

Can Different Tribes be Treated Alike?
Revisiting the Reservation Policy for Scheduled Tribes

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Abstract

The present study intends to find out how the different tribal groups in Wayanad district in Kerala respond to the Higher Education. It identifies the privileged and underprivileged tribal groups in Wayanad in terms of accessibility to higher education. Based on the result, the study questions the holistic treatment of tribes for reservation in education and employment. The study found that the benefit of reservation is enjoyed by a few communities among the tribes and treating them as a single unit is illogical as the socio-economic status of each tribes are varied and their cultural roots are diverse. It also proposes to treat each tribe separately while planning reservation policy in order to reduce wide disparity exists among them. The study suggests that the reservation policy has to be modify to ensure the representation of each tribe in proportion with their population.

Keywords: Tribes, Enrolment, Tribal identity, privileged and under privileged group

Wayanad District of Kerala

The presence of the highest proportion of tribal population is one of the important demographic features of Wayanad District of Kerala. Mullakurumar, Uraalikulumar, Kattunaikar, Adiya, Kurichyar and Paniyar are the major tribes in the District. Paniyas outnumbers other tribes with regard to population. Besides the groups mentioned above, there are also smaller groups like Kadar, Kalanadi, Karimpalan, Kunduvadiyar, Thechanandon, and Pathiyar. They have their own life styles, culture, customs, traditions and religious practices. Though each tribal group follows peculiar dialect, all of them do not have any script. Their history can be traced only through their oral tradition and religious practices.

Problem of Identity, Isolation and Displacement

Tribes all over the world face the problem of identity, isolation and displacement. In this context it is necessary to see how this section of society is accommodated with broader scenario of change, and how far the tribal communities succeeded in coping up with the drastic changes taking place in this era of globalization. The present study intends to find out how the different tribal groups in Wayanad district in Kerala respond to the Higher Education.

Heterogenous Groups

It is to be noted that the tribal communities in Wayanad are heterogeneous in character and extremely diverse in terms of many socio-economic indicators. While some communities were traditionally settled cultivators having considerable land holding, a majority of them were landless labourers. Some of them served as bonded laborers to the landed Adivasis and Non Adivasi migrants. A few sections of them were hunters and gatherers till recently, living inside reserve forest or in its fringes leading a relatively isolated existence. So Adivasi communities in Wayanad cannot be treated as a single entity. While approaching the common problems faced by them, for their sub-tribal/community identity surpasses a common 'Adivasi identity'. There are discernible differences among the communities in terms of economic activity, level of income, educational attainment, access to power structure, and capacity for meaningful participation in developmental initiatives, degree of integration in a non-tribal dominated setting. The present paper does not treat the tribes in Wayanad as a single unit. It attempts to investigate the enrolment pattern in Higher Education separately among various Tribal Groups in Wayanad District.

Research Problem

Even though the literacy rate and the enrolment rate in schools have been considerably improved among Tribal population of Wayand District as a result of various measures taken by the Government for universalizing school education, the number of higher education aspirants is found to be very limited when compared with the other communities in the District. No exclusive programmes and policy have been planned or implemented to address the problem of enrolment and dropout of Tribal students in Higher Education Sector. It is also to be noted that the policy and programmes in higher education sector is largely utilized by the already benefited tribal communities, whereas several other communities are still deprived of

the opportunities or are less motivated to seek Higher Education. The present study tries to bring out the enrollment pattern in Higher Education among various tribal groups in Wayanad. It also investigates the various factors that favour or hinder the enrollment.

Review of Literature

A comprehensive study on the social problem faced by various communities in Wayanad was done by Sharma & Pankaj (2008) entitled “A Baseline Survey of Minority Concentration Districts of India” sponsored by Ministry of Minority Affairs and ICSSR briefly address the Educational problems faced by tribal communities in general. Indu V Menon (2013) tried to identify the problems prevailed in primary schools in tribal areas. However, no serious attempts have yet been made to explore the community wise enrolment and dropout rate in Higher Education sector among various tribal groups in Wayanad. K K George (2011) try to enquire how inclusive is higher education to SC and ST. He treats ST as a single unit in his study and could treat the sub groups separately. In short, Dropout study on the tribal students of Wayanad is mainly concentrated on school education. All the studies on higher education treat the tribal communities as a single unit and undermine the sub group and regional disparities. The present study treats each group separate to bring the pattern of dropout and enrolment among them.

Objectives of the Study

- To find out the community wise enrolment pattern of tribal students in Wayanad in Higher Education Institution with the aim to identify the under privileged tribal communities with regard to higher education

Hypothesis

- There are underprivileged and privileged tribal communities in Wayanad with regard to higher education

Relevance of the Findings for Policy Formulation

The findings of the present study would be helpful to the authorities concerned to streamline the strategies to be adopted for the enhancing the enrollment among under privileged tribal communities and rethink and reframe the reservation policy.

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Methodology

Both primary and secondary data related to the problem under study were collected and analyzed. Primary data indicating the enrollment of tribal students for the last three years were collected from all aided and government arts and science colleges in the Wayanad district. The secondary data were collected from the data source like District Census Hand Book Special tables on Scheduled Tribes, Primary Census Abstract, and Administrative Atlas etc.

Limitations of the Study

The present study surveyed only the Arts and Science College. The professional colleges have not come under the purview of the present study. The data on enrolment t are solely based on the admission register kept in the arts and science colleges and the errors, if any in such register will likely to be reflected in the study.

Enrolment Pattern in Higher Education among Tribal Students of Wayanad

Though the literacy rate and school level enrollment among tribes in Kerala are comparatively better when compared to their counterparts in other part of country, their participation in Higher Education is very low. Even the seats reserved for them are kept vacant due to insufficient applicants. Though Government has initiated special educational schemes with flexible development projects, the rate of the dropout of tribal students in Higher Education could not be reduced. There also exists wide disparity among various tribal groups with regard to their accessibility to higher education. The present study tries to elicit community wise enrollment pattern in Higher Education sector among various tribal communities in Wayanad District.

The sample selected for the study includes the UG Courses of all the Govt. and Aided Arts and Science Colleges of Wayanad District. The table below provides the details of the courses in govt. and aided Colleges in Wayanad District. The unaided courses are excluded from the present study.

Colleges and Courses

Colleges	Courses
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NMSMG College Kalpetta	BA Economics, BA History, BA Mass Communication, BCom, BSc Computer Science
Govt. College Mananthavady	BA English, BA Economics, BCom, BSc Electronics
PKKM College of Applied Science, Mananthavady	BCom, BSc Electronics, BSc Computer Science
WMO Arts and Science College, Muttill	BA Arabic, BCom, BSc Mathematics, BSc Physics, BSc Electronics
St. Mary's College, SultahnBathery	BA Economics, BA Political Science, BA English, BSc Physics, BSc Chemistry, BSc Botany, BCom, BBA, BCA
Pazhassiraja College Pulpalli	BA Economics, BA History, BA Travel and Tourism, BBA, BSc Microbiology, BSc Biotechnology
Mary Matha College, Mananthavady	BA Functional English, BCom, BSc Computer Science, BSc Mathematics, BSc Zoology

Enrollment Pattern of the tribal communities in various streams

Table 1 provides the details of the enrollment pattern among various tribal communities in Wayanad in Science, Commerce and Arts.

Table 1
Stream wise enrolment

Year/ Communities	Science			Commerce			Arts			Total
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	
Kuruma	31	28	32	17	26	18	34	37	32	255
Kurichian	10	18	19	26	17	25	19	16	23	173
Paniya	2	5	1	3	2	1	11	10	5	40
Kattunakka	0	1	3	4	3	3	7	8	11	40
Adiya	2	7	2	3	6	4	4	1	2	31
Urali	2	1	1	4	0	0	2	2	4	16
Kadar	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	6
Vettakuruma	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4

Karimbalan	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Kunduvadiya	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Malayarayan	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
ThachanadanChe tty	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	51	62	61	57	58	54	79	75	77	574

Table 1 shows the stream wise enrolment pattern of various tribes in the academic years 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. When overall enrollments in all the three years are analyzed, the following trends can be elicited.

- The highest enrolment is in the Arts stream, followed by science and commerce respectively.
- Variation in number of enrolment is found in all the three years
- The enrolment pattern is different among various sub groups of tribes in Wayanad

Table 2
Year wise overall enrolment

	2010	2011	2012	Total
Science	51	62	61	174
Commerce	57	58	54	169
Arts	79	75	77	231
Total	187	195	192	574

The above Table indicates that the number of enrolment in the entire streams remains without variation with the exception of science. The number of enrolment in science stream was considerably increased form 2010-11 to 2011-12 and maintains the same in 2012-13. The community wise distribution in all the three streams does not give any uniform trends. The distribution is given in the table 3.

Table 3
Community-wise distribution in different streams

	Science	Commerce	Arts	
Kuruma	91	61	103	255

Kurichian	47	68	58	173
Paniya	8	6	26	40
Kattunaikka	4	10	26	40
Adiya	11	13	7	31
Urali	4	4	8	16
Kadar	3	2	1	6
Vettakuruma	2	2	0	4
Karimbalan	2	1	0	3
Kunduvadiya	2	1	0	3
Malayarayan	0	1	1	2
ThachanadanChetty	0	0	1	1
	174	169	231	574

The table above shows the community wise enrolment in all the three years. Kuruman has maximum enrolment and ThachanadanChetty has the least. With regard to the preference for the three streams, no uniform trend among all the tribes can be traced out. Though Kuruman has maximum enrolment in science, and arts, it stands behind Kurichian regarding the enrolment in commerce. The enrolment of Paniya, Kattunaikka, and Urali are comparatively higher in arts than other streams. The enrolment of Kurichian, and Adiyar are comparatively higher in commerce than other streams.

Proportional representation in enrolment

A clear picture of the enrolment trends can be found only when it is compared with the population composition of ST in the district. The proportional share of seats among various communities is to be traced out in relation with population to identify disparities, if any, exist. Following table gives the details of the composition of tribal population in Wayanad. The data is based on the socio-economic survey conducted by the Kerala Scheduled Tribe Development Department. As per the survey Wayanad District stands first with 35.94 per cent of the Scheduled Tribe population of the State, followed by Idukki (12.42%), Kasaragod (11.21%) and Palakkad (11.01%). The number of Scheduled Tribes in Wayanad is 153181. It constitutes 18.76 per cent of the total population of the district ie.816558 (as per 2011 census) of the

district. The table given shows the community-wise distribution of the major tribes in Wayanad with percentage to the total tribal population.

Table 4
Enrolment rate and population

Community	Population	Percentage to the General population of the District	Percentage to the Tribal population of the District
Paniya	69116	8.46	45.12
Kurichyan	25266	3.09	16.49
Kuruman	20983	2.57	13.7
Kattunaykkan	17051	2.09	11.13
Adiyan	11196	1.37	7.31
Vettakuruman	6472	0.79	4.23
Thachanadanmoopan	1646	0.20	1.07
Wayanad Kadar	673	0.08	0.44
Mala Arayan	166	0.02	0.11
Karimbalan	145	0.02	0.09
Ulladan	94	0.01	0.06
Others	413	0.05	0.27
Total	153181	18.76	100

From the Table, it can be found that Paniya, Kurichyan, Kuruman, Adiyan, Vettakuruman, and Thachanadan Mooppan are the major tribes in Wayanad. Regarding population, Paniyais at the top with 45.12%, followed by Kurichyan (16.49%), Kuruman (13.7), Adiyan (11.13%), Vettakuruman (7.31%), and ThachanadanMooppan (4.23%).

Percentage of stream wise representation to the total enrolment

The percentage of stream wise and total enrolment of various communities is to be traced out in order to compare it with the community-wise representation in total tribal population. Such an analysis would bring out whether each community has attained

proportional representation in Higher Education sector. Average enrolment of various tribal communities in Wayanad in Higher Education is calculated and furnished in the table below.

Table 5
Average enrolment in the year from 2010-2013

Communities	Science			Commerce			Arts			% of total enrolment
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	
Kuruma	60.78	45.16	52.46	29.82	44.83	33.33	43.04	49.33	41.56	44.42
Kurichian	19.61	29.03	31.15	45.61	29.31	46.3	24.05	21.33	29.87	30.14
Paniya	3.92	8.06	1.64	5.26	3.45	1.85	13.92	13.33	6.49	6.97
Kattunakka	0	1.61	4.92	7.02	5.17	5.56	8.86	10.66	14.29	6.97
Adiya	3.92	11.29	3.28	5.26	10.34	7.41	5.06	1.33	2.6	5.40
Urali	3.92	1.61	1.64	7.02	0	0	2.53	2.66	5.19	2.79
Kadar	1.96	1.61	1.64	0	3.45	0	0	1.33	0	1.05
Vettakuruma	3.92	0	0	0	1.72	1.85	0	0	0	0.7
Karimbalan	0	1.61	1.64	0	1.72	0	0	0	0	0.52
Kunduvadiya	1.96	0	1.64	0	0	1.85	0	0	0	0.52
Malayarayan	0	0	0	0	0	1.85	1.27	0	0	0.35
Thachanadan	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.27	0	0	0.17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

When the average enrolment of various tribal communities from 2010 to 2012 is compared, it is found that Kuruma has the highest and Thachanadan has the least enrolment rate.

Comparison on proportional representation in Higher Education

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A comparison of higher education attainment among various sub-groups of tribes and their population are essential to trace out the disparity, if any exist in accessing higher education. The table below compares the percentage of the enrolment of various sub-groups of tribes in Wayanad with the percentage of their population in the total tribal population.

Table 6
Comparison of percentage of enrolment and population

Community	% of Total enrolment	Percentage to the Tribal population of the District	Difference in %
Paniya	6.97	45.12	-38.18
Kurichyan	30.14	16.49	+13.65
Kuruman	44.42	13.7	+30.72
Kattunaykkan	6.97	11.13	-4.46
Adiyan	5.40	7.31	-1.91
Vettakuruman	0.7	4.23	-3.53
Thachanadan	0.17	1.07	-0.9
Kadar	1.05	0.44	+0.61
Mala Arayan	0.34	0.11	+0.23
Karimbalan	0.52	0.09	+0.43
Others	3.31	0.33	+2.98
Total	100	100	0

The table indicates that only five communities (Kuruma, Kurichya, Kadar, Malayarayar, and Karimbalan) have enrolment rate higher than their proportion in total tribal population. Representation of Kuruma and Kurichya in higher education is much higher when compared to their population. Paniyan is the most disadvantageous group that has least enrolment, though it consists of nearly half of the total tribal population of the district.

Kurichyan, Kuruman, Kadar, Malayarayan, and Karimbalan can be considered as advantageous group as the difference of the percentage of their enrolment and the percentage of their population is positive value. The rest of the communities can be considered as the disadvantageous group as their difference in the percentage of their enrolment and the

percentage of their population is negative value. Among them, Paniya is found to be most vulnerable regarding enrolment as it obtains the highest negative value (-38.18). The other disadvantageous groups are Kattunaikka, Adiya, Vettakuruma, and Thachanadan. Hence the study vividly indicates that there exists wide disparity among the sub groups of tribes in Wayanad regarding the enrolment.

Stream-wise representation of communities

Representation in science stream

Table 7
Average enrolment in science

Year/ Community	Science					
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Average Enrolment	% of population	Difference in %
Kuruma	60.78	45.16	52.46	52.8	13.7	+39.1
Kurichian	19.61	29.03	31.15	26.6	16.49	+10.11
Paniya	3.92	8.06	1.64	4.54	45.12	-40.58
Kattunakka	0	1.61	4.92	2.18	11.13	-8.95
Adiya	3.92	11.29	3.28	6.16	7.31	-1.15
Kadar	1.96	1.61	1.64	1.74	0.44	+1.3
Vettakuruma	3.92	0	0	1.31	4.23	-2.49
Karimbalan	0	1.61	1.64	1.08	0.09	+1.17
Malayarayan	0	0	0	0	0.11	-0.11
Thachanadan	0	0	0	0	1.07	-1.07
Others	5.88	1.61	3.28	3.59	0.33	+3.26
Total	100	100	100	100	100	0

The table 7 indicates that the pattern of enrolment in science stream is similar to the overall enrolment pattern already analyzed. In the enrolment pattern of science stream too, Paniya are far behind the other tribes in the expected minimum enrolment proportional to their population. Kuruma and Kurichya are much ahead than other tribe in the enrolment in the courses under the stream of science. The representation of minor sub groups, Kadar and Karimbalan is also slight higher.

Kurichyan, Kuruman, Kada, and Karimbalan can be considered as advantageous group in terms of their enrolment in science stream as the difference in the percentage of their enrolment and population is positive value. The rest of the communities can be considered as the disadvantageous group as their difference in the percentage of their enrolment and population is is negative value. Among them Paniya is found to be most vulnerable regarding enrolment as it obtains the highest negative value (-40.58). The representation of Kuruma is much higher when compared to their population (+39.1). Hence the study affirms that there exists wide disparity among the sub groups of tribes in Wayanad regarding the enrolment in the courses under the steam of science.

Representation in Commerce

Table 8
Average enrolment in commerce

Year/ Community	Commerce					
	2010 -	2011 -	2012 -	Averag e	% of total populatio n	Differenc e in %
	2011	2012	2013			
Kuruma	29.82	44.83	33.33	35.99	13.7	+22.29
Kurichian	45.61	29.31	46.3	40.41	16.49	+23.92
Paniya	5.26	3.45	1.85	3.52	45.12	-41.6
Kattunakka	7.02	5.17	5.56	5.92	11.13	-5.21
Adiya	5.26	10.34	7.41	7.67	7.31	+0.36
Kadar	0	3.45	0	1.15	0.44	+0.71

Vettakuruma	0	1.72	1.85	2.34	4.23	-1.89
Karimbalan	0	1.72	0	0.57	0.09	+0.48
Malayarayan	0	0	1.85	0.62	0.11	+0.51
Thachanadan	0	0	1.85	0.62	1.07	-0.45
Others	7.02	0	1.85	2.97	0.33	+2.64
Total	100	100	100	100	100	0

The table 8 indicates slight differences in the pattern of enrolment in commerce when compared with overall enrolment pattern already analyzed. In commerce the enrolment of Kurichya is higher than that of Kuruma. In the enrolment pattern of commerce stream too, wide disparity exists in the case of Paniya tribe. They are far behind other tribes in the expected minimum enrolment, proportional to their population. Kuruma and Kurichya are much ahead than other tribe in the enrolment in the courses under the stream of commerce. The representations of minor sub groups like Adiya, Malayarayan, Kadar and Karimbalan are also slight higher.

From the Table above, Kurichyan, Kuruman, Adiya, Kada and Karimbalan can be considered as advantageous group in terms of their enrolment in commerce stream as the difference of the percentage of their enrolment and population is positive value. The rest of the communities can be considered as the disadvantageous group as their difference of the percentage of their enrolment and population is negative value. Among them Paniya is found to be most vulnerable regarding enrolment as it obtains the highest negative value (-41.34). The representation of Kurichya and Kuruma is much higher than their proportion in population (+26.92 and +17.48). Hence the study affirms that there exists wide disparity among the sub groups of tribes in Wayanad regarding the enrolment in the courses under the steam of commerce.

Representation in the courses under Arts stream

Table 9

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Average enrolment in Arts

Year/ Community	Arts					
	2010 -	2011 -	2012 -	Average	% of total population	Difference in %
	2011	2012	2013			
Kuruma	43.04	49.33	41.56	44.64	13.7	+30.94
Kurichian	24.05	21.33	29.87	25.08	16.49	+8.59
Paniya	13.92	13.33	6.49	11.25	45.12	-33.87
Kattunakka	8.86	10.66	14.29	11.27	11.13	+0.14
Adiya	5.06	1.33	2.6	3	7.31	-4.31
Kadar	0	1.33	0	0.44	0.44	0
Vettakuruma	0	0	0	0	4.23	-4.23
Karimbalan	0	0	0	0	0.09	-0.09
Malayarayan	1.27	0	0	0.42	0.11	+0.31
Thachanada n	1.27	0	0	0.42	1.07	-0.65
Others	2.53	2.66	5.19	3.46	0.33	+3.13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	0

The table indicates the pattern of enrolment in arts stream is more or less similar to the overall enrolment pattern already analyzed. In the enrolment pattern of arts stream too, wide disparity exist in the case of Paniya tribe. They are far behind other tribes in the expected minimum enrolment, proportional to their population. Kuruma and Kurichya are much ahead than other tribe in the enrolment in the courses under the stream of arts. Kuruma stands at the top. The representation of minor sub groups like Kattunaikka, and Malayarayam are also slight higher. Kadar has the enrolment perfectly equal to their proportion in population.

Kurichyan, Kuruman, Kattunaikka, and Malayaraya can be considered as advantageous group in terms of their enrolment in arts stream as the difference of the percentage of their enrolment and population is positive value. The rest of the communities can be considered as the disadvantageous group as their difference in the percentage of their enrolment and

population is negative value. Among them Paniya is found to be most vulnerable regarding enrolment as it obtain the highest negative value (-33.87). The representation of Kurichya and Kuruma is much higher than their proportion in population (+30.94 and +8.59). Hence the study affirms that there exists wide disparity among the sub groups of tribes in Wayanad regarding the enrolment in the courses under the steam of arts.

From the analysis of course-wise the distribution of tribal communities in various colleges in Wayanad district, it is found that the community like Paniya and Adiya are less aspire to acquire science education. Generally, tribal student are not attracted to or do not prefer the courses like Mathematics and Computer Science.

Findings

The enrolment rate in higher education sector is different among various sub groups of tribes in Wayanad. It is found that only five communities (Kuruma, Kurichya, Kadar, Malayarayar, and Karimbalam) have enrolment rate higher that their proportion in the total tribal population. Representation of Kuruma and Kurichya in higher education is much higher when compared to their population. Paniyan is the most disadvantageous group that has least enrolment, though it consists of nearly half of the total tribal population in the district.

Kurichyan, Kuruman, Kadar, Malayarayan and Karimbalan can be considered as advantageous group as the difference of the percentage of their enrolment and the percentage of their population is positive value. The rest of the communities can be considered as the disadvantageous group as their difference of the percentage of their enrolment and the percentage of their population is negative value. In the stream wise analysis of the enrolment too, the same pattern has been identified. Paniya is far behind other tribes in the expected minimum enrolment in all the streams, proportional to their population.

Suggestions for policy planning

The reservation and other policies related to the higher education of tribal student should treat each tribal subgroup separately. As adopted in the case of OBC reservation, the creamy layer among the tribes has to be excluded from reservation benefits in order to ensure equal justice. Since the proportion of reservation for different OBCs have been fixed separately

and each OBCs are treated singly, the same strategy has to be treated in the case of Scheduled Tribes too.

Special weightage marks can be given to the most vulnerable groups like Paniyas. One or two tribal college can be established in Sulthan Bathery and Kalpetta region in the model of PKKM College of Applied Science Mananthavady. Most of the tribal students enrolled in science courses are with low marks and grades. Some teachers opined they are not able to follow the higher level topics in science as most of them are not well versed in the basic principles of the subject concerned, which they are supposed to be, at Higher Secondary Level. So the tribal students who enrolled in science stream must be provided special coaching and bridge courses in the basic concepts of the subject concerned.

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