



## **THE ROLE OF PALMYRA CO - OPERATIVE SOCIETY ON EMPOWERING TODDY TAPPERS: A CASE STUDY BASED ON ACHCHUVELI VILLAGE IN JAFFNA**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Palmyra co-operative societies are providing a valuable contribution for toddy tappers' social development. It is the focal institution of the toddy tapper's community. Co-operative is a unique association of both men and women. The Co-operative is defined as persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (ILO/ICA, 2003). Co-operative is a business oriented and controlled by the people who use its services and its function based on the demographic platform. Meanwhile toddy tapping is one of the caste based occupations in Jaffna's social structure. Toddy tappers community faced lots of discrimination and exclusion because of the caste by the high caste people who were the authorized persons in this particular community. They were alienated from some exclusive activities which were conducted by prominent class people from then until today. In earlier times, toddy tappers struggled to get enough wages for their basic amenities because they depended on toddy land owners and they dominated them by using caste based discrimination. Although toddy tappers are land less people. They suffer to get reasonable wages and rights from them. They needed to mobilize themselves in the early historical times. Dr. N. M. Perera was the financial minister in 1972. He helped to establish co-operative societies system under the Sri Lankan cooperative law. He lead to mobilize toddy tappers against the caste based discrimination and economic exploitation. Even though Palmyra's co-operative society faced so many difficulties to work with their members for their social, economic empowerment (Dhevarasa, 2012).

Main research objective is identifying the role of the Palmyra co-operative society on empowering toddy tappers. Sub objectives of the research are to identify contribution of Palmyra cooperative society for toddy tappers' social development, barriers of Palmyra co-operative society in empowering toddy tappers, solution to reduce challenges of Palmyra co-operative society' function.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research methods were used to identify role of cooperative societies on empowering toddy tappers. For effective and strengthened findings and solutions, this study to discuss deeply with toddy tappers about some social phenomenon such as caste based discrimination, divisional of labor force, social exclusion, challenges faced by toddy tappers and, job identification. So a qualitative method is used to gather data and provide thematic analysis. This is an institutional based study, which is based on Achchuvveli village. Because this is the famous village for toddy trapping in Jaffna and also it is a well functioning co-operative society in Jaffna and north provinces, so it is selected as a study area. Primary data was collected through case studies, interviews, field observation methods and secondary data was gathered from magazines, books and internet sources. Data collected from 25 persons of Palmyra Co-operative society with use of random sampling method. Results find through thematic analysis from gathered data and solutions created from the analyzed data.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Palmyra co-operative societies are providing security for toddy tappers. There are 38 toddy tappers' cooperative societies dynamic in northern part of Sri Lanka. Below table shows the data of the Palmyra Co-operative society's distribution in Northern Province.



Table No: 01

Area	No of Co-operative Societies
Jaffna	19
Mullaitivu	07
Kilinochchi	04
Mannar	05
Vavuniya	03

(Katpagatharu, 2012: Palmyra Co-operative society' magazine)

So most of the Palmyra Co-operative societies are working in Jaffna zone rather than the other parts of Northern Province in Sri Lanka. We can classify these Jaffna's Cooperative societies as three clusters based on geographical location of cooperative societies such as Valigamam – 13, Vadamarachchi – 03, Thenmaratchchi – 03. These types of cluster helps to maintain administrative function and provide unique identity as well.

Palmyra co-operative society ignored exploitation and it is the safeguard of toddy tappers were community to protect their rights from who is prominent class in historical structured Jaffna peninsula. Toddy tappers exploited economically and they couldn't earn income. Before 1972 toddy tappers suffered to sell their products because they depended on high caste people who are the toddy land owners. But after 1972 toddy tappers move familiar at community and work free because of the co-operative formation. Toddy tappers earn reasonable wage through cooperative societies. Toddy tappers' co-operative societies help to mobilize people without any form of discrimination and provide concrete and reasonable income and formed social security schemes also for toddy tappers such as compensation payments, pension, child education facility, loan facility and saving facilities through the co-operative rural bank. Palmyra co-operative rural bank provide loan and vocational training program for women empowerment and poverty reduction. Pension program was formed by cooperative societies in 2006. Every member above the age of 60 can get pension. This payment is based on their work efficiency. Effective labor get stable high amount of pension. Members get Minimum 5000 to maximum 15000 rupees per month through Co-operative societies' rural bank. This is the one of the best role model action about rural based social security plan. Co-operative society does so many social welfare projects. It provides strength to social progress. The major reason of this institution's establishment to mitigate caste-based discrimination and poverty which is deeply rooted in Jaffna social structure. In Jaffna caste is a major component in social structure. It influences in social, political and religious spaces. Cast mainly influences division of labor. Toddy tapping is also a caste based occupation. The name of Pallar and Nallavar castes people do toddy based works. It will also help to raise their social status and provides unity and power for this particular community. Co-operative societies work as a tool of social change and social mobility. Palmyra co-operative society conducted educational based welfare programs for their community to upgrade their wellbeing. Such as free preschools, distribute educational material and equipment assistance for their member's children. Significantly some social service awareness campaigns conducted through this co- operative society has provided so many relief funds during disaster periods to societies.



Such as floods, Tsunami and dry food distribution during the pandemic. Tree planting is one of major activity in this society.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Palmyra Co-operative society works as a major institution among toddy tappers. It made so many social developments and it provides motive to social movement in Jaffna social structure. It prohibited exploitation and provides sustainable income paths to toddy tappers. Toddy tappers can overcome caste based exclusion with help of co-operative activities. Co-operative societies provide education, social, economic service to development of toddy tappers community. The government also engages hands with this type of institutions for their enthusiastic performance.

Recommendations of this study such as Government need to provide support to labors pension and other social security services. If government contributes for the social security scheme, it will be very protective for toddy tappers. The Northern province council also needs to help through research about Palmyra tree based community' issues and needs to make social policy for development. Palmyra co-operative society should be more concerned about Palmyra based other production rather than toddy production. It will help to change people's perspective about Palmyra related works. At the same time it will raise toddy tappers' social status also. Even though government has provided some attractive planning schemes to engage youth in Palmyra related works for effective outcome.

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