

Work Participation of Tribal Women in India: A Development Perspective

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Abstract: *“This paper has been written on the basis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from secondary source and discussed work participation of tribal women in India in a descriptive manner. The tribal women have been equal partners with tribal men in the contribution to household economy. Quite often their women do more physical labour in their agricultural fields and forest than that of the tribal men. Tribal women have usually enjoyed a higher social status in their own communities than Indian women in general. Some of the tribes like Khasi in Mizoram and Meghalaya are matriarchal. However, the literacy rate among the tribal’s and more so in case of tribal women is quite low and this is also associated with poor nutritional and health status among the tribal’s. The estimate of poverty made by Planning Commission for the year 1993-94 shows that 51.92 percent rural and 41.4 percent urban Scheduled Tribes were still living below the poverty line. They are engaged in various occupations like hunting shifting cultivation to settled agriculture and rural crafts. A very negligible percent are engaged in non-agricultural activities The Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.2% of India’s total population. In all there are 700 Scheduled Tribes in India. States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa all together have about 40% of the total tribal population of the country.”*

I. Introduction:

The status of women in a society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women’s status is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as their roles within the family, the community and society. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. Women in Agriculture play a crucial role in wide range of activities and contributing to sustainable Agriculture development, to achieve inclusive Agricultural growth empowering women by having Comprehensive understanding about work participation, gender issues, drudgery and health and nutritional status is necessary. The concept of work participation of tribal women in Agriculture sector growth is broad and multidimensional. Women’s empowerment in agriculture is an important component of that inclusive growth. India’s poor performance on women’s empowerment and gender equality is reflected in many indicators. In many parts of the country, sex ratio has 940 females per 1000 males. India is ranked 135 out of 187 countries on Gender Inequality Index as per the 2014 Global Human Development Report. Women from disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities in particular face discrimination, exploitation and limited employment opportunities. Our work recognizes that women are by no means a homogenous category.

TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA

According to the 2011 Census there are 24, 94, 54,252 households of which 2, 14, 67,179 households belongs to ST population. Total population of the country is 1,21,05,69,573, out of these 10, 42, 81,034 are classified as ST with 5, 24, 09,823 males and 5, 18, 71,211 females. The decadal growth rate of the tribal population during 2001-2011 is 23.7% which is higher than India’s total decadal growth (17.6%). The tribal population of India constitute 8.6% of total population of the country and majority of them reside in the rural areas (90%)

State wise percent distribution of tribal population that the highest proportion of tribal population resides in north eastern states namely; Mizoram (94.4%), Nagaland (86.5%), Meghalaya (86.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (68.8%), Manipur (35.1%), Sikkim (33.8%), and Tripura (31.8%) Apart from north eastern states tribal population in Lakshadweep islands comprises of 94.8%. Numerically, the highest tribal concentration is in Madhya Pradesh, which is 14.7% of the total tribal population of India. Maharashtra (10.1%) and Odessa (9.2%) together add an additional 19.3% tribal population to the country. In contrast, lowest tribal concentration is in UT of Daman and Diu (0.01%). No ST population is recoded in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi & Pondicherry states/UTs

Objectives Of The Study:

- To analyze the role of work participation of women in India
- To study the socio – economic status of tribal women in India
- To examine the nature and characteristics of socio-cultural conflicts faced by the tribal women

II. Methodology:

Descriptive research design has been adopted for this study. The purpose of this research design is to describe the problems and other units under investigation like socio-economic background and elicit new information about the elderly tribal women through the present study based on secondary source of data, the nature of research is exploratory and collected from the data Census of India 2011, Annual Report 2012- 13 Ministry of Labour & Employment New Delhi, Annual Returns received under the Factories Act, 1948 by the Labour Bureau,

TRANSFORMING OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURES AMONGST TRIBALS

The long term impact of the forms and patterns of dispossession are reflected in the Census of India, 2011. The following picture emerges when compared with the Census of India, 2001

Table: 1
Decadal Changes in Scheduled Tribe Work Participation Rates, 2001-2011

Total	Total			Total Main Workers			Total Marginal Workers		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
India	-0.39	0.68	-1.31	-4.16	-7.33	-0.69	4.16	7.33	0.69
Jharkhand	0.64	0.42	0.98	-13.23	-18.58	-5.95	13.23	18.58	5.95
Odessa	0.73	0.90	0.73	-8.49	-11.31	-4.45	8.49	11.31	4.45
Chhattisgarh	-0.58	0.49	-1.57	-7.13	-10.40	-3.98	7.13	10.40	3.98
Madhya Pradesh	-0.52	-0.01	-1.08	-4.14	-9.19	1.51	4.14	9.19	-1.51
Rural	Total			Total Main Workers			Total Marginal Workers		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
India	-0.40	0.53	-1.28	-4.72	-8.02	-1.17	4.72	8.02	1.17
Jharkhand	0.44	0.07	0.82	-14.22	-20.01	-6.63	14.22	20.01	6.63
Odessa	0.69	0.84	0.70	-8.96	-11.88	-4.88	8.96	11.88	4.88
Chhattisgarh	-0.12	0.53	-1.29	-7.73	-11.09	-4.52	7.73	11.09	4.52
Madhya Pradesh	-0.73	-0.13	-1.26	-4.46	-9.76	1.29	4.46	9.76	-1.29
Urban	Total			Total Main Workers			Total Marginal Workers		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
India	2.58	3.04	2.66	-1.04	-1.97	1.83	1.04	1.97	-1.83
Jharkhand	4.77	5.08	5.04	-2.39	-2.74	0.06	2.39	2.74	-0.06
Odessa	2.92	3.21	3.41	-2.83	-3.73	1.36	2.83	3.73	-1.36
Chhattisgarh	4.31	3.97	5.63	-3.45	-3.34	-0.68	3.45	3.34	0.68
Madhya Pradesh	2.73	2.72	3.31	0.29	-1.15	4.96	-0.29	1.15	-4.96

(Source: Data Computed from Census of India, 2001 ST01 and ST02; Census of India, 2011, ST Tables Online data).

The table above shows a secular decline in the number of main workers or workers getting more than 180 day of regular work in one year, even though there is only a marginal decline or increase in the total work participation rates. What is more interesting to note is the fact that this decline is more drastic in the rural regions of all regions except Madhya Pradesh whose decline in the main rural workforce is lower than that of the all India workforce. This figure becomes especially significant when we consider the fact that the main work participation rate of women has increased in the state.

This is in stark contrast to the decline in the work participation rates of the marginal female workforce in the state in the same period. But overall the secular increase in marginal tribal rural workforce (that people working for less than six months a year) is reflective of the larger rural crisis that has fundamentally impacted tribal livelihoods. In contrast there is a generalized increase in the main female urban workforce in all cases except for Chhattisgarh, and the decline in the urban male workforce in the same period highlights the gendered nature of the changes in the occupational structure. Further even though there is a general all India increase in the total

work participation rate for scheduled tribes it is largely a result of the increasing rates of marginal rural and urban work. But even here, the rate of increase in total and rural female marginal work is higher than that of males.

Significantly the decline in female marginal workers in the urban areas is replaced by a corresponding increase in the main female urban workers. Once again this indicates that schedule tribe women are shouldering greater responsibility to meet the daily needs of urban survival.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN:

On the basis of the research study *On migrant tribal Women Girls in Ten Cities: A Study of Their Socio-Cultural and Economic Reference to Social Intervention* a little More than 55 percent of women and 29 percent of girls were illiterates, about 12 percent and 16 percent respectively were educated up to middle school level and about 7 and 16 per cent respectively up to higher secondary level. Only 6 percent of women and 11 percent of girls were graduates mainly in faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Those with P.G. qualifications were hardly 1 percent and 2 percent respectively.

GENDER WORK PARTICIPATION SCENARIO:

As per men and women work participation rate from the census 2001 data, Mizoram with value 0.093 had the most equitable gender work participation scenario, followed by Manipur (0.094), Nagaland (0.10) and Himachal Pradesh (0.11). Some high gender work participation disparity states include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal and Odisha. In Madhya Pradesh, participation of women in rice based cropping system was 40.51% and that of men was 59.49%. Maximum participation of women was in rice crop (78.18%), followed by wheat (12.76%), field pea (3.22%) and black gram (2.41%). Tribal women earned on an average 158 woman-days/years and ` 150/woman-day of employment in forest produce. For better marketing system, 62% tribal women suggested market in nearby places, 37% direct sale to consumers to avoid traders, 31% better transport facility, 25% creation of storage facility and 7% minimum support prize by government agencies and 2% creation of shelter place. Traders suggested for enhancing knowledge of tribal women in marketing system.

**Table 2
Women Work Participation in India**

SNO	No. of years	Work Participation rate for women in (%)
1	2	3
1	1981	19.67
2	1991	22.27
3	2001	25.63

(Source: Annual Report 2012- 13 Ministry of Labour & Employment New Delhi)

Women form an integral part of the Indian workforce. According to the information provided by the Registrar General of India, the work participation rate for women was 25.63 per cent in 2001. This is an improvement from 22.27 per cent in 1991 and 19.67 per cent in 1981.

Table 0.2

**Table 3
Average Daily Employment of women in Factories**

Year	Total Employment in thousands	Women Participation in thousands	Percentage Share of Women to Total Employment
1	2	3	4
2000	2194.5	210.5	9.6
2001	3272.1	480.1	14.7
2002	3330.4	547.4	16.4
2003	2139.5	236.0	11.0
2004	3554.0	641.7	18.06
2005	3848.0	640.4	16.64
2006	4373.0	730.7	16.71
2007	3054.0	313.9	10.28
2008	2628.4	220.9	8.41

(Source: Annual Returns received under the Factories Act, 1948 by the Labour Bureau)

Note: Date for the years 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 are based on the returns received from 17, 17, 18 and 16 States/U.Ts. Respectively

WOMEN AND FORESTS

Minor forest produce forms a major source of income in many tribal communities, especially those having less than five acres of land. Women and children are almost exclusively involved in collection of minor forest produce, its storage, processing and marketing (Singh, B., 1993; Roy Burman, 1988).

Increased government control of forests has distributed tribal economy adversely affecting tribal's lives, particularly that of women. Appointing of agents from outside for collecting forest produce has not only affected their livelihood, but has also made the work of women more difficult. Collection of fuel wood has become more difficult since it is less accessible and more time-consuming. The result has been less income combined with less fuel wood available for themselves and lesser nutrition. It also leaves them little time for earning wages. Government control over forests has also reduced hunting to a ritual.

TRIBAL WOMEN PROBLEMS:

The migrant tribal women and girls faced a number of problems immediately after their migration to cities which included difficulty of communication in local language, residential accommodation, employment, education of children, local contacts, adjustment with city life and environment etc. The main causes of financial, physical and sexual exploitation of the migrant tribal women and girls in cities were poverty, lack of employment opportunities, lack of awareness, education, unorganized nature of labour force, misunderstanding of the local people about free sex in tribal's, and lack of community support to victims of sexual exploitation.

Besides routine household work, the tribal women work in the agricultural fields, forests for long hours. The overall output if seen in terms of number of hours of work is low. Their schedule of long working hours continues even during pregnancy, natal and postnatal stages. They have a negative energy balance, high morbidity rate, and low child survival rate. They suffer from taboos and superstitions and remain deprived of the benefits from existing development and welfare programmes.

SUGGESTIONS:

To develop or capacitate self reliant and self respect tribal society by strengthening the tribal community comprehensively, promoting, strengthening and expanding community based tribal women oriented society where sustainable development initiatives could be undertaken for marginalized sections of the society.

- The government should focus empowerment of schedule tribe women and allocate separate Funds throughout the five years plan. Health, education and nourishment should be selected Key focus areas, besides; women should be provided ample opportunities for economic development, based upon the traditional skills, women should also be provided additional skills For value additions to the produces
- The government should ensure 100% literacy among the tribal women by the welfare programmes and through the five years plan, the adivasi girls, who are desirous of higher education should be provided subsidy for education like technical, the state should provide the hostel facilities for motivation.
- The tribal women workers, who are engaged in agriculture, construction, brick klin etc, are un-organized; the government should protect their labour rights. And the government should make special allocation for implementation of labour laws for the schedule area to prevent the exploitation of the workers.
- The tribal forest land cultivators, who have been given the land entitlements, should be assisted by enhancing the yield by soil and water development process. The farmers should be provided the high yielding seeds varieties along with training to improve their agriculture. Such farmers should be provided the loan assistance for improving their agricultural productivity.

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