

An impact analysis of hidden hunger among working tribal women in the unorganized sector of Jharkhand

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ABSTRACT

Nutrition is one of the essential components of human health and well-being. Poor nutritional status for an individual is detrimental to his/her physical and psychological health. In the dictionary of anthropology, Tribal is defined as a social group usually within a definite area, with a with a dialect, cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organization. Tribals have not only retained their separate ethnic and cultural identity from the non-tribal population, but each of the tribal groups has conserved and nurtured its own distinct sociocultural and linguistic tradition (Roy, 2004). The tribal women constitute, like any other social group, about half of the total population.

Keywords: Socio-economic, Undernutrition, Hidden Hunger, Malnutrition Hinduisation, Retribalisation, Industrialisation, Modernization.

The tribal women, as women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men. Like other social groups, the tribal women share problems related to reproductive health. When primary and secondary subsistence activities are counted, women work more than men. The conceptual framework to analyze women's status comprises the seven roles women play in life and work: parental, conjugal, domestic, kin, occupational, community, and as an individual.



Women in the unorganized sector confront multiple difficulties, such as inequitable employment and salary possibilities, inadequate maternity benefits, and increased susceptibility to sexual harassment. Despite the presence of laws in place to safeguard women's rights, there are still concerns about implementing these laws into effect and addressing cultural hurdles, that have been hampering the achievement of gender equality in the workplace for a long time. There are many studies that underline the immediate imperative for substantial changes to address the aforementioned challenges. It

promotes the enactment of stronger legal regulations, educational initiatives, empowerment initiatives, and transformations in societal attitudes towards creating a just, equitable, and more inclusive workplace for women in the unregulated sector of the Indian economy. Tribal women today face many problems due to lack of education. These include witch hunting, in which women are the victims, child marriage and immoral trafficking.

Total ST Population of Jharkhand is 1164624, according to the 2011 census. Data prior to the 2011 Census indicate that the literacy rate of Jharkhand was abysmally low. School dropouts were common among tribal children. But things have improved now. As per data from the ASER Report 2022, the number of out of school children has declined in Jharkhand. Government statistics also indicate that the transition rate among both boys and girls in tribal areas has improved. The need of hour is a comprehensive strategy that involves various stakeholders, such as government agencies, employers, organizations from civil society, and women themselves. The approach thus, seeks to enhance women's financial autonomy, safeguard their rights, and advance social equity. In essence, the contention posits that India can fully utilize its unorganized sector to empower women economically in the 21st century by addressing systemic obstacles and advocating a culture of gender equality.

The Socioeconomic status of the tribal

Economy is characterized as subsistence oriented. The subsistence economy is based mainly on collecting, hunting, and fishing, or a combination of hunting and collecting with shifting cultivation. Even the so-called plough using agricultural tribes do often, wherever scope is available, supplement their economy with hunting and collecting. Subsistence economy is characterized by simple technology, simple division of labour, small-scale units of production and no investment of capital. The social unit of production, distribution and consumption is limited to the family and lineage. Subsistence economy is imposed by circumstances beyond the control of human beings, poverty of the physical environment, ignorance of efficient techniques for exploiting natural resources, and lack of capital for investment. It also implies the existence of barter and a lack of trade.

The tribal society is mostly and comparatively egalitarian and tribal women have been equivalent partners with tribal men in involvement of household economy. Even in certain cases, the tribal women carry out physical labour in their agricultural fields and forest than their male counterparts. Tribal women have usually enjoyed a higher social status in their own communities than Indian women in general. Considering gender and migration jointly, that would provide key insights into numerous questions revolving around the altering surroundings of the tribal women who find it difficult to adjust and accommodate. Questions pertaining to the issue might figure out – what are the changes that crop up in gender roles? What employment opportunities are available, and what jobs do the tribal women wish to take up? What are the exact needs or vulnerabilities that tribal women confront while adjusting to new surroundings and non-tribal communities? Migration of tribal women might strengthen the gender stereotypical roles. The gender division of labor culminates in the underutilization of tribal women's skills and consequently may push them into the ugly clutches of the flesh trade.

The socio-economic profile of tribal's especially the tribal women of the Jharkhand is quite low compared to tribal men and general population (also associated with poor nutritional and health status among the tribal's. As indicated earlier, the tribal's are engaged in various occupations like hunting, fishing, gathering of forest products, shifting cultivation to settled agriculture, rural crafts and artisans. A very small proportion of tribal

communities are engaged in non-agricultural activities as mendicants, bards, pastoralists leading a semi-nomadic to nomadic life. Apart from the day to day routine household work, the tribal women work in the agricultural fields and also in forests for longer spans of time. On the whole, the output seen in terms of number of hours of work is low. Their schedule of long working hours continues even during pregnancy, natal and postnatal stages. They have a negative energy balance, high morbidity rate, and low child survival rate. They suffer from taboos and superstitions and remain deprived of the benefits from existing development and welfare programmes. Most of the natural resources including minerals are located in tribal areas. The tribal population is the most disadvantaged social group in Jharkhand. A clear manifestation of this is the distinctly higher incidence of poverty among the tribal population as compared to the general population.

Tribal's are being alienated from their land and forest due to the ongoing de-forestation, hydro-electric power generation, industrial growth and mining activities. The natural resources are being exploited in a way, which leads to a process of gradual displacement and denying the basic right of livelihood to the adivasis. Massive investment in construction of dams, power plants, industrialization and mining create wealth to the nation and employment opportunities to various people but all these are hardly of any benefit to the tribal's rather they lead to their social and cultural deprivation, land alienation, destruction of environment and displacements, which is often without any rehabilitation.

They are heavily represented in migration. Before independence the out-migration of tribal's women to the urban and industrial cities was very meager. This was due to the constraints of physical environment. The limited needs of the tribal's also did not motivate them to come to cities. After independence there has been a considerable shift in the scenario. The transformation is an offshoot of the implementation of Five-Year Plans and Annual Plans which resulted in tribal development. The Directive Principles of the State Policy in our constitution has been the fountain head of special programmes in the field of social, political and economic development of the tribal's aiming at integrating them at the various levels of rural and urban communities. Secondly, the safeguards provided by the constitution have made them capable of availing great opportunities of education, entrepreneurship and also

jobs in organized sector including Government service.

A large number of women and girls from tribal areas migrate to cities and towns in Jharkhand. Most of these women and girls are illiterate and unskilled. They work in inhuman conditions in cities as their living standard is extremely poor. A great number of these migrants are being exploited by middlemen, contractors, construction companies and other types of employers. Many of these women and girls work as house maids where their working hours extend up to 18 hours per day. A large number of tribal women and girls become victims of sexual and financial exploitation. Their children rarely get an opportunity to go to school and learn a productive skill. Gradually many women and girls lose contact with their kith and kin back home and become alienated from their culture.

In tribal areas land is a symbol of the organization of the community. When a transfer takes place beyond the threshold point, the community looks upon the process as alienation. It is thus obvious, that transfer of land is not merely a question of exploitation of innocent tribal's by cunning people and there are more complex factors involved in it. One of the important problems which arise in some areas, after enthusiastic response to the programme of education, is the psychological resistance amongst the tribal's. For some time, the educated youths were in a position to avail new employment opportunity in the surrounding area. But in those areas the minimum level of education has raised, resulting in making it increasingly difficult. They find themselves blocked by the more advanced groups, who are more articulate and educationally better off. They psychologically, detach themselves from their local surrounding but when they fail to get a foothold in the modern sector, they get disappointed and develop frustration. The gulf between the life in the tribal home and the life in a residential hostel particularly in urban areas is an important contributing factor for non-adjustment. Another important fact is that the tribal has no social linkages with the urban areas. These socio-psychological problems can be considered inevitable but concomitant of the process of change. Hence, these need to be accepted as a possible socio-psychological impediment which would arise in the process of change and which should be taken care of as a part of educational programme itself.

Thus while viewing women migrants as dependents, we may often ignore their individual

economic contributions, and an analysis based solely on official figures would give an inadequate account of the actual migration flow pertaining to women. The decisions of women to migrate are informed by the twin forces of opportunities and constraints and are taken primarily by the family, and when taken independently, familial and cultural and societal considerations have a greater influence. The underdeveloped agricultural economy of the state which makes its population unemployed in lean season creates a deficit household economy, which gets further accentuated due to persistent natural disasters such as droughts and reduction of forest resources in tribal areas. Along with this, globalization has resulted in reduced market facilities and lack of employment opportunities for people.

They migrate with family members, relatives and friends:

Earlier only the male members used to migrate but now-a-days the whole family migrates in search of employment. Migration influences gender relations, either entrenching inequalities and traditional roles or challenging and changing Gender influences- who migrates and why and how the decision is made-how migration impacts on migrants themselves, on destination and on sending areas. Migration leading to trafficking of women and children is an issue of the state, which requires urgent and concert responses. A comprehensive approach is essential to address the political, social, economic, legal and institutional dimensions of trafficking. The process of migration has a differential impact on women- whether they are left behind in the village in case their husbands migrate or in case they too migrate along with the males. In case of the former, the female-headed households are faced with the multiple tasks of not only running the household but also looking after the family, children and the aged. Exploitation of the women by the money lenders and other powerful and dominant persons lead to a situation where the women are most vulnerable. In case of the situation where the women to migrate along with their husbands, the new area of habitation is an alien one with no established social nets.

The women are faced with the problem of child care, hostile host community, difficult working environment, lack of benefits etc. In many cases women migrate several times to multiple destinations, leaving them with no social network hence security..

Survival migration which is seasonal in nature and occurs under distress conditions are the unique characteristics of migration in Orissa. This type of survival migration in Orissa is found mostly in Adivasi areas.

Some empirical studies have identified that, women migrants are on the rise from Jharkhand. Though illiterates, they have developed an urge to be economically independent. Thus women are no longer just associational migrants (along with their husbands and family) but independent migrants. However the labor contractor and the employer at the site of migration are the key persons who are often seen to exploit women in some specific ways, such as trafficking. Unmarried women migrating in search of work are a new face of migration from the region. Overall, the female migrant workers are mostly illiterate from poor landless families who have no work in their own village and have to migrate out for survival. The migration pattern of these women is irregular because they are not registered. Distress migration is a regular feature in tribal Jharkhand. In the case of women who are residing in their homes, they are also engaging themselves in various handloom and other income generation activities like tailoring, making badi and papad, etc. It is generally thought that a girl's place is in the home, and as a result, girls do not have the same freedom of movement as boys do. In regard to this, presently, the girls in urban areas are getting education facilities available in their locality, but still, the attitude towards providing quality education to girls has not been ensured so far at the family level. Considering different scenarios, the marriage age of girls in urban areas varies between 18 and 21 years, which is normally not in favor of an adolescent girl's health, a chaotic family environment, taking on responsibilities, etc. Therefore, it results in early pregnancy and concentrating on family matters, or mostly household work, caring for children, and so on. However, inadequate health services are also a prime concern for women, but they themselves are unaware of how to take proper care during pregnancy and infant rearing. In fact, they are more concerned for others health, considering that it is the nature of a mother to sacrifice for others, especially children in particular, than family in general.

Life of Tribal People:

Hence; tribal people are normally culture-friendly, and they enjoy their peaceful life through it, where there is no place for anxiety, depression, or demotivation.

On the basis of many studies and critical analysis of data, it can be said in brief that the change in life style of tribal women in Jharkhand is remarkable to this day. There is no doubt that women have improved their lifestyles according to the trends of modern society, but they have still preserved their culture effectively. It can also be said that livelihood options in urban settings are one of the models for their improvement in terms of economic aspects only, rather than their importance in other areas. Considering the overall situation of the tribal women's livelihood scenario, it could have been developed by utilizing available resources targeting specific categories of people.

Dietary Diversity of Tribals :

Indigenous people are those who retain knowledge of the land and food resources rooted in historical continuity within their region of residence. The food systems of indigenous people often include "traditional foods," that is, those that are not purchased but obtained locally from the natural environment. They are chiefly procured either through farming or wild harvesting and utilized based on traditional wisdom and knowledge. It is well recognized that traditional foods and dietary diversity within an ecosystem can be powerful sources of nutrients and thus better for health. Various ethnobotanical surveys indicate that several species of wild plants have been used for human food at some stage in human history. Dietary diversification is a proven, cost-effective strategy to ameliorate malnutrition. The loss of dietary diversity has many implications for the nutrition and health of rural communities, including loss of income generation and decreased consumption of diverse foods. The multiple benefits of the preservation and promotion of indigenous foods range from a collateral benefit to biodiversity and environmental sustainability to improving micronutrient intakes. The tribal communities in India are a good example of indigenous populations with a vast diversity in their cultures, traditions, and environments. The numerous indigenous foods that exist in the Indian tribal environment reflect the rich biodiversity of India and can be potentially used to promote food security, nutrition, and health. In addition, despite this wealth of traditional knowledge of natural resources in these tribal communities, challenges of geography, agricultural technology, cultural habits, lack of formal education, poor infrastructure, and poverty may contribute to poor nutrition and health. A high

prevalence of chronic energy deficiency and undernutrition, along with micronutrient deficiency, among tribal populations is well documented. Children belonging to tribal communities are at higher risk of iron-deficiency anemia and vitamin A deficiency disorders. In addition, in women from certain rural and tribal communities, zinc, vitamin B12, and iron constitute the principal micronutrient deficiencies. Chronic micronutrient deficiency resulting from insufficient intake of vitamins and minerals is often referred to as “hidden hunger.” It results from a lack of dietary diversity and suboptimal and poor-quality food intake and affects around 2 billion people worldwide. As the name indicates, the signs and symptoms of undernutrition and hidden hunger are less overtly visible in those affected by them compared to the immediate response to a lack of adequate food, that is, hunger.

Nutritional Status of Tribal Women:

The state of Jharkhand in India is among the states and union territories with a significant tribal population. Jharkhand has a total of 30 Scheduled Tribes (an indigenous group of people officially regarded as socially disadvantaged in India). A high prevalence of undernutrition, chronic energy deficiency, and iron deficiency is seen among the adult women and children of the community residing in different states of India, including Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal. Studies have also documented a wide variety of indigenous foods that are consumed by this community.

The indigenous foods were found to be rich sources of micronutrients. These are foods that are adapted to the local agro-ecosystem and do not need any special inputs for their cultivation and sustainability. A substantial contribution to the nutrition security and nutritional status of this indigenous community could be made by promoting the consumption of indigenous foods through the creation of an enabling environment for enhancing awareness about their nutritional benefits. Transferring knowledge of these indigenous foods, along with their nutritive values, to future generations would also facilitate their continued use. The present study may thus pave the path toward further investigations into quantitative consumption estimates of these foods by the community. This would provide information about their contribution to daily micronutrient intake and their potential for alleviating common nutritional deficiencies.

Present Status of Tribal Society:

Like other societies, tribal societies are also changing. Changes in tribal societies have taken place with the passage of time. The processes responsible for changes in tribal societies are hinduisation, Sanskritisation, christianization, de-sanskritization, retribalisation, urbanization, industrialization, westernization, and modernization. The processes of change have affected the tribal way of life positively as well as negatively. Christianity has brought education and development to tribal societies. The changes in tribal societies were brought to every sphere of life during British rule. The process of westernization also brought some induced change. These processes influenced the lives of tribal societies. These modernization processes have also influenced the style of life of tribal people in our country. Different processes of change have also brought different problems to tribal societies. They are also facing problems of poverty, unemployment, health and sanitation (Pandey et al., 2003).



The food of Jharkhand Cousin, as an integral part of the adivashi

Tribes living as part of nature, exploited nature to meet their food demands, and some of their foods are uncommon to us. The diet of all Oraon and Munda groups was deficient in all food groups. Cereal intake from milk and fruit was almost negligible. Their diet was supplemented by locally grown leafy vegetables (dheki saag) and fermented left-over rice. The energy

available from the diet for all age groups was only 52–53 percent of the recommended dietary allowances of the Indian Council of Medical Research (Mittal and Srivastava, 2006). Tribes constitute 26.30 percent of the total population of Jharkhand and traditionally are animal lovers. Livestock, particularly goats, pigs, and sheep, play an important role in their socioeconomic lives. The development of livestock will not only improve their economic output but also their nutritional intake by providing a ready source of balanced nutrition in rural and urban areas (Singh, 2006).

A large number of women consumed tobacco and alcohol, and there did not appear to be any social stigma against such consumption by women (Mittal and Srivastava, 2006). Ready (2004): Due to a lack of education, the tribes lag behind in acquiring the new skills required for the use of appropriate technology and have therefore failed to avail themselves of the benefits of the technological revolution that has greatly changed the economic scenario of Indian society. Chakravarty and Dand (2006) observed that the diet of all Oraon groups was deficient in all food groups. Cereal intake was the least deficient, while the intake of milk and fruit was almost negligible. Their diet was supplemented by a locally grown green leafy vegetable, dheki sag, and fermented leftover rice. The energy available from the diet for all age groups was only 52–53% of the recommended dietary allowances of the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Conclusion :

On the basis of the entire study and the critical analysis of the data, it can be said in brief that the change in the lifestyle of tribal women in Jharkhand is remarkable to this day. There is no doubt that women have improved their lifestyles according to the trends of modern society, but they have still preserved their culture effectively. It can also be said that livelihood options in urban settings are one of the models for their improvement in terms of economic aspects only, rather than their importance in other areas. Considering the overall situation of the tribal women's livelihood scenario, it could have been developed by utilizing available resources targeting specific categories of people. Finally, we can say that tribal women should not be neglected, deprived of, or made to compromise in any way; those are essential to leading a life with dignity in a sustainable manner. Despite dietary diversity,

malnourishment and micronutrient deficiency, such as anemia, are very common among them. This may be due to a lack of knowledge and awareness and a low economic status.

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