



Socio-Economic Conditions of Nomadic Tribe Women's in Karnataka

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Abstract

Nomadic Communities are the most neglected and marginalized sections of Indian society. They are victims of stigma, social neglect and exploitation for centuries. Even after so many decades of Independence, they lack even the most basic amenities of life. Women among them suffer the most. Their literacy rate is very low. Most of them don't have access to health care facilities. They suffer from a number of atrocities not only by people of other communities but within their own families.

Key Words: Occupational profile, Social System

Introduction

One of the major problems faced by policy makers has been the lack of relevant data and information about various socio-economic issues concerning these communities. Since this section of society has been on the margins for centuries, not many research studies have been conducted on their problems, which makes the task of policy makers difficult for developing adequate welfare policies and schemes for them. Therefore we hope this present study will be able to bridge this gap and will provide an insight in the problems faced by women of these social groups.

The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- To develop deep insight into the socio-economic factors responsible for the problem of women of De notified & Nomadic Communities
- To assesses their socio-economic status and evolving new scopes and challenges
- To appraise the effectiveness of various government schemes and interventions targeting the prevention of various atrocities and their rehabilitation.
- To evaluate coordination among various government agencies dealing with their problems.

- To assess the role of voluntary organizations working at grass root level and engaged in creating awareness, providing counselling and rehabilitative services.
- To give suggestions and recommendations to the govt. about new methods and approaches to tackle their problems.

Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status of women of these communities as well as the impact of various laws on their livelihood and their relationship with other communities. The descriptive design was helpful in getting to know the inner most feelings, views and attitudes of the respondents. The study also tried to critically evaluate the impact of various welfare programme and schemes meant for their development, and identify other influencing factors, and make necessary recommendations for the effective alternative strategies.

Majority of people from Denotified & Nomadic Communities want to earn their livelihood through their traditional occupations as the alternative sources of income for them are limited due to lack of resources and lack of skills. Qalandars are still engaged in their traditional occupation of holding street shows of monkeys. Some of them hold magic shows. Earlier many of them had bears too. But due the enactment of 'Wildlife Protection Act' and 'Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act', they are not allowed now to keep bears and hold their shows. Some of them have begun selling precious stones. Even for this they are forced to pay bribe to police. Otherwise they are picked up under the Prevention of Begging Act and sent to beggars home. Same is the story of Nats, who also perform acrobatic shows on the streets.

That most of the women of Denotified and Nomadic Communities take care of various responsibilities such as cooking food, washing clothes, cleaning house, taking care of children etc. Women from these communities are very hard working. A large number of them go out to earn as well as take care of household activities. Fetching water is also a major responsibility of women. Most of them were willing to work and earn some supplementary income for their families. They have a liking for knitting, stitching, embroidery, making mud toys, handicrafts and other decorative articles. But they need some training and resources to begin their own small enterprises.

Begging is common among denotified and nomadic communities. When there is nothing else to do, they especially women and children just go for begging. But begging, as they say, is full of hazards. Sometimes they are caught begging by the police under the Prevention of Begging Act, and taken to remand homes. Young girls begging on streets face sexual harassment by goons roaming around. Some of the women especially from Kanjars are in prostitution. But when asked about this they deny and protest. But it is evident that some of these communities might have practiced it long time ago, but none of them wants to do it by choice now. Some of the women and girls also work as rag pickers. Many of them can be seen roaming in the streets with polythene bags on their shoulders for collecting waste like paper, plastic, tins and bottles. Many of them suffer from skin diseases and other ailments as they are continuously in contact with garbage.

Occupational profile

Occupational profile of women vary significantly from community to community. In Kanjars, Nat and GadiaLohar communities, women are almost equal partners in income generating activities. They are very hard working and laborious. They earn as well as take care of household responsibilities such as cooking, washing clothes and cleaning the house, and caring for children. Women among Qalanders and Rai Sikhs mainly remain inside their homes. Men don't like their women to work outside. But still some women from Qalander community work as rag pickers. Many Sansi women from Majnu Ka Tila sell paper made flags alongside the roads or in buses. Some of them sell liquors and also go for begging. Women and girls from Nat community take active part in holding street acrobatic shows. Recently some of them have also begun selling flowers and other small items on the street.

Women were willing to learn new skills and work to earn extra income for the family. They have a liking for knitting, stitching, embroidery, stuffed toys and handicrafts. But lack of capital and marketing skills is a major handicap. Besides, women also take keen interest in animal husbandry. If given enough incentives and loans on low interest, it can generate extra income and supplement the diet of the family members. Almost all families belonging to these communities are very poor, and live just hand to mouth. Even survival is a constant struggle for them with their daily earnings being very low and hardly enough to sustain the entire family.

In 1947, Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee was constituted in the United Province, which recommended ways to settle them and adopt adequate welfare measures for their proper rehabilitation.

In 1949, a committee was established under the chairmanship of Mr. AnanthsayanamAyyangar, which submitted its report in 1950 and made several recommendations for the repeal of the Act. The Government of India accepted some of the recommendations of the Ayyangar Committee. It repealed the Criminal Tribes Act with effect from 31 August 1952 by the Criminal Tribes (Repeal) Act, 1952 (Act No XXIV of 1952). And this is how they came to be known as De notified Communities.

A nomad is a person with no settled home, who moves from place to place as a way of obtaining food, finding pasture for livestock, or otherwise making a living. The word nomad comes from a Greek word that means one who wanders for pasture. Most nomadic groups follow a fixed annual or seasonal pattern of movements and settlements. Nomadic peoples traditionally travel by animal or on foot. Today, some nomads travel by motor vehicle. Most nomads live in tents or other portable shelters.

In 2006, a National Commission for De notified, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Tribes was constituted under the chairmanship of Shri Balkrishna SidramRenke. After visiting DNT settlements all over the country, and holding hectic consultations with stakeholders the commission submitted its report on 30th June, 2008. It made several recommendations to the Govt. of India about how to improve the living standard of these communities

Housing is one of the major problems of these communities. Since most of them have been nomadic and have been wandering in the past to earn their living, they never had a permanent home or settlement. The overall conditions prevailing in the slums and J J Clusters inhabited by these communities are horrible. Most of the families put up their Jhuggis in a slum or at a vacant patch of land alongside the road as they can't afford an accommodation. The condition of living even in resettlement colonies is not better.

Social System

Most of the families don't have enough space in their houses to have a separate toilet. So most of the people either use public toilets or go into open field. Even the women have to go to defecate in the open. If given a choice, people are ready to build and use toilets at home. Open defecation is a major cause of poor community sanitation, and a threat to public health. Women are more vulnerable to various infections.

Women of these communities are not only the victims of neglect and exploitation by people from outside community, but also suffer tremendous pain and agony inflicted by their own people within the family. The life of a nomad is very hard and difficult surrounded by circumstances full of trauma, agony and turbulence, from which their women suffer the most. Drinking is in common use in most of the de notified and nomadic communities. This has been an integral part of their food habits for centuries. Incidents of domestic violence were reported by many women inflicted mostly by their husbands under the influence of alcohol. Women bear all this in silence as it is considered the fundamental right of a husband to beat his wife. These cases are mostly not reported.

Some of the women and girls also work as rag pickers. Many of them can be seen roaming in the streets with polythene bags on their shoulders for collecting waste like paper, plastic, tins and bottles. Many of them suffer from skin diseases and other ailments as they are continuously in contact with garbage. Begging is common among de notified and nomadic communities. When there is nothing else to do, they especially women and children just go for begging. But begging, as they say, is full of hazards. Sometimes they are caught begging by the police under the Prevention of Begging Act, and taken to remand homes. Young girls begging on streets face sexual harassment by goons roaming around.

The women of these communities have a liking for knitting, stitching, embroidery, making mud toys, handicrafts and other decorative articles. These women are willing to learn new skills and work to earn extra income for the family. But lack of capital and marketing skills is a major handicap. Besides, women also take keen interest in animal husbandry. If given enough incentives and loans on low interest, it can generate extra income and supplement the diet of the family members.

Conclusion

The study was aimed at having an objective assessment of the effectiveness of various welfare programmes and interventions undertaken by the government to help these women enjoy a full and decent life with dignity and achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration. It looked into the qualitative

as well as quantitative changes taking place as a result of their interaction with other communities in an effort to improve their standard of living, and to remove the barriers for their full and effective participation in social and economic development. The study also examined the needs of special care focusing on the most vulnerable women belonging to these communities.

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