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FORMATION OF SHG AMONG IRULA WOMEN

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Irulars are a tribal group who live in southern India, principally in Kanchipuram, Nilgiris and Villupuram locale of Tamil Nadu. The term Irular is obtained from the word Irul, which means darkness or dim. Irulars are a standout amongst the most in reverse tribes who are facing several difficulties. The name Irular bear a reference to the dull wildernesses they live in. A legend says that goddess was intrigued to make individuals who could gather nectar without being stung by honey bees; what's more, she made one out of her sweat, who was effective in gathering nectar without being stung. Indeed, even now it is said that honey bees and untamed life have an aroma similar to Irulars sweat. Ethnically they have a place with Negritos race. Their first language is Irula and their dialect Irula is a blend of Tamil and Kannada (Santhosam & Samuel Jebaseelan, 2016). Their principal occupation was snake and rodent catching. They also function as workers in nearby farms. These gatherings have been generally negated both in monetary and social issues.

The tribal populace in Tamil Nadu is around 72 million. These tribes occupy around 15 per cent of the geological territory and are gathered mostly at Nilgiri region. Irulas are unassuming tribal individuals found in Nilgiris district in a couple of settlements. The government of India perceived these Irula tribes as Scheduled Tribe (Raj & Balasubramanian, 2017).

In India, a lady is considered a symbol of devotion, honorability, respect, dedication, yield, caring administration, and accommodation. In India, the ladies were and are given a high place. She is an Ideal mother, a perfect sister, a perfect spouse, a perfect little girl and perfect womanhood in the world. Our ladies are awesome holy people, extraordinary rulers, incredible educators, extraordinary 'policemen', amazing judges, awesome managers, legal counselors, remarkable thinkers, amazing craftsmen artists, painters, and performers. India is proud of their womanhood (Nanda, 2017). Though India is proud of their womanhood, there is a section of Indian women who are neglected and unnoticed.

Irula women have less power in the decision-making process and are discriminated and subjugated at every level of society (Chitagubb, Shivalli, & Devendrappa, 2011; Dwarakanath, 2002). They encounter savagery inside their homes and preference when entering nearby governmental issues or group activities. Numerous ladies face several health problems because of early marriage, labour and absence of help. The women are engaged in various activities according to the report released by IWWWS (Irula Women Welfare Society). The activities include cultural fests, income generation activities, handicrafts and so on. These activities are done in groups and the development for them will be a whole.

Self-development is a process in which women can achieve self-empowerment. Self Help Groups (SHGs) are a platform for the people to voice against their oppression, exploitations, common problems and improving their skills and capacities to manage resources (Dwarakanath, 2002). Women SHGs are an effective strategy for poverty eradication, women self-development, socio and economic empowerment. These have enhanced the position of women in the process of decision making and in democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life of rural India (Chitagubb, Shivalli, & Devendrappa, 2011).

SHGs are said to be powerful tools for social, political and economic empowerment. SHGs have become a prevailing,

imperative and valuable means for empowering women in parts of mainstream humanity (Chitagubb, Shivalli, & Devendrappa, 2011).

Health standards of tribal women are below the national average. Maternal mortality is high among them because of the lack of institutional delivery and unawareness of government schemes. Most tribal women do not have a fixed income source and are below the poverty line. Hence they are working in rural areas for survival. Since tribal people are poor they do not send their daughters to school and they think that girls can help them in their work.

Their main activities are a collection of firewood from the forest, cow dung processing, childbearing and responsibilities. Some key issues faced by Irula women are changing from familiar jobs to unfamiliar jobs, polio among children, lack of cleanliness habits and food system. The reasons for shifting from one job to another job are low wages, bad work conditions, malnutrition, unhygienic sanitation, and cramped housing.

Alcoholism in men creates nuisance in the family. Witch branding and lynching are the most serious crime perpetrated against tribal women, who are frequently branded witches by community members (out of superstition, religious belief and patriarchal mindset) and hacked to violence and death. Polygamy – though women in mainstream society have been largely protected from this menace, many of their tribal counterparts continue to face this problem out of cultural and religious sanctions. Since forest right act is not implemented properly tribal women face several problems which jeopardize their livelihood.

Lack of education leads to social and physical exploitation. For example, Mass Tubectomy in Chattisgarh state led to the death of several tribal women. At present, the women in tribal groups do not have avenues to form SHGs. Women's role in decision making is either absent or very limited due to which they are exploited. Different social taboos like witch hunting, polygamy, and women as property exists which make their life vulnerable. They also face sexual exploitation by fake godmen, forest contractors, security forces, and armed groups.

Some of the government schemes are Van Bandhu Kalyan Yojana-with special focus on the qualitative and sustainable employment for tribal families, improving the quality of education and health and improving the quality of life in tribal areas. MGNREGA has been launched to provide 100 days of work to rural people. Indira Awas Yojana has been launched for providing a house to rural people below the poverty line. National Rural health mission has been launched to provide effective health care to the rural population. Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana helps tribal women in undertaking any income generation activity.

Several fellowships and hostels have been arranged for better future of tribal women. Tribal women enjoy greater freedom in many areas when compared to mainstream women. But they also face many peculiar problems due to tribal customary laws and traditions and patriarchal mindset. It is time for the government to re-implement the schemes meant for their empowerment.

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