



SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITION OF TRIBAL PEOPLE: A CASE STUDY.

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As a Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellow (PMRDF), I worked in District Shahdol, MP – one of the most backward districts of the central India. The fellowship gave me an opportunity to see the problems associated with remotest part of India and made me aware of the facts responsible for the same.

Shahdol is a district located in the east central India and in 2006, Ministry of Panchayati Raj included it in the list of 250 most backward district in the country. The district is much backward in agricultural practices. The Tribes of the district prefer cultivation in old traditional method. The land holding size is very small and mostly the tribes are marginal farmers. The substantial farming is mainly practiced in the region and most of them are also involved in daily wages for the livelihood.

The district has 44.65 % of tribal population. The district is predominantly inhabited with the tribes like Gond, Baiga, Kol, Mariya . The living standard of tribals is very simple. Their houses are made of mud, bamboo sticks, paddy straw and local tiles. Tribal men wear Dhoti, Bandi, Fatohi and head gear. Women wear Saree named "Kaansh" saree in the local dialect. The saree is always of body colour. Women in the tribal community prefer to get their body parts hands, legs and neck encovered with colours. They wear different kinds of ornaments made of bamboo, seeds and metals. All the tribes mentioned earlier have high number of families below poverty line families. These are most socially-economically backward families in the Gram Panchayat. All the families are institutionally owned by the Gram Panchayat.

The educational background of these people is poor. About 50 % are illiterate. It has been seen that about 28% of the population has passed 8th standard, and only 2.4 are graduates or doing graduation. Most of the head of the families are illiterate and their children are school
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dropout. Girls have left the school at 8th standard as there is no school beyond 8th standard in the village.

These are the marginal farmers and involved in the daily wage labor activities. Their primary occupation is agriculture but confined to rainy season only and for rest of the year they do daily wage labour in the village or in the nearby areas. Some of them are vegetable seller in the nearby market and others are going to district head quarter in search of daily wage work. The females in the village also work in the field and do daily wage work. Some of the tribal people are also involved in the Mistry/ Masonary/Construction work and also works as driver in nearby area. It has been seen that most of the family members were doing farming on the forest land and collecting non timber forest products like Dona Patta and Mahua collection as their economic activity. They go for the daily wage labor in the surrounding area. Some of them were involved in vegetable selling activities and doing Mistry work.

Most of the tribal population is below poverty line. Their major source of income is from daily wage working and from agricultural activities. There are families whose annual income is between Rs. 5000 to 10000 only. They have very low or nil income from the agriculture as they may have very less amount of land or infertile land. This group mainly belongs to the Baiga tribe. There are also families whose yearly income is between Rs. 10000 to 20000. They have few acre of fertile land and also involved in daily wage activities. They are mostly from Gond tribe. There are very few families whose income is above 20000. The marginal income of these families is also increased by Tendu patta, Dona patta add Mahua collection.

The tribal in the region are allotted with FRA patta and had supported their entitlement. The basic benefit is the legal right – household tenure over cultivated forest lands, and a legal basis for collection of forest products and grazing. These rights lay the foundation for a change in the social status of hitherto marginalised households. They can then expect to be free from regular harassment from forest department field staff. Furthermore, they anticipate increased livelihood security and consequent dignity and social status. Right holders may also be expected to be able to better access a range of government development programmes and normal service provision such as agriculture extension and land improvement schemes.

The Tribal people are ambitious unless their ambition is tapped through proper channel. These people have their future plans but the support is needed. They have ambitions to run small business like selling vegetables in the market and want to increase their income. Many had plans to increase their agriculture production and construct the pakka house. Some of them also want to go for goat rearing business and for some kind of small business like that of Bangles selling etc. There are also some people who are not enough confident to speak about their future plans.

To achieve their dreams, these people need the support. There is need of finance either to increase agriculture production or to carry out some work to fulfill their dreams. The tribals are now getting aware of education and they want to educate their children but the finance is crucial for them and they don't have it. The agricultural land owned by them need irrigation facility through ponds or well so as to increase their agriculture production. The scarcity of water is hampering their growth. Electricity supply and larger land holdings are support required by these people which is the need of the hour.

It is pertinent that after the decade of implementation of the FRA, the time has come to monitor the impact of FRA on the patta holder households. Unless the FRA benefitted families are provided with irrigation facilities, credit access and knowledge of efficient agriculture, there are lesser chances of change in the quality of life of the FRA titleholders.