

Improving the Participation of Tribal Women in Developmental Programmes

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ABSTRACT

Tribal women are gradually becoming integrated into village organizations. The present study was conducted among 120 tribal women respondents in four selected panchayats of Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu. The respondents were selected using proportionate random sampling method. The data were collected from each respondent through a pre-tested interview schedule. The results were analysed with the help of statistical tools like mean, frequency and percentage. The results revealed that majority of the women respondents had more social taboos, superstitions and traditions as the major constraints in participating in various developmental programmes.

Keywords : *Tribal women, Organizations, Motivation, Participation, The Nilgiris.*

In the Indian context, the attributes of a tribal woman are that they live in relative isolation of hills and covered forests, and often in geographical areas inaccessible to the mainstream population. Tribes generally are groups which do not have a written letter or script. Their sense of history is shallow or mixed with mythology, and in terms of their cultural ethos, language, customs, institutions and beliefs; they stand out from other sections of society. The Government of India and State Governments, through the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and other agencies like the Planning Commission and Tribal Welfare Departments, through their

schemes and programmes are focussing on improvements of living standards, education, health care and skill upgradation of these tribal people.

Tribal society is normally conceptualized as clan-lineage based segmentary system characterized by mechanical solidarity. Broadly, tribe is an aggregate of people sharing common social values, common dialect, territory and culture. But in a restricted sense, tribe means “a group of people under a chief and maintaining distinct cultural traits. Over eight per cent of India’s total population, the tribals have a variety in their culture, lifestyle and above all different customs and worldview of their

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own. Today, despite their adaptation and exposure to the culture of larger society, modernization, industrialization, they live in a world of dynamic isolation that helps the tribals to maintain their distinct socio-cultural identity. Many tribal development programmes are being implemented in the state of Tamil Nadu, wherein participation of tribal women is, in general, low compared to tribal men. The objective of the study was to find out the constraints and suggestions to increase the participation of tribal women in developmental programmes.

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on participation of tribal women in developmental programmes. In accordance with the objectives of the study, The Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu was selected because

it is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu where the percentage tribal population is higher. The Nilgiris District comprises four blocks viz., Udhagamandalam, Coonoor, Kotagiri and Gudalur. of these, Udhagamandalam and Kotagiri blocks were selected based on the high population of the tribals. From each block, four revenue villages were selected based on the tribal population and thus a total of eight revenue villages from two blocks were selected. Also, the familiarity of the researcher to the culture and local dialect of the district was considered during selection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The tribal women expressed a variety of constraints & suggestions for participation in department programmes (Table 1.)

Table 1.
Constraints expressed by Tribal Women

(n=120)*

Sl. No.	Constraints	No.	Percentage
1.	Lack of adequate training facilities	40	33.33
2.	Lack of awareness about credit sources	82	68.33
3.	Insufficient credit facilities	80	66.67
4.	Indebtedness	81	67.50
5.	Less importance to actual needs	70	58.33
6.	More social taboos, superstitions and traditions	100	83.33
7.	Lack of adequate communication skills	72	60.00
8.	Inadequate motivation from family members	60	50.00
9.	Lack of periodical trainings	34	28.33
10.	Suppression due to "dependancy"	51	42.50

* Multiple responses

Among the problems faced, 83.33 per cent of tribal women had reported prevalence of social taboos, superstitions and traditions, followed by lack of awareness about credit sources (68.33%), indebtedness (67.50%), insufficient credit facilities (66.67%), and lack of awareness about the tribal development schemes (60.83%). In spite

of several development programmes initiated by the Governments over the years, tribal women are hesitant to involve themselves in these programmes due to the restrictions imposed by the tribal society. The results of this study have confirmed this important problem which could be overcome primarily by ensuring education of tribal girls.

Table 2.
Suggestions offered by the Tribal Women

(n=120)*

Sl. No.	Suggestions	No.	Percentage
1.	Training facilities	100	83.33
2.	Loan facilities	85	70.83
3.	Information on banking and marketing	90	75.00
4.	Marketing facility for the products through taluk and district centres	80	66.67
5.	Awareness to be created on developmental programmes and their importance	79	65.83
6.	Counselling to be conducted periodically to solve the problems faced by tribal women	92	76.67
7.	Organizing exhibitions for displaying tribal products	80	66.67
8.	Purchase of products through government sources	82	68.33

* Multiple responses

It is observed from the table that majority of the respondents had reported that training facilities should be provided to tribal women followed by counselling to be conducted periodically to solve the problems faced by tribal women and providing information on banking and marketing (75.00%). If these suggestions are considered by the policy makers then

the participation of tribal women is likely to improve.

The results of the study had indicated that indebtedness is widespread in the tribal areas and among the problems faced by the tribal women, it is probably the most difficult one to tackle. Further it was noted that these problems

clearly indicate that in tribal areas, the tribal women are more bogged down by the constraints of customs and traditions and also their low economic status. Overcoming these constraints and considering their suggestions while formulating strategies would go a long way in empowerment of tribal women.

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