

# Untold and Painful Stories of Survival: The Life of Adolescent Girls of the Paniya Tribes of Kerala, India

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## Abstract

Tribal adolescent girls are vulnerable to neglect, abuse and exploitation across the world. Literature on the status of adolescents belonging to the Paniya tribe is scanty. However, limited information about the Paniya tribe of Kerala indicates that they are neglected and deprived from basic facilities. According to the Census Report of India (2011), 49.5% of the Paniya tribe members are literate. The lives of adolescents in the Paniya community are distinct from those of other sections of society, and they are yet to be addressed by the government or the media. The objective of this chapter is to discuss the issues and concerns of Paniya adolescent girls of Kerala. A Paniya girl from Vattachira (Calicut) treks around 2 km during her menstruation to fetch fresh and clean water. They use pieces of clothes to manage menstruation since they do not have access to pads or tampons. Drying their garments during the rainy season is difficult, which leaves them susceptible to rashes and infections. They are provided with residential educational facilities by the government, but they are unable to adjust to the lifestyles of other members of the society and are frequently bullied and discriminated, leading to school dropouts. Sexual exploitation by strangers and community members is widespread among Paniya girls, and unmarried mothers under the age of 18 are also prevalent among this community. The chapter highlights upon some of the challenges of the Paniya Tribal adolescent girls of Kerala and offers some suggestions for improving the quality of life of this marginalized group, which will assist the policymakers and government for taking need-based measures.

## Keywords

Paniya tribe Adolescent girls Sexual abuse Untold stories Kerala

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