

CHAPTER VIII

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The present study is an attempt to discuss on the various aspects of life of a woman from forest women in relation to forest. Based on the objectives mentioned in the study, following are the major findings from the study undertaken among the women of two major PVTG groups of Odisha, i.e., Kutia Kondhs and Hill Khadias. The four main objectives involved understanding the quality of life of the women in these two communities taking into account their socio-cultural profile. In this context, to understand the quality of life, researcher followed some of the pro-tips from the study undertaken by Amartya Sen and Shirley Farlinger. Considering their perspectives of quality of life, women's status of education, ownership of land, their participation of decision making spaces within the household and village were taken into account. Secondly, the next objective was drawn from women's dependence on forests and capturing this into the folds of income generation and availing fodder and food from forests. Furthermore, the women's assertion of rights to ensure their access and dependence of forests through implementation of Forest Rights Act is also taken into study and lastly, the impact assessment of some of the key schemes and programmes in the study area are taken up in the study. The following points are the relevant findings of the study.

Socio-Economic profile of women with respect to power relation, equitable access and decision making process signifying Quality of life.

Kutia Kondh

- Women are not allowed in the place of origin “*Sapangada*” as women are considered impure because of their menstrual cycle and child bearing capacity and to abide by the *Kutia Niyam*.
- Women do almost all the work in and out of the house which remains unrecognized a major chunk of work done by women alone.
- It is the *Niyam*, when elders or men speak in the meeting or sit together; the women can join but are not allowed to speak, as it will be perceived as a sign/gesture of disrespect towards the men.

- There is a clear division of labor, women are not allowed to plough nor cut tress during the shifting cultivation.
- Women of the village work collectively during shifting cultivation and they also carry their young children with them to the fields.
- that women are the principal food gatherers from forests, they collect water, firewood and fodder, and forest is their first source of gratifying their health needs due to their invaluable knowledge of medical plants and are also primarily engaged in shifting cultivation or locally known as *Gudiya Chaasa*
- Elderly women barely taken part in decision making within their households in both the communities. In was in the case of newly married couple that women were seen taking active lead role in coming to a decision within the household alongside their husbands. Around 50% of women play a passive role and about 30% of women play active role in decision making pertaining to household matters
- The Kutia women who decide on choice or varieties of crops that will be used for cultivation through mixed cropping in their *Gudiya* land, which is mostly driven by the nutrient requirement of the family members.
- Women are socially conditioned to have a say in the household expenses where the men speak up and in this context, only 30% of women have a major say when it is about household expenses
- Women are usually not very vocal about their needs, from a very early stage in life they are laden with responsibilities of taking care of the households in the absence of their parents and also to look after their younger siblings
- When it comes to matters like families disputes both within and outside villages, marriage, adultery or any other social affairs then women are kept afar and are not called in to participate in the meeting along with the men members of the village. In this context only 10% of women took active role in village matters and about 50% stay aloof from the same.
- Yet due to interventions from NGOs and Government agencies, the women are gradually participating in the village meetings but in a more passive manner
- Kutia Kondhs about 80% of the women are uneducated and only 20% of the women had attended primary school

Hill Khadia:

- Women are not allowed to enter the ‘Jahira’ - the place of worship.
- Women are much more vocal due to their daily exposure to the market and town culture in Jashipur.
- In case of Hill Khadias about 77% of women are uneducated and about 15% have attended primary school and only 3% have attended secondary stage.
- About 41% of the Khadia women have major participation in decision making pertaining to household matters and only 14% of women do not have any role in decision making. In this mostly the poorest of the poor households and old women stay aloof in the decision making process.
- Among Hill Khadias that women have a very active participation in matters relating to household expenses as they are in hold of the kitchen in the house, wherein about 36% of the women take active participation in decision making relating to household expenses.
- The Khadia women refrained themselves from participating in the same platform as men and other village elders

Role of women in Securing Livelihoods especially forest based

- It is common in almost all household; women are taking the lead role in gathering food and other MFPs for their day- to- day life. More than 70% of forest produces collected by women above the age of 18 and 20% of all items collected by below 18 age group and 10 % of MFP collected by male member. Depending on the weather condition and distance of travel and type of forest patch, women member moves in groups of 2-6 persons including at least one male member with them. During their visit to forest they are very much conscious about the daily household consumption items and collected accordingly as per their requirement. It give a clear notion of sustainable harvest practice and minimizing the time period with respect to individual items they have collected during a single visit.
- The women have very clear knowledge of using the locally available plants and trees for the purpose of consumption and sell. They have varied knowledge passed on from generation on identifying the particular plants as source of food and medicines, fodder and firewood that are sustainably harvested and used

- Both Kutia and Khadia women mostly prefer leafy vegetables found in their backyard or forest fringed areas
- They not only cook but also enjoy gathering or collecting these as these leafy veggies constitute a major food source for their entire family as they are more conscious in these matters than the male members
- the women have sound knowledge of seasonal availability of this food from forest and also has identified the exact location or patch within the forest to collect
- During pregnancy the women consume more green leafy vegetables which have more iron content in them like sunusunia saga, kanta saga etc
- Women are very sensitive towards their forest, they relate to it not only as a mere source of livelihood or food resource, but they also depend on forest emotionally as well as spiritually security in the form of ancestral and nature worship, categorically.
- Day in and day out, women's need and priorities in terms of livelihood greatly relates to the forest that is around them. Women also take part in agricultural and forest gathering practices and they are commonly involved in sell parts of the yields at the local markets as seen in Desughati and Gudgudia. Hence, they also take part in the decision-making relating to the management and conservation of the forest.

Kutia Kondh:

- The Kutias derive their major living through shifting cultivation, where women continue to remain as back bone of the economy.
- All most all women function as a unit during the shifting cultivation and they also move in small groups to collect minor forest like sal and siali leaves, leafy vegetables, tubers, fruits, harida, bahadaetc
- On an average a Kutia household, makes about Rs. 18800 annually as income from various resources. Out of which, 44% of income is generated from agriculture, 23% from selling of NTFPs and 17% from daily wage works. All of these activities are done by women primarily.
-

Hill Khadia:

- Khadia Women were of the opinion that they visit jungle regularly for the collection of some minor forest produces like honey, seeds, resin, lack, tubers, arrowroot, firewood, fruits, sal and tendu leaves, and raw materials for making broomstick etc.
- the Khadia women consume a fruit locally called as ‘Rajada’ (*Bacuniaramiflora*) and crabs from the local fresh water streams to mitigate the iron requirement during pregnancy
- Khadia women primarily collect tubers for the consumption as a food on daily basis
- On an average a Khadia household, makes about Rs. 20600 annually as income from various resources. Out of which, 55% of income is generated from NTFP collection and sell, 11% from agriculture and 11% from daily wage works. All of these activities are done by women primarily.

To Figure out the issues after and before recognition of rights under FRA.

- The single women or the women-headed households who are primarily dependent on forest land and its resources, so as their right over the forest land and its resources should be recognized through Forest Rights Act, 2006 under the provisions legitimizing their individual rights
- State and Central Policy makers have initiate and recognize the habitat rights of the PVTG communities keeping in mind ensuring the livelihood security for the women in the tribal inhabited areas. And No action or policy should affect their culture which is already on the verge of getting acculturated or are notified “VULNERABLE” as in case of the Kutia Kondhs and Hill Khadias
- Inadequate representation in the Forest Rights Committees and Gram Sabhas: In most Gram Sabhas and FRCs, the office bearers, presidents and secretaries, are men, leading to the exclusion of women in the decision making process. The voices of women are not being captured in the discussions and decisions in the Gram Sabhas.

- Issues relating to registration of titles in the name of women: Though the FRA requires registration of the titles in the name of both the spouses, in many cases, titles on forest land are issued in the name of men only, as reported from the districts of Mayurbhanj and Kandhamal in Odisha. Similarly, other than a handful of secluded cases, single women are not provided forest land rights, though the Act makes specific provision for the recording of rights in the name of single women who are the most vulnerable. Within the public domain, Government has not maintained any data or dedicated information about the women who received titles under Forest Rights Act.
- Problems in the recognition of individual and community forest rights: IFR (Individual Forest Rights) land is not being properly demarcated. There is lack of communication and awareness regarding the rejection of claims related to land rights of women. The rate of recognition of Community Forest Rights (CFR) claims is very low, though it is evident enough that women of forest dwelling communities find a major chunk of livelihood and sustenance from forest. The harsh reality is that women majorly are deprived of any ownership and usufruct rights on minor forest produce (MFP). In this regards the minimum support price provisions on forest produces are not implemented as a result of which many tribal women engaged in collection and marketing of MFPs do not garner any of the relevant benefits.
- Problems due to Forest Department's interventions: Though the FRA vests legal rights and authority for governance and management of community forest rights with the gram Sabhas, the Forest Department's programmes and interventions continue to violate these rights, especially impacting the rights of women. Women continue to face harassment by forest officials while going to the forests for collection of fuelwood and MFP.
- The Forest Department is undertaking plantations under a host of programmes (such as CAMPA, Green India Mission, externally aided forestry projects, and the MGNREGA) in the forest lands, which have either been claimed or been recognized under the FRA, leading to the violation of forest rights. In many states, such plantations violate communities' traditional rights over land under shifting cultivation.

- In Similipal, the fear of relocation of villages has affected women both emotionally and their land rights adversely. The women in study villages are of the opinion that the families displaced from Similipal Tiger Reserve are unable to access developmental facilities (housing, school, and health) in the relocated sites (Kapand- Banabasa village relocated from Similipal).
- As far as convergence is concerned, the people in study villages have not received any kind of livelihood security through the convergent development programmes and schemes.

Assess the impact of some Government programs and schemes relevant for women in study area

- Aadhar linkages possess issues for women opting to get enrolled for Mamata, TPDS and pension schemes.
- Most women registered in their first trimester and in Kutias 50% of women opted for institutional delivery due to the difficult terrain in accessing hospitals and fear of expenses. In Khadias, around 70% of women opted for institutional delivery as the hospital was in Jashipur
- It was remarkable to learn that the ANM and ASHA are doing commendable work in disseminating information relating to nutrition and care before and after child birth.
- Around 50 -58% of women in both the communities had received their first installment under Mamata Scheme and 70% attended VHND for checkups.
- TPDS is one of the best performing schemes across the state; yet capping of the number the beneficiaries resulted in exclusion of some of the households. About 95% of the people receiving food grains were satisfied with the quality and quantity of the grains they get.
- Under the pension scheme, in Jhirpanipanchayat, a total of 182 and 141 women are enrolled for getting old age and widow pensions respectively. Similarly in Gudgudiapanchayat a total of 146 and 129 women are getting old age and widow pension respectively.

Conclusion:

The results of the study revealed that the Hill Khadia and Kutia Kondh tribal groups living in Mayurbhanj and Kandhamal respectively are highly dependent on the forest for their survival. Forest not only act as a source of living but also act as food landscapes for the women who derive nutrition not only for themselves but also for their entire family. The women of both the communities act as knowledge hub in themselves when it comes to the collection of food from forest. The forest derived leaves, tubers, fruits, etc acts as food supplement and contribute a lot during the periods of food scarcity, non-availability of adequate food, as the forested communities find it difficult to cultivate the hilly terrains of Similipal. Yet, shifting cultivation is the major source of living for the Kutias where they selectively and ecologically use the forests in a more profound sustainable manner. Continuance in the pattern of the usage of the forest produces in traditional manner especially by children and poor households. As younger generations in both the communities i.e., KutiaKondhs and Hill Khadias are no longer interested to consume them, there lies a threat to ensure the maintenance of traditional knowledge and passing of knowledge through generations which eventually may erode. It is evident from the study that with the introduction of food schemes by Government, adhering to the modern lifestyle and food habits by younger generation, coupled with migration from resource rich areas to other areas with lesser resources has resulted in gradual depletion of traditional knowledge which included identifying, locating, gathering, conserving and consumption of such plant species.

Additionally, because women hold the authority over the kitchen in the house, they not only look after the food requirements but also look after the income and expenses combined. Based on the information collected from the Kutia and Khadia women, they agree that, there has been some transformation when it comes to participation decision making alongside their male counterparts. Owing to the interventions by the local NGOs at various levels, women have started to participate in village affairs; still a lot remains to be done in terms of gender sensitization. Then again, proper implementation of FRA or recognition of their habitat rights will also ensure that the entire community get secured their forest based livelihood and also gives an opportunity to the Government to further strengthen the income generation of such communities by providing adequate and desired

market linkages for the minor forest produces. This is in return will safeguard the livelihoods of the Kutia Kondh and Hill Khadia people.

Recommendations

- Women are the most marginalized section of any society. Here, among the Kutias and Khadias there is a grave need to understand the requirements of reorganizing, restructuring and reallocating resources for the women of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in general as they stand out as the most marginalized section of the tribal society. In view of their ecology, socio-cultural traditions and their knowledge of indigenous medicine, the nature of the development projects and the needs of such women must be recognized.
- The plans and programmes that are specifically meant for allocating land to the women should focus on securing the livelihood and housing needs of single women particularly, the destitute, separated and unmarried women. This becomes extremely crucial in the context of such women in PVTG communities.
- There is a need to carry out training and awareness programmes, especially for women members of the Forest Rights Committees and Gram Sabhas, as well as for women Panchayat Raj Institution Representatives who are members of the sub-divisional and district level committees.
- There is a need to refer to the women's policies of the various governments and undertake the implementation of FRA in the states in the context of these policies to make these processes gender sensitive. There is also a need to do policy advocacy regarding this. IFR need to be primarily recognized in the name of women and CFR rights under the FRA should focus on the need of women's dependence on forests for generation of livelihood and food gathering source. Following which the MSP on the forest produces has to be implemented.
- The health and social security of the women of the Kutias and Khadia community must be dealt with extreme care and sensibly. There is a great need to provide ample awareness on the immunization, maternal and infant health. Having said that, the villages are mostly located away from accessing easy medical facilities due to lack of proper connectivity hence their health needs are to be prioritized. Along with this, there is a need to document their traditional healthcare practices which are very much important. Similarly, ways are to be figured out by the

government to ease off the access of the TPDS, Pensions etc. and ensure that the benefits reach the deserving people without any hindrances.

- Lastly, the Government should work towards enhancing the market facility for the forest produces collected by women and also train women on value addition of those produces so that it can generate more income for them.