



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

TRIBAL WOMEN OF UTTAR-PRADESH: AT A GLANCE

Dr. Malika Parmar

Assistant Professor

Name of Department: History

(Ram Janaki Mahavidhyalaya)

Assai Berri, Kanpur

Abstract: Women have an important place in any society marked by tradition or modernity. Their contribution to the innovative perspective of the society along with maintaining the prevalence condition is of vital importance. And hence their proper place in any social cultural matrix needs to be explored. On non-tribal women many works of sociological interests are available. But it is still rare to find more valid and exhaustive literature on tribal women. Such a background enthused me to scientifically explore the status of tribal women. In spite of all the government plans and women welfare schemes the benefits have not reached the tribal women. They cannot be regarded as being emancipated and free from the constraints of age old customs and traditions. It seems to be essential to save them from exploitation, to enrich their social status and to achieve their glory as respected citizens of India.

I. INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND The history of India has been influenced by its tribal people. The existence of these tribals in India has been recorded long before the penetration of Aryan speaking people who came to India following some ethnic upheaval or change of climate in central Asia. There are large contributions of these tribes for making our country democratic. Victory of Rama, the king of Ayodhya, over Ravana, the king of Lanka, with the help of Banar tribe during vedic period the victory of Maharana Pratap of Udaipur against the Mughal Emperor, Akbar in Mewar (Rajasthan) with the help of brave people of Bhil tribe during Mughal period protected Guerilla warfare for effective resistance of entry of the British into tribal areas of Chhota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas (now part of Jharkand) by the people from Munda, Santhal etc. tribes and successful struggle of Naga tribes in the North- Eastern region against the British to defend their territory points of history.

The two great epic Ramayan and the Mahabharat refer to tribals such as the Soudras, Abhiras, Dravidians, Pulindas and Sabaras or Saoras, of these "Sabaras are the most familiar and they are probably the only tribe existing today whose earliest references could be traced to Aitareya Brahman". Sabri, who offered fruits to Rama, has become in Varrier Elwin's words "a symbol of the contributions that tribes can and will make to the life of India".

KSE -100 Index is taken from yahoo finance.

II. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim for carrying out this writing is to explore the condition of tribal women in social economic fields and to see whether there is any change in this perspective from the last few decades or not. Since the inception of human being women has always formed an inseparable part of society and culture. History is, undoubtedly, replete with such instances besides those of certain epics as well. From the primitive era to the modern age the women have been contributing their mite for the betterment of their kiths and kins so as to occupy a better position in the society they lived. These studies have raised crucial issues related to the changing status of women in our society and problems faced by them. But unfortunately very little attention has been given to the understanding of millions of women dwelling in the villages and tribal areas silently carrying out traditional, domestic and agricultural tasks and unquestioningly adhering to norms that have been espoused for them for many generations. We have to understand these village and tribal women make them aware of themselves and improve their lot.

III. STATUS

In terms of status and problems of tribal women in Uttar Pradesh is to be analyzed in this writing. Though the social organizational and religious attributes of the Uttar Pradesh tribes display a good deal of uniqueness, represented by features like polyandry, bride-price, peculiar customs and practices surrounding the institution of marriage (for example, marriage by capture service, exchange etc; levirate, Takiwa or Ghar- Baitha, that is custom of keeping 'servant husband' widow- marriage and so on) some elements of caste ideology and caste system of greater tradition have also been internalized to a differential degree. Excepting the Tharu and the Raji, the remaining three tribes, that is, the Bhotia, the Bhoksa and the Jaunsari follow some of the elements of caste system. The Bhoksa, Tha Tharu and the Jaunsari are predominantly agriculturists with specialization in various craft- work ranging from weaving to basketry. The Bhotias were practicing trade across the international border, till the border was sealed for them. The Rajis have been the hunting and gathering people and even now they resort to it considerably.

IV. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE

Looking to the general socio economic situation of Bhotia, Raji, Tharu, Jaunsari and Bhoksa communities the status of women can be rated at comparatively a higher plane. Traditionally and customarily they are treated as important members of the society. Right at the time of birth a female child is welcome and she keeps on receiving cordial treatment through her childhood. She is extended complete freedom in mixing with the boys. During the course she develops a mind of her own and exercises it at the time of choosing her mate. A Bhotia girl can turn down a proposal of marriage if she does not like the boy. A Bhoksa or a Raji girl is free to choose her marriage partner. A Jaunsari girl has to marry the boy of her parent's choice and a Tharu girl has no choice of her mate as she is married at an early age. In household matters the tribal woman has extensive command and she can free to express her views on various aspects of life. The relationship between husband and wife and with in-laws is friendly. The woman participate in almost all the economic ventures like agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, collection of fuel and food from forests and art and craft. Except ploughing the fields, a role meant for men alone, the women actively participate in clearing the fields, sowing, watering, weeding, harvesting and in storing the grain. Right from morning till evening they are busy in work and in free time they do the weaving and basketry work. Keeping in view the depth of women's participation in economic pursuits, they are taken as asset. On marriage the parents of girl loose a pair of helping hands and hence they justify their demand of bride price which is widely practiced. Because of the custom of patrilineal among these tribal societies the inheritance of clan name and family property is in male line only. But a daughter may inherit property in case she has no brother. For instance among Bhotias the parents can keep such girl, and her husband, with them and she inherits mother's jewellery. The son-in-law, kept in his in law's house's called as 'Ghar Jawain.' Among Bhoksa a married sister can get some movable property if the brother agrees upon it. A jaunsari daughter does not inherit property but a wife is the manger of property though it is in the name of her husband. The residential pattern, in general, is patrilocal where wife has to shift to husband's residence after marriage. A society is patriarchal the headship of social control institutions. At all levels, is earmarked for senior male members only. Female heads are unheard of among Uttar-Pradesh hill tribes. The male members control society through tribal council. The women cannot ordinarily participate in its proceedings unless she is asked to present her case before the council. Women is free to divorce her husband if he is unable to keep her contented. If the husband is not found guilty then the wife has to refund the bride-Price. In case of adultery, among the Tharus, the adulterer male has to compensate with double the amount of bridge-Price to the parents as well as to the husband. In case of the Rajis the husband tolerates most of the acts and demands of wife. The background for such a tolerance is the difficulty in procuring a new wife because of high bridge-Price among them. The Raji wife commands both respect and dominance over her husband. In case the husband takes a second wife, when the first one is alive, the latter may leave him and the husband, in that case, forfeits the amount of bride-Price paid for her. A jaunsari wife can be divorced if she refuses to entertain, sexually, the Dharam Bhai of her husband.

The Bhotia widows, in most of the cases, are free to marry again, if they desire so. A widowed sister, in case of Bhoksa, is allowed to stay in her natal home and her brother ensure her subsistence. An issueless widow can have right over her deceased husband's property among the Raji. She is free even do sell apart of it. A Tharu widow inherits her deceased husband's lands and other property. She can keep a man as Gharbaitha (servant huaband) at the sometime. Among jaunsaris the question of widowhood dose not arises so prominently as the women simultaneously gets married to several brother. Jaunsaris practice fraternal polyandry. Due to set division of lobour one husband is almost always present to look after the wife. A wife is, usually, socially and economically, secured among polyandrous jaunsaris. A widow among these tribes is economically secured and no stigma is attached to her on being widow or on widow marriage. The women enjoy a fairly high status among these tribes but still the situation poses for problems. These problems are partly in built in the social structure and partly imposed from outside as a consequence of culture contact with the non-tribals.

V. EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL WOMEN

The major problem of tribal women in Uttar- Pradesh is illiteracy (specially among Raji, Bhoksa, and Jaunsaris) which seems the root cause of many other problems. A huge number of tribal female populations is unlettered. They think there is no use of education for their girl child, as she has to help her mother in household work and she look after her siblings when her mother goes out to work. Their statement is that when the daughter has to move to her husband's house, why we wasting time, money and energy on giving her school or college education. Within the background of such reflexes the tribal girls largely remain illiterate. Due to illiteracy, indebtedness, meager economy, the tribal are living in the worst condition i.e. "Bondage Labour" – "it is a system whereby a debtor pledges his labour or the labour of somebody else close to him in lieu of the interest to be paid on the loan advanced to him by the creditor". At one stage the bondage or serfdom of tribal was widely rampant. The non- tribal, shopkeeper, trader or landlord pays some money to the tribals when the latter is indeed. If the amount is not repaid, as per agreement, the man, his wife or any other member of the family is pledged to the creditor's family to work for them against the interest accrued. Hence, bondedness may continue for generations to generations. They have to suffer great privations and work for their master from dawn under conditions of semi- starvation. As a result of this system the tribals –

- Loss of freedom and utilization of their labour almost free of cost.
- Change in occupation and loss of money.
- Land alienation and its acquisition by the creditor.
- Conversion of their wives, sisters and daughters into prostitutes sold and resold in near and distant cities for ending the debt bondage.
- Chronic venerable diseases.

Thus we see that the female exploitation through the system of bonded labour is one of worst forms. The women have rightly said that they hardly have any entity of their own. Their most of the time fall back at the hands of male. Therefore it is very necessary to take measures for their protection from exploitative agencies, side by side with the implementation of programmes for human resources development, extension of social services and amelioration of economic conditions.

Here is given below the various governmental programmes for socio-economic development:-
For the development of tribals our government established three corporations in 1975 that is-

- The Tarai Anusuchit Janjati Vikas Nigam Limited.
- Garwal Anusuchit Janjati Vikas Nigam, Dehradun.
- Kumaon Anusuchit Janjati Vikas Nigam, Nainital.

The objectives of the cooperation are being achieved through the following activities:-

- ✚ To provide raw material to the tribal families.
- ✚ Promoting the main sources of livelihood for the tribals.
- ✚ Arrangement of marketing for the finished goods of the tribals.
- ✚ To provide the raw materials to the tribal families.
- ✚ To provide shops to the tribals so that they may be able to carry out their independent trade.
- ✚ To prepare plans for their development and allot the funds to concerned agencies or departments.
- ✚ Various trainings and research institute has been established for their welfare.
- ✚ Great emphasis has been laid on women's education.
- ✚ The special schemes under stipends, scholarship both at pre and post matric stage, hostel facilities, ashram schools, free books, uniform and mid day meal are helping the tribal women.
- ✚ A systematic program have been undertaken to spread knowledge about the dietary conditions and sanitary habits.

Thus we can say that if the welfare administration is really serious in doing something for the tribal peoples they should not allow or introduce unexpected and sudden changes in their entire life. The forest policy should be more rationalized and humanized, give more emphasis on health issues, exploitation should be checked and education should be taken on top priority to break the barriers of fatalism and superstitions.

Large-scale ignorance of tribal women, in respect of certain rights and privileges officially granted to them, hampers their involvement and participation in various patterns of social organization and social control. The tribal women of Uttar- Pradesh are not aware of certain new political provisions and processes; they hardly avail of the opportunity to be a part of the new system at their instance. For example, the tribal woman has been officially given a right to be elected as a member of the statutory Panchayati Raj bodies. But one hardly comes across the women elected to such bodies. Non participation of this nature is a hindrance to the fair deal to the womenfolk at the village level and beyond. Traditionally and customarily, the women are not allowed to be member or head of a village council; these positions are earmarked for men only. Within the traditional framework the women themselves are not keen to hold such responsible position due to the fear of public criticism which they may invite by such involvement. Because of such a complex, they withdraw themselves from participation even in the statutory bodies. But if the women can be mobilized to participate it can help them give a better deal in general.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

However, as the foregone analysis of the tribals we seems that the major problems which these communities have been faced with include widespread illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, low health status, undeveloped human resources and over dependence on traditional occupations such as agriculture and daily wage labour etc. The development efforts undertaken in these areas have not been on par with the requirements. Therefore, it is necessary for a better and efficient implementation of the different programmes and schemes for the all round development of the tribal groups.

- First of all widespread illiteracy in tribal areas has to be wiped out. For that massive literacy drive and adult education programmes should be implemented by the government by appointing unemployed graduates in tribal areas. Such graduates should be given proper training by tribal welfare centres. In such centres the languages of the tribal should be taught to the trainees who will work in tribal blocks and among the tribals.
- Special literacy drives should be undertaken for tribal women. They should be made aware about the importance of sanitary living habits as well as their role in the maintenance of family health.
- Health education should be impacted by the local tribal women with guidelines provided by health functionaries.
- It is very necessary to stop land alienation, harassment and exploitation of the tribals in the hands of moneylenders, contractors, middlemen, police and rural elite.
- There is need to rehabilitate the bonded labourers at places which are at a safe distance, away from easy reach of their exploiters.
- Need to open primary schools, ashram type schools and hostels in tribal areas on a large scale and to entrust their management to the tribal development department.
- If some crèches for tribal infants are maintained then the girls can be spared for schooling.
- All the tribal welfare schemes may be implemented by the labour contract co-operative societies organized among and by the tribals and not by the contractors.

If such steps are seriously taken it will certainly result in better and effective and the benefits have been reached definitely to the tribals. They have been treated as mere receivers of the benefits and they have not been involved either in the decision making process or information or implementation of the plans and programs. It is very essential that they are actively involved in planning as well as to create confidence among them in these policies of the government. Such an approach would make the planned efforts of the government more meaningful.

References

- I.Chandra, Amitava, 'Report on Socio-Economic Conditions of Kalsi Block in District Dehradun', Journal of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, 20:2(summer),
- II.Report of the National Workshop on Development Needs of Tribal Women, National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, New Delhi, 1990.
- III.Hasnain, Nadeem, 'Exploitation As Cultural Environment, The case of Kolta- Their Interactional Behaviour, World view and Values', Paper Seminar: Tribal Situation in U.P., Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, Lucknow, February 19-21, 1988.
- IV.Panchjanya, Jeevan Ke Moolbhoot Suvidhayon Se Vanchit Hai Uttar Pradesh Ke Vanvasi. Panchjanya, 51(19):10-11 (Hindi), 1997.
- V.Bahuguna, M.M, 'Chalees Varsh Bad Bhee Janjatiyan Vikas Se Vanchit, Hindustan: 5th January, 1987 (Hindi).
- VI.Saksena, R.N., 'Economic Serfdom Amongst Koltas of Jaunsar-Bawar', Tribal Souvenir, Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, New Delhi, 1963.
- VII.Government of Uttar-Pradesh, Harijan and Social Welfare Departmnet, 'Annual Tribal Sub-Plan (Kheri and Gonda) for 1983-84,' Lucknow, 1983
- VIII.Agarwal, S., Uttar Pradesh Ke Tarai Khetra Mein Tharu Janjati Ki Aarthik Sthiti Ka Vishleshanatmak Adhyan (Ph.D Thesis), Ruhelkhand University, Ruhelkhand 1993 (Hindi).
- IX.Bisht, B.S, Shauka Janjati Mein Mahilayon Ki Paristheti. In 'Uttranchal: Grameen Samudaya.' Almora Book Depot, Almora, 1997 (Hindi).
- X.Chattopadhyaya, Kamaladevi, Tribalism in India: Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1978.
- XI.Elvin, Varrier., A New Deal for Tribal India, Manager of Publications, Governmnet of India Press, Delhi, 1963.
- XII.Mukhopadhyay, Lipi., Tribal Women in Development, Publication Devison Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 2002.

