

A CRITICAL STUDY OF TRIBAL WOMEN EDUCATION: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SAHIBGANJ DISTRICT (JHARKHAND)

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Abstract : Education is play a vital role to development as it provides the individual with adequate proficiency for venturing in various economic activities. The tribal community all over India have been subjected to various forms of deprivation such as alienation from land and other resources. Especially the tribal women though they are away from the main stream of national life, but they are not kept away from the impact of socio-economic changes effecting the society in general. The fact remains that a large number of tribal women have missed education at different stages and in order to empower them there is a great need of providing opportunities so as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for economic self-reliance and even social transformation. Majority of tribal women of the State are illiterate, enrollment is low and dropout rate is high. There is urgent need of expansion and improvement of education system through introducing curriculum relevant to tribal women, more tribal teachers, separate toilets for women, improved teaching methods, reducing distance to school and lowering cost of girls education.

Keywords: Education, Tribal Women, tribal community, Sahibganj, Jharkhand.

INTRODUCTION

Women constituting about 48 percent of total population of the country play equally important role along with men in developing a better family life, however, their perception in agriculture is known since the ancient times where they shared a number of farm operations. The women's average contribution in the field of agriculture varies from 55-66% of the total labour and in regions is on higher side. They are also vital to the well-being of farm-based households. However, despite their immense contribution, their efforts are generally under estimated. As a fundamental right enshrined in the constitution of India, right of equally protects the interests of both the genders. The present status of women in general is still much lower than that of their role male counterparts because of customary male dominance in the society, inherent shyness of women and lack of opportunities for education and training.

Tribal Women in Education

Tribal women play a significant role in the economic development of tribals as they contribute in various economic activities and education is one of them. Education is a crucial requirement for the sustained growth of a developing society and lack of it is largely responsible for the exploitation and pitiable plight of the tribals. The literacy rate of tribals was 8.53 in 1961 and steadily increased to 47.10 in 2001, yet it is far below the national rate of 64.84 (2001 census). There has been an overall increase in the enrolment of children belonging to STs. At the primary stage, against an overall increase of 15%, ST enrolment increased by 25%, whereas that of ST girls increased by 36% against overall increases of 23% from 2000 to 2004. At the upper primary level against an overall increase of 20%, ST enrolment increased by 35%, whereas that of ST girls increased by 47% against girls' overall increase of 30%.

The dropout rate among tribal school children is alarming. Various steps taken by state governments to check dropouts, including free distribution of books and stationery, scholarships, reimbursement of examination fees, free bus travel, mid-day meals, etc. have had an impact but still fall short. The performance of certain states in providing matching grants, maintenance of service and management of hostels is not encouraging. The pace of construction of hostels has been very slow and the basic amenities provided therein are substandard.

Low literacy especially among tribal girls and high dropout rates at elementary and higher levels are areas of serious concern. The main causes are (i) poverty, (i) contents of the education, (ii) inadequate educational institutions and supporting services in tribal areas, (iv) absenteeism, (V) medium of instruction and (iv) education policy.

Empirical Results

Methodology

The present study is a research endeavour which attempts to provide the knowledge of gender-role differentiation in tribal society. This study is empirical in nature and therefore the tools and procedures needed for scientific social research have been followed and applied to collect the information. Our investigation is based on six objectives, viz., to analyse the impact of poverty alleviation programme on rural women; to explore the nature and type of women's involvement income earning activities; to assess the socio-economic status and the infrastructure facilities available in the life o women entrepreneurs; to examine the rural women's knowledge level on modern technology adoption; to find out the problems in economic empowerment of women and to suggest measures for economic empowerment of rural women.

In this study random sampling was used and drawn by means of lottery method. Respondents included in the study have been selected on the basis of random sampling. The specific technique used was the lottery method. At the first step fifteen villages from a total number of five blocks of the sampled district viz. Sahibganj were selected from a list of villages provided by the block offices having high concentration of tribal population in their respective areas. The villages were selected by using the lottery method of random sampling. Thereafter, because of the small size of the villages the female heads or the eldest female members of each of the tribal families were included in the sample. Only women respondents were selected because of the nature and subject matter of the research study. The women respondents have been classified on the basis of their age groups, income, level of education and occupational level etc. Total number of respondents thus came to 450 but during the study 50 of the total respondents could not be contacted and thus, the total number of sample included in the study came to 400.

Primary data were collected with the help of a structure schedule and formal interview; in addition, secondary sources were also utilized. Some of the questions were open- ended and some were closed. The interview schedule was used in the study to organize and

systematize the formal interview. Important useful data and related materials were collected from secondary sources like village handbooks, panchayat records, Block Office, District Gazetteer, District Office, Census reports, academic journals, Books, Conference volume, Seminar papers and news papers etc. The data were collected by the researcher and he had to face the usual difficulties such as no availability of the respondents, lack of co-operation in some cases, time constraints etc. Majority of the respondents were interviewed at their residences while a few outside their residences. The respondents were considerate, courteous and co-operative. At the time interview the researcher had to make the meaning of some questions clear to the respondents in order to get correct answers. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed on the basis of several variables like age, income, education and occupation etc. These variables were used in consideration to their relevance in the analysis of the data. The statistical methods were used to classify and analyze the primary data, collected from the field survey.

Findings

Here we are concerned with the analysis of data in regard to the economic empowerment rural women of Sahibganj district on the basis of our limited grass root enquiry. The eldest female members of each of the tribal families were selected as respondents. The socio-economic characteristics, the personal identification and their household economy have been analyzed on the basis of various statistical tables.

Table 1 : Age and level of Education (in %)

Age	Level of Education					Total
	Illiterate	Literate	Under Matriculate	Matriculate	Above	
Under 25	14.90	21.28	23.40	21.28	19.14	100
25-35	24.40	19.51	21.95	19.51	14.63	100
35-40	31.53	40.54	12.61	09.91	05.41	100
45-55	60.60	22.73	09.10	04.54	03.03	100
55 and above	80.85	14.89	04.26	00.00	00.00	100
Total	36.75	25.75	15.50	12.50	09.50	100

The above table shows that out of the total respondents 23.50 percent were less than 25 years of age, 20.50 percent between 25 to 35 years, 27.75 percent between 35 to 45 years, 16.50 percent between 45 to 55 years and 11.75 percent of the total respondent were above 55 years of age. Apart from this the data regarding literacy showed that 36.75 percent were illiterate 25.75 percent literate, 15.50 percent under matriculate, 12.50 percent matriculate and 09.50 percent were above matriculate. The percentage of higher literacy was distinctly marked in the lower age groups that were due to the increasing availability of educational facilities in tribal area and consciousness about literacy among them.

Table 2 : Education and occupations

Education	Occupation					Total
	Service	Business	Manual labour	Agriculture and others	No. Earning	
Illiterate	00.00	12.24	53.74	20.41	13.61	100
Literate	00.00	13.60	53.40	19.41	13.59	100
Under Matriculate	12.90	19.36	29.03	29.03	09.68	100
Matriculate	38.00	12.00	0.00	20.00	30.00	100
Above	47.37	21.05	00.00	21.05	10.53	100
Total	11.25	14.50	38.00	21.50	14.75	100

The above given table presents the classification of respondents on the basis of their educational levels and occupations. It is found that only 11.25 percent of the respondents were in service where as the maximum respondents were manual labourers. The table shows that only 14.75 percent of the total respondents have no earning or they are housewives. Out of the total respondents 85.25 percent reported that they were earning member of their families. The data of the above table shows that the women with higher education did not in most cases worked either as manual labourers or In agriculture or other works out of total the respondents in matriculate group 38.00 percent and in above educational group 47.37 percent earn money from services.

Table 3 : Education and Family Income

Education	Family Income (Monthly) in %						Total
	Less than 2000	2000-3000	3000-4000	4000-5000	5000-6000	6000 and above	
Illiterate	46.94	25.85	21.41	06.80	00.00	00.00	100
Literate	51.45	18.45	12.62	09.71	07.77	00.00	100
Under Matriculate	19.36	17.74	16.13	17.74	16.13	12.90	100
Matriculate	04.00	14.00	22.00	16.00	20.00	24.00	100
Above	00.00	15.79	13.16	07.89	15.79	47.37	100
Total	34.00	20.25	17.25	10.50	08.50	09.50	100

The above given table presents the classification of respondents on the basis of family income. It means that is case of working women the family includes the income of at least husband and wife. In case of non-working women (house wife) the family income may be the same as the personal income or it may include the income of husband or any other family member. The table shows the 34.00 percent of the respondents belong to lowest income group of less than 2000. This is the highest percentage among all the income group of the total respondent. Only 9.50 percent respondents belonged to the income group of 6000 and above. The table also shows that the family income is related to their educational level. 47.37 percent respondents present in the above matriculate group of education and there are no respondents of illiterate or literate group present in this income group.

Table 4 : Education and Religion

Education	Religion			Total
	Hinduism	Bangaiism	Christianity	
Illiterate	21.77	61.90	16.33	100
Literate	32.04	43.69	24.27	100
Under Matriculate	46.77	37.10	16.13	100
Matriculate	32.00	44.00	24.00	100
Above	26.32	42.10	31.58	100
Total	30.00	49.25	20.75	100

The above table shows that there are three types of religion Hinduism, Bongaiism and Christianity, among tribals. But mainly they follow Bogaiism which is their traditional religion (49.25%), 30.00 percent of the respondents were following Hinduism. It is a fact that actually tribals are not Hindu but the worship some Hindu's Gods and Goddess like Shiva, Durga, Kali, Mansha etc. 20.75 percent respondents follow Christianity. It is a fact that many Christian tribals practice some traditional behaviors of tribal's culture. Besides, they go to Church regularly for service and prayer. It is found from the table that the percentage of Christian tribal in higher educated respondents is comparatively more than in lower educated respondents.

Table 5 : Education and main source of family income

Education	Sources of family income					Total
	Service	Business	Manual labour	Agriculture and others	No. Earning	
Illiterate	00.00	4.08	55.10	37.42	3.40	100
Literate	9.71	4.85	47.57	34.95	2.92	100
Under Matriculate	12.90	19.35	48.39	16.13	03.23	100
Matriculate	42.00	18.00	32.00	04.00	04.00	100
Above	63.16	18.42	07.89	00.00	10.53	100
Total	15.75	09.75	44.75	25.75	04.00	100

The above given table presents the classification of respondents on the basis of their main source of family income. The table shows that agriculture is the main source of family income for most of the tribals. 44.75 percent respondents reported it's this traditional fact about their livelihood in prevailing till now. Only 9.75 percent respondents mentioned business as the main source of their family income. It had found during observation that any tribal family did not possessed large or middle scale of business. They were only tiny businessman. They also do some other works along their business for livelihood. 15.75 percent respondents mentioned service, 25.75 percent mentioned manual labour and 4.00 percent mentioned some other works as the main source of their family income.

Table 6 : Education: a supplement to the sources of family income.

Education	Make effort		
	Yes %	No %	Total %
Illiterate	84.35	15.65	100
Literate	79.61	20.39	100
Under Matriculate	75.81	24.19	100
Matriculate	78.00	22.00	100
Above	73.68	26.32	100
Total	80.00	20.00	100

The above table shows that in tribal society a large member of women make effort to supplement the sources of their family income. In reply to the relating question 80.00 percent of the respondents including 84.35 percent of the illiterates, 79.61 percent of the literates, 75.81 percent of the under matriculates 78.00 percent of the above educated gave affirmative replies and remaining 20.00 percent gave negative replies. One fact has come from the above table that higher educated tribal women were making less effort to supplement the resources of their families that of the less educated or illiterate women. This was due to the fact that the women who were illiterate or literate as well as under matriculates could work either as manual labourers or petty traders or belonged to very poor families. But the matriculates and above adverse to those type of activities, they preferred job in the Government, semi- Government or Private Institutions. Also, the tribal women work outside the family basically to supplement the sources of their family income.

Table 7 : Education and awareness of Govt. Schemes

Education	Awareness			Total %
	Yes %	No %	No answer %	
Illiterate	10.20	70.75	19.05	100
Literate	17.48	63.11	19.42	100
Under Matriculate	22.58	62.90	14.52	100
Matriculate	60.00	36.00	04.00	100
Above	63.16	36.84	00.00	100
Total	25.25	60.00	14.75	100

The government, especially after independence, has been taking various attempts for the improvement of the tribal people. The top most priority has been given to the programmes related to the augmentation of their family resources. In order to assess the awareness about those programmes the respondents were asked whether they were aware of any scheme started by the Government in their areas which could augment their family resources. Only 25.25 percent of the total respondents reported their awareness and 60.00 percent were unaware. 14.75 percent of respondents did not give any answer about this. The fact comes from the above table is that the higher educated women were more aware than the lower educated or illiterate women about the government's schemes regarding their augmentation.

Table 8 : Education and the most difficult problem facing the tribal families

Education	The most difficult problem					
	Alcoholism	Discord with husband & wife	Low Income	Role Conflict	Only other	Total
Illiterate	08.16	10.21	73.47	00.00	18.16	100
Literate	09.71	10.68	63.11	01.94	14.56	100
Under Matriculate	09.68	14.52	46.77	12.90	16.13	100
Matriculate	16.00	22.00	34.00	16.00	12.00	100
Above	13.16	18.42	39.47	13.16	15.79	100
Total	10.25	13.25	58.50	05.75	12.25	100

The problems facing the families are different from one society to another on the basis of the socio-cultural and economic structure of the society. The tribal society has various problems and the most prominent among them is the poverty and economic backwardness. The above table shows that 58.50 percent of the total respondents said that low income was the main problem of their families. The habit of alcoholism combined with low income of create serious problem to the tribal families. But according to only 10.25 percent of the total respondent's alcoholism is the most difficult problem of their families. 13.25 percent mentioned discord between husband and wife and 05.75 percent mentioned role conflict as the most difficult problem facing their families. These types of problems are not very frequent in the tribal society.

In this section the socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of the tribal women have analyses on the basis of above tables from the various age groups of respondents the highest percent is belongs to the age group of 35 to 45 that is (27.75 percent). The respondents are on various level of education such as illiterate, literate, under matriculate, matriculate and above. Illiterate respondents are in the highest (36.75 percent). Today, the tribal are not homogeneous regarding their occupations. It has found that the tribal women have engaged in various types of work to fulfill their economic needs. The highest percent of total respondents (38.00) were engaged as manual labour but many tribal women were engaged in modern types of occupation such as service and business.

At present time agriculture has not alone the means of livelihood for them. They do many types of work other than agriculture; it is also a fact that the economic condition of tribals is not good poverty and unemployment are prevailing on a large area of tribal society. Only 9.50 percent of the total respondents were in the income group of Rs. 6000 and above per month. The present study shows that the rate of literacy among the tribal is gradually going on. But the literacy rate among the tribal women is lower than the literacy rate of the man. The growing in literacy helps them to maintain their families in small sizes. The study shows that the higher income groups or higher literate groups of families have less number of dependents compare to the lower income or literate groups of families. Traditionally, in tribal families both males and females earn money to run their families.

The present study shows that in most cases tribal families do not have adequate income to meet the necessities of the families. (54.25 percent) of the total respondents were belonged to less than Rs, 2000 to 3000 per month. But in the present days the economic status of tribals including tribal are going to change in better situation. (14.75 percent) of the respondents could run the household smoothly out of the total income of their families. Today, tribal women are taking keen interest in increasing their family's income. A large number of women (80.00 percent) make effort to supplement the sources of their family income.

SUGGESTIONS

Education is the most effective instrument for ensuring equality of opportunity; keeping in view of this assumption the Government has been making several efforts to education by extending special educational facilities and reservation of seat in educational institutions. But the development of education is one of the important problems in the case of tribals. Suggestions and recommendations to strengthen and empower tribals as well as tribal women through education are:

- Proper awareness campaign should be organized to create the awareness and the importance of education.
- The attitude of the tribal parents toward education should be improved through proper counseling and guidance.
- Low literacy especially among tribal girls and high dropout rates at elementary and higher levels are areas of serious concern.
- Higher level officials should check the functioning of schools frequently relating to the teaching methods, working hours, days of the school and attendance registers.
- Residential facilities with all amenities should be provided to teachers and other staffs.
- Focus on girls' education, inclusive of context-specific traditional and innovative interventions. Launch Special and sustained education initiatives/drives in low female literacy tribal pockets.
- Teach tribal children in their mother tongue at least at primary level. Prepare textbooks in tribal languages.
- Administration of incentives need to be streamlined so that the students may avail all the facilities at proper time.
- Teacher buildup and maintain close relationship for the development of tribal students.
- To prevent teacher absenteeism in tribal areas, give preference to local and tribal teachers from local panchayats, and place the teaching and non-teaching staff of primary schools under the control of the Village management committee.
- Merits scholarship, attendance scholarship, and more incentives in the form of grant allocated to uniform, books, learning materials, midday meals, supply of sports equipments.

These strategies would empower tribal women through education and bring them into mainstream development.

CONCLUSION

Education to women is as essential as to men. It makes women to find the right way to development. Even today in most parts of the country, the tribal women remains steeped in superstitions and ignorance with men presiding over their destiny. The main aim of education is to change the cultural norms and patterns of life of tribal women to make them economically independent, to organise themselves to form strong groups so as to analyse their situations and conditions of living, understand their rights and responsibilities and to enable them to participate and contribute to the development of women and the entire society. The fact remains that a large number of tribal women in rural areas might have missed educational opportunities at different stages and in order to empower them varieties of skill training programmes have to be designed and organised. The skill could be for assuming political leadership or for economic self-reliance or even social transformation.

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