



Social Change among Scheduled Tribe Women in Koppal District

Yamanoorappa V Talavar

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Gulbarga University, KALABURAGI, Karnataka

Dr. Shashikala. D.J

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Govt. Degree College & P.G. Centre, KALABURAGI, Karnataka

ABSTRACT

The tribes in general and tribal women in particular are facing many of the social problems due to illiteracy and negligence in society. To assess the social problems and social changes made by tribal women a survey was conducted using interviews of total 500 tribal women in Koppal district. It is highlighted that tribal women are educationally backward and as such believe in social evil practices. Even they don't have managing and decision making authority in their families. Hence, it is suggested to increase literacy and education among tribal women and also to organize awareness campaigns against social evil practices in tribal society.

KEYWORDS :

Introduction:

The Scheduled Tribes (ST), the most neglected sections of the Indian society have been subjected to economic exploitation and social discrimination for ages. The age old exploitation and repression of the tribal have cut them from the mainstream of the socio-economic and educational development. This state has been largely responsible for their abject poverty, illiteracy and overall backwardness. As Sujatha (2002) points out, interior habitations are small in size, scattered, and sparsely populated. Most of the predominantly ST habitations are bereft of basic infrastructural facilities like education, transport and communication.

The common beliefs, customs and practices connected with health and disease have been found to be intimately related to the treatment of disease. It is necessary to make a holistic view of all the cultural dimensions of the health of a community. In most of the tribal communities, there is a wealth of folklore related to health. Documentation of this folklore available in different socio-cultural systems may be very rewarding and could provide a model for appropriate health and sanitary practices in a given eco-system. Maternal and child care is an important aspect of health seeking behaviour which is largely neglected among the tribal groups (Basu and Jindal, 1990). Health and treatment are closely interrelated with the environment, particularly the forest ecology. Many tribal groups use different parts of a plant not only for the treatment of diseases, but for population control as well (Chaudhuri, 1990). There exists a definite nexus between forests and nutrition. It has been noted by many that tribals living in remote areas have a better overall status and eat a more balanced diet than tribals living in less remote, forest free areas. The mode of utilization of available natural resources often determines the long term impact on health (Basu, 1993).

Tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders. There is evidence that the gender division of labour among most tribal communities is also hierarchical. Even among the matriarchal tribes, male members of the household managed the resources of women. Gender hierarchy among tribals is also evident from the low ritual status accorded to women. The sedentary form of living altered some of their earlier livelihood practices. Certain changes in the economic activities performed by men and women resulted in further dependence of women on men. Although women's role in the livelihood system is considered natural, their participation in leadership roles and the political sphere are not encouraged. It is highlighted that though women in tribal societies have higher authority, still their status is lower in society and are to a greater extent, illiterates. Hence, a survey of tribal women was made in Koppal district of Karnataka to assess the social status of tribal women.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study is made:

- ❖ To ascertain the educational changes among tribal women in Koppal district;
- ❖ To know whether still tribal women believe in social evil practices;
- ❖ To study the status of tribal women in terms of family decision making; and
- ❖ To look into the social problems faced by tribal women.

Methodology and Limitations:

The authors assessed the general social problems faced by tribal women by studying the published secondary literature. Based on the secondary literature, interviews were made with 250 housewives and 250 working wives in different tribes living in Koppal district. Hence, the study present study is limited to 500 tribal women living in Koppal district.

Analysis and Discussion:

The changes and knowledge improves according to the age and experiences in social life. Further, when observed it is noted that the major portion of young tribal women are educated, whereas major portion of middle aged and older women are illiterates or low educated. The primary data collected on age of the tribal women surveyed is presented in the following table.

Table No. 1. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Particulars	Housewives		Working Wives		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Below 18 Years	04	1.6	03	1.2	07	1.4
18 to 25 Years	29	11.6	26	10.4	55	11.0
26 to 35 Years	65	26.0	74	29.6	139	27.8
36 to 45 Years	84	33.6	68	27.2	152	30.4
46 to 60 years	52	20.8	53	21.2	105	21.0
More than 60 Years	16	6.4	26	10.4	42	8.4
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Of all the respondents, 152 (30.4%) are between 36 to 45 years followed by, 139 (27.8%) are between 26 to 35 years, 105 (21.0%) are between 46 to 60 years, 55 (11.0%) are between 18 to 25 years, 42 (8.4%) are of more than 60 years and 07 (1.4%) of the total respondents are of less than 18 years respectively. It is noted that to collect the primary data from different aged respondents, the researcher selected the respondents from all the age groups.

Education increase knowledge and empower women to adopt changes in their socio-economic life. Further, education increase social status and respect of women. Hence, it is essential that every woman must get education. The educational qualifications of the tribal women covered under the study are as under.

Table No. 2. Educational Qualifications

Particulars	Housewives		Working Wives		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Illiterate	53	21.2	38	15.2	91	18.2
Up to Primary	74	29.6	59	23.6	133	26.6
Secondary	85	34.0	88	35.2	173	34.6
Pre-Univ./ Under-Graduate	23	9.2	31	12.4	54	10.8
Graduate/ PG	15	6.0	34	13.6	49	9.8
Any Other	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

As stated by all the respondents, 91 (18.2%) have not went to schools and are illiterates, 133 (26.6%) have completed education up to primary, 173 (34.6%) have completed secondary education, 54 (10.8%) have completed pre-university or under-graduation and 49 (9.8%) have completed graduation or post-graduation. It shows that educational level among majority of the tribal women is lowest.

It is observed that majority of the respondents are living in joint families, the family management is difficult in terms of decision making. In this regard, following persons or family members of the respondents are managing the families in terms of decision making in families.

Table No. 3. Management of Family and Decision Making

Particulars	Housewives		Working Wives		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Parents/ Parents-in-law	121	48.4	108	43.2	229	45.8
Husband Alone	98	39.2	79	31.6	177	35.4
Husband & Self	15	6.0	43	17.2	58	11.6
Brothers/ Sisters	--	--	--	--	--	--
Self Only	09	3.6	16	6.4	25	5.0
Any Other	07	2.8	04	1.6	11	2.2
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Among all the respondents, 229 (45.8%) have agreed that their parents or parents-in-law are making the family decisions and managing family, 177 (35.4%) have mentioned that their husbands are managing family by making decisions, 58 (11.6%) have remarked that they are making the decisions along with their husbands, 25 (5.0%) have agreed that they are managing family by making family decisions and 11 (2.2%) have felt that the other persons like their children are making the family decisions. In terms of decision making and managing family, only a few of the tribal women have such authority and status and a great majority of the tribal are deprived from decision making the managing family activities.

Majority of the tribal women are still backward and even following orthodox beliefs related to their tribes. As such, they have more number of children, they are with secondary status in family, even they are deprived from family decision making, etc. Hence, it is necessary to know whether they believe and practice few of the social evil practices such as child marriage, dowry, Basavi or Devadasi, etc. In this regard, the collected primary data is as under.

Table No. 4. Support to Social Practices

Particulars	Housewives		Working Wives		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Dowry	198	79.2	215	86.0	413	82.6
Devadasi, Jogini, Basavi, Bettale Seve to Deities	39	15.6	26	10.4	65	13.0
Child Marriage	26	10.4	17	6.8	43	8.6
Remarriage of Widows	33	13.2	54	21.6	87	17.4
Animal Offering to Deities	167	66.8	184	73.6	351	70.2
Any Other	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

As expressed by all the respondents, 413 (82.6%) are supporting dowry, 65 (13.0%) are supporting Devadasi, Jogini, Basavi or Bettale Seve (Nude Service) to deities, 43 (8.6%) are supporting child marriage, 87 (17.4%) are supporting remarriage of widows, 351 (70.2%) are supporting to animal offerings to deities. Though few practices such as Dowry, Devadasi, Jogini, Basavi, Bettale Seve, Child Marriage, animal offerings to deities, etc are banned strictly by law, still many of the tribal women are following and supporting the same. On the other hand, though in many of the communities remarriage of widows is not preferred, many of the tribal women have supported the same. It shows that tribe culture still dominated the tribal women and their family members though they are living in civilized and modernized environment.

Tribal women are suffering from subjugated position in families and as such they are deprived from equal status in family and society. Further, they are also facing many of the problems and challenges associated with their social culture and tribe and the problems faced by tribal women are shown as under.

Table No. 5. Social Problems of Tribal Women

Particulars	Housewives		Working Wives		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Poverty/ Isolation from Civilization	176	70.4	129	51.6	305	61.0
Discrimination/ Alienation	48	19.2	57	22.8	105	21.0
Exploitation/ Harassment	25	10.0	18	7.2	43	8.6
Suppression/ Oppression/ Inferiority	31	12.4	34	13.6	65	13.0
Any Other	07	2.8	09	3.6	16	3.2
None	33	13.2	45	18.0	78	15.6
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

It is noted that few of the respondents are suffering from more than one type of problems. As responded by the total respondents surveyed, 305 (61.0%) are facing problem of poverty or isolation from civilization, 105 (21.0%) are facing problem of discrimination and alienation, 43 (8.6%) are facing problem of exploitation and harassment, 65 (13.0%) are facing problem of suppression, oppression and inferiority, 16 (3.2%) of all the respondents are also facing other problems and only 78 (15.6%) of the total respondents are not facing any of such social problems. It is highlighted that due to the backwardness of their tribes, women are facing many of the social problems.

Concluding Remarks:

As the tribal women are backward in terms of education, it is essentially needed to increase educational infrastructure in tribal areas and also to announce more welfare schemes to increase education among tribal women. Further, awareness campaigns are essentially to be organized by NGOs and voluntary organizations to increase awareness against the social evil practices. It is essential to solve the problems of tribes in general and tribal women in particular.

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