



Personal Narratives of Poor Tribe: Field Insight from Tribal Belt of Kinwat Tahsil of Nanded District

Author

Prof. Ashwini Padhye-Dharkar,

Asst. Prof.,

Humanities Department,

Jhulelal Institute of Technology,

Abstract:

This article explores the poverty scenario in the remote area - Kinwat Tahsil Marathwada region, Maharashtra. Poverty has a multifaceted impact on people living in Kinwat. Water crises, hilly terrains, and forests make life miserable. Additionally, lack of employment opportunities, low income in agriculture, and lacuna in educational opportunities make it worse. As mentioned by Amartya Sen, it is not only about lack of money, it is capability deprivation. The poverty in Kinwat is the result of the failure of society's structure. Migration, in this area, is a common trend. To assess the problem's gravity, a few case studies were conducted.

These studies show the human face of poverty in the rural sector.

Keywords: Poverty, Tribal people, Capability Deprivation, Marathwada, Kinwat.

Introduction:

In Maharashtra's Kinwat region, the ill effects of poverty can be seen. Malnutrition among kids and jobless youth, without hope of improving conditions, is a regular scene.

Kids, after primary schooling, migrate to nearby towns- Nanded or Adilabad. Youth has no option but to go to nearby cities for employment. The villagers, who own land, stay back. Indebtedness, and unfair means used by money lenders, soon will turn into landless laborers.

Poverty eradication has been the main agenda of Indian politics for so many years. Here in Kinwat, it seems to fail. Targeted, participatory, and local policies are required to cure social poverty.

This article tries to identify the meaning, different perspectives and causes of poverty among Kinwat's people.

Review of Literature:

As per the Encyclopaedia Britannica, poverty is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. (Britannica-2024)

This simple definition specifically suggests that lack of money- i.e. inability to spend cash and being poorer than the rest of the community are the criteria, for being officially poor.

'Poverty is the result of the uneven distribution of material resources and wealth' is how Crossman, (2021) defines poverty. Kinwat's tribal people satisfy both definition's criteria.

Karl Marx defines poverty as an inevitable consequence of a capitalist economy. Further, he states that wealth and poverty are two sides of the coin. He added that some are rich because some are poor.

Unemployment and job insecurity make laborers vulnerable to poverty. This is true in the case of Kinwat.

Chakravarti (2006) argues that poverty is marked by unstable socioeconomic conditions and a lack of social and economic capital, restricting tribal youth from being rich.

According to Amartya Sen, a famous economist, poverty isn't only the amount of money one earns; it's about **b** lack of opportunities and freedoms that hinder people from leading the lives they desire. He also calls poverty as 'Unfreedom.' (IDB 2001).

Absolute Vs Relative Poverty

In absolute poverty, a person lacks basic things like – food, clothes, and shelter. the basis of absolute poverty changes from country to country. Modern approaches include transportation, sanitation, healthcare, and access to information in this list. (www.populationeducation.org & www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk)

If a person's income is insufficient to meet his needs, and when compared with others in society, it is low, it is called relative poverty.

The basis of relative poverty is the percentage of average household income.

Individualistic Vs Structural

The individualistic view of studying poverty says that poverty is the result of poor people's lack of motivation to work. Poor people have certain views, values, and beliefs that glorify poverty. As a result, they remain poor. This approach is also known as the Culture of Poverty.

This is an oversimplification of the problem. Poor is the problem here, Here, victims are being blamed. Which can not be accepted.

The structural perspective sees poverty as a problem rooted in social structure. lack of opportunity and lack of jobs are responsible for poverty, and not the poor people.

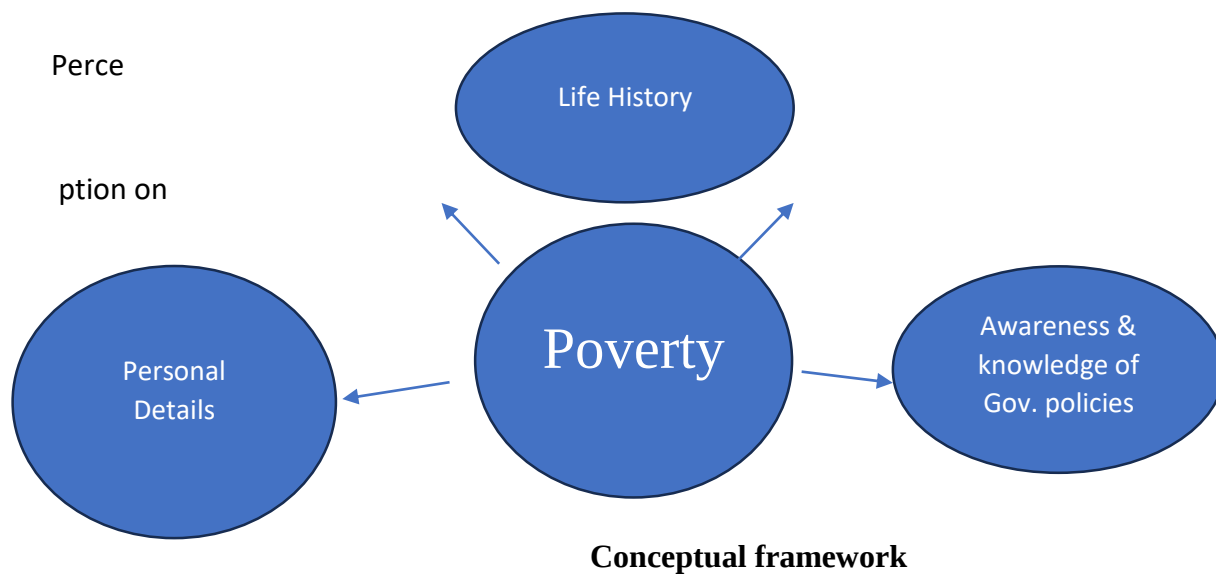
The functionalist perspective believes that being rich or poor is part of social stratification. It is important to motivate intelligent people to pursue more important tasks/jobs/careers, in society.

Conflict theory, on the other hand, believes this stratification is unnatural & cruel. It ends in a lack of opportunities, resulting in the discrimination of the poor.

Symbolic interactionism believes that social class rich and poor affects how people interact with each other in everyday life, and how they see the social world. (www.umn.edu.com)

Methodology-

The paper is focused on explorative research on the problem of poverty among Kinwat's tribal population. The severity of the problem, its major causes, and its effects on people will be assessed. The qualitative research method, in the form of illustrative case studies, is the methodology of the paper. Participatory observation with a semi-structured interview schedule was used during the research. Secondary data is collected from different sources like- journals, articles, books, governmental agencies published documents, census, etc.



Case 1

Raju, a family man, with no formal education is hardworking, honest man. As he do not posses any farmland, he works on other farms during monsoon. During summers, he goes to Adilabad, a nearby town, in Telangana state, to meet ends. Farming is a laborious job, where he has to work for 9 hours a day, 3-5 months a year. The rest of the days, he works sometimes as a sugarcane cutter, construction laborer, and whatnot. For this employment, he has to travel on a weekly/monthly basis. Once hired, he cannot leave the workplace till the job gets done. This unskilled laborer has a very busy schedule throughout the year. Every leave is unpaid. How much he earns? Barely sufficient to support his family of five.

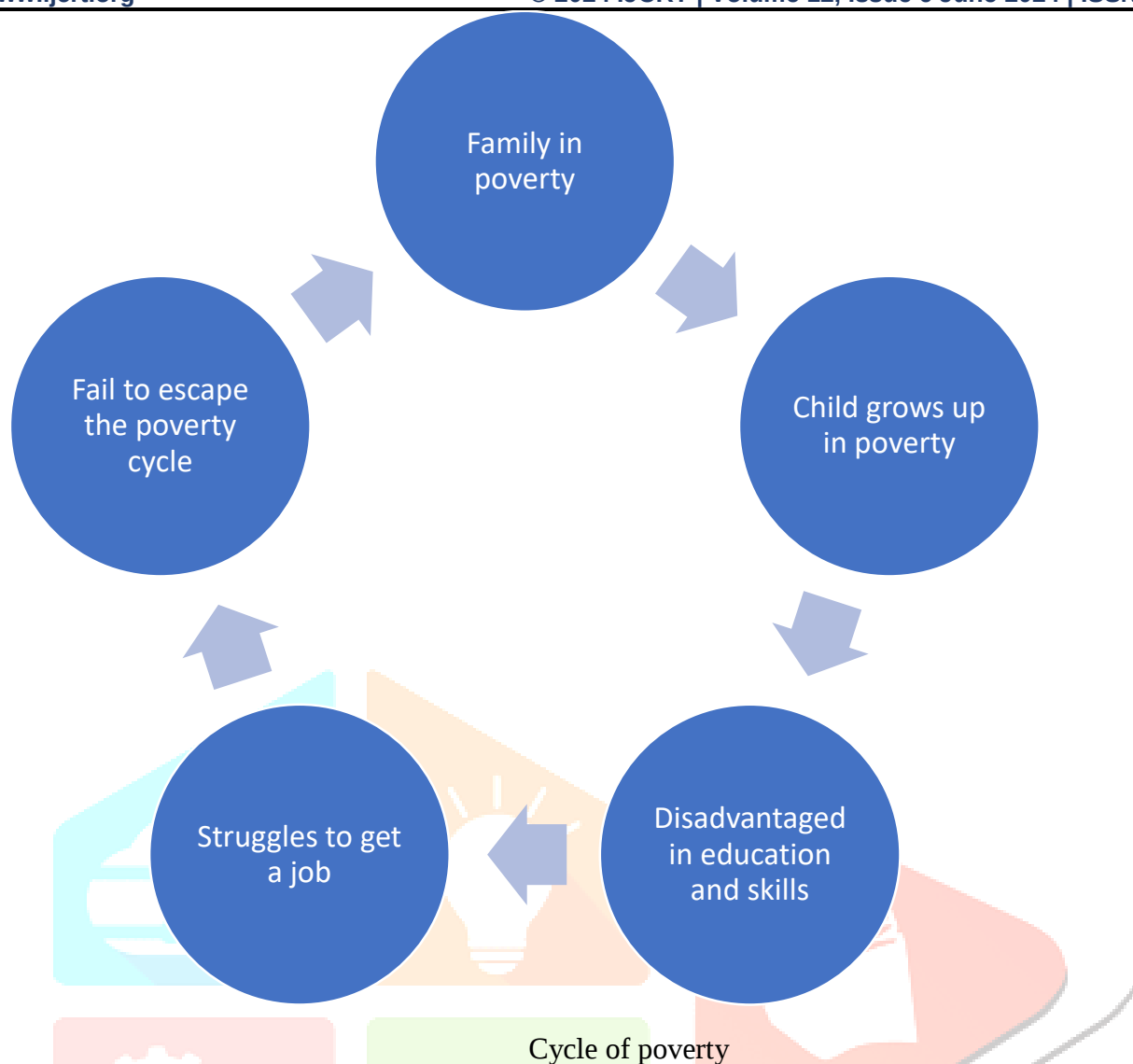
If a person is working this hard, he should get at least a decent income and a social security/ safety net. Is he asking too much?

Case 2

Shiva, a farmer, who speaks the Gondi language and owns a few Akers of farming land, has a smiling face. As part of a joint family, he has to earn at least 8000-10000 Rs./- Per month, which seems impossible due to unpredictable monsoons, and never-ending draught-like situations. Taking loans is an inevitable part of their household. Every year before the monsoon, he takes loans from private money lenders, to purchase seeds, fertilizers, manure etc. When asked why privet money lenders? He stated that national banks do not lend money that easily, besides, he has already taken a loan against the land. In an agrarian economy, money can be handy only at harvesting time. But all the modern amenities require money every month. Electricity bills, installments of bank, school fees everything needs cash/money, for which he has to take loans. His indebtedness is creating pressure on his mind, and paying interest is weakening his pocket.

Case 3

Ritik, a teen, gave up education after failing in 10 board exams. He is a jobless youth with no hopes for the future. With a limited skillset, any modern job is beyond him. His only pricy possession is an Android phone, on which he spends time. He surfs the internet and scroll reels on social media all day, ignoring his mother's warnings. When asked about joining his family's occupation of farming, he gets irritated. According to him, farming has no future, and with modern classroom education, he is neither trained for farming nor willing to join it. He wants to sell some of the land and start a shop or something. With no formal training, this can be a disaster. In such a situation, poverty is around the corner. Due to the influence of social media, he wears fake brands, eats Kharra- a tobacco preparation, and sometimes, smokes too. To add to the complexity, his family is thinking about taking a privet loan for setting up his shop. If not, he will migrate to Nanded/Adilabad.



This is the story of tribal people of Kinwat area. People of poor family, are unable to take modern education, as it is unaffordable. As a result, can't take better opportunities, ending up in poverty again. This vicious cycle should be stopped at once. Dr. Amartya Sen calls this as Unfreedom. The individual is not free to choose what he wants to do and not free to live the life he wants.

Parameters of poverty:

Checking the indicators of poverty is essential to justify the samples in the study. Kinwat's poverty can be sensed through below Indicators-

Poverty & dwellings-

Most of the house's rooftops are made of Malwad, dry grass, in this area, making them vulnerable in rainy sessions. Very few people own RCC houses. Houses are densely populated too, due to joint family structure and in some houses, a Gotha/ place to keep domesticated animals is adjutant to home.

Access to potable water-

The availability of potable water is another crucial point indicating poverty. Kinwat does not have any plants to purify the water. Rich families buy individual units of purification, and the poor are at the mercy of God.

Availability of electricity-

No reliable supply of electricity can reduce the possibility of running any business like -xerox, small units of production, etc. In Kinwat, 8-10 hours a day load-shedding/ power-cuts is a common phenomenon.

Poverty & sanitation-

Although the per-person availability of land is high in rural areas, the old structure of houses does not offer proper illumination and sanitation. Even in comparatively rich houses, no sewage lines, no constant water supply, and underground chambers/gutters were not seen.

Major findings:

In Kinwat, most tribals lack formal education, moreover, they are not skilled. In modern times, low skills are equal to low wages, making people vulnerable to poverty. There is a gendered poverty too. Female farm laborers get less money as compared to male laborers. This inequality in wages makes the majority of people poor.

Temporary unemployment correlates with poverty. Most of the farming is done by Diwali. After Diwali, people are jobless. As they own land, they can not migrate to other places. This cycle deprives them of making a surplus. It ensures they remain poor, all lifelong.

Complete unemployment is yet another concern. With the limited skillset of tribals, modern employment is a far cry. No governmental agency provides employment that can support a person's family and with no strong social security, insecurity and fear of being unemployed remain constant.

Indebtedness, taking private loans, and high rates of interest are making the situation more risky. The agricultural economy offers only one or two times of harvest when the cash or money is available to tribals. But the necessity of money is all year long. This imbalance makes people take loans. Most of the people are illiterate or marginally literate, and as a result, do not understand the documentation of banks, and might end up in fraud.

People in this area have no surplus money. In their language “Amache hatawar pot aache, kaam karave tar kave, nahitar upashi zopave.” This means they earn money sufficient for one meal only. If they do not earn money daily, they will remain hungry.

Natural calamities like drought, heavy rainfall, and hailstorms destroy farm produce and the economic stability of farmers alike. The fragile economic equilibrium of tribal families is shaken by such incidences. It takes years to gain the same level again.

Chemical fertilizers and sowing the same crop again and again have affected the productivity of farms too. In the long term, the production is decreased, resulting in poor farmers becoming poorer.

Kinwat has no industrial development. Apart from the timber business, no big business can be seen in the town. These missing industries are indicators of the absence of opportunities for employment and growth.

Lastly, the unequal distribution of wealth is the reason behind poverty in Kinwat.

To reduce poverty in Kinwat, some strategic actions are required. For instance,

- 1) A strategy for development of agricultural development should be created and implemented.
- 2) Infrastructural development should be focused. Roads, power, irrigation, and communication should be given priority.
- 3) Improve the quality of education, technical and employment-oriented courses should be included.
- 4) Generating non- agricultural employment is need of time. The government and private sector should act on it.
- 5) for immediate relief, Land, houses, and livestock should be provided, to improve the standard of living.
- 6) Microcredits and loans should be easily available for farmers. The rate of interest should be minimal to low.

In past years, the government has planned many poverty eradication programs. The limited success of such programs is due to a. these programs were designed by economists, with economic perspective only. The human face is missing in the plan.

b. the plans are focused on poverty eradication but fail to break the cycle of poverty. We need economically productive activities under poverty eradication schemes. No agency is rich enough to provide money without proper outcome- may it be profit or social welfare.

Conclusion:

As earlier said, poverty is a punishment for a crime, that Kinwat's Tribals have not committed. Poor people are the worst hit of any calamity, whether natural or manmade. Poverty is a structural problem, a manmade disaster, which should be eradicated as soon as possible.

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