

Gender Issues of Tribal Women

Ms. K. Durga Devi: 42, K.V Apartments, Chakarapani road, Guindy , Chennai-600032

Introduction

In all societies, there are differences in power between persons. There is not a single society where all adults have exactly the same influence over every decision where every one has the same right and duties. Social differentiation and inequality are in other words universal phenomenon. Today gender has become problem vary from one society to another. For instance, in India we have two broader societies; the caste society and the tribal society. The gender issues in both these societies are found at different levels. The caste society the women suffer from rape, dowry, and crime against women, political violence and other such discrimination against men. In tribal society the gender problem assumes a different dimension. In this society, women work harder in comparison to men, and they vulnerable to male chauvinism. They are beaten and treated badly, what is worse with the tribal women is that they work all through their life on land and have no right in the share of land.

Gender Issue in Tribal Society

Gender has now become a fashionable term to designate the problem related to feminism. The women all over the world are fighting against this differentiation. The history of this fight for equality goes back of several decades. These have been certain historical forces which have given rise to women's struggle against their subordination. It goes to the middle of the 20th century when there was defeat of fascism, and a forced retreated of imperialism. Prior to this, French revolution of 1789 created a favorable atmosphere for liberty, equality and fraternity.

After the First World War, there was the chapter of the human rights. This chapter, among other things, bestowed equal rights to women, at par with men. There was a favorable situation for women to fight for their rights. On their other hand, the declaration of international women's decade 1957-1985 was a forceful factor to stress for feminism over the world. During this period, modernization had arrived. The New International Economic

Order also created a favorable situation for removing the gender differences, the sense operation in third world Countries the Gross National Income. There was a faulty definition of work in these censuses. All this underwent a tremendous transformation.

In the beginning, mentioned that the gender issues in tribal societies are basically different from caste society is hierarchical. It a dominated by considerations of patriarchy and male dominance. The tribal society, on the other hand, is basically an equalitarian society. In this society there is not much marked division of labor. Whatever society has is characterized by consideration of age.

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The observation of the tribal society vividly makes it clear that there is not much marked division of labor, based on gender. The nature of tribal and caste societies, therefore, give differential nature of gender issues. What we argue is that the gender problem is rooted in the very nature of a society.

Socio-Economic Life of Tribal Women

There is a need for an argument whether the status of women is prescribed or ascribed. In Santhal society the status appears to have been prescribed by the society itself. Their kinship status has recommended the specific role of each member of the family irrespective of the economic status. Even of the women member who are being deprived of property but never they are deprived of the job as prescribed by virtue of their kinship status. However, changing socio-economic condition in non-tribal society invariable has influenced the tradition norms of the tribal society. For examples, job opportunities such as Stony Quarrying and crushing etc, can illustrate an opportunity to enquire the changing status of Santhal Tribe, specially the Tribal women.

But the women have now raised their voice against this oppression and they want due rights and privileges in all walks of life. This is an age of equality and liberty. In this age of people don't accept any discrimination on any basis. Thus the women have raised their any banner for seeking equality with men.

The women of today want a change in their status in the society. They do not to play a secondary role only. The women constitute nearly 50% of the world population. Therefore, they want to play a positive and constructive role in the world. They want to contribute towards the economic, social and political development of the society.

In order to assess the socio-economic impact on any society it is imperative to understand the gender role and its changing elements. Therefore, it needless to emphasize here that the status of the women tribal society is required to be assessed and it's changing perspectives.

Empowerment of Tribal Women

Education plays a crucial role in the empowerment process. Educational faculties should be geared to special needs, like the empowerment- oriented education and diversified vocational training. They can be trained in small scale and cottage industries, village crafts and other occupation. The social welfare and adi-Draavidar welfare department should establish training centers in craft work and cottage industries, as this would promote skill formation and generate employment opportunities.

-Educational facilities should keep in view the specific needs of the tribal. Special measures should be taken to improve the enrolment/retention rates as school dropouts continue

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to be high. For providing easy access to education, provision of hostels, crèches and other infrastructural facilities should continue to be assisted through scholarships/financial assistance, free books at least for the next two decades. Education should help evolve a rationalistic attitude that all human beings are born free and equals and that the caste system in a manmade hierarchy to facilitate his own well being. This qualitative transformation of heart will help to user in, a concept of equality among the human race. Untouchability as a social norm should be completely eradicated, for examples, no separate well, it should be propagated for the greater common good of humanity. The dalit children in schools and colleges should as a social norm should be completely eradicated, for example, no separate wells should exist for the tribal to draw their water from, commonly community wells, it should be treat on equal footing as the other children.

-Their income earning should be raised by providing access to crucial inputs like land and credit. Very few women have access to power and decision making. Reservation may be one of the strategies for empowerment of women. Having independent control over income generating assets is one way of empowering women.

-The rural dalit women working on land should have right to claim equal facilities available to all others workers. Domestic workers must be unionized, registered and be eligible for all worker benefits including social insurance.

-Women can be mobilized by promoting self-help women's group who can congregate frequently to generate awareness among women, develop leadership qualities in them and help them to gain self-esteem and self-worth.

-Informal education should be imparted to these women.

-Centuries of marginalization and repression at all levels have scarred women mentally and almost every women suffers from a defective personality (inferiority complex, feeling of insufficiency etc.) special training to prepare them for leadership roles so that they can politically be more active such a move will help them o avail the quota of reserved seats in the panchayat elections. The N.S.S units of education institution can play a major and vital role in this venture.

-An important ingredient of empowerment in unionized. Rural labor, particular in the agriculture sector is unorganized. This leads to ineffective implementation of land reforms and Minimum Wage Acts.

-Women should be trained in learning to organize themselves into groups so that a platform for voicing out their grievances and to demand better utility services and inputs can be established. The will again, allow women to enter the public sphere of political and society activity from their private sphere of domesticity.

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A plethora of legislation, ordinances and reservation have been promulgated by the State. The crucial need of the hour is an accompanying attitudinal change. Besides education; the media can intervene and exercise its powerful sway towards fighting for a casteless society.

Considering the number and magnitude of the problems of the dalit women, voluntary agencies must be encouraged in this sphere of empowerment dalit women as their agencies are the agents of social change and development through their direct contacts/linkages with the target groups.

Right values and ethics have to be inculcation in the minds of young children. Human Rights Education (HRE) should be a compulsory component of the school/college curriculum- that is respecting every human being whatever be the caste, race, creed or sex each belongs to.

Above all, the dalits themselves should surmount their caste distinction to forge united front's that will resist any suppression or exploitation of them in the name of caste.

Conclusion

As Utsa patnaik rightly opines, the various forms of subordination of one class of human being by another have not been swept away by any revolutionary up-heaval in India. The dalit women are a victim of sorts-caste, gender, class, etc; no revolution has even remotely touched her life. No doubt, this 'given condition; of the dalit women is progressively changing, but this change is a painfully slow process, the more dynamic aspect for change lies within the dalit women herself-via, economic empowerment, personality development, better awareness of her potential. There is a light surely at the end of the dark tunnel of ignorance and illiteracy, poverty and suffering, only then the dalit women's search for an identity would end, as she arrives at possessing a 'life' of her own.

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