



VISTA INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & ENGINEERING



Eco-friendly practices, skill and development by Santhal Tribe Women in Jharkhand

Yugal Jha*

K.K.M.College, Pakur
S.K.M University, Dumka

*Corresponding author email : yugaljha1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Many development programmes to raise the socio economic status of the Santhals have been implemented but the socio economic status has not changed considerably as it is expected and recorded by the government authorities. As far as economic life is concerned, it has been found that the traditional patterns still largely dominate the economic life of the santhals. In Jharkhand for tribal women Jharkhand Panchayat Abhiyan 2001 is the Central act which facilitates local self-government and gives the mandatory provisions of 73rd amendment act 1992 and the provisions of panchayat extensions to scheduled areas act 1996 (PESA). This constitutional amendment as an act has created space for women in political participation and decision making at the grass root level by providing for reservation at elective post of women. PESA should be translated with required amendment into local tribal dialectic and made available to all gram panchayats in scheduled areas. Training programme and workshops especially for tribal women should be implemented so that they may be aware of development and planning. Not only this will bring responsibility and sense of power to avail the benefit of development programme but also strengthen the policy for the green economy of participatory governance of Jharkhand.

Keywords : *Eco-friendly, PESA, Participatory governance, green economy, barter system, Hatts, Hariya, Artisan Leadership, deforestation, eco-feminism, Damin-i-koh*

1. Introduction

The division of Santhal Parganas which has been a part of Jharkhand is the abode of Santhals. They are the single largest section of population though they are not informally spread in the division. Their biggest concentration is the Damin-i-koh where they form nearly two- third of population. The Santhal society has been remaining under continuous pressure of other

cultures throughout the ages. Being a part of the larger Indian society, they are also under the control of Indian constitution which has provisions for various rules and regulations some of which might not be matching with the traditional tribal society [1]. Urbanization, industrialization and development of global communication are also bringing changes in socio-economic structure everywhere. So the santhal society

also does not remain unhurt. This is a continuous change in their social value system, the obvious result of which is the cultural movement. Since the santhals are free by nature they always wanted to manage their social organization on their own. The village was the well-knit institution of their social life which controls their whole community system. It was an independent and self-governing institution preaching their culture and ethos in their ethnic society.

The santhal women are very much peace loving, kind hearted, and ones with co-operative nature. They are very much self-reliant and self-supporting by nature and always like to remain master of their own mind. The land is considered as community property, so any son or male cognate from paternal side has right to use it generation after generation. The property concept has been changing under rules of larger Indian society, now the santhal women have right to claim over land and property and are gradually coming forward with their legal rights in their society.

1.1 Socio- Economic and Cultural Life

It is true that many development programmes to raise the socio economic status of the santhals have been implemented but the socio economic status has not changed considerably as is expected and recorded by the government authorities. As far as economic life is concerned, it has been found that the traditional patterns still largely dominate the economic life of the santhals. They have no certainty in economic life. Thus almost all development programmes in tribal areas crack down the tribal economy, tribal socio political unity and strength. In this position only the santhal women have pointed out with self confidence that they can manage easily both the family and the social responsibilities if they get chances. The long history of santhal agitations since British regime shows the role of women, their sense of patriotism, keen interest, intelligence and heroic sanctifies for the sake of their people and their culture.

1.2 Objectives

The present study aims to explain the legacy of

Santhal women which has been linked with the cultural and reformative movement of the Jharkhand, since century. Their part played in Tilka Manjhi movement, Sido-Kanhu movement, Birsa movement and many others reformative movement for land, labor and wage, forest produce, eco-friendly practices, exhibition of indigenous skills and for language and culture cannot claim their identity without considering the power of strength of these tribal women. Thousands of women either in front or in back hold the blunt of everything whether it is in war or in calamity or in the cultural ethos of life.

2. Methodology

Frequent meetings, discussions, workshops and training etc. have developed a general consciousness among the tribal women. They are also aware about the political development. Their participation in village participatory governance is gradually developing as active member of their society with the configuration of Panchayati Raj Institutions conform [9] to PESA act in the present times. Thus due to women participation in various women development programs the self-confidence of women and their patterns of behavior have changed in many respects. The development programs have considerably improved the way of life of the santhal women of this area. The most notable changes in the life of the santhal women are responses towards education system, health care system, self-help groups' formation for income generating programs, awareness of legal rights, level of aspiration, new mode of thinking, freedom of expression, change in outlook, becoming a bona-fide agent of eco-feminism and the various systems to a certain extent.

2.1 Eco-friendly partner

The women around the world play a key role in the protection of environment, though their role varies. They have recognized the needs not only to protect the bio-diversity, but also to re-create it. In India, the women were always in matter of prevention of pollution, conservation, promotion and enhancement

of the environment. They have made great sacrifices; have exhibited greater love than men in the area of the environment protection. The strong desire, devotion and dedication towards better environment made Indian women a crusader against environment pollution. The indigenous women have launched hundred and thousand active movements and rallies to avoid the threat of deforestation & a civil disobedience against the nexus of the negative agents who are ruining face of the eco-system. Even they have to go on 'Jal-Satyagarh' (Madhya Pradesh, The Benga Tribe) for the inhabitants and livelihood. Some commentators have described Chipko movement as women's movement; (Bahuguna 1975, Bhatt and kumar, 1982, Jain 1983, Mishra & Tripathi, 1978). It is important to recall the name of Indian women who have fought legal battles in the court of Law for environment protection, as Mrs. Sarala Tripathi of Indore, Kinkari Devi and Krishna Devi from Rajasthan.

Today, Menka Gandhi, an environmentalist and politician, Medha Patkar, a social worker and environmentalist, Smt. Mahasweta Devi, Social worker and writer, Smt. Vandana Shiva, scientist they all have given a very strong and impressive action programme with their voice and activities especially Smt. Munni Hansda, Basbi Kiro and Smt Dayamani Barlaare are the names who have launched the impressive movement, "Jal-Jangal-Jameen" in Jharkhand and santhal pargana to protect the environment and natural resources for the life of the people of Jharkhand. In fact, women's right and environment protection are complementary to each other which has laid to the development of a new ideology called eco-feminism [4]. Thus the concept of "green economy"[3] is one of the most important tools to design the new prosperous areas of Santhal Parganas and Jharkhand.

Mahatma Gandhi has explained the brilliant structure of traditional institutions as the inherent character of self-reliant Gram Swaraj of Indian republic. These indigenous institutions have played the role of unifier and an integrator where the Company Raj and its nexus has ruthlessly crushed the brilliant

legacy of Jal-Jungle- Jameen for which great revolutionary Tilka -Manjhi, sacrificed his life in the Rajmahal hills. His martyrdom has been the source of inspiration for the coming generations who fought bravely against the British rule and still burning like the torch to focus on the taboos that still hurdles the herald of Indigenous society. The indigenous society has been breathing with the philosophy of co-existence which led us to think about the other great oral tradition of Vedic literature where the earth has been equated with mother- Mata Bhoomi, Putro Aham. This Vedic thought has been expounded by Swami Vivekanand as a visible expression of a divine mother that is 'Mother India' that regulates the livelihood of the people. This resemblance has opened the traditional resource inventory of traditional farming of the pageantry set of agricultural input which has been the verdant vista of feminist civilizations that has been hampered by the exploitative colonial regime. The specific feature of the indigenous society has been sketched in the book of 'Santhal Village Government' by W.W. Hunter, 1868 and by then settlement officer John Reed in the report of irrigation and canal commission 1901-03.

Thus, the self-reliant village of indigenous society as in the vision of 'Abua Aato Re: Abua Raj' is the finest replica of Hind Swaraj with its traditional set of Institutions like Manjhi, Pargana, or disom pargana in the lap of mountain, river and long range of forest cover. In the 17th chapter of Santhal Pargana Gazetteer it has been written, 'the people themselves are final authority, the officials are only their representatives appointed to perform certain duties and to keep order and to represent them generally.'⁵ But the rein of imperialism ruined the entire set of indigenous India and established the colonial rule of British Raj. The persisting regime of British administration has been in constant feud and in turmoil at its root by the uprisings and revolt of indigenous people.

The eco-feminist school advocated respect and support for women's effort to conserve the environment. Women's relationship with nature has been recognized since ancient time through the concept of "Van-Devi"

(Forest Goddess) and sacred groves in India's cultural tradition. The santhal women share a deep attachment to the land they inhabit, the streams, the hills, the rolling valleys, open fields, trees and secret groves that surround their settlements and protect their well-being and land. We shall explore the world of the santhal women as a feminine presence in relation to their own mindset. It narrates their all possibilities in the santhal tribe at various levels of their participations in the community for their ecology and resources for life, livelihood and culture [6].

2.2 Indigenous women as the health healer

Prominent tribal of this region are attached to the use of medicinal plants to get rid of day today health problems. These indigenous medicinal practices are still prevalent in the remote areas of the santhal parganas. Women tribal groups still inhabit the forests that are closely linked to every aspect to their lives. Forests are the traditional source of the medicinal plants and herbs used for curing various human diseases. The use of various kinds of known plants for medicinal purposes has been traditionally done by the tribal women. This process helps them in curing diseases, way of passing medicinal knowledge to young generation and their health problems. The plant medicines have been passing from generation to generation on verbal information. Most people possessing the knowledge of medicinal plants were secretive in passing the knowledge to other people, which led to the gradual disappearance of this knowledge. It is highly desirable that the whole subject should be studied in greater details and all relevant information should be collected and documented by the new generation of tribal women [7].

Not only that collection and gathering of forest produce which have been the great source of health and hygiene of Indigenous people constitute important part of the eco-feminism of Jharkhand. Today with massive commercialization of minor forest produce a change is taking place. These commercial establishments are appointing their collecting agents from outside, resulting in the loss of an important

economic role of tribal women. Among the hunting and food gathering tribes like Birhors of Chota-Nagpur, Paharias and santhals of Santhal Pargana, women play a very economic role in tribal economy. The collection and processing of roots, tubers, Mahua flowers fruits, chiraungi is entirely the job of women. These are the pictures which present a very routine life of tribal women for the health and hygiene of the people of Jharkhand.

2.3 Exhibition of indigenous skill

Tribal women are the best learner from the everyday struggle for their survival. They live in the hilly forest and in rural areas. Literacy rate is very low. Land, Forest, and agriculture are the main sources of livelihood. Traditionally they are engaged in hunting, collection of forest product, fishing, etc. but all these traditional occupation they are losing day by day due to transformation education and urbanization. If mutual support groups and their network provide a platform for these tribal women they can gain their rights to shape a stronger polity of tribal economy. Their traditional haats can be the best place to sale out forest products. Their seed granary can be the best support for their peasantry occupations.

Tribal women's participation for their empowered economy is legacy of traditional 'Haats' of Santhal Pargana in Jharkhand. It is a type of traditional arrangement for weekly markets on the pavements of hamlets for their local boundaries. One can easily observe that tribal women are sitting in the "Haat" with "Hariya", traditional rice liquor very much useful among the tribal for drinking. This is the place where tribal buy and sale vegetables, fruits, household items, medicines, spices, clothes and certain traditional items like jewellery etc. There are no established markets in the tribal clans, and therefore these weekly markets are held every week. This is the oldest source for their economical exchange at the ease of barter system [8].

Tribal women's participation in economic development is significant from several points of view. One of the most important aims of an effective manpower policy is the optimum utilization of nation's

entire resources human and material. As tribal women as a group constitutes an equal important part of the labor of the Indian economy and they should participate adequately in all sector of our economy; But still, in despite of the constitutional provisions of equality of opportunities of work for men and women, Tribal women are no more than safety valve for labor market in India. Thus the elevation of tribal women power from the labor market is essential to get rid of the source of exploitation of the present set up. Apparently decline of handicraft and wooden sculpture is great setback for the tribal women and for the rich resources under the umbrella of these haats due to migration of women powers in all sector of labor market where tribal women are nothing but tool of business tricks and trifling. Studies have shown that women spend long hours in fuel fodder and water collections. The burden increases as they are avoiding their domestic activities and not paying attention to wetlands, dry lands and agriculture. In India social movements have launched to check social evils environmentalist have challenged the mainstream paradigm of development but no single campaign has been launched to save the indigenous traditional farming which has been the round table circuit of traditional 'Haats' of tribal society.

Due to educational expansion the new generation of these tribal prefers to stay away from traditional haats and go to other established market places. The traditional weekly markets and their importance are becoming less day by day. Many negative developments are becoming a big threat for them. Thus, one can say a lot needs to be done in order to preserve and protect these "Haats" to save the indigenous culture of the tribal society. Due to lack of training and support of state agency, the tribal women could not able to redesign these "Haats" to suit the taste and temperament of their tribal society.

The impact of development has been even on different section of tribal women. While a small number of educated tribal women have new avenues of employment and self-employment, bulk of tribal women remains deprived of opportunities for their

survivals. These "haats" can be their traditional avenues if state agency provide them technical devices to install all needful articles in this weekly markets in the tribal clans. Predominantly tribal women are skilled producer of different categories of creeper based product, such as basket cradles sowing and winnowing baskets water strainers, scale pans, ring stands for supporting pots, coir brushes for washing cattle's etc. This type of domestic craft which requires raw materials at the hand of forest cover are easily available in the Santhal villages in santhal parganas. If these articles can be manufactured by them. These articles can be the best asset for bumper sale better than any shop centers and these type of 'haats' of the hamlet of Santhal Parganas can be exhibition sale center better than any township of the city [8]. Various remedial steps are required to upgrade community based 'haats' to retain their own culture, language, social system and fixed geographical areas.

3. Participatory Governance

Economically tribal women are worst sufferer in the era of economic reforms since 1991, but politically they have got better access in the governance through 73rd and 74th amendment of Indian constitutions by way of one-third reservation in panchayati raj institution and urban local body respectively. Tribal women have exhibited their determinations to occupy the public space in all spheres of life, social economic and political. There are many hurdles in the process of empowering tribal women at house hold level as well as at community level. Tribal women are the victim of illiteracy, ignorance, mal-nutrition, traditions and custom of socio cultural systems.

In order to overcome the hurdles and to make the empowerment process sustainable, the tribal women need proper education skill, orientation, information, counseling and sensitization, continually through civil society organizations where the women members there by gross support from their presence. It is not an easy to break the male hegemony in tribal community so it is necessary that tribal women come out of this domination and subordination for which they need to

be educated and being trained in income generating activities [10].

4. Conclusion

In Jharkhand for tribal women Jharkhand panchayat abhiyan 2001 is the central act which facilitates local self-government and gives the mandatory provisions of 73rd amendment act 1992 and the provisions of panchayat extensions to scheduled areas act 1996 (PESA). This constitutional amendment as an act has created space of women in political participation and decision making at the grass root level by providing for reservation of elective post of women. It has been provided that not less than one-third of total post at all three tiers of panchayati raj institutions shall be reserved for women. This would not only decentralize the power but also remove the gender imbalances.

The provisions of PESA act came into force on 24 December 1996 with objective of safe guarding and preserving traditions and customs of people living in scheduled areas, their social religions and cultural identity and traditional management practices of community resources, PESA is an instrument for tribal empowerment of tribal. Thus PESA should be translated with required amendment into local tribal dialectic and made available to all gram panchayats in scheduled areas. Training programme and workshops especially for tribal women should be implemented so that they may be aware of the development and planning. Not only that this will bring responsibility and sense of power to avail the benefit of development programme of the policy makers.

The Indian government has brought certain constitutional reforms to upgrade the entire electoral process and their voting behavior in the rural leadership of India. The Indian states like Bihar and Jharkhand and others have also given priority to this agenda to drive a balance sheet for the half population of Indian society. Recently both states have implemented this representatives diagram in their last election. The

PESA has given a new insight into election of local bodies of Jharkhand. The rural-artisan leadership are standing for the steel framing of the policy making process of policy makers with their presence and action from bottom to top to strengthen the green economy of participatory governance of Jharkhand.

References

- [1] Chaturbhuj Sahu. The Santhal Women: A social Profile. Swarup & Sons, New Delhi, ISBN-81-85431-63-9
- [2] P.C. Roy Choudhary. Santhal Pargana Gazetteer 1935.
- [3] Khanna, Madhu. "Feminine Presence: The Case of Santal Tribe." In Arvind Sharma (ed.) Women in Indian Religions, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 26-45.
- [4] Rai P.C. Santhal Pargana Gazetteer, 1965.
- [5] Prasad, Sushma Sahay: Tribal Women Laborers – Aspects of Economic and Physical. Exploitation, Delhi: Gyan Publishing House (1988).
- [6] The Tribal Domestic Workers at the Cross Roads: A report published by Indian Social Institute New Delhi, 1993
- [7] Sharan A.B. Tribal Study, Ranchi 1978 offset Printers
- [8] Motilal Kmarak, 1986, Tribal Identity in Changing Industrial Environment: The Santhal case, Metropolitan Book, New Delhi.
- [9] Bhargava, B.S Panchayati Raj Institution: The Ground Reality. Ashish Publishing House 1999, New Delhi
- [10] Ram Krishnan and Ajay Ashirwad. Illusory Rights. Frontline, May 2013, 101-104.
