

STUDY ON THE SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF NOMADIC TRIBES OF EKALAVYANAGAR, MYSORE

Introduction

India is a culturally diverse country in which people with diverse socio-cultural and economic background having equal opportunities in different fields with dignity and honor lives. There are over 826 languages and thousands of dialects spoken and 70 per cent of the populations live in rural areas. In reality of such diversified society, most of all communities get registered during the census, but a few go unnoticed. On the other hand, some important but rarest of rare population do not gain proper recognition for development even though they are registered under census. Nomadic tribes are such communities who are kept away from social recognition and major developmental programmes of the state. Since they are unorganized, minority populate and being historically disadvantaged, were put under different social categories such as the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other backward classes (OBC). In this categorization, the communities that were earlier part of denotified, nomadic and Semi-nomadic tribes were also included in the list of SC, ST and OBC Categories.

The nomads living at Ekalavyanagar, being nomadic tribes for centuries, had never faced the problems of identity crises. But today, this being a major issue has created a sort of confusion among the tribes, resulting in various types of problems such as psychological disturbances, cultural disturbances as well as social disturbances. The condition of women and children at the settlement is still pathetic. In this juncture, the present study attempted to highlight certain issues of the nomadic tribes of Ekalavyanagar and its severity by understanding the conflicts of social and cultural lifestyle.

Review of literature:

The Indian tribal society is a unique society with diversity of nature and people. In our country, known for the extreme poverty of the masses, the tribals constitute the core of the poor. Poverty, poor health and sanitation, illiteracy and other social problems among the tribals are exerting a dragging effect on the Indian economy. It is one of the few nations in the world with thriving tribal population in different parts of the country. India alone is estimated to have a nomadic

population of at least 60 million (between 7-10% of the population) (**National Convention, 2005 in Krätli & Dyer, 2009**). According to the chairperson of NCDNSNT, the above-mentioned nomadic commission, Balkrishna Sidram Renke, there are 11 crore (a crore is 10 million) Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic people in India. Due to the wandering traditions over hundreds of years without any ostensible means of livelihood under the influence of the caste system, they are forced to live under sub human conditions.

The nomads are known for their cultural richness, special cultural identity and diversity but have lot of problems which influence them socially, culturally as well as economically. Their lifestyles have progressively come under strain (Dutt, 2004). The major difficulties of nomadic found through the investigation of major research projects are never seen their problems as they were been the part of their culture. According to National Convention, 2005 and Krätli & Dyer, 2009, extreme poverty, ignorance from outside world, early marriage, homeless and migratory life, illiteracy, superstitions, unemployment, lack of unity and political leadership, scattered groups, alcoholism, drug abuse, lack of civic amenities, social services in the nomadic settlements, harassment by police, loss of traditional occupations, inconvenient present occupation such as working on daily wages in construction group, hotels, robbery and thieves, difficulty in perusing formal schooling due to nomadic life style of the parents, non availing of the welfare measures schemes, physical and mental disabilities among the old aged, malnutrition, lack of basic facilities such as safe drinking water, electricity, afraid of government officials, unavailability of birth certificate resulting in difficulties with schooling, identification with citizenship, pressure of private loans, health issues due to life style, malnutrition and hygiene etc. Due to the changing socio-economic face of the current society, many of them have been forced to give up their peripatetic lifestyle and settle down to earn their livelihood. Nomads have found it increasingly difficult to meet their basic requirements of shelter, security, livelihood etc. Further they have found extremely difficult to gain the acceptance of the societies they have chosen to settle down with. This may due to cultural difference and the way of up bringing. Out of these problems highly complicated is they are facing is that identity crisis. The nomads are still suffering from the identity crisis because of their wandering life style. This has kept them away from accessibility for ration cards, voter identity cards and are cut off from most State services. But it is not the case in Ekalavyanagar. The tribes are out of such crucial identity crisis

by possessing their ration cards and voters identity cards. But with practice of caste system, are still treated as untouchable by the society.

Methodology:

The present study was undertaken to understand the socio-political problems of nomadic tribes of Ekalavyanagar. The specific objectives of the study were to understand their lifestyle with special focus on women and children, to study the social, political problems faced by the tribal community in Ekalavyanagar. The study adopts Explorative research design along with interview schedules and interview guide as tool for data collection. Simple random sampling method is adopted for the study. 468 respondents from different segment of the communities such as male representatives, female representatives, Youth of the community, the community leaders and the fellow members such as members of Karnataka State Nomads and Semi Nomads Federation (KSNSNF) have been considered for the study. The primary data collected has been analysed by adopting the simple descriptive statistical measure.

Results - Major Findings of the study:

1. The study reveals that 80.6 % of the respondents are illiterates.
2. Regarding the knowledge about birth place, people above 40 years have no information (55.5%) but younger respondents (44.5%) have information about it indicating the interest of recent generation in remembering such aspect.
3. In family system, predominantly nuclear families (79%) can be seen. The patriarchal system (67%) is in practice. But families which have lost the heads, considered his wife as head. Otherwise, household responsibilities are managed by elder son of the family.
4. The traditional occupations were singing/dancing (68.1%) and begging (13.1%) at the end of show. The beggary was also practiced with decorated bull called as Koole Basava. Puppet show (9.1%) was the other important occupation known as “Thogalu gombe aata” depicting various scenes of the great epics of India i.e. Ramayana and Mahabharata. Otherwise, vendership (3.4%) and hunting (3.6%) were practiced for livelihood. Few families were selling bangles, mosquito nets etc. They would hunt animals like rabbit, wild boar, squirrels, wild cats, mangoos and birds like cranes, ducks, cormorants, bats etc.

5. Today they are involved in several other occupations along with only few traditional occupations. They found working in manufacturing industries (4.7), hotel industry (1.6%), domestic (3.8%) and construction laboring (38.1%) etc. Few of them found driving auto rickshaws owned by others. These drivers expressed their willingness to own auto rickshaws in future (1.1%). This is the indication of their willingness towards settled life. But the number of such people found to be very less.
6. Food and daily maintenance takes away their major part of earnings (76.4%). Otherwise addiction consumes their income. Through observation, researcher noticed very less respondents admitting addiction for smoking, alcohol and chewing gutka. Women are not the exception for this observation.
7. Celebration of festivals is the major cause for their indebtedness (71%)
8. Regarding health issues, except diabetes, none have major sickness. 84% of the respondents have claimed no problems with regards to their health status.
9. Majority of the respondents (64%) showed willingness towards wandering lifestyle. This result indicates that even after 10 years these people are still in the process of getting adjusted to the settled life with lot of dilemma and value conflicts.
10. 84% respondents are non vegetarians by food style. The sources are animal husbandry (families grow chicken, sheep and pig in the space available), buying, fishing, hunting and begging.
11. Earlier, used to get the food through beggary and so had no choice than accepting whatever is given in alms. Today the major grains they use are rice and wheat through fair price shops.
12. Regarding clothing, these nomads used to wear dhoti and kurtha and huge cotton turban and cotton bags on shoulder to carry materials collected through beggary. Presently they wear pants and shirts. No changes observed with clothing of ladies. Youths never used their traditional clothes.
13. Regarding celebration, they never had traditional celebrations, but have adopted festivals which are adoption by the local communities. Because of the frequent visits from Christian priests in the settlement Christmas is also been celebrated in 13 families.
14. Youth are not alcoholic but chew gutka.
15. 64% of the women respondents found with addiction to tobacco.

16. Watching television (46%) is the hobby of men and ladies where as the youth have adopted sports, reading in the community library and chatting with friend as their hobby.
17. A library has been set up at Ekalavyanagar and a community leader from Dombidasa community is taking care of around 400 books in a hut.
18. Cell phone, found used by middle aged respondents (30%). Most of them are working as construction labour or involved in politics directly or indirectly.
19. Poverty is hindering them from savings. Have loans, mostly from the friends (42.5%) and money lenders (21.9%).
20. Disputes are settled through mutual settlement(18%) . In case of failure, get refer to caste council (78%). Youths prefer court law for their legal settlement (4%). But no case has been taken to Court of law yet. This indirectly represents the distrust of youth on the traditional practices. The local leaders and the respondents of KNSN&DTF opines that such behaviours are the results of immaturity and lack of exposure to the original cultural lifestyle. Otherwise, it shows the declaim of interest in youths about their cultural issues and the practice.
21. At least one in the family is still found practicing their original lifestyle of wandering from village to village (37.5%). This result witnesses the attachment of nomads to their culture.
22. Politically, women and the youth respondents have shown high degree of negligence and disinterest about the issues of politics (85%). The reason behind such negligence is their belief that politics is non income generating field. 15% of the male respondents expressed their interest in politics as it gives them good exposure about advocacy.
23. 25% of respondents from Dombidasa and Korama communities express their dissatisfaction relating to caste identification . They claim that majority of the Sillekyatha families are not originally from nomadic communities but have been made the certificate as Sillekyatha. The reason they quote for the same is to gain the government facilities extended to nomads. But nobody claims it publicly or at least loudly. The local community leaders and the member respondents of KNSN &DTF opines that as they secure legal document, no other issues can be raised.

24. The men group is found affiliated to various political parties and there exist a competition among the groups. Though the Sillekyatha people refuse the blame, the refusal was not very strong. The women respondents have no much opposition for such development as they wish good to all. But the men in general and youths have botheration about this development. When the over all political atmosphere is considered it is observed through the study that dissatisfaction among the communities, among the political groups can be sensed through observation technique. Otherwise, there is a strong influence that can be observed because of the political influence on social issues.
25. All these issues give a mixed impression on the socio-economic aspects of nomadic communities at Ekalavyanagar. With these confusions, it can be said that with related to developmental issues, settled lifestyle can be expected with good feedback. But related with culture and rich traditional practice , we can witness a huge decay.

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