

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE AMONG THE TRIBAL WOMEN: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE P.V.T.G SAURIYA PAHARIA OF KAHALGAON, BHAGALPUR

KUMARI SUNITA CHOUDHARY¹

¹Assistant Professor & Course Co-Ordinator, University Department of Anthropology, Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur, Bihar,INDIA

ABSTRACT

Sauriya Paharia also known as Maler is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) of Bihar and Jharkhand confined in the Rajmahal hills of Santhal Pargana of Jharkhand extending upto Kahalgaon sub-division of Bhagalpur District of Bihar. This study is confined in the Sauriya settlements of Kahalgaon, Bhagalpur, Bihar and part of my Ph.D research work. Sauriya Paharia resides in the hilly slopes and forest villages of Kahalgaon and speaks Malto language belongs to Dravidian linguistic family. Earlier they mostly depend on shifting cultivation but over the period of time their livelihood shifted to the various sources. Along with their male counterpart, Sauriya women contribute equally as far as their economy and livelihood is concern. This paper is an attempt to describe the socio-economic change of the Sauriya women and the factors associated with it. This research paper is based on field work and empirical experiences.

KEYWORDS: Socio-economic, Livelihood, Sauriya Paharia, Change, PVTG

The tribal population in India numerically constitutes a small segment of the total population of the country but is a significant part of the population. According to 2001 census data , total population of Scheduled Tribes constitutes 8.2% of the total population of the country. Most of the Scheduled tribe people lives in rural areas and their population comprise 10.4 % of the total rural population of the country. The term 'scheduled tribes' first appeared in the Constitution of India, to confer certain constitutional privileges and protection to a group of people who are considered disadvantaged and backward. In the Constitution of India, Article 366 (25) defines Scheduled Tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to the scheduled Tribes (STs) for the purposes of this Constitution"

The Scheduled Tribes, who are also referred to as 'Adivasis', meant original inhabitants. For long periods of history, they were always socially and geographically isolated. They belonged to different races with diverse cultural characteristics, speaking varied languages, following a variety of religions and spread across various ecological zones. Process of Sanskritization has affected them culturally, and other processes of displacement have made them a marginalized segment of the society. Since independence, various measures have been taken up at the national level for protecting the interests of the scheduled tribes of the country and particular

attention has been given to tribal development in the different plan periods. Out of the total tribal population, tribal women add up to almost half. Like all other communities, development of status of tribal communities also to a large extent depends on the upliftment of the status of tribal women. The popular perception of the tribal women indicates two differing views. Some researchers are of the opinion that the tribal women enjoy higher social status compared to their non-tribal counterparts and some other studies indicate a low status for the tribal women. In fact, provisions made by the Constitution over the years have not made much difference to the status of tribal women. Their status is found to be lower than that of women belonging to the general population, Scheduled caste women and also lower than that of the status of Tribal men.

Present paper is an attempt to delineate the social-economic conditions and changes taken place among the tribal women of Sauriya Paharia of Kahalgaon, Bihar and adjoining Rajmahal hills of Jharkhand. Now here is the general introduction of the Sauriya Paharia tribe-:

The Sauriya Paharia is numerically a minor scheduled tribe in the state of Bihar and Jharkhand. As the name indicates, are a hill tribe settled in the hilly ranges of the Rajmahal Hills and neighbouring in the region of Santhal Parganas and adjoining regions of Bhagalpur and Banka districts of Bihar. The Sauriya Paharia has been identified and declared as a

Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) now Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) by the government of Jharkhand and Bihar. Those groups of tribes who live more or less in isolation having a different life style showing little change from time immemorial has been termed as "Primitive Tribe". The criteria generally followed in identification of Primitive tribal groups are: (a) Pre-agricultural level of technology; (b) Extremely low level of literacy; (c) small, stagnant or diminishing population. They belong to the Proto Australoid racial stock and speaks Malto language. The group of Paharia who lives in deep forest are in a miserable state and are getting depopulated. Their chief means of livelihood is practicing the slash and burn type of cultivation and they are in a state of abject poverty. Originally, the Paharia were mainly dependent on shifting cultivation, but now one can hardly find them practicing their own methods of cultivation, which have almost been replaced by settled agriculture since a couple of decades back.

The Culture of Sauria Paharia originated, developed and even today largely flourishes in the lap of Nature. The natural setting of the Sauria Paharia habitat comprises mainly of forests and hills. The influence of forest is reflected on every aspect of Sauria Economy and livelihood it appears, can be had mainly by examining it in context with its forests. (Vidyarthi, L.P. 1963, March). The economy and livelihood of the Sauria Paharia villagers revolves round the forest. These days practicing Khailu Cultivation is prevented by forest department.

Rather than Shifting Cultivation, the economy and livelihood of Sauria Paharia can be understood under the following categories: -

- (a) Ecological differences and the problem of adjustment with new environment.
- (b) The economic differences with special reference to economic level, sources of livelihood and the standard of living.

The study was conducted in Kahalgaon sub-division of Bhagalpur District, Bihar adjoining with Rajmahal hill region of Santhal Pargana of Jharkhand. All the Sauriya villages are mostly revolving round the forest. Apart from providing setting for Khailu Cultivation (Shifting Cultivation) they are dependent upon forest for sources of food. Sauria Paharia is also dependent upon daily wages. They didn't have much of their own land for their livelihood which leads to worst situation for Sauria Paharia of both villages which affects the livelihood and economy at the same time.

Shifting cultivation has always been an eyesore to forest department. As the traditional economic system of Sauriya Paharia is based on Shifting Cultivation which takes place at the interval of every 3 years is getting altered due to forest Act

1927 and Forest conservation Act 1980. The main reason behind is this prevent them from practicing shifting cultivation which is based on deforestation which is leading to deteriorate of their traditional way of living. Though it results creates condition for deep- rooted changes in the Economic life and traditional mode of their livelihood.

But now a day's Sauria Paharia is migrating from their natural habitats because there is no way of livelihood. Usually they are now doing the settled type of Agriculture. The nature of work done by them is construction work as labour, hotel work, brick -kilns, Further, a large number of seasonal migrants work in urban informal manufacturing construction, services or transport sectors, and are employed as casual laborer, head loaders, rickshaw pullers and hawkers. Thus, they are engaged in low paid jobs and occupations. Sauria have been always reluctant to settle in planes even after several attempts done by the Government since pre -independence time. If the foregoing proposed schemes will be carried out properly the Sauriya will be benefited immensely.

The purpose of the implementation of different schemes was mainly the economic development of the Paharias but it was found out that primitive tribal development strategy lacked in any micro level comprehensive planning. The achievement has not commensurate with the inputs provided. The development needs of PVTG vary from tribe to tribe, sometimes even village to village, so the generalized nature of schemes at times did not cater to the specific village need. The development programmes initiated by the state government has not brought marked improvement in the life of these PVTG's.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim and objective of this research paper is as follows-

1. To know the socio-economic condition of the Sauriya Women
2. To assess the changes taking place in socio-economic life of the Sauriya Women and its' to know its associated factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To carry out this study I have conducted a microscopic fieldwork and collected first hand information regarding changing pattern of economy and livelihood among the Sauria Women. Considering Prof. Vidyarthi's Study on Maler as baseline date, I have tried to carry out the changes took place in last five decades. To know the changing pattern of Economy and Livelihood of the Sauria women, I have applied primary techniques of data collection such as Observation, Interview, Schedule and Photography. Focussed Group Discussion on traditional economy and culture and livelihood of the Sauria

Paharia. I have analyzed that how traditional shifting cultivation (Khailu) was once the identity of Sauria Paharia and now a days they are looking at different kinds of resources for their economy and livelihood. The present study and the observation are based on the few Paharia villages of Kahalgaon, Bhagalpur and adjoining Rajmahal hills which have been extensively studied for obtaining qualitative data through fieldwork and empirical research. At the same time, I did library work and incorporated secondary data from the published and unpublished work do so far.

maize in their hilly slopes tracts and used to sell it for income generation. They also go for daily labour work to nearby brick-kilns and in construction works along with their childrens. Most of the sauriya are landless hence they have no land to cultivate paddy in large scale however they used to cultivate nearby hilly tracts only for producing vegetables, maize and some pulses but to a limited extent. They face problem as they are having no fixed livelihood yet. Sauriya girls also engaged themselves in livelihood generation because of poverty. Sauriya women also seen in rearing live-stocks to get earnings from it.



Map: Map of Bihar Indicating Bhagalpur District where Field Work Conducted among Sauriya

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In tribal societies, tribal women are more important than women in any other social groups because tribal women are very hard-working and in almost all the tribal communities they participate in economic activities almost equally with men or works harder than men and the family economy and income also depend on women. This is true as far as Sauriya Society are Concern. This Study reveals the socio-economic conditions of the Sauriya women of Kahalgaon, Bhagalpur and delineates the problems which Sauriya Women faces are as follows:

1. Absence of any fix livelihood: The Sauriya women commonly seen engaged in many of occupations for livelihood generation as compared to their male counterparts. Sauriya women used to go to forest daily at morning for collection of minor forest produce and sell these to the local hatt. Today Sauriya women used to go to sell firewood, sal leaves, fruits-nuts in nearby townships of Kahalgaon, Sahebgunj and Bhagalpur by local train daily. Beside these they also cultivate

2. Lack of access to education: Sauriya family more or less engaged majority a time for livelihood and fulfil their day to day need hence all members of a family concentrates on livelihood generation.

Due to this the parents seldom sends their childrens to school. Awareness towards education is still far away as far Sauriya family is concern. Due to poverty and poor transport connectivity, they fail to attain with education however in Sauriya villages, Aanganwadi Centres and Primary schools are functioning but even they are failing to bring them towards school for education because majority of Sauriya women moves outside for daily labour along with their childrens.

3. Poor condition of health: Sauriya women used to tolerate high level of hardship in their villages because of their hard labour but on the other hand sauriya women face severe health problem during pregnancy. During pregnancy, they hardly consult doctors of even their primary health centres. Morbidity is high in sauriya villages due to contaminated water as well. Infant mortality is also high among Sauriya due to malnutrition and non-institutionalised delivery of childrens at home through the help of local untrained midwifery.

On the whole, in my study I found that due to more contribution in obtaining livelihood, Sauriya Women played a vital role in decision making at family level, this in turn

empowers sauriya women but poverty and lack of employment opportunity are making them vulnerable to a great extent.

CHANGES PLACE AMONG SAURIYA WOMEN TODAY

Followings are the changes that can be seen among Sauriya Women these days-

1. Decision Making Ability
2. Participation in Village Panchayats
3. Awareness towards education and Health:
4. Generating Income and Increasing tendency towards future Savings due to formation of Self Help Groups.
5. Mass protests of Sauriya women against Alcohol Consumption of their male counterparts reforming their quality of life gradually.

Factors of Changes among Sauriya Women:

Factors behind the changes taking place among the women of Sauriya Paharia are as follows

1. Participation in Panchayati Raj System
2. Formation of Self Help Group
3. Role of Aanganwadi Kendra and Asha Workers
4. Training of Skill Development in Sauriya Villages
5. Development of Transport and Communication
6. Impact of Special Schemes for the development of PVTGs (for example- Van-dhan Yozna etc.)

CONCLUSION

In spite of various constitutional provisions and policies for the tribals, it is a hard reality that the tribal women still are lagging behind in many respects and they have to face many challenges. The study emphasized the need for tribal development in India. Their low level of economic activities, social backwardness, low level of literacy, poor health conditions makes it vital for a systematic process of tribal development. They work very hard and contribute significantly towards the economic condition of the family, but they are still in poverty mostly because no proper efforts are oriented towards them. During the plan periods, various programmes are taken up for the development of the Scheduled Tribe population and a lot of betterment has been already done, but still, a lot more requires to be done. The families need to have a sufficient income to enable them to cross the poverty levels. Since

economic status determines other aspects of life and living conditions, it is of utmost importance. Education for tribal women is an essential aspect of development. Education is a vital instrument to bring about a change in the cultural norms and patterns of life of the tribal women and to change their outlook and made them economically independent. It would help them to organize themselves to analyze their situations and living conditions and be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Education will enable them to take up jobs so that they can improve their situation. Social and economic status of the scheduled tribe to a large extent depends on the educational attainment. Educated women will be able to face the present day society better than earlier times. In the present context, no one can remain completely isolated, but they are influenced by the growth of modern society and culture. Government is providing a lot of support and grant for the education of Tribal students. This will help to increase the literacy rate and it will lead to the right way to development. The health status of the tribals is explored to assess their awareness regarding their health. Sometimes they lack the essential nutrients. Many times they suffer from various diseases as there is a lack of health and hygiene awareness. Thus increasing the literacy rate and providing opportunities for gainful employment for tribal women will be instrumental in bringing about a change in the status of tribal women in India and to handle to challenges successfully.

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