facilities like frequent transport for the produce may in turn enhance the level of production and the trade of minor forest products. Similarly, the level playing field need to be provided to reap the benefits made provision under the Forest Right Act 2006 for the wellbeing of Junu Kurubas and other tribes.

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