



HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH TO LIVELIHOOD OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN ODISHA: A REVIEW

ABSTRACT

The State Odisha possesses varied physiographic and ecological habitats which constitute extensive hilly ranges, forests, rolling uplands, long stretched coastline, extensive riverine system, coastal mangroves and coastal plains. There are 62 numbers of Scheduled Tribes and 13 PVTGs constituting 22.13% of the State's total population. These tribal communities present diverse socio-economic panorama and livelihood pattern ranging from nomadic food gatherers and hunters to skilled and settled agriculturists and horticulturists. However, the tribal communities of the State are immersed in high incidence of poverty and backwardness which induced developmental planning to enhance their welfare through varied livelihood opportunities in order to bring them above poverty line.

The study adopts human rights approach to livelihood programmes in empowering tribal women of Mayurbhanja district in Odisha. The sample respondents (N=200) reveals that the present livelihood components do not provide enough scope to increase their economic status of tribal women. The study explains the livelihood activities undertaken by the tribal womenfolk in agriculture and allied activities include collection of minor forest produces and handicrafts etc. The opportunities given to the tribal womenfolk in terms of training and skill up-gradation programmes, financial assistances through micro-credit linkages and marketing tie up etc have not been able to yield expected results due to lack on internalization of modern technologies. Further it is revealed that the relative advantages of compatibility with the tribal culture, simple to adopt in limited scale and low input intensive technologies are quickly accepted by the tribes. There is a need to modify the development approach to reach and teach tribal women in the area under study. Besides, the study also illustrates the challenges faced by the tribal womenfolk in the context of livelihood such as ignorance, illiteracy, poor connectivity, financial crisis and low productivity etc. The study also highlighted the constraints in terms of social, economical, environmental and technical aspects.

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INTRODUCTION

Livelihood is defined as a set of activities, involving securing water, food, fodder, medicine, shelter, clothing and the capacity to acquire above necessities working either individually or as a group by using endowments (both human and material) for meeting the requirements of the self and his/her household on a sustainable basis with dignity. Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for acquiring means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Chambers and Conway 1991).

The tribal communities are the original inhabitants of the land representing around 8% of Indian population. Not only are they crucial components of the country's human biodiversity, but also are important sources of economic and socio-cultural heritage. Indigenous communities, especially women, are the custodians of traditional wisdom and culture, natural resource management, waste management, medicine, metallurgy and significantly contribute to the cultural diversity, utilizing human resources and maintaining environmental sustainability. However, industrialization and globalization has posed harmful effects which have drastically changed the tribal life. In the socio-political and economic struggle, and process of development, tribal women have become the major victims. The launching of mega development projects in the tribal areas have not only caused irreparable damage to their forest based subsistent economy but also deprived them of their traditional customary rights and privileges which they and their ancestors were enjoying for generations.

The state of Odisha occupies a unique place in the tribal map of India. It is the second largest tribal dominated state in the country comprising 62 tribal groups that constitute around 22% of total population of the state. Around 73% of tribes live below the poverty line. In Odisha the Scheduled Areas covers 44.71% which includes 118 blocks in 12 districts. The tribal literacy rate of the state is only 37% whereas the tribal female literacy rate is even lower *i.e.* 23% (Indian Census 2011). Tribes of Odisha are known as *Adivasi* (aborigine), *Vanabasi* (forest dweller) and *Girijana* (mountain dweller). Based upon the level of development, Government of India has classified and declared certain tribal groups as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) often called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) who are the most backward indigenous ethnic groups. These PVTGs are not only techno-economically

backward but are also relatively less acculturated, characterized by declining or stagnant population, low levels of literacy, pre-agricultural technology, primarily belong to the hunting and gathering communities.

Tribal economy in Odisha is subsistence oriented. It shows wide variation in economic pursuits which are generally influenced by ecological characteristics of their habitat and own culture and tradition. Based on the traditional economy, the tribes of Odisha may be grouped under (a) hunters and food gatherers, (b) cattle herders, (c) simple artisans, (d) shifting cultivators, (e) settled agriculturists and (f) industrial workers. Tribal economy still revolves round agriculture in some form or other and continues to be the mainstay of the people as about 90% of their main workers have returned as cultivators and agricultural labourers (SCSTRTI 2010).

RESEARCH WORKS DONE IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The term 'feminisation of poverty' is frequently used in discussions on the effects of changes in global economic policies on women. The concept is in its initial usage and relatively simple that women and female-headed households tend to be disproportionately represented among the world's poor economies. However, it is used to illustrate the links between social and economic subordination of women. The increase in women's employment does not necessarily lead to poverty reduction and increases household welfare. In other words, women's entry into waged labour is not enough to draw conclusion about the impact on poverty nor does it tell us about the changes in women's economic, social and political position in relation to men. These depend not only on the quantum of women's earnings, but the degree to which women control their own income and the manner in which it is spent. It is now more widely accepted that household organization and gender relations are critical variables in livelihood system (Menon-Sen 2001). In some parts of the world, women have almost total control over their own income (for example, in parts of West Africa). In others, their income is handed over to men or to older women (parts of South Asia). The relationship between women's income and their bargaining power is complex, changing and mediated by processes outside as well as inside the household. There is considerable body of research which indicates that women and men have different spending priorities (Bruce 1989, Kanji 1995, Narayan 2000). Women tend to emphasize food and basic goods for household consumption, while men tend to priorities items for personal use or investment, rather than household

maintenance. In contexts where men hold the purse strings and do not necessarily prioritize basic household needs, has resulted in deterioration in children's nutritional status (Evans 1997). A multi-country study found that the resources (cash and food produce) under the mother's (rather than the father's) control constitute the most important factor in determining the livelihood status in low-income households (Blumberg 1991).

The women workers continue to be primarily responsible for reproductive and domestic work, which is perceived to be their primary function. This perception reinforces structural barriers that prevent women from accessing education, training, land and productive assets. Women's double workload also restricts their time and mobility for productive work, and limits their choices of income-earning activities. Women are perceived to be 'secondary' earners so that men often have priority over women in the allocation of opportunities for paid employment. Women do not have equal access to productive resources and services. Because they are largely dependent on self-employment for which land, capital, technology and labour are critical, lack of access constrains their productivity and reinforces the stereotype that they are inherently less productive than men (Menon-Sen 2001).

The women's increased involvement in paid work has not significantly reduced poor women's share of unpaid work in caring for households. Women's gender-ascribed 'caring' roles, the costs of raising children, the existence of social support structures which women can depend on and mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups all affect the extent to which women can enter and participate in the labour market. Along with decreased social provisioning by the state, liberalisation and privatisation have shifted the costs of social reproduction from the paid to the unpaid economy, with evidence of negative consequences for women's health and well being and for household welfare in successive generations. When women work for meagre incomes, girls may be taken out of school to help with household work, decreasing their opportunity to acquire marketable skills and increasing their chances of being poor in the future (Elson 1995, Kanji 1995, Moser 1996).

The sustainable livelihoods idea was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development as a way of linking socioeconomic and ecological considerations in a cohesive, policy-relevant structure. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) expanded the concept, especially in the context of Agenda 21, and

advocated for the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty eradication. It stated that sustainable livelihoods could serve as 'an integrating factor that allows policies to address development, sustainable resource management, and poverty eradication simultaneously (UNDP 1999).

Four types of capital are identified by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS, UK) (which does not pretend to be an exhaustive list): Natural capital – the natural resource stocks (soil, water, air, genetic resources, etc.) and environmental services (hydrological cycle, pollution sinks, etc.) from which resource flows and services useful for livelihoods are derived. Economic or financial capital –the capital base (cash, credit /debt, savings, and other economic assets, including basic infrastructure and production equipment and technologies) which are essential for the pursuit of any livelihood strategy. Human capital – the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health and physical capability important for the successful pursuit of different livelihood strategies.. Social capital –the social resources (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations) upon which people draw when pursuing different livelihood strategies requiring co-ordinated actions (Krantz 2001).

RESEARCH WORKS DONE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Tribal woman plays key role in the well being of the family. Her average contribution in the family income is about 40% in addition to the household activity, which is not treated as economic activity. Generally, the tribal families possess very limited cultivated land, which is undulated and degraded. With hard work, the tribal family tries to get substantial return. In case of wage earning, the woman has to work hard during the day and attend the domestic responsibilities. The contribution of tribal women for the family prosperity is significant and in the present era, her role for the family food security is important as she rarely spends any money for her personal requirements, except for clothes or some customary ornaments purchased at fairs. Her contribution towards the family prosperity is significant where food security is the most important aspect. In totality, the contribution of tribal women in the family earning including activities not treated as economic, is more than half in comparison to male, in real terms. This is the reason that general tribal family is having food security with her pivotal role.

The study on "Socio-economic empowerment of tribal women: an Indian Perspective" reviews the emerging perspective in the context of the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women and changing paradigms

of development. Even after industrialization and resultant commercialization that swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role. Collection of minor forest produce is done mostly by women and children. Many also work as labourers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. Despite exploitation by the contractors and managers, the tribal are more sincere and honest than the non tribal. However, tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life. The strategy for tribal development, and specially women, needs improvement, betterment, development and up-liftment to effect their empowerment. Undoubtedly, the programme oriented towards the empowerment of tribal, particularly women have improved their socio-economic conditions and status. However, there are wide variations across regions and tribes in terms of work participation, sex ratio, economic productivity and social life. The impact of development planning needs to be evaluated in terms of desired and unanticipated consequences. (Awais, Alam and Asif 2009)

In a research study on "Migration of Tribal Women: Its Socioeconomic Effects - An in-depth Study of Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, M.P and Orissa" it has been observed that large number of educated, uneducated and illiterate tribal women from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal have migrated to different parts of the country in search of gainful employment /casual labour in the unorganized sector and as household maids for their livelihood. The main cause of migration is that the tribal families are not able to meet their basic needs out of their meagre income from their occupations and are heavily indebted to the money lenders. They are pledging their fixed assets like land, mahua and tamarind trees and mobile articles for meeting their daily expenses and occasional functions. There is no proper marketing and forward and backward linkages of the forest produces and articles which are being produced by the tribes in the rural interior areas. Tribal migrant women exploitation is mostly done by the middlemen who offer them good emoluments, good placement and work conditions and after they are taken to the work place they are cheated. It has been noticed that they are often exploited physically and sexually (Society for Regional Research and Analysis 2010).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the present livelihood status of tribal women in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha relating to the availability of food, safe drinking water, housing, primary health and educational

facilities and extent of utilization of such services by them;

2. To analyze tribal women's accessibility and control over resources available through livelihood programmes and participation in decision making processes and address major challenges faced by them;
3. To explore various livelihood improvement programmes undertaken by different agencies like National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Banks, Cooperatives, Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), and government and non-govt organizations and policy measures adopted to promote livelihood status of tribal women community;
4. To make a note of the practices that make livelihood programmes successful and to formulate development strategy suggesting requisite measures to be adopted for effective mobilization of resources available for retaining the livelihood status of tribal women community.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The study covers Mayurbhanj district, a scheduled district located in the northern part of Odisha. The socio-economic profiles of tribal of Mayurbhanj district show a very complex picture. The major tribes of the district include Santal, Bhumija, Kolha, Bhuyan, Bathudi, Gond and Munda etc. These tribal groups mostly depend upon agriculture and forest. There are three PVTGs such as Hill Kharia, Mankerdia, Lodha who are mostly landless and depend upon collection of minor forest produces. Selected livelihood indicators such as availability of food, safe drinking water, housing, education facilities and primary healthcare facilities, community resource utilisation, use of essential resources, energy use, environment, and sanitation are used to assess the present socio-economic profiles of tribal women communities in respect of their health, education, economic opportunities, access and control over resources and participation in decision making processes.

Stratified random sampling method was used by systematically taking district, block, panchayat, household and women member as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th stage of sampling units. Keeping in view of the Block wise distribution of tribal population, the blocks are chosen for conducting field based research study. Two types of interview schedules were used to get relevant information from two broad categories of respondents tribal women as well as opinions of the experts like bankers, government officials, NGOs, community leaders, academia, researchers

and experts regarding necessary changes required to improve the livelihood situation of tribal women communities. The sources of primary data include household survey, semi-structured informal interview schedule, focus group discussion, case study and observation with the key stakeholders like community leaders, PRIs, government officials, activists, local NGOs, CBOs and field based observations. Besides, the researcher has collected relevant literatures from different books and journals, reports and relevant web sources. The quantitative and qualitative data received from different sources are integrated to make the research analysis meaningful and comprehensive.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

So far as the present livelihood status of the tribal womenfolk of the Mayurbhanj district is concerned, it shows a very complex picture as they have different literacy rate, population growth and density and several others distinctive features of their own. The regional variation is also noticed as they are at different stages of social and economic development. Besides, these tribal communities are different in their skills, aptitudes, habits, cultures, traditions and customs which have differential impacts on their development as a whole. The PVTGs are at the lowest rung of socio-economic ladder and need special attentions for their rehabilitation and development. However, the most common distinctive picture of the PVTGs is that they are socially, educationally and economically backward and isolated from the mainstay of development. The present study shows that different tribal groups have differential access to the basic livelihood necessities such as food, safe drinking water, housing, primary healthcare and education facilities, community resource utilization, use of essential services, energy use, environment, and sanitation etc.

$$\text{Mean score} = \frac{\text{Summation of all scores obtained by all respondents for a particular element}}{\text{Total Number of Respondents}}$$

Keeping in view of the above distinctive pictures, the Table-1 shows present livelihood system of tribal women in the area of study. It illustrates the extent of availability of the livelihood elements to the women of four different tribal groups such as Santal, Kolha, Hill Kharia and Mankerdia in the area of study. The livelihood system of the women of the four tribal groups was measured by using 10 important elements cited in the table -1. The scoring method was followed using 3 point

scale consisting of very much, much and little to which 3, 2 and 1 score were assigned respectively. Thus the mean score was calculated for ten elements of the four tribes.

While analyzing various livelihood elements of women of four tribal groups it was observed that, the availability of food was a concern for both the Santal women and Kolha women who had similar score i.e 2.00 while the score obtained by the Hill Kharia women and the Mankerdia women were 1.86 and 1.20 respectively. While examining the availability of safe drinking water, the score obtained by the Santal women was 2.15 and that of Kolha women was 1.95 who were in a better position, in comparison to the Hill Kharia women who got 1.50 score and the Mankerdia women got 1.10 score. Similarly, in getting housing facility, the score obtained by the Santal women was 2.60 and that of Kolha women was 2.55. While comparing the scores of the other two tribes the Hill Kharia women got 1.56 score and so also the Mankerdia women got 0.90 score respectively.

While examining the availability of primary healthcare facility, Santal women and Kolha women availed 2.60 score and 2.32 score respectively while the Hill Kharia women availed 1.64 score and Mankerdia women availed 1.10 score in availing the same. In availing educational facility the Kolha women were ahead obtaining 2.74 score than the other three tribes i.e the score of Santal women was 2.70, and that of Hill Kharia women was 2.15 and for Mankerdia women the score was 1.24. Similarly in utilizing community resources, the Kolha women were at the top scoring 2.56, whereas the Santal women obtained 2.40 score, and the Hill Kharia women and the Mankerdia women lagged behind obtaining 2.20 and 1.40 scores respectively. In using essential resources, the score obtained by the Santal women was 2.55, and that of Kolha women was 2.43 and in case of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women the scores were 2.11 and 1.65 respectively. Similarly in energy use, the Santal women availed 2.87 score and Kolha women availed 2.76 score but in case of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women the scores were relatively low i.e 2.12 and 0.54 respectively. In using environmental resources, the scores obtained by the four tribes varied to a limited extent i.e Santal women and Kolha women availed 1.65 score and 1.70 score, while the Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women availed 1.87 and 1.83 scores respectively. Similarly, in availing sanitation facility, the scores obtained by Santal women was 1.93, and that of Kolha women was 1.81, whereas the scores of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women were 1.78 and 0.76 respectively. On an average, the Santal women availed 2.33 score, Kolha women availed 2.28 score, Hill Kharia women

availed 1.87 score and Mankerdia women availed 1.19 score. Hence, it is evident that the gap was more in case of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women which was 53.25 score and 70.25 score respectively whereas the gaps were comparatively less for Santal women and Kolha women which were 41.75 and 43.00 respectively.

From the Table-1 it can be concluded that, the womenfolk of the Santal and Kolha tribe were relatively in a better position in comparison to the womenfolk of the two PVTGs such as Hill Kharia and Mankerdia tribe in availing the basic livelihood opportunities. Majority of the tribal women among the PVTGs were debarred from availing primary healthcare and educational facilities. They were also in ill health and illiterate which have also affected their livelihood to a considerable extent.

In addition to this, it is also essential to know the access and control of tribal women over various resources and their level of participation in the decision making process. Table-2 illustrates the sample tribal women's accessibility and control over resources in various livelihood programmes as well as their participation in the decision making processes.

The qualitative responses of the tribal women respondents were quantified by assigning the numerals in order to calculate the mean average score. This process was followed for the tribal womenfolk of all the four tribes including Santal, Kolha, Hill Kharia and Mankerdia. The scoring pattern for all the four elements like tribal women's accessibility over resources, control over resources, livelihood programmes and participation in the decision making process were measured in using four point scale consisting of very much, much, to some extent and little with assigning scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. However, the zero scoring was not included because none was isolated to all the four elements.

While measuring the accessibility of women of four different tribal communities to various livelihood resources it was observed that the Santal women scored 3.65 and the Kolha women scored 3.35 and the Hill Kharia women scored 3.00 and the Mankerdia women scored 2.56. Similarly, while exploring the control of tribal women over various resources, the women from Santal and Kolha communities were in a better position scoring 3.00 and 2.98 respectively, whereas the score of Hill Kharia women was 2.85 and that of Mankerdia women was 2.12 which were comparatively less. Similarly, in availing the facilities of different livelihood programmes, the scores obtained by the Santal women and Kolha women slightly varied within 2.91 score and 2.90 score. But in case of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women the scores were 2.85 and

2.13 respectively. While considering the participation of tribal women in the decision making process, the Santal women scored 2.50, and the Kolha women scored 2.43 while the scores of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women were 2.40 and 2.20 respectively. On an average, the score obtained by the Santal women and Kolha women were 3.01 and 2.91 respectively and that of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women were 2.77 and 2.25 respectively. Hence, the gap was more in case of Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women whose scores were i.e 30.75 and 43.75 respectively whereas the gap was comparatively less in case of Santal women and Kolha women whose score were 24.75 and 27.25 respectively.

It is noticed that the sample women among the developing tribe like Santal and Kolha have comparatively more access and control over resources and derive more benefits from various livelihood programmes whereas the sample women among the Hill Kharia and Mankerdia tribes have less access and control over livelihood resources and get fewer benefits available through various livelihood programmes. The Mankerida women were the most vulnerable in comparison to the women from all other categories. So far as participation of the sample tribal women in the decision making processes is concerned the representation of Santal and Kolha women were relatively more in comparison to the Hill Kharia women and Mankerdia women.

It has been observed from the study that agriculture provides food to the tribal household for a maximum period of six months in a year due to poor productivity and relatively small landholdings. Besides, the livelihood of the tribes is also closely linked with the forest. The PVTGs mainly depend upon the collection of minor forest products to earn their livelihood Many of them are nomadic and semi-nomadic wandering bands who migrate from one place to another due to exhaustion of resources. But, the new forest policy of government has restricted them from entering into the forest which is a major setback for continuation of their forest based livelihood. In the absence of any suitable livelihood alternative it becomes increasingly difficult day by day to sustain their livelihood for maintenance of their family. Besides, increasing deforestation due to rapid industrialization has intensified the vulnerability, exploitation and land alienation of these tribal communities. Tribal women suffer to a large extent in comparison to tribal men as they are mostly involved in household management and work outside home to contribute towards family income. The present situation of tribal women is caused mainly due their ignorance, illiteracy and lack of exposures to the outside world.

Besides, the uneven distribution patterns of resources, infrastructure, wealth, knowledge and ineffective utilization of such services have affected the livelihood status of tribal household to a significant extent. In recent years various livelihood improvement programmes undertaken by different agencies like National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), State Cooperatives, Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDA), and non-govt organizations and various policy measures have been adopted for promoting the livelihood status of tribal women. However, these programmes have

not been successful to a significant extent. It is also revealed from the study that the simple low input intensive technologies in limited scale are quickly accepted by the tribes as they have relative advantages of compatibility with the tribal culture. Hence, there is a strong correlation between the acceptance of the development programmes and delivery of technology which leads to infer that there is a need to alter the development approach in order to achieve desired result.

Table: 1 Perceived Present livelihood system of the sample tribes of Mayurbhanj District in Odisha

SL No	Elements of Livelihood system	Santhal	Kolha	Hill Kharia	Mankerdia
1	Food availability	2.00	2.00	1.86	1.20
2	Safe drinking water	2.15	1.95	1.50	1.10
3	Housing	2.60	2.55	1.56	0.90
4	Primary health care	2.45	2.32	1.64	1.34
5	Educational facilities	2.70	2.74	2.15	1.24
6	Community resource utilization	2.40	2.56	2.20	1.40
7	Use of essential services	2.55	2.43	2.11	1.65
8	Energy use	2.87	2.76	2.12	0.54
9	Environment	1.65	1.70	1.87	1.83
10	Sanitation	1.93	1.81	1.78	0.76
11	Average	2.33	2.28	1.87	1.19
12	Gap(%)	41.75	43.00	53.25	70.25

Source: Primary data

Table: 2 Sample Women's Accessibility and Control over Resources and Participation in Decision Making Process

SL No	Livelihood resources	Santhal	Kolha	Hill Kharia	Mankerdia
1	Accessibility over resources	3.65	3.35	3.00	2.56
2	Control over resources	3.00	2.98	2.85	2.12
3	Livelihood programmes	2.91	2.90	2.85	2.13
4	Decision making process	2.50	2.43	2.40	2.20
5	Average	3.01	2.91	2.77	2.25
6	Gaps (%)	24.75	27.25	30.75	43.75

Source: Primary Data

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