

Socio Economic and Political Aspects of Tribal Women – A Study

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Scheduled Castes along with scheduled Tribes and denotified tribes constitute the weaker sections of India's population from all angles. Though tribals are sons of the soil and citizens of the country they are born to grow as the children of nature. The tribal population in India accounting for 8.6 percent of the total population of India as per 2011 census. Tribals live in all states and Union territories with the exception of Punjab, Delhi, Pondichery and Chandigarh. They are deprived of many civic facilities and isolated from modern way of living. Tribal societies are mostly traditional and are the cross roads today as they are pushed to modernity on one side and they are inclined to maintain their identity as a tribe.

Women play a crucial role in the Tribal societies by earning income to supplement the family income and also by taking care of children and household management. Tribal women are constrained to play dual role in the Tribal societies.

Objectives:

- 1) To analyse the socio-economic conditions of the sample respondent women.
- 2) To examine the political awareness and participation of the tribal women.
- 3) To assess the social status of the tribal women at home and the society
- 4) To analyse the child preference of the tribal women.
- 5) To examine the children education of the respondent households.

Methodology:

Chinna Eerlapudi village of Raghunadhapalem Mandal in Khammam district is selected for this study. 60 respondents from Tribal women are selected and data is collected through the structured questionnaire. Simple research tools are used to arrive at the results.

Social and Demographic Features:

Age particulars of the respondent women in the study area analysed in Table-1.

Table-1: Age wise distribution of the respondents

Age	No.of Respondents
15-20	6 (10%)
21-25	16 (26.67%)
26-30	30 (43.33%)
31-40	4 (6.67%)
41-50	08 (13.33%)
Total	100 (100%)

Source: Field Study

Data indicates that 10 percent are between 15-20 years of age group, 26.677 percent are in 21-25, 43.33 percent are in 26-30 and 6.67 percent are in between 31 to 40 years of age group. It is noted that most of the respondent women (86.67 percent) are in the age group of below 40 years. It implies that the age is in favour of the respondents to make them active and effective work. Just 8 percent are in the age group of 41-50 Years.

Literacy levels of the respondent women examines in Table-2.

Table-2 :Literary Levels

Literary Levels	No.of Respondents
Primary	24 (40%)
Secondary	13 (21.67%)
Higher	02 (3.33%)
Illiterates	21 (35%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

65 percent of the respondent women are literates. Among them 40 percent have completed primary level of education 21.67 percent completed secondary level and just 3.33 percent have completed higher level of education. It is very happy sign regarding literacy. Literacy levels are encouraging in the study area because it is nearer to mandal head quarters.

Age of maturity is also elaborated in Table-3 as given here under.

Table-3 : Age of Maturity

Age	No.of Respondents
11	02 (3.33%)
12	15 (25%)
13	36 (60%)
14	07 (11.67%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Filed Study

Maturity age at 11 years for 3.33 percent of the women, 12 years for 25 percent of the respondent women and 13 years for 60 percent of the respondent women. It implies that weather conditions, food habits and genetically reasons nearly 88.33 percent of the respondent women were matured by 13th year. Just 11.67 percent of the respondent women were matured at the age of 14 years. Tribal girls, mostly Banjara girls are physically strong and mentally a little bit advanced as reflected by the age of maturity.

The data collected on age at marriage and analysed in Table-4 as follows.

Table-4 : Age at Marriage

Age	No.of Respondents
15	21 (35%)
16	17 (28.33%)
17	10 (16.67%)
18	07 (11.67%)
19	03 (5%)
20	02 (3.33%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

35 percent of the respondent women got married at the age of 15 Years. 28.33 percent at 16 years and 16.67 percent at 17 years. It is interestingly, early marriages are common among the tribals as data reveals that 80 percent of the respondent women got married by 17th year. 18th year and plus age is the legalized age for marriage. Just 20 percent of the marriages are leagalised in this study area. It implies that tribal women slowly adopting themselves to the modern trends.

The village and Mandal for the study is near the district head quarters, Khanmam and dominating Tribal group is Banjara which is the most upcoming group among the triabls. This fact is to be kept in mind while analyzing further aspects in the study. All the respondent women are married and 95 percent of the respondent women are nuclear families which facilitate hard work, earning and saving.

Ability for girl child education is examined in Table - 5 as follows.

Table-5 : Do you have ability for your girl child's education

Responses	No. of Respondents
Yes	52 (86.67%)
No	08 (13.33%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

86.67 percent of the respondent women have girl child and the same percentage of the respondents are emphatic in providing good education to the girls and they state that they have the financial ability. Just 13.33 percent express their inability to provide education to their girl child.

Nature of marriage is analysed in Table-6 as given below.

Table-6 : Is your marriage is arranged or Love

Nature of Marriage	No. of Respondents
Arranged	58 (96.67%)
Love	02 (3.33%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

This trend is also progressive highlighting the transformation of the tribal societies contradicting the general opinion as to the dictatorial attitudes of the tribal families as it is 96.67 percent of the respondent women got married through the parental arrangements. The acceptance of the respondent women was solicited before finalizing the bridegroom as reported by 96.67 percent of the respondents and love marriage has been reported by only 3.33 respondents.

Data collected and elaborated relates to love marriages of the daughters of respondents in Table-7 as given here under.

Table-7: Do you accept, If your Child want Love Marriage

Responses	No. of Respondents
Yes	16 (26.67%)
No	44 (73.33%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

Interestingly 73.33 percent of respondent women states that, they want their girls to marry through arranged process. Only 26.67 percent of the women in the study, accept love marriages and this trend reveals a little bit of a acceptance of modernity.

Table-8 as given here under depicts the willingness to payment of dowry.

Table-8: Is given dowry to your husband

Responses	No. of Respondents
Yes	47 (78.33%)
No	13 (21.66%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

78.33 percent of the respondent women offered dowry to the spouses at the time of their marriages implying that 21.33 percent of the respondents did not pay dowry.

Acceptance of dowry to the children analysed in Table-9.

Table-9 : Do you accept to dowry to your girl child marriage

Responses	No. of Respondents
Yes	53 (88.33%)
No	07 (11.67%)

Total	60 (100%)
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Source: Field Study

Surprisingly, 88.33 percent of the women in the study are willing to offer dowry at the time of marriages of their daughters. This attitude also reveals the acceptance of modern systems of general population.

Marriages of the respondents daughters with whom, aspect is also examined in Table-10 as given here under.

Table-10 : With whom do you prefer the marriage of your daughter

Whom	No.of Respondents
Relatives	17 (28.33%)
Other Than Relatives	43 (71.67%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

As stated by the respondent women at the time of interaction, nearly 71.67 percent of the respondent women wish their daughters to be employees and earn money to enjoy economic freedom. Here also trends of modernity is evident. Tribal societies prefer marriage within group and with the relatives. This traditional opinion is contradicted by the women in the study as majority of the respondents are willing to give their daughters in marriage to boys other than relatives.

Table-11 as follows depicts the son preference of the respondents.

Table-11: Son Preference by You

Responses	No.of Respondents
Yes	54 (90%)
No	06 (10%)
Total	60 (100%)

Source: Field Study

Son preference is very strong in the Indian Society and the same is reflected in the study as 90 percent of the respondent women want to have at least one son and just 10 percent stated other wise. At the same time most of the women express their opinion to have at least one daughter and this is a welcome feature. They want to care of health, nutrition food and well being of the girls without any discrimination

Social status as examined in the study is free from discrimination as majority of respondent women state that they are not socially downgraded in the village. Most of the women state that they can freely move and take up labour work in the village with dignity. Husbands mostly (80 percent) decide the number of children to be delivered and thus, the tribal women have no freedom in taking decisions on the number of children. They enjoy freedom to a large extent in taking decisions on the purchase of house hold goods. In this way they enjoy economic freedom they have freedom in family expenditure as well as spending their own incomes. With regard to economic freedom tribal women are comparatively better than their counter parts in the general population. It is happy to note that all the women in the study state that their spouses treat them with concern and ensure their well being. 73 percent of the women in the study are members of DWACRA groups and 99 percent have cast votes in the last elections. Political party membership is confined to just two respondents and no one has ever been elected to a political position and membership in the Mahila Mandals is limited to only two members and SHG membership is also limited to 4 members only. Their political awareness as to the reservations in Panchayat Raj institutions is limited to only 12 percent of the respondents.

Tribal women take up different activities and participated in the farm activities of the agricultural holdings of the family. They earn income and supplement the family income for a comfortable living.

Major Findings:

- 1) 86.67 percent of the respondent women are in the age group of below 40 years. It implies that the age is in favour of the respondent to make them active and effective work.
- 2) 65 percent of the respondent women are literates. It is very happy sign.
- 3) It is that 88.33 percent of the respondent women in the sample matured by 13th year, due to weather conditions food habits and genetically reasons.
- 4) 80 percent of the respondent women got married by 17th year.
- 5) 95 percent of the respondent women are nuclear families which facilitate hard work, earning and saving.
- 6) 86.67 percent of the respondent women have girl child and the same percentage of the respondents are emphatic in providing good education to the girls.
- 7) 96.67 percent of the respondent women got married through the parental arrangements.
- 8) 73.33 percent of the respondent women states that, they want their girls to marriage through arranged process.
- 9) Surprisingly, 88.33 percent of the women in the study are willing to offer dowry at the time of marriages of their daughters.
- 10) 71.67 percent of the respondents wish their daughters to be employees and earn money to enjoy economic freedom.
- 11) Majority of the respondents are willing to give their daughters in marriage to boys other than relatives.
- 12) 90 percent of the respondent women to have at least one son. At the same time most of the women express their opinion to have at least one daughter.
- 13) As majority of the respondent women state that they can freely move and take up labour work in the village with dignity.
- 14) 80 percent of the respondents states that husbands decide the number of children to be delivered.
- 15) It is happy to note that all the women in the study states that their spouses treat them with concern and ensure their well being.
- 16) 73 percent of the women are members of DWACRA groups and 99 percent have cast vote in the last elections.

Conclusion:

Because of the development of transport and communication facilities in the tribal areas and the welfare programmes of the government, tribal societies are under transformation to modernity. Their urge to preserve their identity comes in the way of this transformation due to which the pace is slow. Specific programmes can ameliorate the social, economic and political conditions of the tribals and make them shine.

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