

Skill Development among Rural Tribal Women in Meghalaya is a Great Challenge

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Abstract

It is interesting to note that apart from several governmental efforts, the contributions of non - governmental organizations is providing training and development in different sectors of economy especially to the tribal population of the states. Many NGOs in the states as well as in India initiated various surveys to study the opportunities and avenues for the people especially women living in remote tribal villages to acquire essential knowledge and skills for their livelihood. This paper discusses training as well as skills development in tribal women of Meghalaya, India. The training and skill development among women would be mainly pertaining to farm forestry, bee keeping, sewing, cooking, weaving, bamboo productions, cane works and so on. Women in Meghalaya often face abusive situations related to domestic violence, physical and mental torture, sexual abuse and many more so forth beside its matrilineal society. It is also realized that women from rural areas face resistance in participating in training programmes due to sharing of responsibilities at family level. They also face barriers due to bias and discriminatory behavior common in society. The government and NGO'S are trying to encourage women to form self - help groups and seek answers to their own problems. The paper brings out the cases of under - represented women who are successful in empowering themselves by making use of education and training through vocational and skill based training by tribal women in Meghalaya.

Key words : Empowerment of Tribal Women, Training and skills development.

Introduction :

India is a country of villages as the majority of its population lives in villages and far - flung remote areas. The interesting aspect is that every region of the country though connected with the cities now; however, still possesses its own peculiar

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traditional ethos. Also most of the Rural communities/Tribal?s are still devoid of modern facilities like education, electricity, proper drinking water, health care, ample transportation, etc. But the lack of education in many of the rural belts of India is proving fatal and acting as the breeding ground for social vices, evils and paving the way to anti-social/national activities. Education enhances ones competence level to cope up better in physical and social environments, Bourdieu, an educational sociologist refers it to as cultural capital and argues that it is the dominant culture known as "cultural capital" because, via the educational system it can be translated into wealth and power, which rural community is usually devoid of despite possessing abundant resources and man power. It can transform the rural/tribal communities of India and Meghalaya in particular by: Ensuring the upward social mobility among people, by liberating them though slowly from the shackles of casteism, groupism and superstitious life ways. Further education will ensure opportunities for functional employment thereby empowering rural folk for more economic opportunities, growth and development and can thus lead to the change in the whole map of poor and downtrodden rural landscape. This paper discusses the empowerment of tribal women in Meghalaya through education and skill development as education, skills development and training are central to agricultural and rural employment especially the tribal?s. It prepares mostly young people for work in the formal and informal sector in rural areas and thus plays an important role in poverty alleviation. The better the training and the more refined the skills in terms of human capital, higher the income and returns leading toward the better rural life and socio - economic structure. This goes without saying that India has the second largest tribal population in the world but Meghalaya is one of the largest number of tribal population of the country and its women continue to be under represented in formal business training programmes thus limiting their employment options, economic returns and long term career development. Consequently, more disadvantaged, poorer and discriminated the women in any society, lesser the development index and poorer the growth and progress of that society. The fact is despite being unskilled, poor, suppressed or discriminated; women still try to contribute to family income either directly or indirectly. Poor and vulnerable women are usually more interested in skills training that meets their immediate practical gender needs as opposed to longer term, "strategic gender needs" that directly tackle the basic underlying causes of female subordination (Moser: 1989). Women are often concentrated in handicrafts, basic food processing and sale which are traditionally

considered to be women's domain. Women also show a propensity to pursue micro - enterprises and homestead farming activities (The World Bank, FAO, IFAD, 2008). Skills training, increased growth, productivity and Prospects And Challenges In Empowerment Of Tribal Women www.iosrjournals.org 47. Innovation, in particular for the informal sector are linked with poverty re education. (Fluitman: 2002). Skills development improves output, quality, diversity and occupational safety and improves health, thereby increasing incomes and livelihoods of the poor. It also helps to develop social Capital and strengthens knowledge about informal sector associations, rural organizations and governance. According to human capital theory, the better educated the agricultural labour, the higher their productivity (Atchoarena, et. al. 2003).

Constitutional provisions for Tribal people :

The constitution has given more than 20 articles on the redressed and upliftment of underprivileged with policies on positive discrimination and affirmative action with reference to S.T.

Article 14 confers equal rights and opportunities to all.

Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste etc.

Article 15 (4) States to make special provisions for advancement of any socially educationally backward classes.

Article 16 (4) empowers the state to make provisions for reservation in appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens, which in the opinion of state, is not adequately represented.

Article 46 state to promote with special cares the educational and economic interests of the weaker section, especially the ST and protects the social injustice and all form of exploitation.

Article 275 grant -in aid for promoting the welfare of ST and raising the level of administration.

Article 330 Seats shall be reserved in the House of the People for - Article 332 Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States

332,335 stipulates the claims that the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection

with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

Article 244(1) tribal welfare communities to be setup for the welfare of the tribes.

Article 22(2) 73rd and 74th amendments - to ensure effective participation of tribal in the process of planning and decision making.

Extension to scheduled Areas Act 1996 Amendments of Constitution are extended to the Scheduled Areas through Panchayats. These constitutional provisions of the Government of India helped in the development of the tribes and their education.

The Skill Development Initiatives by Government :

Government of Meghalaya is one of the states which initiated many Programmes to enable tribal people to upgrade their skills in order to get sustainable employment and thus increase their incomes. Skill development initiative includes various types of training programmes, involving conventional and non - conventional subjects, varying in duration and cost. These training programmes are implemented through NGOs and institutions having expertise in their respective fields. With a view to understanding Training for aged tribal's especially women is emphasized in order to help them lead an independent and respectable life. As in any other case, tribal or not, aged women feel depressed and hence attention is given to them and are given proper medical aid, diet etc. Tribal Welfare Association has been giving much importance to equip tribal youth and women with alternative skills to supplement and augment their income and employment and to fulfil the community needs with locally available raw materials and human resources towards optimum use. Some of the important skill training programmes in equipping tribal youth and women are: Tailoring, embroidery, cooking snacks, painting potteries and many more. However most of the skill training programmes are failure in entire state of Meghalaya.

Failure of skill training programme in Meghalaya :

In Meghalaya of northeast India mainly tribal womens are leading with physical and psychological threats in job market because of their low involvement in skill training programmes. Though government initiated several programmes scientifically for womens' but far away from reality to reach many due to:

- Lack of motivation among local women (homesick and wants to confine within their own belief, thought and availability with low need).
- Cultural barriers by which many women wants to be in their own locality not

to be outside.

- Gaps in between resource utilization v.s. surplus creation, like use of land, labour and capital with profit.
- Capitalising opportunities v.s. enterprising among locals - traditional economy v.s. non-traditional economy.
- Motivation towards job v.s. satisfaction in job among tribal women is below in index value.
- Nature of own competencies v.s. institution information through training.
- Orientation of customary practice and habit in different jobs and freedom vs modern autonomy in job.
- Bamboo and cane goods manufactured mostly for domestic use.
- Women organizations are very strong and are playing a major role in education, health, nutrition only but not in vocational education.
- Weaving but only in traditional loom.
- They are very good consumer of cosmetics and ornaments but depend on others.
- Maximum women want to be in government jobs rather than in other jobs.
- Prepare local rice beer for their own consumption but that can be improved, refined and should be market oriented.
- Farming like poultry, piggery, cattle can be included in commercialisation because maximum people are non-vegetarian and depend on outside supply.
- Language barrier for entrepreneurship by outside people to understand the local language. Also lack of language ability is a great barrier to them for acquiring vocational skills.
- Lack of knowledge of availability of different vocational skill training by different organizations and any special loan package for tribal women to start a business.
- Still a vast majority of ST children are illiterate.
- Weak motivation and in many cases no motivation among tribal women for life skill education.
- Road communication is one of the big barriers in the entire north-eastern region which blocks the reaching of life skill education at the doorstep of the women mainly in rural areas.
- Lack of centralized labour force even in urban areas like wise trade unions for better earning and future protection which may motivate many others to select

daily labour work is also proper to them.

- Local trades both visible and invisible needs to be the part of vocational education, like local cake preparation, art, local medicines, painting and many more.
- Cotton fabrications in agriculture vocation, Bee farming.
- Food processing and that to be market oriented, like wise pine apple, banana, ginger, etc.
- No social organizations/institutions to provide training to the future generations on their local practice (live fishing, cultivation, weaving etc.)
- Northeast in general and Meghalaya in special can be made as the better tourist places in India and can generate employment to local youths. Hence, tourism can be included as one of the area in vocational education.
- All the vocational education is towards urban and semi-urban centric to start up the entrepreneurship, hardly anything for rural centric.
- Marketing knowledge among youths need to be developed for better marketing of local products.
- Inclusion of organic farming and its product for local and global market can strengthen vocational education future.
- Inclusion of service sector like - barber shop (saloon and parlours) cement works (construction work), goods transportation etc. for unskilled women.
- Bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides for better agricultural production.
- Wood craft is not transacted for trade.

To be successful in life skill education different approaches can be taken such as:

- Revival of age-old institutions in modern ways among each tribal women.
- Include village head/community head in vocational education programme and include their idea into action.
- Set up specific programme for specific ethnic tribal women groups through life skill education.
- Follow-up of action should be taken after giving skill education to women.
- Fix up the skill education objectives, strategy and planning, region and tribe wise not in common.
- More emphasis should be given on content, areas, approaches, methods, techniques in life skill education.

- National as well as indigenous management systems and practices need to be incorporated in skill education.
- Meaningful engagement of tribal women from rural areas.
- Management of women emotional and states of mind.
- Encouragement of group work.

Considering tribal women is not only as employee but as potential contributors to the growth of the region, community and economy of Meghalaya. To engage women in income generating activities in home based or village based industries. The trade should be innovative and strategic in promoting activities where larger share is received by tribal women. Emphasis should be given to Women Friendly Special Projects to promote to facilitate participation in productive work that ultimately leads to increase in social empowerment of woman. Farm forestry should be implemented through Mahila Vikas Mandal (MVM). Thus, there is no doubt that the rural women can acquire any developmental milestones (skills) only through education and thus can change their own destiny. Their self perception can be elevated by the knowledge that they are contributing financially and visibly to the household and that they are in a better negotiating position. They can avoid dependence on others and escape exploitation in everyday life, avoid humiliation, gain confidence to work more productively. But the situation discussed above is turning the future of Tribal Women in Meghalaya by which there is only hope that the, education may play a major role in this regard.

Conclusion :

Any developmental process is the expansion of assets and capabilities of rural women to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold the institution accountable that Affect their lives. Skill development among rural women is the need of the hour so as to make them confident, self reliant and to develop in them the ability to be a part of decision making at home and outside. Indeed it may not be wrong to say that still tribal's and rural women are the most disadvantaged and neglected section of the society for they are economically backward.

Therefore there is a need on the part of the government and civil society to enable improvement in the quality of life of such vulnerable sections of the Indian population. More importantly the developmental process in India should give priority

to welfare schemes and programmes meant for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes including women. These are the people who are economically backward. Therefore, there is a need for sincere efforts on the part of the government to help improve the quality of life. The Social Assessment for the training and skill development clearly reflected that rural landless (mostly SC's and ST's) form an integral part of poverty - ridden and marginalized groups. By empowering rural woman through education can thus enable them to live with dignity and self reliance cutting across the barriers of customary biases and prejudices, social barrier of caste, class, gender, occupational and institutional barriers that prevent them from taking actions to improve their state both at the individual and collective level. Therefore, free education and necessary and employable skill development programmes must be launched for tribal women so as to make them self reliant and economically independent. Furthermore, right to vote is meaningless unless rural women are made aware educated and imparted skills to understand the order of the day and this can bring change in their lives, in the family and lastly transform the holistic tribal landscape of India, through education, legal awareness, and socio economic independence.

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