

VISIT REPORT NO. 30/VR/SZ-1 OF 2017**REPORT ON VISITING****SCHEDULED TRIBE SETTLEMENTS****IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT****BY****JACOB PUNNOOSE, SPECIAL RAPPOREUR,
NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

1. In accordance with the tour programme approved as per NHRC Ref No 16(4)/2016-Coord Dated: 20-06- 2017 I visited tribal areas in Trivandrum District, Kerala on 28-06-2017, 29-06-2017 and 03-07-2017. During the course of the visit I interacted with the District Officials of the Tribal Welfare Department. I visited the Tribal Kindergarten at Vlavetty, the Multi Grade Learning Centre at Mancode, the Settlement and Anganwadi at Valippara, the Multi Grade Learning Centre and settlement at Podiyam, the CBSE Model Residential School at Kuttichal, the Multi Grade Learning Centre and settlement at Podiyakala, the Anganwadi and Tribal School at Theviarkunnu, the Model Residential School for Girls at Kattela, the Multi Grade Learning Centre, Anganwadi and Settlement at Pottomavu and the CBSE Model Residential School at Njaraneeli. The entire arrangements for facilitating the visit at these 16 different locations spread over three days in different parts of the district were made by Sri Surendrababu. the ITDP Project Officer Nedumangadu , TEO Nedumangad Sri S Shinu, TEO Kattakkada Sri R Sudhir, TEO Harikumar and APO ITDP Sri Vipin Das and associated

officers who all enthusiastically took me around to enable me to interact with a cross section of the tribal population of the district..

2. The purpose of visit was to ascertain the conditions relating to tribal development in the district with particular reference to facilities for tribal children

3. The population of tribals in the district is 26759 persons (14136 females) in a total district population of 33 lakhs. The tribal population is only less than one percent of the district population. Practically all of them are living in forest settlements except a few who have migrated from different parts of Kerala to the capital city for employment and educational purposes. During the course of three days I moved through practically all the geographical regions in the district in which the tribal population is resident.

4. I visited the Kindergarten for tribal students at Vlavetty. This is directly run by the ST Department. 37 children including 30 tribal children are studying here. Children are collected by bus from places as far away as 14km in the morning and dropped back. 15 among the children actually live in settlements far inside the forest, under conditions in which normal schooling would have been irregular or of poor quality or downright impossible had it not been for the special arrangements effected now. The children are exposed to computers also. Three pairs of uniforms, Bag, Tiffin Box and other miscellaneous articles are given to every child at government expense. Transportation to school is also arranged free. They are also given proper meals at the Kindergarten. The allocation for meals is Rs 40 per day. The KG is managed by a teacher – Ms Laiju- who is holding a regular post and is paid out of Government funds on the regular salary scale applicable to regular school teachers. There is an Ayah also. I found the children to be very happy and healthy and their knowledge level and confidence for conversing, interacting and socialising were found to be of a far higher standard than that of 4-year olds in the usual Anganwadis meant for the general population. I was particularly impressed by the fact some of the children do understand and use English words too in addition to Malayalam.

5. I am told that this is a new initiative started by the ST Department to ensure that the Tribal children are given good quality preparatory training before they

enter the proper regular school system. It was explained to me that one of the reasons for the high dropout rate at the 10th standard level later on is the fact that the tribal children in regular schools do not stand a chance before the competition offered by non-tribal children from Class I onwards. Because they cannot compete on an equal footing, they become deficient or indifferent in studies. But the policy of promotion for all without detention ensures their going from class to class with the result that, at the 10th standard where merit based weeding out takes place, the tribal children are heavily disadvantaged. This KG is an experiment to see whether tribal children can enter the school system on an equal footing with the non-tribals and to all intents and purposes, it seems that the purpose has been achieved to a very large extent. Poor quality pre-primary education and upbringing, which is the plight of the tribals due to parental ignorance, infrastructural backwardness in isolated areas, lack of socialisation and absence of role models, makes the tribal children permanently handicapped in their race to attain equality in education with non-tribal population. Considering their multi faceted backwardness, the tribal children require much greater quality of care and education from the pre-primary stage onwards. Unfortunately government schemes tend to adhere to minimum standards of verifiable quality concentrating on essentials rather than on promoting competitive excellence. In this background, this experiment is good and needs to be enlarged. 300 such schools all over Kerala can transform the social and mental makeup of tribal children. The expense for this is a far better investment in the future than spending money on ill-conceived routine construction activity, which hardly ever benefits the tribals. **Widespread adoption of this scheme all over the state is desirable by allocating more funds for such schemes. (SUGGESTION 1)**

6. It is felt that, in this KG, there is no teacher if the present sole teacher has to go on leave. Moreover for managing 30 children throughout the day some teaching assistant is also required. It is also found that the essential articles for the KG are purchased at normal price without the eligibility of any subsidy. It is necessary that the provision of food to a tribal KG should be assisted by granting price subsidy applicable to Tribal populations. **These matters may be rectified by the Tribal Welfare Department by taking up with the Government and other departments. (SUGGESTION 2)**

7. I also visited Mancod settlement Multi Grade Learning Centre (MGLC) which is situated within 5 km forest area, near Kottoor. This institution has 7 children, 5 boys and 2 girls. They are aged variously between 5 to 9 years and are to be taught respective textbooks, as may be applicable to each, from 1st standard to 4th standard. The children here are given free food and meals at Government expense. MGLC evolved as an answer to education of children in remote settlements from which little children cannot go to schools situated far away. But given the advancement of Kerala in general standards of education, persisting with these models in the same form as they were conceived two and a half decades back serves no purpose at all and adds to the relative backwards of children vis-a-vis children who study in regular schools outside forest areas. The tribal community itself is becoming conscious of this as is evident from the fact that as against 6 such centres in contiguous areas initially, now there are only 2 such institutions, each with very few children.

8. At the MGLC at Podiyam settlement later, I found similar difficulties. There are only 6 students in four different grades. It is situated several miles within the forest. The teacher Sri Sudarsanan pointed out that the MGLC students have not yet been given uniforms for the current year and that the children are irregular in attending the classes. **The Tribal Development Department may quickly attend to solving these difficulties.**
(SUGGESTION 3)

9. On the next day, I visited the MGLC at Podiyakala also. There was no teacher present (due to illness) on the day. These are single teacher institutions. Two children were present in the class. I found the standard of the children to be far below the desirable standard, showing clearly that that the multi grade learning centre will not be sufficient to prepare the children for the competitive environment. They can make them barely literate. It cannot motivate them or equip them with skills to pursue higher standards of excellence in studies.

10. Much later, I visited the MGLC at Potomave settlement. The teacher there for the 9 students studying in various classes from 1 to 4, is Ms Geetha. She is a highly qualified and motivated teacher who walks miles every day through the forest area to reach the MGLC. As was felt in the case of other MGLCs too, the salary of Rs 10000/-

given to her is meagre and insufficient by any standards of teaching. The cooking is done in the open space which is undesirable. This should be rectified. I am told that Rs 25 lakhs given to PWD for improvement works is not yet spent. **The matter needs to be followed up and expedited. (SUGGESTION 4)**

11. The salary of teachers in these single teacher multi-grade schools requires urgent re-examination. Neglect of these teachers would be tantamount to neglecting the interests of the tribal children whom they teach. I also noticed that at the MGLCs the provision for daily expense on Food is about Rs 8/- per day whereas even at the Kindergarten at Vlavetty it was Rs 40. The benefit of the Gothrasarathi transportation, a special scheme for arranging school bus every day, also should be extended to all children. **These matters also should receive evaluation and remedial action by the Tribal Department and Education Department. (SUGGESTION 5)**

12. But to many households, transportation difficulties and infrastructural deficiencies create a situation in which they have to rely on MGLC. The plight of the MGLC teachers is a matter requiring urgent attention. Though the children are few in number, they have to simultaneously teach books pertaining to four standards, often without any parental support for the children in their respective homes. Personally they have to travel long distances traversing forests or difficult terrain. At the end of the month they are paid a mere Rs 10000/-, which is only roughly 30 per cent of the total emoluments of a primary school teacher when joining government service and far below the minimum salary in government service. These Single teacher schools may not be the best solution to the problems encountered in imparting education in remote settlements, but the difficulties faced and the efforts put in by the teachers require to be properly compensated. Their lien is in the education department and they work in tribal areas. Their pathetic plight requires urgent attention. They are not eligible for pension too. Even teachers, who have been working for 20 years, get only 10000 Rs a month. **This matter requires to be taken up by both Education and Tribal Welfare Departments. (SUGGESTION 6)**

13. At Valippara settlement I interacted with the local people who had come out in quite large numbers. This settlement is a focal point for settlements at

Mulamoodu, Valippara, Ariyavila and Mancodu. Some complained that many outsiders belonging to other communities are getting married to tribal girls and that this is causing a social problem for family culture and tribal stability. One reason for this is that the better educated girls do not get well-educated boys from within the tribal community as most of the boys, according to local people, become some kinds of dropouts or are unemployed. Just four boys have got employment so far among hundreds of boys who had passed SSLC. This also poses problems of inheritance of property rights in forest areas which by succession through children of daughters will end up in non tribal families and their relatives. This problem exists in other areas I visited. **It is necessary that this matter is studied well and solutions worked out by the Government. (SUGGESTION 7).**

14. The tribal people also had a feeling that the multi-crore projects on infrastructure like roads, culverts etc being implemented in the area which are done by outside contractors who profit by these works, also bring lot of outsiders to the area who exploit the forest wealth for criminal purposes. It was also complained that the Forest Department is not allowing bituminised roads to be built inside settlements which is causing the tribals lot of difficulty. The people also complained that though the Model Residential School is sanctioned for tribals and though land is earmarked for the MRS within the tribal area, no steps are being taken to build it within the allotted land, the staff preferring to locate it in the township rather than tribal area. It was also complained that wild animals are causing a lot of damage to crops. It is ironic that the rights on forest land are given to tribals and government does no action to protect them from the pestilence of wild animals. It must be construed that the duty of the State extends to ensuring that the means of livelihood of the tribal population are not jeopardized by wild animals. **It is necessary that these matters are studied looked into by the Tribal Development Department and acted upon on a priority basis. (SUGGESTION 8).**

15. It was pointed out that the police are not taking sufficient interest in preventing the accused in SC ST Atrocities Act from operating in the area and often the police are seen in the friendly company of the very same accused persons whom they are supposed to control. The ST promoters of the area are not approached by the police nor

are they welcomed by the police as assistants in any enquiry or investigation. The anti socials' nexus with the police is causing problems. The complaints are serious. **It is necessary that the Government directs the State Police Chief to send a senior officer to the area and ascertain remedial steps. (SUGGESTION 9)**

16. There is electricity in all tribal settlements. I also found that an active cultural troupe, URAVU, which has preserved tribal customs and arts is also functioning in the area. Over the years the group has become quite well known. It was also found that there was a well stocked library as part of the centre. Such initiatives deserve all encouragement.

17. I found that though an Anganwadi is sanctioned at Valippara, there are no children coming to the Anganwadi because of better options available to the parents, particularly at the Kindergarten earlier mentioned. However nutritional needs of children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating mothers, health needs etc are attended to by the Anganwadi staff consisting Sulochana and Helper Anita.

18. At Podiyam settlement, the local people complained that the road to the settlement is in a bad condition, that there is no bus service, that there is severe unemployment with only one person having managed to get employment, that too as contract appointment in forest related works, that the tribals are not taken as temporary labour for which outsiders are brought in etc. Employment of tribals must be a priority for all government departments working in forest areas. **It is necessary that these matters are studied looked into by the Tribal Development Department and acted upon. (SUGGESTION 10).**

19. I visited the GKM CBSE Model Residential School situated at Kuttichal. This was newly started with the first 1st standard in 2015. It has 67 students now drawn from all over Kerala in three standards from the 1st and three teachers including the Principal and seven other staff as Cooks, Ayahs, sweeper, watchman, office attender etc. Children are selected on the basis of a state wide process conducted by the Department. This is a 100 percent centrally sponsored project. The children are well looked after and all appeared happy and healthy. The academic schooling is also of a higher standard than what they would have got elsewhere. Thus this is a good initiative to lift the tribal

children above the average standards of other sections of society. However the school needs to be quickly shifted to better and safer premises befitting an educational institution.

20. This is a new institution and temporarily it is functioning in rented premises at a road junction in a busy commercial area on the higher floors of commercial establishments doing business at road level. Vehicles are plying hardly 2metres away from the building. This is a residential school. Because of the inadequate nature of the facilities, there are no playgrounds or open spaces for these little kids who are kept in the shop rooms converted as classrooms and dormitories. As the school expands every year with more children getting promoted to higher classes and new intake into the 1st standard, the continuation of the school here will actually endanger the safety of the children because of the proximity of commercial public activity taking place so near a residential school. Though the Principal and staff are now managing the teaching aspect well, it is felt that the continuation of the school at this location is not wise with regard to proper care of the boys and girls who stay here. It is suggested that the school may be shifted to new premises which are more spacious till a regular place is built with the Rs 25 crores said to be available for construction of a campus. From safety point of view the continuation at the present premises is not desirable. **It is desirable that Government and the Tribal Welfare Department should take urgent action on this. (SUGGESTION 11)**

21. I visited the Podiyakala settlement. This is situated within the Peppara wildlife sanctuary. The residents complained of widespread and persistent attacks by wild animals on their crops with the result that no cultivation is possible. The whole area is surrounded by acacia plantations managed by the Forest Department for meeting pulpwood obligations. These plantations are not natural forests and wild animals cannot find any food there. So they wander off from the forest lands and come into the cultivated areas assigned to the forest dwellers and foray for food and cause widespread destruction. So effectively the pulpwood acacia plantations have destroyed the means of livelihood of the tribal people. In addition the acacia spreads by itself and even in the non-plantation areas they are spreading fast. Because they draw considerable water, they contribute to the water shortage also in the area. Water levels in Peppara Dam are

also dropping. The residents complained of serious water shortage problems too. **The Government has to take a decision on the acacia plantations and on suitable compensatory mechanisms for the tribals who are adversely affected in multiple ways by these plantations. (SUGGESTION 12)**

22. It was also complained that the forest officers take action against the tribals for cutting branches from trees to construct fences around their cultivated patches. Actually it should be the responsibility of the Forest Department to ensure that the wild animals do not stray into tribal settlement areas and destroy their crops. The tribals also need to be compensated for the damage caused by the wild animals. Though there is a scheme for this, it is not administered through the tribal departments and the cumbersome procedures ensure that the tribals who are affected the maximum do not get the benefit of such schemes. **Government may suitably instruct the Forest and Tribal Welfare Department in these matters which are of the nature of general problems all over the State. (SUGGESTION 13)**

23. There is no Anganwadi in the Podiyakala settlement having 75 families. The next Anganwadi is 9km away. Obviously young children cannot go that distance. The solution is to start a Gothrasaradhi service to Meenankal giving special permission or to start a KG on the lines of Vlavetty at Peppara. **The suggestion may be considered by the Tribal Department. (SUGGESTION 14)**

24. While interacting with the women, it was clear that the mothers were hoping for a much better quality of education for their children. 9 children are studying, staying in Model Residential school hostels. Even about those children, there was anxiety because their basic levels of skills acquired in early years at MGLC etc were so deficient that they were finding it difficult to cope as the competition in higher classes became tougher. Out of 22 persons who have passed SSLC so far, only one has got employment and that too as a tribal watchman. One person is studying for degree and another has passed degree but has not got any jobs so far.

25. The residents also complained that tribals are not taken even for the unskilled works relating to Peppara Dam nor for forest related works. Even in forest areas, the non-tribal outsiders are preferred. They expressed strong resentment over

this. The Government has to instruct Forest and Irrigation Departments on this matter and give a guideline that in Forest Areas, tribal workers are to be preferred in the matter of casual or contract labour. (SUGGESTION 15)

26. Outside the forest area, I went to a school at Theviarkunnu, primarily catering to Tribal children. There was an Anganwadi too at its premises. I found both the school and the Anganwadi conforming to good standards, with very good buildings, excellent sanitation and very interested teachers. Transportation is also arranged for the children to come and go which enable large number of tribal children to attend the school. These two institutions indicate that with proper infrastructure and committed staff, the quality of care and learning can be improved considerably.

27. I visited the Model Residential School for Girls at Kattela. The Model Residential Schools are of a general pattern as per which such schools function as a joint venture with the Education Department. The curricular matters are attended to by the Education Department staff and the residential and management matters are attended to by the Scheduled Tribes Department. The Higher Secondary Principal is Ms Ajitha Punnen and the Headmistress for the high school is Ms Sasikala Jayan. Sri Anilkumar is the Senior Superintendent and the Hostel manager is Ms Shailaja. There are 210 girls selected from all over the State from the 10th to 5th standards and there are 144 seats for the Higher Secondary. All the seats are filled through a state-wide selection process.

28. The building and the facilities are excellent. The premises, 8 acres in extent, are kept exceedingly neat and clean. The children are getting good food and very good accommodation. Every facility for better education is sought to be made available. The teachers are also posted with some certainty of tenure. Many have been working for years here and know the students pretty well. The standard here is far better than what the children would have got in their local schools. The quality of the cleanliness in the kitchen and dining hall was very high. Despite more than a decade of continuous use for hundreds of inmates every day, there was hardly any stench emanating from the kitchen. A daily regimen starting from 0500 hrs to 2200 hrs is enforced giving emphasis both to studies and other activities. The annual expenditure on running the school is about 5 crores, which works out to about 1.5 lakhs per student. However there is need for repair

work in the civil and electrical aspects as the buildings are getting old. I understand that steps are under way to get these done. The school requires a good quality playground which is not there now. The authorities should consider this as an essential adjunct to good education. **This may be made available early. (SUGGESTION 16)**

29. The cooking staff of the hostel seems to be heavily overworked. More than 300 permanent residents are there, but the staff strength is limited and is just enough to manage matters. They have to be active in their work from 0430 to 2200 hrs every day. There is no system of shift for them and they have to keep on working for many hours at a stretch. **Judging by the heavy nature and quantum of work it is necessary that a few additional posts are sanctioned and at least partially, some kind of shift system is introduced. (SUGGESTION 17)**

30. I also interacted with the students and they were generally positive in their attitude. The results of the last exams in class 10 and in class 12 were very encouraging.

31. It is desirable that the school should have a strong counselling programme for motivating students to higher levels of personal excellence and social commitment which should be followed up by an alumni contact programme. This will help the school to assess what was the effect, socially and economically, of the organised and systematic high quality education that is imparted to the tribal girls at this institution. Ideally this should lead to the social and economic empowerment of the communities and hamlets from which they came here. Such an assessment will help in strengthening the school mentoring programme and the counselling systems. **The Tribal Department may take initiative for this. (SUGGESTION 18)**

32. I also interacted with the residents of the Potomave settlement. One of the main complaints was that the earlier system, of forest department licensing the collection of forest produce from the forests like honey, fruits etc from the forests and marketing them through the SCST development corporation, is no longer functional while the alternative system introduced through the Forest Rights Committee consisting of tribal representatives has not yet started functioning. This is a very serious matter affecting the livelihood and traditional earnings of the community. **It is necessary that the difficulty is**

resolved in this as well as all other tribal settlements on an urgent footing. (SUGGESTION 19)

33. It was also complained that the Forest Department does not allow them to cut trees to repair or build their houses. The laws are interpreted to the absolute disadvantage of the tribals, they complained. Even when a tree is standing in a dangerous condition over a home, the permission to cut the branch is not given. **The Government may suitably instruct Forest Department that they should not stand in the way of genuine needs of forest dwellers. (SUGGESTION 20)**

34. It was also pointed out that the rough road leading the settlement is sought to be improved and that Rs 45 lakhs have been sanctioned to the PWD for the purpose. But there is no progress with regard to this. This matter also requires close follow up. Similarly the work on the community Hall, though finished for the most part, is not fully over. It was necessary to commission the hall quickly. **The Tribal Department needs to follow up on these urgently. (SUGGESTION 21)**

35. The residents also complained about attack by wild animals and lack of effective steps to minimise or eliminate the risk. Once a tribal settlement is allowed inside, it is the moral obligation of the State to ensure that reasonable level of protection is afforded to the residents, to protect life and property from attacks by wild animals. **Government may consider proactive steps for ensuring this. (SUGGESTION 22)**

36. Another complaint was that several people in the settlement have not received the remuneration due to them under the Employment Guarantee scheme for the past six months though they have been working as per the schedule. It was also complained that the disease elephantiasis is now becoming very common. This requires urgent special attention of the health authorities. **The tribal Department has to take the initiative to liaise with the concerned departments to treat the settlements as a priority area in these matters. (SUGGESTION 23)**

37. Though several persons have passed SSLC and 4 are studying for degree, the only jobs so far got were that of two tribal watchers. The problem of unemployment is severe particularly because private sector avenues are practically closed to them, though one girl is venturing out now with an autorickshaw as an auto driver.

38. I also visited the Anganwadi at Potomave settlement. It is working well in the usual manner with all the usual facilities and tasks. But one complaint is that the Anganwadi is not getting the advantage of the Shabala project which is available in the neighbouring Kollam District. It seems the project is not sanctioned in Thiruvananthapuram district. There is no compound wall for the centre, which is a necessity considering the nature of the area. The proposal has been included in the Tribal sub plan of the District Panchayat and will shortly materialise. A grill is needed for the veranda so that it can be enclosed. Teacher Sobha and helper Sudharmini have been looking after the children very well and they look happy, healthy and contented.

39. I visited the CVBSE Model residential School at Njaraneeli. 480 students drawn from all over Kerala can study from 1st to 12th standard in the school which has got good buildings to accommodate them and their classes. The present strength is only 383 as the admissions are in the process of getting completed. Two 12th batches have already passed out from the school. Last year out of 33 who appeared, 27 passed the CBSE Board Exam.

40. Interacting with the students and some of the parents who had come to the school, I found that the biggest problem that the school faces is the lack of regular teachers. Dr A Samuel, who is the Principal now, is a contract employee who has joined for one year. **So are all the other teachers!** Government has not yet managed, in more than a decade, to find regular staff for this institution. I do not know how a school of this size and type can function without regular teachers. Unless a determined effort is made at the highest levels of government to solve this problem, the situation is likely to continue with advertisements given every year for temporary teachers who join for one academic year. It is true that some teachers are regularly re-appointed which has served to endure some semblance of continuity. But the process is unpredictable and each year, after some months of school year have elapsed, some teachers join for a brief period. This upsets the rhythm of academic instruction. It will be a great help if the contract appointments are at least for three years at a time and also if advertisements and selections are done in the previous academic year itself without waiting for the new year to begin for the applications to be processed. Meantime permanent teachers also have

to be selected and appointed. **Government is to give top priority to this matter in which educational future of several hundred tribal children are involved. (SUGGESTION 24)**

41. However one redeeming feature is that I found all the teachers are residing within the campus itself. That makes them capable giving a bit of extra attention to the children which many of them are indeed giving.

42. The library is stocked with 3000 books. More books should be made available, to be fully in accord with CBSE specifications of books. The number of newspapers subscribed is too few to cater to the large number of staff and students.

43. There is no proper waste management facility at the school though the quantity of waste generated must be huge. However the premises were found kept clean and tidy, probably because waste is dumped elsewhere. There is also need for proper rainwater harvesting in the area to ensure adequate water for everybody.

44. There is also no proper assembly hall or auditorium for the children. This is also an urgent necessity and construction thereof must be treated as a priority. The present auditorium is a tin-covered shed which can accommodate only a few. A better facility is a must. The children stressed the need for getting desks with drawers so that they can keep the books. And some of them complained about the quality of dosa and idli and wanted a change in the food menu. There is also need for a proper playground at the premises. **It is suggested that all the deficiencies pointed out in paragraphs 42, 43, and 44 may be quickly remedied by the Tribal Welfare Department. (SUGGESTION 25)**

45. The teachers were of the view that there must be a provision for an orientation class for beginners. Since the children come from tribal hamlets and since quite a few of them did not have systematic schooling earlier and basic skills of reading and writing, an orientation course of six months would be a good thing before regular classes are started at the appropriate standard. **This is a good suggestion and is recommended for consideration. (SUGGESTION 26)**

46. Despite all these limitations, I must observe that the school is well run and that the teachers and the staff are making the best use of available facilities. But if the

goal of excellence is to be achieved some more investment in infrastructure and manpower is definitely required.

47. In all these residential schools, more time is spent by the children outside the class than inside the class. The role that the parents play at home must be discharged by responsible persons who are capable of psychological handling of children. This is particularly true of children from underprivileged classes. So in addition to financial management of the model residential schools and preparation of food etc which are unavoidable, there should be a group of assistant wardens and mentors for the children who are spending their time in the hostel. There should be at least one such wardens for every 50 students. **Only then can personal attention be paid to each child for ensuring that mental, psychological and physical difficulties are tided over improving cultural and community behaviour. Therefore a system of Wardens and assistant wardens must be introduced.** The tribal children, if they are to compete with others deserve to be specially encouraged, mentored and coached. There is no point in trying to merely make them conform to the lowest minimum standards of passing the examination. This is not forgetting the fact that in their homes, they may have failed to attain even the minimum standards attained here. **Government may seriously consider this. (SUGGESTION 27)**

48. One major problem identified during the discussions with the officers and those in the settlements was the problem of unemployment of educated tribal youth. Several hundreds have now passed out of schools but have been unable to find jobs. Unlike most other communities in Kerala which have been able to large number of jobs in the private sector as well as abroad, the backwardness of the tribal community prevents the tribal youth from being gainfully employed in jobs in private sector and abroad. They also do not generally go into business or obtain jobs in the booming service sector. The modern education given to them makes them attitudinally unfit for traditional tribal occupations; at the same time the modern systems do not imbue them with the necessary qualitative excellence necessary to compete and gain employment in the open job market on the basis of their qualifications. The lack of competitiveness arises from the backwardness off their social condition, absence of family or community role models, prejudice and the poor quality of infrastructure and facilities provided to them by

government which generally adhere to the minimum possible and not necessarily the best that is needed. **This is a serious problem in which special measures are called for on the part of Government to give them special consideration in the matter of public sector and contract appointments, even when they fail to make the grade in the limited opportunities available to them in the usual reservation quota (SUGGESTION 28)**

49. Only very few families are seen to own any kind of motor vehicles. In Kerala the rate of average vehicle ownership is nearly 1.2 vehicles per family. If the tribal colonies conformed to at least half the State average, there should have been at 400 vehicle owners in the settlements I visited. But in total there were less than 10! This shows how, despite all efforts for well over five decades, the population, the third generation in independent India, is many times behind in relative prosperity compared to the rest of the population.

50. There is no serious land problem as most families have been given forest rights. They are also given assistance in cultivation of cash crops like rubber. The houses in the settlements are generally in good condition and new units are under construction in an efficient manner. The houses are seen to be kept extraordinarily clean. Common facilities exist to a satisfactory degree. But systemic weaknesses implicit in being a member of the ST community continue to plague them, as stated earlier. Greater participation in economic activity and greater employment are essential if they are to be meaningfully uplifted.

51. In the light of the above the Hon Commission may be pleased to consider the above suggestions numbered from **1 to 28 above** and issue directions to the Government of Kerala to implement the suggestions in an appropriate manner.


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