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ATTAINING HEALTH AND EDUCATION AMONG TRIBES OF KARNATAKA: FACTORS OF EXCLUSION AND INEQUALITY

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Abstract

Poverty and Social exclusion are interconnected and contribute to each other. Tribal groups or also called Adivasis considered the earliest inhabitants of India. The issues of tribes including the mainstream are the subject matter of discussion way back to the first five-year plan of India up to here. India generally considered a success story in terms of growth and poverty reduction, while tribes in the year 2004–2005 were twenty years behind the average. Remoteness, typical lifestyle, following their belief system and smaller in numbers have gone together with political isolation and low voice in decision making for the Scheduled Tribes. Along with the political isolation, the social exclusion and inequality in terms of education and economic development need deliberate attention and prospect to revive the condition and rejuvenate the life of the tribal communities is the urgent necessity.

Keywords: Tribes, poverty, exclusion, inequality, development.

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, the tribal communities misplaced from accessing and benefiting the success of mainstream development. Though the Scheduled Tribes are away from attaining equal opportunity, women are more marginalized and side-lined than men among tribal groups. Despite their multiple roles in the household, women's exclusion from knowledge systems, market sphere, limited access and control over the resources affecting the overall development of tribal communities. Equal participation and promotion of women's

physical and economic rights is the key for economic growth of tribal communities (Panda, 2017).

Adivasis considered the earliest inhabitants of India. Tribes are closer to nature and practice animism. In India, many forest dwelling tribal communities are residing in the interior forests and away from the urban influences. Most of them have a specific dialect and have distinct cultural affairs. According to Census 2011, there are 104,281,034 people of tribal groups, comprising of 8.6% of the total Indian

population. Scheduled Tribes (STs) mostly inhabit in rural areas (11.3%) and only 2.8% have migrated to urban spaces (Census, 2011). Some states having high proportion of tribal population viz. Mizoram (94.4%), Nagaland (86.5%), Meghalaya (86.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (68.8%), Manipur (37.2%), Tripura (31.8%), Chhattisgarh (30.6%), Jharkhand (26.2%) and Odisha (22.8%).

For administrative purposes, government recognizes most Adivasis under the constitutional term called “Scheduled Tribes” which derived from a XXII schedule in the Constitution Order of 1950. Bêteille (1991) claims that the Scheduled Tribes are often conflated with Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the development literature, although they are completely different social categories. However, SCs or Dalits are isolated socially and ritually from the Hindu hierarchical society and placed them under avarnas (other than four varnas) ie. *panchmas*, the adivasis were isolated physically, away from developmental process and less represented in political clouts and hence socially segregated.

Tribal Population

India has as many as 705 different ethnic groups, which are notified as Scheduled Tribes (STs) and out of which 75 indigenous groups have been identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Karnataka, the south Indian State was once part of several kingdoms and princely state of Mysore. It reputed in the deccan peninsula with rich in its history, culture and heritage. As per Census 2011, the State has 42,48,987 Scheduled tribe population in Karnataka, out of which 2 ethno-cultural vulnerable tribal groups (Jenu Kuruba and Koraga) belonging to the PVTGs with a population of 50,870. However, their percentage of representation is only 6.95 per cent of the population of the State. There are 14 groups primarily natives of the state out of 50 tribal communities (Census of India, 2011).

Health and belief system

Tribal communities’ condition is extremely poor and neglected over many decades, resulted into poor state of health and nutrition among STs in Karnataka. Leininger (1988:16) states “patterns of eating, food procurement and food use by diverse cultures in their unique ecological context are major areas of study to help nurses understand the meanings of wellness, illness and disease”. It is important to investigate proper dietary replacement than simply sweep the statement that forest and natural food consumption is healthy. Although efforts from the Government and non-Governmental organizations are encouraging but authentic, information available to assess the state of health of these tribes of the region remains scanty. However, the original natives of these tribes have been protecting the forest conservation and vast knowledge on various medicinal plants and their use in traditional/folklore medicines. The practice of traditional or folk medicine for generation together is important factor for further researches. However, vast majority of people of tribal communities do not prefer traditional medicines always and for all ailments. Generally, knowledge of the prevention and cure of sickness passed on from generation to generation and depends on notions about health, illness and practice. (Jai, 2020).

Belief system of people may not allow receiving the state run medical facilities. Concept of health is in terms of functional aspect for them. Evil eye is another strong belief among tribes. The people believe that diseases can be transferred to other people by crossroad pattern. Evil eye considered another cause of sickness (Hutter, 1994). People use the eye metaphor to emphasise evil originating from envious eye-to eye contact. As studied by Stevens Jr., (1996:1228) that in areas around the Mediterranean fringe belief that malign power may be projected through direct gaze. Curing the evil eye is

therefore, difficult because it violates the integrity of the human body and creates an orifice that attracts other sorts of evil (Fadlalla, 2002).

Exclusion and Inequality

Many groups in India experience some forms of inequality or social exclusion, although most frequently and most numerous are Dalits (SCs) and Adivasis (STs). Interestingly, both SCs and STs together constitute a quarter of the Indian population. Their exclusion is echoed unequal access to political institutions, to public services, to public places, to land assets etc. Inequality and social exclusion have a gendered aspect as well (Sarah Byrne and Devanshu Chakravarti, 2009). The term 'social exclusion' and 'social inclusion' are two terms most widely used in recent years by politicians, social scientists and the public as well. The term social inclusion originated in French social policy in the 1970s and it came into play in the 1980s economic crisis (Benn, 2000).

The term 'social exclusion' is ambiguous and always contested. There are two social policy traditions- Social democracy, and Social concern. Social democracy surrounding inequality and equal opportunities. Social concern denoted for social ties in the community and within the family. The concept of inclusion means the including all sects of population to access equally all the system of functions. On the one hand, this concerns access to these benefits and, on the other, dependence of individual modes of living on them. Luhman, (1990) expressed that the extent of inclusion cannot be achieved if groups disappear and only marginally participate in social living. In broader based concepts, it is a lack of, or inability to participate in society with any reason (Burchardt et. al., 1999).

Tribes at Transition

Traditionally culture and society are dynamic in nature. It change over time due to several factors like exposure to other cultural traits, invention of new

knowledge, constant experimentation, changes in surrounding environment etc. The effect of the same would influence on the life of tribal societies. This would change the social status and cultural components in different stages of transition. Though, state incorporating modern facilities like education, health, economy etc. to all, there is a lack of uniformity in these domains among the different tribes in different regions of the country. The specific characteristic of the tribal groups needs to be taken care before making policy changes. For social and economic development of any community, level of transitional factors play vital role. Because north-eastern tribal groups participating better in their education level than tribal communities of Orissa and Bihar states. This kind of situation can be found among tribal groups across the country. Thus, policies must be tribe specific, region, or group specific to achieve certain goals of the government programmes. Common or generalised uniform policies may not solve problem until it specified.

In both the cases of social inclusion and exclusion, tribal traditional entities and identities were lost and merged to dominant religion. It may influence on the social and economic front, which directly leads to extreme changes. It creates problems of identity crisis called detribalisation. People do not keep anything unique as tribal folk, culture and of their own. It only create undesirable differential treatment from others.

Economic Scope

If non-tribal sphere included into tribal world, it only create economic exploitation of tribal people and their resources. It produces a vacuum on the economic resources because tribal community lost their traditional authority either it may be a land, forest or other natural resources. Livelihood of tribal communities deprived because of several land policies, land acquisition act and land distribution policies.

Inclusion and Adjustment

Large scale migration and maladjustment occurred in tribal zones. The post independent inclusion of tribal territories into development map of the state has displaced millions of Tribal people of their home, making them dependent on others' mercy. Inclusion had great impact on tribal social and economic front. The concept of inclusion was misunderstood resulted the open up of tribal belts to non-tribal. This created lot of confusion among tribals who are living generation together towards the entry of non-tribal in to their territory. During colonial administration, many traders, contractors, money lenders etc. entered to conduct non-tribal activities. This kind of inclusion hampered the life of people, flora and fauna of the tribal forest. The ignorant tribal people could not cope with the changing situation and reduced to land less wage labourers.

The inclusion of non-tribal in to the tribal belt produced exploitation of resources and breakdown of tribal traditions. Idea of tribal development and mainstream could not impact much on the tribal society. It was used only for the political gain in terms of social security and smooth administration. The education, economy and infrastructure were suffered much by the inclusion in excluded (Thakur, 2012).

Despite their heterogeneous social background, the livelihood systems of all tribal groups centered on the forest products. Hunting and collection of minor forest products are part of their livelihood system. Tribal population living in Karnataka feel deprived of the forest livelihood system with introduction of forest development and conservation policies. Imposed certain restriction on access to forest made them to depend on modern economy. Their way of traditional subsistence form of living is withering slowly and they adjusting slowly with the modern world nuances.

In any society, women play a vital role in social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life. Tribal community gives much important to the women role in their life and considered economic asset in their society. However, they are still lagging far behind in the various walks of life like education, employment, good health and economic empowerment etc. Lack of education, poor health status, low-level wage work etc. are continuing to alarm for women empowerment in our society. These problems including gender bias slowly percolating into the tribal society with advent of new transitional economy and employment. Concept of rural and tribal development brought new facilities to their localities but accessibility is still a challenge. The government and non- governmental organisations should prepare suitable plans and programmes for the economic empowerment of tribal women (Heggade and Heggade, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Attaining health and education is still a challenging issue in tribal areas. Specifically women are still deprived of many opportunities. Factors of exclusion and inclusion play it own way of impact on the life of tribal communities. The social exclusion and inequality in terms of education and economic development need deliberate attention and prospect to revive the condition and rejuvenate the life of the tribal communities of Karnataka.

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