

Status of Adolescent Girls in Tharu Tribe of Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh, India.

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ABSTRACT

The Tharu tribe is a famous tribal community of India. Though playing very dominant roles in their community, its adolescents are not connected with the main stream of development. Role of women in Decision Making Process is not very dominant. Decision making is one of indicator of social status. The ability to make decision makes people powerful. It explains the women's status in terms of decision making in different aspects of household as well as other activities. The people in the study area are found to be engaged in agriculture so the decision making role has been analyzed in term of the decision making in farm management which included cropping pattern and livestock management, children education aspect, household management aspect. Hence, this study aims at enlightening the government and international community on the challenges facing this community. Exploratory and descriptive research design has been employed in this primary data based study. Primary data on adolescent awareness in various matters have been collected by interviewing 48 adolescent girls, 18 to 25 year age group to know the level of awareness about education, technology, health and ownership. The study reveals poverty, illiteracy and lack of communication are the main problems of Tharu adolescents who are very backward in matters of advanced education, technology and communication. They do not like to go to advanced cities for education. And though they must have a rethink about this, they must also stick to their old culture in order to keep their identity. At present there are many other communities that exist in Tharu area, so the process of cultural exchange is still going on. However, they are against others who are capturing their land and forests. Hence, governmental financial assistance is a must if the Tharu tribe is to be developed and integrated into the global community.

INTRODUCTION

Generally in India as per 2001 census, women constitute 48% of the total population. Women as an important human resource were recognized by the Constitution of India which not only accorded equality to women but also empowered the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in their favour. The Constitution, the Government of India has been engaged in committed and continuous endeavours towards ensuring all-round well-being, development and empowerment of women. One of the six basic principles of governance laid down in the National Common Minimum Programme is to empower women politically, educationally, economically and legally also. The progress of Department of Women and Child Development to a Ministry under the independent charge of Minister of State for Women and Child Development with effect from 30.01.2006 is an important mile stone in that direction. The capacity of the Ministry has been striving for the holistic empowerment of women by reviewing the laws to remove gender bias, bringing new legal measures aiming at gender justice and implementing programmes to achieve the social and economic empowerment of women.

Generally, Women empowerment is the buzzword now-a-days. No country can afford development without considering women who constitute about half of its stock of human resource. So, development has bypassed women in India despite worshipping and paying respect to women in mythology and historical texts. Gender disparities vary vastly across cultural, geographical and historical context. India is a large country with vast economic and sociocultural diversity in the country. The growth issues related to women in a large country like India will not only be inappropriate but sometimes even misleading the country. Women specific and women related legislations have been enacted to safeguard the rights and interest of women, besides protecting against discrimination, violence, and atrocities and also to prevent socially undesirable practices. In the previous days government of India has undertaken a large number of schemes aimed at the socio-economic development of women under various Five Year Plans in India.

ABOUT THE PEOPLE

There are many tribal communities that exist in every region of India. Indian tribes are very backward in economic, educational and political matters. Indian tribes are mostly in need of higher education, fast economic growth, social justice, and political awareness. Above all, the most paramount and compulsory need is well advanced communication. It is true that this is the era of advanced technology and global communication, but most India tribal communities are suffering from lack of advanced communication till date. Most tribes are still struggling for food and clothes in this advanced era. It is a very sad and an unthinkable situation for all civilized people, governments, and social workers. The Tharus are mainly concentrated in the Tarai from Gorakhpur in the East to Nainital in the West. Lakhimpur, Baharaich, Gonda are the districts of Tharu concentration. The tribal belt of Chandan Chouki in Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh is spread over 300 sqkm and inhabited by 99 % Tharu population, in about 40 hamlets and 15 Gramsabhas. The tribal area is blessed with plenty of water resources such as about 90 ponds of different sizes (0.08 -1.5 ha), rivers, tributaries and wetlands. Besides fish farming, most of the tribal populations are also engaged in fishing activities in the nearby rivers and connected wetlands. Tharu of Lakhimpur are Ranas. They claim themselves to be descendants of Ranas of Chittor. Tharus are mongoloid affinity and are of average medium height with round head. *Tharus* are fond of non-vegetarian food but local produce are insufficient to fulfil the demands.

Women play significant role in the development of a nation. Without women participation, goals of development activities cannot be fully attained. Women's inside activities are generally connected with men's outside sphere. It is seen that if women do not manage the household sphere properly men shall not be able to work outside enthusiastically. So the role of men and women are interdependent. But overall burden of women is higher than that of men.

The life of Tharu women is dominated in comparison to their male counterpart. The status of Tharu women in the society results continuous lags in opportunities in education, training, employment, health public life access to economic rights etc. Although Tharu women are very active in household and field works, they have assigned very less status to men. But we see just reverse in the case of Rana Tharus. That is Rana Tharus maintain a female dominant society. Household activities are not considered as economic activities. Tharu women are restricted into their domestic and subsistence activities. The main profession of these women are household shares and agricultural activities. Tharu women also help their male counterpart in collecting food materials such as rice, wheat etc. They substitute for paid labour in activities like repairing and maintaining the house. They also involve in productive works such as kitchen garden, cattle and poultry farming and so on.

METHODOLOGY

This is a primary data based study and presented in Exploratory and Descriptive Research Design. Primary data on adolescent status on various matters have been collected by interviewing 48 adolescent girls, 18 to 25 year age group. We have selected Tharu girls for interview and observation because of their small number. We want to know the status of girls in society. We have used a survey schedule for collecting information but personal observation was also used as per requirements. Mainly, we have collected information of awareness about education technology economic and political environmental health cultural activities. We have also used the related literature as secondary data for making some statements in this article.

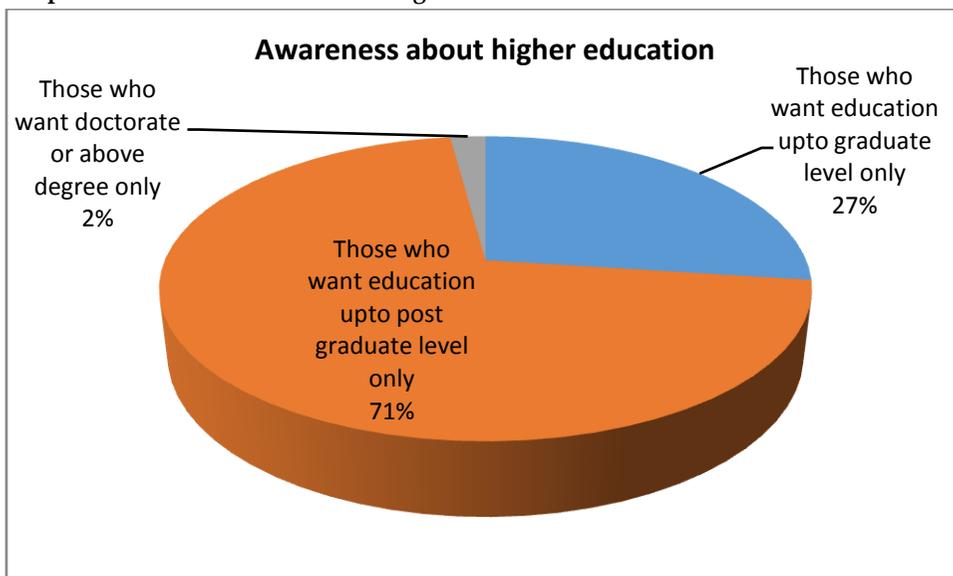
OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Educational awareness

The Tharu community is one of the Indian tribes which do not have enough awareness about education. There are many educational institutes and organizations in Tharu area, but the percentage of educated people especially the girls' education is very low. Tharu tribe is close to Nepal and there is more awareness of education in this community. There are many social workers of their own community working hard for education.

Detail	Girls	%
Those who want education upto graduate level only	13	27
Those who want education upto post graduate level only	34	71
Those who want doctorate or above degree only	1	2

Graph 1. Status of awareness about higher education in Tharu Girls.

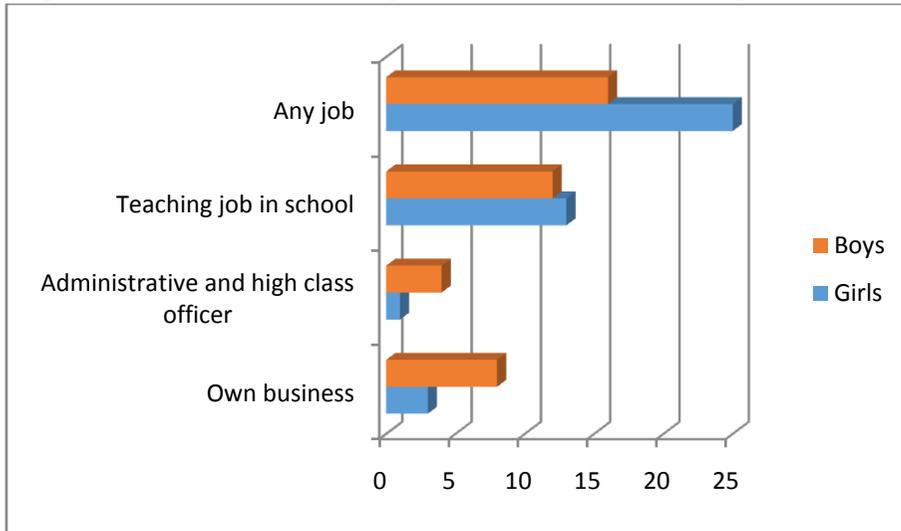


Status of awareness about employment

At present, it is poor of the Indian society that every person is getting education only for a job. That is why the social and cultural values are losing their importance. It is big a factor that affects their region and social values. At present, every Tharu student studies for job only: a large group of Tharu students do not care about their own culture and social

values. Employment factor is affecting their social and cultural values because they do not like and want their traditional occupation; they only want any new job anyhow and at any cost. Graph shows that only 9.48% adolescents like or want to do their own business, and maximum number of adolescents (90.42%) wants government or private service job. It also shows a notable fact that awareness about administrative and higher class service

Graph2. Status of awareness for employment in Tharu Girls as compare to Boys



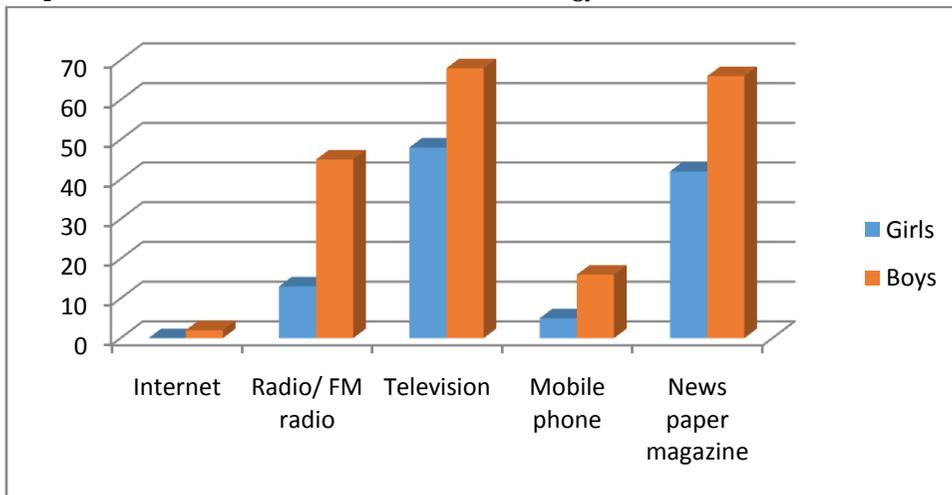
Status of awareness about modern technology and communication

This era is era of modern technology and advanced communication but Tharu adolescents are not using them to make their own carrier. They use some technological facilities like mobile phone, FM radio, television and DVD player but only for entertainment. They are not meant for their business or for making good career. Table shows that 100% of its adolescents watch mostly television programmes. They do not like to watch news and educational programmes.

Table also shows that the most important communication system, internet is not popular among Tharu adolescents. Only 1.72% adolescents use internet and have e-mail addresses. 50% adolescents use radio and FM radio, but a maximum number of them use it to listen to songs and other entertainment programmes. A maximum number of adolescents (93.10%) read newspapers and magazines but the situation is same for television or FM radio. A large number of adolescents like to read only entertainment news and articles mostly about movie actors and actresses. There is a little number of adolescents that like to read editorial and other knowledge full articles. This is the status of awareness in highly educated Tharu adolescents; in other Tharu adolescents, the situation will be very poor and unthinkable. Many communication companies are providing mobile phones on very low prices so many adolescents (18.10%) are using mobile phones. Students living in hostels mostly use mobile phones for communicating with their parents and girl/ boyfriends also. In short, we can say that Tharu adolescents need to use more and more technologies and communication systems for making good carrier and real life goal.

Technology	Girls	Boys
Internet	0	2
Radio/ FM radio	13	45
Television	48	68
Mobile phone	5	16
News paper magazine	42	66

Graph 3. Status of awareness about modern technology and communication in Tharu Girls.



Status of awareness about health

There are many social, cultural and economic groups existing in Indian society simultaneously. Their standard of living and awareness varies according to their socioeconomic status. There are two major parts of population in India:

Graph shows that maximum (54.2%) Tharu girls like to take modern medical treatments and 45.8% girls like to take traditional medical treatment. 45.8 % girls like to do physical exercise daily. All Tharu students know about HIV/AIDS because there are many literature and alerting advertisements about HIV/AIDS in India. Notable fact is that more adolescents do not like their own culture, but they like to take their traditional medical treatments. At present, other people are also coming back to traditional, natural and herbal medical treatments systems like Yoga, naturopathy, Ayurveda etc. So this is a good signal for Tharu adolescents because they also like these medical treatment systems. At least, we can say that the future of health care in Tharu community is very bright.

Table. Status of awareness about health in Tharu girls.

	No of girls	%
Knowledge about HIV/AIDS	48	100
Playing active role in health activities	3	6.3
Like daily physical exercise	22	45.8
Believe in traditional treatment	22	45.8
Modern Treatment	26	54.2

Property in Women's Ownership

In Tharu women have less access on ownership of family. So they are economically backward. If they have property in their ownership, they are not free to use it. Therefore the socio economic status of women is miserable.

Distribution of respondents of ownership in property

Types of property	No. of respondents	%
House	4	8.33
Land	5	10.42
Livestock	20	41.67
Bank or other financial deposits	15	31.25
No ownership	4	8.33

The above table shows that out of 48 respondents 8.33 percent said that women in their family have ownership on house, 10.42 percent said that women in their family have ownership on land, 41.67 percent women said that their family have ownership on livestock, 31.25 percent women said their family have ownership on Bank and 8.33 percent women said that they have no ownership on any type of family property.

CONCLUSION

After all facts gathered, it is concluded that Tharu community is undergoing social dynamics rapidly and their adolescents are playing a big role in this process specially girls. Tharu adolescents lack awareness about higher education, but have dominant position in local politics. It is true that Tharus do not have more highly class administrative jobs in governmental or private sector but they have many political and constitutional posts at local and regional level. Tharu girls are ignoring and refusing their traditional systems and customs, so the main identity of Tharu culture is getting lost. However, it is not only common in Tharu community. Role of women in Decision Making Process Decision making is one of indicator of social status. The ability to make decision makes people powerful. It explains the women's status in terms of decision making in different aspects of household as well as other activities. The people in the study area are found to be engaged in agriculture so the decision making role has been analyzed in term of the decision making in farm management which included cropping pattern and livestock management, children education aspect, household management aspect. It is a part of global social change and it is problem of all communities of the world. Keeping of their sociocultural traditions is most important. This step will be helpful for their development and bright future.

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