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Chapter - 6

Covid-19: Tribal Issue and Challenge

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Chapter - 6

Covid-19: Tribal Issue and Challenge

Vijay Madhu Gawas

Abstract

The large number of Tribal peoples are living in remote and the forest areas have been adversely affected during the time of COVID-19 and lockdown period. Despite these distinctions problems faced by the tribal people due to lack of economic and health facilities. During the time of COVID-19 and lockdown period it accelerates the economic slowdown and large number of poor tribal push into the poverty and unemployment. This Paper discusses about the impact on Tribal people during time of COVID-19 in the state of Goa. For this Purpose, Secondary data from books, Articles, Journals, Newspapers, etc. have been used.

Keywords: impact, health care, economic crises, livelihood, access facilities

Introduction

Around 104 million of tribal peoples and concentrated in 10 different states in India. Across the 705 tribes spread and the account for 8.6% the total population of scheduled tribes in India. The tribal people rank the lowest in various health, Educational, Societal indicators ^[1]. India has the largest concentration of tribal people in the world. The tribal groups inhabit widely varying ecological and geo-climatic conditions in hilly, forest, desert, coastal region etc. in different concentration throughout the country. Along with being geographically and socially isolated the tribal have historically been politically under-represented and their regions of residence economically underdeveloped. After independence in 1947 the government of Indian spent a lot of resources to improve the life of the native Indians or schedule tribes.

The majority of tribes of the tribes and other forest dweller communities were affected during the time of lockdown Period. Hence the lock down is the measure concern issues like livelihoods, food, shelter and the economic

¹ <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2020/06/impact-of-covid-19-on-the-tribals-across-the-country/>

distress for affected the large number of the tribal groups in India. There are forms to be change by disadvantages communities to lead not to development but to deprivation ^[2]. Unfortunately, due to lack of healthcare facilities plan for tribal peoples to combat the COVID-19 and other emergency concern issue in the Tribal Area.

During time of Coronavirus (Covid-19) relief campaign run by the government to prevent the spread of infection. It is a critical time of epidemic when the world economy is going through a crisis of recession and lockdown is going on all over the country and both life and livelihood are threatened. The Lockdown can be prolonged across the country or in certain places. In the meantime, millions of people may be trapped in a dilemma of terrible poverty; or also become hungry due to lack of employment and lack of government support. It is accountabilities to the States to provide the extra grain to the needy tribal peoples. Besides the States should provide the temporary ration card to the needy tribal peoples. Apart from starvation, there are many other concerns and Relief funds should also be available for state governments and local bodies.

Besides the Mining activities have created the Conflicts in many tribal dominated areas. The conflict of natural resource and governance issues are impact on the Tribal people and their livelihood. The spirit of the Constitution which talks about village self-rule, it would have empowered tribals to impose necessary precautions, while ensuring that their livelihoods are not greatly impacted. It great opportunity to create self-sustaining and long- term livelihood options for tribal near their habitats. During the time of lockdown, it required to provide the information and awareness among the tribal about the pandemic. But most of the tribal settlement are located in remote area and it is very difficult to reached such kinds of the information in the tribal areas.

Impact of COVID-19 and tribal

Presently, the state of Goa update COVID-19 stated the total Active cases 24898 including with Active cases 5252, Recovered cases 19648, and Death cases 304 ^[3]. In the connection, during time of the COVID -19 the serious problem faced by the tribal peoples compared to the rest of the other population. Due to the limited resources of livelihood and the problems of the poverty. The reason for the most of the tribal community have pattern of style

² Dev Nathan, Virginius Xaxa, Social Exclusion and Adverse Inclusion: Development and Deprivation of Adivasis in India, 2012, published by oxford University press, New Delhi, India. Pp at 1

³ <https://www.google.com/search?ei=-oRgX8zzEYuGyAOmwp2ADw&q=covid-19+figrues+in+goa>

living in joint community in rural Areas. The coronavirus pandemic is rising every day, and the visible challenges being faced by tribal peoples. Similarly, the tribal people's livelihood rights are increasingly being subverted by the state and powerful sections of the society in concert with global capital and market forces, resulting in the loss of economic spaces, livelihoods, resources and Knowledge, and often the suppression of ways of life and culture. The livelihood rights of poor and marginalised people are in-extricable linked to their rights to living spaces, as also to natural landscapes and ecological occupational niches ^[4].

According to the report by an expert committee of the central government in December 2018 on 'Tribal Health in India', around 104 million tribal people in the country are largely concentrated in ten states. Almost 90 per cent of the tribal population lives in rural areas. The report further states that there are 90 districts or 809 blocks with more than 50 per cent tribal population and they account for nearly 45 per cent of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population in the country. In other words, almost 55 per cent of the tribal population lives outside these 809 tribal majority blocks. According to the ministry of tribal affairs, the percentage of ST people living below the poverty line in 2011-12 was 45.3% in the rural areas and 24.1% in urban areas, compared to 25.7% in rural areas and 13.7% in urban areas for the overall population ^[5].

Currently, it is very difficulties during time of Covid-19 to access economic support and other healthcare facilities, because the majority of tribal peoples are struggle for food and livelihood. Due to lack of opportunities and monetary earnings due to restrictions and unsold stocks of their products are some of the key challenges tribal people. Since after post-independence of India, the Government take many initiatives to empowerment of tribal communities through floated the various schemes and policies under tribal sub plan. Prior that the objective of Resolution was tabled by Jawaharlal Nehru in Constituent Assembly in December 1946. It sought to secure social, economic, and political justice, equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law to all the people, and promised the adequate safeguards for minority, backward, and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes ^[6]. The tribal groups are very important in Indian society due to the unique traditional skills of earning livelihood through forest produce. however, the situation was changed due to Covid-19.

⁴ Sumi Krishna. Women's Livelihood Rights: Recasting Citizenship for Development published by sage publication, New Delhi, Pp at 16, 2007.

⁵ <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/tribals-in-india-need-firmer-hand-holding-during-and-following-covid-19-pandemic-2739661.html>.

⁶ Ibid 2 at 19.

While following the social distancing and lockdown norms laid down more than four months, most of the tribal peoples were loss of jobs and livelihood. It is high time for the stakeholders in tribal welfare, as well as governments both at the Centre and states to pay more attention to the plight of tribal people during the Covid-19 crisis. As measures to combat the predicament of the tribals, the government needs to strengthen healthcare, food security, wage employment, the Forest Rights Act. But the awareness about the pandemic and safety measures are key issues in the state of Goa.

Economic crises and tribal peoples

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only the health crisis but also the economic crisis which has created the among the poor is unparalleled. It has also created the huge burden for tribal groups due to loss of income, hope and aspiration in future. Most of the tribal groups have irregular incomes and highly vulnerable to economic and health crisis. Overall poor Condition of the tribal people was attributed to their Social and geographical isolation and through such isolation, to their social and economic backwardness ^[7]. For last few years the Indian Economy was slow down and now present issue of pandemic crisis is makeup with impact on the millions of the tribal peoples in India. Due to crisis of the Indian Economy and pandemic issues, there are many tribal peoples fear for losing jobs in the private sector.

The economy of tribal is subsistence oriented. The concept of saving is not known because they generally produce perishable things. When establishment of Government administration in the forest and enactment of forest acts snatching away the traditional rights of tribal over the forests has brought the problem of unemployment among the tribal ^[8].

Currently, the COVID-19 crisis is an affecting the different regions of India especially, in tribal areas due to lack of resources endowments, unemployment issue and other agrarian distress. Moreover, the rural areas, many smallholder tribal farmers and daily wages tribal labour are affected because most of them are depend on the additional income from the informal sector. Many of the tribal workers take on job in construction, as taxi and pretty shop etc...

However, during the time of COVID-19 the central and state government made an announcement a relief to support to the poor and marginalized communities but the measures things are not adequate. Due to wider global

⁷ Ibid 6 at 23.

⁸ John. k Thomas, Human Rights of Tribal (In two volumes) (empowerment and protection of the rights of tribal),2005, published by Isha Book, New Delhi, pp at 34.

economic and pandemic crisis many small industries were closed. Besides lockdown has created a huge of pressure on Indian's economy and automatically, many of the tribal employee lose their jobs. The Continuation of lockdown may further accelerate the economic slowdown and large number of poor tribal push into a vicious cycle of the poverty. Therefore, the measurement of poverty can be split into two distinct operations, viz. the identification of the poor, and the aggregation of their poverty Characteristic into an over-all measure ^[9].

Besides the another issue of the Socio-economic distress situation in tribal areas arising out of Covid19 outbreak and lockdown measures. The lack of adequate awareness and healthcare and to protect the rights and livelihoods of the tribal communities. While assessment of COVID lockdown impact on tribal communities which was initiated after the announcement of the lockdown was made on March 24. Particularly Tribal Groups in severe distress during the lockdown measures affected access to forests and livelihood activities. The problems due to restrictions on their movement and due to lack of access and other entitlement. Many Tribal communities have been affected as the milk economy faces severe crisis as procurement and sale has been disrupted during the lockdown.

For instance, in the process, the Adivasi people are forced to give up their lands, including forests, to the state and industrial capital. With the loss of traditional agriculture-cum-forest livelihoods, the Adivasi's are forced into change, that is, into different kinds of economic activates ^[10]. Such as marginalization of Adivasi's, or economic factors, such as non-recognition of ownership of the land forests. According to the Forest Rights Act (FRA) to provides for Community Forest Rights (CFRs) and Individual Forest Rights (IFRs). Due to lack of recording of existing forest rights as result the insecurity likely to increase vulnerability and more adversely impact livelihoods and food security on tribal and forest dwellers during time of lockdown period and even after. Many Tribal people living around protected areas for their livelihoods and they mostly are dependent on the natural resources. The restrict access of these communities to the natural resources that they are dependent on for their lives and livelihoods. The causing severe distress to the tribals and forest dwellers in the present situation by impacting their livelihoods and destroying agro biodiversity.

⁹ Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze Omnibus, 1999, poverty and Famines Hunger and Public Action India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity, published by oxford University press, New Delhi, pp at 24.

¹⁰ Ibid 7 at 321.

In the Indian context, scheduled tribes have the special provisions, constitutional rights for their social, economic and educational promotion. Besides, there are other general social and economic developmental schemes for tribal peoples. As a consequence, they remain deprived from such benefits due to lack of awareness about Government Schemes. Due to illiteracy and lack of awareness many families remain in dark about the assistance laid down for them by the Government. The forest-based products and living with forests; dependent on nature were the basic features of tribal resources. The tribal peoples have an in-built relationship with nature, a wealth of traditional knowledge, and have used natural resources for their livelihood. They have their own knowledge about management practices for centuries to preserve their lands. The forests disappeared in large amount, and control over natural resources has shifted from tribal people to the Government. With the concept of protected forests and national forests, the tribal felt themselves uprooted from their property of forests. Hence the right of forest is abolished today.

The term of the Poverty refers to the condition of not having the means to afford basic human needs such as clean water, nutrition, health care, clothing and shelter. Generally, poverty is measured by Below Poverty Line (BPL) indices in rural areas. The Below Poverty Line is an economic benchmark and poverty threshold used by the government of India to indicate economic disadvantage and to identify individuals and households in need of government assistance and aid. It is determined using various parameters which vary from state to state and within states. According to each five-year plan to survey the BPL for rural areas were based on the degree of deprivation in respect of parameters including landholding, type of house, clothing, food security, sanitation, consumer durables, literacy status, labour force, means of livelihood, status of children, type of indebtedness, reasons for migrations, etc. The nature of poverty in rural areas. The Public health and education of the tribal were not satisfactory. Housing conditions of the tribal people were very pathetic.

Another incident, during the time of lockdown most of the tribal farmers are not getting proper price of their agricultural produce. Enhance, the Middlemen purchase vegetables at lower prices from the tribal farmers and tribal farmers have no option to sell them. The state need to support Tribal farmers during the lockdown, because bringing vegetables to the market during the lockdown is a challenge for them. It is an attempt to draw the attention of common people towards tribal farmers that the state government need to take the steps to ensure that farmers get proper price for their produce. As many tribal labour as well as tribal frames who had been living on daily wages was suffered during time of lockdown

Health care and Tribal peoples

During the rising cases of COVID-19 most the challenges for healthcare both in private and public sector. In Tribal areas have more challenges on the basic provide the healthcare facilities, healthcare professionals, information and awareness etc. It may be cause dangerous to increases risks of infection to the tribal and forest dweller living in the forest Area. While the Testing and monitoring of the disease is inadequate, and it is mostly limited to urban areas. Therefore, it is a major challenge to Providing testing facilities in tribal areas.

The human development index comprises three components i; e health, education and income generating capacity. Health is a function, not only o medical care, but also of the overall integrated development of society-cultural, economic, educational, social and political. The health status of a society is intimately related to its value system, philosophical and cultural traditions, and social economic and political organisation, each of these aspects has deep influence on health, which in turn influence all these aspects [11].

Most of the tribal peoples were living in remote areas, and the solutions are very limited. It clarified based on the two types of health resources in a tribal area i: e herbal medicine and modern medicine. The first herbal medicine, is that the sort of natural healing, which is a system that over the years has almost collapsed. The second is access to modern medicine through healthcare systems. Since the tribals are susceptible to various diseases and it is essential for them to have uninterrupted access to these centres. Sometime the health centres themselves are under great stress. The government should allocate the knowledge, financial resources and create enough volunteers so that these groups can take care of their basic health requirements.

The tribal live in a specific territory and their culture, style of life and economy are different. There distinct culture, residence style of life and economy are also responsible for the problems of health and sanitation. Tribal live in the village surrounded by hill ad forest. In these areas, they have lack communication facilities, and they are not able to attain the benefits of the programmes related to health [12]. Besides most of the vulnerable groups among the tribal peoples were not being able to access the better healthcare facilities and it is critical issue for their survival because of social distancing Norms. Unequally, the social distancing norms is a measures affected the lives

¹¹ John. k Thomas, Human Rights of Tribal (In two volumes) (status of Tribal in India), 2005, published by Isha Book, New Delhi, pp at 74.

¹² Ibid 8 at 63.

of tribal peoples in the throughout of the country. And the tribals living in remote, forest areas are among the worse situation. As a result, the high levels of deprivation and exclusion faced by the tribal poles in India. Such as the deprivation lead the denial of basic healthcare facilities in tribal areas.

Conclusion and Discussion

As a result, during the Indian economy slowdown and COVID-19 adds to distress the scheduled tribes facing the several problems. It also ensures due to lack of financial resources and multiple challenges led to struggle and sustain themselves. therefore, it is very unique and diverse ecosystem, the tribal community inhabiting in forest area are face the several development challenges. In order the tribal community dependent on the forest produce, farming and other daily wages have faced the adverse impact during the time of lockdown. Despite the traditional shifting cultivation practised by tribal, is transforming into settled agriculture. Such types of cultivation are resulting in land degradation and unsustainable agriculture leading to poverty and increasing demand for land again for further cultivation.... there's urgent need to educate the tribal on sustainable farming... access to improved agriculture practise for these tribal need to be made available ^[13].

In recently, the prime Minister of India has make announced the economic package of Rs.20 lakh crores a self-reliant India. It's a duty of the central as well as state Government to mention the plan for Tribal community and tribal groups under the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat and make the comprehensive guideline to states to addressed the issues and concern the tribal communities. Around 300 million of tribals and other forest dweller population depends on minor forest produces for food, shelter, medicines and income. It is adverse impact of the COVID-19 and the lockdown on trial communities and forest dweller has been immense and they can availed the benefits under the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat.

Apart from the state government issue the specified guideline to addressed the issues and problems face by Tribals and forest dwellers. The state government make a recommendation to the central government regarding to provide the immediate relief to the tribal communities in the state of Goa by ensuring the health care facilities in the Tribal Areas. It is duty to the state government to look the cases of the forest rights violation, eviction and restrictions on access to forest for livelihoods activities during the lockdown. During the COVID-19 state government release the huge compensatory afforestation funds under tribal sub plan to the Gram Sabhas Constituted under

¹³ Ibid 4 at 55.

FRA to support tribal community for generating livelihood and wages employment during the time of economic crises.

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