
VULNERABILITY OF TRIBAL WOMEN ON ACCOUNT OF MALE ALCOHOLISM: A STUDY ON CAUSES OF WOMEN MIGRATION FROM JHARKHAND

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Abstract: Tribal women commonly referred as assets in their tribal community are characterized by hard physical labour done by them at home as well as outside. In tribal rural pockets they are predominantly engage in activities such as trade in manufacture and sale of products based on minor forest produce. Among other activities involvement is collecting wood, gathering fodder, picking leaves, brewing liquor and selling them. These activities are typically low income, seasonal activities and marginal to the economy. For a perennial source of income a larger number of women singly or in a group moves out decades after decades to work as domestics, construction labourers, brick kilns workers in urban or semi urban areas. A larger number of social and economic causes are there such as lack of irrigation facilities, deforestation, indiscriminate mining, displacement, unemployment, male alcoholism and many others.

In Jharkhand, many tribal families and especially their women brewed their own liquor as a part of a social and religious tradition. Haria (rice beer) the alcohol content was not high. It is said that it is highly nutritious, fermented brew, drunk with ceremony by the community, given to children, women and old people. The liquor trade in tribal areas finds a predominance of tribal women. This may seem a sharp contradiction when viewed in terms of the problems faced by women on account of male alcoholism. But when viewed in context of the limited availability of economic options and issues of survival, it is perhaps less surprising that such trade is taken up by women.

A large number of tribal women cry out in despair that alcohol is decimating their families and the tribal community in their regions. Most of the male members of the families due to addiction of alcohol are inactive to earn and as a result issues of survival and income generation solely remains the workload of women of the house. Many women moves out of home to work as manual labourers only due to excessive liquor consumption of their male members which in some cases leads to domestic violence too.

The objective of this paper is to understand alcoholism as one of the cause of out migration of destitute tribal women who due to inactive members of families such as brothers, husbands or parents choose migration as a better option to earn a living and to live a peaceful life. It is based on preliminary enquiry into the problem on few Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). This paper further highlights problem arises due to male alcoholism in families and the forces pushes women to decide to migrate to various destination. At last paper has discussed the issue of migration due to this problem and its serious consequences on community, followed by conclusion.

Keywords: Alcoholism, Haria (Rice Beer), Migration, Tribal Women.

Introduction: Migration a worldwide accepted phenomenon and tribal migration from Jharkhand is one of the several ways through which tribal fulfills their livelihood needs. Tribal docile, innocent and hard working in nature are mostly seen and valued as manual laborers abundantly available to do hard and cheap work. Large scale migration of tribal girls or women to work in metropolitan cities as domestic worker or taking up jobs of laborers in brick kilns or construction sites are the symptoms of degradation the tribal community is facing.

If we go through the history of tribal migration from Jharkhand then it shows three different phases of out migration. (Society for Regional Development 2010) cited that first phase was during 18th and 19th centuries to work in the tea plantations of Assam, secondly towards rural areas of Bihar and West Bengal to work as agricultural labour and present trend from 1980s onwards is towards the big cities of Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai in which women or girls are moving as work force.

(Mallick 2002) mentioned that migration of tribals from Jharkhand emerged rapidly as soon as it become focus of industrialization in 1950's for its rich mineral deposits, forest, water resources and the availability of cheap labour. A large scale of indiscriminate mining, denudation of the forests, land aggression, and encroachment of water resources took place which devastated tribal life causing large scale migration to faraway places. Tribal economy is largely forest dependent as the forests not only provided their economic base but were also source of the society's spiritual and cultural life.

In the forest based economy women enjoy considerable economic power and social freedom. The destruction of forests over the last half century has thus not only caused immense damage to tribal society as such but has also weakened the female sex and consequently strengthens the tribal patriarchy. All the above factors have contributed to the rapid disintegration of tribal society. The fundamental reason for mass migration of women therefore has been the resources depletion and societal disintegration that these hapless women have experienced, coupled with growing demand for labours in the fast expanding industrial and urban centers.

Tribal especially women educated, uneducated and illiterate are forced to leave their home and hearth in search of food and livelihood as seasonal and long term migrants in the urban, semi urban, forest or plantation areas for agricultural, unskilled, domestic help and works which do not ensure upward mobility only ending up making life more vulnerable to bondage, trafficking and the like, migration of this kind can only be looked cautiously. They are often exploited physically and sexually. Back in their places of origin, the way they are trapped in intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty, it bounds them to work and bring an income for family and community. In most such cases, the push factors operating in the localities are heavier compared to the pull factors from the places of destination. Among the push factors male alcoholism and inactiveness to do economic activity forces their women and girls to move out of their homes. Many among them try to escape a difficult family situation due to drunkenness and harshness.

This paper tries to comprehend the causes of women migration to places of destination and examines through an analysis the relationship between male alcoholism and inactiveness to earn an income as a factor forcing their women to migrate singly or in group to migrate for livelihood. For this study, Gutwa village of Sisai block in Gumla district, Jharkhand state is considered as a case study. Jharkhand is a tribal dominated state. According to the Census of India 2011, 26.2 percentage of total population of Jharkhand are Scheduled Tribe. Out of total 32,988,134 persons, 8,465,042 are tribal populations live in Jharkhand. The sex ratio of the ST population in Jharkhand is 1003 females per 1000 males. There are 32 Notified Tribes and 9 Notified Primitive Tribes in the state are commonly called Scheduled tribe as they are notified by the President of India. These Scheduled tribe populations mostly live in remote rural villages where the infrastructure facilities are the weakest. The incidences of poverty are plentiful. The status of education/literacy among Scheduled tribe population is also poor. As per 2011 census, as against the state average of 67.63%, the literacy rate among tribal is 57.13%. The scenario is even worse in the case of tribal women, whose literacy rate is as low as 22.11%.

The pattern of migration followed by tribal community (men and women) in Jharkhand is mostly seasonal but young girls or women are migrating throughout the year. In the tribal village of Gutwa, most of the people in this hilly landscaped village live under abject poverty. For the purpose of sustainable livelihood men and women both migrate from this area but women and girls migrates throughout the year singly or in a group with agent or own to urban and semi urban areas.

The paper is organized into four sections. The second section says about the methodology adopted in the study, discusses the profile of the study area, nature of woman migration, circumstances forcing women migrate and work in various places of destination. The third section discusses filed data and impact of male alcoholism different aspects of their life. The fourth section makes the conclusion saying that it is a need of hour to wake up and work together on the issue of alcoholism which compels to move out and women suffer socially as well as economically due to alcoholism. Fed up of their domestic living and scarcity of perennial sources of employment nearby, women look for other job alternatives in faraway places where many of them are exploited by outsiders such as their employers, recruiters, middlemen and contractors. Awareness and sensitization of the tribal community regarding the hazard of excessive drinking and problem arises in family environment due to this habit or addiction and prevention of problems related to alcohol. Many a time women development and empowerment programmes might not be gain success or improve if women are neglected and exploited at family and community level. A healthy environment is required for all round development of men and women in tribal community. Alcohol is a substance abuse and has collateral damage destroying lives and families forcing the women to migrate. Hence necessary steps to curtail its use are required.

Methodology and the Context: This paper is based on preliminary enquiry into the problem based on few Focused Group Discussion (FGDs) conducted during October 2016 when tribal migrant women working as manual labours in brick kilns or construction sites, domestics work, other cleaning workers in different urban or semi urban areas were back to participate and celebrate local fairs, Jataras during tribal festival Karam.

The FGDs were conducted with three groups of migrant women who were at home during the festival season. Women were requested to speak and discuss about the reason for their movement outside and how these have changed and influenced their individuality and affected their original community. The village Gutwa is situated about 25 km away from the Sisai block headquarters of Gumla district. This village is surrounded by small hills and forest having majority of population belonging to Oraon community.

Both the 'Pull' and 'Push' factors (Lee,1966) work in most of the cases of migration and people of this village have migrated largely due to lack of suitable avenues for decent employment. There is expectation of improvement in such circumstances through migrating out. It has been observed that people generally migrate with family includes woman and children during the off agricultural seasons i.e. October-May. Overall though the family migration predominates in out moving cases but a large number of women singly or in groups with agents or contractors or relatives are migrating to work in various destinations. According to (Mallick, 2002) tribal female migration to urban centres as domestics does not depend upon male members of the family. It is basically the decision of the woman, however often endorsed by the men in the family. It has been observed that women migration decision is influenced by several reasons which are individual as well as influenced by overall household characteristics and the social matrix but families where the male members inactive to be involved in economic activities due to drunkenness are more migrating in numbers.

The female migrant of this village can be divided into teenagers and married. Both categories migrants move out either due to influence of success stories of other migrants or to look for sustainable livelihood for family when parents or husband or other family members are inactive due to addiction of local liquor. It was very disheartening to observe that tribal women do largely hard physical labour. They are commonly referred to as head loaders, walk miles through different conditions, collecting wood for fuel, gathering fodder for cattle, picking leaves. All activities they predominantly engage in are such as 'minor' forest produce and manufacture and sale of products based on minor forest produce. These activities are typically low income, seasonal activities and marginal to economy.

Women are largely involved in brewing liquor and selling them. This trade in tribal areas finds predominance of tribal women. This may seem a sharp contradiction when viewed in terms of the problems faced by women on account of male alcoholism.

What Is Special About This Drink?

Haria in Jharkhand state was a rice beer of sorts, a highly nutritious, fermented brew, drunk with ceremony by the community, given to children, women and old people. Drinking this brew alone was unthinkable, culturally taboo. Significantly, it was not a distilled liquor. Another fermented brew made from the mahua flower was consumed in enormous quantities. It provided nutrients at the peak of summer, at a time when the grain stocks were low and no other food was available to food gatherers. It was a cooling drink, bringing relief in midsummer when temperatures soared to 40+ degrees centigrade, and it probably helped keep many people alive.

(Shah 2011) explained the preparation of Haria, a beer made from rice. Husked rice is boiled with a little water and then dried. The husks are partially removed and the rice is boiled again. Before softening, the rice is removed from the heat and cooled. A jungle root and herb mix called ranu is crumbled into the rice. The mixture is left in a pot covered with sal leaves and kept for three days inside the house till it ferments. In the cold weather, the fermentation process can take eight to ten days. Water is added before the brew is drunk as haria. The second is mahua pani, a distillation made from the mahua flower. The white mahua flowers are collected from trees in the village in the hot season in April and then dried. To prepare the wine the dried flowers are drowned in water. Ranu is added to the mixture before it is left for five to six days in the hot weather and up to fifteen days in the cold weather. The mixture is ready to be distilled when it has stopped producing bubbles. Distillation takes place through a combination of four pots. The first, which goes directly over the fire, holds the fermented mahua flowers and water mixture. Directly on top of it is another pot, with holes at the bottom to let through the steam from the mahua ferment. Inside this second pot, a smaller clay vessel collects the distilled liquid, the mahua pani. A last vessel, which holds cold water, is placed on top of these pots in order to enhance the condensation of the distilled liquid into the clay vessel. This water in the pot at the top needs to be kept cold and is changed at least five times over the process of distillation.

The name haria is used probably because of the pot in which rice is fermented called "handi" in local language. Social drinking of haria is acceptable and is not considered a taboo even in females of various tribes of Jharkhand. However this drink has been commercialized and liquor trade in tribal areas finds predominance of tribal women, though on account of male alcoholism social and economic problems are faced by women only.

Discussion and Findings: During the discussion many women cited the reason for their movement out of the origin places is excessive liquor consumption of male members or elders of family. A women working as brick kiln worker said that she migrates for 6 to 8 months and don't feels to be back at home reason given by her was inactiveness of her husband due to haria addiction. She complained her husband takes away her saving and abuses her too.

Another tribal women who works as domestic in Delhi narrated her ordeal that she was fed up of physical assault by her husband after liquor consumption. He was not only beating her but her 3 daughters too. Fed up of his atrocities she requested her neighbor to look for a job in Delhi where she could live-in and earn a living. Though her daughters were living with their fathers but in coming years mother is planning to place her daughters in her work place to keep them safe from abusive husband. These two cases explain the extremes of physical and mental harassment most of the tribal women suffer at their native places. Women in all groups for discussion felt the alcoholism as one of the important cause of women migration. Domestic violence is also heard among the women due to the habit of liquor. Limited availability of economic activities and resources in the area pushes women to migrate as fed up of domestic violence motivates them to go faraway places.

After drinking haria few women complained the case of molestation and sexual harassment too by other tribal or non tribal men in work places. Though nobody during discussion mentioned such problems arise with them but said such sexual abuse due to drunkenness is common in workplace of brick kilns and construction sites. Addiction to the alcohol many a time pursues the women to leave behind children in care of parents or in laws and migrate for a livelihood due to unwillingness of husbands, to

work. In such cases education of children lapses as many times grandparents are unable to look after schooling and other related needs of their grand children.

One unmarried girl in her forties complained due to habit of drunkenness of parents, she had a fate to migrate outside for a living for younger siblings. Her father died of this habit of liquor consumption and mother, now partial blind due practice of alcohol. From very early age she has seen them drinking which turned out to be a habit leads them inactive. She expressed her depression that marriage and acceptability in society is not there as for longer period of time she was absent from home. She expressed that somewhere alcoholism is the cause which ruined her childhood and adolescent and lead her to migrate out for a livelihood for family.

Another woman, a widow, working as domestic worker said her husband was always ready to stake everything to buy it and he died due to the habit of excessive drunkenness. Due to poverty and helplessness to do anything nearby migrating outside was only option for her. Chronic and excessive alcohol intake has a hazardous impact on human health and society. (Mitra et al 2017) in their medical research mentioned that alcohol is the most common substance abused, yet the pattern of drinking along with the type and amount of alcohol varies considerably with respect to a person's socioeconomic status, cultural and regional background. Excessiveness of alcohol leads to develop Alcohol liver disease (ALD). Illicitly brewed country liquors are associated with an early development of ALD and have grave prognosis.

(Sreeraj et al 2012) in their study when measured on the alcohol dependence scale, the problems related to alcohol were more severe in the tribal as compare to non tribal. Educational and socioeconomic deprivation could be the cause for such variation. Cultural factors like traditional acceptance may enhance the number of people involved in drinking. Reasons like consuming alcohol to have good time with friends, when feeling peer pressure, or identify oneself in a group are significantly cited more by the tribal than non tribals. It is clearly indicating that social influence to get addicted to alcohol is more among tribals.

Further their study mentioned that the use of alcohol to cope with the distressing emotions was found more in tribals. The persisting psychological problems related to low self esteem in tribals is often noted in the literature; historical oppression and discrimination have had their after effects on their well being. Use of alcohol increases when one feels bad about oneself, when one thinks about the bad happenings in the past, when one feels suspicious and discriminated. Sleep disturbance have been reported more often by tribals as a reason for alcohol intake.

Though women in social and economic sphere faces problems on account of male alcoholism but when viewed in context of the limited availability of economic options in the source areas and issues of survival, it is perhaps less surprising that such trade is taken up by women in large number. Women during discussion revealed that many migrant women largely moves to brick kilns and construction sites not as laborers but to brew country liquor (Haria) and to sell it to other labourers in work place. It was learned that women earns between Rs400 to 500 per day doing this job which is more earning than working as a labourer.

There is a need for developing good employment opportunities for tribal women so that they can be empowered. (Sunder, Vidya 2014) mentioned that Non-governmental organizations can also play a very positive role in educating women thereby making them empowered. Most of all, involvement of men in these activities can make more meaningful these reforms. It is to be understood that around the world, healthy, educated and empowered women break poverty cycles, not just for themselves, but for their families, communities and countries too.

An empowered woman has the abilities to influence at societal and community level against hazards of alcoholism. (Chinmayeesatpathy2014) rightly pointed out one can relate empowerment at three levels: empowerment on the individual, group, and societal/ community- level and the interaction between

these. The individual level deals with individual women's abilities to take control over their lives, their perceptions about their own value and abilities, their abilities to identify a goal and work towards this goal. The group level deals with the collective action and sense of agency that women experience together, in a group. The societal level deals with the permissiveness of the political and social climate, the societal norms and the public discourse on what is possible and impossible for women to do, how women should behave etc. The different levels are seen as interconnected and mutually reinforcing, e.g. when empowerment on individual level occurs, this will have effect on the group and societal level. Women who are empowered on an individual level will most likely go on and affect the other levels.

Conclusion: Thus, due to practice of drunkenness among male members in families, women are prone to suffer economically as well as socially. Crisis situation arises when due to drinking habit brings inactiveness among tribal men for livelihood. As doubled with the social and economic responsibility to share family burden women look for a source of employment. When perennial sources of jobs are not available nearby women migrate singly or in group with other women of village. In rural tribal pockets most of the families and women have more or less same liquor consumption story of male members of family.

A larger number of movements against liquor consumption have been taken place from time to time to mobilize tribal community and masses in Jharkhand. After years of silent suffering women brigade formed Mahila Samities who 'vowed' to enforce a ban on sale and consumption of 'any form of liquor in their respective villages in Jharkhand. In this movement against liquor consumption of any form, women patrol the villages in search of country liquor shops and drinkers. This kind of group work for mobilizing community against alcoholism is largely found. (The Telegraph 2004, Business Standard 2014)

However, the prevention and treatment of alcohol dependence in the Indian context in general and Jharkhand state in particular cannot be avoided but the use can be lessened. Improving the psychological well being of tribals through various measures might decrease the alcohol intake in the dependence pattern.

Educating people about the side effects of liquor consumption, its consequences and treatment facilities focusing especially in the rural pockets is the need of the hour.

Awareness and sensitization regarding the disadvantages and severe effect of alcohol addiction is required to be made popular among the tribal areas along with de addiction centres. With the addicted members to overcome the dependence relying on their will power and learning new ways to cope with life will lead them to come out of the distress situation. Educating the addicted members on the physiological aspects of alcohol dependence might help them to have a better control over the drinking problem behavior, by differentiating the symptoms from craving, intoxication, and withdrawal symptoms. Discussing the treatment options and providing proper psychological interventions would be more acceptable than emphasizing on pharmacological therapies.

As a cultural beverage it is important to respect the tribal customs and norms as a cooling drink it provided nutrients at the peak of summer. In summer season when the grain stocks are low and no other food was available to food gatherers it brings relief to them but there should be a limit for this too. There is need to overcome the dependence on alcohol as it many a times decimates tribal families and community in various tribal pockets. Women are directly or indirectly the sufferers of such alcoholism practice in families. Once they know that their husbands brothers or parents are not working, to work outside without having good payment here they decides to migrate outside.

Chronic and excessive alcohol intake has a hazardous impact on human health and society. Alcoholism and subsequent alcoholic liver disease is quite prevalent in the tribal people of Jharkhand. Many don't exactly consider it to be an alcohol or an agent affecting their health adversely.

In India vast majority of people consume illicit country liquor. The exact percentage of alcohol depends on the method of brewing which is often below standard and unsupervised. Since it is affordable to the lower income groups it is widely prevalent and as such we found that it was the most commonly used alcoholic beverage in our study group. Illicitly brewed country liquors are associated with an early development of ALD (Alcoholic Liver Diseases) and have grave prognosis. The use of haria couldn't be vindicated of producing chronic liver disease and hence should be lessened if not avoided.

At last, there is need to understand the helpless of women who are choosing migration to urban or semi urban areas as manual labourers, domestics, and brick kilns workers for earning a living only to escape a difficult family situation such as drunkenness. If migration ensures upward mobility in the economic strata, such migration is normally welcome and this phenomenon may not draw attention. A larger number of women in the process of migration ends up making their life more vulnerable to bondage, trafficking and in this women experience violations of human rights which are quite different from that of men. Every injustice that a woman suffers is human right violations which engross major concern in multiple dimensions. Both women migrants and their families left behind experience a large number of hardship, inconveniences and insecurities.

Alcohol as a substance abuse has a collateral damage destroying lives and families, hence necessary steps to curtail its use is required by the legislation.

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