

Towards Globalisation: An Analysis of Tribal Transformation and Empowerment in Bihar

Chandani Roshan

Assistant Professor, PG Department of Sociology, Magadh University, Bodhgaya, Bihar

ABSTRACT:

Globalization refers to the growing interdependence between different people, regions and countries in the world as social and economic relationships come to stretch worldwide. Although economic forces are integral part of globalization, it would be wrong to suggest that they alone produce it. Globalization is a multi- dimensional concept which has left its imprint on every section of the society. It has led to more intrusion of state and market in tribal areas. The most significant impact of globalization on tribes is that it has changed the relationship of tribes with natural environment vis-à-vis land, forest and minerals. This happened mainly because of the imperatives of national and regional development. In this context, this study attempts to examine the paradox of empowerment among the tribes of Bihar where the very state that has been at the root of the disempowerment of tribes has also made certain provisions for their empowerment. The study is based on the secondary sources such as books, journals, government reports etc. Major findings of the study reflects that globalization has intruded in the lives of tribal communities in its various forms and the transformation of tribal life is still continuing under the major agenda of regional and national development..

Keywords: Globalization, Transformation, Empowerment, Development, Disempowerment

INTRODUCTION

Since last three decades, there is a wave of transformation which has swept the nations across the globe. This transformation has been equipped mostly by Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). The nation states have opened their boundaries for imports and exports. Economists have analyzed these changes in economic terms which is most obvious, but the social scientists have realized its impacts on every section of the society. Globalization is a multi-dimension concept. For some, it has posed a threat to the nature and the natural habitat of the tribes, but for others it has brought various opportunities for all including tribes. In other words, globalization constitutes an unprecedented threat to the autonomy of indigenous cultures as well as an unprecedented opportunity for indigenous empowerment. However, the tribal way of life is dictated by the law of nature. In this context, the impact of globalization on tribal communities is multifaceted as they are the ones that evidently negatively affected not only in India but all over the world. In the name of development, the life, livelihood, culture and habitat of indigenous people has brought under the hot-iron of globalization. It has been observed that the concept of private property and penetration of market in tribal areas made tribes alienated from their own 'native' home. The interaction with the mainstream people led to acculturation and encroachment of tribal space, culture, practices.

Notwithstanding the fact that the world is transforming into a knowledge based territory, the dismal conditions of indigenous communities after 75 years of independence which has entailed huge investments in terms of manpower, material, technology and financial resources could be attributed to various causes. These are interior, forested and rough terrain, minimal communication and transport facilities have made the task of transformation and development of these communities difficult. Illiteracy among the tribal communities and other cultural barriers like language has also stood in the way of tribal acceptance of modern ideas and technology. Besides the fact that the Constitution of India has granted various safeguards to the tribal communities, they continue to remain the most backward and discriminated groups in India. Cases of displacement of tribal people in India have increased manifold. Commercial activities under the garb of economic growth and economic development brought alien forces, cultures and influences into the traditional life and culture of Tribal communities (Babar, 2016). In this context, this study attempts to examine the paradox of empowerment among the tribes of Bihar where the very state that has been at the root of the disempowerment of tribes has also made certain provisions for their empowerment. For example: the Constitution contains many provisions to safeguard their rights and benefits under Fifth and Sixth Schedule. These rights and benefits in the form of acculturation and interaction with the mainstream people were correlated with the national agenda for the economic social, cultural and political development for these indigenous people.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to one Anthropological Survey, total of 4,635 communities are now to be found in India out of which total tribal communities are 732 in number (Babar, 2016). The indigenous people though have a long history but the solidification and classification of tribes started only during the colonial rule. According to Xaxa (2008), unlike castes which has a common connotation, the term tribe is not very generic. Though, there was a differentiation as a distinct community, with different culture and language from the dominant community, but there was no term to describe tribes. The concept of tribe is a universal category unlike caste, which is basically circulating in different parts of the world even before British colonialism. They were defined by their striking features like 'backward', 'savage', 'primitive and 'barbaric'. All those societies which had their cultures different from those of Europeans were regarded as 'other societies' with 'other cultures'. Later on, anthropologists argued that these 'other societies' are marked by kinship based social organization, poor division of labour, primitive lifestyles etc(Xaxa,1999). The 73 amendments of the constitution of India have fixed 33% reservation for women in local bodies and it is further enhanced to 50% in 2010 which came into force in 2012, the reservation for SC/ ST women within the quota will be proportionate to be the population in the area. This brings an opportunity for the tribal women to come forward and be part of the decision making process. They came out of the periphery of the village and be a part of the administration. They are encouraging other of the community to move to the path of empowerment .

However, the globalization process as a whole has immensely impacted tribal life both in positive and negative terms. Before discussing more about the various effects of globalization on tribe let get an idea of real concept of globalization. According to Scholte(2008) globalization is understood as the spread of trans- planetary and in recent times also increasingly suprateritorial connections between people. To him, a clear and precise definition of globalization is crucial to advance contemporary knowledge and policy. However, for Choudhary (2008), globalization is one of the widely used term but less defined in the present economic and political discourse. Some thinkers argue that instead of defining the term

globalization it's better to emphasize on its impacts. In course of this analysis, economic impact has been the central axis as compared to the other elements like social, cultural, political and environmental. Furthermore, social scientists especially the anthropologists consider globalization to be a 'wave of risks and danger' for the society in general and tribal community in particular. Initially, in India too, the concept of globalization along with liberalization and privatization was seen uni-dimensional i.e. only its economic aspects were emphasized. However, at present, debates have been there to unfold the multi-layered process of globalization.

Accordingly, the term globalisation is a result of the collection of multiple strategies that are directed at transforming the world towards a greater interdependence and integration. It includes the creation of networks and pursuits transforming social, economic and geographical barriers. Globalisation tries to build links in such a way that the events in India can be determined by the events happening distances away. To put it in other words, globalisation is the method of interaction and union among people, corporations, and governments universally. Looking at definitions of globalization by important social scientists such as Anthony Giddens, David Held and colleagues and Robertson shows that they concentrate on quite similar aspects. Giddens(1990) portrayed globalization as intensified worldwide social relations where local events are shaped by distant occurrences. Held (1999) and colleagues wrote that globalization exemplifies interconnectedness of regions near and far, allowing for enhanced social activity and power networking. Robertson (2000) noted that the term globalization denotes both a compression of the world and greater consciousness of the world as an entity. These definitions show that the central aspects of globalization are interconnection, intensification, time-space distancing, deterritorialization, supraterritoriality, time-space compression, action at a distance, and accelerating interdependence. Thus, the common theme raised by a number of theorists of globalization such as Giddens, Manuel Castells(2010), and David Harvey(1995) was that modern technologies such as the computer both accelerate social relationships and make them more flexible.

Through these definitions it can be assumed that sociologists and anthropologists tend to see as the end result of social change among the tribes vis-à-vis globalization. Xaxa questioned the assumption of loss of tribal identity with regards to tribes not as communities in their own right but in terms of affinity or non-affinity with mainstream communities (Xaxa, 1999)

METHODOLOGY

The significance of this research lies in its engagement with multiple perspectives such as subaltern perspective, neo-Marxism which argues about the marginalization of the minorities including tribes and the inherent conflict present in this marginalization process. The research is mainly based on secondary sources such as books, journals, tribal scriptures, reports of government and different agencies, census data, surveys etc. The major objectives of the study is to explore the impact of globalization on tribal communities in Bihar and to examine the paradox of empowerment and disempowerment among the tribes of Bihar. The study also tries to analyze the role of state in terms of ongoing government schemes for tribal welfare. In a way, this study is an attempt to examine the interaction between tribal communities with the mainstream societies and its effects on tribal culture, livelihood, education and health. The following research questions are derived from the above mentioned objectives: The following research questions were derived from the above mentioned objectives: (a) How do the indigenous communities perceive and accommodate themselves with the idea of globalization? (b) How does the idea of empowerment for mainstream society especially government different from those of tribes? (c) How has

the process of encroachment of land and private property has alienated tribes from their own land? (d) What are the challenges faced by the indigenous communities due to interaction with the mainstream society? (e) How does livelihood of tribal communities get affected due to increased industrialization and urbanization? (f) How has this interaction of tribes with the dominant community benefitted the tribes in terms of health, education and awareness?

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Globalisation vis-à-vis urbanization and modernization have brought about a significant change in the social and cultural fabric of society. The phenomenon of encroachment of tribal culture is a significant concern in the state of Bihar. Bihar has a diverse population, including many indigenous tribes, such as the Santhals, Oraons, Mundas, and Gonds. These tribes have a distinct culture, language, and way of life that have been shaped by their unique history, geography, and environment. These practices have been passed down from generation to generation and are an essential part of their culture. However, the process of modernization has led to the decline of these practices. Many young people in these communities are abandoning their traditional practices and adopting modern practices. For example, in the Pirpaiti block of Bhagalpur district, it was found that the idea of ‘medical healers’ or ‘medicine men’ in tribal society is about to extinct. The area which is predominantly inhabited by particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) tribes like Mal Pahariyas and Sauriya Pahariyas avail their medical services in the government hospitals or private clinics rather than going to their tribal medical healers. In this way, the process of modernization and urbanization has threatened their way of life, their resources, and their practices.

Another area of concern is that the increase in urbanization has led to a decline in forest cover. The forest is an essential resource for these communities, as it provides them with food, fuel, and medicinal plants. The loss of forest cover has made it difficult for these communities to sustain their livelihoods. However, the paradox of the situation lies in the fact that schemes like Scheduled tribes and Other Traditional forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest rights Act), 2006, which recognizes the rights of the forest dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers to forest resources, on which these communities were dependent for a variety of needs, including livelihood, habitation and other socio-cultural needs. It also recognizes the symbiotic relationship of the scheduled tribes with the forests, reflected in their dependence on the forest as well as in their traditional wisdom regarding conservation of the forests. But, there have been numerous government reports which reflect that there has been encroachment on tribal land and resources for various development projects, without seeking the consent or involvement of the affected communities. One such example is the governments’s plan to build a dam on Kosi river, which runs through several flood affected tribal areas in the state such as Madhubani, Supaul, Araria, Purnia, Katihar, Madhepura and Bhagalpur. This project has been criticized for its potential environmental and social impacts such as loss of biological diversity, forest resource, land alienation, livelihood loss etc. Additionally, there have are reports of the Bihar government allowing non- tribal individuals and companies to acquire land in tribal areas, often through fraudulent means or at the expense of the local communities. This has led to the widespread displacement of Santhal tribes in the Bhagalpur region. It has also led to conflicts between tribal communities and non-tribal communities. Furthermore, the government has also been accused of discrimination and marginalization of tribal groups by neglecting the basic needs and welfare of tribal communities such as access to education, healthcare and basic infrastructure.

Despite globalization and modernity process happening all around, tribes have remained aloof and have not felt empowered enough to participate in this process (Singh, 2007). In this regard there are various

strands of discourses and dispositions going around both at national and international level. There are some who argue for the need to understand the essence of globalization but there are some who oppose both the process of globalization and its impact on economy, society and culture of tribal communities. By ignoring the positive impacts of globalization, it has been argued that globalization has intruded the livelihoods, community norms and taboos, cultural attributes which is entirely dependent on nature and natural resources like land, forests, water and minerals.

The most significant impact of globalization on tribes is that it has changed the relationship of tribes with natural environment vis-à-vis land, forest and minerals. This happened mainly because of the imperatives of national and regional development.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be noted that impacts of globalization has directly or indirectly affected the tribal culture, language, belief system, livelihood structure and so forth in the name of modernization and development. Their disempowerment process became an agenda for their empowerment. Indeed, measures of bringing about rapid national development which escalated after the globalization process, such as building infrastructure, setting up industries, constructing dams and power projects were seen as important steps for achieving the integration of tribal society. However, the benefits of development touted under the globalization has not percolated down to the poorest, socially backward and disadvantaged sections of the society but reached to those who are already educated, well-settled, well-fed and well-nourished. Overall, the Bihar government's actions towards tribal communities and their resources have been a cause of concern and highlight the need for greater attention and support for these marginalized groups. It is important for the government to recognize and respect these rights of tribal communities, and to involve them in any decision-making processes that could affect their land, resources and livelihoods. The study thus, is an attempt to bring about a comprehensive qualitative and policy oriented research for the development of tribes in the state.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There was no conflict of interest in conducting this research.

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY

Author is currently teaching at P.G. Department of Sociology, Magadh University, Bodhgaya, Bihar as an Assistant Professor. Her areas of interest are tribal sociology, sociology of education, advance sociological theories and sociology of gender.

REFERENCES

1. Singh B., "Tribal Scenario in the Context of Economic Liberalisation and Globalization", Indian Journal of Public Administration, 2007, 53(4), 759–766.
2. Babar A., "Analytical Study of the Impact of Globalization on Tribal Communities in India with Reference To Economic Justice, All Inclusive Growth and Social Transformation", Journal of Poverty, Investment and Development, 2016, Vol 21, 2016.
3. Choudhary K., "Globalisation, Governance Reforms and Development in India", SAGE Publications India, 2007.
4. Scholte J.A., "Globalization: A Critical Introduction" Macmillan Press Ltd., 2008, Vol.31 Issue11.

5. <https://www.britannica.com/event/antiglobalization/Right-and-left-wing-antiglobalism>
6. Castells M., “Globalisation, Networking, Urbanisation: Reflections on the Spatial Dynamics of the Information Age”, *Urban Studies*, 2010, 47(13), 2737–2745
7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098010377365>
8. Harvey D., “Globalization in Question”, *Rethinking Marxism*, 1995, 8:4, 1-17.
9. Held D., “Democracy and Globalization. Alternatives”, 1991, 16(2), 201–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549101600205>
10. Giddens A., “Modernity and self identity: Self and Society in Late Modern Age”, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.
11. Robertson R., “Globalisation: Social Theory and Global culture”, Sage Publications Lt, 2000.
12. Xaxa V., “State, society and Tribe: Issues in Post-Colonial India”, New Delhi: Pearson Education Press, 2008
13. Xaxa V., “Tribes as Indigenous people of India”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1999, 34 (57): 3589-3595, Special issue.
14. Xaxa V., “Transformation of Tribes in India”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1999, Vol 34. Issue No. 24, Special issue.