

Deprivation, Poverty, Dispossession: A Focus on Tribal Women

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ABSTRACT

The tribal women, constitute like any other social group, about half of the total population. The tribal women, as women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men. Like others social groups, the tribal women share problems related to reproductive health. When primary and secondary subsistence activities are counted, women work more than men. Status of women varies in different societies. The conceptual framework to analyse women's status comprise the seven roles women play in life and work: - parental, conjugal, domestic, kin, occupational, community and as an individual. In order to appraise the social status of women in these diverse ecological areas, the findings have been divided in to subsequent categories: - (a) a girl; daughter; a unmarried woman; (b) a married woman; (c) a widow; (d) divorcee; and (e) a barren woman. Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important.

Keywords: *Deprivation, Poverty, Dispossession, Tribal Women*

The tribal women work very hard, in some cases even more than the men. All the tribal societies in the study area are patriarchal in which men dominate in public sector. However, in their own world women have a freedom, and a self-expression. With the onset of development programmes economic changes are taking place but tribal women remain traditional in their dress, language, tools and resources, because they grow food crops rather than cash crops. Modernisation is bringing changes, which affect men and women differently. India as a whole is characterised by sharp gender disparities, although women's status varies considerably by region. On virtually all frontiers of human societal pursuits-economic, educational, scientific, legal, political, official, political and religious sphere Indian women suffer profoundly. For all time there are socio-cultural factors, which validate for the status of women in particular society. It is always culture (a set of collective experiences of ideas, norms, values and beliefs associated with a people) with its gender role inequalities and socialisation (the intricate process through which culture is transmitted from one generation to another) determines the position of women in a society. Gender roles are socially constructed. The family structure in India is patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. Patriarchy denotes a culture of power relationship that promotes man's supremacy and women subjugation. It encompasses institutional endorsement of man's ascendancy within the family and other social structures.

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Deprivation, Poverty, Dispossession: A Focus on Tribal Women

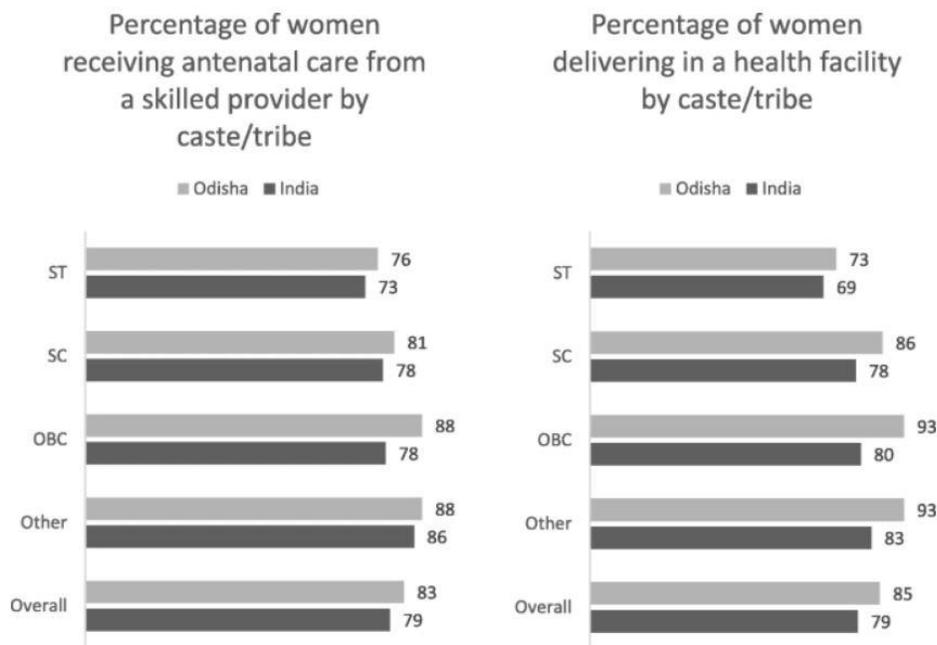
It justifies the normative process pertaining to the recognition and sustainability of his dominance in society. Consequently a boy is looked upon as the perpetuator of the family line, and a girl 'a bird of passage'. The Indian family organisation makes discrimination between the sexes. It promotes a hierarchy of classification in which man centred issues take dominance where as women derive their personalities from their fathers', husbands', brothers' and sons. With a secondary status, women play but a submissive role in social life. Despite several economic, political and social changes, women, are still far behind. One of the most unflattering statistics concerning India's girl child shows that the preference for a son runs across rich as well as poor households, educated as well as illiterate families. Widespread use of modern technology, a joint failure of medical ethics and failure to shed concept of a male heir has pushed female foeticide to high proportions. Female foeticide is just one side of the vast anti-women behavioural range in India. The tragedy is that even women, who have the choice, opt for a male child. They feel that only with a birth of a son, they will achieve higher status.

The status of any social group is determined by its levels of health-nutrition, literacy- education and standard of living. The tribal women, as women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men. The low educational status is reflected in their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and their presence in the school. United Nations has defined the status of women as the "conjunction of position a women occupies as a worker, student, wife, mother of the power and prestige attached to these positions, and of the right and duties she is expected to exercise" (UN, 1975). "To what extent, do women, compared with men, have excess to knowledge, to economic resources and to political power, and to what degree of personal autonomy do these resources permit in the process of decision-making and choice at crucial points in the lifecycle?" (UN, 1975). Women make up only 6% of India's workforce and the numbers get skewed as you go up the corporate ladder. Only 4% women are at the senior management level and almost none in a leadership role. Status of women is generally measured using three indicators: - education, employment status and intra-household decision-making power. In general women with higher education tend to have a better position (WHO, 1989). In some cases, however, education alone may not be sufficient to enhance status unless it engages employment as well (Hogan et al., 1999). In addition women's ability to communicate with and with great decision-making power are supposed to have a higher status in the house- hold.

In India women are discriminated due to several historical, religious and other reasons. A girl child is suppressed from the moment she is born in terms of personal development. She is made to undergo the feelings of being inferior and feeble. She is denied the prospects for personal expression. There are various hypotheses about why women have relatively high or low status. The common premise is that women status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities. Women position is low in the societies where food getting is entirely men's job like hunting, herding or intensive agriculture. In the historical times when warfare was essential, men were more esteemed than women. Likewise in the centralised political systems men had high status. Men in most societies contribute more to primary subsistence activities, as women have infant and child care responsibilities. However, women contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities that depend heavily on gathering and horticulture and in which men are away on labour or pastoral duties while sub- sistence work has to be done. When primary and secondary subsistence activities are counted, women work more than men.

Deprivation, Poverty, Dispossession: A Focus on Tribal Women

According to Sana Q. Contractor, Abhijit Das, Jashodhara Dasgupta & Sara Van Belle, the utilization of maternal health care as well as institutional deliveries increased dramatically. The percentage of mothers who had at least four antenatal care visits increased from 37% in 2005–06 to 52% in 2015–16 and the proportion of institutional births increased from 39% in 2005–06 to 79% in 2015–16. However this overall improvement masks inequities across geographic and socioeconomic groups (Fig. 1). States such as Uttar Pradesh and Assam have an MMR close to 300. Kerala and Tamil Nadu have almost 100% institutional delivery while only a third of births in Nagaland take place in institutions. Successive rounds of the Annual Health Surveys (2010–11 and 2011–12) showed that 207 out of the 284 high focus districts remained in the same range of MMR.



Source: National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015–16: India. Mumbai: IIPS. 2017 and National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015–16: Odisha. Mumbai: IIPS. 2017.

Mohanty, P. (2009) conducted a study on potential correlates of academic achievement of rural SC girls from class IV and V of four blocks of Haryana. His result reveals (i) significant difference and positive relationship between academic achievement and socio-economic status of high-achieving girls (ii) no significant relationship was found between high-achieving rural SC girls and home environment (iii) no significant relationship was found between high-achieving rural SC girls and school environment. Gosh, S and Sushmita, (2012) studied on domestic violence against women in Hugli district, West Bengal and suggested that women need to be educated to change their attitude and self-confidence. Patil, A.K., and Chandhar, Samita, V (2009) studied on improving women’s status through lifelong learning, a case study in Raigad District of Maharashtra, the study found that women educational status is directly reflecting on the profession, employment and income of the family, it also revealed that dropout from the formal women education system and further education classes they have obtained do not fulfil the requirements of their life, providing lifelong learning programmes can provide the opportunities to enhance their status in several aspects.

Deprivation, Poverty, Dispossession: A Focus on Tribal Women

Violence

Violence against women remains a constant practice across societies. Crawling under the umbrella of violence is an array of horrifying acts-female foeticide, trafficking, workplace harassment, domestic torture and rape. When women defy social norms and prejudices to report criminal action they are confronted by unequal laws that refuse to give them redressal. The UN says that violence against women is a major cause of death and disability for women 16 to 44 years of ages. Crimes against women are committed with impunity in the absence of any meaningful punishment or deterrent for their perpetrators legal luminaries and citizens groups engage in lofty debates on the merits of current punishment patterns. Yet verdicts that may qualify as justice done are few and far between. Whether it is female foeticide or trafficking of girl children, domestic rape or harassment at workplace, there seems to be an unhappy acceptance that these "wrong" will continued. Little progress can made if the roles of such violence are not needed out. Expression of violence against women reflect a society's values, law and order responses act only as deterrents. 2 Yet the scale of the challenge should not deter us from pressing on in this battle, on all fronts-community education, better law enforcement and deterrent punishment.

Education

The vulnerability of tribal populations to exploitation by minor government officials, as well as moneylenders, landlords, and other agents of vested interest, can largely be traced to their illiteracy and general ignorance of the world outside the narrow confines of their traditional environment. Their inability to cope with the many novel forces impinging nowadays on tribal villages and on an economy which had remained virtually unchanged for centuries is by no means due to any innate lack of intelligence.

As long as they operate within their familiar atmosphere, tribals evince as much perspicacity, skill, and even true wisdom as any other populations, but as soon as they are faced by social attitudes rooted in a different system they become insecure and often behave in a manner detrimental to their own interests, brought up a system in which all communications are by word of mouth, and hence used to trusting verbal statements, they get confused by constant reference to documents and written rules, which increasingly determine all aspect of rural life. Unable to read even the receipt given by an official and obliged to put their thumb impression on documents which they cannot understand, they are easy victim of any fraud or misrepresentation which more educated exploiters likely to devise. It is obvious, therefore, that a modicum of literacy is indispensable as a first step towards enabling tribes to operate within the orbit of the of the advance. Communities dominating the economic and political scene. The disadvantages under which illiterate tribes labour are multiples in the case of those who do not even speak and understand the language of the dominate population, and hence cannot communicate with officials except through better-educated fellow tribesmen acting as interpreters.

Location of the Village:

Most of the tribal communities inhabit in the forests in a scattered manner. Therefore, it becomes impossible to open separate schools in each village where the required student's strength is not available. On other land, tribal habitations remain segregated from each other by some physical barriers like rivers, hills, nalas and forests. So these physical barriers produce an obstacle for the girls of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighboring village. In this situation, parents do

Deprivation, Poverty, Dispossession: A Focus on Tribal Women

not allow their girl child to attend schools. More residential schools should be established in each states and districts and should be extended up to PG level in tribal areas.

Attitude of the Parents:

Most of the dropped out girls are living with their family. As per the study signifies, majority of their parents do not have proper education and they are early dropouts. Tribal parents are mostly illiterate. They always show a very indifferent attitude towards the education of their girls. They are interested in providing household responsibilities to their girls a very early stage of their education. “The parents of these girls do not have any relationship with the society outside and are unaware of the importance of education. Teaching such girls is a herculean task.

Negative Attitude towards School Education:

Many of the dropouts are having an in favor attitude towards education, they consider education as a boring process. They still are not convinced of the need of education for their livelihood. They are aware of the government’s allowances for their education. But a negative attitude towards education makes them stay back in their colony environment than go to school.

Economic Condition:

The tribes depend on forests for 8 months and on agriculture for 4 months. The girls of the age group 4 to 6 are found to be helping their parents in collection of forest products. In this situation, parents do not allow to spare their girls or their labor force and allow them to attend schools. When a family not economically secure, prioritizing a girl child education take a backseat.

Appointment of Local Teachers:

In the remote tribal areas the teacher absence is a regular occurrence and it largely affects the quality of education. In tribal villages, there is virtually no relation with the teachers of the villagers. Teachers do not get any housing facility in the village, which makes them irregular which inhibits the normal routine of the school. Apart from this, the apathetic attitude of the villagers and the appointment of untrained teachers in tribal areas reduce the values of education.

Lack of Proper Prohibition:

Due to bad coordination between the tribal welfare department and the school education department, proper monitoring is inhibited.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to various issues tribal women are lagging behind in the education level than non-tribal women. The problem linked to the female children in general and tribal girl in India are perplexed, multiplied and interlinked. The above reasons causes major hitch in the process of spread of education among tribal women. The main aim of education is to change the culture norms and patterns of life of tribal women to make them economically independent, to organize themselves to form solid groups so as to analyse their situations and condition of living, understand their right and responsibilities and to enable them to participate and contribute to the development of women and the entire society.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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