

## **Impact of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana on the Forest Dwelling Tribes of Kannur District in Kerala**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper attempts to study the impact of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme on the tribes living in the Kannavam Reserve Forest of Kannur District in Kerala and it also tries to analyse the economic activities of the forest dwelling tribes of Kannavam Reserve Forest diachronically. The PMUY scheme was launched on 1st May 2016, which was aimed to provide LPG connections to rural women below poverty line and later it was extended to all SC/ST households and forest dwellers. The tribes of the study area have got LPG connections through the PMUY scheme within the last six months in 2019. Most of the tribal people were unaware of the use of LPG and they continued to use firewood in their kitchens. With the implementation of the LPG scheme, a considerable number of the forest dwelling tribes have got LPG connections and the present paper provides a succinct image on the impact of the PMUY scheme on the forest dwelling tribes and the resultant socio-cultural changes.*

**Keywords:** Forest Dwelling Tribes, LPG connections, PMUY, Socio-cultural Changes.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Many developmental programmes have been implemented among the forest dwelling tribes of Kannur District in Kerala. Various housing schemes and various other development schemes have been implemented among them. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) is a recent scheme being implemented among the tribes of the Kannavam Reserve Forest area from the last six months. The PMUY has virtually started to make impact on the tribal life.

The PMUY was envisaged to provide LPG cooking gas to a large number of poor households of India. In many cases, the poor people are not in a position to make an initial payment to take a gas connection. Moreover, most of the people are unaware of the use of LPG and besides that some people are fearful to use LPG for cooking. The Government of India, in the official website of PMUY, has clearly stated that "India is a home to more than 24 Crores households out of which about 10 Crores households are still deprived of LPG as cooking fuel and have to rely on firewood, coal, dung cakes, etc., as primary source of cooking fuel. The smoke from burning such fuels causes alarming household pollution and adversely affects the health of women and children causing several respiratory diseases or disorders. As per a WHO report, smoke inhaled by women from unclean fuel is equivalent to burning 400 cigarettes in an hour. In addition, women and children have to go through the drudgery of collecting firewood" (PMUY, 2019).

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016, which was commenced to provide LPG connections to rural women below poverty line. Later, this scheme was extended on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018 to all SC/ST households and forest dwellers. The PMUY "aims to safeguard the health of women and children by providing them with a clean cooking fuel, LPG, so that they don't have to compromise their health in smoky kitchens or wander in unsafe areas for collecting firewood" (PMUY, 2019). Through the PMUY scheme, the Government has envisaged to provide Five Crores LPG connections to BPL families

with a support of Rs.1600 per connection in the next three years. Ensuring women's empowerment, especially in rural India, the connections will be issued in the name of women of the households. Towards the implementation of the scheme, Rs. 8000 Crores has been allocated. As per the recent updates of the Official Website of the PMUY, as on 04-07-2019, there are 73160261 LPG connections have been provided all over India in 714 Districts. That is, instead of five Crores, it crossed seven Crores in terms of the number of LPG connections.

Barua and Agarwalla (2018:6) have pointed out that "the promise given by the Prime Minister that the savings in subsidy [subsidy given up voluntarily] will be given back to people [by providing LPG at subsidized rate] who were less privileged. We were also quite certain that the facility provided will not be entirely free of cost for the beneficiaries. They would have to meet a part of the cost to get committed to the idea." At present, the PMUY provides financial support in terms of 50 per cent or Rs. 1600 to poor households to help them to purchase a LPG connection with stove, regulator and the pipe. The poor households could not have afforded the high initial cost of purchasing an LPG connection and they are depending upon firewood. Today, at the time of getting the LPG connection, the people below poverty line, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes do not need to pay any amount, but when they start refilling the cylinders, up to six cylinders, they will not be provided with any subsidy amount and they have to pay the full amount for a refilled cylinder. That is, the PMUY LPG consumers will have to pay full amount for a refill cylinder and no subsidy will be transferred to their bank accounts up to the refilling of six cylinders. Therefore, the PMUY is not totally a free business and it is providing either 50% or Rs. 1600 per connection as initial subsidy. The remaining amount is collected from them by not providing subsidy up to six cylinders. Nevertheless, the PMUY scheme helps the poor people to get LPG connections without any financial burden at the time of taking a gas connection.

According to Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gases, in Kerala, up to 18-7-2018, through the PMUY scheme 104846 LPG connections have been released. In Kerala, this scheme is getting implemented in many areas. In this context, the present study made an attempt to understand the impact of the PMUY scheme on the forest dwelling tribes of Kannur District in Kerala.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Anthropological studies on tribal development have had at most importance with its holistic nature and comprehensiveness. The socio-cultural aspects of the tribal people have always been studied along with various development issues. Envisaging development programmes on the one hand and implementing such schemes on the other hand is always needed studies at various stages of any programme or schemes. Therefore, the studies on tribal development are also vivid in terms of the subject matter and the angle of study. A few such studies are reviewed to set the background for the present research paper.

Singh (2006) has studied the development programmes carried out among the tribal communities by various departments and agencies in two villages, namely, Nayapur and Miyapur villages in Manipur. He studied the five year plans and the agencies of tribal development in Manipur. The study has pointed out that it is desirable to have separate allocation of funds and development strategies for the tribes living in plain and hill areas for a justified distribution of development benefits and to protect the due share of the poor tribes living in hill areas. The study also pointed out the socio-economic changes of these two villages.

In an article, Pandey and Dubey (2012) have made an attempt to provide a picture on the role of forests in tribal economy in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, as the tribal economy is in many ways interrelated with the forests in terms of food, shelter, medicinal plants, MFP, firewood, etc. The study point out that 80 per cent of the total tribal population of India is found in Central India. Madhya Pradesh has the largest population of Scheduled Tribes of all states. Out of 45 districts, 23 are predominantly tribal. The study has also briefly mentioned that about 85 per cent of 176 million people of Central India are rural people and firewood is the mainstay for the people for cooking food.

Prasad and Sinha (2012) in their book have discussed the topics such as tribal development in India, Forest Policy, Forest Rights Act, etc. They have mentioned that the forest dwellers' rights to collect fuel, fodder and minor forest produce are very restricted.

Chanda and Basu (2018) have studied on the development of thrift habit or economical management of resources among the tribes of West Bengal. The study focused on the impact of Large sized Agricultural Multi Purpose Co-operative Society (LAMPS) under Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal. There are 154 LAMPS and of these 82 are operating the Deposit Mobilization Scheme (DMS). The LAMPS is an effort to develop the habit of economic management among the Scheduled Tribes. It is an effort to bring the tribal people under a simple banking system and the scheme was started in 2001 in 13 Districts of West Bengal.

Giri and Aadil (2018) have conducted a study entitled 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana: A demand-side diagnostic study of LPG refills'. They conducted an independent assessment of PMUY in three Indian states, namely, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh (M.P.), and Uttar Pradesh (U.P.). The study was made to assess the demand-side behavioural triggers or barriers to the use and subsequent refill of LPG cylinders. The study pointed out that providing an LPG connection, which is the first step of the process, has been fairly successful. Yet there are several impediments to significant adoption in rural areas. These include the high price of refills, cultural or behavioural beliefs, and issues with access, which translates to the long distances of beneficiary households from the LPG dealer.

Barua and Agarwalla (2018:6) have conducted a study among the PMUY beneficiaries of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Odisha. They visited 7 families from Gujarat, 6 families from Uttar Pradesh, 4 families from West Bengal and 5 families from Odisha to study the problems related to PMUY LPG connection. The study has pointed out that "the beneficiaries raised the issue of high price of refill (about Rs. 800 as in February, 2018). They said that collecting Rs. 800 to buy a refill was a challenge. Several beneficiaries informed that with the rise in price of refill, they had stopped use of LPG."

The above literature review is a cross section of the literature on tribal development and various schemes of development including PMUY. The tribal economy and the restrictions in the use of forest resources and the need of economic management among the tribal people and the programmes to inculcate such motivation, and finally the newly implemented PMUY are also the subject matter for research. In this context, the present study is intended to portray the impact of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme on a tribal community living in the Reserve Forest of Kannur District in Kerala. The following objectives are framed to study the present topic.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To study the impact of PMUY on the tribes living in the Kannavam Reserve Forest of Kannur District in Kerala; and
- To compare and analyse the life of the forest dwelling tribes of Kannavam Reserve Forest during past and present.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

Anthropological research methods, namely, household survey, observation and interviews were conducted among the forest dwelling tribes. Secondary data have also been collected with regard to the PMUY beneficiaries from oil companies to study the impact of the scheme on the forest dwelling tribes. The household survey has helped to understand the traditional and modern economic activities and it has been quantified to know the socio-economic conditions of the forest dwelling tribes of Kannur District in Kerala.

#### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:**

The present study is conducted among the Kurichiyas, one of the 36 Scheduled Tribes of Kerala, inhabiting in the Kannavam Reserve Forest in Kannur District in Kerala. The area selected for the study is the Peruva ward of the Kolayad Grama Panchayat in Kannur District. The Peruva region is the most important tribal concentrated area within the Kannavam Reserve Forest. In the Peruva region, most of the tribes are the Kurichiyas; however, some Paniya Tribal families also inhabit. The households of the Kurichiyas are situated in the tribal colonies, namely, Thettummal, Chandroth, Kadalkandam, Kolappa, Akkumoola, Chembukkavu, and Parakundu colony.

A survey was conducted among the tribes of Peruva during 2010 and the same households are surveyed in 2019 to study the changes among the tribes of Peruva. With regard to the present topic, the major change occurred among them is that they have developed a lot in terms of education, employment, housing, electrification of houses, etc. At the same time, they are still maintaining many of their traditional means of living such as agriculture labour, wage labour, agriculture, etc.

As per the present survey, 64.57 per cent of the tribes are following their traditional economic activities whereas 35.43 per cent have entered into new or modern economic activities. This shows that still the majority of the tribal households are continuing their traditional way of life as agricultural and wage labourers.

During 2010, all households were using fire wood in their kitchens and there were not even a single household using LPG gas for cooking. It was in 2015, two households took Indane LPG connection from one dealer of the Indian Oil Corporation, Koothuparamba, which is around 25 KMs away from the Peruva tribal settlements and later on in 2018 four more households took Indane LPG connection from the same dealer.

In January 2019, a new out let of the Hindustan Petroleum (HP) gas agency was opened at the Kolayad town,

which is 12 KMs away from their main settlement of Peruva. It was through this dealer, the PMUY LPG scheme was implemented in the Kolayad Grama Panchayat for the first time in February 2019. Through this scheme, 336 LPG connections have been given in the whole Kolayad Grama Panchayat. But, in the Peruva region alone, 120 LPG connections have been given exclusively for forest dwelling tribal households.

**Table 1: Status of PMUY LPG Connections provided to the Forest Dwelling Tribes**

Sl.No.	Tribal Area	No. of LPG Connection	%
1	Peruva	76	63.3
2	Chekkeri	39	32.5
3	Chembukavu	5	4.2
<b>Total</b>		120	100

The tribal colonies and number of given LPG connections are given in Table 1. Among these, 63.3 per cent LPG connections are provided to Peruva tribal region. The Chekkeri and Chembukavu are the contiguous places of Peruva.

**Implementation of PMUY Scheme in Kolayad Grama Panchayat:**

In Kolayad Grama Panchayat, 336 households belonging to BPL, SC and ST have received LPG connection through PMUY scheme within the last six months from January 2019 to June 2019.

Among the tribes, during 2010, there is not even a single household using LPG. They were collecting fuel wood either from their own homesteads or from the Reserve Forest. In 2019, the 40 per cent of the households of the interior forest are using LPG for cooking purposes. Of these, only six families (12 per cent) have taken gas connection with their own and the rest of households have received gas connection through Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme. The details are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Use of LPG in 2010 and 2019**

Sl. No.	Use	Number of Household in 2010	%	Number of Household in 2019	%
1	Using LPG	0	0	20	40
2	Not using LPG	50	100	30	60

As per the sample of 50 households surveyed, no households were using LPG in 2010 and at present in 2019, the 40 per cent households are using LPG. Out of this 40 per cent, 12 per cent people have taken LPG connection since last four to one year; and the remaining 28 per cent households received LPG connection during the last six months through PMUY scheme. As per the sample, the rest of the households, 60 per cent, are still collecting fuel wood from the forest and also from their own homesteads.

**Table 3: Year and Percentage of LPG Connections**

Sl.No.	No. of LPG Connections	Year	LPG	Scheme	%
1	2	2015	Indane	No	10
2	4	2018	Indane	No	20
3	14	2019	HP	PMUY	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>				<b>100</b>

As per the sample, the details of LPG connections and the year of taking the gas connections are given in Table 3. Among the forest dwelling tribes, the PMUY scheme has made ample impact as a considerable number of the tribal people (28 %) are benefitted from the very scheme.

In Kolayad Grama Panchayat, at the time of the PMUY application, the beneficiaries will have to submit an Application Form for a Loan for PMUY LPG stove and/or refill. Although the people have submitted the loan application for this scheme, they are not aware of the fact that they are receiving subsidy of Rs. 1600 and the rest of the amount will be collected from them through refill of six cylinders. Giri and Aadil (2018) have rightly pointed out that the “beneficiaries who have taken a loan for their PMUY connection [in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh (M.P.), and Uttar Pradesh (U.P.)] also noted that they do not receive any information on the outstanding

loan instalments and loan amount. Some beneficiaries were not even aware of the fact that they had actually been given a loan to purchase the stove and first LPG refill.” Giri and Aadil’s finding are compatible with the present finding emerged out from the study in Kannavam Reserve Forest in Kannur District in Kerala as the tribal people of the present study area are not fully aware about the scheme. Most of the tribal people of the study area believe that they got the gas connection absolutely “free of cost” through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana scheme.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

At present, the tribes are very happy with the LPG connections received through the recently implemented Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme. They are not aware that they are given the PMUY LPG connection through a part of subsidy and a part through the loan and it has to repay through next six refills. Still, many households are interested to apply for this scheme. The PMUY scheme has made a very positive change among the tribes of the studied area. Earlier, the people were very scared to use LPG gas stoves at the onset and later on they became accustomed to use gas stoves. They find it as very useful for cooking, especially, during rainy seasons as the damp firewood cannot be used easily.

At present, the tribal people use the gas very carefully as they do not want to exhaust one cylinder quickly. They are using a 14.2 Kg. gas cylinder for three to four months. In the sample, some families have purchased refilled cylinders after obtaining the PMUY gas connections. Through the scheme, they have got only one cylinder and it is found to be difficult to get a refilled cylinder quickly within one or two days. Therefore, the present study suggest that they may be given one more cylinder in a subsidised price or free of cost to use the LPG gas stove without interruption of many days or weeks if the scheme really considers the health problems of women.

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