

Disabilities And Social Justice For Nomadic Tribal Communities In India

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Abstract

The term **Nomadic Tribes** in sociologically refers to the people who were forced to live a wandering life by the Indian social system divided into deferent castes and their origins. The term De-notified nomadic tribes consist of about 60 million in India out of which about five million lives in Maharashtra state there are 43 major nomadic tribes scattered into various sub tribal groups around 313 Nomadic Tribes and 198 De-notified Tribes.

In British India the government enacted law against criminal attitudes of the tribes and castes those traditions adopted as the occupational system of lively hood. Over hundreds of years without any good means of life under the influence of caste system, they are forced to live under sub human conditions. The large section of these tribes is known as Vmukta Jatis or Jamatis or 'Ex-criminal castes or Tribes' because they were branded as criminals by birth under the act Criminal Tribes Act- 1871.

Key words: Social disabilities in Nomadic and De-Notified Tribes, social welfare measures, settlement for sustainable development among Nomadic Tribes.

1.1 Introduction:

The term **Nomadic Tribes** in sociologically refers to the people who were forced to live a wandering life by the Indian social system divided into deferent castes and their origins. The term De-notified nomadic tribes consist of about 60 million in India out of which about five million lives in Maharashtra state there are 43 major nomadic tribes scattered into various sub tribal groups around 313 Nomadic Tribes and 198 De-notified Tribes.(1)

In British India the government enacted law against criminal attitudes of the tribes and castes those traditions adopted as the occupational system of lively hood. Over hundreds of years without any good means of life under the influence of caste system, they are forced to live under sub human conditions. The large section of these tribes is known as Vmukta Jatis or Jamatis or 'Ex-criminal castes or Tribes' because they were branded as criminals by birth under the act Criminal Tribes Act- 1871.

After independence of India, this act was repealed by Government of India in 1952. In Maharashtra, they have been not been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes because of some historical circumstances, but

are listed as Scheduled Castes or "Nomadic Tribes". The tribes designated as "De-notified", "Nomadic" or "Semi-Nomadic" are eligible for reservation in India(2)

1.2 Nomadic Tribes classifications:

The Nomadic communities in India classified on the basis of race, colors of skins, geographical deviations like Northeast's Aryans, Mongolians, southern Dravidians and Asteroid, Anthropological investigations also shows classification base on languages, occupations, short stay and long stay of the residents, cultural varieties and social behavior.

The name "Criminal Tribes" is itself a misnomer as no definition of tribe denotes occupation, but they were identified as tribes being their primary occupation. The first Census was in 1871 and at that time there was neither consensus nor any definition of "tribe". The terms tribes and castes were used interchangeably for these communities. In this colonial context, the term "Tribe" connoted the notions of primitiveness and backwardness and hence the assumption that these tribes needed to be civilized or transformed.(3)

1.3 Nomadic Tribes- Cultural common Identification as their problems:

Culture is totally unique. The faiths, dress, festivals and even the languages are different and not to be found anywhere in India. People usually prefer visiting these tribes because of their lifestyle and conduct. Common stone Chula, Varieties of hut structures, begging styles, marriage, Birth and death ceremony, tribal council rules, Primitive Traits. various practices like worship of nature in different forms, animal sacrifices during religious ceremonies, adorning head with horn (Banjara woman), not wearing a blouse (Wadar woman) are only a few of them to demonstrate this fact. Distinct Cultural Identity, Geographical Isolation from the rest of the society. Some of these tribes still prefer to stay near jungle, away from the villages. Their temporary settlements are known as pal or pada residential temporarily settlement colonies.

Social and economic backwardness:

The Nomadic and Denotified tribals have no means of production and livelihood as a result of which they have to move from village to village in the form of a caravan. Also, the children are deprived of education. They cannot take education through regular school systems in a settled society due to this unstable life style. They are left away from the mainstream of life and their life is fossilized in poverty, superstition and ignorance. They have remained backward economically and socially. Apart from the criteria mentioned above there are two other criteria which make these tribes eligible for having constitutional safeguards which are enjoyed by the Scheduled Tribes.

1.4 Nomadic Way of Life:

As already mentioned these tribes have wandering traditions. In absence of any means of survival and lack of education to fit into the settled society they are forced to continue with this tradition for bare survival in the most degrading and sub human conditions. Thousands of families belonging to these tribes wander from place to place and stay in temporary structures rarely fit for humans beings to stay. Unless they settle at one place or another, unless they are provided with opportunities of education and employment they will never be in a position to integrate themselves in the society and avail of the benefits of modern civil life.

1.5 Stigma and Criminality:

Though Criminal Tribes Act was repealed in 1952 the stigma of criminality is still attached with them. Due to this stigma they are the victims of persecution and torture at the hands of the British and the state machinery. Anywhere an act of theft or robbery takes place persons belonging to these tribes in the

surrounding area are arrested and subjected to various forms of torture. In the eyes of the society they are still criminals, and a wide gulf exists between them and the rest of the society.

1.6 Historical Perspective of the Problem:

In the year 1950, the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was released. The Criminal Tribes Act was repealed in 1952. Though the Criminal Tribes Act Enquiry committee had categorically made the recommendations to the Central Government regarding these tribes they were deprived of the Constitutional safeguards due to both the acts of commission and omission. Thereafter the issue was swept aside due to the conflicts of the state formation on the linguistic pattern and these tribes in Maharashtra became victims in the process.

Following the linguistic pattern of state formation the territory of the early Nizam state was shared by Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. While the tribes in the territory included in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka enjoy the constitutional status and priviledges, the same tribes in the territory of Marathwada region included in Maharashtra are deprived of it for no fault of theirs. Similarly, it is ironical that tribes like the Kaikadi and Pardhi in Vidarbha, which was previously a part of Madhya Pradesh, enjoy the constitutional status, in the rest of Maharashtra they are deprived of it.

1.7 Nomadic tribes may be defined as;

“Those people that because of their wandering lifestyle are unable to satisfactorily fulfill their needs of food, clothing, shelter and formal education those do not own immovable, property, nor have a village of origin nor posses tools of trade, but who for survival opt to beg or steel, whom the larger society has for millennia branded as aliens, and who have no place in the village affairs or the Balutedary system (system of caste and their division of work), may be defined a ‘Nomadic Tribe’. (4)

1.8 Recent Major problems of Nomadic Tribes:

The major difficulties and hindrances survived of the life of nomadic tribal communities has been found through the investigation of major research project of University Grants Commission, New Delhi in year 2011 as; extreme poverty, ignorance of the world outsidess, early age marriage, homeless and migratory life, illiteracy, superstitions, unemployment, lack of unity and political leadership, scattered groups, majority of family heads and young generation addicted of alcohols, adaptation of traditional tribal council rules as it is burden of personal life of the every individuals, lack of social services during the nomadic existence or the settlements, harassment by local villagers and police, loss of traditional occupations, inconvenient present occupation such as rag picking, buffalo saving, road shows like snake charmers, bull worshipers Nandiwale, produce country liquor, robbery and thieves, difficulties for children to attend the schools due to nomadic life style of the parents, non availing of the welfare measures schemes, physical and mental disabilities among the old age persons, mal nutritive, lack of drinking water facilities and proper food, electric supply, afraid of government officials, negligence approaches of the local villagers toward the nomadic tribes, unavailability of birth certificate so that difficulties in schools, citizenship identification, accident in work place like Vadars, Laman in stone mining, Madari snake charmers while in snake poisoning, private loan pressure, health problems like diarries due to dirty water, stomach dieses due to begged spoils food, leprosy, HIV AIDS, cancer, communal disease. such a large numbers of the socio-economic as well as psycho- social problems suffering to the nomadic tribal communities and its caused of the distress life. (5)

1.8.1 Residential condition:

Table No. 1.1 : Ownership of a home and land

Sl.No	Nature of ownership of home	Numbers of respondent	Percentage
1	Homeless	188	37.60
2	Temporary huts on Private land	152	30.40
3	Owned house	160	32.00
	Total	500	100.00

Table No.: 6.8(A) Indicated that out of 500 responded families, 152 (30.40%) families have their own ordinary huts or mud-houses, having with tiles. Some have pals or huts or shelters having covered with straw.

In wandering period, wherever they stay they make their camps and prepare Godhadi-pals or huts of old cloth blankets. Prominently, these tribes come from Solapur, Usmanabad, Bijapur, Pune, Gulbarja (Karnataka), Nanded to Southern-Western Maharashtra. These people, who come in Kolhapur and Sangali districts, theirs shelters are either strong or weak. But some have no pals or huts of their own. The ratio of these people is 188 (37.60%).

These wandering Nomadic Tribes stay near the sides of the roads, on foot path, under the tree and near the shelters of school buildings.

Tambat, Takari, Madari tribes stay with Rajasthani Rajput Katari. And Budga Jagam. These tribes have no shelters of their own. Under the open sky they spend the night and near the road they lead the life.

Table No. 1.2 Causes behind death in family members

Sr. No	Particular	Number	Percentage
1	Snake bite	25	5.00
2	Accident in stone mining	38	7.60
3	Accident while demonstrating road entertainment	10	2.00
4	Road accident during journey(migration)	25	5.00
5	Killed by wild animal in forest	12	4.40
6	Death due to Diseases	50	10.00
7	Alcoholic addiction	180	36.00
8	Natural death	160	32.00
	Total	500	100.00

The table indicates the serious situations of reason of death among the respondents' family members and it found that in higher ratio 160(32.00 %) family members dead caused by alcohol addiction. And 160(32.00%) dead in caused by lack of nutrition's due to insufficient food. In case of Dawari, Bharadi Gosavi tribes' men died in alcoholic addiction and Dange Dhangars in western Ghat dead due to insufficient nutritious food like vegetables, fruits, fish and others concerned food. In such family members residing in Jungle areas some persons killed by wild animals that is 10(2.00%) in accident and dead by

snake bite is 25 (5.00%) and same number occurred in road accident while migration from place to place is indicating.

Dead of any person in the family is very expensive for ceremonial functions, the owners of family where happen these incident have to produce and provide liquor and got mutton after three days later of buried the dead body and so as to the family leaders have to money purpose they need to get loan from local leaders or owned tribal money Landers. (6)

1.9 Constitutional provisions and welfare of Nomadic Tribal community:

Under Article-46 the state shall promote with special care, social, economic and educational development of the weaker sections. On this basis, the Government of Maharashtra has made separate provision for the welfare of the Nomadic and De-notified Tribal groups of the people.

The Government of Maharashtra through its Department of Social Welfare, has classified its various social welfare schemes under several heads, namely (1) Education, (2) Research and Training, (3) Protection of Civil Rights, (4) Beggars Rehabilitation, (5) Verification of caste certificates, (6) Backward class Development, (7) Special component plan, (8) Handicapped Welfare and (9) Prohibition Propaganda. Out of the various welfare schemes formulated under these heads, the schemes like educational scholarships, Ashram schools and craft training for women are particularly important to the nomadic tribes. (7)

1.10 Research Methodology used:

The researcher had investigated of 500 respondent families and 50 unique case studied representing the psycho-social problems and community development reality, the present work has been maintained at the 'exploratory' level.

Moreover, the present researcher, growing up on the periphery of a typical remote village with its caste biases in Kolhapur and Sangli Districts, has first-hand interactions with wandering hoarders of nomadic people since his childhood. He has a better understanding of their mindset, traditions and customs, tribe wise drive of nomadism as well as their hopes and longings and problems. It was, therefore, both interesting and enlightening to evaluate the impact, if any, made by the welfare measures on the lifestyles of the nomadic tribes in a limited geographical area. Basically the '**Survey Method**' was adopted, to supplement the survey method, '**Case Study Method**' was adopted and non participatory observation method too was followed, observations about the sample households lifestyle were made, '**Photographic Evidences**' collected and detailed notes prepared. Survey method, case study method and observation method all rendered valuable primary data, also collected '**Video-Films**' of movements of Nomadic tribe for identifying their socio-economic problems in documentary film it was unique experience, this data representing 'A critical study of community development and psycho-social problems among the Nomadic tribes in Kolhapur District of Maharashtra state.

Data of 500 respondents families in Kolhapur and Sangli Districts of Maharashtra states collected using '**Accidental Sampling**' technique i.e. on reaching a certain destination only those family heads that were willing to participate in the survey were administered the '**Structure Interview Schedule**' for collecting the primary data. Secondary data collected through **library sources, archival information**, and information by informal discussion with Nomadic tribal leaders and families, formal discussion with Government officials. The functional scope is confined to offering a set of meaningful suggestions for social work intervention in the implementation of the welfare measures targeted on the nomadic tribes. The structured interview schedule was used for collecting the primary sours of data.

1.11 Conclusions:

The conclusions presented here below are a synthesis of the inferences derived from the analysis of both the primary and the secondary data.

Atleast 43 different nomadic tribes in large and small groupings populate in 183 sub-divisions is found in Maharashtra state. Dhangar 14%, Gosavis 12% and Vadars 8% being larger ones and 0.4% each being Katabu, Masanjogi and Nandiwale, the rest falling in between.

'Jamath Panchayat' (caste council) mediates in the infra-family disputes in 84% families, 9% settle them mutually and only 7% take resources to courts of law. 12% families live in makeshift tents, 33% in earthen walled houses, 23% in mud-walled houses and 7% in RCC houses. Majority families are settled in slums around the city areas and suffering from dirty atmosphere.

On the whole, there is underlying nexus between the acceptance of the settled lifestyle and improvement in housing conditions. The endeavor is further conducted by the ubiquitous social reform movements and the government's social welfare efforts in providing housing, employment, education and economic opportunities. Majority (91%) of the nomadic families are unable to effect savings of many or food grains for the reasons such as object poverty, shortage of money, addiction, ignorance and migration, beggary is only an incidental activity. 'Scrap collection' also provides work to all the working age group members in the families and children participated in family occupation because of those 32% children's having difficulties to attend the schools.

Being unable to secure regular employment, educated nomadic tribe youth are working as construction and farm laborers or scrap pickers. These youth are also unable to secure occupational training and industrial credit starting one's own self-employment activity. Many government and bank officers are biased against them and consider them as risky borrowers. Consequently, there is a growing sense of frustration among these youth.

Some nomadic families are found wandering in pursuit of both the 'traditional' and 'adopted' occupations. Traditional occupations include folk-arts, folk-dancing entertainment, animal acts, hunting, sale of herbal medicines, acrobatic, fortune-telling, beggary, genealogy recording, quilt-stitching, hand over locking of country bed sheets, cow and sheep breeding and herding, removing ear lint, exchange of household utensils for old clothes, idol-making, wood working, gold and copper smithy and tattooing. The 'adopted' occupations include scrap collecting, construction and market labour, shaving buffaloes, trading in old clothes etc.

Some nomadic tribes undertake their jaunts only during harvest season; hence, they are called 'seasonal nomads' or 'semi-nomads.' Nearly two thirds of the families are living below the poverty line and are mired in poverty, hunger, ill-health, unemployment, family strife, ignorance and superstition, with the youngsters and elders alike ultimately leading themselves into addiction. 8% families indulge in the illegal activity of illicit liquor brewing.

About 68% children of the perennial nomads are deprived of primary education because of their continuous shifting from one place to another. On other hand, among the nomadic tribes settled in urban areas even children are withdrawn from the school to help in the family's income earning activity mostly paid labour, scrap collection or beggary. As a result, they too are deprived of formal education. Poverty, ignorance and itinerant lifestyle are the main reasons behind the illiteracy among the nomadic tribes. Another reason is the negative attitude towards education as the educated youth fail to secure gainful employment.

The average lifespan among the nomadic tribes varies between 51 to 80 years. Recurring illnesses, addiction, lack of nutrition and medication, inadequate shelter and over-exertion, all contribute to the reduction of lifespan among them. Majority young boys among the Gosavi, Vadars, Davary, Kanjarbhat, Gopal are in 72% families addicted of Alcohol and their children's are away from education such disorganized families surviving extreme poverty and hunger.

Majority of the nomadic tribes suffer from the disabilities like ignorance, apprehensions about Police and the developed society, illiteracy, inferiority complex, etc. Hence, they do not come forward to obtain benefits of the Governments welfare schemes. Their continuing poverty, repeated visits to government officers, neglect of the officers, mistrustful treatment given by the officers, etc. also are the other reasons that prevent nomadic tribe families from obtaining the benefits of the Welfare Schemes. On the while, the government's Welfare Schemes are inadequate to suppress the nomadic urges of these people.

The nomadic tribes however are being benefited by the larger development process under way. This is reflected in their changing attitudes and lifestyles. Their economic, social, educational and

intellectual transformation is being helped by Dalit movement, social movements and social agitation's, to which the revolutionary concepts propounded by social reformer Mahatma Phule, Chh. Shahu Maharaja, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar have contributed significantly.

1.12 Recommendations:

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions presented above:

In order to properly rehabilitate the nomadic tribes, they should first be provided with permanent homesteads with housing and cultivable lands. For this purpose, the Government's housing schemes like 'Gharkul' and 'House for Homeless' should be duly modified to meet the needs of the nomadic tribes and implemented with due sincerity. Only after the nomadic tribes settle down and accept the lifestyle, schemes for their educational, economic and social upliftment could be implemented, providing youth diverse occupational skills needed by the contemporary society. After training them in new skills, they may be financially supported to set up their enterprises in manufacturing and service sectors.

In and on the periphery of urban centers nomadic tribes have established their slum 'settlements, which lack basic amenities, create considerable pollution and health hazards. In an effort to improve these slums, they may be provided with running water, electric supply, drainage, public lavatories, access roads, Balwadis, Community halls etc. So as to improve the living environment there it is necessary to counsel the nomadic tribes about marriageable age, family planning by community workers and health workers. Criminal inclination of the nomadic tribes known for such activities could only be curbed with provisions for educational and economic development for which acceptance of settled life is the precondition. Residential schools like 'Ashram School' may established near the population pockets of nomadic tribes and it may be ensured by the field workers appointed for the purpose that not a single child remains out of school or Mobil School. The curriculum in the 'Ashram Shalas' may focus on occupational training. Voluntary organizations working for the upliftment of the nomadic tribes may be encouraged with monetary rewards and public recognition. The Government should formulate the reservation policy equally in every state of India for nomadic tribe as a separate category in tribal community. Social welfare administrators at regular intervals may evaluate the implementation of each scheme targeted on the nomadic tribes. They may also record the practical, difficulties encountered for suitably modifying the implementation strategies. It is now very necessary to initiate a comprehensive, nation-wide, anthropological-historical survey to identify the 'true' nomadic tribes, so that their benefits are not pilfered by others.

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