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## SPECIAL NUTRITIONAL FOOD PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: INSIGHTS FROM FOREST COMMUNITIES IN KODAGU DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

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ARTICLE HISTORY	Abstract
<p><b>Received</b> : 24-06-2024 <b>Revised</b> : 09-12-2024 <b>Accepted</b> : 22-12-2024 <b>Published</b> : 31-01-2025</p> <p><b>Author Affiliation:</b> India</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Srikantha Nayaka. G</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Forest Tribals, Nutrition Food and Raining Season, Food Insecurity, Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP)</p>	<p><i>This paper examines food insecurity in forest tribal areas of Karnataka, focusing on beneficiaries of the Special Nutrition Food Programme under the Integrated Tribal Development Programmes (ITDP). It explores opportunities for forest tribal people in districts with Tribal Sub-Plans, which are the sites for special projects. Although the ITDP implements Tribal Sub-Plans in an organized manner, the government's special nutrition program has not benefitted Scheduled Tribe (ST) sub-castes. Indian tribals are a heterogeneous and marginalized group, often facing geographical isolation, primitive occupations, and extreme poverty. The Special Nutrition Programs, held annually for six months, aim to improve health and well-being by providing essential food to tribal families in forest areas. The study emphasizes tribe-specific actions and active participation from community members who benefit from these programs. Kodagu, located in the Western Ghats, is home to various tribal groups and has seen some success in government social programs providing access to necessities.</i></p>

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

For the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the Indian Constitution provides specific constitutional protections, enabling them to occupy their rightful place in society. The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population represents a heterogeneous group scattered across different regions of India, both at the state and district levels. Differences are noticed in cultural practices, socioeconomic status, and patterns of livelihood. Both the federal and state governments contribute funding to implement numerous programs and schemes under the guidance of the state government. Although the Central Government provides full or partial funding for certain programs through the Tribal Sub Plan's Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Special Central Assistance, the State Government alone funds and initiates the majority of the programs. The schemes are executed at three main levels: the state level (Directorate of Scheduled Tribes' welfare), the district level (Zilla Panchayat), and a few at the Taluk Panchayat level. The Anganwadi centers receive all food supplies, which are then distributed to family members. Women's nutrition impacts various health and social issues, including food security in the home and family care.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY**

1. To examine the special nutrition food program in occupied forest tribal districts in Karnataka.
2. To analyze the special nutrition food program beneficiaries in Kodagu District, Karnataka.

## **3. AREA OF THE STUDY, MATERIALS, AND METHODS**

The current study is descriptive in nature, and the data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The majority of data sources come from secondary sources, with some primary sources included. Secondary data was gathered from books, magazines, and journals. Virajpete district has three taluks. Most Jenu Kuruba tribes are concentrated in two taluks, namely Virajpete and Madikeri. Six scheduled tribes were found in the study area, belonging to the tribal community and Focus Group Beneficiaries (FGB). Tribal settlements, locally referred to as Haadisi (Hamlets), were identified as having FGBs.

## **4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Since 2008, the Karnataka state government has been providing tribal groups with wholesome food kits. The success of tribals largely depends on their increased

participation in and benefits from development programs. Notably, the provision of special programs and representation by tribal areas has made government programs and schemes exclusive to tribal people. According to Article 275(1) of the Indian Constitution, the central government provides 100% annual grants-in-aid to states. These grants are added to State Plan funding and Tribal Development initiatives, and are charged to the Consolidated Fund of India. The funds support the socioeconomic advancement of Karnataka's forest tribal districts. Given the significant social implications, it is essential to understand the effectiveness and success of these schemes and programs. Therefore, this research paper aims to investigate the improvement and success of these initiatives.

## 5. LOCATION, FOREST, AND RAINFALL

There are 705 Scheduled Tribal communities distributed across 15% of India's geographical area. In Karnataka, 50 Scheduled Tribal communities are notified, spread across 31 districts. Nineteen of these populations are classified as forest-dwelling tribes. The majority of Scheduled Tribe (ST) people reside in rural or forest fringe regions, with 80% living in rural areas. Karnataka is home to 42,48,987 indigenous people, including 50,870 from primitive groupings such as the Jenu Kuruba and Koraga. The state's tribal



population accounts for 7.0% of the total population and 4.1% of all tribal people in India. Karnataka has the second-highest number of scheduled tribes, with 8,75,742 tribal households in the state, according to the 2011 census (MOTA, 2017). Kodagu district, the smallest in Karnataka, covers an area of 4,102 km<sup>2</sup> and comprises three taluks: Madikeri, Somwarpet, and Virajpet. As one of Karnataka's Integrated Tribal Development Program (ITDP) districts, Kodagu has forests covering almost one-third (1,34,597 hectares) of its total land area. With 20% of the state's total forest area, Kodagu ranks fifth in terms of forest cover.

Of the district's 4,102 km<sup>2</sup>, 1,259.52 km<sup>2</sup> are forested, accounting for approximately 30.43% of the total area. Located in the high precipitation zone, Kodagu has a beautiful terrain occupying the eastern and western slopes of the Western Ghats. It is situated in southwestern Karnataka, between 11° 56' and 11° 52' north latitude and 75° 22' and 76° 12' east longitude. The district is bounded by Hassan to the north, Mysore to

the east, Dakshin Kannada to the west, and Kasaragod (Kerala) to the south. Kodagu receives significant rainfall from the South-West and North-East monsoons. The South-West monsoon typically sets in during early June, with June, July, and August being the months of heavy rainfall. The average annual rainfall is 2552.54 mm, with 85-153 rainy days per year, averaging around 118 rainy days. The primary support provided by the program is gap-filling interventions. Over 50 Scheduled Tribes, dispersed across the state’s districts, have been notified under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. These tribes are scattered throughout multiple districts, with some experiencing stagnant or shrinking populations, low literacy rates, pre-agricultural technology levels, and economic backwardness. Due to their small numbers, lack of social and economic advancement, and remote living conditions with inadequate administrative and infrastructure support, these groups are among the most vulnerable segments of society.

### 6. SCHEDULED TRIBES IN KODAGU DISTRICT

In Kodagu District, there are 15,433 Scheduled Tribe (ST) families, comprising 10.47% of the population. This is higher than the state average of 6.97%. The majority of ST people reside in rural areas, with Virajpet taluk having the largest percentage of ST residents (19.61%). The district is home to several tribal communities, including Yerava, Jenu Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba, Soliga, and Malekuidya, as well as smaller communities like Nayaka, Meda, Marata, and Kuruba.

Table No: 1 Name of the ST Population in Kodagu District (2011, Census)

Sl. No.	Name of Scheduled Tribes	Urban		Total	Rural		Total	Grand Total
		M	F		F	M		
1.	Jenu Kuruba	29	37	66	5,978	6,147	12,125	12,191
2.	Kadu Kuruba	01	02	03	94	96	190	193
3.	Melakudi	27	29	56	1,001	959	1,960	2,016
4.	Kuruba	85	62	147	1,462	1,502	2,964	3,111
5.	Soligaru	07	04	11	579	627	1,206	1,217
6.	Yerava	86	93	179	12,881	13,473	26,354	26,533
	Total	752	757	1509	27187	28197	55384	56893

Sources: Co-Ordinator, ITDP Office Report (2024) Madikeri.

According to table no 1, the tribal communities primarily reside on the hillside forests of the Western Ghats in Coorg, as they were the first tribes to inhabit these forests.

Among all the Scheduled Tribe (ST) households and people, the majority are Yerava (26,533), followed by Jenukuruba (12,191), Kuruba (3,111), Melakudi (2,016), Soliga (1,217) and Kadu Kuruba (193).

Table No: 2 Forest Households & Hamlets in Kodagu District

Sl. No	Name of Blocks	Total Number Hamlets	No, of Households	Monthly Each to Households Amount paid (Rs)
1	Madikeri	23	42	77132.58
2	Somawarpete	57	1805	3314864.45
3	Virajpete	87	6868	12613013.32
	Total	167	8715	16005010.35

Sources: Co-Ordinator, ITDP Office Report (2017) Madikeri.

Table no 2, shows that among the three taluks in Coorg, Virajpete has the highest number of forest tribal hamlets, while Madikeri taluk, which is also the district headquarters, has the lowest number of hamlets. In contrast, Somwarpete has the second-highest number of hamlets.

Table No: 3 Forest Households & Hamlets in Kodagu District

Sl.No	Name of the Forest Tribes	Total Number of Households
1	Jenu kuruba	3855
2	Yerava	4268
3	Soliga	409
4	Kadukuruba	183
	Total	8715

Sources: Co-Ordinator, ITDP Office Report (2024) Madikeri.

In table no 3, the tribal communities primarily reside on the hillside forests of the Western Ghats in Coorg, as they were the first tribes to inhabit these forests. Among all the Scheduled Tribe (ST) households and people, the majority are Yerava (4,268), followed by Jenukuruba (3,855), Soliga (409), and Kadukuruba (183), whose families make up approximately 8,715 households in the district. The Department of Women and Child Development's nutrition programs cover around 53% of the population of mothers and 47% of the population of babies, according to an examination of their coverage. Given the high levels of maternal and infant mortality linked to undernutrition, it is essential for ST communities to expand the coverage of these services, particularly for pregnant and nursing women in tribal areas. While Virajpet exhibits the expected

trends, with a higher share of ST beneficiaries among the overall beneficiaries of the nutrition programs, other taluks, especially Madikeri taluk, may focus on expanding the coverage of ST populations (KHDR 2014).

## **7. SCHEDULED TRIBES: DIVERSITY AND HEALTH IN INDIA**

The majority of India's tribal populations lead unique, remote lifestyles, which can contribute to undernutrition due to poor eating habits combined with traditional sociocultural and biological factors. Therefore, addressing the nutritional needs of tribal populations is essential, as a healthy diet is a key element of overall health, and a healthy population leads to a stronger nation. To improve the socioeconomic status of the nation's tribal population, both the federal and state governments have been implementing various programs. The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) is a multifaceted approach that supports areas such as livelihood, water supply, sanitation, education, and health. The majority of Integrated Tribal Development Program (ITDP) socioeconomic programs incorporate the three fundamental dimensions of education, health, and standard of living into the TSP initiatives. As a result of the TSP strategy, tribals have made some progress in areas such as livelihood, health, literacy, and other human development indices. However, Scheduled Tribes continue to lag behind other social groups in terms of human development, particularly regarding health and nutrition. Two Special Area Programs, namely the Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS) and Grants-in-Aid under Article 275(1) of the Constitution, the Ministry oversees several Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes to support the nation's overall efforts to develop its tribal population. The Ministry is responsible for general policy, planning, and program coordination for Scheduled Tribe (ST) development, aiming to provide a targeted strategy for the planned and coordinated integrated socioeconomic development of STs, who are among the most disadvantaged members of Indian society. The nutritional and health issues facing India's large tribal population are as diverse as the tribal communities themselves, exhibiting a wide range of socioeconomic, sociocultural, and ecological characteristics.

Malnutrition is a significant concern, with over half of all child fatalities in the country linked to undernutrition. India's 329 million hectares of land represent a unique tapestry of physiographic, climatic, cultural, anthropogenic, and ecological diversity, influenced by geographical, climatic, and physiographic factors (GoI, May 2014). The majority of tribal communities reside in small, dispersed habitats, often far from the country's main population centers and close to hills and forests. Due to shared socioeconomic



and sociodemographic issues, such as poverty, illiteracy, and a lack of developmental amenities, tribes in India are considered the most vulnerable segments of the population (Srikantha Nayaka, G., 2014). The Ministry's programs and schemes complement and support tribal communities' efforts through financial assistance, particularly in underdeveloped, drought-prone rural areas and scheduled tribal and forest communities, where children are particularly vulnerable to undernutrition.

## **8. TRIBAL SUB PLAN AND NUTRITIOUS DIET PLAN**

The Tribal Sub-Plan is implemented in 30% of the ITDP's geographic area. Currently, five ITDPs in the districts of Mysore, Chikmagalur, Kodagu, Dakshina Kannada, and Udupi are implementing the Tribal Sub-Plan. The program was expanded to all districts in the state in 1992. The primary goal of the program is to ensure children's healthy physical, mental, and social development by providing nutrition, health, and educational awareness services throughout their early childhood years. In 16 districts, the Departmental schemes are implemented by the District Social Welfare Officers, while in five ITDP districts, project coordinators are employed. There are less than 5% Scheduled Tribes in 12 districts, between 5% and 9% in 7 districts, and more than 10% in the remaining 11 districts. Five tribal districts, six hill area districts, and 22.60% of the state's total land area are covered by forests. The forest tribes inhabit the hilly rain forests of the southwestern Ghats (61.5%) in southern India (KSTRI).

The ITDP and other administrative and institutional procedures are necessary for the efficient implementation and provision of services in areas with a concentration of tribal people. By filling gaps through targeted programs and schemes based on tribal needs and priorities, ITDP adds value to the actions of line Ministries and States. For their development, the state government has also initiated several programs. The Karnataka government's Social Welfare Department launched a program in 2008 for the Koraga tribe, which was later expanded to include the Jenu Kuruba tribe in 2011. One of the fundamental needs of all living beings is food. This program is unique in that it considers the mother and child as a single 'biological unit' and integrates services. Of all the notified tribes, the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are the most at risk. The scheme for the Development of PVTGs covers two identified PVTGs in Chamarajanagar, Mysore, Kodagu (Jenu Kuruba), Dakshina Kannada, and Udupi (Koragas) districts. The goal is to improve the nutritional quality of the forest people groups in specific districts of the state, focusing on the population component of nutrition, specifically diversifying the Indian cuisine (Srikantha, 2014).

The tribal population has been living in forest and fringe areas, collecting forest produce for sustenance, and facing problems acquiring nutritious food during adverse climates. Considering these factors, the Nutritious Diet Plan has been formulated. For millions of years, the primary source of income for indigenous tribal groups residing in Karnataka's Western Ghats forest areas has been the forest. Currently, 41,653 families are receiving benefits from this program, which provides wholesome food items for a period of six months. In the district of Chikkamagaluru, 4,670 tribal families are covered by the provision. Due to their inability to work during the rainy season, 41,071 indigenous families receive wholesome food for six months, from June to November (2013–14 Tribal Sub Plan).

The overarching development programs of the Tribal Sub-Plan provide nutritious meals to every family. The nutritional program is specifically designed for the seven forest area districts of Karnataka, where the majority of tribal communities reside in forest and rural areas. To address individual deficiencies, specific nutrients are supplied: vitamin A to prevent blindness, iron and folic acid to combat anemia, and iodized salt in areas where iodine deficiency is prevalent. In Karnataka's tribal areas, where deep poverty and high vulnerability to food insecurity are common, these nutrients are crucial.

Table 4, Special Nutrition Programmed of Forest Tribals and Districts in Karnataka

Table 4, indicate the Special Nutrition Programmed of Forest Tribals and Districts in Karnataka. The authority and protein content of the supplementary food supplied to different target beneficiary groups are as follows:

Sl.No	Name of the Districts	Name of the beneficiaries Tribal's	Forest Area (In km)
1.	Chamarajanagar	Jenukuruba Soliga ,Kadu kuruba	2620(7.1)
2.	Chikka mangalore *	Gowdalu,Hasalaru	3497(9.5)
3.	Dakshina kannada *	Koraga, Malaikudi,	2397(6.5)
4.	Kodagu *	Jenukuruba,Soliga,,Yerava, Kadu kuruba, Kudiya	3047(8.3)
5.	Mysore*	Jenukuruba, Soliga,Yerava,Kadu kuruba	1145(3.1)
6.	Udupi *	Koraga, Malaikudi	2226(6.1)
7.	Uttara Kannada	Siddi,	7483(20.5)
<b>Total Households</b>		<b>8,75,742</b>	<b>36449 (100)</b>

Note: \* ITDP Districts in Karnataka

Sources: Vartha Bharathi Kannada Daily News Paper P-1, 22-01-2017.



1. The Gowdalu tribe: According to the 2011 Census, there are 8,617 members of this tribe, primarily residing in Chikmangalur and Bengaluru Urban districts.
2. The Hasalaru tribe: With a population of 24,466, they are concentrated in several districts, including Chikkamangaluru, Shimoga, Udupi, and Davangere.
3. The Kadu Kurubas: As the original inhabitants of the forests of Nagarahole and Kakanakote in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, this tribe has a population of 11,953, mostly living in Mysore, Kodagu, Chamarajanagar, and other districts.
4. The Jenu Kurubas (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, PVTG): With a population of 36,076 in Karnataka, they primarily reside in the districts of Mysore, Kodagu, and Chamarajanagar.
5. The Koraga (PVTG) tribe: Mainly found in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada, their population is 14,794, according to the 2011 Census. Unfortunately, their diet is poor, and malnutrition is common among children.
6. The Kudiya tribe: Karnataka is home to 2,169 members of this tribe, with the majority residing in the Kodagu district.
7. The Soliga tribes: They primarily inhabit the Chamarajanagar, Mysore, and Kodagu ranges.
8. The Yerava tribes: With a population of 30,359 in Karnataka, according to the 2011 Census, they are mainly found in the Kodagu and Mysore districts.

## **9. THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS**

To prevent malnutrition, nutritious foods (such as eggs, lentils, millets, jaggery, and edible oil) are provided for six months, from June to December. Due to their inability to work during the rainy season, 41,071 indigenous families receive wholesome food for six months, from June to November. These families have been neglected for generations, resulting in poor health and nutrition. The program is a nutritional support initiative exclusively for the two primitive tribal groups and six forest area STs, excluding the state's Social Welfare Development's Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). Both programs have been covered, with a focus on the free nutrition program. The State Government's subsequent initiatives provide nutrition-rich foods with high nutritional value.

Table 5, Food Items and their Quantity

S. No	Food Items	Quantity(monthly)per family
1	Rice	15kg
2	Toor Dal	5 kg
3	Green Gram/ Serials	1 kg
4	Horse Gram	3 kg
5	Cooking Oil	2 litres
6	Sugar/Jaggery	4 kg
7	Eggs	45 per month
8	Nandini Ghee	1 kg

Sources: Co-Ordinator, ITDP Office Report (2023) Madikeri

The main goal of this all-inclusive plan is to alleviate the malnutrition epidemic in eight areas and ensure nutritional security and access to food when needed. This program provides free rations to all forest tribal beneficiaries for six months during the rainy season, from June to November. The ration package includes 15 kg of rice, 2 kg of lentils, 2 kg of hesur dal, 2 kg of jaggery, 1 liter of palm or coconut oil, and 30 eggs. The Integrated Tribal Development Program (ITDP), a division of the state government's Social Welfare Department, oversees the program. In the absence of a Gram Panchayat, the service is provided through the Anganwadi facility or the Gram Panchayat.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The ecosystem significantly influences the indigenous people's way of existence, and they are intricately connected with nature. India's diverse ecosystems give rise to a diverse range of tribal people across the country. Tribal people have their unique way of life, spirit, worldview, and sense of community. This study paper presents a conceptual viewpoint, development and progress, and policy perspective, along with some helpful suggestions endorsed by the government for the advancement of tribal communities in Karnataka. A comprehensive strategy on tribal development is being developed, incorporating inputs from people at the grassroots level, to ensure sustainable development that is ecologically sound, forest tribal people-centered, decentralized, and culturally acceptable. To facilitate benchmarking and monitoring, ensure that disaggregated data is collected and compiled. Conduct a brief assessment of the health of tribal people living in forest areas and create location-specific and tribe-specific health programs. Promote nutrition security by encouraging kitchen gardens. Address hereditary illnesses. Increase access to healthcare by integrating services from multiple

departments. Crucial health-related initiatives include nutrition food teams, community involvement, and targeted programs in maternal and child health. The government's provision of wholesome food during rainy seasons will benefit communities in Western Ghats districts and forest areas. Empower tribal people at the forest village level to participate effectively in Gram Sabhas through community-based organizations.

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