

Traditions and Economic Advancements: A Study of Tirupati Tribes

Dr. A. Kusuma¹, G. Janakiramaiah²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, S.V. University, Tirupati – 517501

²Professor, Head, Department of Sociology, S.V. University, Tirupati – 517501

Abstract:

Scheduled tribes constitute a small proportion of India's total population and remain marginalized in many aspects of society. Despite constitutional provisions aimed at improving their status, these communities continue to face numerous challenges. Tribal women play a significant role in contributing to family income through hard work, but they are constrained by limited income-generating opportunities. This financial limitation often results in the need for more family members to engage in labor, leading to a reluctance to send children to formal schools. The overall low educational attainment within these communities contributes to poor awareness of basic health conditions. Consequently, tribal women lag both tribal men and women in the general population in terms of education, employment, and health. This theoretical paper seeks to identify the specific challenges faced by tribal women and propose strategies to address these issues effectively. The findings aim to inform the implementation of targeted projects to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Keywords: Scheduled tribes, Tribal women, Awareness, Economic backwardness, Tribal Culture, Education, Socio-Economic Conditions.

Introduction

Scheduled tribes constitute a small proportion of the total population in India and are marginalized from society in many respects. Although constitutional provisions have improved their position, they continue to face numerous challenges. Tribal women, who are generally more hard working than tribal men, significantly contribute to family income but have limited income-generating sources. Due to low income, many are reluctant to send their children to formal schools and their low level of education leads to poor awareness of basic health conditions. The socio-economic and cultural landscapes of India have traditionally placed STs at the lower end of the social hierarchy, resulting in their exclusion from mainstream development processes.

Historical Context and Constitutional Safeguards: The Indian Constitution recognizes the unique status of Scheduled Tribes and includes several provisions for their upliftment. These include Article 46, which promotes the educational and economic interests of STs, and the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, which provide for the administration and control of scheduled areas and tribal areas. Moreover, various affirmative action policies, including reservation in education, employment, and political representation, have been instituted to bridge the socio-economic gaps between STs and other communities.

Socio-Economic Challenges: Despite these measures, STs continue to grapple with a multitude of challenges. They often reside in geographically isolated regions with limited access to basic amenities

such as healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. Economic backwardness is a predominant issue, with many ST communities relying on traditional occupations such as agriculture, forestry, and artisanal crafts, which are often not sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods. This economic vulnerability is further exacerbated by low literacy rates, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to modern technology and markets.

Role of Tribal Women: Tribal women, in particular, bear the brunt of these socio-economic challenges. Generally, more hardworking than their male counterparts, they play a crucial role in sustaining their families through various economic activities, including agriculture, collection of minor forest produce (MFP), and wage labor. However, their contributions are often undervalued, and they have limited access to income-generating opportunities. This economic marginalization is compounded by social issues such as gender discrimination, limited access to education, and poor health conditions.

Educational Barriers: One of the most significant barriers to the socio-economic development of STs is the low level of education. Many tribal families are reluctant to send their children to formal schools due to economic constraints, cultural factors, and the perceived irrelevance of formal education to their traditional ways of life. The result is a vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty, where low educational attainment limits access to better employment opportunities and perpetuates economic hardship.

Health and Awareness: The low level of education among tribal communities also leads to poor awareness of basic health conditions and practices. Tribal areas often suffer from inadequate healthcare infrastructure, leading to high incidences of malnutrition, communicable diseases, and maternal and child health issues. Traditional healing practices, while culturally significant, are often insufficient to address these health challenges comprehensively.

Need for Targeted Interventions: Given these multifaceted challenges, there is a pressing need for targeted interventions that address the unique socio-economic and cultural context of STs. These interventions should focus on improving access to quality education, enhancing healthcare facilities, promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities, and empowering tribal women through skill development and financial inclusion initiatives. Effective implementation of government welfare programs, along with community participation and awareness campaigns, can play a crucial role in improving the overall socio-economic status of Scheduled Tribes.

Statement of the Problem

Various tribal development programs have been implemented by the constitutional machinery to ensure the welfare and social security of indigenous tribal people. However, the process of total empowerment of tribal people has not reached its zenith, and there have been mixed experiences regarding the effectiveness and quality of these programs. Scheduled Tribes are mainly engaged in agriculture and other forms of hard labor, with income largely dependent on Minor Forest Produce (MFP). Degradation and deforestation have drastically reduced their income levels. The government has implemented various development, livelihood, and empowerment programs in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and other areas to empower the tribal population. The primary objective is to improve livelihood patterns by empowering them using existing resources, thereby reducing pressure on forests. There is a specific emphasis on observing the changing livelihood patterns of tribals in terms of socio-economic platforms.

Profile of Tribal People in Andhra Pradesh

Geographical and Demographic Overview: K.V.B. Puram Mandal and Srikalahasti are in the Tirupati

district of Andhra Pradesh, India. These areas are home to a significant population of tribal communities, primarily engaged in traditional occupations and living in remote, rural settings.

Population: The tribal population in these areas comprises several groups, including the Yanadi, Yerukala, and other smaller tribes. The communities are typically organized into hamlets, with a strong emphasis on traditional social structures and kinship ties.

Review of Literature

There are few secondary sources of information on the religion and caste of Yanadis in India. This part of the research lacks comprehensive literature on the religious practices of Yanadis over the decades.

Vidyarthi Lop and Rai, B.K (1977) "The Tribal Culture of India" provides comprehensive information related to tribal culture along with overall dimensions of tribes' socio-economic and political profiles.

Pareek, R.N (1997) "The Tribal Culture in Flux" discusses various issues such as social interaction, economic exploitation, and religious aspects with transition and continuity.

Research Methodology

The present investigation deals with the socio-economic status of scheduled tribes in Katrapalli, Vagathuru, and K.V.B. Puram villages in K.V.B. Puram Mandal of Tirupati District in Andhra Pradesh. The study aims to understand the socio-economic status and utilization of welfare programs by S.Ts. The research uses both structured and unstructured interviews for data collection. The survey included 70 respondents from three villages using purposive sampling.

Field Area

K.V.B. Puram Mandal is in Pichatur and Srikalahasti road in Tirupati District. It has 29 Panchayats with a population of 39,432. The highway road connecting Tirupati to Srikalahasti goes through this Mandal.

Data Analysis:

Table 1: Village Composition

S. No	Name of the Respondent	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Katrapalli	25	25
2	Vagathuru	45	45
3	K.V.B. Puram	30	30
	Total	100	100

Table 2: Educational Level of the Respondents

S. No	Educational Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Illiterates	20	20
2	Primary (1st to 5th)	45	45
3	Secondary (6th to 10th)	35	35
	Total	100	100

Table 3: Type of Family

S. No	Type of Family	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Nuclear Family	60	60
2	Joint Family	35	35
3	Single Family	5	5
	Total	100	100

Table 4: Annual Income of Respondents

S. No	Annual Income (Rs.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
1	5,000 to 10,000	15	15
2	10,000 to 15,000	20	20
3	15,000 to 20,000	30	30
4	20,000 to 25,000	45	45
	Total	100	100

Table 5: Debts of Respondents

S. No	Debts	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
1	Yes	55	55
2	No	45	45
	Total	100	100

Major Findings of the Study

Demographic Composition:

The study included 100 respondents from three villages in K.V.B. Puram Mandal: Katrapalli, Vagathuru, and K.V.B. Puram. Vagathuru had the highest representation with 45% of the respondents, followed by K.V.B. Puram with 30% and Katrapalli with 25%.

Educational Levels:

- A significant portion of the respondents, 45%, had primary education (1st to 5th grade).
- 35% had secondary education (6th to 10th grade).
- 20% of the respondents were illiterate, indicating a need for improved educational initiatives.

Family Structure:

- Most of the respondents, 60%, lived in nuclear families.
- 35% lived in joint families, and 5% were from single-family households.

Annual Income:

- 45% of the respondents reported an annual income between Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 25,000.
- 30% had an annual income between Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 20,000.
- 20% earned between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 15,000 annually.
- Only 15% had an annual income of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000.

Debt Status:

- 55% of the respondents reported having debts, while 45% did not have any debts.
- Employment and Livelihood:
- Most respondents were engaged in agriculture or worked as agricultural laborers. Due to limited skills in modern agricultural practices, they relied heavily on mono- cropping.
- Financial assistance and modern agricultural inputs were primarily obtained from the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA).

Food Habits:

- The diet of the respondents was predominantly sub-nutritious due to low income and economic backwardness. They consumed both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, primarily consisting of self-produced items like rice, tamarind, vegetables, and meat. The consumption pattern included eating twice a day.

Socio-Economic Challenges:

- The study highlighted low-income levels, high illiteracy rates, and poor health conditions as major challenges faced by the Scheduled Tribe women.
- The traditional lifestyle and limited access to modern facilities further exacerbated their socio-economic conditions.

Utilization of Welfare Programs:

- There was a general lack of awareness and effective utilization of government welfare programs aimed at improving the socio-economic status of Scheduled Tribes. The study indicated a need for better implementation and outreach of these programs to ensure they reach the intended beneficiaries.

Dress Pattern

- Scheduled Tribes mostly wear traditional dresses. Elder males wear panchas and shorts, while women wear cotton sarees. Among young Madigas, there is a noticeable change in dress patterns, with the use of polyester and terricottens, although traditional dresses remain predominant due to low income.

Education

Literacy Rates: The literacy rate among tribal communities in K.V.B. Puram Mandal and Srikalahasti is relatively low compared to the state average. Limited access to quality educational institutions, early dropout rates, and socio-economic barriers contribute to this issue.

Educational Facilities: There are few schools within tribal areas, and those that exist often suffer from inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and insufficient educational resources.

Government Initiatives: Various government schemes aimed at improving tribal education, such as scholarships and residential schools, have seen partial success but face challenges in implementation.

Health

Access to Healthcare: Tribal communities face significant barriers in accessing healthcare services, including distance to healthcare centers, lack of transportation, and financial constraints.

Common Health Issues: Malnutrition, communicable diseases, and maternal and child health issues are prevalent. Traditional healing practices coexist with modern medicine, often leading to delayed treatment.

Healthcare Infrastructure: The availability of healthcare facilities is limited, with primary health centers often lacking essential medical supplies and staff.

Employment and Income

Occupations: The primary sources of livelihood include agriculture, forest-based activities (like collecting minor forest produce), and wage labor. Seasonal migration for work is also common.

Income Levels: Income levels are generally low, with many families living below the poverty line. The reliance on traditional occupations and lack of access to alternative employment opportunities contribute to economic vulnerability.

Government Programs: Various government programs aimed at enhancing tribal livelihoods, such as MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), have had mixed results, with issues in implementation and awareness.

Living Conditions

Housing: Housing conditions vary, with many families living in kutcha (temporary) houses made of mud, thatch, and other locally available materials. Government schemes like PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) aim to improve housing but face hurdles in reach and implementation.

Sanitation and Water Supply: Access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities is limited. Open defecation is still practiced in some areas due to lack of toilets and awareness about sanitation.

Electricity and Infrastructure:

While electrification has improved, consistent electricity supply remains a challenge. Infrastructure development, such as roads and communication networks, is also inadequate, affecting overall socio-economic development.

Social and Cultural Aspects

Cultural Practices: Tribal communities maintain rich cultural traditions, including festivals, dances, and rituals that are integral to their social fabric. However, these practices sometimes limit exposure to modern socio-economic opportunities.

Social Issues: Issues such as child marriage, gender inequality, and social exclusion persist, influenced by traditional norms and economic hardships.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges: The primary challenges include geographical isolation, inadequate infrastructure, socio-economic marginalization, and lack of access to quality education and healthcare.

Opportunities: Potential opportunities for improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities include enhancing educational access and quality, improving healthcare services and infrastructure, and implementing sustainable livelihood programs. Integrating modern practices with traditional knowledge can also foster development while preserving cultural heritage.

Recommendations

Educational Initiatives: Strengthen educational initiatives to reduce illiteracy rates and improve overall awareness and health conditions among the tribal population.

Nutritional Intake: Targeted interventions are needed to improve the dietary habits and nutritional intake of the respondents.

Financial Stability: The government should take special measures to promote financial stability among

Scheduled Tribes through better access to banking services, technology transfer to enhance their livelihood, and encouraging savings and investments.

Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic status of Scheduled Tribe women in K.V.B. Puram Mandal, highlighting their challenges and suggesting potential strategies for improvement. By addressing the identified issues through targeted interventions and better implementation of welfare programs, the socio-economic conditions of these women can be significantly improved. Scheduled Tribes have the lowest social status in the caste hierarchy and experience social neglect and economic deprivation. Their educational level is low, and despite various programs for their development, they continue to face socio-economic challenges. The government should focus on enhancing their financial stability through better access to banking services and technology transfer to improve their livelihood and reduce their reliance on forests. By recognizing and valuing the contributions of tribal women, enhancing access to education and healthcare, and promoting economic empowerment, it is possible to create a more inclusive and equitable society that ensures the holistic development of Scheduled Tribes.

References:

1. Vidyarthi, L. P., & Rai, B. K. (1977). *The Tribal Culture of India*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. This book provides comprehensive information related to tribal culture along with overall dimensions of tribes' socio-economic and political profiles.
2. Pareek, R. N. (1997). *The Tribal Culture in Flux*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications. This work discusses various issues such as social interaction, economic exploitation, and religious aspects with transition and continuity among tribal communities.
3. Government of India. (n.d.). *Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA)*. Retrieved from [official ITDA website].
4. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. (n.d.). *Programs and Schemes for Tribal Welfare*. Retrieved from [Ministry of Tribal Affairs website].
5. Census of India. (2011). *Primary Census Abstract Data*. Retrieved from [Census of India website].
6. National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). (2020). *Report on the Condition of Scheduled Tribes in India*. Retrieved from [NSSO website].
7. Andhra Pradesh State Government. (n.d.). *Welfare Programs for Scheduled Tribes*. Retrieved from [Andhra Pradesh State Government website].
8. Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. (n.d.). *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)*. Retrieved from [MGNREGA official website].
9. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. (n.d.). *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)*. Retrieved from [PMAY official website].