

SUMMARY

The status of women in any society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Their status is described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as their roles within the family, the community and society. In tribal communities women play a substantial and crucial role. Even the Soliga tribal women have been playing a prominent role in agricultural operations, collection of fuel and other forest products and bringing potable water. In course of time, with the depletion of bamboo and other natural resources, they took to agricultural labour. Due to various acts of the government, such as the one which declared BR Hills as a wildlife sanctuary etc., the Soliga women were displaced and started living in settlements called Podus in the periphery of the forests. Since Independence, a number of government acts have brought in some changes in the lives of the Soligas, especially of the women as some of them conferred rights to the forest and land as well as provided opportunity for collaborative management. This study is an attempt to explore the socio-economic status of the Soliga tribal women living in the Mahadeshwara Hills and Biligiri Rangana Hills of Chamarajanagar District of the State of Karnataka since Independence.

A detailed review of literature was done. The various studies conducted in the area of tribals and status of tribal women were classified as studies related to the Tribals of India, studies related to the Tribals of Karnataka, studies related to the Soliga Tribes and studies related to the Tribal Women. This detailed review had helped the researcher in finalising the topic as it enabled the researcher to know the scope of the study. The outcome is the statement of the problem called “Socio-Economic Status of Soliga Women In Karnataka Since Independence.”

The study proposed to trace the history of the Soligas living in Male Mahadeshwara Hills and Biligiri Rangana Hills of Chamarajanagar District of Karnataka, It also aimed at studying the various social and cultural practices and lifestyle of the Soligas women; the prospects of the Soliga tribal women as entrepreneurs and factors leading to the empowerment of these women; analyse their socio-economic status, and the impacts of tribal welfare programmes introduced by the Central and the State Governments on the Soliga women

For a detailed study of the topic, both primary and secondary data have been collected and analyzed using SPSS, MS excel and other statistical techniques. The population was divided into three groups according to the age such as women between 20-35 years, between 36-59 years and women who are 60 years and above. From the detailed analysis of the data collected, the researcher arrived at the following findings :

The Soligas prefer nuclear families. The Soliga women are aware of the Government's legislation on marriageable age. Women have freedom to select their life partners. The practice of bride-price exists among the Soliga women. There has been an improvement in the awareness of family planning among women over a period of time. The study showed that there has been a proportionate increase in the number of cemented houses and houses having electricity connection since independence. Most of the houses of the young age

women have toilets. Majority of women use fire wood in combination with other types of fuel. Majority of them are engaged in more than one occupation. The number of women who join the self-help groups is on the increase. The various tribal welfare measures taken by the central and state governments have had a great impact on the Soliga women. Economically, they could practise various crafts due to the vocational training received by them from various sources including the NGOs. While retaining their traditional cultural practices, the Soliga women have absorbed some of the non-tribal practices in their dressing and manners. It was found out that there has been a tremendous improvement in the level of literacy among Soliga women from past to present. They are very much aware of the educational facilities available and they make every effort to utilise those facilities to the maximum advantage. They are aware of the health facilities in their areas and even for major health problems they have accessed the medical facilities in major cities and bigger towns. Nowadays, the rate of infant mortality has reduced. Majority of them have savings bank account. Migration of the Soliga women had stopped as they could practise various crafts and be self employed. Their income levels have increased leading to the enhancement of their economic status.

If women are economically strong it creates leadership and decision making power. Constitutional safeguards to Tribal women provided opportunity to enjoy more freedom and power than ever before. Still the tribal women require awareness in all aspects. There is a strong need of economic empowerment through education and employment.
