

**Rural Development Through Tribal Farm Women Empowerment :
A Case Study of Paharia Tribe in Godda District of Jharkhand**

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ABSTRACT

The present study focuses on how country's rural development agenda could be fulfilled by empowering tribal farm women in involving them purposefully in agricultural development process running through crop production, vermi-composting sericulture, apiculture, live stock management, horticulture, social forestry, silvi-pastoral activities, post harvest operation, fisheries and dairy management. Though rural development is a complex and challenging process, the tribal women in Jharkhand state can play a predominant and vital role in maintaining its sustainability while accomplishing individual family's food and nutritional security. This study delves into socio-economic condition of tribal women of Paharia tribe in Godda district of Jharkhand.

Key words : Rural Development, Tribal Farm Women, Agricultural development, Food and nutritional security.

Introduction:

In India, women constitute about 48 percent of total population. Women's average contribution in the field of agriculture varies from 55-60% of the total labour force. Women in the rural parts of the country constitute an important workforce in agriculture and allied sector which include Crop production, Livestock management, Horticulture, Silvi-pastoral activities, Post-harvest operation, Social Forestry, Fisheries, Apiculture and Dairy Management. In the primary sector, women contribute more than men but enjoy no control over their earnings. It deprives their opportunities for effective participation in decision-making process, both at home and the community. Women realise their potential and equip them for better employment and wages. The gender wise educational imbalance in India impairs women contribution to development process and systematically excludes them

from participatory growth. Despite the significant role of women in agricultural and animal husbandry activities, the government and extension programmes often bypassed women which deprive them the status of skilled labourers and to get the decent return for their labour. Women handicapped by the lack of new skills will find themselves marginalised in the changed economy.

Poverty in general and extreme poverty in particular has a significant gender dimension. The women's capacity to work, her health, her knowledge and her skill endowments are often the only resources to call upon for survival. Poor the family, the greater its dependence or an inverse correlation between household economic status on the one hand and women's labour force participation and their proportional contribution to total family income on the other. Thus, enhancing women's economic productivity is an important strategic necessity for improving the welfare of the estimated 60 million Indian households still below the poverty line.

In India, women work 14 to 17 hours per day as per some studies. Some researchers remarked that women labour force in India is a reserve pool of helpless labour. It is observed that half of the women labour is unpaid and the other half is underpaid. Women's household activities are not at all considered as work and they are not paid for it.

In the primary sector women contribute more than men but enjoy no control over their earnings. It deprives their opportunities for effective participation in decision-making process, both at home and the community.

Access to education, extension services and training will empower women. Technology will equip them to acquire new skill and to lessen their drudgery. Educating women has the multiplier effects than educating men. Literacy alone makes women realize their potential and equip them for better employment and wages. The gender wise educational imbalance in India impairs women contribution to development process and systematically excludes them from participatory growth. Despite the significant husbandry activities, the government and extension programmes often bypassed women which deprive them the status of skilled labours and to get the decent return for their labour. Women handicapped by the lack of new skills will find themselves marginalized in the changed economy.

Poverty can be alleviated through rural development designed to increase production and enhance productivity. Rural development recognises, however, that improved food supplies and nutrition together with basic services such as health and education can not only directly

improve the physical well-being and quality of life of the rural poor, but can also indirectly raise their productivity, their ability to contribute to the national economy. It is the fact that women contribute larger part in shaping and developing the family, community which in turn make the nation developed in all aspects of life. Hence, it would be befitting that emphasis is given for all-round development of the society to the rural women than their counterparts. The objectives of rural development extend beyond any particular sector, they must encompass improved productivity, increased employment, higher income for target groups, minimum acceptable levels of food, shelter, education and health, equal opportunity to men and women and lastly enhancing the quality of life among the people living in rural regions of the country and more specifically the rural women who are the backbone of families' development. It is the fact today that no development objectives can be achieved without making women self-reliant. Therefore, there is an urgent need to empower women to enable them to act upon swiftly to accomplish their total development and the development of the society to which they belong through strengthening their innate vitality i.e. nothing but empowerment.

In India, rural women spend on an average 40.4 percent and 15.8 percent respectively in home and farm related activities. They have lived with scarcity of resources and the threat of economic deprivation for last many years. In cases where cast and family taboos are not strong, women joined the secondary stream of workforce in order to raise supplement resources. The studies reveal that day to day life of rural women has been full of hardship, deprivation and struggle to survive. Apart from this they have to bear the exclusive burden of managing household activities. Women closer to the urban area seek job as construction labourers and household servants or engage in small trades like selling vegetables. For the rural women, life has meant that they are borne to live as beasts of burden and to die without having lived even one moment for themselves. A rural woman finds relief and freedom only in death. But this sad, unpleasant and unwanted scenario of suffering rural women is slowly changing towards desired direction of their empowerment.

With empowerment, women do not remain as "objects" of social change but becomes "agents" of it. There is no doubt that economic contribution of women is related to their status and role in the family and in the society. If a woman is economically a parasite, she can never claim an equal status with her counterpart man. The problem of Poverty can not in any way be tackled without providing opportunities to productive employment to rural

women. Women's participation in the labour force also brings about changes in awareness and attitude which may have long term benefits such as access to health, and education programmes, reduction in birth rates, thrift and savings etc. More over, economic independence of women will create far-reaching social changes and provide a necessary weapon for them to challenge injustice and discrimination.

To attain the objective relating to women empowerment following strategies may be adopted:

- (i) Generation of economic policies that have a positive impact on the employment and income of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors and adopt specific measures to address women's employment.
- (ii) Taking particular measures to promote and strengthen policies and programmes for full participation of women with respect to their cultural diversity.
- (iii) Promoting and supporting women's self employment and the development of small enterprises and strengthen women's access to credit and capital on appropriate terms equal to those of men through the scaling of institutions dedicated to promote women's entrepreneurship, including appropriate non-traditional and mutual credit schemes, as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions.
- (iv) Adopting policies that support business organizations, non-governmental organizations, co-operatives, revolving loan funds, credit-unions, grassroot organizations, women's self help groups and other groups in order to provide services to women entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas.

The recent technological revolution and break through made in the agricultural and other allied areas can significantly contribute and enhance the empowerment process of rural women. As most of the rural women engage themselves in agriculture related activities for their earning or income generation activities, the technological advances can help them to reduce their drudgery and improve their work efficiency and earn more.

The Problems:

Jharkhand region is a home to many of the oldest tribes of India. This area has more than 32 different tribes as its inhabitants. The Paharia tribe, a unique tribal specie, as its very name indicates, live on the hill tops of Raj Mahal Hills. With time, they have come to occupy the lower levels and have settled in the foothills of the region. As revealed by demographic surveys, this tribe has more than average birth rate among females, higher death rate of infants, higher mortality rate among females. Mortality and average age figures show that tribal population in past dwindling and individuals above 50 years of age

hardly survive. Today, Paharia have been reduced to a mere 90,761 people in the state, alienated from their forests and struggling poverty, malnutrition and human trafficking.

This tribe is one of the most backward tribes of India. A descendant of the Dravid Maler race, having migrated here in ancient times, this tribe has failed to assimilate itself with other tribals of the region and has been living in a pitiable economic and social milieu. Lack of adequate health facility, addiction to wine, mal-nutrition and unhygienic life style in addition to disappearance of traditional ecological environment have affected them severely. Economy being dependent on agriculture, forest and livestock play truant with them as it is fast being drained by exploitation of traders, erratic way of expenditure on social ceremonies, alcoholic drinks and faulty storage system. No doubt, these factors have a degenerative effect or their genetic gradual extinction.

Though the constitution has special protective umbrella for the tribals, the last sixty five years of Independence, have not seen any major change in their socio-economic pattern of life. The Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA)/Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) had many provisions for the development of the tribes and tribal region but hardly any impact is visible on the Paharia tribe in specific and other tribes in general. Apart from these manners, many central and state schemes of social welfare are being run to improve the socio-economic conditions of these generally deprived people. But these too have shown little impact in ameliorating their pitiable socio-economic state of affairs.

Numerically being insignificant and not in a position to convert their strength into political advantage, they have also failed to catch the attention of the scholars to their socio-economic plight. There is an urgent need to study this tribe in proper perspective and find out justifiably needed policy decisions to save this dwindling tribe from extinction.

Theoretical Principles involved:

The study is based on the theoretical assumption that the government's socio-economic interventions have not reached the people. The benefit of these programmes have reached only powerful sections of the society. In the case of Paharias, very little benefit of socio-economic educational welfare schemes have reached them as they are one of the most politically silent tribes. Numerically, too being a minority, even the Jharkhand state has not been able to address their problems.

Objectives:

The present study encompasses the following objectives:

- (i) To analyse the various factors influencing the rural women empowerment.
- (ii) To study the socio-economic condition of the Paharia tribal women.
- (iii) To identify the problems encountered sericulture, apiculture by the Paharia tribes.
- (iv) Implementation of vermitechnology and apiculture for tribal women empowerment.
- (v) To suggest measures for the betterment of Paharia tribal women.

Methodology:

A study of socio-economic condition of Paharia Tribe women was conducted in the year January 2013 to June 2013 by personal interview technique with the help of pretested schedule. A sample of 100 Paharia Tribal Family was selected for the study from Godda district of Jharkhand.

Results and Discussion:

The prosperity and development of any region is dependent on the socio-economic condition of rural people.

Table : 1

Socio-Economic condition of Paharia Tribal women of Godda district of Jharkhand State.

| Variable and Category | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| 1. Education | | |
| (i) Illiterate | 92 | 92.00 |
| (ii) Primary & Middle | 08 | 8.00 |
| (iii) Secondary | - | - |
| (iv) College | - | - |
| (v) Professional Education | - | - |
| 2. Family Size | | |
| (i) 1-4 members | 12 | 12.00 |
| (ii) 5-8 members | 85 | 85.00 |
| (iii) 9 and above members | 03 | 3.00 |
| 3. Annual Income | | |
| (i) Below Rs. 6500/- | 80 | 80.00 |
| (ii) In between Rs. 6500/- to Rs. 20,000/- | 20 | 20.00 |
| (iii) Above Rs. 20,000/- | - | - |

From Table: 1 it is clear that 92% of tribal women were illiterates and 8% of tribal women have nominal education in terms of primary and middle education.

With respect to family size, it was found that majority (85%) of Paharia tribal women believe in big sized (5-8 members) family due to high child mortality rate among the Paharia tribes.

Majority (80%) of the Paharia tribal had an annual income below Rs. 6500/-. The possible reasons could be the poorer socio-economic conditions. Vermicompost biotechnology is just taking root in India. Vermiculture means scientific method of breeding and raising earthworms in controlled conditions. It aims at creating good environmental conditions and employment generation among the tribal women.

Table : 2

Earning of the tribal women respondents in Godda district of Jharkhand

| Sl. No. | No. of Women | No. of Women | Percentage of women | No. of days in a year | Average Earning of an individual (Rs.) |
|---------|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 01. | Works in other fields | 90 | 90.00 | 62 | 2,400 |
| 02. | Works in development project | 10 | 10.00 | 78 | 2,400 |
| 03. | Forest Visit | 100 | 100.00 | 180 | 1,500 |
| 04. | Animal husbandry | 92 | 92.00 | Past time | Milk, Goat, Pigs etc. |
| 05. | Social Festival | 100 | 100.00 | 15 | - |

Analysis of data earning of the respondents is furnished in Table: 2. To visit the forest is a natural instinct of the tribal women but it is need based and during the course of the study it was noted that respondent earns approx. Rs. 1,500 head in one season by selling the forest produce and fuel wood. Apiculture is an employment generating industry giving gainful employment to the rural masses. It is remarkable for its low investment and quick and high returns which makes it an ideal industry that fits into socio-economic fabric of rural India.

The factors which influence economic empowerment among tribal women were classified as technological, personal, economic, physical and market factors. The respondents were asked to indicate which factors under each influence them and the percentage analysis is used.

Table : 3
Factors influencing Entrepreneurship

| Factors | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Technological | |
| (i) Guidance from private agencies | 08 |
| (ii) Guidance from extension personnel | 40 |
| (iii) Guidance from SHG | 75 |
| (iv) Guidance from NGO | 65 |
| Personal Factors | |
| (i) Own Interest | 90 |
| (ii) Self-Confidence | 95 |
| (iii) Eagerness to evaluate enterprise | 43 |
| (iv) Risk taking ability | 20 |
| (v) Achievement motivation | 18 |
| (vi) Anticipation of future possibilities | 18 |
| (vii) Experience | 60 |
| (viii) Educational qualification | 20 |
| Economic Factors | |
| (i) Initial Investment | 55 |
| (ii) Possession of ancestral property | 05 |
| (iii) Demand for the products | 80 |
| (iv) Resource recycling | 05 |
| Physical Factors | |
| (i) Availability of inputs | 63 |
| (ii) Good transport facilities | 93 |
| (iii) Own vehicle | 03 |
| (iv) Good roads | 05 |
| Market Factors | |
| (i) Good market potential | 80 |
| (ii) Response prices | 83 |
| (iii) Nearness to the market | 03 |

From the above Table: 3, it is clear that availability of SHGs for consultancy as the technology factor influencing their entrepreneurship expressed by 75% of the respondents followed by NGO which is expressed by 65% of the respondents. Among the personal factors, self confidence was expressly 95% of the respondents. About 90% of the respondents had expressed the personal factor own interest as factor influencing their

entrepreneurship. Among the economic factors, demand for the product was expressed by 80% of the respondents. Higher demand results in higher economic gain from the enterprise. The next important economic factor as expressed by 55 percent of the respondents was initial investment. Initial investment must be strong to setup or to maintain or to expand the enterprise. High investment makes the enterprise viable and therefore the returns are high. Physical factors which influenced the entrepreneurship were good transport facilities and availability of inputs. Regarding market factors, response prices 83% and good market potential 80% were major factors influencing entrepreneurship. Potential market and responsive prices will influence one to set up the enterprise and expand. The data are collected on various constraints encountered by tribal women in relation to attend different training programmes and these are categorized as social, economic, technical and other and is presented in Table: 4.

Table : 4
Constraints perceived by Tribal women in attending various training programmes.

N=100

| Sl · N o. | Constraints | Frequency (N=100) | Percentage |
|--------------------|---|----------------------|------------|
| | Social | | |
| 0 1. | Villager's Criticism | 65 | 65.00 |
| 0 2. | Lack of Co-operation from group members | 48 | 48.00 |
| 0 3. | Shyness/inhibition of participants | 58 | 58.00 |
| 0 4. | Difficulty in getting permission from husband | 61 | 61.00 |
| | Economic | | |
| 0 1. | Lack of finance to adopt the technique learnt in training | 60 | 60.00 |
| 0 | Losing wages | 75 | 75.00 |

| | | | |
|---------|---|----|-------|
| 2. | | | |
| | Technical | | |
| 0 1. | Difficulty in understanding | 50 | 50.00 |
| 0 2. | Lock of interaction | 56 | 56.00 |
| 0 3. | Sometimes more theoretical | 35 | 35.00 |
| 0 4. | Lack of conviction | 31 | 31.00 |
| 0 5 | Skills/techniques taught not always suitable | 38 | 38.00 |
| 0 6. | Lack of input supply | 50 | 50.00 |
| | Others | | |
| 0 1. | More work load/responsibility | 78 | 78.00 |
| 0 2. | Difficult to attend training programmes which are conducted outside | 76 | 76.00 |
| 0 3. | Difficult to attend long duration training programmes | 68 | 68.00 |

Rural women's role as preservers of the forest wealth can be further accentuated by more technical knowledge on its nursery maintenance-nursery grafts of horticulture and other perennial crops. These activities will help women to generate extra or additional income.

Table : 5**Benefits/Utility of the training programmes as perceived by the respondents**

| Sl. No | Benefits | Frequency (N=100) | Percent |
|--------|---|-------------------|---------|
| 01 | Opportunity to get together | 79 | 79.00 |
| 02 | Shyness/inhibition reduced | 55 | 55.00 |
| 03 | Gaining self confidence | 44 | 44.00 |
| 04 | Awareness and knowledge level increased | 54 | 54.00 |
| 05 | Importance of savings realised | 60 | 60.00 |
| 06 | Small and marginal farmers benefited economically | 55 | 55.00 |
| 07 | Banking procedures learnt | 65 | 65.00 |
| 08 | Women's involvement in various village activities increased | 25 | 25.00 |

The respondents were asked to state various benefits perceived by them in attending different training programmes and the same is represented in Table: 5. Majority of respondents (79.00%) reported that they are able to get together due to various training programmes. This is a great opportunity for them to discuss simultaneously various aspects concerning them other than training related matter. Due to attending training programmes of SHGs, women have learnt banking procedures, realized importance of saving and small and marginal farmers benefited economically as reported by 65, 60 and 55 percent of the respondents respectively. Because of frequent participation in different training programmes, there is decrease in shyness as indicated (55%). Initially, shy nature of women might have prevented them to participate effectively in the training programmes. But, repeated exposures to such training programmes might have reduced their shyness to a

considerable extent. About 54 percent of the respondents have expressed that training programmes have helped them in increasing their awareness and knowledge level on various agricultural technology which shows that training programmes are really useful. However, during study, following soci-cultural barriers were found as faced by the tribal women:

- (i) Illiteracy
- (ii) Non-availability of critical inputs for adoption of improved agricultural practices.
- (iii) Lack of exposure regarding latest communication technologies.
- (iv) Resistance from the family members with respect to free mixing with the male counterpart at community hall meeting.
- (v) Lack of time to be spent for watching and listening T.V. and Radio due to heavy domestic work burden of the tribal women.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

In rural India, no development could be achieved on sustainable basis until and unless its women folk are developed and empowered socially and economically. The only means to achieve this is to alleviate poverty and eliminate drudgery in their day to day lives and actions.

Involvement of women is essential in all stages of economic and social activities. Therefore, organizing tribal women in Self Help Groups (SHGs) will enhance the status of women as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life.

From the above study it can be said that without induction of some well planned programme, the rural development of tribal region by empowering tribal women is not possible. Hence, following suggestions may be incorporated:

1. Location specific, remunerative system which have capacity to enrich the soil could be introduced and tribal rural women who engage themselves mostly in those kind of activities will be able to enjoy much in reaping the maximum benefits. Tribal women also required to be provided with knowledge and skills in multi-storied cropping systems which generally they do in their homestead and which also create available micro climate for crops and can tap solar energy more efficiently.
2. The tools and implements generally used by tribal women in their agriculture related operations in the field takes a lot of their energy because of non-suitability in its use by them. Ergonomically designed farm machinery, tools and implements that art

genderised can ensure tribal rural women more employment and add value to their time and indirectly enhance their earnings.

3. Integrated farming systems with inclusion of diversified farming components like crop (food grains-plantations-horticultural crops-fodder crops-cash crops), Livestock (dairying-sheep and goat rearing-piggery-poultry) and allied areas (sericulture-apiculture-mushroom cultivation-social forestry) can be appropriately packaged and talked to tribal rural women for its purposeful and meaningful adaptation in their farming/homestead activities. The total process of integrated farming can optimally help them earn more and improve their life style.
4. Cultural practices like contour cultivation, summer ploughing, stale seed bed preparation, weed control, micro watershed development, cyclic padding and drying in rice, seed selection and treatment, nutrient application and use of pesticides and herbicides could well be exposed meaningfully to the tribal rural women resulting their confidence building in agriculture operation for better earning and living.
5. Hybrid technology seed producing activity which needs finite skilful operation could employ more tribal women and generally they have knack for it. It is generally seen that about 70 percent of employees in hybrid seed production sector are women. However, the saddest part of it is that though women do the better job in this kind of specially skilful activities, they receive less wages than their male counterparts. This should be reversed.
6. Another area where women have shown special interest and efficiency that is tissue culture technology. This can be specially made known and available to most of the rural women which may enhance their capacity in the particular area and could be engaged and employed for better earning living.
7. Tribal women's role as preservers of the forest wealth can be further accentuated by more technical knowledge on its nursery maintenance-nursery grafts of horticulture and other perennial crops. These activities will help women to generate extra or additional income.
8. Livestock participatory extension services with an eye to empower women with specific livestock production technologies like clean milking concept, cultivation of new fodder grasses are definitely rural ways of sustaining production systems.

In the process, rural tribal women can employ themselves most of the days of the year and add value to their strength and earnings which definitely help them in their empowerment objective.

In the present globalised regime without economic and social liberalisation of women, no true liberation of women is possible and also without the provision of equal economic and social opportunities to women no emancipation of women truly occurs. Further, it is only when the rural women is allowed to participate as an equal partner in the most vital process of development of the nation, the rural development will take place in a real sense.

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