

EMPLOYMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA'S INFORMAL SECTOR

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Introduction: Some characteristics are essential to identify informal sector. These characteristics are mainly low level organization, casual labour relation; small owned accounting family, own enterprise or micro enterprise, ownership of fixed and other assets by self, involvement of family workers, easy entry and exit, free mobility, uses of indigenous resources and technology, absent of fixed working hours, unregistered and ported work, lack of employment social securities, use of labour intensive technology etc. As the employment opportunities in the formal/traditional sector of the economy is gradually shrinking due technological up gradation informal sector is the most growing up sector to offer employment opportunities for the unskilled labour force (rural & urban) in the developing economy like India.

Informal activities are of two kinds namely farm based and non-farm based activity. By non-farm activity we basically consider non-agricultural activity. It includes cattle farming, forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying, small scale manufacturing industries, manufacturing of tobacco, wood products, transport, trade and tourism and various other services in rural and semi urban areas.

In this paper we make an attempt to find out work participation of poor and vulnerable section of tribal women. This paper also reflects the consumption and employment pattern of such tribal people with particular reference to women since early 1990s with a view of how economic growth process has impacted on their lives. The paper mainly deals with the work participation in the non-traditional informal sector and the employment and income opportunities in this sector. Women employment in the informal sector is introduce with a classification across the social group namely SC and STs in two major sates namely West Bengal and Assam. The papers also consider the educational attainment of such women as an endowment.

The primary indicators of the deprivation of the tribal particularly women are household consumption, literacy, work participation, political empowerment and decision making. In this paper we also try to focus on how the tribal women can extract better income and employment opportunities from the informal activities by increasing the productivity with the help of technical education. This empowerment will also benefit the tribal women to take part in the growth process of the Indian economy and informal activities are turned out as a major source of such higher income. Our analysis covers three time points namely 1993-94, 1999-2000, and 2004-05.

The informal activities are mainly considered with non-agricultural activities such as cattle farming; forestry; fishing; mining and quarrying; manufacturing of tobacco; wood product; transport; trade and various services. During the reforms process the employment opportunities in the formal sector have not expanded with the increase in the labour force. As a result the assetless poor labour force are forced to enter into the casual labour market due to lack of education, skill and capabilities. We need a disaggregation of the labour market engaged in informal activities. Disaggregation across the social group is important for analytical purpose because this will help us in identifying whether people belonging to the backward section of the population are getting benefits of such work transformation in the informal sector. The disaggregations of the informal labour are mainly made in the backward section of the population namely SC, ST and OBC. Since the women work participation ratio in rural areas is high so we mainly focused on women labour force across the said social category.

The prime objective of the paper is to examine the impact of transmission of technology in the rural sector and to trace the process of development. This will also improve the quality of product produced in the informal sector. Naturally the marketing of output and wage level of the labour force will improve. This will be said dynamic process of growth through the propagation of the technology in the rural sector. At macro level growth will be incipient and will not be inclusive and it will have a tendency of occupational instability.

Since the tribal women are almost 100% are workers in the farm and non-farm based rural activities, they have low productivity and therefore low income earning capability. Besides large segment of the tribal people are land less and asset less and therefore affected by poverty intensity. The paper emphasizes on effective implementation of packages of development programme with particular emphasis on women empowerment.

II

ALL INDIA SITUATIONS OF TRIBAL WOMEN

Let us first see the existing pattern of the status of tribal people particularly women at all India level. Before going to the macro level information in per capita consumption, let us consider for the government reports Economic Survey 2007-08 which shows that rural house hold accounted for a predominant share of inadequate food availability in respect of state wise comparison West Bengal followed by Orisa has an unusual high percentage of house hold reporting food adequacy. This reflects that the state of percapita consumption in different states of the country. Certainly this depressive state of the noted areas is in the area inhabited by tribal people (Ref. Economic Survey 2007-08, Govt. of India)

If we look to the literacy status, literacy rate of the scheduled cast female population between 1961-2001 has improved significant from 3.29 in 1961 to 6.44 in 1971 and 41.90 in 2001. This is certainly a significant advance. In 2000 over 2/3 of rural scheduled caste house hold were land less or near land less compare to 1/3 of the other. This is another indicator of deprivation of scheduled case population. Studies also show evidence of discrimination of various market and non-market transaction including social services like education, health and political participation. The total impact of this disparity is reflected in the high level of the poverty, over 36% among the scheduled case population as compared to 21% among others (Ref. 11th Plan Volume I page 106). Population living bellow poverty line even in 2004-05 in the scheduled caste group in the rural areas is 36.80.

The human development index (HDI) and human poverty index (HPI) for scheduled caste versus non-scheduled caste and tribes indicates wide variation across states. There are ten states with HDI value higher than all India average for scheduled caste and six states with HDI values lower than this average. Measured on this basis reported that level of deprivation greatest in Bihar (59.36%) following Uttar Pradesh (50.03%), Orissa (47.66%), Rajasthan (43.78%) and Madhya Pradesh (43.68%) compared to all India level (41.47%). Another indicator is access to Govt. services. SC population access to the govt. services in 2004 is 12.2% of the total. This information does not reflect the status of women in the total picture of scheduled caste population. However, if one considers the position of women in the house hold and out side of the SC population it will be different to conceive that the women get only a drop of this minimal development index of the scheduled caste and tribe as reflected in the data.

The literacy rate of the scheduled tribe female population was 3.16% in 1961 and it's improve to 18.19% in 1991 and further 32.76% in 2001. Level of living of the tribal population in bellow poverty line in the rural areas is also alarming. In 2004-05 it was 47.30%. This official information reflects the state of tribal population in general and the tribal women also in particular. Apart from this general information we also attempted to find out the states of tribal women in particular among a number of tribal groups in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. The field level survey conducted by our individual research grouping Bundwan (West Bengal) in Bodo land (Assam) and Tripura provides also further alarming information of deprivation among the tribal women.

Participation of tribal women in the franchise standard guideline given by the government with the constitution 73rd and 74th Amendments passed in 1973. This might have partly helped the women participation as voter in the Assembly election, Panchayet and local bodies. If we take a specific case of North Eastern states most of which are

extremely tribal inhabited the information is revealing in the district of Karbi Anglong number of women contested in the district council was very limited. 1989, 1996 and 2001 only 1, 2 and 5 candidates respectively contested in the election. In 1984 Mrs. Margaret Alva, were leader of Congress, visited Shillong urged upon the women of the region to fight reservation of seats in the district council also. In the traditional tribal village organization the women have no right to participate. In the tribal customary laws the role of women is confined to mother hood, house keeping and help in agricultural field.

The reservation of seats or constitutional amendments is not necessarily enough to overcome the traditional customs of the tribal life. The lack of literacy and occupational opportunity through both male and female tribal labour force to the customary occupation of agriculture, forestry and other related activities. The census data of 2001 however, do not reflect the employment status of the women of different neglected and backward ethnic group in different states. This particular noted in case of Karbi Anglong has its autonomous council with demarcated power of administration and work activities. There also employment opportunity of tribal women is mainly concentrated in traditional activities of agriculture, wood collection, handloom, bee keeping and crafts.

It does not reflect sufficient movement both in respect of occupation and income. We have seen that separate states of tribal particularly in the North Eastern region namely Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. There has been improvement of literacy and political participation. But as for employment status, tribal women participation in the modern tertiary sector is only slowly coming up. The case of these three states is 100% representation of tribal economic states, women employment and empowerment position. Several studies carried out in other tribal autonomous council of Bodoland and Tripura provides the same information. We can broadly observe that even with development of literacy which is slowly picking up, among the tribal women, as we have seen above does not necessarily ensure better employment opportunities of tribal women. It entirely depends on development of economy and social welfare activity which are mainly to be steered by the government. Some improvements of tribal women work participation have taken place under several governments tribal welfare scheme, where implemented.

Otherwise majority of the tribal women are anchored in age-old activities of agriculture, firewood collection, dairy and cottage industries.

III

GOVERNMENT WELFARE PORGRAMME FOR TRIBAL WOMEN

We can make a reflection of several tribal improvement programmes now invoke through out the country. When all these programme are earnestly taken up and implemented states of tribal women and men will improve and the inclusive growth process in real terms will take place. A number of welfare and development scheme for SC, ST and OBC have been introduce through out the country. Special scheme like Kishori Shakti Joyana (KSJ) and Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG) are bringing in different parts of the country. These are particularly for development of adolescent women and children. KSJ aims at needs of self employment, nutrition, health status, literacy and vocational skill development. The ICDS programme in operation throughout the country. Support to training and employment programme (STEP) is also implemented to provide updated skills and new knowledge to poor asset less women in traditional sector like agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handloom, handicrafts, Khadi and village industry, sericulture, social forestry and wasteland development. To facilitate employment to women away from their home and town new centers are being set up such as working women hostel. Under 11th five year plan special programme like SC/ST sub plan for welfare of SC and ST are being implemented. National Ssfai Karamchari Finance and Development Corporation, National Schedule Caste Finance and Development Corporation have been setup. There is a great emphasis on economic empowerment of STs. National Schedule Tribe Development and Finance Corporation has been set up through which financial support have been extended. Tribal Cooperation Making Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED) is engaged in marketing development of tribal products mainly produced by the tribal women in their house hold. There is a particular emphasis on education of ST girls especially in the low literacy areas. There are marginalized communities among the STs e.g., primitive tribal groups for which conservation of development plan have been formulated by various state governments and union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Iland.

For particularly women economic empowerments to significant nation wide programme are now being implemented on Angan Bari scheme and the SHG programme. Millions of women a large segment of which are tribal women are involved in this process of self employment and empowerment programme. Our field study of West Bengal and Tripura indicate that the tribal women have enthusiastically come forward to take advantage of this income earning programme. For further development of this programme government in collaboration with NGOs must come forward in an determined way to support backward and forward organizational linkage for upholding this employment oriented scheme of women particularly tribal women.

On the basis of field study and the implementation of this government programme in different parts of the country we make some recommendations particularly for increasing employment of tribal women so that poverty and exploitation of the tribal women can be eliminated.

1. Education is the first entitlement for human being. The tribal women should have special programme for pursuing education so that they can make themselves worthy of remunerative employment.

Tribal women are particularly traditionally hardier and undertake labour activities in agriculture and infrastructure development. There should be special job training programme for them so that they can attain skill in their existing employment opportunities.

2. Modern mechanical development devices should be transmitted down to the level of rural and tribal inhabitant area so that tribal women particularly engaged in traditional cottage industries and handicrafts can produce quality product for extended market and consistent with improving taste of quality products.
3. Education and skilled tribal women should be absorbed in developed public and private enterprises under special women development and employment programme through out the mission. This will cut across the intrasectional women isolation and deprivation.

IV

CONCLUSION

Employment of tribal women is a Herculean task. Since the tribal society historically are isolated in various aspects of mainstream development of the nation. Therefore poverty intensity is now mainly concentrated tribal centric areas and that too further spotted among women. So tribal should be protected from the alienation of their land and also their occupation. Under liberalization tribal particularly women are being eliminated from their century old occupation and habitations. They are being increasingly used as feeder agency or inputs for large scale production and profit augmentation. Tribal women and men are being shifted gradually from the original exploitative domain of Indian economic and social structure to the new arena of mercerization and globalization. Hence for the development and employment of tribal women and tribal society government should take active part to deter this negative forces and for widening the area of entitlement of tribal population. Hence only a multiplicative programme for human development and particularly for employment of tribal women can ensure their empowerment and employment.

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