

Gender Sensitization & Participatory Democracy among Tribals: A Study of Kalingnagar Industrial Complex of Jajpur District

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ABSTRACT

Background Gender sensitization is the process of creating awareness regarding gender equality issues and modifying the behaviour and views that people hold about themselves and other genders. Participatory democracy is a form of government in which all citizens participate equally irrespective of class creed and sex. The present study has been carried out in Kalinga Nagar, Jajpur district of Odisha and attempt has been made to collect the information from displaced women and their participation in politics.


Methods The study is definitely having a strong empirical bias. The scientific method has been followed to design the whole content of the study. Different testing methods for identifying different sets of relationship among the variables have also been executed. The study is both explanatory and experimental. Data have been collected so far through schedules participant observational method and focus group discussion and a thorough scrutiny of the so far assembled data has been made.

Results The tribal people are physically and mentally not sufficient to compete with the other nontribal people in the society. Deprivation is a stage of life, which contributes only violation of someone's right. Tribal women are getting less opportunity to participate in the politics, due to displaced from own land.

Conclusion As the research project intended to study Gender Sensitization & Participatory Democracy of resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced women, it has been decided to give coverage to the women from pre-displacement and post displacement period. The post displacement scenarios have shown a very distressing picture of socio-political harmony. The affected people are suffering from multiple plight which are necessary to address.

What is already known?

- The impact of displacement is devastating particularly on women.

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- It is a very complex issue with far reaching consequences.
- It is a process which, women get less opportunity in politics.
- Women have to face tough challenges from the opponent.

What this article adds?

- Women became vulnerable while losing cultural identity and traditional knowledge.
- Women having no alternative, compels to face violence, discrimination, exploitation uncertain future in their new environment.
- Due to breakdown of the traditional protection mechanism, displaced women are at a higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence.
- Tribal women are unable to justify their political rights.

Keywords : *Gender, Displacement, Resettlement, Participatory Democracy, Tribal Women*

INTRODUCTION :

Gender sensitization is the ongoing process of raising awareness about gender inequality and discrimination, ultimately aiming to create a society where everyone has equal opportunities and experiences respect, regardless of their gender identity. It's about dismantling the walls built by stereotypes and biases that limit people's potential based on their gender. Gender sensitization goes beyond surface-level ideas of equality between men and women. It acknowledges the spectrum of gender identities and expressions that exist, and the importance of respecting them. We all have unconscious biases, formed through societal norms and upbringing. Gender sensitization helps us recognize these biases in ourselves and others. Traditional gender roles often dictate what behaviours, activities, and even professions are appropriate for men and women. This not only limits individual choices but also reinforces stereotypes. Gender sensitization encourages us to question these roles and create a more flexible society. The benefits of a gender-sensitive society extend far beyond creating a fairer playing field. When everyone has the opportunity to pursue their goals and interests freely, it unleashes a broader range of talents and perspectives that benefit society as a whole. Gender stereotypes can be harmful

to everyone. For example, the pressure on men to suppress emotions can negatively impact their mental health. Conversely, the expectation for women to be solely responsible for childcare can lead to burnout. Gender sensitization fosters a more supportive environment where everyone can express themselves authentically and access the resources they need to thrive. When there's less discrimination and everyone has the chance to contribute their full potential, society as a whole prospers. It leads to a more just legal system, a more innovative workforce, and a more vibrant and inclusive culture.

Gender sensitization is a continuous journey, but through ongoing efforts to educate, challenge biases, and celebrate diversity, we can move towards a future where everyone has the freedom to be themselves and reach their full potential. But women participation in the democratic process is vital for gender equality. However Participatory democracy is a system of governance that strives to bridge the gap between direct and representative democracy. While a traditional direct democracy would have every citizen voting on every issue, which becomes impractical in larger societies, participatory democracy looks to empower citizens beyond simply picking their representatives. Active Citizen Engagement including women is the cornerstone of participatory democracy. Citizens have opportunities to directly participate in shaping policy and legislation, not just through electing officials. This can take many forms, from citizen assemblies to online forums where people can discuss, debate, and propose ideas. In addition to by incorporating citizen input, the idea is to create a more informed and representative decision-making process. Citizens with firsthand knowledge of the issues at hand can provide valuable perspectives that elected officials might not otherwise consider. When citizens feel they have a stake in the decisions that affect their lives, it fosters a greater sense of trust and legitimacy in the government. This can lead to higher rates of civic engagement and a more stable political system.

Participatory democracy is an evolving concept that offers an alternative to the limitations of purely representative systems. It can lead to more informed decision-making, increased civic engagement, and a stronger sense of ownership among citizens over the direction of their communities and country. Participatory Democracy is the essence of the Tribal Communities. Tribal societies often have a strong foundation for participatory democracy due to their traditional

emphasis on consensus-based decision making and community involvement. Tribal communities frequently have well-established systems for collective decision-making through village councils or elder deliberations. Participatory democracy can build upon these existing structures, fostering a sense of continuity and empowering traditional leadership. Tribal communities possess a deep understanding of their environment and needs. Participatory mechanisms can ensure their voices are heard in matters concerning resource management, development projects, and land use. Moreover, by encouraging participation from all community members, participatory democracy can strengthen social bonds and promote a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of the tribe. The village assemblies in India, mandated by the constitution, can be a powerful tool for tribal participation in local governance. Here, tribals can discuss issues, voice concerns, and influence decisions related to their villages. In addition to, Projects where tribal communities are directly involved in managing their forests through decision-making processes exemplify participatory democracy in action. This fosters sustainable practices and protects tribal rights.

TRIBAL WOMEN AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION:

Tribal women have historically been marginalized from political participation, facing a multitude of challenges that stem from social, cultural, and economic factors. However, there has been a growing movement in recent decades to increase their representation and voice in decision-making processes. In no country do men and women have equal social, economic and legal rights. Women still possess less of a range of productive resources, including land, education, and financial resources (World Bank:2000). The gender gap is a major challenge for power distribution and representation. It also contributes to inequality, poverty, unemployment, illness, deprivation and adverse impact on life. There is a marked “invisibility” of women’s lives and their problem in tribal ethnographies, (Mehrotra:2008:107) and they are viewed as either active participants in conservation of their cultural or helpless victims of forces of globalisation, cultural change and modernisation. They have to acquire a legal and social status as a category by themselves. In tribal community gender relationships were seen as relatively egalitarian.

Traditionally tribal women are enjoying better opportunity compared to their male counterparts in

communities. Tribal women having greater economic independence and land rights as well as play a significant role in the domestic economy. But industrialisation and other development projects are the major factors due to which tribal people have been gradually deprived of their habitat and subsistence economy. Migration to other areas in search of work opportunities make them exposed to economic and physical exploitation. Hinduization and Christianization are affecting the value system of tribals. These new cultural values are seen to be putting more restrictions on women in terms of choice of mate/spouse, marriage practices and transition from bride price to dowry and withdrawal of women from work in quest of acquisition of status (Mehrotra: 2008:110)

CHALLENGES FACED BY TRIBAL WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

- Traditional gender roles: In many tribal communities, traditional gender roles often confine women to domestic spheres, limiting their opportunities to engage in public life and politics.
- Lack of education and awareness: Limited access to education and information can hinder tribal women’s understanding of political processes and their rights to participate.
- Socio-economic disadvantage: Tribal communities often face higher levels of poverty and social exclusion, which can further marginalize women and limit their access to resources and opportunities needed for political participation.
- Discrimination and violence: Tribal women may be subjected to discrimination and violence, both within their communities and in the wider political sphere, which can create a hostile environment for their participation.

TRIBAL WOMEN OF KALINGNAGAR INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX:

The gender-based division of labour dictates the tribal women of Kalingnagar Industrial Complex of Jajpur District, to play their role as care-taker of the families. They have to collect water, fuel for cooking and to prepare food for the family. They suffer most due to lack of infrastructural facilities and basic amenities of life in the settlement colonies. Due to insufficient water-pots or tube-wells, they have to wait for hours together only to collect few pots of water. They have to walk a long distance to collect fire-woods. The restricted and

compact areas become unattractive due to their neglect of socio-cultural aspects of tribal life. Tribal women do not find a free land for their social and religious congregations and for their dance. Studies found that due to poverty and malnutrition, women are unable to think about their political rights. Only trying to gather the bread and butter in the newly resettlement and rehabilitation colony. The nontribal people and landlords of that locality hardly allows the innocent tribal women to participate in the electoral process. Though the reservation system provides opportunities a few women to participate in the local self-government and Panchayat election, usually the male member of the taking decision all decisions.

It is evidenced from the analysis of the field data collected from the household survey of the oustee families of the Kalinga Nagar Industrial Complex through a random sampling that majority of the women belonging to Schedule Tribe and others are Schedule Caste and some of them belongs to General Caste. However, when the educational level of persons in the oustee households is analyzed, it indeed gives a discouraging picture of the quality of human capital which indicates socio-economic vulnerability and susceptibility to poverty and livelihood insecurity of the oustees. It has been found that around 85 per cent of the tribal women excluding 0-6 age group population are illiterate. Moreover, those who are literate are only literates from the official record with less than 10 years of formal school education. Most of them only can write their names. Among the oustee families very rarely women have been qualified upto graduation degree. It is because of the low level of education, very few among the earning members of the oustee families at present get employed in the formal and organized sector economic activities. Most of the women are employed as class IV group employees in the industries. In the other hand they are deprived of the agricultural products. Their land in rehabilitated areas is too small to cultivate any crops as result of which for all such family's agriculture is no longer a major source of livelihood. Some other people do small and micro business and others have taken up self-employed type informal sector services such selling formatted country liquor (Handia), collection of minor forest products like honey, kendu leaves etc. The poor economic condition of the tribal people contributes the less participation in the politics.

LIFE AFTER DISPLACEMENT:

Displacing the tribal people from their homeland the government and company authorities heave a sigh of relief that the displacement work is over

and they would get a better chance to construct industries in this locality. But the real suffering comes to the life of displaced people in general and women in particular in the rehabilitation colonies. With a limited locality they have to adjust forever which is against their way of life. Generally tribal people prefer to moves freely in a large peripheral and lead their livelihood. But in rehabilitation colony they became exhausted with the so called modern confined and limited way of life.

The displaced persons who have shifted out from the affected villages and either moved to the resettlement colonies or are in the process of constructing their houses in the colonies expressed their utter dissatisfaction over the inadequate space for burial of the deads and lack of provision of grazing land in the colonies made by the company. Most of the displaced persons asked for larger area for burial purpose and a big patch of land close to the rehabilitation colonies for use as grazing land. In fact, providing space for grazing land in the Rehabilitation colonies is a mandatory provision and it was reported by all the displaced persons that the demands for providing space for Grazing Land and adequate space for burial purpose is a dire necessity in the project sponsored colonies for the restoration of their earlier pattern. While making field study, the researcher found that no tribal women come out to interact primarily due to lack of exposure. Very few of them open their door but hesitated to share their experiences. Therefore, data has been collected from only those women who finally agree to share their experiences of displacement and resettlement.

KAMALI MUNDA:

Kamali Munda at the age of fifty-five is staying in the Gobarghati Colony. She is displaced from the village Madha Pur, Khurunt Panchayat, by Nilachallspat Ltd. She has lost her husband in the prime time of her life. She has only one son and two daughters. Her son is the only earning member of her family. The authorities provided compensation money and land in Gobarghati colony, which is inadequate to build a house. Now she is staying in a thatched house in her land. They are unable to maintain privacy in a single room. In her room only few utensils and certain cooking materials are found. When asked about her present state of living, she openly condemned this life and urged the authorities to settle them in the colony. She has been cut off of all relationship with her other relatives due to displacement. Moreover, she complained that the authorities are not providing food stuff as promised to them. The life in

transit camp being confined, they are only remembering free tribal life of the past. She is unable to describe about the political participation. She never visited any political representative, only reminded the election period, while large number of people gathered in a same place.

HARA JAMUDA:

Thirty-seven years old Hara Jamuda has been displaced from the village Chandia. At present, she is working as Group IV employee in the Gobarghati government school. She has lost her husband AtiJamuda in the tribal agitation of 2nd January 2006. He was killed by police firing while opposing the acquisition of land for the TATA Steel. Hara is the only earning member of her family as her parents-in-laws are so old to do any work. At the same time, she has the responsibilities of two daughters and two sons. At present, she is earning Rs. 12000/- per month. It is somehow enough to maintain a simple tribal life. But she is feeling helpless with the loss of her husband. For her, life is only full of struggles and she is deprived of communitarian tribal way of living. Now Hara does not see any future for her family and being an illiterate lady she reconciles to her fate. She does not dream, unlike others, to get a job for her son and daughter in the steel plant, nor any miracle to rescue the family from its present predicaments.

TULASHI BAWEA:

Tulashi Bewea is now 70 years old. She is resettled in Trijanga colony coming from village of Bangargadia. In Bangargadia she was having a good life. She lost her husband and her only son in an accident. She has not yet received her pata of 10 decimal homestead land in the resettlement colony and leads a very miserable life in transit camp, with very few aluminum utensils and other household belongings. She feels lonely being detached from her kith and kin. She is getting only old age pension (Rs300/) per month. The living condition of Tulashi is miserable and she is compelled to lead a life in scarcity. Tualish virtually started weeping when, asked about her previous land holdings and living condition before being shifted to the Trijanga resettlement colony. This illiterate lady has been compelled to live solitary life of sufferings and destitute. She admitted that, she never cast her vote in the election, but now she understand few things about the politics, while representatives visit their displacement colony.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS:

Involuntary resettlement experience suggests that its impact on tribal people in general and tribal women in particular has become disastrous. Development creates both winners and losers, but it is the tribal women who invariable end up as losers in comparison with their male counterparts. In the resettlement colonies of Kalinga Nagar, the data collected by the researcher prove that majority of the tribal women have ended with lower incomes, less work opportunities, inferior housing and less access to the resources of the commons such as fuel wood, worse nutrition and physical and mental health. The state of affairs or the paradigm of rehabilitation and resettlement policy could change drastically only with the adoption of human rights approach into developmental endeavours. It would not only have effects on the structure of the economy, but also influence societal growth on the basis of equality and justice. The economic hardship restricts tribal women to participate in the democratic process. As a result, tribal women are unable to participate in the mainstream democratic process. The need of hour is, increased participation of tribal women in politics is crucial for ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed in decision-making processes. It is also essential for promoting gender equality and social justice within tribal communities. Overall, participatory democracy holds immense potential for empowering tribal communities and ensuring their voices are heard in matters that affect their lives. However, careful consideration needs to be given to addressing existing inequalities and ensuring inclusive participation for all tribal members. The government should adopt constitutional provisions and legal frameworks to reserve seats for women in local government bodies, specifically for tribal women. This has led to an increase in the number of tribal women holding elected positions. At the same time take affirmative action programs to encourage the participation of tribal women in politics and take stringent action, those people are involved in the hijacking the power of the women. These programs may include capacity-building workshops, leadership training, and financial support for campaigns. Civil society organizations should play a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of tribal women's political participation and mobilizing them to participate in the electoral process. Integrating gender equality concepts into school curriculums from a young age is crucial. This can involve discussions on gender stereotypes, celebrating diverse role models, and

fostering an environment of mutual respect. Creating open dialogues about gender issues and promoting positive narratives through public awareness campaigns can significantly shift social attitudes. This can involve featuring diverse representations in media, showcasing successful women and men in non-traditional roles, and highlighting the importance of gender equality. Individuals also play a critical role, advocating for equal opportunities, we can all contribute to a more gender-sensitive world.

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Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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