

LIVING FENCE AND ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY: A STUDY ON HALAKKIS OF UTTARA KANNADA

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ABSTRACT

The Living Fence is one of the types of fences made up by of living trees, thorny or non-thorny plants, shrubs, creepers etc. It is also called green fence, or hedge since it has greenery. Normally the fences are made by stone and mud, bricks, barbed wire, bamboo plants, or even branches. But among these fencing patterns, the most eco-friendly form of barrier is the living fence, since it is being a barrier, can also produce many other benefits for the farmers and environment. This paper focuses on the practice of live fences used by the Halakkis of Uttara Kannada District and their contribution to ecological sustainability. Halakkis are the aborigines of Uttara Kannada district. The other view is that they are the immigrants to Uttara Kannada district. Halakkis are socially and economically backward communities of the district. Though they have all the features of tribal community they are not included into the list of scheduled tribes. Earlier they were engaged in terrace cultivation and lived in hillside and interior places. But now majority of them are small landholders and landless labours. The Halakkis are named for vegetable cultivation through organic methods in Uttara Kannada. A large majority of respondents have live fence for their agricultural crop. They use stones, plants creepers, and thorny plants for fencing. They also use branches of trees and bamboo plants for fencing. They normally use all the above said materials according to the need and availability of resources. The Halakkis fencing pattern is eco-friendly and provides shelter for many birds and other living beings. Their fencing also includes medicinal plants, shrubs and creepers. The mud wall fencing method also contributes for water harvesting. The living fence has multiple benefits for farmers like they saves money, prevents soil erosion and contribute for biodiversity. To conclude living fencing of Halakkis contributes for ecological sustainability.

Key words: Halakkis, Sustainability, Living Fence, Eco-Friendly and Ecology.

Introduction:

In India a large number of population is resides in rural, interior places and near forests. The people who reside in this area largely engage in agricultural activities. Meanwhile it is a greater challenge for the farmers to protect their crops from wild animals, stray cattle and insects. So, our ancestors found different types of securities for their livelihood. Normally farm land methods to protect their farm land. Fencing the farm land is an inevitable effort made by the farmers. Traditionally they found out variety of methods like construction of mud walls, stone walls, thorny plants, bamboos, branches of plants, living plants, shrubs, creepers, barbed wire etc. The tribes being living amidst the nature, they use very traditional and eco-friendly methods of fencing. Among them living fence is the most important pattern in modern time since it contributes ecological sustainability.

Living Fence:

The Living Fence is one of the types of fences made up by of living trees, thorny or non-thorny plants, shrubs, creepers etc. It is also called green fence, or hedge. It is alternatively called as green fence, or hedge. It is one of the important methods of protecting farm land and crops from wild animals and stray cattle. In rural area the farmers normally use naturally available materials like the stones, mud, bricks, barbed wire, bamboo plants, branches of trees etc make a fence. Though there are multiple methods to protect farm land and private land the most eco-friendly barrier to protect crop and land is the living fence. Living fence being a barrier, it makes many useful benefits for the farmers and the people at large.

The live fences differ in respect of its abundance, plant species composition and its structure is concern. The difference reflects in in its environmental conditions and managements reflecting differences in environmental conditions and management approaches. The important role of live fence are dividing the farm land, serving as a fence for animal movement, source of fodder, firewood, timber, fruits etc. the significant ecological role of live fence is proving habitation and resources for animal species, plants. It also serves accommodation for number of birds, bats, butterflies and insects.

Halakkis are socially and economically backward community of the district. Though Halakkis possess all the features of tribe, they are not scheduled Tribes so far. Basically they were the inhabitants of hilly, remote and forest areas of the District. They were initially engaged in terrace cultivation and occupied hillside and interior places. Gradually they also moved towards plain land and river banks. Though the Halakkis traditionally engaged and have in-depth knowledge of agricultural activities, were not land owners. Presently, majority of them are either small landholders or land less labours, which is after implementation of Land Reform Act. Today Halakkis are known for sustainable economic activities and contributing for ecological sustainability. Halakki women of Uttara Kannada district are famous vegetable cultivation through organic methods.

Objectives of the study

- To reveal the pattern of Halakkis agricultural fencing methods
- To know the advantages of Living Fencing
- To analyse that live fencing contribute to ecological sustainability.
- To discuss that the Halakkis fencing method is eco-friendly.
- To reveal live fencing contributes to bio-diversity.

Traditionally, live fences are noticeable fencing pattern in Indian agricultural landscapes. But there is a very little information about live fencing with regard to its availability, distribution, and its functional importance. In this context the paper makes an effort to detailed analysis of: its composition, form and distribution of live fences among Halakkis in Uttara Kannada District. It also tries to reveal the management of live fences by Halakki farmers and the ecological significance of live fencing in providing habitation, sources for food chain and connectivity for wildlife and biodiversity. Data on composition and structure are complemented by documentation of Halakkis knowledge about live fences and related management practices, as well as an assessment of fauna that utilize them. This paper is prepared on the basis of data collected for a Ph. D dissertation on Halakki Community.

About Halakki Community:

Halakkis are the one of the larger tribal groups of Uttara Kannada. Actually they have all features of tribes and would have included in list of scheduled tribes. Though they are not included in the list, they maintained their own uniqueness in all spheres of life as a tribe. The geographic condition of the district is uneven landscape, dense forest, hills and rivers made the transportation difficult. As a result, the different caste groups maintained social distance between them, which made them to have a kind of cultural distance and uniqueness. So, each caste group of Uttara Kannada district has its own dialect, tradition, customs, dress pattern, food habits, occupation and religious practices. In this regard Halakki are socially isolated and culturally maintained their uniqueness.

The origin of Halakki is concern there are two views. The first is Halakkis are as the aboriginals of Uttara Kannada district. The other view is that they are the immigrants of Uttara Kannada. They Mumbai Gazetteer states that Halakkis are mostly migrated from Mysore region and settled down in the coastal area. But there is not any resemblance between the Halakki Vokkaliga of Uttara Kannada district and the Vokkaliga's of Mysore with respect to dress pattern, culture, tradition and dialect.

The folk literature, customs and dialects of Halakkis makes some of the scholars to think that they are migrated from Andra Pradesh. The Halakkis are stringent devotees of Thirupathi Thimmappa. Halakkis finds the ultimate aim of their life is visiting Thirupathi and getting the blessings of God Ventakaramana. In all religious ceremonies of Halakkis Tulasi Pooja is an important event. All these things indicate that Halakkis might have migrated from Thirupathi. Similarly a good number of folk songs of Halakkis states that they are having connection with Thirupathi. Thus, on these ground some of scholars opine that they have migrated from Andra Pradesh.

With reference to the second view Halakkis are one of the important immigrants of Uttara Kannada district. They settled down in valleys of river and forest area like Toda's of Nilagiri. Halakkis prefer these places to feed their cattle and to get medicinal plants, in which they have abundant knowledge of its use. This area is also good for their traditional occupation, terrace cultivation. Later on they shifted to river banks and coastal areas. Now Halakkis are found in coastal area between Karwar to Honnavar on river bank, hill areas and coastal areas. The Halakkis are having intimate relation with nature with simplicity and without the touch of modernization. These are the people who collect forest products like herbs, firewood, cocum, cane, honey and other forest products. Though, Halakkis cultivate the land, it was shifting

cultivation, more like nomadic people. These people had not much interaction with other groups, have suspicious nature and kept the outsiders at distance. Halakkis does not bother much about marital relations but maintain their own rules for the good and health of the society (N R Nayaka; 2012). Though the other tribes of Uttara Kannada adopted many features of Hinduism, Halakkis still maintained their own cultural distinctness and uniqueness. They are not like other Hindu castes, who have already submitted to Hindu customs.

The tribes of Uttara Kannada follow totemism like other tribes, where totems are worshiped respectfully like mother. In the beginning these tribes used to follow matrilineal family pattern and later on changed to patriarchal family structure. Even today the tribes follow the both patterns of the family in the district. The communities of Uttara Kannada like Gondas, Halakkis, Nadavas, Namadharies, Kunubeis, Konkana Maratas are the followers of balis or clan. It indicates non-Brahmin practices. All these communities engaged in agricultural activities and considered their God is Balindra. So Deepavali is an important festival for these people. It is a festival of worshipping the agricultural land. Basically Halakki Vakkalu engaged themselves in hunting and terrace cultivation.

Life style of Halakkis:

Halakkis have inculcated hard work in their life irrespective of women, children and men. They considered begging as an offence and do not like to be lazy people. Even, the God and Goddess of Halakkis are depicted as hard works. The main occupation of Halakkis is agriculture, started with terrace cultivation a long ago. This people are once experts in terrace cultivation but now since there is no scope for such type of cultivation. Now they have started settling down permanently with paddy cultivation. Halakkis mainly depend on monsoon for irrigation and do not have irrigated land. Recently a few families have become small land holders due to the land reform acts, otherwise majority of them are landless agricultures and tenants. The Halakkis once used to sow the traditional paddy seeds like Gandshali, Joragashali, Halaga, Kempji, Kattapadya, Jadepadya, Sannapadya, Ajjaga, Malbari etc. But today many among the seeds are out of use or disappeared.

Halakki women also collect and grow medicinal plants at their home gardens, in which they have abundant knowledge of its use. Thus various activities of Halakkis are eco-friendly and there by contributing to ecological sustainability. However, the Halakki women, like the women of other communities are also not enjoying much freedom due to the recent influence of other communities on them. They are also on at social change and slowing adopting considerable features of other dominated communities.

There are different methods made used by the farmers as barrier to prevent harmful pests and wild and stray animals coming into farmland. The most effective and eco-friendly method is live fencing which has been adopted by Halakkis of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka state. They normally use environmental supportive materials for their farm land protection. Live fences may act as tools for biodiversity conservation by providing habitat for native species and increasing connectivity in the landscape. There are three types of live fences:

Sustainability and Live Fencing:

The World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 made an attempt to understand sustainable development for the present world through this definition: "Sustainable development should "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", which involves integrating the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

The live fence besides providing hedge for farm crops, it is a major source of timber, firewood, fodder and fruits, habitation for flora and fauna, resource for wildlife etc. It also maintains landscape connectivity, conservation of soil, shades for cattle and divides farm lands. The most primitive fences were made out of locally available materials like stones, mud, thorny plants, bamboos, shrubby plants. But modern fencing pattern replaced these materials with plastered compounds, barbed wires, dressed stones. This development in fencing naturally gives threat to nature.

Halakkis one of the primitive social groups of Uttara Kannada district, engaged in agricultural activities have been practicing live fencing to protect their farm land. The following data shows the type of fencing to the crops by the Halakkis. 37.33 percent of respondents construct mud wall for fencing the crop. 28 percent uses stone walls for fencing, 43 percent by growing the plants and creepers fence their crop area and 18 percent of respondents said they use branches of trees for fencing and 67 percent of them use all the above said methods according to their need and availability of resources (N= 100).

Halakkis have their own method of fencing their agricultural land. They use traditional methods and eco-friendly materials to safeguard their crops from wild animals. The data shows 43 percent of the respondents said that they protect their crop by fencing their land using live plants and creepers. The live plant fencing is one of the major methods of fencing that contribute to ecological sustainability. This is not only protecting the crops but also protecting the biodiversity. It consists of variety of plants and creepers at the verge of disappearance. The fences used by the Halakkis also cover the different flower and fruit plants that serve as the fodder for different birds and other creatures. The fences of plants and creepers also include medicinal plants and medicinal creepers. The various fruits and flowers of these plants and creepers provide food and protection for birds, insects, reptiles and small animals. 42 percent of them protect their crops by constructing walls using mud and stones. This is another way of sustaining the ecology. Unlike the urban fencing pattern, Halakki type of fencing does not create any such hazards to the nature. This method of fencing also contributes to the water harvesting. The natural ingredients used for fencing provides for eco-sustainability.

Conclusion:

The paper focused on how the Halakkis of Uttara Kannada district protects their farmland by live fencing. The Tribal communities and primitive social groups still practice eco- friendly methods in their agricultural practices. On the other hand the process of modernization made the urban and advanced communities to destroy the nature and contribute to natural hazards. The Halakkis fencing pattern contribute to a greater extent to ecological sustainability. The live fencing of them gives scope for variety of species plants, creepers, shrubs and even flowery plants. As result it is the habitation for variety of species of birds, insects, and animals. All such activities of Halakkis certainly contribute ecological sustainability and to have a comfortable place for human living.

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