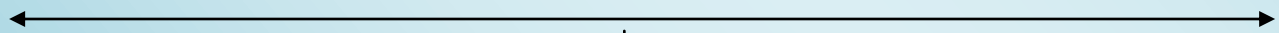


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TRIBAL WOMEN IN KARNATAKA: AN OVERVIEW**YANKATAPPA SAIBANNA******Guest Faculty, P G Centre Halahalli Bidar, Karnataka****ABSTRACT**

Tribal population occupies a significant place in Indian economy. Since independence a number of schemes have been introduced to improve the living conditions and emancipation of the tribal women. Planned efforts have also been taken for tribal development. But the conditions and status of this population are yet to improve. The mid-term appraisal of ninth five year-plan pointed out it is important to understand that tribal communities are vulnerable because they are poor asset less and illiterate compared to the general population; often the distinct vulnerability arises from their inability to negotiate the cope with consequences of their forced integration with the mainstream economy, society, cultural and political system, from all of which they were historically protected by their relative isolation. After independence, the requirements of planned development brought with them dams, mines, industries and roads – all located on tribal lands. With these came the concomitant processes of displacement, literal and metaphorical, tribal institutions and practices were forced into uneasy existence which gave way to market or formal state institutions. Tribal women found themselves at a profound disadvantage in the face of an influx of better-equipped outsiders into tribal areas. The repercussions for the already fragile socio-economic livelihood base of the tribal women were devastating- ranging from loss of livelihoods, land alienation on a vast scale, to hereditary bondage. The paper analysis the problems and Empowerment of tribal women of Karnataka.

Key words: Women, Empowerment, Tribal's

INTRODUCTION:

The gradual realization that large percentage of population in India has been bypassed by economic growth, led to the awareness that economic growth, led o the awareness that economic growth, to be meaningful must be attended by increasing participation of masses especially women. Because development of women is the only meaningful way of transforming purchasing power and raising the general level of well being. Although economic deprivation has been inherited from our past subjugation, yet we have exacerbated it by perpetuating social backwardness, inequalities of gender and caste, outmoded traditions and divisions and a new individualistic

cynicism. It is generally believed that growth brings about change in quality of life as well as in the inter-personal relations. If its is true, then economic growth should also help women to fight against the injustice, perpetuated through sex discrimination vindicated. They should have an equal access to health, education and occupations. Economic growth should have the same effects in improving the status of women. In tribal activities, and their role as wives and mother compel them to remain dependent on men. The extent of equality of women with men varies in tribal societies ranging from near equal to utter subjugation. Different explanations have been given by scholars for the differential low status of Women in different societies. The tribal communities are at various stages of development in our country due to inaccessibility, living in rigorous habitats large scale illiteracy and ignorance, lack of suitable area specific and group focused strategies of development etc.,

Through none deny that women development has taken place in tribal areas, when we analysis the expenditure during the plan years. Vis-a vis the changes brought into the quality of socio-economic life of tribal women the results are not very encouraging. Still tribal women in India re in lowest rung of ladder in terms of socio-economic development. In this context, few studies such as those on Nag. Saxena, vidrathi, roy, ramaiah, S.P. Sinha, K.S Singh etc have brought out the main features of tribal economy and its agro forest base. Most of the earlier studies identified that requirement of different tribes and regions differ depend upon the stage of development Also even in the same region we can find inter-tribe variations among the tribal women, particularly among the tribals living in the interior hill tracts i.e, primitive tribes and tribals living in plains. Hence, in this context region studies has its significance and they are useful for formulating different policies.

PROBLEMS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN:

Tribals constitute an integral part of Indian population. India has the second largest concentration of tribal population next to African continent. The total tribal population of India constitutes about 8 percent as per 2001 census. About 90 percent of the tribal populations are concentrated to the central belt covering the states like Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and west Bengal. At present, there are 435 scheduled tribal communities in India. Facing a different level of acculturative situation each tribe has different problems which have emerged because of contact situations, deprivation of their habitat and economic resources, which has more often reduced them to the most exploited segment of India society.

Most of the studies on the tribals show that there is close link to tribal with the forest. The relationship thus established between forest and the tribals was mutual as has been referred to even by the national forest

policy 1988 as symbiotic. i.e. the two depend on each other as the mother and the fathers do. This link is disappearing gradually. The tribals have today been deprived of the natural resources on which they have depended for centuries. In turn, they are making the transition from constructive to destructive dependence on the forest. They do not keep any more balance between human development and environmental needs.

As per the 1991 census nearly 50 percent tribals are workers, out of which 56 percent are males and 44 percent are females. Among the workers 58 percent are engaged in cultivation and the 42 percent earn their livelihood through labour works, handicraft, trade and commerce and other allied activities. In the latter category a majority of more than 75 percent are engaged in manual labour work. Women workers constitute a considerable number among these manual labourers. Moreover, among the 54 percent tribal engaged in cultivation most of them do not get sufficient produce to manage for the whole year. So they are mainly engaged in manual activities. The tribal women supplement the family income in various ways. In tribal societies, women contribute to the working force, supplementing the family income in a more substantial way than in non-tribal societies. Still their condition has not improved as was expected. In a majority of cases their contribution is confined largely in meeting the needs of their own economic subsistence.

One can make a distinction between the problems of tribal societies in general and those which specifically pertain to the women. The genesis of the tribal problem as stated earlier, lies in the contact situation with the opening of the country the non-tribals, outsiders started migrating to the tribal areas in search of fertile land and resources. Being rich in minerals, these areas usually attracted the government planners with the installation of industries and much irrigation and power projects the tribals lose their land. In most cases, they were displaced. This led to large scale unemployment and poverty. They were forced to migrate to the industrial towns and urban areas as unskilled labourers. The women were also forced to look for employment in industries in the cities so that they could supplement the income earned by their men, thus, the women were constrained to combine their domestic activities with extra domestic work. In work places and towns, the women were repeatedly exploited physically as well as psychologically. They were not only subjected to work under adverse conditions denying them minimum wages or parity with the men's wages, but they were also expected to work beyond the scheduled working hours and had to subject themselves to the far basic desires of their employment and other local people.

Besides, these tribal women are also engaged in many other type of activities such as collection of forest produce, firewood, cowdung, maintenance of kitchen, garden etc. deforestation has caused several problems of

tribal women. The maximum impact of the bio-mass destruction is on women. In most all the tribal societies the collection of household necessities like fuel, fodder and water is left to women. With the degradation of environment it becomes difficult to obtain these household necessities. Women have to spend more amount of time for collecting these things in addition to doing the household and agricultural work. She has to spend twice her energy for domestic labour; they spent 6 to 9 hours every day for fetching water, collecting firewood fodder.

One of the effects of environmental degradation and migration to towns and industrial centers has been on the condition of the health of tribals, women do not have time to seek health care even when they are ill. The nutritional difference between men and women exists in the tribal societies. Maternal mortality is high among them due to work pressure; the adult women usually do not have time to visit the primary health centers. The health care facilities of the government are yet to reach to the inaccessible remote tribal areas of the country. Besides these difficulties, the tribal women face another problem of illiteracy. It is the lowest among all the categories. In comparison of 52.21 percent of literates in India as a whole, only 29.6 percent of tribals are literates as per 1991 census. The literacy rate is 40.6 percent of males and 19.2 percent for female in India, the dropout rate of tribal girls studying in school is very high. Right from childhood, they are overburdened with domestic duties and chores. It is disheartening to note that from 1961 to 1991 the literacy rate of tribal women has gone up to only 29.6 percent from 8.04 percent in 1961. As a result of low literacy they cannot aspire for portfolios of higher occupation. Some studies reveal that there is a wide difference in female literacy rates in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, the major tribal dominated states of India. The level of literacy among female is extremely low and more specifically among the tribal women of our country.

It was erroneous on the part of the planners to assume that there is no gender differences as far as the social problems are concerned. It was primarily because of the policy makers and planners did not have any complete knowledge about the pattern of division of labour and tribal societies and how this will be affected by the socio-cultural changes. It was presumed that the problems of the tribes are shared equally by men and women. True there is a set of problems applying to the people as a whole. But in addition to this there are specific problems of women. Hence, every plan needs to have a specific attention on the women's problems and the way to tackle it.

The tribal agricultural practices in India, the men are predominantly concerned with the activities like ploughing, harvesting, taking the grain to the market etc.,. Women are mainly concerned with household activities. The men's work pertains to the monetized sector of the economy while the women are predominantly concerned with the non-monetized aspect. Because of this, their respective problems are also varying. As they continue to

remain in the non-monetized sector the problem of women multiply because of environmental degradation and industrialization. Therefore, the planning needs to be at two levels, firstly at the level of the society as whole and secondly for the tribal women.

EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA AND KARNATAKA:

According to the National Population policy 2000, the tribal people need special attention in respect of basic health and reproductive and child health services. Equally important are provision of mobile clinics, information and counseling on infertility and regular supply of standardised medication. The Dhebar Commission (1960-61) has mentioned that the tribals and their leaders emphasized that the instruction in primary schools be imparted to them through their mother tongue. Teachers from amongst them, or tribal dialect knowing teachers may be appointed. Formal and non-formal education, forest education and vocational courses need to get due emphasis. More women animators are to be identified by the local specific communities for getting trained in development education.

The Ninth Five Year plan (1997-2002) documents observed that their earlier initiative of the Government to start creche facilities within the school campus or nearer to the school will be revived / intensified to ensure that the girl children are not deprived of education. Crafts and products produced by tribal women need to be popularised particularly in urban areas. Also, these women should be trained in various crafts in vocational training institutes. Due importance should be given to time saving mechanical devices. Empowerment is essential to participatory development. Attempts shall have to be made to reduce economic disparities and increase educational levels and expand access to health services on an equal footing. Keeping in view, the principles of the "Panchsheel", the process of tribal development was also initiated on the basis of respect and understanding of tribal culture and traditions. Besides appreciation of their social, psychological and economic problems.

An enthusiastic and responsive political leadership and bureaucracy at various level is crucial for the success of these programmes in a largely backward and illiterate milieu inhabited by the tribals. Given their low socio-economic status, the tribal women can improve their lot only through self help-groups. Besides gainful employment, they need awareness and training programme appropriate to their environment.

APPROCH TO TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA & KARNATAKA:

The Constitution of India aimed to give protection to women against exploitation in general and particularly in regard to their interest in land and forest and to save them from exploitation by the money landers and unscrupulous contractors. It provided for protection for all tribals living scattered and residing in other parts protection for all tribals living scattered and residing in other parts not declared as scheduled areas through general legislation. Protection also implied prohibition of bonded labour and adequate alternative credit through simple procedures.

Development aspects involve four fold development, namely, i) Economic, ii) Educational, iii) Health and iv) Communication through Tribal Development Blocks. Economic development involves agriculture, forest, animal husbanding and cottage industries. Education development involves vocational and technicla education, girls's education stoppage of waste facilities and health care system and communication required breaking of business through roads and flow of idea the tribal areas.

GENDER ISSUES IN TRIBAL WELFARE & DEVELOPMENT:

The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchyats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decsion making at the local levels. Active participation of women in the entire development process is essential for the overall socio-economic development of any country. Therefore, raising the status of women in general and that of socially and economically, backward women in particular is not just a moral imperative bu also a stategic one.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is concerned about the well-gbeing of the Schedule Tribes who suffer as a group due to their social and economic backwardness and relative isolation. The major policies of both Schedule Tribe men and women. However, within the Scheduled Tribes, women often suffer from a greated disadvantage. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs therefore, while trying to ensure that women benefit equally from general schemes also has some special schemes meant for the benefit of ST women & girls. The

Ministry provides grants to the states under Special Central Assistance to the Tribal Sub-Plan and under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution of India, Central Sector and Centrally sponsored schemes for the development of the Schedule Tribes and for creation of infrastructure in tribal areas. The Ministry also implements the following schemes, which are focused on the upliftment of tribal girls and women in the field of education and employment so that they lead a life of self-confidence and dignity.

Low female literacy among STs being particular concern, the gender-specific scheme of “Setting up Educational Complex in Low Literacy pockets for development of Women’s Literacy in Tribal Areas” introduced in 1993-94, was revised in 2008-09 and renamed as **“strengthening Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts”** The revised scheme became effective from 1st April 2008. The revised scheme is being implemented in 54 identified low literacy Districts where the ST population is 25% or more, and ST female literacy rate is below 35% or its fractions, as per 2001 census. Any other tribal block in a district, other than aforesaid 54 identified districts, which has scheduled tribe population 25% or above, and tribal female literacy rate below 35% or its fractions, as per 2001 census, are also covered. The areas inhabited by particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) and naxalite affected areas are given priority. The scheme aims to bridge the gap in literacy levels between the general female population and tribal women, through facilitating 100% enrolment of tribal girls in the identified Districts or Blocks. More particularly in naxal affected areas and in areas inhabited by PTGs, and reducing drop-outs at the elementary level by creating the required ambience for education.

The scheme is implemented through Voluntary Organizations (VOs)/Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) and autonomous society / institutions of State Government/Union Territory Administration. Ministry provides 100% assistance for running and maintenance of educational complexes for ST girls which include free education, boarding and lodging, books, uniforms, medical help, coaching, incentives to girls, periodical awards, etc., The revised scheme envisages the convergence with the schemes of Sarva Shikshana Abhiyan and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya of Ministry of Human Resource Development. It meets the requirement of primary level students as well as middle/ secondary level students and provides residential facility to ST girls students to ensure their retention in schools. Besides formal education, the revised scheme also takes care of skill upgradation of ST girls in various vocations. The revised scheme also envisages establishment of District Education support Agency (DESA) in each also play the role of monitor, facilitator and support linkages with various institutions.

Under the scheme 'Grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution of India' funds are released to State Governments for taking up specific projects for creation and up-gradation of critical infrastructure required to bring the tribal areas at par with the rest of the country. As per the guidelines of the scheme, the concerns/issues affecting women should occupy central position in preparation of the projects/schemes, including the involvement of women, right from the planning to the implementation stage. The projects should be so planned that substantial benefits, at least 30% in proportion, are targeted for women.

Under the scheme for construction of hostels for ST boys and girls, 100% Central funding is provided to State/UTs for construction of hostels for ST girls at school, college, university and vocational education levels. The main objective of the scheme is to promote education among tribal students by providing hostel accommodation to such tribal students who are not in a position to continue their education because of their poor economic condition, and remote location of their villages. The scheme provides for the construction of new hostels and extension of existing hostel buildings for students. Under the scheme of establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub-Plan areas, 100% Central funding is provided for the construction of Ashram Schools for ST girls. These revisions were introduced from 1-4-2008 and are expected to have profound impact on the increase in education among ST girls.

The National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation is an apex institution under Ministry of Tribal Affairs, for economic development of Scheduled tribes by extending concessional financial assistance for income generating scheme(s) projects(s). The Corporation is having an exclusive scheme for economic development of scheduled tribes women titled Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (AMSY). Under the scheme the Corporation provides financial assistance upto 90% of the scheme/project having unit cost upto Rs. 50,000/- At highly concessional rate of interest @4% p.a chargeable from beneficiaries. 17.8.2 Under AMSY, during the year, NSTFDC has sanctioned financial assistance for 80 schemes having NSTFDC share of Rs. 15.73 crore, for economic development of 10041 women beneficiaries.

The Corporation also extends its financial assistance for women beneficiaries under other income generating schemes including marketing support assistance. Further the corporation is making all endeavors to cover more women beneficiaries under NSTFDC financial assistance.

The Scheme of Exchange of Visits by Tribals, was introduced in 2001-02, to enable ST people below the poverty line to visit other parts of the country for a period of 10-12 days. The Ministry bears the

entire expenditure. According to the scheme, each team/group, consisting of say 10 tribals, will include minimum there women. This enables them to broaden their perspective and also create awareness about the developments taking place in the country.

In some of its schemes the Ministry of Tribal Affairs takes special care to ensure 50% participation of girls or women. In the Ekalavya Model Residential Schools for instance. 50 % of the seats are meant for ST girls. Under the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship scheme for M. Phil and Ph.D, instructions have been issued to the UGC, which implements the scheme, to make efforts to award 50% of the fellowships to women. Every year two tribals from each state / UT sends one woman and one man.

“Under the Special Area Programme, SCA to TSP meant for community based income generating activities for BPL families, the guidelines stipulated that 30% of the funds are to be kept apart for ‘women Component’ and to be spent for income generation activities of women beneficiaries”

CONCLUSION:

It has been argued that absence of a viable comprehensive tribal policy has been one of the main reasons for not providing focused attention to tackle tribal problems and implanting meaningful result oriented programmes. We do not consider this to be so. In fact, the special provisions in the Constitution for protecting and promoting the interests of the Scheduled Tribes and raising the level of administration in the Scheduled Areas are by themselves a viable comprehensive tribal development policy. In addition, various other national policies e.g. Forests, health, women, etc., also spell out the policies in respect of such sectoral issues. Some national policies have bearing also on tribal issues and incorporate additional prescriptions for the scheduled tribe. Further, the well known Panchsheel for tribal development enunciated by the first prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has all the components of National policy on Tribal welfare and Development. In recent years, the tribal sub-plan approach has also laid down norms and procedures for determining developmental inputs necessary for the sustained development of the tribal people and the tribal areas in an integrated manner. The malady has been that in tribal development there is acute absence of sincere and honest execution of agreed policies and programme. What is now needed is a codification or consolidation of various such measures/prescriptions advocated and / or implemented particularly because no serious shortcomings have come to the fore in such measures except of course, the all important issue of “implementation.

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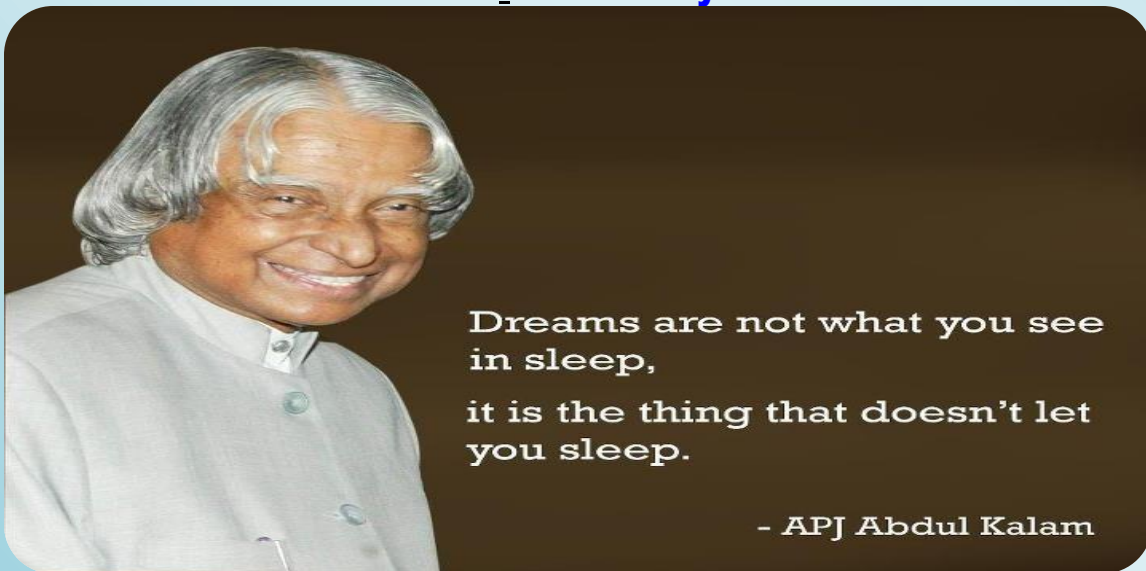
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Cell: 09086405302, 09906662570,

Ph No: 01933212815

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Dreams are not what you see
in sleep,
it is the thing that doesn't let
you sleep.

- APJ Abdul Kalam